

Object Stories Through Visual Prints

by

Jennifer Bornheimer

A Senior Honors Project Presented to the

Honors College

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for

Graduation with Honors

by

Jennifer Bornheimer

Greenville, NC

May 2018

Approved by:

Daniel Elliott

Graphic Design, School of Art and Design

Artist Statement

I have been fascinated by the shapes and textures of objects, how their properties not only capture beauty, but also tell stories of intent and use. My goal for this project was to investigate these objects, learn their stories, and convey that through letterpress and silkscreen printing. I include references to personal stories, advertisements and songs based on the objects, as well as the history of each object. The beginning prints focused mainly on precise research, highly designed compositions and learning the process of printing. As the project went on, I became looser in my interpretation of the project. The later prints show far more experimentation, in method of printing, how the object was referenced and the emotional capacity of the objects. In addition, my later prints respond to each other, discovering and building upon the connections between the shapes textures and stories. My last two prints *Whisper* and *Scream* are a response to what I had learned throughout the process, and are a reflection on the body of work I have completed.

Explanation of Work

Doomsday, Anniversary, Tomatoes

These pieces were based off a perpetual calendar created by Ritz for their 50th anniversary. All of these prints used imagery from the calendar and phrases from Ritz advertisements over the years. *Doomsday* focused on the concept of time and planning, using John Horton Conway's Doomsday Algorithm as inspiration, but also referencing how the calendar functioned and the feeling of impending doom that can occur when our schedules get busy. *Anniversary* focused on Ritz's celebration of 50 years in business, and *Tomatoes* was a reference to an advertisement about not being able to disguise the great Ritz taste. It also referenced a personal story of my brother and I dipping Ritz crackers and cherry tomatoes in chocolate to trick my dad (the Ritz crackers in chocolate were good, the tomatoes, which we told him were cherries, were not).

Risk, It's Your Turn, I See Loss and Lies

These prints were based off a vintage game spinner found at a flea market. I could not find information on the exact spinner, but used similar typefaces and colors to those found on the

spinner. I referenced the ideas of allowing arbitrary physical forces to dictate the outcome of a game, the competitive nature they can bring out in people, and the personal story of how my dad and I would always get distracted playing with the pieces of the game instead of paying attention to the game.

Income/Sold, Pg. 153, Christmas Cookies

My great grandparents owned a farm and kept a log of prices they paid and goods they sold. The dates in this journal range from 1914 to 1923. I used song lyrics from that time period as well as my relationship with my grandmother and the shapes found in the journal to inspire prints based on the journal.

\$925.52, Spring Ahead, Bedbugs

The idea of rest, its simplicity, and how quickly the price of bedding adds up, and realizing what a luxury such a simple part of our lives really is inspired these prints. I used phrases from mattress advertisements that reflected deeper meanings. The Moon image is from NASA's collection of public domain images.

Ask Me Anything

This print was based on a 1948 Medical advice booklet from Hygenica Family Health Magazine. The magazine was filled with letters that had been written by hand, mailed in and answered. I titled the print "Ask Me Anything"—a phrase common to the site Reddit—to emphasize how technology has changed the flow and speed of information.

Breathe, Heal, Roll with It

These prints were inspired by moss and inspired by phrases taken from Merriam-Webster, Encyclopedia Britannica, and G.K. Chesterton in Heretics. These prints are discussed in the Discussion/Conclusions section of this paper.

Glitch Series

These prints are based on technology and elements of the digital world, more specifically the relation to technology and the of robotic dopamine systems in the brain. Phrases relating to

the dopamine system and how destructive it can be were found in Judson Brewer's *The Craving Mind*.

Whisper, Scream

These prints were a response to what I learned throughout the project, and based on the idea of making something real/staying present in the moment. The visual inspiration was based on producing an image while leaving the prints a solid color.

Discussion/Conclusions

In the beginning prints, I focused on the technical histories of each object. I looked at advertisements and sayings from the time periods they were created and incorporated specific stories with each print. I spent most of my time working on formal design elements, and from that developed new ways of understanding objects when working on designs. I saw deep connections between how items were advertised and was able to connect stories to sayings and songs of that era.

As the project went on, the focus of the prints shifted from the object to the message the story was telling. The objects were used as metaphors rather than the focal point of the concept. In these prints, I allowed myself to be much more experimental in the process of creating. On extreme example of this is my Glitch prints. They are imperfect as they were much more about the process of experimenting than creating a final print.

The main thing I learned is how much emotion is linked to the objects around us. While we all interpret the world differently, there were themes in the emotional connotations with many of the objects. Rather than views that contrasted each other, the prints revealed trios of stories that amplified each other's meaning. The quote "The moss is silent because the moss is alive" holds strong connotations of survival in the midst of hardship, but it also shares hope and strength coming from that same root. The next print from that series discusses two scientific definitions of moss, one that shows it to be a failure of a plant, and the other that shows how necessary it is to the ecosystem. While it's not the same exact message, it still shares the theme

of a silent and overlooked force of strength. I saw these themes in all of the objects I worked with, and over the course of the project learned to let these emotional themes work with the visual elements of the object, to convey deeper meaning.

Appendix

Images of the prints are available in “The Prints” supplemental file. Note: the print *Whisper* was not included as the print had to be seen in person to understand.