THESIS

PERSPECTIVES

Submitted by

Silvia Minguzzi

Department of Art and Art History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Fall 2014

Master's Committee:

      Advisor: John Gravdahl
      Co-Advisor: Cyane Tornatzky

      Phil Risbeck
      Eleanor Moseman
      Silvia Canetto

ABSTRACT

PERSPECTIVES

We see what we want to see. We perceive the world around us in our own way and

sometimes our perception is far from how others might perceive it. We have got used to rely on

our feelings and emotions when we see or judge something and sometimes this leads to the

misinterpretation of the things around us, because feelings and emotions can't be objective.

Perspective projection distortion is the inevitable misrepresentation of three-dimensional

space when drawn or projected onto a two-dimensional surface. It is impossible to accurately

depict 3D reality on a 2D plane. The main focus of my body of work is to apply my research on

how the new technologies pushed the boundaries of perspective projection distortion in the

digital art world. I use perspective projections in my work not only as a technique, but also as a

philosophy. Being able of looking at the world from a different perspective, being able to

challenge stereotypical perspective is a powerful way to fight inequality in our society: income

inequality, gender inequality. Diversity can be as simple as a different point of view.

I believe in the power of data, and in my work I always look for inspiration in different

terrain: politics, economics, anthropology, psychology are my bread and butter. I believe that any

modern artist needs to push the art forward, inventing, defining new paradigms of expression

with powerful meanings. It can be done using new technology, or researching new techniques

with old media. It is about the experience the artist delivers to the public - whether it is

provocative, whether it changes how the viewer thinks, feels and views the world. This is what

really matters, and it has nothing to do with the techniques that the artist chooses to use. Just as

the development of acrylic paints in the 20th century did not mean that oil paints or even the practice of creating one's own paint from pigments fell out of practice, so it is with technology. Just as some artists paint in oils only or acrylics only, some create their work digitally. Image editing and graphic design software programs are yet another tool to add to the artist's palette.

This is why in my work I try to use a wide range of media: from printmaking to digital fabrication, from graphic design and typography to motion graphic and projection.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ON PERSPECTIVES

1. From Renaissance to Contemporary Art

Some of the major themes of the earlier treatises such as regular solids remain significant to this day. Yet, there are significant contrasts between Renaissance methods and modern developments. Renaissance artists paid lip service to equations between perspective and vision, while at the same time linking perspective increasingly with geometry and committing themselves to recording geometrical space of the physical world. Some twentieth century artists have continued this tradition in their explorations of realism, hyperrealism, and surrealism. Others have abandoned this commitment, and focused increasingly on the exploration of visual space, both exterior and interior. Perspective systems are designed to construct pictures that, when viewed, produce in the trained viewer the experience of depicted objects that match perceivable objects.

Space perception theorists have written about how our capacities to see are constrained by the perspective system that we use, that is, by our way of depicting what we see.[1]

In the arts, the methods of depiction are of significant importance as they are the means of expression and description of
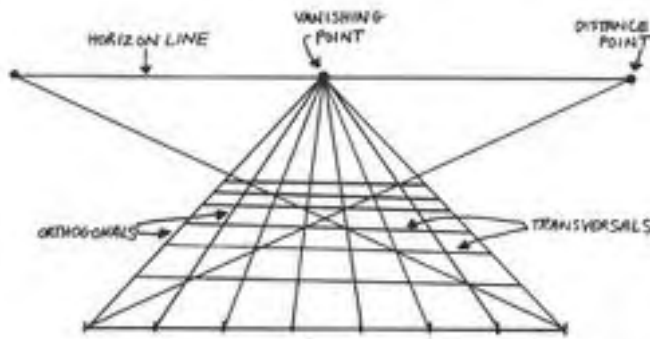
Figure 1, Filippo Brunelleschi, Linear Perspective. Drawing by Silvia Minguzzi, 2013.

---

[1] Terzidis, Kosts and Ali Malkawi. "Distorted Eye." Paper, UCLA and University of Pennsylvania, 2011, 262.

1

imaginary worlds. Artists and designers engage in story telling and offer a glimpse into their fantasy worlds through unique, personal, private, and idiosyncratic visual methods.

Pictorial spaces are constructed through geometrical models. Each model is expressed as a geometrical transformation applied to Cartesian shapes of the physical environment. These transformations show how shapes are projected in pictorial space.

The usual projections we are accustomed to see in computer graphic are called standard

Figure 2, examples of non-linear perspective: bulge projection. Photo by Silvia Minguzzi, 2013.

Figure 3, examples of non-linear perspective: fisheye projection. Photo by Silvia Minguzzi, 2013.

projections: perspective and orthographic (Figure 1). However, there are many other projections we don't ordinarily see called non-linear projections: fisheyes (Figure 2), bulge (Figure 3), panoramas, map projections, etc.

In the Renaissance, painters needed to be able to translate the 3dimensional world around them onto the 2-dimensional surface of a painting, called the picture plane. The solution was linear perspective (Figure 4); the idea that converging lines meet at a single vanishing point and all shapes get smaller in all directions with increasing distance from the eye. The discovery of perspective is attributed to the architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446), who suggested a system that explained how objects shrink in size according to their position and distance from the eye.
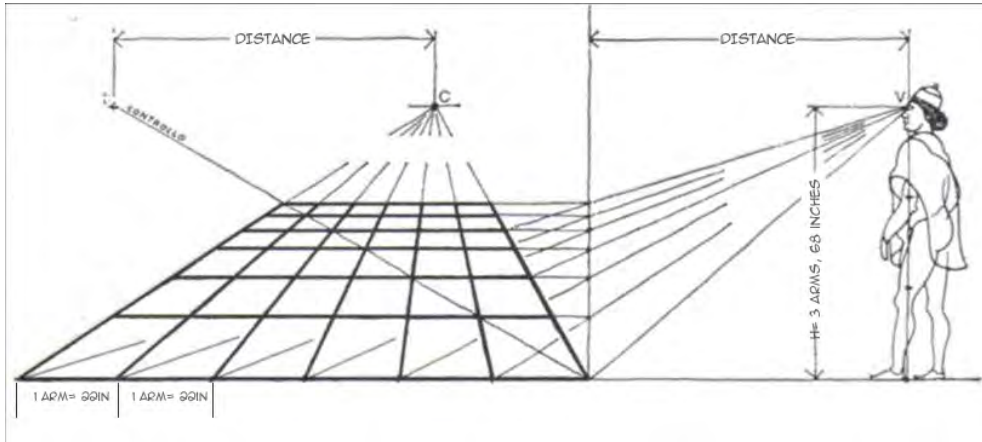
Figure 4, Leon Battista Alberti's Perspective. Drawing by Silvia Minguzzi, 2013.

However, the nature of Brunelleschi's system and date of its discovery remain unclear.

In 1435, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), provided the first theory of what we now call linear perspective in his book, On Painting.[2]

The impact of this new system of measurement in paintings was enormous and most artists painting in Europe after 1435 were aware of the principles Alberti outlined in his book.

This has led to setting new goals for art, in terms of exploring perceptual, mental, dream, psychological and even psycho-pathological states. As a result, whereas Renaissance artists focused attention on linear picture planes, twentieth century artists are exploring many alternative shapes of picture planes. They are also contradicting the traditional transparency-occlusion principles of perspective in their quest for artistic freedom. Hence, while Renaissance artists established a one to one correspondence between object and representation, twentieth century artists strive to demonstrate the contrary.

---

2 "Alberti". Note Access. http://www.noteaccess.com/Texts/Alberti.

The rapid development of computer graphics, which allows artists to transform one kind of picture plane into another simply by altering the algorithms for the perspectival grids, has added new vigor to these experiments. So has the continued study of psychological aspects of spatial representation and perception. Optical illusions and visual ambiguities have instilled a new playfulness into these explorations of space, as has the development of virtual reality. The rise of fractals has made us aware that scale is a factor that needs to be taken into account. Perspective in this sense has yet to be developed, even though linear perspective is now some five hundred and seventy years old. Whether in the old or the new sense, perspective remains one of the most fascinating expressions of links between mathematics and art. It is very clear now how artists have evolved to take advantage of the new technologies available to us in the online era. If we think of technology we suddenly imagine a smart phone or a computer. Throughout history, technology has provided artists with new tools for expression. Today, these two seemingly distinct disciplines, art and technology are interlinked more than ever, with technology being a fundamental force in the development and evolution of art.

All over the world, people are engineering our future. The Internet, digital fabrication, nanotech, biotech, self-modification, augmented reality, virtual reality, "the singularity" - you name it, all of this is altering our lives and our view of the world and ourselves.

The evolution of computer technology has visibly affected most aspects of our lives; it is perhaps one of the most fascinating mediums to be adapted for a creative purpose.

Is technology changing art? In an interview posted on Curiosity.com on Sept 26th 2011, John Maeda, president of the Rhode Island School of Design answers saying:

> I think that computers and the advancedness of computers hasn't changed art very much. It's enabled more to happen. Again, that counts a bit more. Better resolution, longer

lengths, more color variety, but all in all it's the same thing. It's what experience can I deliver to you that is provocative, that can change how you think. How can I, the art piece, change your relationship -- not to me, but to something else or to the world? That question has nothing to do with technology at all. I would say that if it wasn't for the computer, my art wouldn't be known because my art is so linked to it. It's how it's defined. I made art with the computer, writing computer programs. I made things that could morph and change and if it wasn't for the Internet maybe a thousand people would know about it. Or like when I walk into MOMA, and that work I made as I sat on the second floor of my flat in Tokyo on a small ironing board with my Macintosh and between my legs I'm typing or whatever. Sat with a fan because it's very hot in Japan, the little piece of code I made is living in a museum now. I find that very odd, interesting, very fortunate, very lucky.[3]

On the other side Bruce Wands,[4] explains that digital technologies have had, and continue to have, a profound effect on contemporary art and culture. Contemporary artists are using the Internet as a new art museum, and adopting digital tools and techniques as part of their creative process.[5]

This is probably one of the most interesting passages of Wands' theory. New technologies are not used by contemporary artists only for the distribution and advertisement of their work, but in the creative process. I stand with him when he underlines that the impact of internet and social media which allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content and provide a structure for people to get organized, exchange and collaborate is just part of the technological effect in art.[6] The computer had enabled artists to create works, new types of work, never before possible: intricate images that could not be created by hand; sculptures formed in 3-dimensional databases rather than in stone or metal; interactive installations that involve internet participation

3 "Is technology changing art?" Curiosity: Art and Architecture. Last modified September 2011. Accessed on March 19 2013. http://curiosity.discovery.com/question/technology-changing-art

4 Bruce Wands is Chair of the MFA Computer Art Department, Director of Computer Education at the School of Visual Arts, New York.

5 Wands, Bruce. Art of the Digital Age. New York, Thames & Hudson, 2006, 10-11.

6 Wands, 2006, 206-209.

from around the globe, and virtual worlds within which artificial life forms live and die. The art experience extends now to homes, cybercafés and any public or private space where there is an Internet access or a local area network.

I can see at least 3 important fields where the evolution of new technology impacted art. The first is visual art in general: modern technology has transformed traditional art forms such as painting, sculpting and drawing, allowing artists to utilize digital technologies in the production of their pieces. The second is the digital consumption of art, since technology has also impacted the way that art is consumed. From the visual arts to music, technology has allowed art to become mobile and instantly accessible around the world, providing greater exposure for today's artists and paying homage to artists of the past. And finally the third is art history appreciation: the availability of art in digital form provides greater access for students and lifelong learners to study and experience art from the vast and varying time periods throughout history.

The real turning point of contemporary art is that if throughout history and up until very recently, the public was merely a passive observer, today almost everyone creates. Almost everyone participates. With the Internet and new technologies of fabrication, remixing, editing, manipulating and distributing, it is becoming easier to create things - and share them with the world. What is changing and probably - arguably - for the worse is that it is now easier to create "art", and we see a lot of "bad" art being created and exposed.

What looks clear to me is that in digital art, the notion of the original becomes obsolete. The *experience* in art becomes the original, especially in the realm of the computer; everything can be processed into something different. This is one of the great differences with traditional art.

With the speed of development of new technology today, new tools are continually introduced to artists, which enable them to explore their ideas and imagination in every possible ways that are seemed to be limited before.

2. My Perspective

In my whole body of work I try to challenge the stereotypical perspective not only in the subject matters of my art pieces, but also subverting how a piece of art can be *experienced*. I either try to demand some kind of action from the viewer in order to "activate" my piece, or I challenge the viewer's point of view regarding well-known and controversial issues in the sphere of inequality. My goal is to show a possible way to fight inequality in our society, because I strongly believe that the main cause of inequality is a set of strong preconceptions with no scientific data or logical reasoning behind. Accordingly, my perspective is a different one, the one that you don't expect, a perspective made out of substitutions (men for women and vice versa), a physical perspective (North for South and vice versa), a formal perspective (shadows and projections). Another form of perspective I use in my art is also my personal way to explore the art world: I want to push on the relationship between digital and non-digital art, and in the conversation between old and new technology.

EQUALITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Changing perspective in issues like inequality in our society cannot resume from touching delicate themes like immigration, the environment, income inequality and human rights. In every society, some people have a greater share of valued resources – money, property, education, health and power – than others. Patterns of unequal access to social resources are commonly called social inequality. Social inequality reflects innate differences between individuals, for example their varying abilities and efforts. However, by and large social inequality is not the outcome of innate or natural differences between people, but it is rather produced by the society in which they live.

For this first part of my dissertation I will toggle the theme of human rights and politics in our society: the occasion was given to me by the 2012 US Presidential election. I had the chance to being exposed to live news, debates, interviews, comments, shows about the political agenda of the two major parties in the United States and at the same time being able to watch this show from a European lens. I decided to investigate and document the time I was living with two projects. For the first project, I created a fictional party that would put together the madness of the time: a party that would have a very specific defined graphic tendency and would refer to a particular time (Communist Propaganda Posters from the early XX Century), but it would completely negate that iconography in the messages (taken from real debates, and real politicians, active and running, during the presidential election) that were on the opposite spectrum of the political podium. The name of the party was *The Conservative Revolutionary Party*.

The second project, what I called *Equality makes a Difference: a visual campaign*, is a party, or more a movement, I would be interested in voting for.

1. A new/old political party: the Conservative Revolution

The US presidential election of 2012 gave me the opportunity, and the inspiration, to talk about politics and human rights through graphic design. I come from a communication background, and the message in my work has a very important place. I wanted to create a political Party that would contradict its design through its political agenda, using real quotes and real planks from politicians active (and running) during the 2012 US Presidential Campaign; a black or white Party, where everything can be read as the contrary of everything else. That is why I called this fictional party *The Revolutionary Conservative Party*. The name of my front-runner is Hermann (from Hermann Wilhelm Göring, a German politician, military leader, and leading member of the Nazist Party) and his last name is Bakunin (from Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin, the Russian revolutionary, philosopher, and theorist of collectivist anarchism). The planks of this party are extremely conservative, but the design resembles the old Soviet Union's or Chinese propaganda poster from the 1940s.

Figure 5, Silvia Minguzzi, *The Revolutionary Conservative Party Mailer*, 2012.

I created a series of postcards (Figure 5) ads and mailers in support of the party's planks that would cover themes like immigration (*They are coming, they are often Darker, they are Foreigners)*, environment (*We found an Alternative to Alternative Energy: OIL*), women's rights (*Women: Shut up!*), Education (*Study if you can… afford it*) and right to vote (*do NOT VOTE!*)*,* all printed on an old style vintage paper, shredded on each border.

A series of full-page magazine ads enriched the project. Each piece promotes a different aspect of the fictional party platform. I focused on women's rights, especially on the so called "war on women", with a piece called *Arm yourself with a Slouch bag* (Figure 6), inspired by *We can do it*, or *Rosie the Riveter,* an US wartime propaganda poster produced by J. Howard Miller in

1943 for Westinghouse Electric. In this poster, I quote former US Republican Representative of Missouri, Todd Akin, and his speech on "legitimate" rape, Wisconsin Republican Governor Scott Walker on equal wages for men and women, and finally Rush Limbaugh's definition of Feminazi.

The ad *Tax the Needy not the Rich and Greedy* (Figure 7), showcases quotes from Republican Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney during one of his speech to the high-dollars campaign donors about the now famous 47% of American defined as freeloaders who pay no taxes, who don't assume responsibility for their lives, and who think government should take care of them.

I finally presented my candidate, Hermann Bakunin. I dedicated this one last Ad (*Our leader*) to the former right wing Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi (Figure 8). Quotes include: "I will defeat Cancer in three years", "Poor people are just not accustomed to wealth", "I'm the Anointed" and "Women, look for a rich man and marry him".

Figure 6 Silvia Minguzzi, *Arm yourself...with a slouch bag*, 8.5 in x 11 in, Digital Print, 2012.
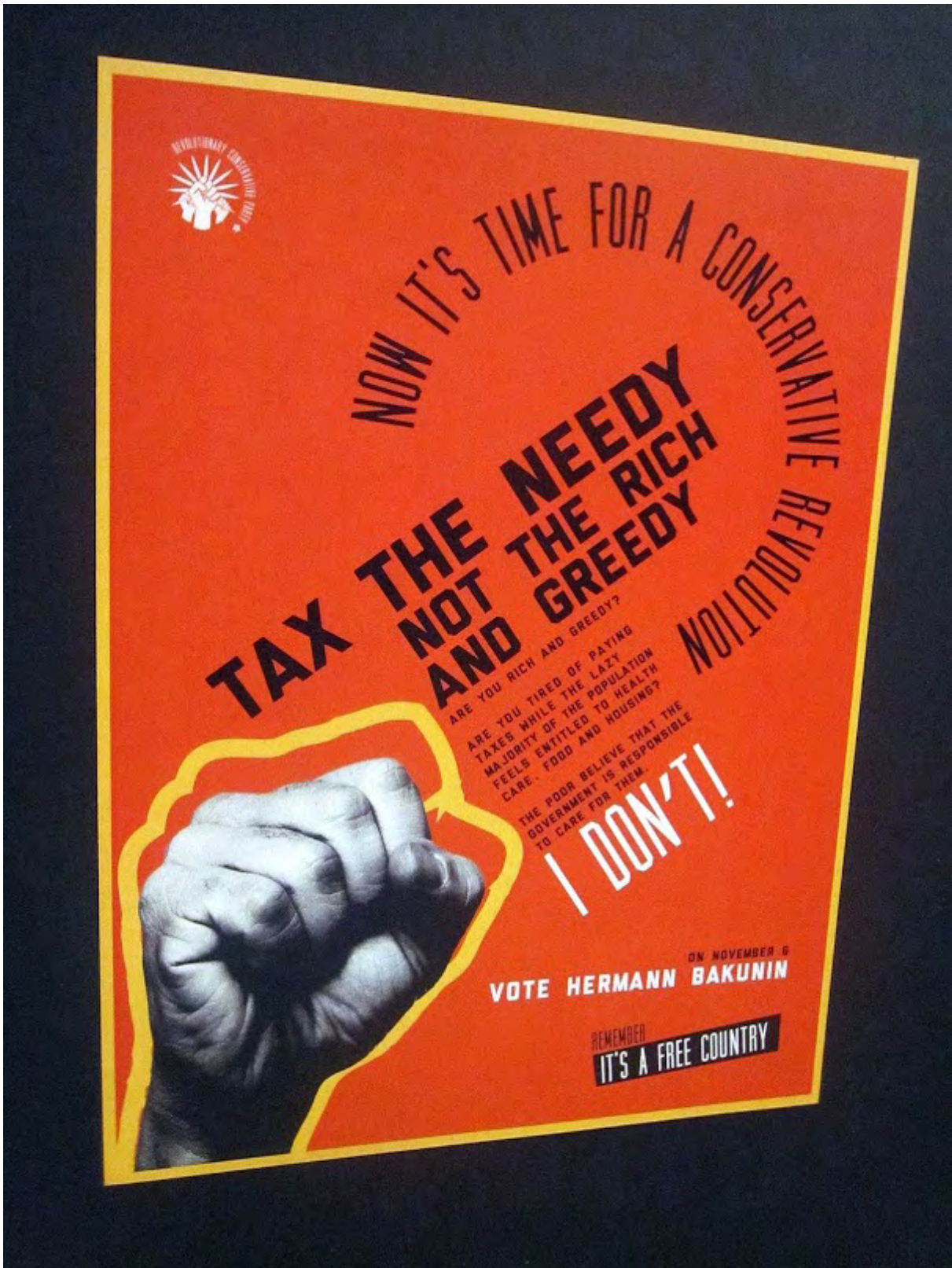
Figure 7, Silvia Minguzzi, *Tax the Needy not the Rich and Greedy*, 8.5 in x 11 in, Digital Print, 2012.

Figure 8, Silvia Minguzzi, *Our Leader,* 8.5 in x 11 in, Digital Print, 2012.

The final piece for this visual campaign is a family game *Long Live the Conservative Revolution: A game of pure luck, for all the family* (Figure 9-10).

My game is based on the Game of the Goose (Gioco dell'Oca) created by Francesco I from the Medici family in 1598. I really tried to design a board game for the whole family, accessible to kids as well, so I decided to base the general rules on a simple dice-based game. The main goal is to go from the start to the cell 45, where you will finally be able to organize your Conservative Revolution and free the Country. To get there you have to go through tricks and helps according to the space you land on.

Figure 9, Silvia Minguzzi, *Long Live the Conservative Revolution,* Board Game, 2012.

I want people to learn more about the planks of the Conservative Revolutionary Party while playing with the game. To achieve that goal, I used the artworks from my posters and ads to generate "actions": you land on the *Feminazi, you have been caught advocating for gender equality…Go back to 16*. Or the *Fact Checker: 3+5=17 Truth is overrated…Go back to 6*.

Figure 10, Silvia Minguzzi, *Long Live the Conservative Revolution*, Game Board detail, 2012.

2. Equality makes a difference: A visual campaign

Too much talk about social inequality generally makes the US uncomfortable. After all, the United States are a nation founded on the premise that "all men are created equal" (what about women?) and most North Americans see themselves as part of a vast middle class. The evident economic differences between rich and poor do not dislodge the popular conviction that the US still provides equal opportunities for all. In a free market economy, open to individual enterprise and ability, some people will inevitably work harder, or get a better education, or invest more fortunately, and as a result, accumulate more resources than others. In principle, these inequalities of outcomes need not threaten equality of opportunity, so long as the children of rich and poor can still start the race of life on equal footing. In fact, of course, an individual's chances in life have always been shaped by family resources – income, education, social connections, political influence. US promise of equal opportunity has, at best, been approximated by social reality – much more closely at some periods in our history than others.

Figure 11, Silvia Minguzzi, *Equality Logo*, 2012.

The fundamental idea behind this project was to imagine a movement that would be advocating for equal opportunities. I started imagining an identity, a logo and a tagline for it playing with the equal/unequal sign created by two E letters and two strong colors like yellow and dark grey (Figure 11). Name, address, and phone number of my fictional front-runner are palindromes, so they can be read both ways. The tagline *Equality makes the Difference* came

17

up during some discussion with a group I'm part of called *Inequality Matters*, a Fort Collins based group of concerned individuals committed to providing information and promoting dialogue about economic and political inequalities and their implications locally, nationally and globally.

The planks I focused on for this movement are: gender equality, LGBT rights, equal opportunity, and the right to vote. I decided to play with the typography trying to deliver a strong message for each poster tying all together through color and the tagline "Equality makes the difference". The first poster called, *I just want Half* (Figure 13) is inspired by Barbara Kruger's *Your body is a battleground* (Figure 12) poster. As a feminist artist and graphic designer I wanted to pay tribute to a strong US feminist poster designer who focused her work on gender equity and feminism. Kruger's poster was originally designed for promoting a march in Washington DC supporting a pro-choice position and reproductive rights for women in 1989.

I wanted to use a similar typographical effect on my poster, but with a different, simpler message. As women we are just asking to matter as much as men in our society, we are just asking our half.

Figure 12, Barbara Kruger, *(Untitled) Your Body is a Battleground*, 1989.

Figure 13, Silvia Minguzzi, I Just want half, 11 in x17 in, Digital Poster, 2012.

The other posters talk about gay rights and gender equality in an ironic way (Figure 14-15)

Figure 14, Silvia Minguzzi, *Everyone deserved a shot*, 11 in x 17 in, Digital Poster, 2012.

Figure 15, *Gay rights*, 11 in x 17 in, Digital Poster, 2012.

The final Poster, *Rise to vote siR*, selected by AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) as part of their campaign Get out to Vote in 2012, and published permanently on their website[7] (Figure 16).

Figure 16, Silvia Minguzzi, *Rise to vote siR*, 11 in x 17 in, Digital Poster, 2012.

7 AIGA website, Get out the Vote, 2012, http://www.aiga.org/get-out-the-vote/

Being an active member of the group *Inequality Matters* gave me access to contemporary research and academic papers, and gave me the opportunity to participate to public speaking events and screenings on inequality in the Colorado area. All the material I collected inspired a series of infographics about four inequality issues in the Unite States: income inequality, parental leave, inequality and death rate, life expectancy and health (Figure 17).

Figure 17, Equality Infographics, Digital Prints, 2012.

Income inequality describes the extent to which income is distributed unevenly among residents of an area. High levels of inequality indicate that a small number of people receive most of the total income, and that most people receive only a small share of the total. Income inequality, as measured either by the Gini index or the share of top income earners, has increased steadily in the United States since the 1980's.[8]

Life expectancy and Inequality investigate the relation between income inequality and life expectancy in the United States. One of the most basic indicators of wellbeing is life expectancy. Analysts have long recognized the powerful association between personal income and expected life spans. According to Naoki Kondo's Publication[9] about 884,000 deaths per year in the United States result from the high level of income inequality. In other words, if the U.S. had Denmark's inequality levels, there would be nearly 884,000 fewer deaths per year.

Life expectancy and GDP spending for health care is portrayed in the third infographic, which uses data from the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (2011). It shows how the US spends US$2 trillion per year on health care, nearly half of all the health dollars spent in the world. Still, US people live shorter, often sicker lives than almost every industrialized nation. The USA is the only major industrial country that does not guarantee health coverage to all residents and citizens.

---

8 Richard Wilkinson, Kate Pickett "*The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*", 2009, London Allen Lane.

9 Naoki Kondo et al., "*Income Inequality, Mortality, and Self-rated Health: Meta-analysis of Multi-level Studies,*" British Medical Journal, 2009.

Probably my strongest piece is *Parental Leave* (Figure 18), which was selected as part of the Curfman Gallery Student Exhibition at Colorado State University in 2012 and used by the Human Development and Family Studies Department of CSU in some of their courses.

Despite big changes over recent decades, workplace gender inequalities endure in the United States and other industrialized nations around the world. According to sociologists at the University of Washington, these inequalities are created by facets of national social policy that either ease or concentrate the demands of care giving within households and shape expectations in the workplace.

My argument is that gender inequality in the workplace is in a large part due to bearing and rearing children. There are successful women everywhere but exactly how women manage the dual load of work and home varies a lot. The biggest differences come when women and men have children and when those children are young. Some countries support mother who take care of children, by providing child care. What the United States has are private solutions to childcare. People who have more resources can maximize their employment and pay for childcare. The majority of nations are more generous, and the US is way behind in providing early childhood education, childcare and paid maternity leave.

My piece is presenting data from Linda and Thomas P. Vartanian's paper on the importance of public policy in the workplace to guarantee equality between men and women[10]. This analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth quantifies the role that public policies play in enabling new parents to take parental leave when a child arrives. It shows that women who

_____

10 Houser, Linda, and Thomas P. Vartanian. 2012. Policy matters [electronic resource]: public policy, paid leave for new parents, and economic security for U.S. workers.
http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/RutgersCWW_Policy_Matters_April2012.pdf.

live in Countries that have some kind of paid parental leave program are twice as likely to take paid leave following the birth of a child as women in places without these policies, and their leave periods are an average of 22 days longer. Out of 178 nations the United States is one of 3 that don't offer paid parental leave benefits, which more than 50 of these nations offer.[11] US women are offered 12 weeks of unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, which exempts companies with fewer than 50 paid employees.

---

11 Houser, Linda, and Thomas P. Vartanian. 2012.

Figure 18, Silvia Minguzzi, *Parental Leave*, 8.5 in x 11 in, Digital Print, 2012.

What completes my visual campaign is a kinetic typography short movie, where I animated the content from my ads and poster on Equality, using a combination of After Effects to create the animations on a 3D space, and Final Cut to edit the final project with music[12].

Here are some shots of the whole visual campaign I exhibited in the Visual Arts Building Mini Gallery in 2013 (Figure 19-20-21).

Figure 19, Silvia Minguzzi, Equality Makes the Difference, a Visual Campaign, 2013. Mini Gallery, Visual Arts Building, Colorado State University.

---

12 Silvia Minguzzi, *Equality makes a Difference*, Kinetic Typographic Animation, 2012 https://vimeo.com/53743118.

Figure 20, Silvia Minguzzi, Equality Makes the Difference, a Visual Campaign, 2013. Mini Gallery, Visual Arts Building, Colorado State University.

Figure 21, Silvia Minguzzi, Equality Makes the Difference, a Visual Campaign, 2013. Mini Gallery, Visual Arts Building, Colorado State University.

The second part of my dissertation focuses on a very important theme for me: migration. In particular, I want to raise awareness on the issue of North Africans migrations to Europe.

A big part of my data and images come from the Italian independent documentary label *Zalab*, whose mission is to tell of lives largely ignored by mainstream media, marked by today's conflicts, with the desire to make these stories accessible to everybody. I was inspired by a documentary called *Closed Sea* (2012), and I was able to use some original footage and imagery that *Zalab* made available copyleft for my projects. Since March 2011, after the outbreak of the Libyan War, many African migrants and refugees escaped from their country. While a part of this flow has found shelter in refugee camps at the border with Tunisia, other migrants managed to reach Italian coasts by boat. Many of them had been previously pushed back by Italy as a result of an agreement signed by Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi and Lybian ruler Qaddafi in 2008. Since the signature of this treatise, all migrants intercepted at sea by the Italian navy were forcibly returned to Libya, where they were exposed to all sort of abuses by local police.

I am an Italian migrant to the USA. However I recognize that my migration experience is a privileged one, I want to raise awareness on the huge and dramatic immigration wave happening from North Africa to Europe, the one I experiences from the other side, and make my personal statement: nobody chose where to be born, hence nobody should be considered or treated as an illegal anywhere.

All this body of work became a big exhibition under the name "Another Perspective" showed at the Hatton Gallery at Colorado State University in 2013, as winner of the juried

competition among all the CSU Graduate Students in Art. For this project, I started investigating not only graphic design, but also, video, projections, digital printing, trying a fusion between methods and enjoying the difference in the creative process. From a communication standpoint, I wanted to be able to speak with different voices in order to reach a larger group of people with my message: it is important where you stand. People, users, general public have preferences when approaching art, someone like to read, someone like to watch, listen, or touch. This is why I presented a variety of work realized with different media or combination of media.

Another inspiration for my work with immigration is the work of artist and film-maker Andres Arce Maldonado. His short movie *Impronte a Regola d'arte* (Perfect Fingerprints)(Figure 22), was created in response to an immigration law passed by the Italian Government in 2002.[13]

Andres Arce Maldonado wants to question the social and political institutions, using a semiotic narrative structure, and fits perfectly in the binary opposition[14] elements theorized by

---

13 On July 11, 2002, the Italian government passed by decree Law No. 177, known as the "Bossi-Fini" law after the last names of its proponents, introducing criminal sanctions for persons caught illegally entering the country or who return after being expelled. Under the new law, an immigrant who is found without a residence permit will be accompanied to the border and expelled immediately. The permit for residence of immigrants has been strictly linked to a work contract. All foreigners applying for a residence permit will be fingerprinted. The law, initially proposed by Mr. Gianfranco Fini of the National Alliance (AN – a neo-fascist party) and Mr. Umberto Bossi of the Lega Nord (LN – a separatist party), extremist members of Italy's governing coalition, replaces the former "Turco-Napolitano" immigration law.

14 Binary opposition is the way a word has meaning, and how these meaning are associated with them, the positive and negative connotations evoke how a word is understood. It is used in the media and in literature and is often used in poems to demonstrate controversy and conflict in ideas, a theory introduced by Claude Levi Strauss and Roland Barthes. The meaning assigned to a word is 'culturally constructed' and so a word has more meaning when you consider its opposite, and the connotations of the word, brings more meaning than the word itself. For example 'hero' and 'coward' these words are binary opposites and using one with the other provides some of the core meaning, and each meaning is 'shaped' by the opposite lexis, for example the way the youth is viewed and

Saussure. The binary opposition is a common dramatic technique used to bring 2 ideas together and using the difference to suggest possibility or conflict. Black and white in this case.

The immigration phenomenon in Italy for a long time was almost restricted to people from North Africa so that the distinction in color skin is the easiest and still most evident to make: black vs. white. The most common colors have a standard social precept in which specific colors might stand for a general mood or idea.

Figure 22. Metamorphosis from black into white.

These meanings do not often transcend the boundary of the society that has constructed the meaning. One of the most powerful ideas of Perfect Fingerprints is to play on the signification of the color black and the color white. The issue of immigration is deconstructed in terms of a simple

represented in a film, changes dramatically through how the idea of old age. A poor person might be judged and looked down upon and the negative stereotypes associated with the poor are reinforced and maintained through the ideas associated with being wealthy, and how everyone would rather be wealthy than poor. Masculinity is often more valued than femininity. And this is an example of how 1 side of the opposition tends to be viewed slightly higher than the other. Jacques Derrida recognized why we judge one side of the opposition more than the other, finding that one of the words is more culturally 'marked' as being positive and one can be 'unmarked' so has less positivity or can be 'marked' negatively.

dichotomy good/bad. The color black is the signifier and the culturally constructed meaning linked to the color black (negativity, death) is the signified. In opposition we have the color white (signifier) and its signified: positivity, pureness, life. In all my body of work that became the show *Another Perspective* I play as well with the color black and white, with the dichotomy between what is considered pure and what is considered bad and dirty.

What I appreciated of Maldonado's work is the twist that he often includes in his work. In this case the two main characters slowly merge into one another. Not an easy change though, they go through a difficult metamorphosis that is impregnated with pain. Black becomes white, white becomes black (Figure 22) and the transformation is portrayed as a frequent event in our society by the repetitions of screens and monitor in the background of the scene. Maldonado's message is that in our multicultural society there is no way to stop or contain diversity and mixture in culture and race.
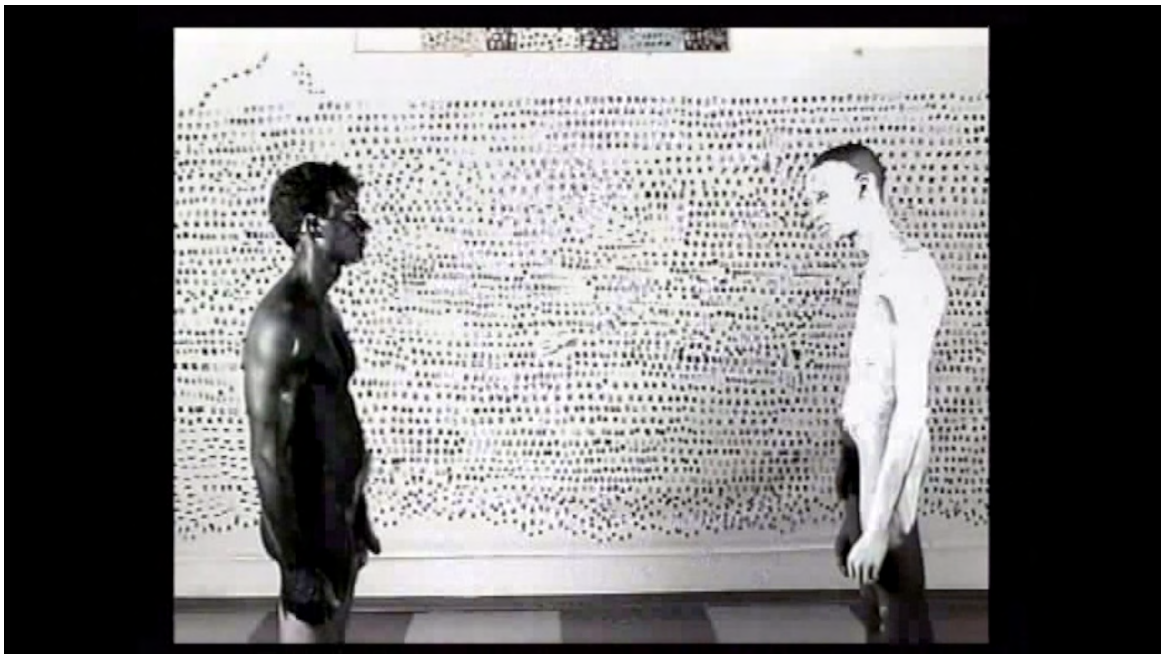

Figure 23. Closing scene Impronte a Regola d'Arte

In its minimalistic setting (Figure 23) the short movie *Impronte a regola d'arte* covers a fight between powerful forces of good against evil, the multiculturalism of our society, the painful transformation and metamorphosis necessary when you leave your own Country to start a new life somewhere else, the difficulties of being accepted and accept a diverse culture.

1. Perspectives

ROME — Having floated for at least two days in the choppy Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, a rickety trawler overstuffed with African migrants fleeing war and poverty was nearing a Sicilian island, not even a quarter-mile away. But it was still dark and no one had yet spotted them. So to signal their position, someone set a match to a blanket. Nearly 500 people are estimated to have been on board — including children — and the blaze created a panic that capsized the boat. So close to reaching land, the migrants were now tossed into the sea. Many could not swim. Now it is night and 150 people were saved...111 people were reported dead, more than 200 are still missing...[15]

The piece *Perspectives* (Figure 24) is a 10ft by 46 inches poster on migrant routes.

Immigration from North Africa is constantly continuing to Europe, while the professionals young Europeans are flying somewhere else. The same phenomenon, emigration from one's Country, affects two completely different Worlds that, even when they touch each other, don't connect. We are accustomed to see a three dimensional world on a two dimensional map using the

---

15 On 3 October 2013, a boat carrying migrants from Libya to Italy sank off the Italian island of Lampedusa. It was reported that the boat had sailed from Misrata, Libya, but that many of the migrants were originally from Eritrea, Somalia and Ghana. An emergency response involving the Italian Coast Guard resulted in the rescue of 155 survivors. On 12 October it was reported that the confirmed death toll after searching the boat was 359, but that further bodies were still missing; a figure of "more than 360" deaths was later reported. This is how the news was reported by the New York Times the next day.

Mercator projection: in *Perspectives* I used the Peters projection, where areas are shown in correct proportion at the expense of distorted shape. I reflected the poster left to right, to show the subjectivity of the point of view and how a new perspective can make us *see* things in a different way.

The creative challenge was to design a poster that was clear and at the same time would challenge what we are accustomed to see. My goal was to change the point of view on something as iconic as a geographic map to raise awareness on how conventions are not allowing us to really see. Moreover, I wanted the viewer to look at the piece and think that the issue of immigration deserves more than one single point of view to be looked at.

Figure 24, Silvia Minguzzi, Perspectives, 2013, 11ft x 42 in, digital print on canvas, black acrylic, black vinyl.

Creating an interactive poster was another aspect I was very interested in, so that the viewer could actually touch and walk around the installation moving objects that will change the piece itself. The installation, in facts includes a series of black laser cut birds on the walls and others hanging from the ceiling[16]. Viewers can walk in front of the piece and interact with it, moving not only the objects (birds), but creating interesting shadows projections on the wall and the poster becoming part of the piece, immigrants flying the ocean to reach a new promised land. The piece is illuminated electrically, and the shadows of the cut out hanging birds are projected on the white wall around the poster, giving the illusion of leaving the poster itself.

2. Perspective Typography: it matters where you stand.

Shadow Typography, Noise, Lampedusa and *Perspective Typography* represent the power of data in understanding issues like immigration. Each piece plays with typography and numbers to explain the phenomenon of African immigration to Europe in the last 5 years. All the data are available in the pieces themselves, but the viewer is required to be active in looking for them. They are all interactive pieces and the position of the viewer as well as the use of simple, analogical tools, like a light bulb or glasses, is necessary to activate the piece as well.

2.1 Shadow Typography

In *Shadow Typography* (Figure 27), I hacked the concept of a regular infographic poster using projection of light and shadows. Instead of constructing my visual representation of data just

---

16 Watch video of *Perspectives,* 2013, https://vimeo.com/86204241

using digital graphics, I engraved those data into transparent acrylic strips using Illustrator, Rhino, and a CNC milling machine. I designed angle brackets and printed them 3D in order to hang my content on a vertical surface and give each strip the possibility to rotate and not be just perpendicular to that surface. I designed a regular typographic poster, but instead of using only digital software, I introduced a more crafty analogical elements like a light bulb. I'm projecting light through the Plexiglas, so that the message can be projected on a wall in a form of shadows.
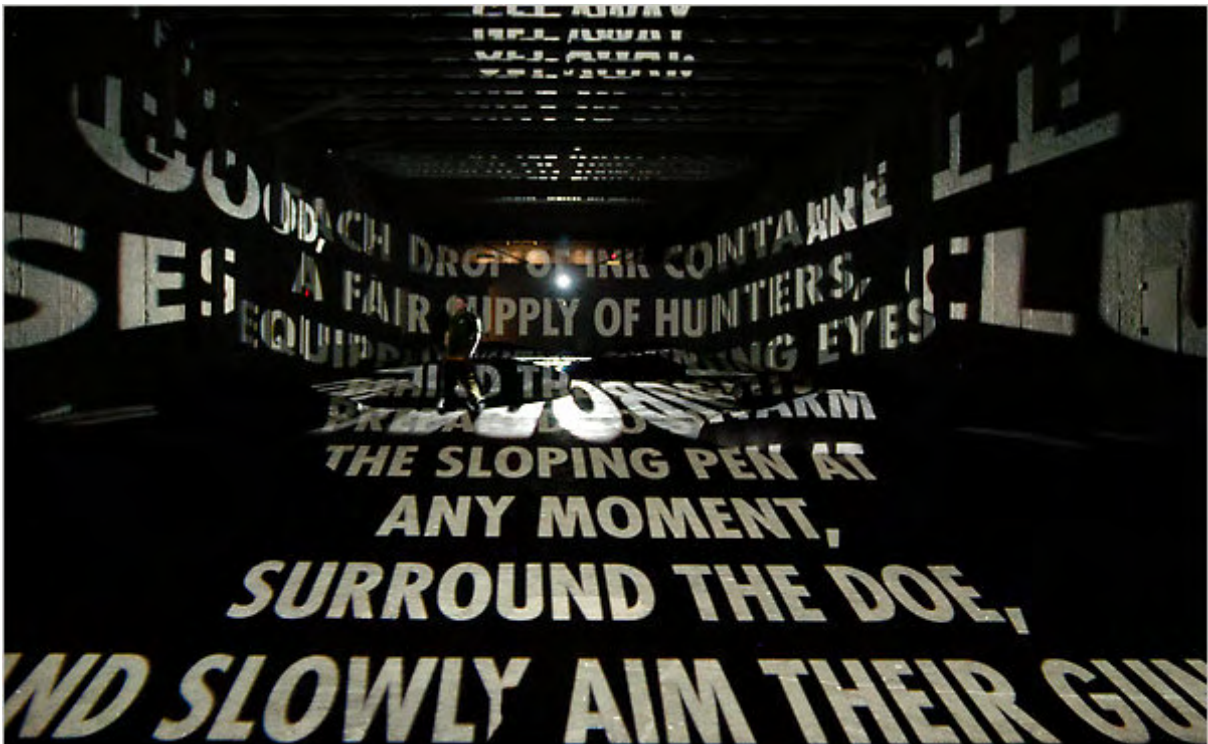

Figure 25 - Jenny Holzer – *Projections, Interactive installation, Mass MOCA, North Adams, 2012.*

With this project I started my investigation on light and geometrical shapes applied to my research on perspective projections and how they changed in the century in ART. How new technologies are involved in this process and if new technologies are changing the way contemporary artists use perspective projection in their work. I researched how projected messages have been realized by different artists and with what meaning.

I came across very interesting projects like Jenny Holzer's *Projections* (Figure 25) on

display at Mass MoCA in North Adams, where the projections transform the enormous, seemingly

empty gallery into an engaging and provocative meeting place flooded with words, bodies, and

light.

Figure 26 - Nota Bene, Visual, In Order to Control, Interactive installation, Nutrecht Rail Factory & Trouw Amsterdam
Freemote'11 & Fiber Festival / Netherlands, 2012.

But I got especially intrigued by the Istanbul-based multidisciplinary creative studio NOTA

BENE Visual, which has designed a mind-boggling audiovisual installation using an intricately

executed video-mapping technique that uses the latest technology to create an artistically

intriguing environment for spectators to engage in. The piece is called "*In Order to Control*"[17]

(Figure 26).

---

17 Watch video, Nota Bene, *In Order to Control*, Video http://vimeo.com/43257999 - at=0

I wanted to recreate the same feeling, but relying on more analogical tools than digital projections. Readability has been part of my struggle: do I want the data to be very easy to read, or do I want the viewer to work and look for the messages and maybe not able to have all the information? I found this last idea far more interesting. I wanted those data and messages to be readable enough, but part of the nature of perspective projection is that the projection changes according to the viewer position in the space. So in this case I thought that my work will not be defined just by the understanding of the viewer or just what the viewer sees, but would rather exist in its own right, and have its own relation to the three-dimensional space in which it is created. I started designing my data playing with typography, realizing that I'm free to design something pleasant without being too concerned about readability. But in the end, even without having a readability concern, I actually created a product that is easy to read.

My last challenge was to design a hanging system that would work, and could maybe add some dimensions to my piece. I designed 4 angle brackets with Rhino and printed them 3D. At first, I wanted just some regular brackets, but adding this possible angle to my Plexiglas will add more interesting effect to the projection. Installation plays a big role in this project, and the idea that this piece plays with space, light, projections, and it is realized using digital software, 3D software and crafty material is part of its charm.

Figure 27, Silvia Minguzzi, *Shadow Typography*, 2013, 6 ft x 30 in, acrylic, light bulb, 3d printed brackets.

2.2 Noise

The piece *Noise* (Figure 29) represents the action we have to do as individuals in order to understand the core on issues like immigration. It is necessary to remove material, noise, from the information we get from the media in order to get to the fundamental data. With this piece I kept exploring the power of type, this time introducing another media, a laser cutter.

Represented in the black typography are official data from the International Organization for Migration about immigration of African and Middle Eastern people to Italy in 2013. I laser cut my typography on the black acrylic but kept all the shapes that were not my typography. Those shapes represent the noise we need to remove. I want the viewer to be aware of the action necessary to be an educated consumer of information. Too often we rely on second hand info about important issues and we shape our judgments of them. Too often what we see is only a shadow of the data we need to fully understand a complex matter, this is why I reintroduced a light bulb that can be activated by the public. The shadows of my typography represent the multiple interpretations that we hear on TV, Internet, Radio and media in general and according to which we create our own idea about immigration. In Noise as well as in Shadow Typography I applied theories by Korean artist Kumi Yamashita. In her work she wants to question all our expectation, so she starts challenging the predictable relationship between solids and their shadows.

She invites us to reassess the unpredictable relationship between what we expect to see and our actual perception. Much of Kumi Yamashita's artwork is constructed with everyday things such as alphabets and numbers (Figure 28), building blocks, thread, nails, credit card rubbings and light installations. Any number of objects could produce the same retinal projection, just as the same shadow could be produced by many different sculptures. What's really interesting about

vision is that the shortcuts and heuristics our visual system relies on to make this inference get it
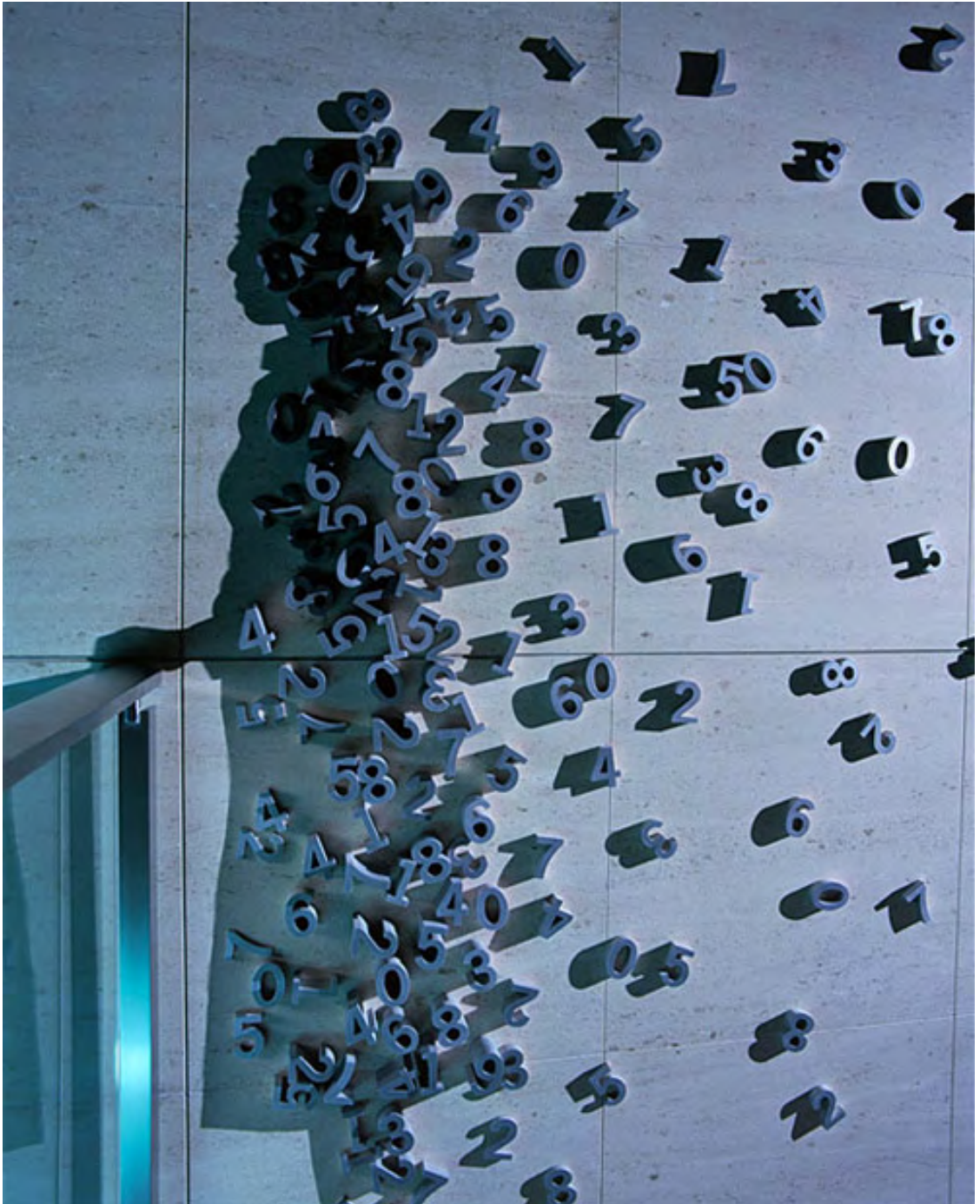
right so often.

Figure 28, Kumi Yamashita, <u>City View</u>, 2003, H250, W500, D5cm. Aluminum numbers, single light source, shadow. Commissioned by Namba Parks Tower, Osaka Japan. Kumi Yamashita, 2012, <u>http://www.kumiyamashita.com.</u>
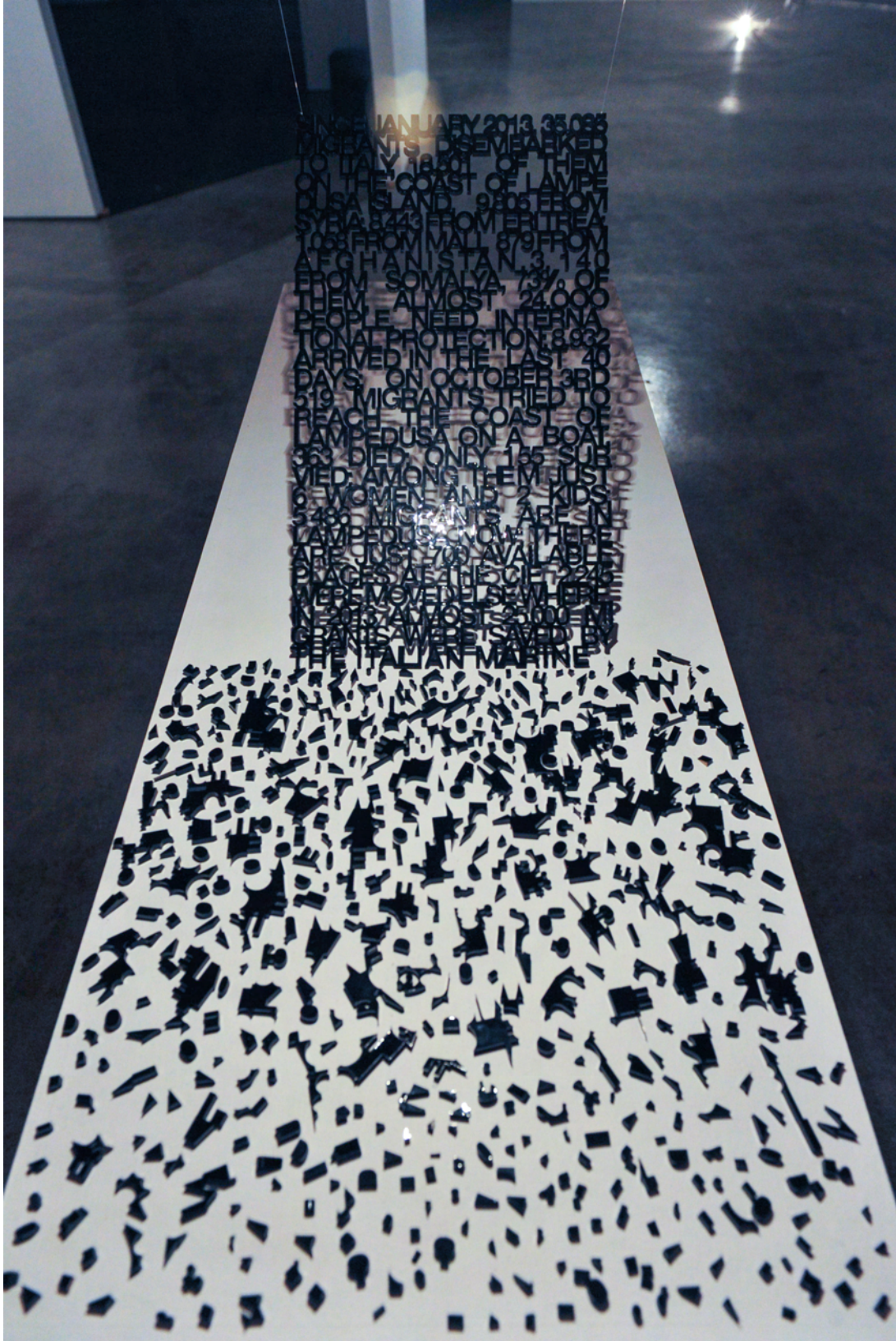
Figure 29, Silvia Minguzzi, Noise, 2013, 10 in x19 in, laser cut black acrylic.

2.3 Lampedusa

The piece *Lampedusa* (Figure 30*)* walks on the same line of *Noise*, but here the viewer is asked to look behind the data and realize the core of an issue like immigration, the human kind condition. This Typographical Poster is another perspective on data. The inspiration was once again the horrible migration tragedy close to the coasts of the little Italian island of Lampedusa, occurred on October 3rd, 2013. I wanted to dedicate a piece to that strong bulwark of peace that is Lampedusa.

I overlapped 3 messages on my poster: the chronicle of the even happened on October 3rd, the names of the survived migrants (only 155 over 518) and the more recent statistics about the numbers of migrants arrived to Lampedusa in the last year. Each message is on a separate layer, and each layer has a different color: yellow, magenta, and red. Hidden is my personal take: beneath the data there are people and people are never to be called illegal. I challenge the viewer in acting: one needs red lens glasses to reveal the message it and be able to read it.
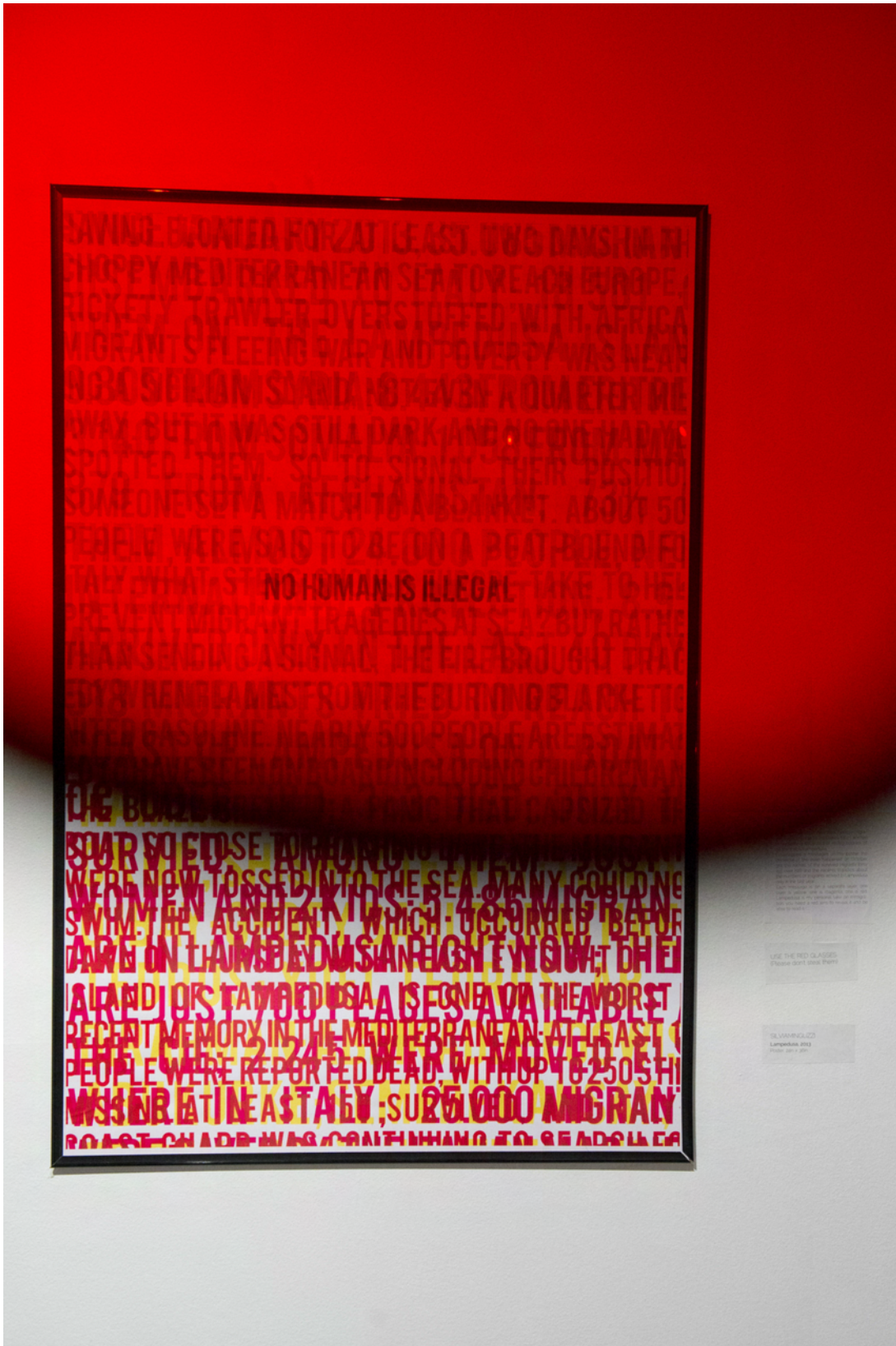
Figure 40 - Silvia Minguzzi, Lampedusa, 2013. 46 x6ft. Digital Printing on Canvas.

2.4 Perspective Typography

Figure 31 - Silvia Minguzzi, Perspective Typography, 2014. 30 in x30 in, Plexiglas.

This last piece I called *Perspective Typography* (Figure 31) and it is my last chapter in terms of investigation of typography, projections, analogical and digital fusion focused on the African immigration.

Perspective Typography[18] is all about the power of the viewer in order to understand the issue of immigration. Data are engraved on three layers transparent acrylic; partial information is provided in each layer, but the only way you can experience and fully understand them is standing in a specific spot. What am I looking at? It is a face of an Eritrean child made out of 3 sheets of transparent Plexiglas with engraved the European Convention on Human Rights statement against

18 Watch video of Silvia Minguzzi, *Perspective Typography*, 2014, https://vimeo.com/94883017.

48

cases of push back from Italy to Libya. The Court has condemned Italy for violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. If you stand in a specific place you get to see the whole picture; if you don't, you'll probably miss some "information". Once again, the importance is where you stand physically in order to be able to read the message and see behind the data.

I played with the use of perspective that artist Felice Varini introduces in his artwork[19]. I wanted to investigate what happens outside the vantage point of view. Swiss artist Felice Varini has been creating illusions of flat graphics superimposed on 3 dimensional spaces since 1979 using the same eye-deceiving technique called anamorphosis. The complete shapes can only be seen when viewed at certain angles, otherwise the viewer will only see some random broken pieces. For Varini it's all about your point of view. Varini takes this idea to its extremely literal conclusion. From the perfect perspective his painted geometric shapes seem to float in front of your eyes.

However, in reality Varini works hard to make only appear this way. In reality his pieces are huge, cover entire structures (at times multiple buildings), and carefully prepared to be seen from a precise viewpoint. His large optical illusions underscore the subjective nature of art – it's all about your point of view. The vantage point (Figure 32 and 33) is carefully chosen: it is generally situated at his eye level and located preferably along a well-traveled route, for instance an opening between one room and another, or a clearing, or a landing. He then projects the form devised for the particular space onto its surfaces from the vantage point, then traces and paints.

In a sense this piece gets layers and layers of meanings: on one side, it gives you the opportunity to see a very specific message if you stand in the right place, but on the other side the

---

19 Dekel, Gil. "I am a Painter." 2008. http://www.poeticmind.co.uk/interviews-1/i-am-a-painter.

artwork is not defined by the understanding of the viewer or what the viewer sees. Rather, each artwork exists in its own right, and has its own relation to the 3-dimensional space in which it was created.
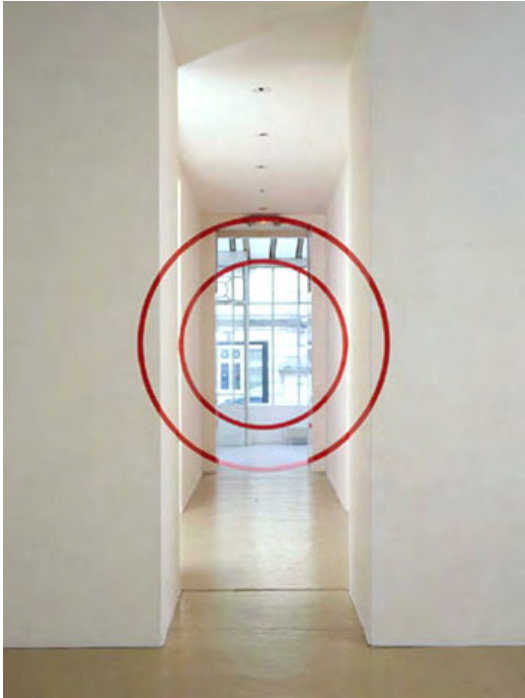
Figure 32, Felice Varini, <u>Two Circles In Corridor</u>, Red No. 1 (1992), Paris, acrylic paint (seen from the vantage point). Dekel, Gil. "I am a Painter." 2008.

Figure 33, Felice Varini, <u>Two Circles In Corridor</u>, Red No. 1 (1992), Paris, acrylic paint (seen from outside of the vantage point). Dekel, Gil. "I am a Painter." 2008.

3. Digital Printmaking: Another Perspective

Another media I introduced in this exhibition was printmaking. I investigated printmaking in its old, traditional woodcut process as well as a more digital approach thanks to digital fabrication and 3D software.

This series of digital and traditional woodcuts describe the struggles of immigrants in the Mediterranean Sea, narrated as a storyboard, playing with the idea of old and new technology

working together. I designed my artwork on my computer using Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator; then I imported the artwork into Rhino and Visual Mill in order to further manipulate the images. This allowed me to use the full potential of a CNC Milling Machine to engrave wood in a way that would not be possible manually and print using old style printmaking techniques.

I worked on 2 images representing the journey of immigrants in the Mediterranean Sea trying to reach European coasts, and turned them into grayscale; then, I converted them in bitmap using lines. I think this is a valid technique to get details and give the effect of old style computer images from the 80's and 90's, even though the final product will be realized using a printmaking wood press. Then, I imported the Illustrator file into Rhino and Visual Mill, and engraved the wood board (Figure 34).

Figure34, Silvia Minguzzi, *Another Perspective*, 2013 25 inx25 in, Wood board detail.

My aim is to focus the attention on the relationship between the object and its representation. Differently from the Renaissance Period where, after Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti's perspective studies, the artists wanted to represent reality through perspective, I would like to negate that. I want to investigate the non-correspondence between reality and representation of reality. We see a woman in water, is she peaceful? Is she relaxing in a pool? Maybe. She is in fact struggling for her life. The Series of woodcuts, *Another Perspective* like in a storyboard, show the same woman drowning in that same water. And at the same time the perspective of each woodcut changes so much so that we don't even recognize the face of the woman anymore (Figure 35).

Figure 35, Silvia Minguzzi, Another Perspective, 2013, digital woodcut series, Hatton Gallery, Visual Arts Building, Colorado State University.

The position of the viewer in the space of this exhibition changes the shape and the perception of each piece. Standing very close to the first woodcut doesn't allow the viewer to notice and read the image properly. Since I decided to depict the images using anamorphic projection, in experiencing the second, the third and fourth woodcuts, the position of the viewer is functional, but not necessary to a view of the piece from the correct perspective.

My inspiration was of course Holbein's skull in The French Ambassadors (Figure 36)

Figure 36, Hans Holbein the Younger, Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve (The French Ambassadors), oil on oak, 81X82 in. 1533. National Gallery, London.

This visually incorrect disruption is one location of the anamorphic potential, and as such it is correct point-of-view is hidden elsewhere.

Once found, this elsewhere reveals its pictorial intentionality. That is, once the beholder correctly locates the second axial point-of-view, the un-interpretable stain emerges into visibility. What was hidden within unclear distortion now appears in clarity—the stain appears as a skull. This second position puts the viewer approximately seven feet to the left of the painting's frame, and virtually parallel with the wall. Now, looking slightly down to the "intransigent" mark, it appears to lift off the surface into pictorial legibility.[20]

The importance of using an anamorphosis perspective is not only because it is as an alternative to the way we experience works, but as a metaphor for accepting information from unfamiliar places and unexpected sources. The eccentric observer is one who acknowledges the limitations of a static, homolographic world-view and embraces instead a dynamic unfolding process encompassing a field of light and texture shot through with expressions of personality and specificity.

Using the same technique, I created a connected piece engraving a 20x20 inches of transparent acrylic with the same image (Figure 36) and applied the technique I used already in Shadow Typography: I added a clear light bulb. Once again the viewer needs to be active to see the projected shadow on the wall and he/she is the real creator of this new image projected on the surface.

---

20 Marc, Franz and Annalisa Crannel. Viewpoints: Mathematical Perspective and fractal Geometry in Art. Princeton: University Press, 2011, 84-87.

Figure 37, Silvia Minguzzi, *Another Perspective*, 2013, 20 in x 20 in, Engraved Acrylic, Hatton Gallery, Visual Arts Building, Colorado State University.

4.   A video documentary: The Trip

Figure 38 – Still from Silvia Minguzzi's *The Trip*, 2012, Video Documentary

The Trip (Figure 38) is a short documentary on African Immigration to Europe. In particular

I narrated the story of the journey of African immigrants: from their country they walk the desert

to reach the coast (of Libya), then pay an incredible amount of money (around $1600)[21] to secure

a place on one of those very unsafe boats, and hope to reach the Italian coasts alive. As I

mentioned before, I was able to use original footage provided by Zalab Documentaries, and I

combined them with extracts from the live show *Desert Crossing: a cross-cultural performance*

which is a collaboration between UK based State of Emergency and South African choreographer

Gregory Maqoma of Vuyani Dance Theatre. The choreography resonates with ancient traditions,

21 Danielle M. Samek, *North African Immigration and Human Security in The European Union*, BA, Bradley University, 2008.

belief systems and mythologies emanating from mosques, churches and ancient caves from the

origins of mankind to Timbuktu, and beyond the Jurassic Coast is edited with original footage of

immigrant on boats crossing the ocean and arriving to the Italian coasts. Using a music video clip

style I narrate the story of a journey of an African Woman with no words, only images and

photos, leaving the viewer to decide about the future of my main character. Is she safe now?[22]

---

22 Watch video of Silvia Minguzzi, *The Trip*, 2012. https://vimeo.com/55453393

In the introduction to *Women across Culture* (2005), psychologist Shawn Megan Burn explains how one of the four key themes in her psychology work is the multicultural, intersectional, contextualized approach.[23] In particular, she stresses the importance of recognizing the similarities and differences among women all over the world. A similar idea is expressed in postmodernism in art (by which I mean any of a number of trends or movements in the arts and literature developing in the 1970s in reaction to or rejection of the dogma, principles, or practices of established modernism). In absence of a unique strong art style or theory, the "Artworld" borrowed theories from psychology, sociology, semiotic, in order to better explain the multiplicity of contemporary art pieces.

Essentialism is one of the theories used especially to explain and study works of art that defined Feminism. According to essentialism, Race, Sex, Gender, and Sexuality are figured as 'rational', 'objective' and 'apolitical'. Social construction theory, on the other hand, argues against essentialized views of identity in favor of historical and cultural approaches and methods. The difference between these two theories is that essentialism believes qualities such as sexuality and gender are mainly caused by biological factors; while social construction theory shows that society has more influence on these qualities than biology.

---

23 Burn, *Women Across Cultures*, 2005, p 3.

One example that comes to mind, in order to better explain this concept, is the body of work of Catherine Opie, which tides in together with the distinction in definition between gender and sex discussed by Crawford in the second chapter of "Transformations"[24].

Figure 39 - Catherine Opie, *Jake*, 1991 Courtesy of the Artist, Regen Projects, Los Angeles

Catherine Opie is an American photographer interested in challenging and deconstructing the idea that all women share a set of biological characteristics that define them as part of a single group. In her work, she presents portraits of people with stereotypical female and male features. I

---

24 Crawford, Mary. *Transformations: women, gender, and psychology*, 2006, Chapter 2.

chose a couple of photos from the exhibition "Being and Having" (1991): the thirteen color

photographs that make up the series are variations on a single composition: exaggerated masculine

facial hair and other macho props. Opie's subjects are shot against a brilliant yellow background

while they stare directly into the camera. Each closely cropped image is presented in a wooden

frame bearing the pseudonym etched in cursive script: Jake (Figure 39), Chicken, Con, Ingin,

Papa Bear, and so on. Deliberately playing with the signs of gender, Opie's photographs

interrogate the notion of gender identification as stable, unified, or even natural.

It is like Opie is showing the theory by Judith Butler in her book "Gender Trouble" (1990),

where she challenges the notion of identity as a static category into which an individual places his

or her self. Life experiences, and the different identifications one holds through life, cannot be

captured by binary gender identity system. Gender is defined as a performative accomplishment

brought about through the stylized repetition of acts. Thus, gender is created by the performance

of gendered acts.[25]

These readings and art historical references are at the basis of my last chapter: challenging

the gender and race stereotypes and defining a new identity. It is still a matter of point of view and

perspectives. How do we define the identity of people and attribute to them a series of

characteristic that don't have anything to do with the reality of that person. What is that we see

that is not show by the image of that human being, is that a shadow of what she/he really is? It's a

singular perspective that becomes problematic when we use it to analyze multiple dimensions

problems.

---

25 Butler, Judith. *Gender trouble feminism and the subversion of identity,* 1999. p 15.

1.   **The importance of the faces for and identity search: one Face no Race**

We meet the world with our face. We are face to face with the surroundings. We are recognized first of all by our face. It is also in the face all our senses are situated. The face-to-face between parent and infant are of crucial importance for the development of the child's later interactions and ability to build up relations and maintain interaction[26]. However, we also learn how to manipulate our face, to put on literarily or metaphorically a mask. The avatars appearance will tell a lot about our wishes and fears, dreams and desires, hopes and anxieties.

The investigation on faces started with a series of 3D posters called *One Face No Race* (Figure 40, 41, 42, 43) where I wanted to explore diversity in connection with people faces and what those faces represent. Diversity is just a point of view, a distortion of reality that we are accustomed to see. In this 3D Poster series the faces of each kid from a different ethnicity are made out of faces from people form a different part of the world (or not?).

I travelled around Europe, North America, South America, Asia collecting photos of people, from Brazil to Vietnam, from New York to Rome and Berlin, Paris and Belize City. This project wants to challenge the stereotypes behind racial physical features: if you look Asian, you *must* be Asian. In our multicultural contemporary society we cannot mistake a specific physical characteristic and apply a strong set of features that define that person.

---

26 Winnicott plays an important role in Sherry Turkle's latest book, *Alone Together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other* (Cambridge, Mass. 2011). On Facebook she states July 15, 2011 to Jessica Broitman about the importance of Winnicott: "Jessica Broitman: Ahhh you and winnicott. Sherry Turkle: Definitely, I like to think that I am channeling Winnicott for the digital age. One in which we are forgetting the importance of connection (and of solitude!)."

Figure 40, Silvia Minguzzi, *One Face No Race*, Girl Photo by Fabio Sabatini, 3D digital Poster Series, 2012. 46 in x 23 in.

Reality is more complex that this, and the concept of identity is more complicated than that. These posters represent different continents, and portrait a child, as a hopeful thought of integration for the future.

All faces are made out of faces from people from a diverse continent. The 3D effect wants to push the idea that a different perspective is necessary to be able to really see the unfairness of our society, the racism applied to people looking different, or unusual. With the 3D glasses, the message "One Face" easily is transformed into "No Race": they are merged together.

Figure 41, Silvia Minguzzi, *One Face No Race*, 2012, 3D digital Poster Series , 46 in x 23 in.

Figure 42, Silvia Minguzzi, *One Face No Race*, 3D digital Poster Series, 2012. 46 in x 23 in.

Figure 43, Silvia Minguzzi, *One Face No Race*, 3D digital Poster Series, 2012. 46 in x 23 in.

2.   A different Perspective: Imagining Body Equality

Too often, a woman's identity and value is reduced to her body. Women are seen as valuable because their bodies can provide sex, bear children, cook, clean, and other labor. And in order to maintain their value, women's bodies must look and function in a certain way, fitting into very specific standards of beauty and ability. But for every person who values a woman only for her body, there are countless women challenging those norms. Women are imagining a world where they have autonomy over what they do with their bodies, and redefining what bodies can look like. The article "Making Sexism Visible: Birdcages, Martians and Pregnant Men", by Sherryl Kleinman, Martha Copp, and Kent Sandstrom caught my attention especially in the

chapter "Men in Women's Body"[27], where it unveils the belief that women's inequality is ultimately built into her body. Substituting the word men with the word women (like substituting race for gender) will make people realize better the double standard applied to women.

I drew inspiration from this concept, and I tried to illustrate the change of perspective that Gloria Steinem presented in her article "If Men Could Menstruate"[28]. She uniquely introduced a true and accurate stance on gender distinction based on the fact that any and almost every thing has been used to promote male superiority and female inferiority. Steinem showed women their relative voiceless-ness, and in this way, suggested that there is work to be done yet in the feminist movement on account of the fact that oppressive, patriarchal logic continued to sanction gender inequality. Her text has longevity, it tackles foundational attitudes about gender and is consciousness-raising, even though these attitudes have been written-off and undermined to a degree, they have not been obliterated. I created a series of 4 posters that directly quote Gloria Steinem's article, and reflect 4 characters representing 4 strong voices in our society often attributed to man: a priest, an Army soldier, a politician, a body builder (Figure 44, 45, 46, 47).

My other perspective in this case is by substitution: men for women. I want to use Steinem's inspiration to explore what would be the representation of menstruation if the actor of this biological event were a man instead of a woman. Would all the parameters we are accustomed to see in different society still stand?

---

27 Kleinman, Copp, and Sandstrom. 2006. "Making Sexism Visible: Birdcages, Martians, and Pregnant Men". Teaching Sociology. 34 (2): 126-142.

28 Steinem, 1978, *If Men could Menstruate*, Ms Magazine.

There has always been a double standard between men and women, preventing women from acting a certain way because it goes against social norms. While menstruation and child barring have been constructed as signs that women are weak, I believe that it is plausible that if men had our body, they would attribute to it power such as the ability to bring life into the world.

For many women, equality is when your body can be a tool, a canvas, or a sanctuary in the struggle for women's human rights. We do not choose the body we are born into, but women around the world use their creativity to thrive with the bodies they've been given. Famous Indian writer and political activist Arundhati Roy put it best when she said that "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day I can hear her breathing."[29]

---

29 Arundhati Roy, *Not Again*, https://ccrma.stanford.edu/~peer/arundhatiRoy.html

Figure 44 – Silvia Minguzzi, *MENstruation Series*, 2014, Digital Poster on canvas, 11 in x 17 in.

Figure 45 – Silvia Minguzzi, *MENstruation Series*, 2014, Digital Poster on canvas, 11 in x 17 in.
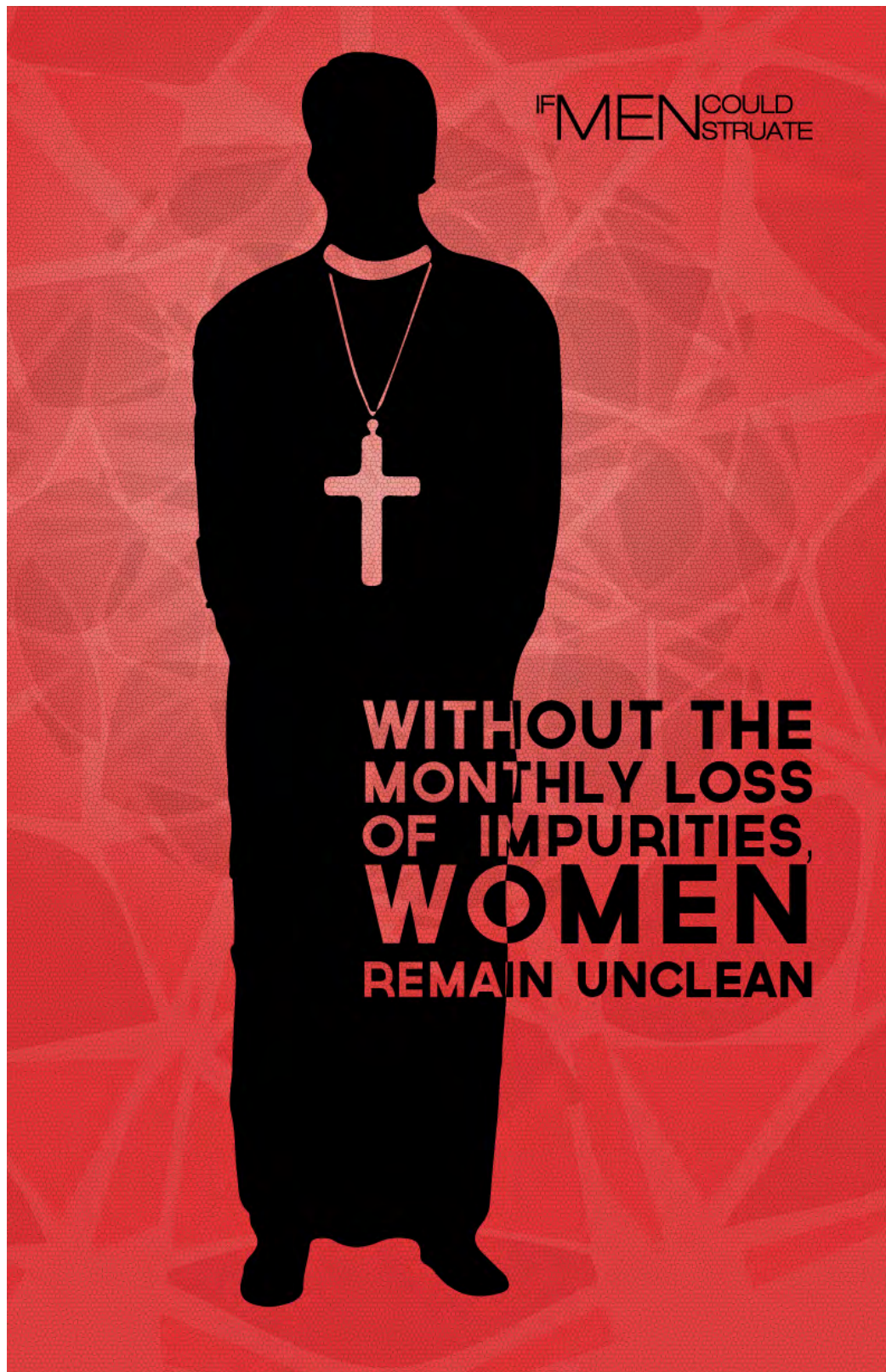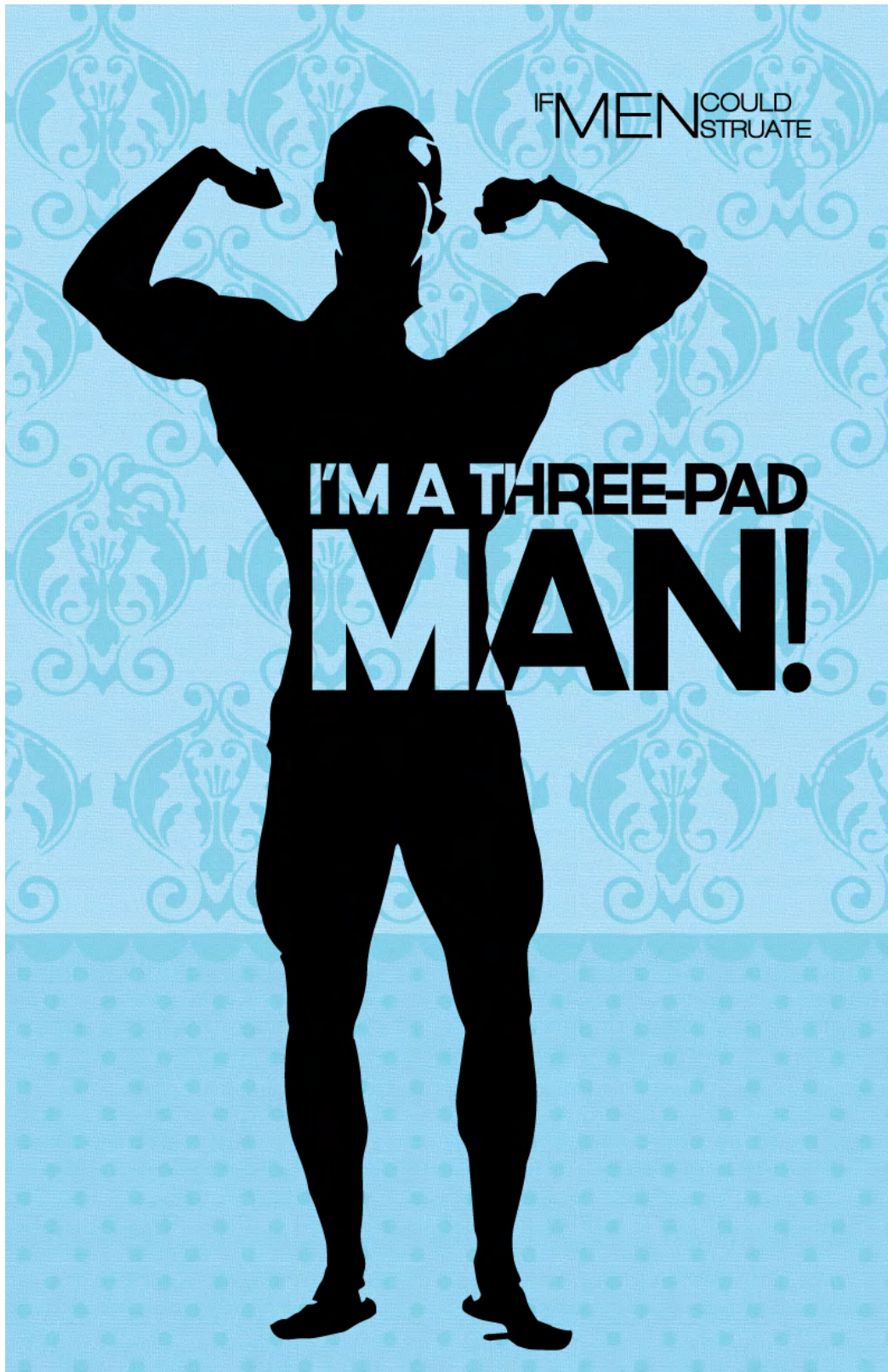
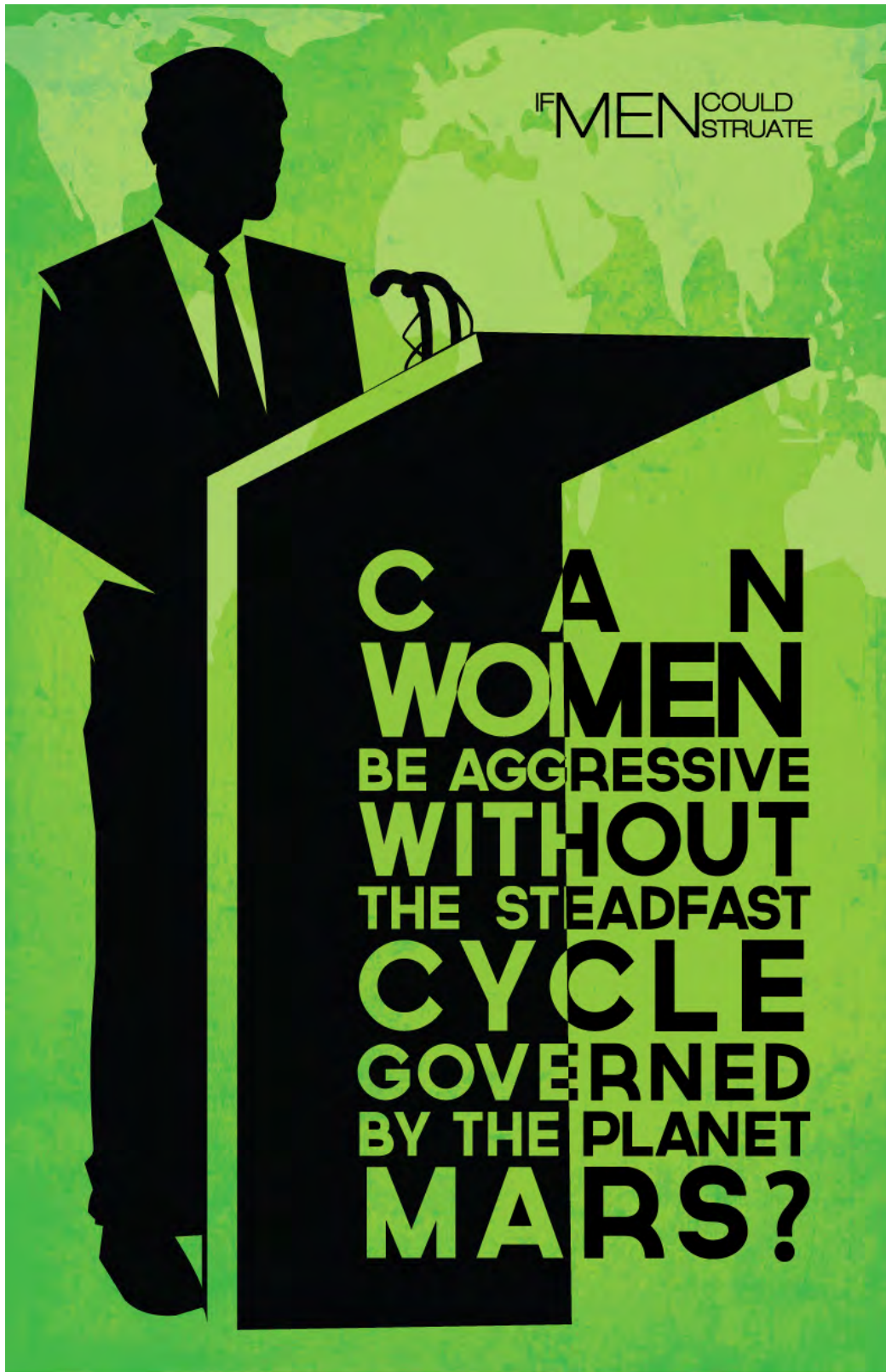Figure 46 - Silvia Minguzzi, *MENstruation Series*, 2014, Digital Poster on canvas, 11 in x 17 in.

Figure 47 - Silvia Minguzzi, *MENstruation Series*, 2014, Digital Poster on canvas, 11 in x 17 in.

3.   Personal Identity and collective memories: *Shared (re)collections*

This project originate from a personal interest in working with identity in contemporary art. I work with personal identity as an object and have therefore been searching for a way to define the kind of art I'm producing. Through this search I have come across the definition of identity mainly related to minority groups, but the definition used in this project should rather be understood as described by Richard Meyer in "Critical terms for art

history", quoting Philip Gleason:[30]

> *Identity came into use as a popular social science term only in the 1950´s at which time it was assigned not to particular racial, cultural, or sexual differences but to the self as an existential category (Gleason 1983, 910). Rather than suggesting a stable sense of selfhood, however, the term was often used to designate a problem as "search for identity" stemming from the individual's alienation in the face of an increasingly anonymous society."[31]*

Since the 1950's it seems that this search for identity along with an increasing self-reflexivity has only grown. It seems as if the self has become a field of interest in international art practices, in my surroundings and in the society as a whole. Still, I often meet the perception that working with personal identity as an artist is a therapeutic project rather than a field for artistic investigation and production. I cannot deny that some sort of learning process is involved, but what I found interesting was the dimension of investigating personal identity with the purpose of communicating possible models for how to deal with reality in this "increasingly anonymous society".[32]

---

30 Gleason Philip, 1983. *Identifying Identity: A Semantic History*, p. 69.

31 As described by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff in *Critical terms for art history*, 1996.

32 Ibid, 1996.

As an artist I can create and suggest these models in a visual, action oriented and experience based way. This allows me to explore the contemporary in other ways than scientists, journalists or other communicators of new knowledge. I use my senses and investigate the contemporary almost like an anthropologist, and I have the opportunity to experiment with what I experience using my own body and own personal identity in the process.

I find that this approach is coherent with the approach of "our times" and therefore I find it interesting to investigate whether this perception is rooted in something common in my surrounding reality or at least a tendency within parts of my reality. If it is something common there must be other artists working with personal identity in the same ways. This is how I started looking for collaborations with other artists who would share the same interest in such identity research and investigation.

Personal Identity is an ambiguous word to say the least. Two are the fundamental problems I found in defining the concept of Personal Identity: how is it possible to identify a person (myself and others) as an individual human being? How is it possible to distinguish between two individual persons? In these respect memory seems to be an interesting starting point for my exploration.

Shared (re)collections (Figure 48-49) is the first result of this investigation: a collaborative piece between a Sculptor and a Digital Designer, Anthony Guntren and myself. The piece combines digital media and hand forged sculptural forms to explore ideas of the personal, political and popular culture memories shared between two artists, female and male, growing up a half a world apart. The experiment was not only about combining two different media like sculpture and digital media, but also about investigating the possibility of documenting a shared collective set of

memories where it didn't matter our difference in sex, nationality and life style. We wanted to create an art piece that would be alive, thinking, and pulsing: an organic sculpture in terms of shape, but with the same implant of a multi-screens media room where showcasing our own memories.

Both Anthony and I started collecting a series of memories from 3 main topics: pop culture, world events and our personal sphere. One of the most interesting aspects of this collaboration was to investigate how our creative process works in a completely different way: not only because we are different artists, but also especially because our media demands some specific approaches, that we discovered being very stereotypical and sometimes a limitation. Once again, even in my creative process I find that changing the perspective would not only improve my final work, but also add interest and meaning to the all body of work.

Figure 48, Silvia Minguzzi, Anthony Guntren, *Shared (re)collections*, Projection on steel sculpture, 2014. Still Image.

I worked on video mapping[33] and projections, and as a Digital Media Designer I was envisioning some kind of surface I could project on, while Anthony presented me with this hallow circles organism. What we really appreciate was to be challenged by each other: I had to interact with those shallow shapes - how am I going to project on them? He had to compromise his sculpture that is functional for its shadows more than its materiality. We came up with the idea of placing the sculpture either on the floor or on the wall and play with the shadows of those circles on either surface. I edited 12 videos and mapped the sculpture's circles with a combination of software apps; finally projected them inside the shadows created by the sculpture itself.

Figure 49, Silvia Minguzzi, Anthony Guntren, *Shared (re)collections*, Projection on steel sculpture, 2014. Still Image.

---

33 The practice of sculpting video content to match the surface geometry it's being projected on.

The Sculpture looks alive and pulsing, our memories are projected at the same time, and overlap to the point that the final question remains: if our memories are so similar, are we than that different? Is memory communal or relational? Thinking about the work of Carrie Mae Weems, and her *Kitchen Table Series* I realize that *Shared (re)collections* is a piece that defines my identity as shaped by many variables: gender, status, relationship with other people, social history, but at the same time blurred those stereotypical stories about females, Europeans, immigrant people presenting the similarities with a male, US memories. Our reenactment strategy capitalizes on the immersive power of the form but also deconstruct its assumptions and problems. Our work is a reflection of reenactment to upset the balance, disrupt the clichéd assemblage of details typical of a contemporary historicism.

4. Identity and selfies: *Mirror Mirror*

Looking at yourself in a mirror or depicting yourself in a self-portrait, a selfie, is a form of reflection in which you distinguish yourself from other people and seek recognition of what is unique about yourself.

Cell phone cameras have democratized self-portraiture. Selfies are pictures you take of yourself tagged with #selfie or just with #me. They are showing up all across social networks like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. As the numbers and frequency of selfies increase, the phenomenon has garnered attention. In our globally connected 24/7 world, anything that gets attention gets talked about. Some view these self-created self-portraits as proof of cultural—or at least generational—narcissism and moral decline.

Since November 19, 2013 when Oxford Dictionaries announced selfie as "the international

Word of the Year"[34] this hybrid phenomenon of vernacular photography and social media has

created quite a bit of media hype. A selfie, according to Oxford Dictionaries, is "a photograph that

one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smart phone or webcam and uploaded to a

social media website."[35]

Humans have long demonstrated an interest in self-exploration. From early Greeks to present

day, people have used self-study and self-observation to explore identity and sense of self. Trying

to figure out who we are and what we're about is a distinctly human pursuit for almost everyone.

It's not a big leap to go from a pursuit of self-exploration to the desire for self-portrait. As far

back as Ancient Egypt, people of wealth and power have commissioned self-portraits, although

less for self-exploration than glorification. Nevertheless, a number of technological breakthroughs

throughout history have continued to lower the barriers to the creation and display of self-

portraits.

Selfies are the new digital mirror. We take mirrors for granted, but their invention in the

15th century let artists paint themselves. Some artists, like Albrecht Durer, did with gusto. The

camera in the 1860s launched a new era of selfies, but the technology demanded skill and

expense. As the camera evolved, more and increasingly creative versions of self-portraiture

appeared. Digital cameras freed portraiture from the cost and time lag of film. Then mobile

---

34 "Language research conducted by Oxford Dictionaries editors reveals that the frequency of the word selfie in the English language has increased by 17,000% since this time last year." http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/press-releases/oxford-dictionaries-word-of-the-year-2013/.

35 Ibid, 2013.

phones became cameras, too. By 2012, 86% of the population of the US had a cell phone, lagging behind a host of countries like the UK, Italy, Spain and China[36].

Selfies facilitate self and identity exploration. One of the most effective ways to know yourself is to see yourself as others see you. Selfies offer the opportunities to show facets of yourself, such as the arty side, the silly side, or the glamorous side. By offering different aspects through images, we are sharing more of ourselves, becoming more authentic and transparent—things that digital connectivity encourages. Selfies have been called "a symptom of social media-driven narcissism,"[37] a "way to control others' images of us,"[38] a "new way not only of representing ourselves to others, but of communicating with one another through images,"[39] the masturbation of self-image and a virtual mini-me, what in ancient biology might have been called a "homunculus" – a tiny pre-formed person that would grow into the big self.

In *Mirror Mirror*, I collaborated once again with Sculptor Anthony Guntren to realize a piece that would celebrate diversity and play around the research of identity through the study of the Selfies. We wanted to investigate and play around the representation of ourselves that we create through selfies, showing that we cannot control the way others see our image. Being able to modify people's age, sex or ethnicity and completely change the identity of a particular selfies is a

---

36 Oxford Dictionary Word of the Year 2013, "Selfie." 2013.

37 Telegraph, 2013. "Australian man 'invented the selfie after drunken night out", Jonathan Pearlman. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/10459115/Australian-man-invented-the-selfie-after-drunken-night-out.html

38 "Scholarly reflections on the selfie", Oxford University Press blog, 19 November 2013, http://blog.oup.com/2013/11/scholarly-reflections-on-the-selfie-woty-2013/

39 Rawlings, Kandice. "Selfies and the History of Self-Portrait Photography." Oxford University Press Blog, November 21, 2013. http://blog.oup.com/2013/11/selfies-history-self-portrait-photography/

interesting way to let people understand that differences are just a point of view. Again perspectives in diversities come back in my creative process.

Through the past months I've been collecting selfies from a web-based project I created (www.silviaminguzzi.com/mirrormirror). I asked people to take a selfie, upload it on my website and answer few question about their appearance. I had the opportunity to collaborate with Bernie Tiddeman, professor of Computer Science at the University of St Andrews, UK. He developed Face of the Future, an EPSRC funded public engagement project aimed at exploring the latest advances in facial computer vision and graphics, and what they mean for society. The project has developed a number of standalone interactive exhibits, online demos and a lecture presentation aimed at engaging the public with the technology and the social implications of the technology. I've been using such software to change the identities of photos I got from people from all over the world.

My piece includes several mirrors/frames (reclaimed found objects by Anthony Guntren): The first image in all the frames is the original selfie, but I gradually morph that portrait into something different in all the other frames, reimagining a new identity all of them: maybe changing their sex, or age, or ethnicity, or physical appearance. I'm interested in the reaction of people looking at those images; I would like to create a place for reflection on the meaning of personal representation using self-portrait. In many ways ethnicity, gender, age is about difference and how those differences are codified through language, categories, boxes, segmentation, and even the implicit sorting that goes on in our heads in terms of the way we label others and even ourselves. Appearance and identity are most certainly linked when it comes to racial categories, but there is another important ingredient in that stew: experience. There is no room for that on those official census forms, but when a person picks up a writing instrument to choose which box

they check, experience most certainly helps guide their hand. But what happens when I apply

those boxes to the not expected category?

Here are some example of identities I crated using my own selfies (Figure 50).

Figure 50, From left: my original Selfie, Me as an East Asian, Me as a Male, Me as a West Caribbean, Me as a West Asian, Me as an Old Person, 2014.

I asked people to fill out a small form before uploading their selfie, so one frame will be dedicated to a Kinetic Typography Animation[40] of their own words about their appearance. My words connected to the selfie were "Another shade of white."

A final, interesting aspect of my research was about creating a sort of selfie's archive of people from different places and from diverse background, and again push the attention on the few differences that really divide us. As in *Shared (re)collections*, there are more things that make us similar than take us apart, it is a matter of point of view.

---

40 Kinetic typography—the technical name for "moving text"—is an animation technique mixing motion and text to express ideas using video animation. This text is presented over time in a manner intended to convey or evoke a particular idea or emotion.

CONCLUSION

Writing this dissertation has given me the opportunity to reflect about my overall experience as a graduate student at Colorado State University. During my MFA, I was fortunate enough to collaborate with different Artists, being exposed to a wide variety of classes and media (from Printmaking to Digital Fabrication, Graphic Design, from Video to Typography, and Fabrics), receiving critiques and feedback from visiting artists working on different media or similar media. All this experience really enriched my research, and helped me thinking outside of my own box. Not only I feel very inspired about continuing my search of equality through my art; I also believe that what I have been working on had already some impact in the small community I live in.

I did analyze how methods of visualization in digital art have evolved and researched on three important fields where the evolution of new technology impacted art: visual art in general, digital consumption of art and art history appreciation.

I experimented about techniques mixing media together; I illustrated academics papers through Graphic Design, Video, and Digital Fabrication. I played around analogical and digital media fusing them in a unique piece, trying to find an answer to the question: is technology changing art? I believe that any modern artist needs to remember about pushing the art forward, inventing, defining new paradigms of expression with powerful meanings. It can be done using new technology, or researching new techniques with old media. It is about the experience the artist delivers to the public - whether it is provocative, whether it changes how the viewer thinks, feels and views the world. This is what really counts, and it has nothing to do with the techniques that the artist chooses to use.

Imagining Another Perspective represents my personal interest in matters of human rights applied to a formal investigation on perspectives, not only as a technique, but also as a philosophical attitude.

Social inequality is the result of innate differences between individuals. Yet, those differences are mostly produced by the society in which we live: they are a construct. The importance of using different perspectives in a physical and also mental way is a possible solution to break stereotypical patterns about race, sex, gender, and class. I strongly believe that Art is a vehicle of knowledge; Art can help communicating difficult messages with the power of visual representation. Furthermore, as a communication artist, I try to give my message a position that is relevant to the times we live in. I want people to know what I stand for, and I think that the combination of different media will give me the opportunity of reaching a wider public. People experience information and Art in very different ways; giving them the opportunity to see a wide range of media is to me a valid way to raise awareness on issues I believe fundamentals for a better society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burn, Shawn Meghan. *Women across cultures: a global perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005.

Butler, Judith. *Gender trouble feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge. 1999.

Crawford, Mary. *Transformations: women, gender, and psychology*. Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill. 2006.

Marc, Franz and Annalisa Crannel. *Viewpoints: Mathematical Perspective and Fractal Geometry in Art*. Princeton: University Press, 2011.

Gleason, Philip. 1983. "Identifying Identity: A Semantic History". *The Journal of American History*. 69 (4): 910-931.

Houser, Linda, and Thomas P. Vartanian. *Policy matters: public policy, paid leave for new parents, and economic security for U.S. workers*. 2012.

Kleinman, Sherryl, Martha Copp, and Kent Sandstrom. 2006. "*Making Sexism Visible: Birdcages, Martians, and Pregnant Men,*" Teaching Sociology. 34 (2): 126-142.

Kondo, Naoki et al., "*Income Inequality, Mortality, and Self-rated Health: Meta-analysis of Multi-level Studies,*" British Medical Journal, 2009.

Nelson, Robert S., and Richard Shiff. *Critical terms for art history*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1996.

Samek, Danielle M., *North African Immigration and Human Security in The European Union, BA, Bradley University*, 2008.

Steinem, Gloria, *If Men could Menstruate*, Ms Magazine, October 1978.

Terzidis, Kosts and Ali Malkawi. "Distorted Eye." Paper, UCLA and University of Pennsylvania, 2011.

Turkle, Sherry. *Alone together: why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. 2011.

Wands, Bruce. *Art of the Digital Age*. New York, Thames & Hudson, 2006.

Wilkinson, Richard G., and Kate Pickett. "*The spirit level: why more equal societies almost always do better.*" London: Allen Lane. 2009.

ONLINE RESOURCES

AIGA. "Get out the Vote." Last update November 2012. Accessed on October 2014. http://www.aiga.org/get-out-the-vote/

"Alberti – On Painting." Last updated 1993, Accessed on March 17 2013. http://www.noteaccess.com/Texts/Alberti/

Dekel, Gil. "I'm a Painter, Perspective-localized painter, Felice Varini." *Poetic Mind.* Last update July 6 2012. Accessed on March 24 2013. http://www.poeticmind.co.uk/interviews-1/i-am-a-painter

"Is technology changing art?" *Curiosity*: *Art and Architecture*. Last modified September 2011. Accessed on March 19 2013. http://curiosity.discovery.com/question/technology-changing-art

Oxford Dictionary. "Selfie." Last update 2014. Accessed on October 2014. http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/press-releases/oxford-dictionaries-word-of-the-year-2013.

Pearlman, Jonathan. "Australian man invented the selfie after drunken night out." Last Update November 14 2013. Accessed on September 2014. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/10459115/Australian-man-invented-the-selfie-after-drunken-night-out.html

Rawlings, Kandice. "Selfies and the History of Self-Portrait Photography." Oxford University Press Blog, November 21, 2013. http://blog.oup.com/2013/11/selfies-history-self-portrait-photography/

Roy, Arundhati. "Not Again." Last update January 2013. Accessed on September 2014. https://ccrma.stanford.edu/~peer/arundhatiRoy.html