100 Dialogues: 100 Dialects

Thesis

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Abstract

The following will attempt to present a view of the artwork created for my Masters of Fine Arts thesis show through the influences, imagery, and creation process. I will analyze my current practice and discuss how I approach my printed images and bring them into fulfillment. I will relate my own practice to ideas and artistic styles that have influenced and continue to influence me in my own work. Allegorical in nature, my works rely on a reasonable degree of visual literacy in their development process as they include aspects of Medieval Art, Comic Books, Literature and Music, and works by contemporary printmakers that have all seeped into the cracks and crevasses of my artwork. Finally I will elaborate on how the created product is intended to operate visually and conceptually both in and outside the gallery space.
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CHAPTER 1: 100 Dialogues: 100 Dialects

“It might be possible to imagine an experience of enlightenment strictly as a visual experience, one that enables our eyes to do the thinking about material things.” (Sennet, 95)

It is sometimes a struggle to fully grasp the world around me. I believe that the easiest way to bring about a greater understanding of this world is to actively explore it visually through the creation of artworks. This practice becomes a driving factor in my purpose and process of making.

The following will attempt to present a view of the artwork created for my Masters of Fine Arts thesis show through the influences, imagery, and creation process. I will analyze my current practice and discuss how I approach my printed images and bring them into fulfillment. I will relate my own practice to ideas and artistic styles that have influenced and continue to influence me in my own work. Allegorical in nature, my works rely on a reasonable degree of visual literacy in their development process as they include aspects of Medieval Art, Comic Books, Literature and Music, and works by contemporary printmakers that have all seeped into the cracks and crevasses of my artwork. Finally I will elaborate on how the created product is intended to operate visually and conceptually, both in and outside the gallery space.

The two years I have spent working towards my Master of Fine Arts Degree have mostly consisted of me making slow developments in a very formulaic process, heavily reliant upon the use of printmaking as a vehicle for the creation of my artworks. The pieces created for my M.F.A. show have successfully challenged me to explore, expand, and refine the conceptual and physical basis of my previous work.
When looking at my old work no matter how much I attempted to separate myself from a particular way of working, the ideas and motifs running through the images still run through the more recent images. The change of my approach to working had little effect on the image content. These ideas often focus on a figure or figures trapped within a world of their own, which allows little to no opportunities to leave. Within the work I am constantly striving to tell some sort of story. The story most often is allegorical in nature. The work employed the use of multiple panels that all relate to the center image. It is within this context that I envision natural connections between the border imagery and the central images. All of these images add up like a fairly complex math equation to create one tale or bring about one message. These messages were often variations on themes of morality/mortality and of human nature and death. It was through the use of the imagery that I hoped these messages would come across. The message varies from piece to piece in the older work and often relates to a very specific thought related to those themes.

These tales of morality were inspired most often by music or literature. A passage from a book would be a kick starting point for my thoughts on a subject. This translation would come out visually in my prints. Thoughts touched upon included our perception of time as humans and the inevitable end that faces us all or the evil that is contained within everyone but not necessarily seen by all. The variety of human nature is an interesting subject for me to explore visually. The idea of translating ideas on these subjects into a visual realm becomes a challenge to work out. I find that human nature is basically all the same but it’s the different facets from person to person that truly intrigue me. Although most of the works speak to human nature from a more general perspective, they tend to take these characteristics to one extreme or the other. The subject of morality/mortality and death all become part of the human condition.
A lithograph created in 2011, titled “Float Like Logs”, a title which comes from a lyric from the song “the Devil’s Workday” by the band Modest Mouse, deals with many of these issues.

Figure 1: Float Like Logs

The images main focus is that of a lumpy creature crawling across the middle of the page. This figure has a large empty space in the area that might be assumed to house his brain. The figure has very human qualities, including a face and the standard human limbs. Its body is however distorted and disfigured. The disfigurement could have come as a result of the situation it is in. There is a certain amount of toil and hardship that it seems to have gone through for an extended period of time. From viewing the scene, it appears that this hardship has no definite end. This seems to come as a result of the figures, which surround him in the borders of the image. The most prominent of them is a blindfolded figure on the right side of the page. He seems to be directing the central figure to move ahead.
This figure’s direction is ironic based on his inability to see what lies ahead. He does not know what lies ahead, yet he continues to push the central figure foreword and the figure obliges the blind man’s directions. The blind figure is attached to a small set of legs that appear to be bleeding at the knees. It can be assumed that he has followed these same directions and is not in any better shape than the crawling figure. It brings about the question of why the figure would follow such misguided directions?

Contained within the top border of the page are three furry figures viewing the scene from above holding apples with chunks presumably bitten out of them? This brings about a biblical connection to forbidden fruit or fruit of knowledge eaten by Adam and Eve? These figures indulge in the fruit while watching safely from above the toiling figure. They seem no worse off for doing so. Perhaps eating the fruit creates a life more fulfilled than that of toiling and struggling with a strict and religious lifestyle or they have knowledge, but theirs is a warped sense of entertainment?

One last set of figures lie within the left hand of the image. These figures, although in two different styles, seem to be a reflection of one another. The top figure is a depiction of a classic theatre representation of the devil. He is surrounded by the cautionary color of yellow. The yellow is the brightest color within the image. The caution becomes a false warning when the image parts come together? The devil perhaps becomes a symbol of free will that the figure below clearly has chosen to ignore? Below the theatrical devil is a comic book image of a figure that maintains those devil-like stereotypes. Lines radiate from his head suggesting thought or some other mental capacity. This once again reinforces the idea of freethinking. The lithograph makes attempts at comparing the world of free-choice and living a life in which free-will and living become the important aspects and that perhaps other controls adhere one to a life filled with toil and hardship? The glorified life may not be the best choice. Even as the title of the piece suggests, perhaps those following blindly are just like dead logs floating down a river? Another main
element used within this piece is an alternating color band around the entire border of the image. This border acts as a containment element trapping all of the figures within the space. It is the main element in the work that prevents the figures from leaving the space they occupy even if they desired to do so. The border also suggests some sort of rhythmic movement that relates to the use of music as an inspiring source for the work. The pattern or length of the color blocks often follows the rhythm of the song itself and mimics the sound of the song visually. Another way the border operates is to provide almost a color map or key that relates the border to the images contained within.

With this example of one of my older works created early in my M.F.A. studies and as a printmaker practicing for over six years, I had reached a certain level of understanding and expectations of the exact results for my printed images. These things most often became creation of images as I clearly saw them in my head. All that remained was execution of what I saw there. I had gained such an understanding of the process that it had lost a good amount of the initial excitement it offered me when I first learned about printmaking and began developing my images. When I realized that the results seemed to always be predetermined and the answer of what an image would be left no room for further development, surprise, or accidents, I concluded that the process had become stale and the images seemingly formulaic and overly controlled by me.

It was from a need to break from this overly planned and predetermined creation of imagery that I sought out a new way of approaching imagery that removed at least a small amount of my own control over the final product. The result of this became an altered way of working and a way to balance out my own control over the process with a more responsive way of working to a certain degree of randomness.

The process began with my using remnants or pieces of the more controlled prints. These images became layered bits of information from which I was forced to respond to new interactions not predetermined by me.
The prints began as a stack of thirty and slowly grew to sixty and then to one hundred prints. Not all prints contain information from the previous, more controlled work as seen in Figure 2. Other prints began as watercolor wash, digital transfers from my personal comic book collections, or found imagery as seen in Figure 3.
From these base images, hand drawing using different materials, mostly ballpoint pen, was added in response to the base imagery. The prints were stacked in a pile and pulled one at a time from the top and drawn on anywhere from thirty seconds to an hour. After what felt like an appropriate amount of drawing at the time, the print would be moved to another stack and the next would be pulled from the top of the original stack and worked on in the same manner.

The next steps involved creating a large number of carved images on linoleum for relief printing. On a twenty-four inch x thirty-six inch sheet of linoleum, one pencil drawing was made of a Buffalo. From this one image, I began to respond one image at a time to the image that came before until the entire sheet of linoleum was completely filled with imagery. The process of creating these images developed into a type of mind-map of images, all in response in one way or another to the original image of the buffalo. In the end images that developed all tended to fit into being idealized, nostalgic images of
masculinity but also of death, almost reminiscent of something viewed in old *National Geographic* or *Popular Mechanics* magazines. The symbols used for this purpose may or may not have been what they represent in today’s world.

These images were then carved in the linoleum for printing using the relief process to give them a more solid definition and to occupy spaces in a bolder manner. The individual images were then separated from the group (Figure 4).

They became assigned to categories such as: limbs, animals, heads, weapons etc. Those categories were assigned numbers. Five ink slabs were laid out with five different colors. Those colors were assigned numbers one through five. In order to remove an amount of control from the process of printing, I employed a random number generator to select
which category of linoleum images I would pull pieces from for printing and which color would correspond to those pieces of cut linoleum. The control is once again however placed in my hand in choosing where the image to be printed is placed within the paper border. The paper was always placed in a stack, and the items to be placed on the paper were paired up only by what piece of paper came up next in the stack. Responsive drawing once again follows the process of printing. The steps were repeated over and over through multiple layers of drawing and printing until the print reached a point in which it, at least for the time being, felt finished.

With the process I have described, I had searched for and found a way to again bring about that surprise I had missed. In creating this new series of work, there is a moment of pause when the paper is pulled away from the press bed. That moment of pause keeps bringing me back over and over throughout this whole process. This new way of working and responding left the working process more free and brought back the element of surprise that had slowly started to dissipate. What became very interesting was the lack of a known stopping point for me. All the images I had executed in the past had a known beginning and a known end. The end becomes questionable in these works; it seems now that they may in fact have no definite end. What has become important within them is the new way of layering information. The information is no longer strictly organized by predetermined planning. Before, each piece became like a piece in a puzzle locked in place with no ability to move from the space that it occupied. The information is now organized in a new fashion.

The images now occupy space in a new way, one in which the implied narrative becomes more open for interpretation. Images before had become more specific and locked into what was a specific narrative. Now the placement of images comes at random and presents me with the ability to create the story from the combination of images instead of a predetermined story, the story is created through the process. The specific imagery chosen and used is solely responsible for the interpretation of the works in any work, predetermined or placed at random. My choices in the process now come as a response to
what has been placed on the page at random, opening the potential to consider merits of multiple approaches.

The imagery used in the thesis works all comes from my creation; the nature of their pairing is what comes at random. To an extent, this has allowed me to question my own negativity as expressed with this work and the symbols that I use, both in the older and newer works. The images and the way they are used all come from various inspirations and points of my own interest.

Music and literature have become more and more important within my work. These sources provide me with starting points for making work. This could be lyrical inspiration or provide a rhythm for the work. There is almost no point in time in which music is not playing while I work in the studio. No matter what, this has to influence my making process. I find that as well as inspiring imagery, the mood and tone of the music influences the speed at which I work or the types of images I create and colors used. If the music moves at a faster pace my drawing tends to be quicker and less controlled. Music moving at a slower pace lends towards more controlled drawings. I have never completed a work from start to finish without some sort of music playing in the studio, and now make me question how the work may change without the constant background noise. The music comes from a variety of genres, including indie rock, hip-hop, electronic, classic rock and country. This variety of music sets up a variety of tone, pace, lyrical content and provides an ever-changing source of material and ideas. This may not be apparent in the work but needless to say is a regular influence within the work. One such example of music inspiring imagery comes from Modest Mouse’s song “The Devil’s Workday” the inspiration for the image seen in Figure 1

“I could buy myself a reason.
I could sell myself a job.
I could hang myself on treason.
Oh I am my own damn god. “ (Brock)
This small section of lyrics from the song became the starting point for the creation of that image. The way this operates for me is to provide a train of thought for my thinking. In this case these lyrics made me contemplate ideas regarding devout religious individuals and the path they choose versus the path people may pick who are in more ways free to live as they please. The music becomes just a sparking point for ideas the imagery created come about from these thoughts and ideas. These ideas may be present in my mind already music just acts as a source to bring those thoughts and ideas to the forefront of my mind.

More than any other medium, contemporary printmakers continue to influence the work that I make. As any other artist working within a specific medium, I am aware of many others working within the same processes. I can only assume that my exposure to the various printmakers over the years through personal interaction or through visiting artist demonstrations, talks and printmaking conferences have provided a degree of influence on the choices I have made in my own work. Artists such as Kurt Kemp and Jenny Schmid are contemporary printmakers I admire and respect. These artists in some way tend to work with ideas of narrative that translates in some way through significant use of symbolism and archetypes to make visible the complex narratives that define their work, structured quite often using a central component set within an environment of their creation.

Jenny Schmid, a professor at the University of Minnesota, creates images based very often on social commentary. Her images, most often colorful in nature, relate to ideas of feminism and popular culture. I have been drawn to the compositions of the images and their ability to communicate the idea of the artwork through a variety of symbolic elements crammed into the picture plane, much like her lithograph, “Floating World“ From 2003, as seen in figure 1.5.
Kurt Kemp also employs similar techniques in the creation of his images. His images are always packed full of symbolism. The symbols all create a world to be read visually in order to fully understand the artwork. His works as well take inspiration from music and literature as starting points for the work. His images are often created using direct references to lyrics from a variety of contemporary rock songs. Kemp’s images often make use of the male figure going through some sort of trial or tribulation. These images such as found in the print “In the Cups”, an intaglio print from 2005, Figure 6 employs the use of central figure as the focus of the work. The surrounding characters and imagery are all used in support of the central figure. This is a technique that I have often employed in my own, older work. I find that visually the amount of information contained within the images keeps me interested and constantly finding new interesting things about them.
Both Kemp and Schmid make use of the same need for visual literacy (heavy use of symbolism and archetypes) that I attempt to employ. Their images are meant to be read through the use of symbolic images that hopefully are but may or may not be familiar to a viewer. These images contained within one picture plane all influence the way the image is read and are crucial in the interpretation of the images.

I am particularly interested in the idea of visual literacy and need for it when artists use a significant degree of symbolism and archetypes in their creative work as I have chosen to do. In a modern society, visual literacy seems imperative to survive. We are constantly bombarded with visual stimuli every day. Kemp’s work, as does Schmid’s, manages to bombard the viewer in that same way with an overwhelming amount of visual
information, primarily as a composition of symbols and archetypes to allow an interpretive view that can be dark and cynical or humorous, or all three. Moments can be spent in small sections, but the view is frequently complex and saturated in order to complete the narrative and prove importance and/or possible threat or joke. Medieval Art is likely an appropriate reference for its purpose in defining morality and provisional mortality through visual means to an illiterate public. Words were unnecessary to explain the images.

In essence I am trying to capture that same type of visual reading of my pieces. The story however may not be as well known. Symbols are identifiable but may be a bit jumbled or set in an unusual context if the images were metaphorically related to comic books themselves, the images I had been creating with my previous lithographs could be envisioned as the cover of the comics. Comic books are filled with a very specific story. It is the cover of the comic book that quite often sums up or gives hints to the overall story contained within the pages of the comic. In a way everything within the comic is summed up on that one cover page. This is the way I see the older lithographic work. The images summed up a story with all the parts presented hinting at the story contained within the pages of the comic. The new images may be more related to that of the inside snippets of the story themselves. They are small hints of information. One could pull clues from the information provided to lead them in a certain direction, but the complete story is still left open. The end could come in twenty different ways. This more open idea does not lock the images into one state or into one specific story. Visually they present more open space and perhaps allow the viewer to fill in the gaps that were mostly provided before. This became an important way for me to see the work. Instead of trying to force a very specific message to the images, hints and pieces were instead given. I was seeing in my own practice if leaving more possibilities for interpretation to the viewer might aid the images. I came to no definite conclusion to this question but instead was provided with the insight that perhaps the images can operate in both realms. I have to be careful that leaving more open-ended options for a viewer could become just not taking responsibility for what the work needs to be.
Archetypes are also of interest to me. Visual Literacy is likely the most applicable to Archetypes. The idea of a collective unconscious that governs a set of known symbol’s or figures is truly intriguing.

“This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.” (Jung 42)

This idea has become so imbedded within our literature, art, and popular culture that it can be identified within all of these instances. Symbols have slight variations based on the culture base. However the variations are all on known archetypal ideas. The first person to present these ideas of Archetypes was Carl Jung. Jung developed the ideas of Archetypes and there relation to human psychology and made the idea of archetypes a well-known theory. The Hero is a well-known example of an archetype. The idea of the hero relates to old myths, folk tales, literature and more recently, comic books and movies. This idea of the hero has been around for as long as man has existed and is one of the well-known and collectively accepted archetypes.

Medieval art has always struck me in the simplicity of the imagery and through its simplicity the power it can carry. Not all medieval imagery is inherently simplistic, but the hand used to create the imagery deals with the space in a simplistic manner. Figures, animals and objects are broken down into their simplest states. And from this visual narrative is easily read and understood. The spaces are often broken down into small fragments in which things may or may not leave their designated spaces. Although these images were often related to religious narratives, I often respond to the ways in which medieval artists went about organizing spaces. It is very similar to the way in which comic book artists organize space with their own imagery.
Comic books have had a particularly large influence upon me. I reached my comic book interest age around eight years old and continued to collect for many years. I still find myself drawn to the imagery and stories contained within the pages. Batman was a favorite read of mine. The ideas contained within comic books are a great example of Jungian archetypes. The ideas of good versus evil, and hero versus villain are some of the most apparent, but others are contained within the pages and stories told in Batman and all other comics.

The graphic nature of the comic book imagery always stuck in my head. My earliest aspirations to draw came from trying to recreate the images from the covers or pages of these comics. I spent hours and hours trying to get every detail the same as the comic illustrator. I learned from the act of mimicking the hand of another.

Comic book imagery has leaked its way into the work I was making and am still making. The comic book imagery adds another layer of information that reflects the imagery I choose to see in my prints. The comic book imagery becomes a machine-made, printed companion to the hand drawn and printed images. The ideas contained within both directly correlate with one another in meaning or feeling. In a way they even become dependent of one another. Perhaps this idea of leaving the narrative more open becomes something that I am truly interested in carefully considering further. In creating a group of one hundred prints, what became interesting to me was their ability to operate as both individual works and as a group. When working on these images, I became very used to seeing them both one at a time and as a group due to the nature of my approach to making the images. The images, however, were never far from one another and were still often envisioned as a group. It was upon preparation for my thesis exhibition that some of the images truly became separated from one another. When placed in frames as an individual they took on a different meaning. The images became very much about the individual piece of paper and imagery contained within its borders. This was in stark contrast to how I had begun to understand the images. Initially, the number of prints and the group as a whole were both the important consideration. The mass quantity of images
was something that I felt either justified this new way of working or provided so many more open possibilities that removing one from the group and making it more important by placing a frame around it changed that individual work’s meaning. This let me see that perhaps the creation of these images was both about the individual and the group. Prints and drawings could constantly be added to as a group or as an individual works, and they still stood up as images.

100 Dialects: 100 Dialogues is a project that I have been perusing for the last few months of my graduate studies. This project consists of 100 works on paper, all containing similar and as well as different elements throughout the group. The majority of the time that I have viewed and worked on the stack of 100, mixed medium prints has been spent slowly filtering through them by processing the information provided by each of the individual works and responding to the information as it was slowly laid out on the page. The idea to arrange them in a group came early on when a small group of the prints was compiled at random as one work on the wall of my studio. Upon seeing this grouping, I began to realize that the elements could begin to interact between the pieces of the paper to make a single whole. Henceforth, I envisioned the display of the prints in two different fashions: both as individual pieces and as combinations to create larger works. The next few experiences I had with the images as a group consisted of viewing them spread out on the ground in a larger space whilst standing on a table to take in the images as a whole. Although I saw the connections still present, it was hard to understand the full possibilities of the combinations until they were placed on a wall big enough to accommodate a group of possibility twenty-four in the gallery space. The editing process became quite toilsome to narrow the prints down from one hundred to twenty-four. Although certain prints were excluded immediately, there were somewhere around fifty that presented me with a challenge of excluding them from the final group. The final group was chosen due to connections that seemed apparent and others that did not.
Once the prints were on the wall, I began a new, yet similar method of responding to what I saw in front of me. This differed for me because although the individual prints were to an extent packed with information, it was not nearly to the same extent on the larger scale. The combination of them incorporated all the symbols used in the small prints, but it no longer left them isolated within their own piece of paper. They now were forced to interact with the other symbols within the borders now established by inclusion of the other sheets of paper. This created a new dialogue within the work. I then actively began to force some of the imagery to directly interact across pages. The process of doing this now connected lines, imagery and symbols to activate the space. Elements now no longer seemed locked within the single space they occupied, but they were freed to move from page to page to create a more complex world?
This makes me curious as to how the connections I make visually may differ depending upon my mood, the place I stand, outside interruptions, sounds, lighting. How might all these factors influence how I respond?

When speaking of these images in their earliest form they molded out of what I described as mind maps of information. I believe that the mind map could be significantly changed based on all those same factors. How do we recall information and imagery? If everyone were given a starting image to respond to how many variations of the second image would arise, and how often would my own response vary? It brings about questions of memory and the way we process information and especially how I process visual information.

This may be in fact what I have been trying to figure out in making these works. In one way I am trying to figure out how I process and respond to visual information, and also questioning the means in which I used to process words through music and literature. It may be questioning my old approaches to making.

This process allowed me to question my regimented process and introduce a process of give and take with the control I had over the creation of the prints. This whole series began to take on the process of responding rather than planning. The question that arises from undertaking this is if there is any more validity to either way of working. I believe that the most important thing I can do is to take elements from both and include them in future modes of working. My art making does not always need a rigid structure or rigid set of rules. Perhaps I am more interested in leaving the narrative of ideas more open?

It becomes interesting to me in creating a new body of work, which I initially saw as a huge departure from my old ways of working, that there now appears to be very strong connections existing between it and the work I had been doing previously. It was not until I placed them in the gallery that I truly noticed these connections. It became most outwardly apparent within the oversized installation piece. I made a
habit of working with images all contained within panels on a page. Instead of visually separating panels with lines on one sheet of paper panels were now created with different sheets of paper. The different colors of paper operate in a sense like a patchwork quilt connecting the panels into broken lines and geometric shapes.

The large wall piece manages to operate both as a structure of separate panels and as a whole with one main difference of the implied or seemingly actual ability of the elements to shift or move from panel to panel. Information and symbols are contained within the space but present the opportunity to leave the space they are held within. Another similarity was the color palate employed as well as imagery that all drifts within the same realm. The color palette chosen tends to be a much muted set of colors. The colors for me relate to the images and the moods that they convey. Keeping the colors muted keeps the images in a somber environment. Bright colors would lighten the mood too much. The images printed in these colors leave the possibility that they could in fact disappear from the image plane quite easily, and the only remainder of them would be the artifacts left behind in the mind. The color palate although not as rich for me is reminiscent of the pages of comic books I read as a kid. This help me to envision them in the realm of a narrative or relates it to comic books specifically. This becomes important as a relation to not only the stories told within comics but relates it to my own particular interest in comic books. Color on certain elements also brings about another layer of meaning to already layered images. Color just acts as another tool to add layers within the layers of imagery. For me it is important to bring in as much information as possible to be provided to the viewer without directly spelling the information out. The ability of color to operate almost on a subconscious level within people is something that I hope to put into use within the images. This is just another element that relates to visual literacy.

The center of the wall piece has a glowing effect due to the white of the paper showing through. It becomes a focal point or a point of light within a somewhat dark image. This
provides, in a way, a starting point to enter the image visually. It is from that spot which the rest of the image can be viewed. Amidst the chaos it allows for a small break and a point to which work out a new path outward from the image. Each time you start at this point you may follow another path out of the image exposing more information.

There is a feeling of toil and hardship running through the imagery within the panels. Three heads sit high above on the left side of the work marching along mimicked by their smaller counterparts on the page below. Objects fade in and out of vision from panel to panel. These transitions bring about repetition of the same images and perhaps stress the importance of certain visual symbols.
A landscape is created at the base of the images due to the grounded heavy nature of the symbols used in the bottom panels. The houses and a sort of horizon line also aid this. This creates a ground level for the world these images are contained within while placing most of the remaining imagery floating in the atmosphere. A grounding point acts as the anchor for the imagery. It makes some things a permanent fixture while allowing everything else to escape. This in a way allows the potential for things to leave and others to take its place. It prevents anything other than the grounded objects from being locked within the space. Although objects may come and go there never seems that there shall be a calm moment within the space. The chaos will continue to come.

The buffalo and whale are typically powerful creatures; however, when placed next to the rat they become weaker than the rat himself. The rat looks unburdened while a large building is strapped to his shoulders and back with verses spewing from his mouth. While he does this power animals appear to be fading slowly into the page. Cogwheels and hands crank invisible machines that produce what looks like an endless supply of pills. This idea of visual literacy lets the viewer take the cues provided within the image and translate them into a narrative interpreted by only visual elements. The rat in the image the weaker or lesser of the animals has taken over a world, which should be dominated by the stronger members of the animal kingdom. Although the story may be small it is an interpretation of the images within that relate to these ideas of visual literacy. It is through the combinations of images that the viewer is able to piece together a meaning through their knowledge of the symbols used.

“Meaning in visual message making lies not only in the cumulative effects of the arrangement of the basic elements but also in the perceptual mechanism that is universally stored by the human organism. More simply put: we create a design out of many colors and shapes and textures and tones and relative proportions: we relate these elements interactively: we intend meaning.” (Dondis 20)

There is an overwhelming feeling of destruction and perhaps self-destruction running through the panels. The largest figures within the piece are the humoresque figures on left
hand side of the composite. One of them has a mass of tears defying gravity as they exit while above; another figure spews jumbled letters, which funnel into the head of the figure below. There is very little hope for any of the figures within the space. They all seem to either be bringing about destruction or just nearly facing destruction. This all comes as a product of being placed within the environment they live in. The environment that they occupy has been created in a manner where objects within the space have feelings of a destructive nature. Hammers, guns, and knives are just some of the objects littered within the space. In their state of being, little have been placed into action, but they all offer the potential to be put into use. When viewing the images, it can be assumed that these objects would be used on the main figure or object within the space. If they were not to be used on them, they will then most likely be used by them. There is also a very strong sense of tension within the work. The tension is built up by the objects and their interactions with the space. All of them seem to be frozen in a moment just before something happens. The potential for energy is present within all of the images, and that energy is most likely not pleasant in nature. The tension comes from the anticipation for that one thing to happen that sets all other things in motion.

Although the piece is littered with symbols and images, very few of the human or animal symbols manage to interact with one another. There is a feeling of disconnection between them all; this makes it seem as if they do not even acknowledge the existence of any other object within their world. They represent potential to interact with one another but have chosen instead to ignore everything. They have become oblivious to the chaos taking place within the larger space.

At the pinnacle of the image is a figure that seems to be falling while wrenching in agony and moments from being speared on the high point of the tent below. This figure becomes almost like the angel or star placed upon the top of a Christmas tree.

The large drawing becomes an object that is larger than us and is able to invade our world. One, as a viewer is able to be encompassed, if only for a minute, by the images in
front of them but is allowed to escape by stepping away. The ability to leave this world creates a relief from the tension it creates.

Figure 9: smaller framed works

The smaller framed pieces operate as their own world as well, but instead, they become a quick peak or window view while the large piece requires a viewer to more physically recognize this as a world in which they may also reside. The creation of both these worlds; large and small was in order to see how both operated. It was out of my own need to see how I would interact with the world at large and the microscopic vision of the same world. It was a necessity to be immersed in the imagery as well as view it from a more sterile and contained standpoint in. In doing this I was more able to digest and process what I was so heavily immersed in creating leading up to the show. It was through seeing them in these two ways that I was better able to understand what I had created.
In the end I created a body of work that all become a translation and a way of better understanding the world around me. The imagery becomes a way of processing my experiences with life and the nature of the human condition. The works makes attempts at describing my own human experience through images and symbols to deal with my own thoughts, fears and emotions. The work itself becomes a product of all the things I have experienced that I feel may relate to the world at large as well as my own personal experiences.

After the completion of this small body of work, the inevitable question to ask is what comes next? Through the process of creating the work for the thesis show, I was able to, if only slightly; separate myself from the constraints of my old habitual ways of working. Relinquishing some of the control, but not all, from the process of drawing and printing is now likely. It is through this that I have managed a much needed step in the progression of my work. If I were to honestly assess what comes next, I could not answer the question. What I do know is that through the process of working and producing, I generate ideas. I cannot help but take away important observations from my past work and the recently completed work. Although these ways of working will no doubt influence me, they will neither be the old or the new. What will come will have to be something new? My next work will likely come from a series of failures and half finished products until I once again find something new and exciting to create.
References


