Adrian Waggoner: For Sale, Sold!

THESIS

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By

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Abstract

The night of February 20, 2016 was the opening reception for my thesis exhibition entitled, *Adrian Waggoner: For Sale, Sold!*. My thesis paper, of the same title, begins as a narrative of my experience preparing for and attending my own exhibit. Through this format I explain the intention, motivation, and inspiration for the work. I also explore the idea of storytelling and myth-making as documentation of the work that then becomes the work.
Dedication

For my uncle-in-law, Robert Vargo, and my father, Edward Waggoner, who through hours of phone conversations got me through the most difficult time of my life while I was simultaneously trying to complete my thesis. I owe them a debt of gratitude for their constant concern, wisdom and advice, without which, this would not have been possible. Thank you.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my committee George Rush, Amanda Gluibizzi, and Dani Leventhal for constantly pushing me harder than I wanted to be pushed.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

It all had to be perfect. Considering the circumstances pertaining to my life at the moment however, I think just showing up to my own thesis exhibition may have been acceptable. But I was not OK with acceptable. Every detail had to reach my ideal of perfection. I had to be OK with it.

I have the firm and exhausting belief that god is in the details. This goes against the more colloquial phrase of the devil is in the details, suggesting that the devil will trick you in the fine print. To be clear, I do not believe in god, gods, deities, devils or the supernatural. I do believe though, that the awe felt when encountering an experience where so much attention was paid to the smallest detail, must be similar to the feeling of reverence and respect god-fearing/loving individuals feel when contemplating the infiniteness of their respective deity. I imagine this is the desired effect of cathedrals. Every square inch designed in a way to elevate the feelings and beliefs of its patrons. When I walk into these cathedrals however, with their high ceilings, intricate painted patterns, stained glass windows, perfect low lighting, and fine woodwork, all I can think of are people on ladders, putting god in the details. I wonder; do any of these contracted laborers want credit for their long hours of work? Do any of them go in during worship?

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1The low lighting may be a key to the perfection. It hides imperfection. It is an illusion. Similar to the way people look better in bars and clubs in low lighting.
and nudge the person on their left and whisper, “Hey, see that gold leafing way up there? I did that.” Or, “Hey, check it out, I had my neighbor pose for that painting of St. Peter, and that Jesus on the cross up there, yup, that’s me!”

I think I would like that job. Putting in so much effort to create an environment with my skill and my time for people to come in and say, “Oh my, this is truly the house of god for I am in awe at its magnificence.” They won’t think of me on a ladder tracing quatrefoil patterns and painting them green and gold. Only I would know. And that would be all right.

I have always felt this way about details. In everything I did. I had a landlord who let me remodel a few rooms in his 19th-century Italianate home. It was divided into apartments and he would let me stay in one at a discounted rate if I did the work. I was caught up in the details immediately. I took out old painted radiators and when I couldn’t strip and sand away their years of paint, I primed them, then painted them with various metallic pigments to give them the appearance of old, unpainted iron that was showing age. I painted them the way I imagined they would have looked and aged had they never been painted. I did this sort of thing throughout the whole apartment with the light fixtures, wainscoting, chandeliers, and claws on claw-foot tubs. As funny as it sounds though, when it was done, there really was a sense of awe upon entering. I was in the details. The apartment’s new tenants would come in, feel the “awe” and not realize that the radiator in the corner, that looked as though no one had touched it in one hundred fifty years, in fact was a faux-job I spent thirteen hours on.

My Thesis Exhibition could afford nothing less. It had to be perfect.
Chapter 2: Work

Opening night came. I was nervous. My piece, called *Adrian Waggoner: For Sale, Sold!*, at first appearance was a narcissistic, ego driven, ultra masculine assault. But that is how I wanted it to be. I wanted it to be an immediate assault that would be a front to cover vulnerabilities and reveal a character created to hide behind.

Figure 1: *Adrian Waggoner: For Sale, Sold!*

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Walking in to the exhibit was an immediate confrontation of motorcycles, denim, and general badassery. There was a table, hand-built from reclaimed wood, covered with items for sale including CD’s, T-shirts, posters, and temporary tattoos. There were vintage receivers and headphones for customers to sample tracks from the two different albums, one titled *Adrian Sings the Songs That Needed to be Sung in November and December of 2015*, and the other *Adrian is Going to Tell You Something*. The setup had the appearance of a merchandise table, known as the merch table, typical in small venues hosting touring bands. There were posters and a black t-shirt on the wall behind the table advertising the ones for sale.

Figure 2: Merch Table
Adjacent to the table were two vintage motorcycles parked atop stained plywood like trophies, or decorative touches in some trendy hipster store. Behind the motorcycles was a large landscape painting of a gold field and clean horizon with similar men, bare to their skivvies, floating parallel to each other and the horizon, one floating above and one below it. It seemed out of place in the continuity of a curated art exhibit, but in the context of a trendy hipster store, could be seen as a prop or decoration, further enhancing the ultra-coolness of the store. A shipping pallet, sanded, lacquered, and polished leaned against a wall, also serving as a decorative enhancement of the general manliness that this store’s target audience could appreciate. Next to the table and against a wall was a
cardboard cut-out of a James Dean-looking motherfucker with slicked back hair, black tee, dark jeans, denim jacket and harness style riding boots. The sleeves of the denim jacket were rolled up, revealing a tattoo that was the same temporary tattoo offered for sale on the table. The t-shirts for sale were also the same as the one on the cardboard cut-out. It served as a prop, or mannequin advertising the look that could be accomplished by purchasing the merchandise. The two posters on the wall, that were samples of those that were for sale, both featured the same character as the cut-out. In one, he was throwing a shipping pallet in a field, across a big sky and over an unhindered horizon spanning from edge to edge of the picture plane. In the other, he was in a boxing ring, bloodied and taking a blow to the face by a chiseled and attractive boxer.

Figure 4: Poster Option: Throwing a pallet
The cardboard cut-out was of me. That was why I was nervous to come to the reception for the exhibit. I was nervous for the conversations I would have to endure during the show. That cardboard cut-out, in this context, became a character that raised the bar on the possible level of narcissism an artist could have. I imagined myself sitting behind the merch table, next to the cut-out of myself, hocking my goods and trying to convince people why they should purchase items about me, or to look like me. I imagined myself like a sad kid at a lemonade stand that had overpriced, over-pulpy lemonade made from bad lemons and no ice. I imagined how pathetic I would look. So, early in planning I decided I would hire employees to run my shop/exhibition. I hired two young attractive twenty-year-olds, one male, one female, dressed them up in jeans, black tees, and boots. I had them both apply the temporary tattoos and I personally slicked back and styled the
female’s hair to be like mine. I chose her specifically because of her short hair. They both fit in perfectly. They arrived early to the exhibit, got into costume and I instructed the dude to be a little aloof when asked questions, like he was too cool, but still believed in the brand and what it stood for. I told him to carry a rag in his back pocket and to constantly be polishing one of the motorcycles. I told the girl to be super friendly and draw horizon lines in gold on the brown gift-bags the items purchased would go into. I told her to take her time doing it. Make it special. Make it perfect.

Figure 6: Employees

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2 I was very aware of and intentionally gave instructions to employees that suggested gender roles. They were actors in my play.
Hiring employees and dressing them seemed to solve my problem for a bit. Buying into the brand of me would no longer have to be a confrontational experience. Someone could do it anonymously and with confidence. There were employees there, obviously already buying into the idea enough to sell it; just like the kids who work at trendy stores in shopping malls dress, look and smell like the products being sold. It’s a club. It’s cool. And if that is the club you want to be a part of, you can buy into it.

I was still nervous for opening night though. Most artists troll the area in the gallery where their own work is exhibited. It makes sense. Why wouldn’t they? I have had paintings in exhibits in the past and staked out the area where my work was hung to hear the conversations about the work. I also had those awkward moments of glances back and forth with viewers while they, through eye contact and body language, were determining if in fact I was the artist responsible for what they were looking at. Then I would return those glances with eager eyes and subtle nods to affirm the strangers’ curiosity until they finally approached me and I could get my words of approval and the adulation that I so desperately wanted.

This show was different though. The adulation was obviously already there, though not in the form of the viewer’s praise, but the artist’s own self-praise. The viewer might assume the artist saw himself as so deserving of it already that he had made himself a brand and now wanted your money as praise.

I did not know where to put myself at my own opening. How could I hover anywhere near my own exhibit? All night I would just be saying, “Haha! Yup, that is
me.” So I convinced a bunch of my buddies to be my entourage³. We would continuously walk through the exhibit together looking tough. Like a gang. I told them to never be more than three feet away from me. I told them that no matter with whom I spoke, or who approached me, to not leave, even if the conversation never addressed them. I told them never leave me alone, especially if my soon-to-be ex-wife showed up. I had to stay in character.

I think the whole show in general could be compared to Sean Landers 1995 video piece entitled *Dancing with Death*, but in reverse. The video shows Sean, sporting long hair and the horseshoe-shaped facial hair stereotypically seen on truckers. He is wearing a shirt tucked into tight black jeans. He is dancing, very slow and dramatically, thrusting his body awkwardly. Suddenly the door behind him opens, interrupting the performance. Sean stops, and we see John Currin, who was sharing a studio with him at the time, enter the studio laughing. They both disappear out of the shot and we hear them laughing and Sean explaining that he just needs to make a quick video. There is more laughing, Sean starts the song over and proceeds to begin the dance again with the same fervor as before. It goes on for several minutes of uncoordinated dancing with Sean flailing his body around to various beats and rhythms throughout the song. Sometimes the dancing is jerky and sporadic like that drunk guy at any outdoor music festival. Then he switches tempo, dancing to the long orchestral notes of the melody, slow, serious and awkwardly graceful like that drunk guy at any outdoor music festival. The whole performance at first appears to be a joke, or not serious because of the interruption, laughter, and then the exaggerated

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³ My entourage is not to be confused with the Hollywood-type, A-list celebrity entourages. Mine consisted of lowbrow, stereotypical “bikers” with long dirty hair, scroungy beards and tattoos.
dancing. But as it goes on for three more minutes, with no more interruptions, no more laughter, and with Sean making eye contact with the camera (and hence the viewer) nearly the entire time, there begins to be a feeling of, “Oh shit; wait, I think this is serious. Is this serious? Is he for real? I think he is. Wait, is he taking himself seriously? Am I? Was I set up? Am I being duped? Am I supposed to laugh the whole time? I am uncomfortable.” Then the video ends with him walking up to the camera and turning it off. I, the viewer, came to the video feeling like it was to be taken lightly. I laughed with him and John Currin. I laughed as he started back up. I laughed at the god-awful dancing. Then it kept going and my laugh became chuckles. It kept going and my chuckle became one-syllable sounds that if punctuated, would be with a question mark. Then I was silent for the rest of the video. I think I became aware of my breathing. I think my brows were furrowed. I was a little confused. I loved it.

Figure 7: Sean Landers Still from Dancing With Death (1995) 5m 45s
What I mean by my exhibit being like *Dancing with Death* in reverse is that I believe the same questions and discomfort happen in *Adrian Waggoner For Sale, Sold!* but in the opposite order. The confusion and furrowed brows come in the beginning. The viewer is confronted with the question, “Is this dude fa-real? Does he really think this highly of himself? Is this a joke, or is he serious?” After spending some time in the exhibit however, the questions might become, “Is he making fun of me or of himself?” Then the humor and ridiculousness of it all begins to set in.

A good example of where this is most obvious is in the album being sold called *Adrian Sings the Songs That Needed to be Sang in November and December of 2015*. The album is seventeen tracks of me singing songs originally by other artists spanning sixty years of music. I am not a good singer. I am about as good a singer as Sean Landers is a dancer. But I sing the songs with the confidence and seriousness of someone who really, truly believes he is talented. It seems delusional. Many of the songs are layered with backup vocals, harmonies (though off key), rhythms, and duets all sung by me and edited together like a one-man a cappella choir. The songs are humorous and emotionally charged at the same time. Throughout the album, there is the constant question of the seriousness of it. It seems raw and emotional, but equally ridiculous and hilarious. The title begs the question of its listener, did Adrian, in his supposed wisdom, just know that these songs *needed* to be sung, and he believed he was the one to facilitate that? Or were they just the songs that *Adrian* needed to sing at that time? The listener’s queries or uncertainties are never satisfied. They may remain in a state of vacillation between whether to laugh or to believe Adrian thought himself a talented enough singer to spend
hours recording, editing, and mastering these tracks, then hiring someone to design the album art and jacket, have them professionally printed, shrink wrapped, autographed, and become part of a limited edition print of twenty-five. They might think, maybe he is one of those tone-deaf assholes who always try out for televised singing competitions. No one has the heart to tell them they really suck and let them go on TV to make fools of themselves. Then, when these people are not chosen to advance, they seem so upset and shocked that their talent went unrecognized.

I was in the process of an unwanted divorce in the months of November and December. The songs on the album were the songs that were in my head at the time. They were the type someone might listen to while going through a break-up and take comfort there was a soundtrack to their misery. The songs become their allies and can be angry and depressed with them. The listeners can sing along with the words through snot, tears and liquor while clutching a pillow or a photo album. The songs on the album were the ones I was singing along to. They were my allies. I knew I wanted to make an audio recording of stories documenting my various adventures in art making, but was having difficulty finding a voice or motivation to speak. I knew if I wanted to make that work, I needed to start by turning my sad-song singing mess into work. Then I needed to edit it to perfection to distance it from its source until it was completely removed from my emotions and then put it on display and sell it along with the album of stories.⁴

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⁴ This vulnerable bit of information is the part the listener doesn’t know. This is where the work is autobiographical but hidden behind the bravado of narcissism and denim. This is where the vulnerability is that contradicts what the shows appearance is. This is the part that allows me to enter my own anguish, then edit it, give it a spit shine, and call it art for people to look at and puzzle over.
The other album for sale, *Adrian is Going to Tell You Something*, is a collection of stories I tell about myself. It is nine tracks of my experiences in art making that were either undocumented, failed attempts, or just interesting encounters. Every story is riddled with tangents, sidetracks, tangential sidetracks, back stories and tangents from back stories. This album had its own set of contradictions in how it functioned with the rest of *Adrian Waggoner: For Sale, Sold!*. It relied on everything else in the exhibit, and everything in the exhibit relied on it. It was the purpose and reason for everything surrounding it as if it were a key to an unreadable map, but was packaged up and for sale and therefore not immediately available to the audience except for one set of headphones playing brief selections from tracks on the album. Those selections gave enough clues to the listener to understand the items, posters and sculptural elements in the space, but the *viewer* of the exhibit had to *choose* to be a listener and therefore could also choose not to be. To add to this, to fully take in the whole exhibit, to experience the hours of details, and understand the sculptural elements in the show, one would have to purchase that album. It is three hours and twenty-some minutes of me talking. In it I tell several stories of un-sellable works performed in site-specific locations that were left behind to be discovered, or forgotten and only known by word-of-mouth. They were like gifts with possibly no receiver. The decision then to put a price tag on the audio recordings of my stories, would make them potentially unheard and mimic the context of the work explained in the recordings while simultaneously contradicting them because the stories were then turned into a commodity. The fact that they were made into a consumable item though was simultaneously supported by, *and* supported the rest of the show. The exhibit
appeared to make myself a larger than life character whose style, manliness and fame were worth branding and marketing. The stories of the mischievous and daring art adventures then appear to be the cause of the legendary status, thus, making my life, and *Adrian is Going to Tell You Something*, a product worth purchasing. It was extreme circular logic.

The intention of the audio-recorded accounts of artworks began as a means for documentation of work about work. I began exploring the notion of taking an object of utility, and through actions of futility on my part, aestheticizing the object without taking away its function. An example of one of these on-going works of Futilitarian Aesthetics was taking shipping pallets from industrial locations around Columbus. The pallet was disassembled. If any board was broken in the process, it was remedied. Each piece of wood was trued, planed and sanded. The pallet was then re-assembled, sanded again, and again, lacquered and then returned from where it was taken. Once there, the still utilitarian pallet, though aestheticized, would go un-noticed, or become a curiosity, or a prize to be taken home. It could go back into circulation or stay in the shipping yard for years, and through use and weather, could return to a similar state in which it was

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A) Futilitarian aesthetics can be defined as the aestheticizing of a utilitarian object in a way that does not change its utility, thus making the aestheticizing futile to its function. This use-object is transformed to an art-object that remains a use-object. In most futilitarian aesthetic works, the object aestheticized either remains in its original environment, or is put into an environment suitable to the context of its function. A futilitarian aesthetic work is not intended for the white cube (unless the white cube needs a fresh coat of paint), consumerism, or public displays. It puts in question the role and necessity of an art-audience. Its value is measured in use and not in an art-market.

B) *Futilitarian Aesthetics* are reference books created by Adrian Wagoner in the reference section of the Fine Arts Library at the Ohio State University. They are cataloged, can be checked out, and studied. Each volume of *Futilitarian Aesthetics* attempts to further the understanding of this practice by demonstrating instances of aestheticized utility in specific ways. The set itself functions as an example of a use-object, made into an art-object, and placed in a setting apposite to its utility.
originally found, undoing the hours of futile labor. There were other projects similar in
nature which involved hours and hours of labor and performance that went
undocumented and unseen. Greater knowledge of their existence was only by way of my
sharing them through stories of mischief and humor.

I wanted those stories to be the documentation. I wanted them to become stories
that were shared with others. “Did you hear about the guy who pretended to be a
construction worker, snuck onto a job site and helped build I-71? Yeah, mile eighty-nine
is now art!” Or, “Yeah, he used to sand pallets ‘til you could lick’em they were so
smooth, then dude would just put’em back, no name, no pictures, no nothing. He just put
them back where he found’em. Didn’t take pictures, didn’t put it in a gallery, he just
spent forty hours of purposeless pallet perfecting and walked away.” And, “Hey man, I
heard someone found one.” This form of documentation I felt best suited the work
instead of a big glossy photo of a glossy lacquered pallet leaning on a warehouse wall, or
on top of a pile of rough pallets. Maybe that photo would accurately describe how quiet
that work was once the pallet was back in its original environment, but it didn’t take the
rest of the work into consideration. The sneaking around business of looking for pallets,
the trespassing, the risks, then the hours of care put into a common utilitarian object.
I began thinking of documentation photos by other artists, such as Gordon Matta-Clark’s *Splitting*. I loved the photo. It was an epic photo of an epic feat; but to me, the photo was a story. I remember another photo I saw of Matta-Clark outside the split house, shirtless and in jeans, holding a hammer up like a badass as if to take the final swing that would part the house in half. Those two photos were my first introduction to his work and for a while the only reference I had to it. For the sake of this argument, if those two photos were the only references to the work, then their function would have only served to see those moments in time. But I wanted to hear the story! I wanted to hear about the shirts-off labor it took to accomplish it. I wanted to hear the parts where shit got crazy. I wanted to hear the part about when Gordon was just sitting there and thought, “Fuck, I
am just gonna cut a house in half.” That is where my mind went when I saw the photos. I feel the same way about many of that era’s works. Another example is Double Negative by Michael Heizer. The image is beautiful. But all I can think of is, “you did wha…? Tell me the story!” I imagine all the work and time spent out in that barren land. I think about all the planning, the safety precautions, and how or if he got permission to do this thing when I see that photo. And I want to hear about it.

Figure 9: Michael Heizer Double Negative (1969-70) Moapa Valley on Mormon Mesa near Overton, Nevada

I intend my stories about my work to be the documentation of the work. I see the story as the image. My words or the words passed on by others form mental images/documentation in the receivers’ minds and become their entry into the work. And just as photos documenting performances or earth art can become a work in-and-of themselves, the stories I tell become an art form.

My refusal to have photo documentation of the work also helped fuel the idea of the artist, or myself, or the work as myth. I could become a character or legend. In a one-
year performance piece called *Outdoor Piece* lasting from September 26th 1981 until the same day the following year, Tehching Hsieh spent one year outside, not entering any shelter of any sort. He had a backpack and sleeping bag. This was performed in New York City. This amazes me. I can only imagine the stories that came from this experience. This and his other performances were a merging of life and survival as art. It was time and work spent learning to live on the street. It was about solitude. How many times did New Yorkers assume he was just another homeless man and disregard him? Who was his audience? Who was this for? Himself? People in the know talked about it. It was shared with people who were not in the know. It was thought about on cold nights while people lay in their beds. Where was Tehching shivering through the night tonight? It became legend. It became stories.

In the late seventies, Ed Ruscha made and placed a fake rock somewhere in the expanses of the Mojave Desert. He did not announce it. He did not have a reception. He just did it. And even with proof of its existence coming from none other than a BBC documentary that filmed him placing the fake rock, entitled *Rocky II*, it has never been found since. It has reached mythical status. Recently a movie/documentary by Pierre Bismuth began filming a quest to search for Ruscha’s rock. His attempts to gain information from Ruscha were ignored so he attended the Ruscha retrospective at London’s Hayward Gallery disguised as a journalist in 2009 and asked him directly where *Rocky II* was. The interaction is caught on film. Ruscha is caught off guard but clearly amused. He doesn’t deny its existence, but does not reveal the location either. Then he wishes Bismuth good luck.
This piece clearly has no direct audience. What is an artwork that no one can see? Is it solely for the amusement of Ruscha? The piece does exist. It is sitting somewhere in the vast expanses of the Mojave where perhaps no one will ever see it. But would seeing it be as satisfying as the myth that surrounds it? Doesn’t it better exist as just the story or image in our minds? I think so. There, the possibilities are endless. It is a myth. It romanticizes the relationship of the artist’s need to create simply because they are driven to do so. But also, it is hilarious. Ed Ruscha made a big fat fake rock, and then put it next to real rocks in a desert geographically equivalent in size to half of the state of Ohio. It is a well thought out and deadly serious art work that plays with the dead-seriousness of art. In a way it mocks the very art genre it is participating in. Artist like Michael Heizer, Robert Smithson, and Walter deMaria were going out into the expansive and uninhabitable West and making works with, in and on the land that imposed on imposing landscapes.

The following is a transcript of track number six from *Adrian is Going to Tell You Something*. It is a documentation of two works by means of a conversation with my friend Alejandra. We are sitting in my truck parked by the Olentangy River. It is the first warm day of the year.

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6 Transcript is followed verbatim including filler words (um, ah), nonverbal communication, and false starts.

7 This recording is not the only documentation of these works. Any time the story is told by me or by word-of-mouth, it is considered documentation of that specific piece.
Alejandra: That's gross. Don't do that. I don't burp.

Adrian: Then what do you do when you drink a beer?

Alejandra: I don't drink beer. (laughter)

Adrian: Oh.

Alejandra: (laughter)

Adrian: Wait, do you drink at all?

Alejandra: Hmm mm. (negative)

Adrian: Okay.

Alejandra: I'm afraid I don't have the right friends. (laughter)

Adrian: To drink?

Alejandra: Yeah.

Adrian: That's so responsible and mature. I hope my daughter's that responsible and mature.

Alejandra: (laughter) I mean may, maybe the blood of Christ is like a Pinot Grigio but I don't know.

Adrian: (laughter)

Alejandra: (laughter)

Adrian: Oh shit. Okay, so yeah, there was this, uh, what was I saying? What was I leading into?

Alejandra: You were talking about all-nighters...

Adrian: All right, so, yeah, no, there was this one...

Alejandra: and then you burped. (laughter)
Adrian: Okay. So, so there was this, there was this one time where I stayed up for five days. It was only like four years ago. Now I can't handle staying up all night at all. I, I mean, now I can tell when I stay up late one night. I sound like a, I sound like a fucking old man.

Alejandra: (laughter)

Adrian: (laughter) Shit, I am an old man. I started uh, tucking my shirts in just to remind me that I'm an old man.

Alejandra: Why?

Adrian: Because old men tuck their shirts in. (laughter) I've been a little boy for so long I just want to be an old man, just skip the middle part so I don't ever have a crisis.

Alejandra: (laughter)

Adrian: 'Cause I was coming up on having a crisis. I mean, can you imagine feeling like you were a nineteen or twenty year old in your thirties and then turning forty-five and realizing you're forty-five? Straight from being a teenager to like, rubbing like, lotions on your dry ass skin 'cause you're an old man now. Like, what the fuck? That's a hard thing to, to realize.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: I don't want to do that so I'm just starting right now telling myself, "You're old, you're an old man Adrian."

Alejandra: (laughter) But now you're just skipping young adulthood, going from being nineteen to...  

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Adrian: Well ... yeah, but, you know, I'm still thirty-five and my body still works really well but I've already in my mind accepted that I'm old.

Alejandra: Fair enough.

Adrian: So this one time, a few years ago when I, it was actually, uh, the week before Christmas. I had gotten it in my head that I wanted to build a bed for Wendy and uh, the plan started pretty simple but as all things I do, simple becomes super complicated. I went to the lumber yard and was picking out all sorts of lumber and this wasn't, I mean, it wasn't good enough for me to go to Home Depot and pick out some oaks and some poplars or some pine. I had to go to this specialty store and get like, all these exotic woods from, from South America and, and Africa. (laughter)

Alejandra: I was waiting for you to say, "Oh no, I actually had to grow the tree myself."

Adrian: (laughter) Oh shit, that's a good idea. See? Yeah, I'm sick, I'm sick in my head.

Alejandra: Well, see, like, I, I thought it was going to take like this whole, like Odysseus like type story, like, oh yeah, you know, we made this bed.

Adrian: Mm hmm. (negative) No, I had a week to do it.

Alejandra: Oh, okay, well ... in which case, no you can't grow a tree in a week.

Adrian: So, I had a, I had, um, I thought of the idea like three weeks before but in the meantime, I'm planning, I'm drawing sketches and I decide that it's gonna be this extravagant headboard with like, all this beautiful inlaid
wood of all different sorts that would like, butt up against each other and make like, this mosaic, um, pattern of different wood grains. So I go to the lumber yard, I buy all these different woods and I take them all to my studio and for five days, I am working on this bed and I have Christmas coming up as my deadline and I really, really want to give this to Wendy for Christmas. Like, it is a huge gift, maybe unnecessary but you know, I really wanted to do this.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: And I realized I have to like, pull, start pulling some all-nighters and it ended up being four all-nighters in a row and I was just popping Adderall like every six hours to, to stay awake and it was, it was working, you know, but the days became weird. Like I didn't know when one day ended and another day began and I started to forget when things happened and if they happened and at what time they happened. Everything became so strange, I was just inside for all this time sanding and, and getting all these like, pieces of wood to like, sit next to each other just perfectly and once I had all those, that inlay wood all glued down to the, the headboard, I started sanding them and this, I didn't have a planer, I didn't have, um, like any heavy duty sanders, I just had this like, handheld orbital sander and I sanded for two days straight. For forty-eight hours I sanded...

Alejandra: Oh my God.
Adrian: ...so I can get all these different pieces of wood that were all different heights down to the same, to the same level.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: But after like, you know, two nights of not sleeping, three nights of not sleeping, your mind starts to like, play tricks on you. Like I, like I was saying, like you start to lose a sense of when you're awake and if you're asleep and if something is in dream sate or something is in wake state. Uh, I remember sanding this headboard and standing there in the same position just doing this rhythmic movement with my hand for so many hours in a row that I would start hallucinating. I kept on jerking around; I thought something was creeping up on me all the time.

Like I would see something coming up behind me. At the same time that it was such a, a rough experience, it was also kind of nice having all that time just to be sanding something 'cause all this lumber that I had was just really rough and grey. You really couldn't see anything but once you started sanding it, then all the, the grain and the beauty of the wood started to come through and it was super satisfying. Anyway, I was up for five days straight and my wife was like, "Where are you? What are you doing," and I don't want to say, "I'm making you a bed," or "I'm making you a present," and she's so...

Alejandra: (laughter)
Adrian: ... she was always so like, understanding I think on the outside. Um, but she didn't question me, she was just like, "Okay, okay," and it was Christmas Eve and I was just like still working on this bed and I knew that I couldn't abandon my family on Christmas Eve no matter where the bed was so I assembled it all. It wasn't stained but it was all sanded and put it up on display in my studio and I called my wife and I was so out of my mind. I remember, I heard her voice and I started crying.

Alejandra: Oh. (laughter)

Adrian: (laughter) And I said, "Will you please come pick me up? I can't drive home."

Alejandra: Oh. (laughter)

Adrian: “I'm too tired.” And I don't remember what else I said but I know that I was weeping. (laughter)

Alejandra: (laughter)

Adrian: I just cried and I laid down in a pile of sawdust and fell asleep.

Alejandra: Oh. (laughter)

Adrian: (laughter) And then the next thing I know, my daughter's in my studio and my wife's in there. They came to pick me up and they woke me up and my wife had already been in there for a couple minutes before I woke up and she saw the bed and, and she was moved to tears as well and understood why I'd been there for that long. Then I went home for Christmas Eve and
I was so tired. I just wanted to sleep but I didn't want to mess up my little
girl's Christmas Eve, so I took ...

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)
Adrian: ... another Adderall on Christmas Eve just to stay awake.
Alejandra: (laughter)
Adrian: We went to see a movie on Christmas Eve.
Alejandra: What movie?
Adrian: I don't remember. It was a movie that would have been appropriate for my
little four-year old at the time to see.
Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)
Adrian: Yeah, she would have been four at the time and we were running a little
bit late. I was running across the parking lot holding her, I fucking slipped
on ice and I'm like, fighting so hard. You know that feeling where you're
about to fall and your legs are like doing this dance that your upper body's
not aware of? (laughter)
Alejandra: Yep.
Adrian: Your upper body's not participating in it...
Alejandra: (laughter)
Adrian: ... and your lower body's like doing everything it can to keep you upright.
Alejandra: Remember when I told you that I fell like three times this week?
Adrian: Yeah, yeah. So you feel your upper body like, moving faster than your
lower body, and I'm like...
Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: ... holding my daughter so I do everything I can to brace her. I, I know I'm going down so I put down my elbows, both elbows, my knees, brace her neck and I go down so that none of her touches the ground except for her, I think her little ankle or her little, like, leg hit but like, every single major bendy joint in my body hit the ground. (laughter)

Alejandra: (laughter) Ow.

Adrian: It hurt so bad but she was upset, you know and crying and like, I'm so tired and embarrassed. I think I probably was almost crying in the parking lot, like, with my daughter 'cause...

Alejandra: (laughter) Oh.

Adrian: ... like I've already been awake for five days and now I fell in the parking lot. (laughter) But it ended up being a pretty, pretty bad spill. I was pretty bruised up. But anyway, that bed has a, ended up being an important part of my art I didn't know about until, until recently. Like how much it reflected, like, other parts of my practice.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: My first year of grad school just really kicked my ass. I'm like, wait, who am I kidding? Like, every year of grad school kicked my ass. Like thoroughly, thoroughly kicked my ass but my first year I come in starry eyed and after a few like, really, really rough crits that made me question what my ideas were and what, why I even made art and I started to
question what my role as an artist was or what painting meant to me and I really felt like I needed a break from it and a time to think but like, it was hard for me to not be doing something.

I couldn't just sit there and think, I, I thought I need to do, to be doing something while I think and I, I, I remember thinking, okay. There was that one time where I, where I sanded for like three days and it gave me a lot of time just to be there in my mind and to think and sort through things and understand things. I was like, that's what I need to do. I need to sand something, so what am I going to sand? And I thought, okay. What is the gnarliest wood? Something I can just sand on forever? Just give me time to think about painting and think about why I'm even an artist so I thought shipping pallets.

Those are like the gnarliest pieces of wood you have ever seen. It's like, I can sand on that forever so I went out and stole a shipping pallet from behind some, uh, industrial place and I took it back to my studio and I started to sand on it but you know, there was all those nails in it. So I was like, well shit, I should take it apart.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: So I got a crow bar and I started prying it apart and then I broke all the wood trying, in my effort to take it apart so I was like, well shit. Now I need to fix this wood.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)
Adrian: So I spent the next couple days remedying all these broken boards. I went and got some glue and some like, big clamps and, and once I took care of that, then I started sanding. I sanded every board for hours until each board became like furniture grade wood, just so smooth and I sanded so I can find that beauty that that wood had that was, that was hidden. So I did that and then I put it back together, sanded it some more and then lacquered it.

While I was doing that, and thinking about art and thinking about painting and thinking about why I do what I do, I thought, maybe this thing that I'm doing right now is a thing. Maybe I should think about what I'm actually doing. So I went and got myself another pallet and I did the same thing. I took it apart, remedied all the boards, then I started planing them and putting them through the joiner, perfecting them, getting all the, the edges ninety degrees. And if one board was beyond repair, I replaced it and I sanded it until it was gorgeous and I lacquered it and now I had another pallet.

I decided I should go put these pallets back where I found them so I took the pallet, the first pallet that I made and I went and put it exactly where I found it and just left it there and walked away. I didn't take any picture to document it, I just left it there and so I just did that for a long time. Take pallets, sand them and put them back where I found it.

Alejandra: Why the pallets?
Adrian: I had spent so many years of my life in my studio making paintings that I thought were desirable and beautiful and that then had a market value and would sell.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: And now, I am taking all these hours and hours of time only to give it back. Like, these hours of time no longer are gonna be a benefit to me in a, in a way, in a financial way. Um, and the thing that, that, um, entertained me was thinking about the person that stumbled on it or that found it and thinking, “What the hell? Hey Johnny, come check out this pallet. You think this is what they look like when they're brand new?”

Alejandra: (laughter)

Adrian: (laughter) Or you know, the guy who doesn't even notice or care and he just puts a bunch of shit on it and puts it in the back of the truck and then there it goes, off somewhere else and it slowly gets chewed up and becomes the pallet that it was when I found it. Or maybe no one notices it and it just sits still in the same place where I found it for years and years and then the weather slowly turns it, deteriorates it back to what it was. So that idea also, I really like that idea of putting hours and hours into labor that would be undone again. It would make my, what I was doing futile and I kept thinking, shit. This is my whole idea about art. It is almost futile.
Alejandra: So then, what happened? Like, 'cause you obviously went back to painting. What did painting mean to you?

Adrian: I actually didn't go back to painting for a long time. I thought the next move is to dress up like a construction worker and drive out onto the side of the highway and sand the top of the posts that had, that hold the crash rail guards so I did that. I went and bought a constru- uh, a hardhat. One of those like, vests that have, that are like bright green and reflecty.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: And got myself a flannel shirt and...

Alejandra: (laughter)

Adrian: .... and drove my truck out to the side of the highway, hooked up all these tools to my car battery and went out on the side of the road and sanded the top of these posts until they were just as smooth as those pallets.

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: Lacquered them and then left them there. Well, I kept doing this; I did it all over town. Dozens of these posts are sanded all over. They're everywhere.

Alejandra: (laughter)

Adrian: But the one thing I learned from that is that the hard hat has authority that no one questions. You wear a hard hat; you can sand the top of posts on the side of the highway.
Alejandra:  (laughter)

Adrian: No one even looks twice. They think, that dude's doing what he does. Someone told him to do that.

Alejandra:  (laughter)

Adrian: (laughter) I remember thinking, I was like, I got to think of a bunch of stories to tell to people in case I get busted. Like, if a cop comes or if like, a real, like highway, I don't know, highway maintenance worker, DOT, is that...

Alejandra: Mm hmm. (affirmative)

Adrian: .... Department of Transportation comes by with their trucks and they're like, "What the fuck are you doing?" I'd be like, "What do you mean what am I doing? I'm doing my job. I was sitting here to repair this post and they'd be like...

Alejandra:  (laughter)

Adrian: where, you know. I had this whole scenario in my head of what they would say and then what I would say but no one questioned me ever and I had a cop drive by me. You know, and I would, I'd put my hard hat on the dash, I could park wherever the fuck I wanted.

Alejandra: Yeah, there you go.

Adrian: You don't need a parking pass, you need a hardhat.

Alejandra:  (laughter)
Adrian: You can go put your car anywhere, people will just assume. Like, dude's got a job to do.

Alejandra: Yeah, there you go.
Chapter 3: Conclusion

These stories are the documentation of works. I make works from work. I perform the work to have a story to tell. The story is a performance and therefore also the work. In this way, the artwork exists through performance, objects, storytelling, myth, and tall tales. *Adrian Waggoner: For Sale, Sold!* is art about art. Like *Ed Ruscha’s Rocky II*, it presents itself as a serious artwork while musing on the seriousness of art. It is also funny. I made a cardboard cut-out of myself as a James Dean-looking motherfucker, hired employees to dress like me and sell CD’s of me singing other peoples songs. I called motorcycles sculptures and convinced my friends to be my entourage at my opening. I did it for the story. I did it so I could tell you this. This thesis paper documents and is the story of the exhibit and therefore, is also art.
Appendix A: Price List

CD - Adrian Sings the Songs That Needed to be Sung in November and December of 2015…$25

CD-ROM - Adrian is Going to Tell You Something…$25

Poster…$20

T-Shirts…$15

Temporary Tattoo…$5

Table…$180

Pallet…$120

Cardboard Cut-out of Adrian…$120

Big Painting…$8,600

1977 BMW R100 w/ Dneper Sidecar…$15,000

1971 Honda CB750…$10,000
Appendix B: Track Titles For:

Adrian Sings the Songs That Needed to be Sung in November and December of 2015

1. You Really Got a Hold on Me
2. Your Fine Petting Duck
3. Idaho
4. Woodson
5. Butterfly
6. It Aint Me Babe
7. FU and UR Cat
8. Misunderstood
9. Poison
10. Runaround Sue
11. Violins
12. Hold me Now
13. Second Place
14. It's Hard for me to Say I'm Sorry
15. Sheets
16. Wild World
17. Wond’ring Aloud*

*accompanying vocals by Scarlett Waggoner