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CURRENCY: THE FANTASTIC FESTIVAL OF THE MIND

by
Kristen Marie Vise

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2012

Approved by



Advisor: Professor Ginny Chavis



Reader: Professor Carlyle Wolfe



Reader: Dr. Charles Gates

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ABSTRACT

KRISTEN MARIE VISE: *Currency: The Fantastic Festival of the Mind*
(Under the direction of Ginny Chavis)

Currency: The Fantastic Festival of the Mind is an exploration of memory and ephemerality through abstracted imagery originating in the wonder of childhood, the magic of festivals, and the divinity of nature. In the work, an underlying “current” or essence of wonder serves as the “currency” of subjects ranging from carousels to clocks to Sycamore trees. The work explores fragmented concepts of time and memory that intertwine with whimsical imagery in the mind over time, leading to the development of fanciful perceptions and reassembled experience.

Pulling from sources as diverse as Environmental Graphic Design, contemporary graphic design, Surrealism, and German Expressionism, *Currency* is a large-scale drawing installation of lines, colors, and fantastic imagery. Developed over the course of two years and produced by hand in two weeks, *Currency* was open to the public as an exhibition in Gallery 130 in Oxford, Mississippi, from December 5–9, 2011.

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ARTIST STATEMENT

I perceive something whimsical and wondrous in the variety of subjects that I continually draw. My subjects include maypoles, carousels, clocks, all sorts of animals, festivals, childhood birthday parties, toy ballerinas, phonographs, antique furniture and jewelry, certain trees, and wildflowers. The underlying “current” of wonder, or wondrous essence, common to all subjects becomes the medium of exchange, the “currency,” between them.

Maintaining intrinsic characteristics of wonder and whimsicality, the subjects also relate to time, memory, and/or circular movement. In the mind, subjects wind together and become strangely linked not only to memories of the past but also to new experience. The alterations and reinterpretations form “The Fantastic Festival of the Mind,” or the fanciful imagery, perceptions, and thoughts about the whimsical subjects in the mind at the present time. *Currency*, the exhibition, is my attempt to depict visually these fluid and ephemeral, evolving images.

INTRODUCTION

Visual imagery transforms in the mind over time, becoming a bizarre database of fantastic subject matter. Grouping non-like things and joining disparate images, the mind finds its own meaning and reality in snippets of remembered experience. Memories become delicate and fragile, as they wither away to their most elemental form. What remains are momentary understandings of the underlying nature of the thing or event remembered. For the objects in figs. 1–6, that underlying nature is wonder.



Figure 1. Belfast Botanic Gardens in spring bloom. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.

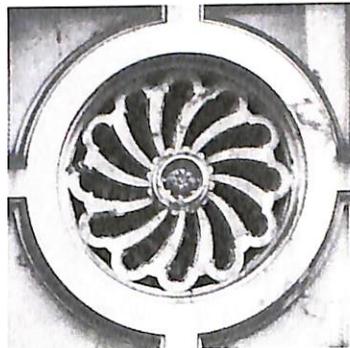


Figure 2. Spiral rosette architectural detail. 2010. Venice. Photograph by author.



Figure 3. Colorful stones collected along the shore of the Belfast Locke. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 4. Spring rider suggestive of the wonder of childhood. 2010. Madrid. Photograph by author.



Figure 5. An oddly shaped, locally grown eggplant. 2011. Water Valley, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 6. Stylized manhole cover. 2010. Berlin. Photograph by author.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

(Statement of Purpose; written September 22, 2009)

In my second semester of college at the University of Mississippi, I realized that the ideas discussed in my literature courses showed up in my sketchbooks, and the intricacy of tiny organisms called diatoms that I saw through a microscope in biology lab showed up in my design work. My classes suddenly connected, and the topics from my lecture-based classes were the topics I researched more and brought into my art classes. The subjects that offer the most inspiration to me are history, literature, and studies of human interaction...Experiencing cultures different from my own and exploring in nature also provide inspiration for my artistic production.

Though I wrote the previous Statement of Purpose more than two years before the exhibition of *Currency*, I continue to work in a similar manner. I am still influenced by academic lectures and research, the natural world, and travel, and I bring ideas and experiences from these sources into my art and design work. This pattern is characteristic of my undergraduate career as an art and design student; often, it is after beginning a project or illustration that I realize the relation of it to a recent topic of study, a flower seen the day before, or a weekend drive in the foothills of North Mississippi.

Currency stems from concepts about memory, imagery, perception, and aura addressed in the class "English 498: Image, Text, and Technology" taught by Dr. Gregory Heyworth at the University of Mississippi in spring 2011, from Exploratory Research on the relationship between graphic design and architecture conducted in Belfast, Northern Ireland, at the University of Ulster School of Art and Design, from Modern Art movements and graphic design, and from experiences while traveling in Europe in 2010.

Drawn to certain objects and imagery, and interested in how visual memory transforms in the mind over time, I developed my thesis as a process-based, experimental, and explorative project. As such, intangible ideas about time, memory, ephemerality, and underlying connection are explored through wondrous subjects including carousels, maypoles, animals, birthday cakes, clocks, and ballerinas. As Paul Klee wrote in the Creative Credo of 1920, “Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible. A tendency toward the abstract is inherent in linear expression: graphic imagery being confined to outlines has a fairy-like quality...” In the same vein, *Currency* references “the visible,” but is not a depiction of the visible itself; rather, the purpose of *Currency* is to “[make] visible” the essence of certain objects, imagery, and events. For example, the seadragon in fig. 7 triggered the abstract seadragon illustration in fig. 8. This is not a representational depiction of the seadragon as photographed; it is an experiment in “mak[ing]” the underlying whimsical nature of the seadragon “visible.”



Figure 7. *Phyllopteryx taeniolatus*. 2009. Georgia Aquarium; Atlanta. Photograph by author. Known as the common seadragon or weedy seadragon, this relative of the sea horse prompted the illustration in fig. 8. The curved body provides a base for the delicate leaf-like lobe extensions. Named for its resemblance to legendary seadragons, this small sea creature provides a mystical connection to the past.



Figure 8. Weedy seadragon illustration. 2011. Pen and ink on paper by author. Inspired by the ethereal weedy seadragon, this illustration began as representational but quickly diverged into an abstracted representation of the fairy-like sea creature. The teardrop lobe extensions of the weedy seadragon (seen in fig. 7) grew into lace-like patterns of ribbon-like teardrops extending from the head and back.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

For my Bachelor of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition, I propose to transform the back, right corner of Gallery 130 (see fig. 9) into an environment of wonder where viewers can experience the energy and excitement of whimsical subjects altered by memory. Influenced by the use of vinyl decals in Environmental Graphic Design (EGD) (see figs. 10 and 11), I will design large-scale, black vinyl decals based on small-scale line illustrations.

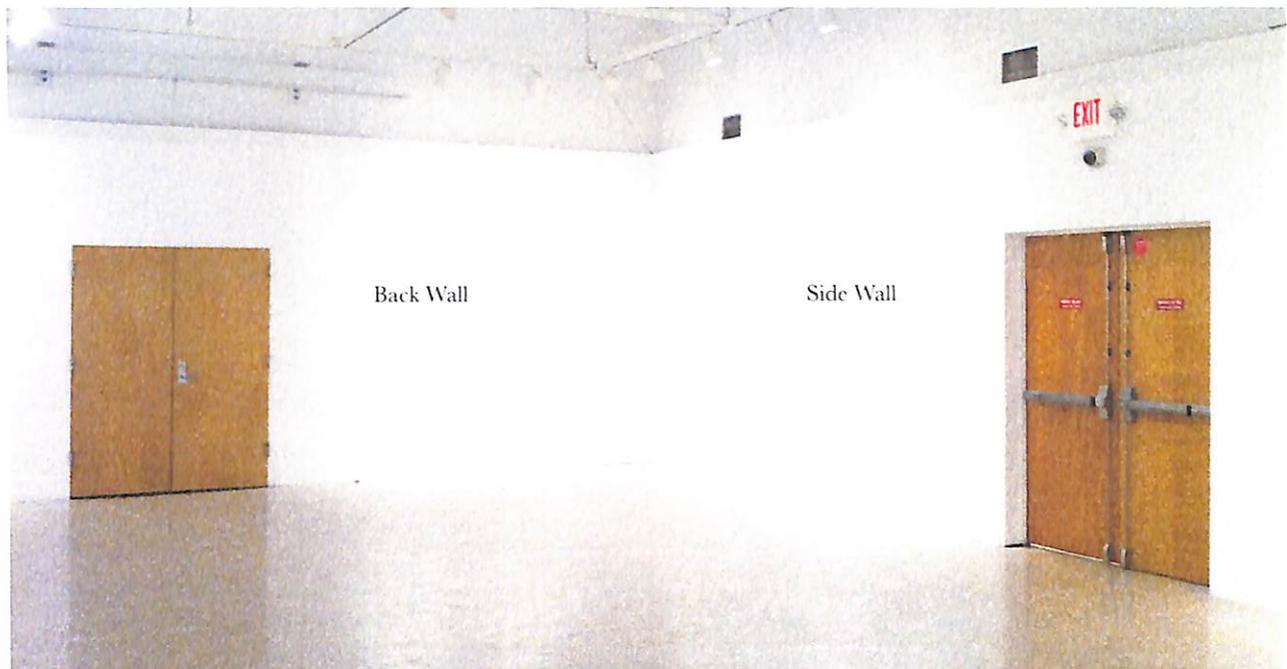


Figure 9. The back, right corner of Gallery 130; my thesis exhibition space. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 10. Kentish Town Health Centre Wall Graphics. Source: Studio Myerscough. Kentish Town Health Centre. London. <http://www.studiomyerscough.com>.



Figure 11. Tate Modern Vinyl Graphics. Source: Holmes Wood and Herzog & de Meuron. Tate Modern Wayfinding and Signage. London. <http://www.holmes-wood.com>.

Original small-scale line illustrations will be scanned into the computer and translated into vector graphics suitable for manufacture as vinyl decals by a sign manufacturing company. The graphics will be scaled and designed to properly fit the back right corner of Gallery 130 (figs. 12 and 13).

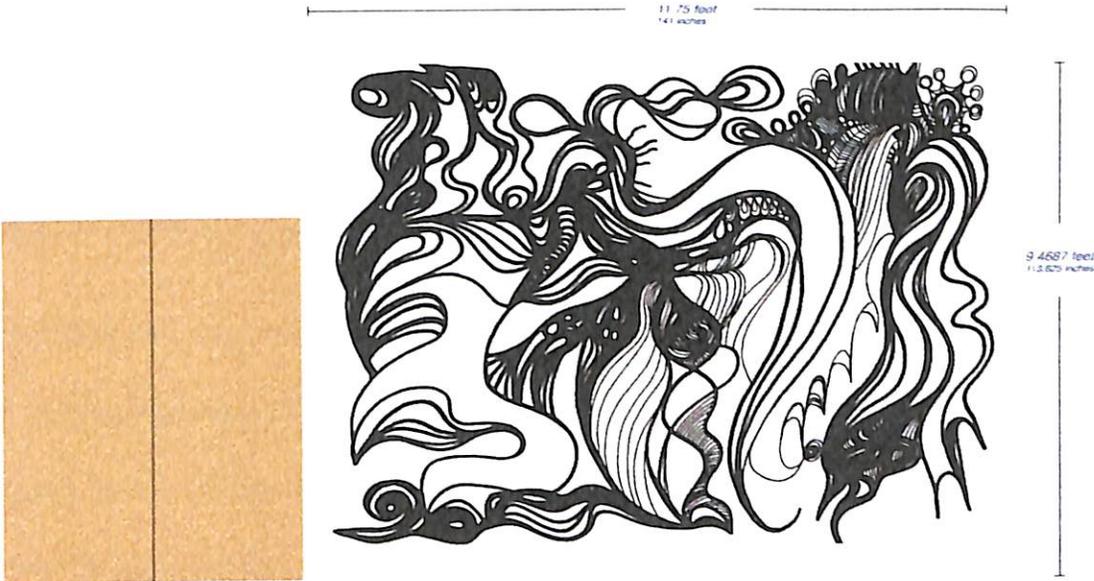


Figure 12. Plan for back wall of exhibition space. 2011. Digital illustration by author.

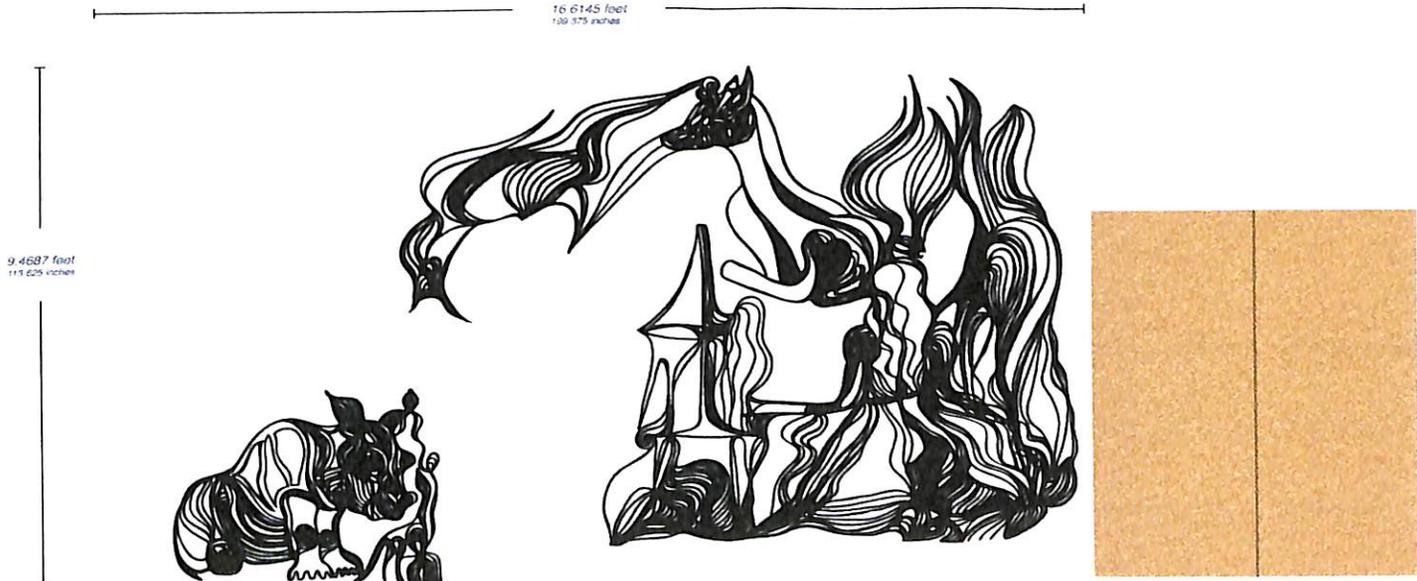


Figure 13. Plan for right wall of exhibition space. 2011. Digital illustration by author.

If the decals cannot be manufactured for technical or other reasons, the project will instead be realized as a large-scale drawing installation. Wall-size paper and graffiti markers will be used to make the work based on the original design plans. Small-scale illustrations will be digitally projected onto the large paper to serve as a guide for the large-scale drawings. Cut outs and collage elements may be added to the work to increase depth through layering.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of *Currency* is to communicate the wonder and magic of a kaleidoscope of subjects abstracted through a lens of time and memory. Influenced by theories and practices in the up-and-coming field of EGD, *Currency* is designed to be an experiential environment for the viewer. The objectives of the project are to communicate a sense of wonder to the viewer through large-scale graphics and to design a spatial experience of continual, winding movement, representing the constant transformation of memory and subject matter in the mind, although they remain essentially the same.

BACKGROUND

As an art student at the University of Mississippi, my training in graphic design is heavily based in fine art. Within the graphic design area of the University's Department of Art, the skill of drawing is of equal or more importance than more obvious graphic design skills such as layout or typography. This hierarchy of technical importance regardless of creative field set the stage for my undergraduate career as a graphic design student, which ultimately fed into my Bachelor of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition *Currency*.

Fostering an environment where a graphic designer can be a printmaker and a painter can be a photography, the Department of Art also encouraged proficiency in more than one area of specialization. Thus, although a Bachelor of Fine Arts student pursuing a concentration in graphic design, I also developed skills in printmaking and photography. This multidisciplinary approach to art and design nurtured by the Department of Art influenced my research interests and my mixed media approach to art and design.

CHAPTER I — CONCEPTS & IDEAS

WONDER

In the First Surrealist Manifesto André Breton (1924) wrote, "...my intention has been to see that justice was done to that hatred of the marvelous which rages in certain men, that ridicule under which they would like to crush it." Calling for a resolution, he proclaimed, "...the Marvelous is always beautiful, everything marvelous is beautiful. Nothing but the Marvelous is beautiful."

I view the world as place connected by small bits of wonder everywhere. Curiosities are abundant in both natural and man-made environments. As adults, we often belittle the marvelous aspects that are very much a part of daily life; we are busy and preoccupied, concerned with the next task rather than the present moment. We do not take time to enjoy the small things that make life lovely. In order to avert these pitfalls of adulthood, I maintain a collection of subjects – objects, photographs, magazine clippings – from different times and places that represent marvels large and small. Some of these subjects are encountered by chance; others are sought out while traveling or attending an event.

My collection of whimsical curiosities (often in my possession only as a digital image or visual memory) serves as the raw material for my artistic production. Objects in the collection include carousels (fig. 14), circus tents, Ferris wheels, ballerinas, celebratory desserts, birthday cakes with piped icing and sparkling candles, phonographs, flowing dresses, antiques, vintage horse show ribbons (fig. 15), coins, printed number sequences,

paper ephemera, clocks, golden locket, crown jewels (fig. 16), precious gems, natural stones, blooming and dead trees and flowers, brass buttons and crystal doorknobs.



Figure 14. Feminine and ornate carousel in Belgium. 2010. Brussels. Photograph by author.



Figure 15. Vintage horse show ribbons. Source: "Sweet as Pie Set of Silky Mauve Horse Show Ribbons." 2009. Emerson Merrick, Brooklyn. Etsy.com.



Figure 16. Crown with repeated motif and curves. 2010. Victoria and Albert Museum; London. Photograph by author.

Antiques are collectable items valued for their age, rarity, and craftsmanship. Introduced to antiques at a young age, my affinity for the objects has only intensified over the years. As a child, I often visited my grandparents who lived in the Louisiana countryside outside of the rural town of Franklinton in Washington Parish. Right next to their 1920s home, my grandparents ran Vise Antiques on a huge concrete slab with aluminum roofing and siding. Exploring "the shop" was a staple of my childhood, and I developed skills of treasure finding early on.

Antiques have an aura about them. The value of antiques contributes to this aura, as does their unknown histories, which instill the objects with mystery and uniqueness. Original owners may pass the objects down to their children or relatives, and the antiques continue to switch owners within the family for multiple generations. However, the antique outlives them all. In this way, antiques represent the wonder and mystery of the past. These odd and old objects transcend time by bringing the past into the present. While other items from the same time period are obsolete and forgotten, the antique lives on, as if chosen by chance. Perhaps this ability to approach eternity is part of their whimsical appeal (see figs. 17 and 18).

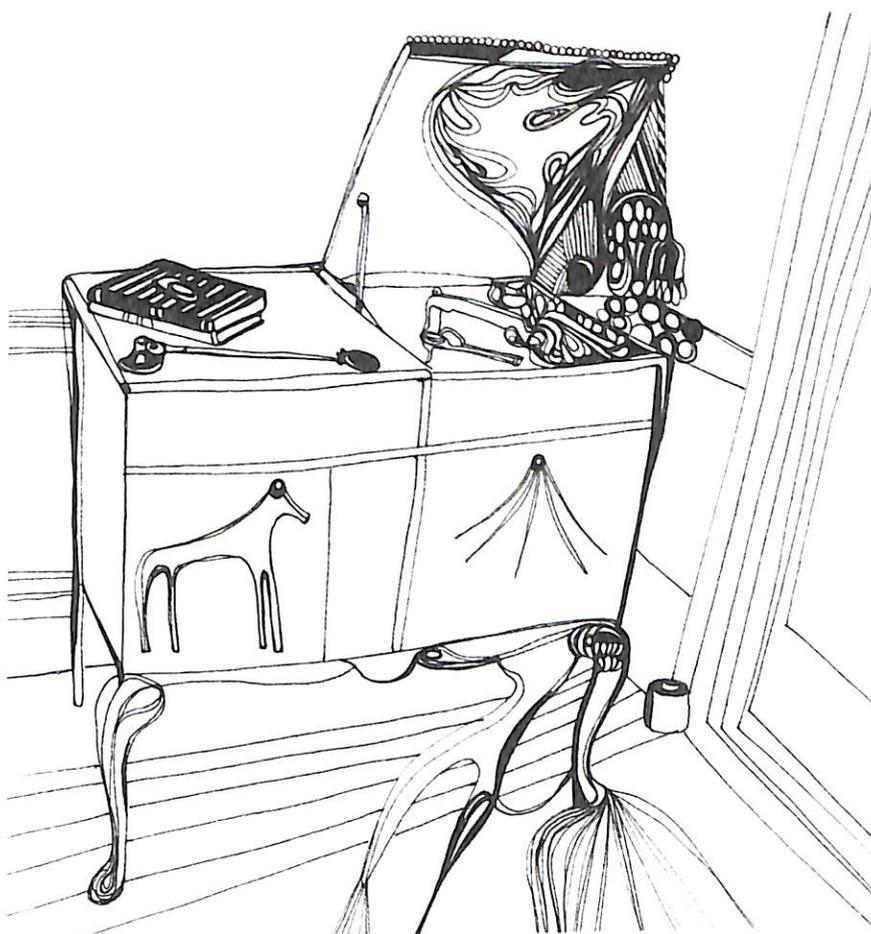


Figure 17 Overflowing record player. 2011. Pilot Precise V5 pen on paper by author. This is an example of how antique imagery becomes the whimsical raw material for my work.



Figure 18. Edison "Home" Phonograph, Model "D" with Cygnet Horn, 1909. Source: Phonophan.com.

Special events are a category within my collection of whimsical subject matter. An event is defined as “something that occurs in a certain place during a particular interval of time” (“Event” def. 1). The finite time period of an event contributes to its aura of wonder. In particular, festivals, state fairs, holiday celebrations, parades, and birthday parties seem especially whimsical. Different from ordinary experience, these events seem more magical because they are uncommon. Decorations, traditional foods and desserts, festive costumes, special activities, gifts or prizes, and light displays often accompany special events and contribute to their aura and ambiance.

Holidays, celebrations, and community festivals generally occur periodically. As such, they are often anticipated throughout the year, which adds to their excitement. These events live in the mind as upcoming events or recent celebrations, augmented by photographs, ticket stubs, or trinkets. Similarly, festivals and spectacles experienced during childhood live on in the mind through photographs (see fig. 19) and memories. In this way, memories connect the past and the present, the child and the adult.



Figure 19. Childhood Birthday Party. 1995. Photograph of author.

MEMORY

Continually expanding and muddling with new experience, memories become elaborate narratives in the mind. Original memories distort and change over time, and the way a memory exists in the present is its new reality, as real to the keeper of the memory as the original occurrence.

Memories are translucent planes and lines that overlap and intersect forming complex layers (see fig. 20) and unidentifiable structures in the mental landscape. The translucency of aged memory intensifies the effects of overlap. Organic and amorphous, memories are capable of transforming and intertwining like long strands of sea kelp and of creating infinitely more new memories through the overlay of their different sections. Glimpses of reflection, shadow, and transparency in the tangible world provide a metaphor for the ephemerality of memory and the new realities constructed in the mental landscape (see figs. 21 and 22).

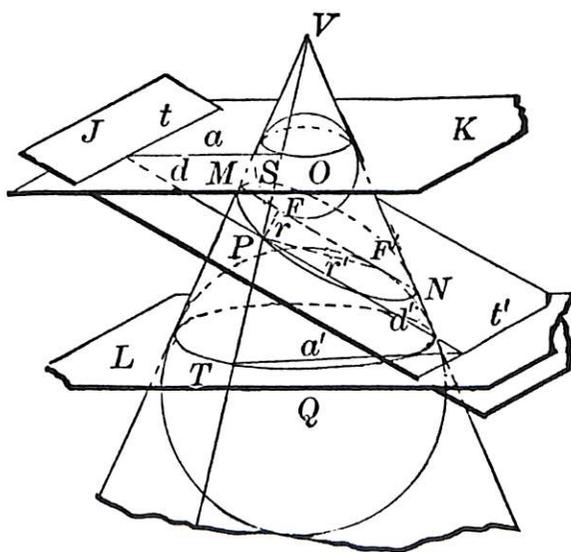


Figure 20. A metaphor for memory. Conic Cross Sections. Courtesy of Educational Technology Clearinghouse.



Figure 21. A metaphor for memory. 2010. Jackson, Mississippi. Photograph by author. Tree branches and glass atrium reflected on shark vertebrae in glass exhibition case.



Figure 22. A photographic metaphor for memory and the whimsical concoctions of the mind. 2011. Nashville, Tennessee. Photograph by author. The layered, translucent image resulting from a red brick building reflecting on interior design store window display.

In Western society, time is generally accepted as a linear concept. It is interesting that though we understand time to be linear, capable of charted along a timeline, we keep time with circular clocks and watches. The hands of the clock continually follow the same course, completing sequences of twelve hours which stack up like discs on top of one another. The clock presents time as a cyclic concept (see figs. 23–26), one that continues to layer upon itself, to keep winding along a course.

Similarly, imagery, events, and experience are not always stored as “linear,” chronological memories. Often, they are not even stored logically. Memories become more porous due to time, retellings of events, visual culture, and new experiences. As memories are in a constant state of transformation, contradiction and distortion are prevalent. Isolated

events become oddly connected in the mental landscape. Arbitrary bits of information dislodge from their sources and attach to other things equally as arbitrary. A certainty today becomes an uncertainty tomorrow. Memories become layered, blended, cut through, and reassembled. Individual memories are subdivided and reinterpreted as new experience intervenes. The subconscious juncture of once distinct memories creates a new playground of imagery and ideas in the mind.



Figure 23. Saint Mark's Clock. 2010. Venice. Photograph by author.



Figure 24. Rosette. 2010. Dubrovnik. Photograph by author. Divided like a clock face; representative of cyclic time.



Figure 25. The Clock Tower. 2010. Dubrovnik. Photograph by author.

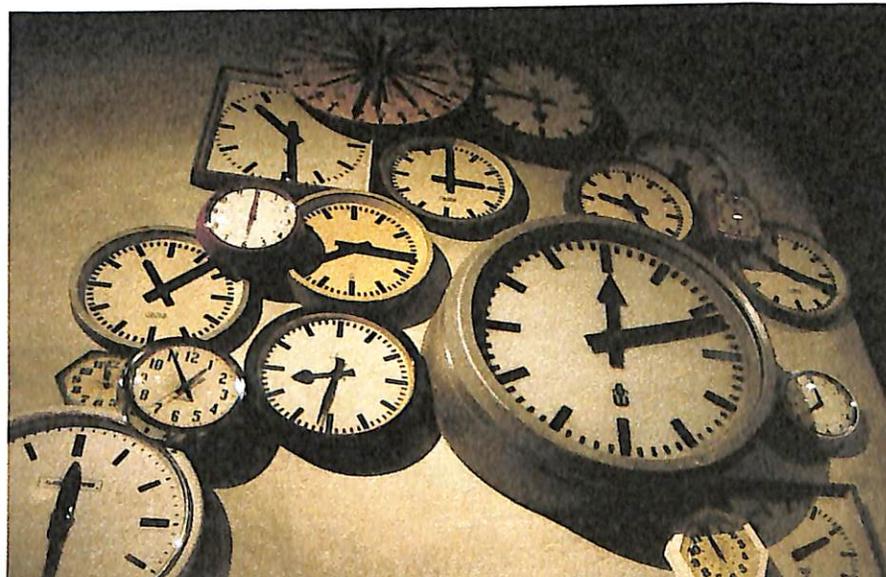


Figure 26. Clock Installation at Anthropologie. 2009. Jackson, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

NATURE

Nature serves as a never-ending source of ideas, inspiration, and organic repetition that informs my work (see figs. 27–33). The varied repetition of natural form exemplifies continual change and the perpetual continuance. Everything changes and everything remains the same. The beauty of this idea leads to an intricately connected universe where everything is related.

Nature is relentless and eternal, but individual leaves and flowers are ephemeral and fleeting. Patterns in nature can be observed on a large and minute scale. As Henry David Thoreau describes in *Walden*, the lines of the landscape mimic the lines of the leaf (see figs. 34 and 35). Studying the linear divisions of leaves, one can begin to grasp a sense of something so basic it is profound. From skeletal trees and wildflowers to the open spaces and the land in Mississippi, nature presents a host of magical subject matter.



Figure 27. Natural repetition in cheery spring blooms. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 28. Natural repetition on the La via dell'Amore overlooking the Ligurian Sea. 2010. Riomaggiore, Italy. Photograph by author.



Figure 29. Magenta flowers overtake a balcony. 2010. Cinque Terre, Italy.
Photograph by author.



Figure 30. Belfast Botanic Gardens with floral patterns in spring. 2010. Belfast.
Photograph by author.



Figure 31. Woodland floor plants. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photography by author.



Figure 32. Interlocking geometric columns of volcanic rock contrast with the organic swirls of sea foam inbetween. 2010. Giant's Causeway; Northern Ireland. Photography by author.

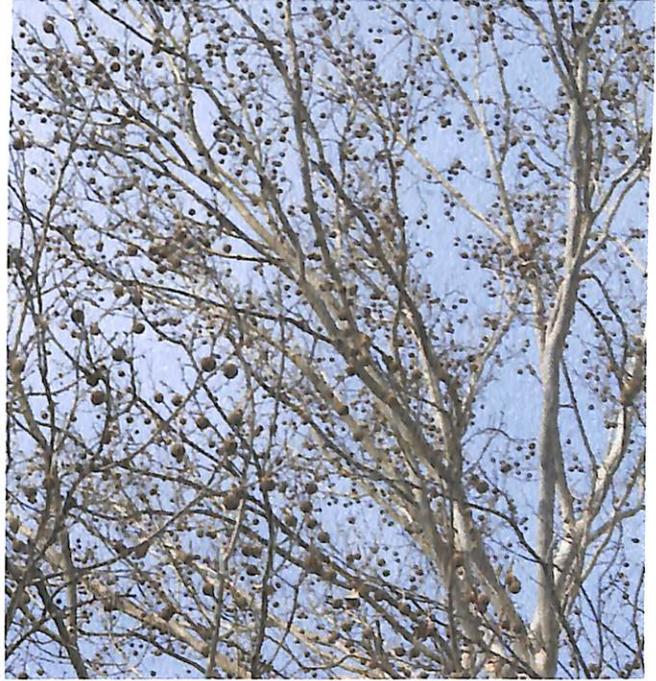


Figure 33. Varied repetition – spherical pods and linear branches of a Sycamore tree. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photography by author.



Figure 34. The lines of the leaf mimic the lines of the landscape. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author. Hand-picked collection of dead fall leaves, arranged to suggest a fluid motion.



Figure 35. The lines of the landscape mimic the pattern of veins in a leaf. 2010. Scottish Highlands. Photograph by author. Repetition in nature can be observed on a small and large scale.

Trees are line drawings in the air (see fig. 36). The twisted branches of trees extend like rivers against the sky (see fig. 37), intermingling and intersecting, transversing one another. While branches create repeated linear patterns, leaves form masses of color in the air (see fig. 38) or on the ground (see fig. 39). Sometimes, when walking under or driving under a tree, I look up and see a tree that looks almost as if it were an upside-down maypole. Its branches radiate from its trunk like ribbons, its linear extensions sway in the wind. I get the sense that the tree could begin to spin from its central axis at any moment (see fig. 40). The repetition and motion observable in trees is of a divine order. The continuous limbs of trees become canopies of lines in the sky.



Figure 36. Together with the dark, wet tree trunks, looping vines form black line illustrations against the stormy grey sky. 2011. Whirpool Trails; Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 37. White bark Sycamore trees become white rivers against a blue sky. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

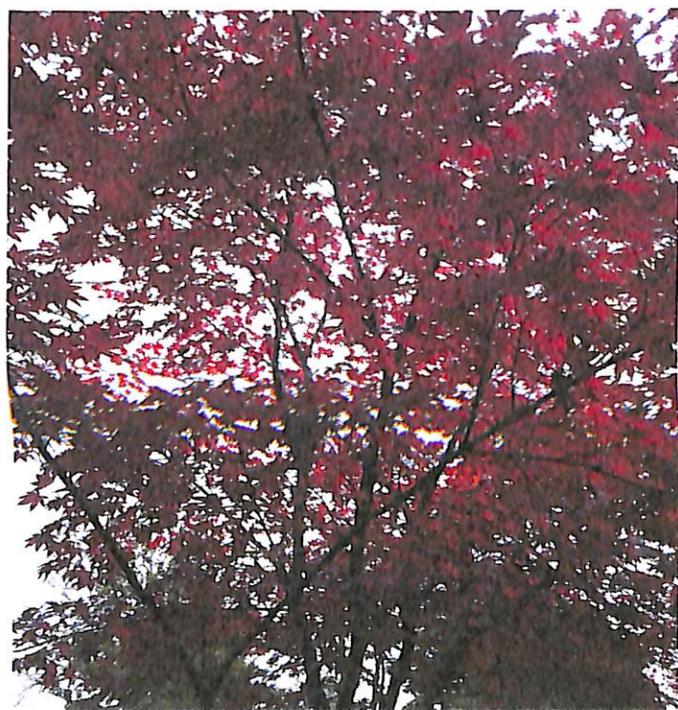


Figure 39. A red canopy of lines and leaves. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author. Oxford, Mississippi, 2011.

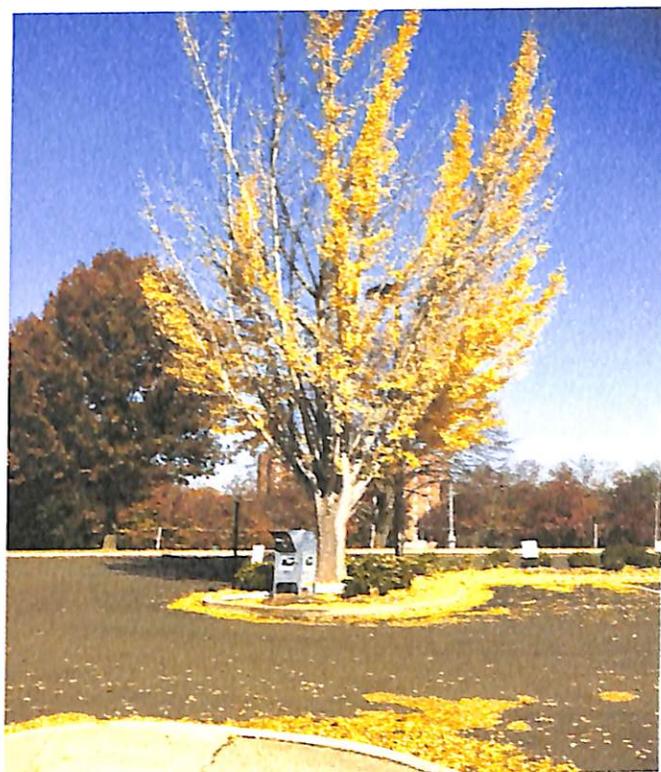


Figure 38. Yellow leaves form color columns against the blue sky and islands of yellow on the ground. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

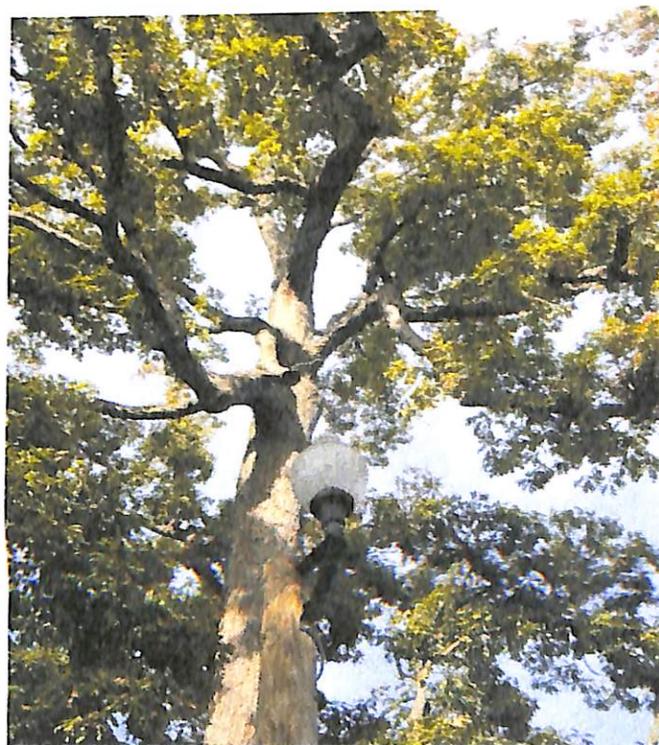


Figure 40. From below, this tree looks as though it could begin to spin from its central axis at any moment. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

CHAPTER II — DEVELOPMENT

BELFAST

In 2011, I spent a semester studying abroad in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Commuting to and from school each day, I walked through the city three miles in the morning and three miles at midnight. Over the course of my six-month stay, I began to absorb the atmosphere of the city. I became familiar with the buildings, trees, patterns, and colors of the city (see fig. 41–43). I noticed minute changes in lighting conditions (figs. 44 and 45), weather (fig. 46), and seasons (figs 47 and 48). But although I could identify these outward changes in the city, there was something not quite perceptible about the place that intrigued me.



Figure 41. The great façade of the Lanyon Building at Queen's University Belfast; modeled after Gothic and Tudor medieval universities, this monumental structure “create[s] an instant authority and presence” (Stelfox, Latimer, & Evans 4). The colors of the red brick and sandstone are present throughout the city. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 42. Belfast City Hall and the Belfast Wheel in the morning grey; a black and white scene with the river-like lines of the tree trunks, day from morning rain. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 43. Belfast City Hall illuminated in warm lighting and the Belfast Wheel sparkling in blue LED lights, both set against the inky midnight sky, and looking very differently than the morning view (fig. 42). 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 44. Belfast Botanic Gardens on a typical grey day in the city. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 45. Belfast Botanic Gardens under a soft rainbow sky. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 46. Belfast weather – hail, rain, and snow, all in one hour. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 47. Though skeletons all winter, these trees greeted spring in full force. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 48. After a seemingly endless winter, flower petals litter the curbs. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.

Over time, I began to recognize a theme of contradiction throughout the city. Examples of the contradictions included the city's brand, the disparity between what one heard and what one could see in terms of the Troubles, and the architectural friction between new and old, and sometimes, between progressive and decrepit.

The city's bubble-letter branding identity system seemed almost ironic, as it did not fit the harsh overtones of historic conflict known about the city. The graphic identity labeled the city, but did not identify it. Belfast is deeper than the "B" Heart logo assigned to the city. The gummy-like, heart shape of the letter "B" in the logo (see fig. 49) did not seem to fit the character of the people, who with their harsh Belfast city accents and black clothes worked hard, long days in the city. The logo colors spanned the gamut of the rainbow, oddly, as the predominant colors of the city were neutrals, red brick, grey, or the green of the surrounding hills in the spring and summer.



Figure 49. Belfast Brand Color Guidelines. Courtesy of Belfast City Council.

The prolific amount of printed banners, signs, posters, and flyers with the logo only deepened the irony. For six months, the main street of the city was rumpiled concrete, loud machines, neon orange vests, plastic fencing and caution signs. Attached to the orange

fences around the sprawling construction zone, bright green signs encouraged citizens to “B Patient” (see fig. 50). In the midst of never-ending construction project, however, the the consolation signage program had little effect.



Figure 50. Belfast "B Patient" sign. 2010. Belfast.
Photography by author.

A contradiction between what one heard and what one saw also existed in the city. Though the Troubles ended officially in the late 1990s, the city is still fairly divided along political and religious lines. Protestants and Catholics continue to live in separate neighbors, to identify with different political entities (see fig. 51), and to attend different schools. Though many citizens say the past is history, the city walls, or peace lines (see figs. 52–54), and the Murals of Belfast (see figs. 55 and 56) continue to echo the Troubles.



Figure 51. Irish Republican Party Sinn Féin Sign. 2010. Belfast.
Photography by author.



Figure 52. Belfast Peace Wall. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 53. Detail and signatures, Belfast Peace Wall. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 54. Belfast Wall along Cupar Street, West Belfast; separating part of the Catholic Falls and the Protestant Shankill. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 55. Ulster Defence Association (UDA)/Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) Mural. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 56. Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) Mural of "Bobby" Sands. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.

The contrast between “old” and “new,” or sometimes more accurately, “decrepit” and “progressive,” could be observed in the architecture throughout the city. Open businesses stood adjacent to abandoned buildings with broken windows (see figs. 57 and 58). Lively shops on one street turned into deserted, boarded store fronts on the next (see fig. 59).



Figure 57. An abandoned building stands next to an open business. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 58. An abandoned building, 2010, Belfast. Photograph by author.



Figure 59. Fly posters placed on an abandoned building façade. 2010, Belfast. Photograph by author.

Meanwhile, displaying the contrast between old and new, historic structures such as the Belfast Botanic Gardens Palm House designed by Charles Lanyon (see fig. 60) accompany newer architectural projects such as the contemporary the Victoria Square shopping center (see fig. 61). Even the art school at the University of Ulster exemplified the contrast between new and old architecture. Divided definitively by a busy street and connected

merely by a skywalk, the newly renovated design wing of the school remained separated from the old art building, which housed the fine arts. Full of glass rooms overlooking the city, the design wing towered over the white-washed brick building on the other side of the street. The contrasts, contradictions, and changes I observed while living in Belfast influenced my ideas about continuous change and perpetual sameness.



Figure 60. Belfast Botanic Gardens Palm House, by architect Charles Lanyon. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.

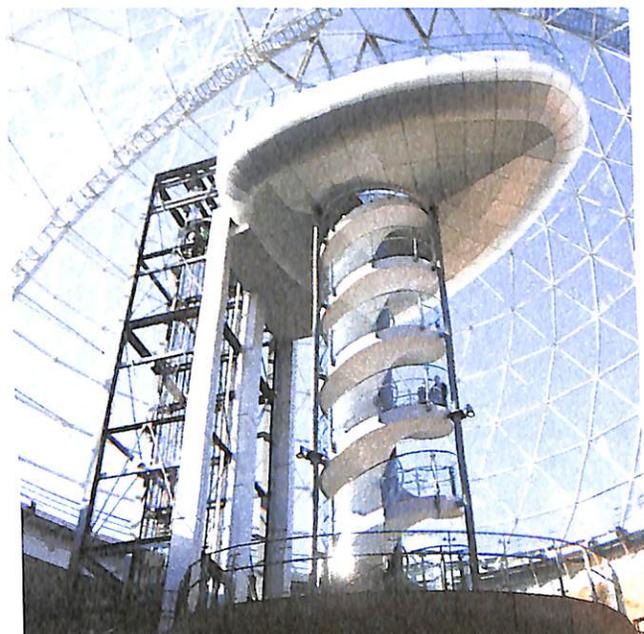


Figure 61. Victoria Square shopping center and look-out dome. 2010. Belfast. Photograph by author.

CURRENCY

The fluid and winding movements associated with the words “current” and “currency” were a starting off point for the concepts and stylistic rendition of *Currency* the exhibition. Currents and currency change constantly, but continue to flow. A current is something that is continuous and constantly moving. The idea of a current lends to flowing movement that achieves a sort of rhythm, or characteristically varied movement. The word “currency” lends itself to many ideas and meanings that all relate back to the idea of a fluid movement. The connotation of “currency” is not that of a straight line. Currency brings to mind something that is winding and coursing in an undetermined but fluid way. This movement – this winding, curvilinear path associated with the idea of currency – is vital to my thesis (see fig. 62).

While studying abroad, currents and currency were continually on my mind as I used *adaptors and convertors for all my electronic devices and as the currency exchange between the dollar and the pound was daily necessity.* In addition, the current affairs of the time in both Belfast and in the United States were focused on the *economic crisis and the global bailout – more currency.*

The similarity between the “flow” or circulation of currency and the flow of a current sparked experimental illustrations combining the two different but etymologically related words. The constant use of adaptors and convertors for electrical current, and the variety of cords, plugs, and outlets needed to perform simple tasks like charging one’s computer living abroad fueled the idea. Winding cords and the difference in heating systems between the United States and Northern Ireland were explored through illustration. Combining ideas of circuits, interconnectivity, river currents, ocean currents, the flow of



Figure 62. A winding and fluid early *Currency* illustration. 2010. Pilot Precise V5 pen on paper. Illustration by author.

money, electric wires and outlets, being “plugged-in”, and cross-Atlantic communication, I made “running”, “fluid”, and “flowing” ink illustrations that addressed the topic (see fig. 63). In the drawings, typographic currency symbols turned into winding rivers (see fig. 64). My physical movement winding through the city while walking each day reinforced the type of movement used to depict the concept.

In *Currency* the exhibition, an underlying current or “currency” of wonder unites the subjects. This connection is the whimsicality, the ephemerality, and the perpetual winding movement that unites the carousels, maypoles, creatures, and numbers; the past and the present in memory; and organic forms and processes in nature. This concept is translated into the drawings as fluid, ribbon-like lines.



Figure 63. "Consuming" *Currency* illustration. 2010. Pilot Precise V5 pen on paper. Illustration by author.

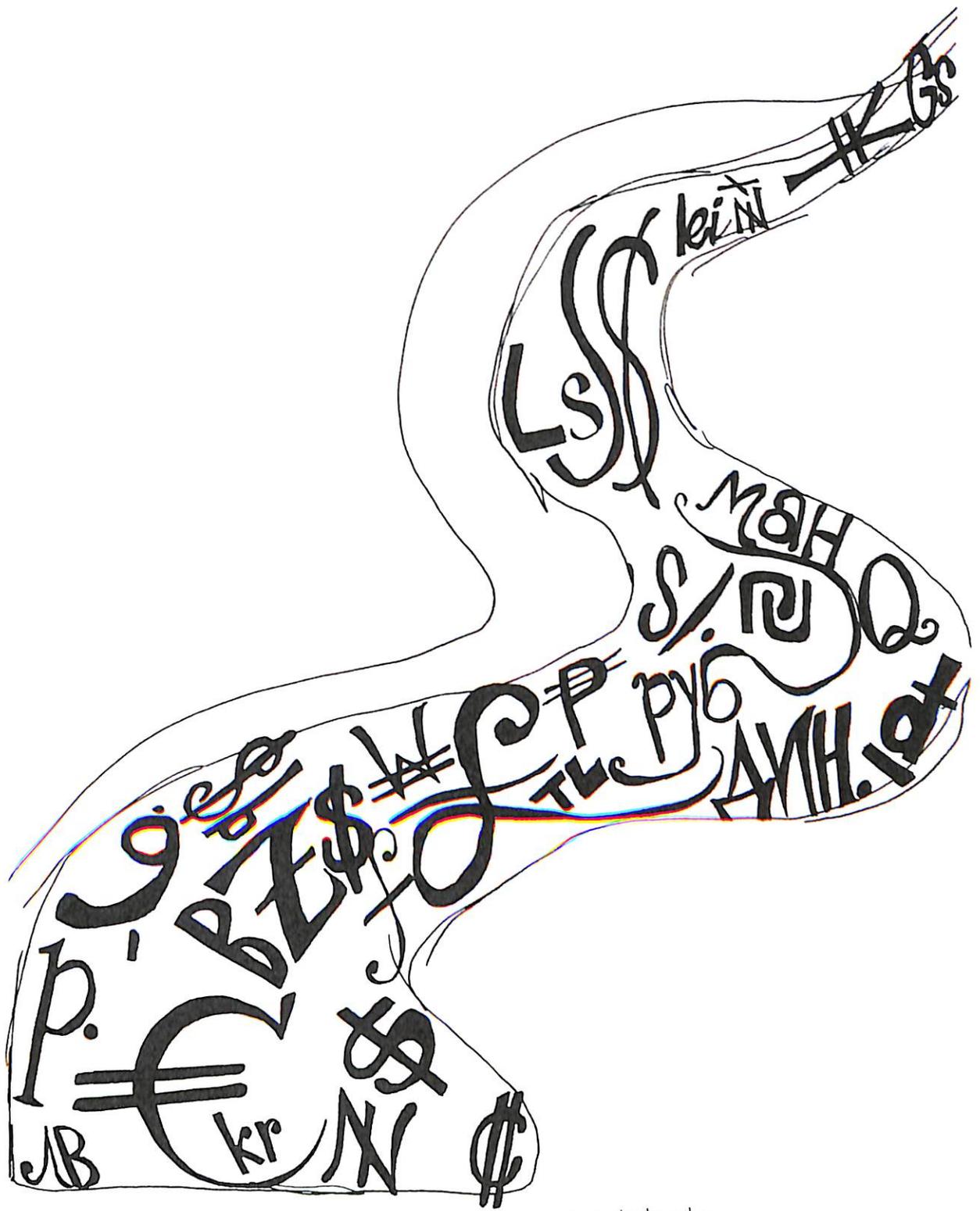


Figure 64. *Currency river illustration*. 2010. Pilot Precise V5 pen on paper. Illustration by author.

FOUND OBJECTS

The objet trouvé, or found object, is the 20th century term given to manmade and natural objects embraced as raw art materials or works of art in their own right (“Objet trouvé” def. 1). Found objects represent the wonder of reality through the surprise and unexpected nature of their discovery. I collect lost jewelry, coins, trinkets, notes, and colorful bits of material that I find on the ground (see figs. 65–68). The small found objects in my collection are trinkets that represent the little surprises of everyday life.



Figure 65. Personal collection of small found objects. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 66. Personal collection of small found objects in glass globes. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 67. Personal collection of small found objects. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 68. Found branches in vase. 2011. Photograph by author.

Fantastic creature shapes can be seen in a variety of found objects, ranging from shadows to beer foam (figs. 69 and 70) to shapes on the ground (see fig. 71). These shapes often find their way into my work. Figure 72 shows a small sculpture I made from a found gold hoop earring and a broken camera. I savaged the camera originally to make use of the buttons

and typographic symbols. Upon taking it apart, however, I found creature-like shapes inside. The long-nosed creature in the middle of the hoop was found in the lens of the camera. The small black gear, the gold circle, and the white circle were also found inside the camera.

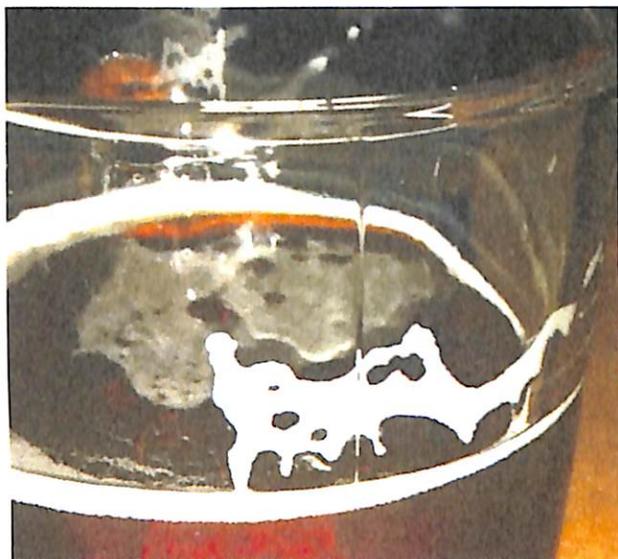


Figure 69. Elephant creature. 2011. Beer foam on glass. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

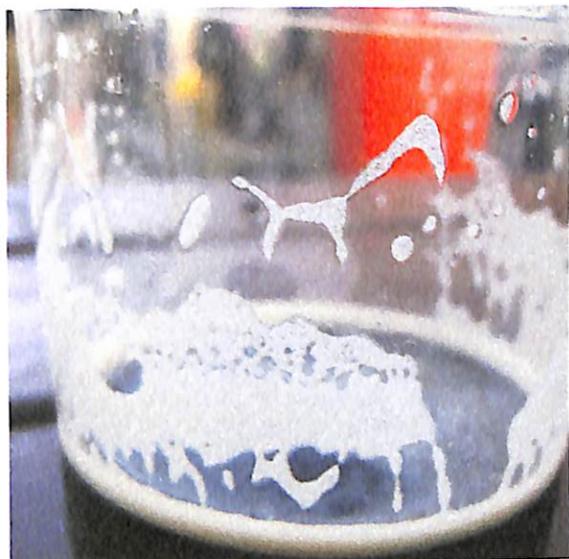


Figure 70. Giraffe bird creature. 2010. Beer foam on plastic. Galway, Ireland. Photograph by author.



Figure 71. Bird creature. 2010. Pine straw in concrete hole. Mijet, Croatia. Photograph by author.



Figure 72. Creature. 2011. Small sculpture made from recycled camera parts and a gold hoop earring. Photograph by author.

TRAVELING

Traveling in Europe while studying abroad in 2010 significantly expanded my visual vocabulary in terms of landscape (see figs. 73–77), architecture (see figs. 78–81), and



Figure 73. View from atop Diamond Hill, 2010. Letterfrack, Ireland. Photograph by author.



Figure 74. Galway seashore stones. 2010. Galway, Ireland. Photograph by author.



Figure 75. View of sea from Dún Aengus Fort Clif. 2010. Inishmore, Ireland. Photograph by author.



Figure 76. Winding lines in the landscape leading to the mountain; seen from the train to Füssen, 2010. Germany. Photograph by author.



Figure 77. Rose gardens in Vienna. 2010. Vienna. Photograph by author.



Figure 78. Pattern and repetition in the architectural detail of the Doge's Palace. 2010. Venice. Photograph by author.



Figure 79. Clock and arches. 2010. Verona. Photograph by author.



Figure 80. Architectural motif detail; influence comes from the scrolls, animals, and curves. 2010. Verona. Photograph by author.



Figure 81. Hotel sign with number four in Dubrovnik. 2010. Dubrovnik. Photograph by author.

art. Europe is a magical place, teeming with historic buildings, established cultures and festivals. Traveling in Europe in 2010, I encountered an abundance of Christmas markets, community-wide celebrations, and summer festivals (see figs. 82 and 83). The presence of exciting events in many European cities made these places seem even more magical.



Figure 82 Festival banner in Dubrovnik. 2010. Dubrovnik. Photograph by author.



Figure 83 A waving flag and surrounding birds set the stage for the city's festival. 2010. Dubrovnik. Photograph by author.

ADVANCED PRINTMAKING

Animal-like creatures became the subjects of my prints and mixed media pieces upon returning from study abroad. Over time, the creatures became more abstracted and were drawn in a more “automatic” or intuitive way. The process involved drawing organic shapes that fit into curves of adjacent shapes, then finding the creatures and animal forms in the freely drawn illustration.

(Advanced Printmaking Statement; written December 8, 2010)

My work in Advanced Printmaking from this semester is focused around the creatures that fill my sketchbooks and are created from the spontaneous movement of my pen on paper. The forms I draw are becoming increasingly creature-like. After I draw a shape, a creature presents itself to me, and I simply fill in the spaces with eyes, or needed line detail to define different aspects of the creature’s body. Working with serigraphy as the printing method to translate pen drawings into prints, I often used single colors to print the abstract forms created by lines onto neutral colored papers (see figs. 84 and 85). The resulting images were interesting and graphic, yet lacked depth. By removing shapes from one print and layering different colored and different designs underneath the removed shape, I began to add depth to the silk-screen prints (see figs. 86–87).



Figure 84. *Orange Bull*. 2010. Silkscreen on paper by author.



Figure 85. *People and Animals*. 2010. Silkscreen on paper by author.

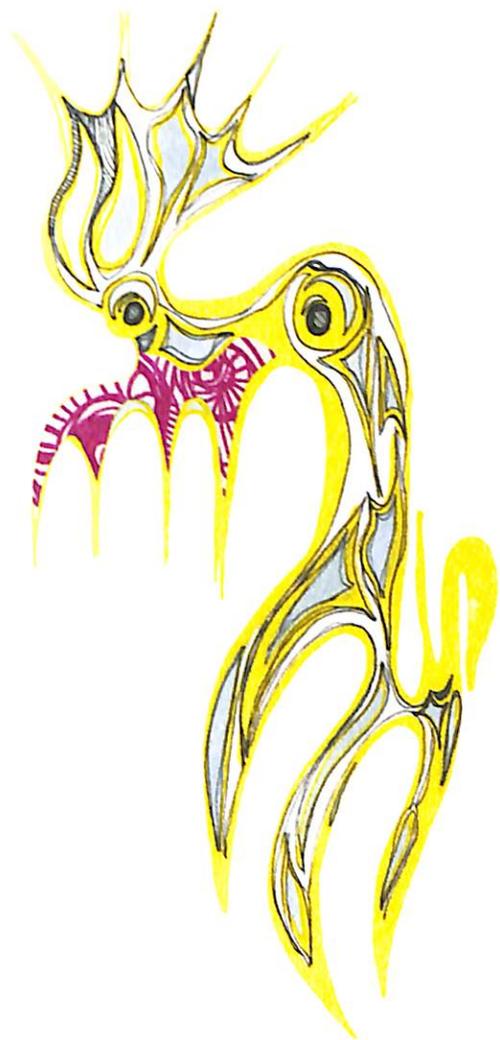


Figure 86. *Green Creature with Magenta Swirls*. 2010. Mixed media print by author.

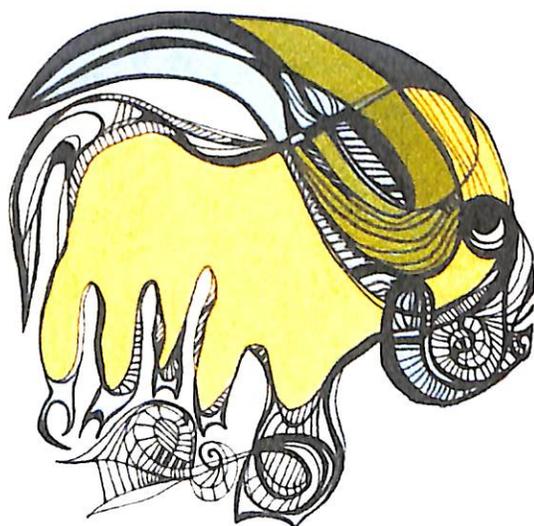


Figure 87. *Yellow and Blue Creature*. 2010. Illustration by author.

NEW TECHNIQUES AND PROCESSES

Over the two-year thesis process, significant developments in technique and style include a tendency to draw freely or “automatically,” increased abstraction and stylization of line drawings (see figs. 88 and 89), paper cutting and layering of prints to create areas with more depth, coloring sections of black line drawings with solid color (see fig. 90), working with pen and ink, intuitively drawing in combination with more representational drawing (see figs. 91 and 92), and ultimately working larger and with new materials (see fig. 93).



Figure 88. *Elephant at the Circus Tent*. 2011. Ink pen on Bristol by author.



Figure 89. *Eye I*. 2011. Pilot Precise V5 pen on paper by author.

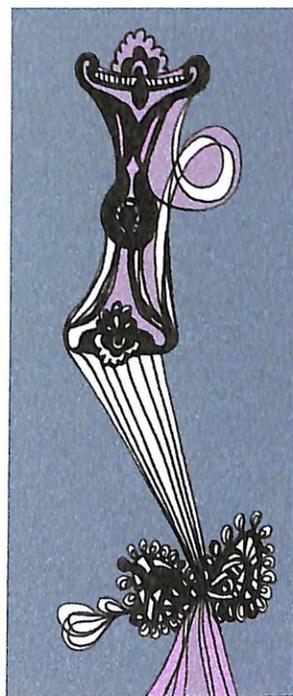


Figure 90. Black line “T” drawing with solid fill colors. 2010. Digital illustration by author.



Figure 91. *Ballerina, Organic Forms, and Numbers 1*. 2011. Pilot Precise V5 pen on paper by author. A spontaneous illustration with shapes resembling small found objects and plant-like forms.



Figure 92. *Ballerina, Organic Forms, and Numbers 2*. 2011. Pilot Precise V5 pen on paper by author. Intuitive drawing in combination with more representational drawing.



Figure 93. *Ballerina and Creatures*. 2011. Charcoal, acrylic ink, and acrylic paint on paper by author. First wall-size abstract drawing.

CHAPTER III — INFLUENCE

Two years before my thesis exhibition, I researched the relationship between graphic design and architecture while studying abroad in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The research led me to the field of EGD, the design discipline that exists “at the intersection of communication design and the built environment” (“What is EGD?”). Graphic façades, exhibition design, and corporate lobby design are all examples of EGD applications. In particular, the use of vinyl decal graphics, prolific in EGD, caught my attention. This research began the process of research and development for the exhibition *Currency*. In addition to EGD, *Currency* is influenced by Modern Art, in particular, contemporary graphic design, Surrealism, and German Expressionism.

ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHIC DESIGN

EGD is a multi-disciplinary field that brings together designers from an array of disciplines including graphic design, architecture, interior design, product design, and digital media to work collaboratively on the design of environments. EGD practitioners focus on the “visual aspects of wayfinding, communicating identity and information, and shaping the idea of place” in order to develop “visually unified graphic communication system[s] for...given site[s] within the built environment” (Calori). Examples of EGD projects include signage design (see figs. 94–96), retail store and showroom design, trade show booth design (see fig. 97), exhibition design, and façade design.



Figure 94. Vienna black vinyl decal signage. 2010. Vienna. Photograph by author.



Figure 95. Pension Astra backlit signage. 2010. Vienna. Photograph by author.

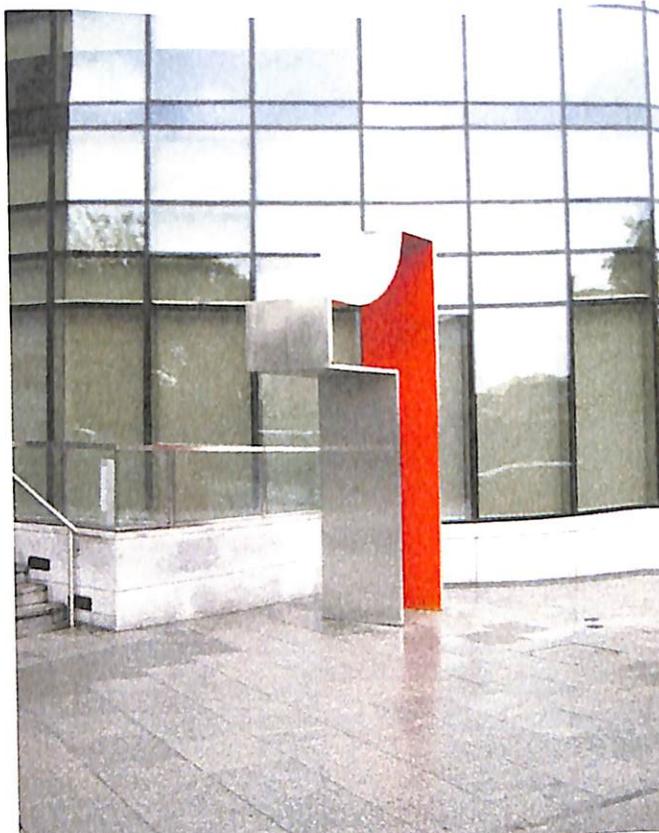


Figure 96. Three-dimensional street address identity signage. 2010. Dublin. Photograph by author.



Figure 97. Source: Mauk Design Videogame Exhibits. Playstation 2 trade show booth exhibition design. www.maukdesign.com.

In EGD, visual communication design strategies are used to develop communication messages within the built environment. Practitioners in the field use words, letters, colors, and graphics in three-dimensional, physical environments in order to communicate specific messages to a given audience. The famous EGD practitioner Reudi Baur,

founder of the Integral concept, explains that graphic designers working in the field of EGD understand that “anything can be a form of visual communication,” and there is no reason to not explore the “natural offshoots of a single domain” (Brawnstein). By approaching environment design as a graphic communication project, EGD practitioners move graphic design off the page and into the three-dimensional world.

Existing at the intersection of visual communication design and the built environment, EGD is the “ultimate hybrid...of design” (Lorenc, Skolnick, & Berger; Calori, 14). More than merely attaching a logo to a building, EGD practitioners develop integrated design systems that communicate identity and information through the elements within the built environment. The exhibition design for the BMW Corporate Museum in Munich echoes this idea, as the design reiterates the brand's underlying communication message through the visual design of the museum (see figs. 98 and 99).

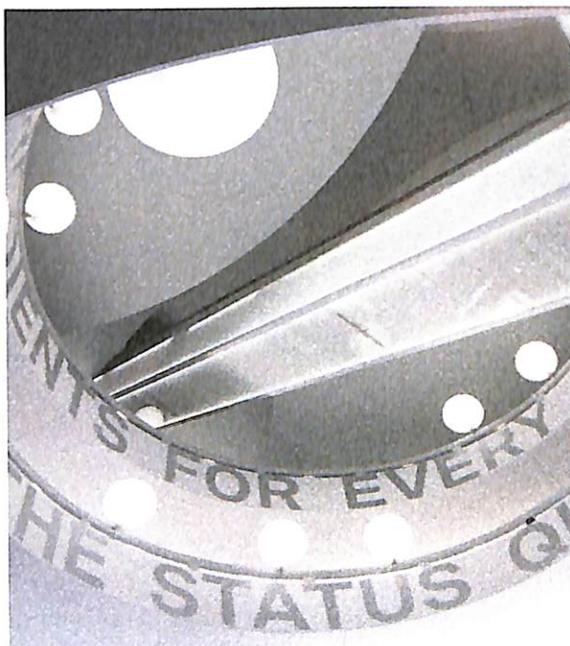


Figure 98. BMW Corporate Museum exhibition design. 2010. Munich. Photograph by author.

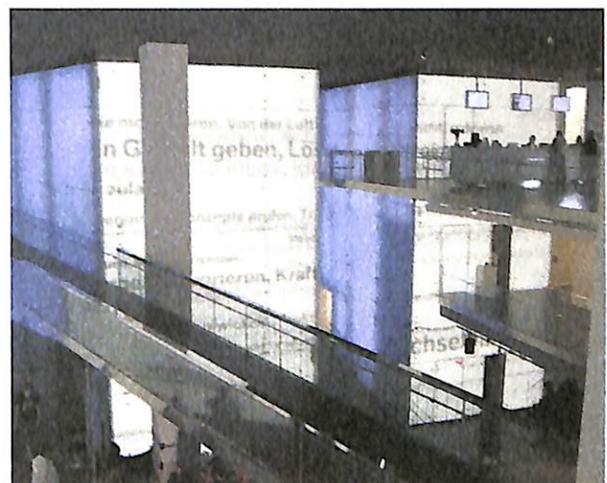


Figure 99. BMW Corporate Museum exhibition design and signage. 2010. Munich. Photograph by author.

The signage for Park Güell in Barcelona, also exemplifies the mission of EGD, as it blends with the park surroundings and reinforces the stylistic elements of Gaudi's design, keeping the park's visual identity consistent from the entrance throughout (see figs. 100 and 101).



Figure 100. Park Güell signage. 2010. Barcelona. Photograph by author.



Figure 101. Park Güell benches. 2010. Barcelona. Photograph by author.

In retail store environments, EGD is used as an innovative marketing strategy in the development of experiential environments with underlying brand messages (Rosenthal & Seppi). As Ron Pompei, CEO and creative director of Pompei A.D. states, ‘the spatial experience should be transformative’ because stores impact visitors on emotional levels (Feigenbaum). Examples of EGD in store design include interiors, showrooms, and window displays.

Anthropologie, a retail store for women ages 18–80, is designed as a “visual extravaganza tailored to” its particular location (Ryan). Anthropologie is “all about visual detail,” a theme clear to the visitor through the large in-store installations made from large quantities of repurposed materials (Ryan). Antiques and found objects are interspersed with new merchandise, creating a plethora of visual stimuli that will keep the shopper occupied for hours (see figs. 102 and 103).



Figure 102. Anthropologie store design. Source: Ryan, John. "Anthropologie, London." Visual Merchandising and Store Design. ST Media Group International, 2012. www.vmsd.com.



Figure 103. Anthropologie store design. Source: Ryan, John. "Anthropologie, London." Visual Merchandising and Store Design. ST Media Group International, 2012. www.vmsd.com.

Urban Outfitters stores, sister stores of Anthropologie, are designed to appeal to the complex nature of experience through interiors constructed with a diversity of materials. The store 'celebrat[es] diverse materials, textures, patterns and colors, an eclectic mix of found objects and unexpected groupings,' living up to their "culture of repurpose and reuse" (Feigenbaum). Fig. 104 shows an interior wall design application of EGD at the Urban Outfitters retail store in Victoria Square in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

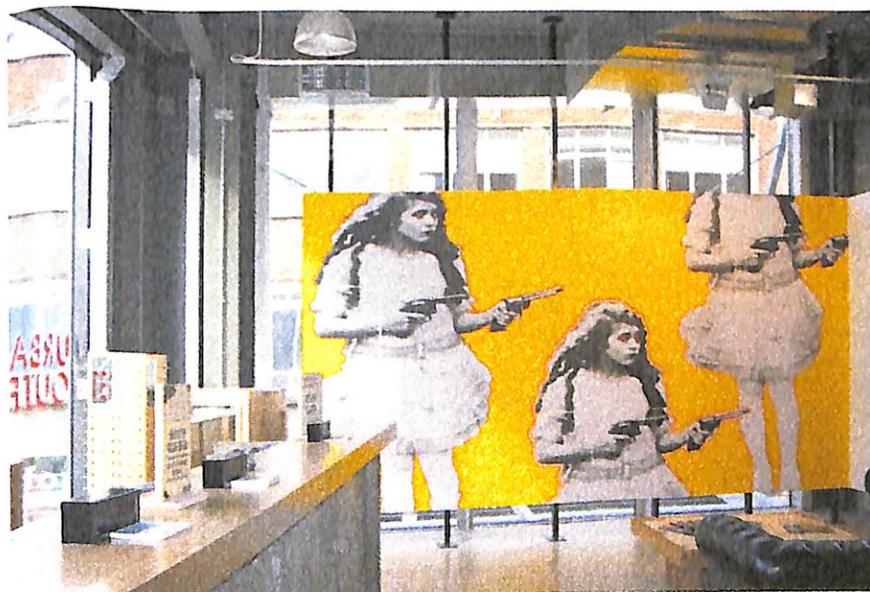


Figure 104. Interior wall design application of EGD at Urban Outfitters, 2010. Victoria Square, Belfast. Photograph by author.

The boundaries between EGD and installation art are often difficult to determine. Retail store installations, window display installations, and public art installations toe the line between EGD and installation art. For example, for a Valentine's Day-themed window display, Louis Vuitton on Champs-Elysées in Paris presented a festive display of larger-than-life pink and red cellophane letter balloons with giant satin ribbons extending from the balloons all the way to the floor of the store (fig. 105).



Figure 105. Louis Vuitton window installation. 2010, Champs-Elysées; Paris. Photograph by author.

Letters used in the gigantic balloon bouquet derived from the brand name, but jumbled in the air to create a message somewhere between “love you” and “Louis Vuitton,” though the letters “e” and “y” were not present. Sophisticated geometric cladding served as the backdrop to the elaborate display (see fig. 106). By reflecting the surroundings of the Champs-Élysées, the slick glass added depth and complexity to the window display. By evoking the luxury, quality, and larger-than-life nature of the Louis Vuitton brand, the window display fulfilled not only requirement of visual intrigue, but also an EGD requirement of communicating to an audience through a built environment.



Figure 106. Louis Vuitton geometric cladding and gigantic ribbons. 2010. Champs-Élysées; Paris. Photograph by author

GRAPHIC DESIGN — MIKE PERRY

Mike Perry is contemporary illustrator and graphic designer. He is known for his hand-drawn typography and illustrations. He illustrates fictional towns of buildings, trees, and odd inhabitants with simple shapes and repetition, and often uses black lines as outlines which he fills in with solid color. In his 2010 *Toms Shoes Holiday Campaign* (see fig. 107) illustration, buildings have eyes, a star shoots from a red house, and a paper chain is lowered down a chimney by a finger extending from a hand coming out of a giant giftbox. Perry explains of the illustration that “Toms commissioned me to explore a holiday world full of color, love, trees, presents, and who knows” (Perry). His spontaneous and energetic approach to design and illustration can be seen in his commercial and personal projects (see fig. 108 for a non-commercial project). Treating anything as a surface for graphic illustration, Perry designs everything from t-shirts to posters to chairs. Perry’s illustrative techniques, materials, and use of bright, flat color influence my work.

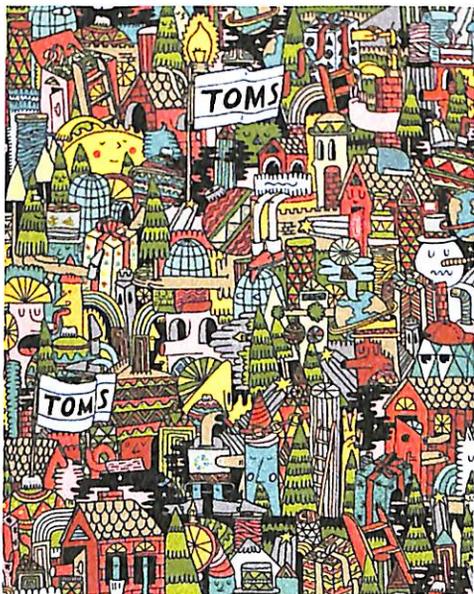


Figure 107. Perry, Mike. *Toms Shoes Holiday Campaign*. 2010. Source: Perry, Mike. “Toms Shoes Holiday Campaign.” *Mike Perry Studio*. Mike Perry, 15 December 2010. Copyright © 2012 Mike Perry. <<http://www.mikeperrystudio.com>>.

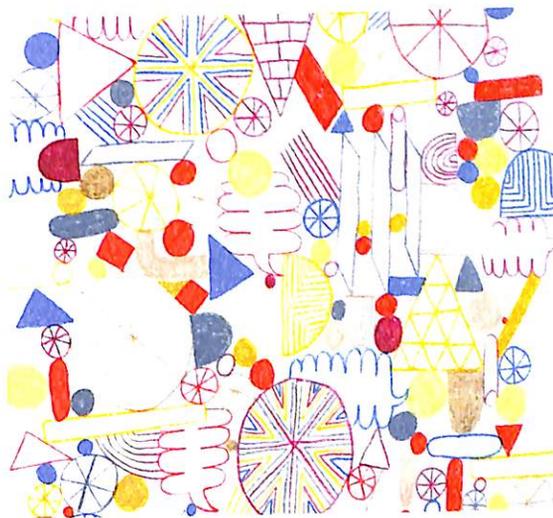


Figure 108. Perry, Mike. *Like Clockwork*. 2010. Color pencil on paper. Source: Perry, Mike. “Like Clockwork.” *Mike Perry Studio*. Mike Perry, 17 October 2010. Copyright © 2012 Mike Perry. <<http://www.mikeperrystudio.com>>.

SURREALISM — JOAN MIRÓ

For the Surrealists, “nature...offered a store of ideas, forms and motifs” art (Wood, 12). Surrealism “borrow[ed] from disparate subjective associations” and made use of the “found object (the fusion of material reality, chance and the unconscious)” (12). The artists and poets associated with the movement relied on “automatic techniques that explored chance processes” (12). The work of Surrealists featuring “curvilinear biomorphic forms resembling plants or amoeba” led to Biomorphism, which became a formal “organic form language” (12).

In the First Surrealist Manifesto, André Breton (1924) wrote, “I believe in the future resolution of these two states — outwardly so contradictory — which are dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality, a surreality, so to speak.” The “automatic” drawing process associated with Surrealism is a method used to unite these two states. The interplay of chance and human input (and to some extent, human control) leads to the realization of “more magical” work. Maybe this type of work, where process so emphasizes the element of chance, is nearer “reality” than a work that is meticulously planned and executed. The elements of chance and intuition fostered by the “automatic” process seem more natural than planned mark making.

Continuing in the First Surrealist Manifesto, Breton laments the vogue of “absolute rationalism” that assigns rules “even to experience.” He writes that “in the guise of civilization, under the pretext of progress,” society has “dismiss[ed]...anything...regarded as superstition or myth.” Breton recognizes Freud as the savior of “the explorer of the human mind,” as Freudian theory “empower[s]” the “explorer” “to deal with more than merely summary realities.”

Joan Miró was a Spanish painter, printmaker, and sculptor who practiced Surrealist techniques beginning in the early 1920s in Paris (Waldberg). The simple palette, flat color fields, curvilinear forms, and amebic shapes of Miró’s work suggest organic subject matter and whimsical play. Imaginary and magical qualities are evoked by Miró’s paintings, sculptures (see figs. 109 and 110), and prints. In addition to the Catalan countryside, “plants, insects, [and] simple forms of life” as well as “the stars, sun, moon and sea” all became part of Miró’s work (“The Collection”). Childhood memories and thoughts of the countryside in the town where Miró grew up led him into a series of works using “imagery of almost childlike innocence” (“The Collection”).



Figure 109. Miró, Joan. *Pájaro lunar (Lunar Bird)*. 1966. Bronze. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid. Photograph by author.



Figure 110. Miró, Joan and Gardy Artigas. *Dona i Ocell (Woman and Bird)*. 1982. Mixed media sculpture. Joan Miró Park, Barcelona. Photograph by author.

Miró’s “Dream Paintings” number over one hundred works produced from 1924–1928. These works are recognizable by stylized objects painted carefree on a flat color field. The scales of the “Dream Paintings” are surprising at first encounter. Viewed only on the screen or in a book, one expects his creature-like paintings to be small and intimate. The

large paintings command a presence of importance and significance and draw the viewer in to take a closer look.

Man with Pipe is an example of a dream painting by Miró (see fig. 111). At almost 4x5' (45x57.5") this work presents a larger than life size creature-like figure to the viewer (see fig. 112). Developed during 1925, this oil painting shows a milky white figure on a translucent pale blue background. An organic shape forms the figure of the man. The ethereal quality of this painting is evoked through the curvilinear lines, the moonlike sphere, and the organic shapes.



Figure 111. Source: Miró, Joan. *Man with Pipe*. 1925. Oil. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Barcelona. (AS11003). <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/index.html>.



Figure 112. Scale of Miró's *Man with Pipe* at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Barcelona. 2010. Photograph by author.

“Constellations” is the name of a series of paintings Miró developed from 1940–1941 (“The Collection”). With the chaos of the surrounding environment due to the outbreak of the Second World War, Miró began these introspective gouache paintings on paper.

The stars and the sky were important in the development of these works, as the “myriad celestial signs” reside next to figures representing earth (Fundació Joan Miró). *Constellation: Toward the Rainbow* shown in fig. 113 is one painting from Miró's “Constellations” series.



Figure 113. Source: Miró, Joan. *Constellation: Toward the Rainbow*. 1941. Gouache and oil wash on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, 1998 (1999.363.53). © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. www.metmuseum.org

Though Miró never formally join the Surrealist group, he practiced many of the Surrealist approaches to art making including “automatic” drawing, an aim to express the unconscious, and a close connection to nature (“The Collection”). The sky and the constellations were very important imagery for Miró’s works. In his “Constellations” series, “myriad celestial signs” mix with “ethereal figures” “refer[encing]...the earth” (Fundació Joan Miró). The “rhythmic reiteration” of Miró’s paintings achieves a “dynamic effect” (Fundació Joan Miró).

Women and Bird in the Night exemplifies Miró's characteristic a "graphic style" and "rounded forms" of the 1940s (see fig. 114). Key to these iconic works are the "color masses... contrasted with line drawing" (Fundació Joan Miró). Featured on a neutral background, Miró's elements from the mid-1940s include dots, colored shapes, black lines, black shapes, and crescents. The nearly flat background of this painting serves as stable backgrounds for strategically placed dots and lines. Intersecting lines and dots form new shapes, where solid colors are used to define triangles, crescents, and other shapes.



Figure 114. Source: Miró, Joan. *Women and Bird in the Night*. 1944. Gouache on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, 1998. © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. www.metmuseum.org.

GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM — ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner was a German Expressionist painter, printmaker, and sculptor. He led the expressionist group Die Brücke (The Bridge) and lived in Dresden and Berlin. Kirchner's mystical female portraits are often depicted in natural settings. The angular stylized portraits and the suggestions of landscape and forest rely on expression to evoke emotion. Kirchner's use of expressive strokes, severe marks, and intense, saturated color are iconic of the artist. Intense emotion and bold expression make his work a stark expression of reality (see fig. 115). His confidence in painting led to uninhibited strokes.



Figure 115. Source: Kirchner, Ernst Ludwig. *Fränzi in front of a Carved Chair*. 1910. Oil on canvas, 2009 © Museo Thyssen Bornemisza, Madrid. <http://www.museothyssen.org>.

Magdalena Moeller, the Director of the Brücke-Museum, explains that the German Expressionists looked “for the mystery hidden behind the external form” and for “the soul of things” (Miall 3). German Expressionists’ wanted to “reveal the inner emotional truth of objects, people and experience” (3). “It was the Expressionists’ aim to communicate a deepened expression of their subjects’ essence” (3).

My work is related to Expressionism through the drawing process. Small-scale drawings are created through spontaneous process and expression. Original drawings are made in the fluid media of ink. Though I find it difficult to express in words the sense of wonder and beauty that I perceive in certain objects, imagery, and events, I am able to express it more accurately in lines made from fluid, black ink.

When I draw, I understand the rhythm and the movement of the ink, and I understand what I am doing. I do not pre-plan images and I do not make preliminary drawings. The success of my work and drawings lies in the execution of smooth and continuous line, confidently drawn without strict contemplation of final product or the degree of realism achieved. If I try to control my drawing, restricting the intuitive movement of my pen, it will fail.

CHAPTER IV — PRODUCTION & ANALYSIS

PROCESS

Small-scale “automatic” line drawings in ink are translated into large-scale wall graphics. The small-scale illustrations are scanned into the computer and meticulously converted to bitmap file formats in order to be manufactured as large-scale vinyl wall decals through a laser cutting process. Due to the financial constraints of the project, however, the work is realized as a full-scale, hand-drawn version of the original vinyl decal design.

Step One

“Automatic” drawings are made on sketchbook paper or Bristol board (see figs. 116–117). Materials used for original illustrations include Canson 400 Series 11x14” sketchbooks, Smooth White Bristol Board, BFK Rives paper, Pilot V5 Precise Pens (Black), Speedball Lettering Pen Nibs (B-1, B-3, B-5), and Higgins Waterproof India Ink (Black).



Figure 116. *Hippo*. 2011. Pen and ink on paper by author. (Dimensions: 14x11”).



Figure 117. *Girl and Giraffe*. 2011. Pen and ink on Rives BFK by author. (Dimensions: 30x22”).

Step Two¹

Original illustrations are scanned into the computer using a flatbed scanner. Digital scanning creates a clear digital image. Because the original illustrations are drawn on paper, scanning is also practical method for digital translation. If the drawing is larger than the scanner bed, the illustration is scanned in sections and then stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. Illustrations are scanned at 300 dpi/24-bit color using an Epson flatbed scanner and saved as TIFF files.

Next, the scanned image is prepared for conversion into a vector-based digital file format. The steps are a series of meticulous editing and converting processes performed in Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. Images are edited at full zoom and often on an individual pixel basis.

Using Adobe Photoshop, the quality of the scanned image is examined. Excess information is removed from the scanned image (specks of dust, etc.). The background is removed from the scanned image leaving a line illustration on a transparent background. The resulting image file maintains the original light and dark variations of the pen ink and the photographic representation of varied depression in the paper due to varied pen pressure.

Step Three

Next, the files are prepared for more accurate translation into a vector illustration. Adobe Photoshop is used to burn and erase certain parts of the line illustration without sacrificing original line variation and quality. Avoiding edges that are too soft (fuzzy)

¹ Steps Two-Four were completed in order to have the large-scale vinyl decal produced. Though the decals were not realized, the files are ready for manufacture.

or too hard [jagged or pixelated] is key. Tedious editing and minute alterations lead to preserved line quality and solid color lines.

Step Four

The final step is the conversion of the digital image into a vector files using Adobe Illustrator. Settings for the “Live Trace” function are tweaked according to the given illustration. Once the “Live Trace” function is performed, the resulting vector illustration is further edited. Vector points and anchors are manually converted at full zoom. Properly converting scanned images is important for the translation into high quality print and manufactured products. The result is the translation of an original black ink illustration into a digital vector file optimized for manufacture and production not only for vinyl decal laser cutting, but also for a variety of other media, ranging from silkscreened t-shirts to CNC-milled Plexiglas wall mounts (a rough print of the scaled illustration can be seen in fig. 118).



Figure 118 Half-size mock up of original plan for side wall of exhibition space, 2011. Toner on paper. Photograph by author

Step Five (see figs. 119–130)

The large-scale drawing installation is produced over a period of two weeks using a variety of media. Initially drawn on Savage Widetone Seamless Background Paper (107” x 12yds, #1 Super White), layering, overlapping, pasting, and cutting are added to create depth. Materials include graffiti paint markers, graffiti ink markers, gold leafing pens (18kt gold), Prismacolor Premier Softcore colored pencils, printmaking paper in various neutral colors, tissue paper, found paper, neutral pH adhesive polyvinyl acetate (PVA) glue, acetate, foam core, a digital projector, and NACTO™ knife and blades. The predominant use of paper and ink relate to the overall ideas of change, movement, and ephemerality embodied by the work.



Figure 119. Savage Widetone Seamless Background Paper set up to begin in the drawing room at Meek Hall. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 120. First lines. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 121. Molotow graffiti markers used for drawing installation. 2011. Photograph by author.

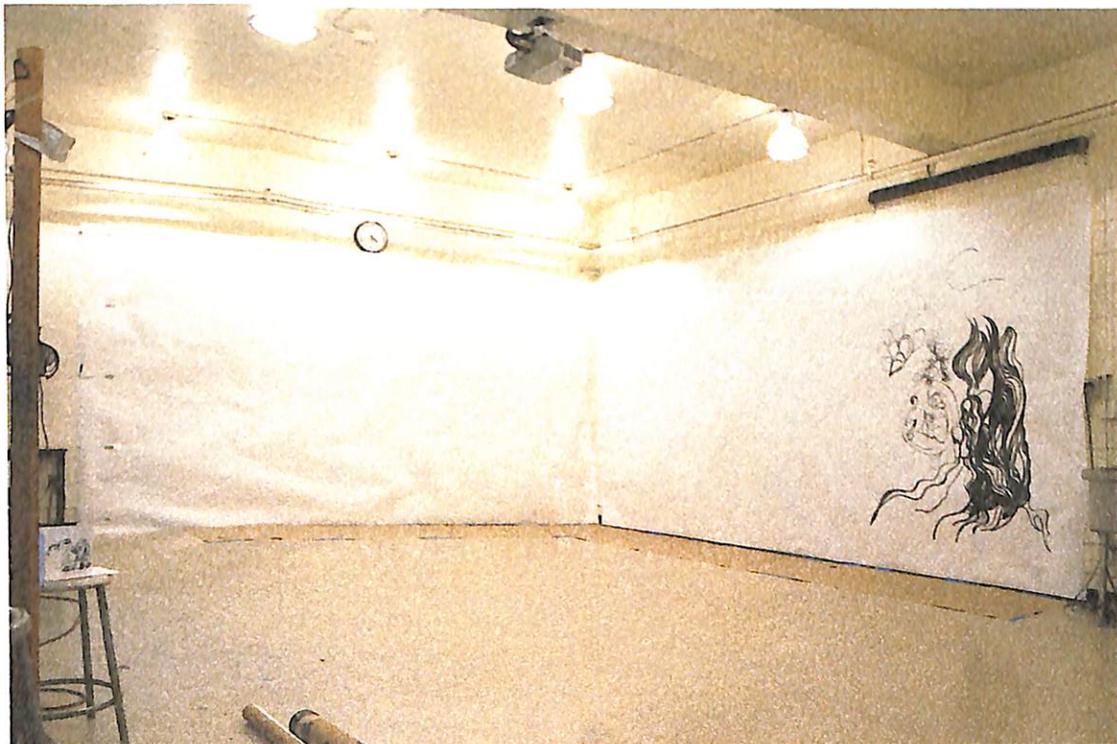


Figure 122. Workshop room at Meek Hall. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

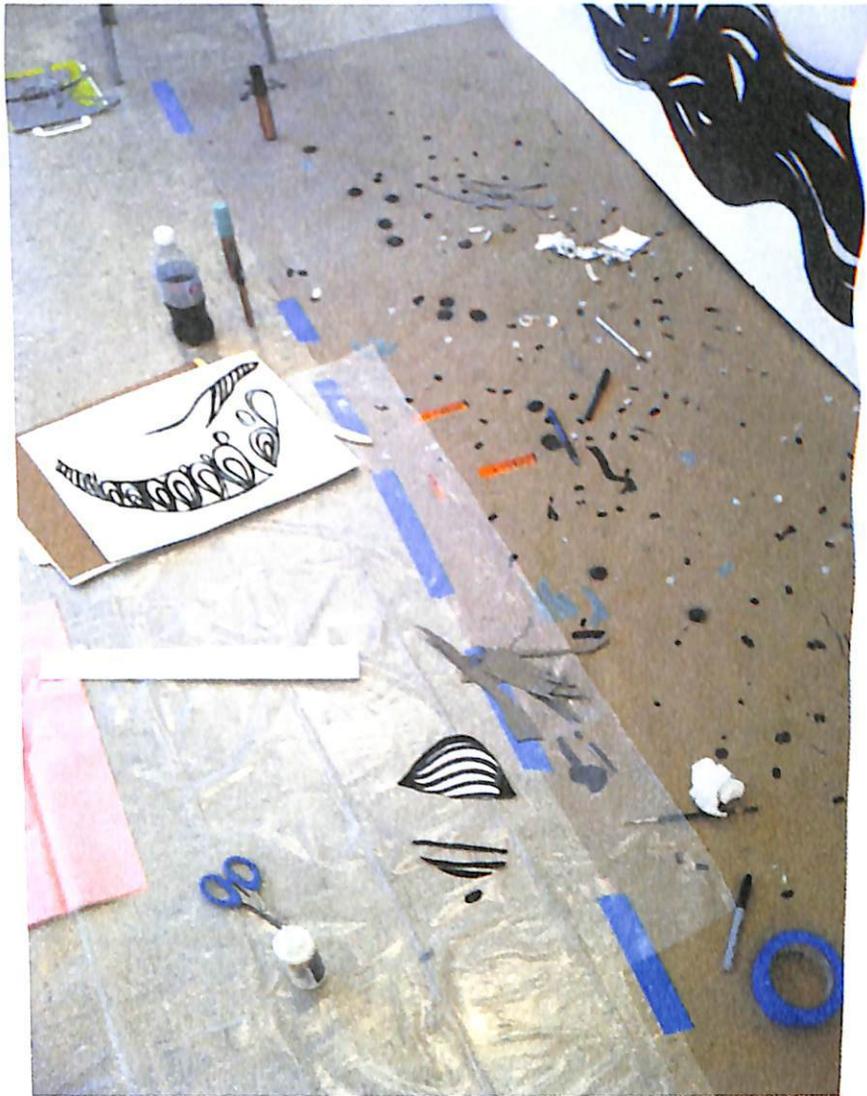


Figure 125. The floor in the workspace. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 126. Colored pencils. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 127. The first work space. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 128. Potential thesis components. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 129. Detail of organic illustration. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

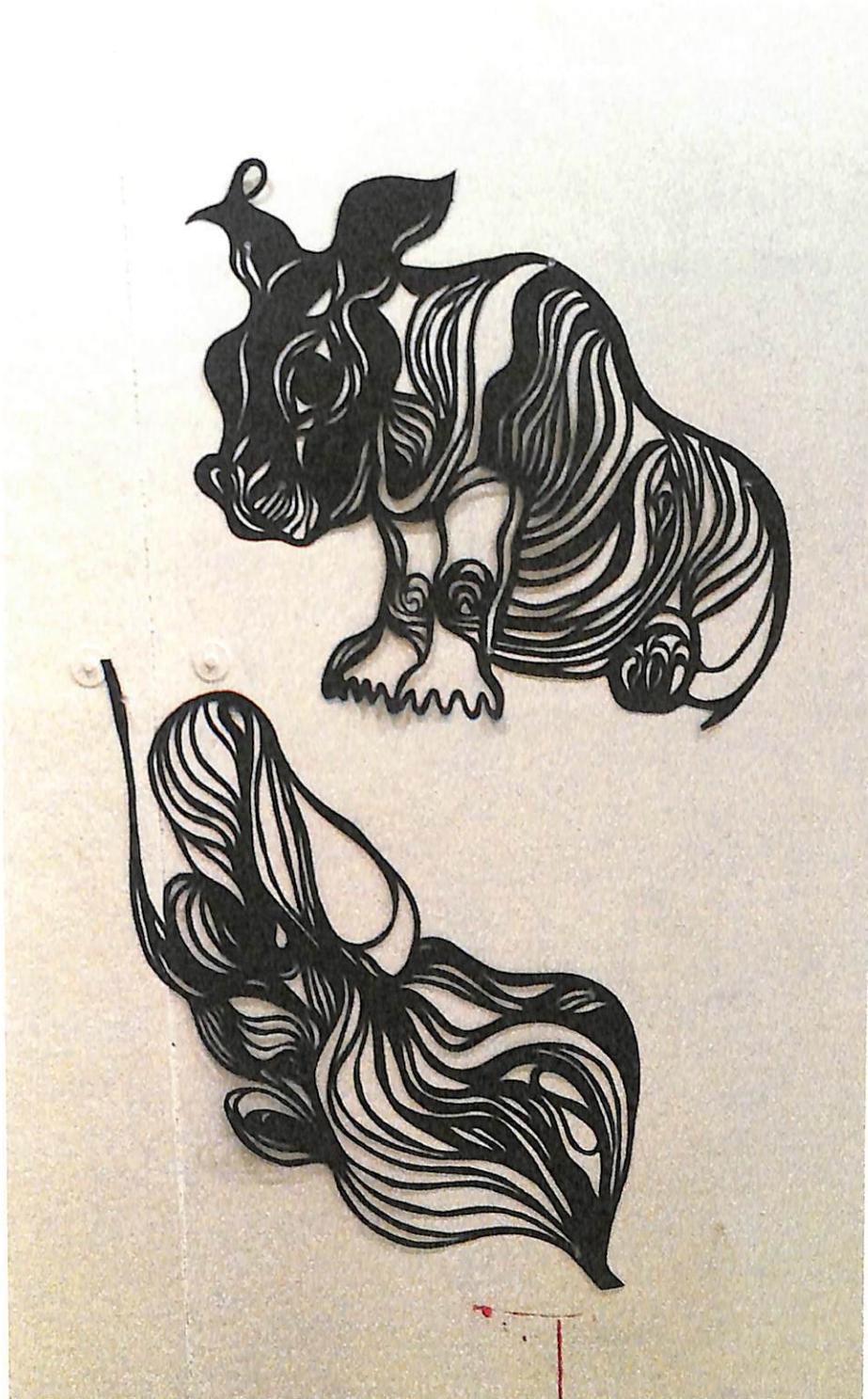


Figure 130. Hippo and plume cut outs for the show. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

Installation

Team of Six People.

X-ACTO™ Knife and Blades.

Stanley ¼" Staples and Staple Gun.

24 Hours.

ANALYSIS

The drawing evokes a sense of wonder and magic through interlacing line work, fantastical animal creatures, and a colorful palette. The work is unified formally through the repetition of curvilinear lines and organic shapes, and consistency of media – mostly papers, markers, and colored pencils. Varied repetition, remixes, and permutation of the same subjects of carousels, antiques, jewelry, symbols, celebratory sweets, childhood memories, clocks, ballerinas, maypoles, horses, gazelles, sea creatures, and strange animals produce abstract, ribbon-like forms (see figs. 131–133).



Figure 131. *Currency*. 2011. Gallery 130, Meck Hall; Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 132. Back wall view of *Currency*. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.



Figure 133. Side wall view of *Currency*. 2011. Oxford, Mississippi. Photograph by author.

Degree of Abstraction

Different elements of the work are drawn with varying degrees expression and control.

Recognizable objects in the installation include a rhino with blue horns (fig. 134), a giraffe (fig. 135), a baby hippo (fig. 136), a deer (fig. 137), the numbers seven and two (fig. 138), a spotted cow (fig. 139), a birthday cake with candles and sprinkles (fig. 140), an antler, and cloud-like shapes (fig. 141). Creature-like objects include a bird creature, an elephant-like creature, and a small drawing of monster creatures (fig. 142). The animals in the installation are drawn in a whimsical manner and are connected to other elements of the drawing with ribbon-like lines.



Figure 134. Rhino with two blue horns. 2011. Graffiti marker and colored pencil on paper. Photograph by author.



Figure 135. Giraffe. 2011. Graffiti marker on printmaking paper. Photograph by author.



Figure 136. Baby hippo. 2011. Paper cut out mounted on printmaking paper. Photograph by author.



Figure 137. Blue deer. 2011. Graffiti marker on acetate. Photograph by author.



Figure 138. Recognizable symbol cut out of the number two in brightly colored paper. 2011. Photograph by author.

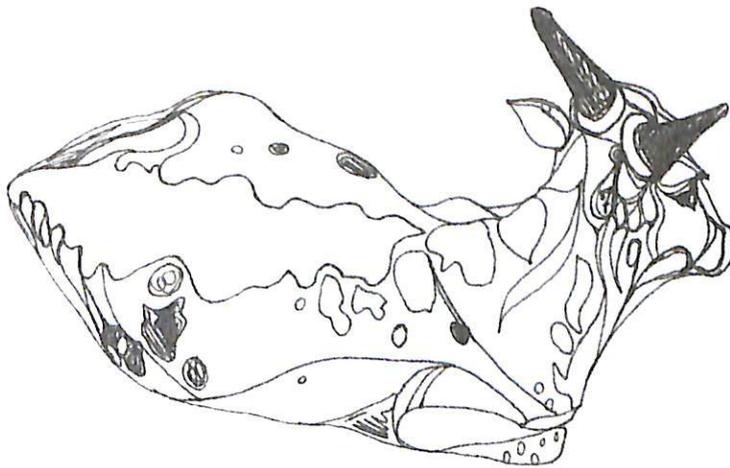


Figure 139. Cow at the state fair. 2011. Pen on found paper by author.



Figure 140. Birthday cake, 2011. Mixed media illustration on paper by author.

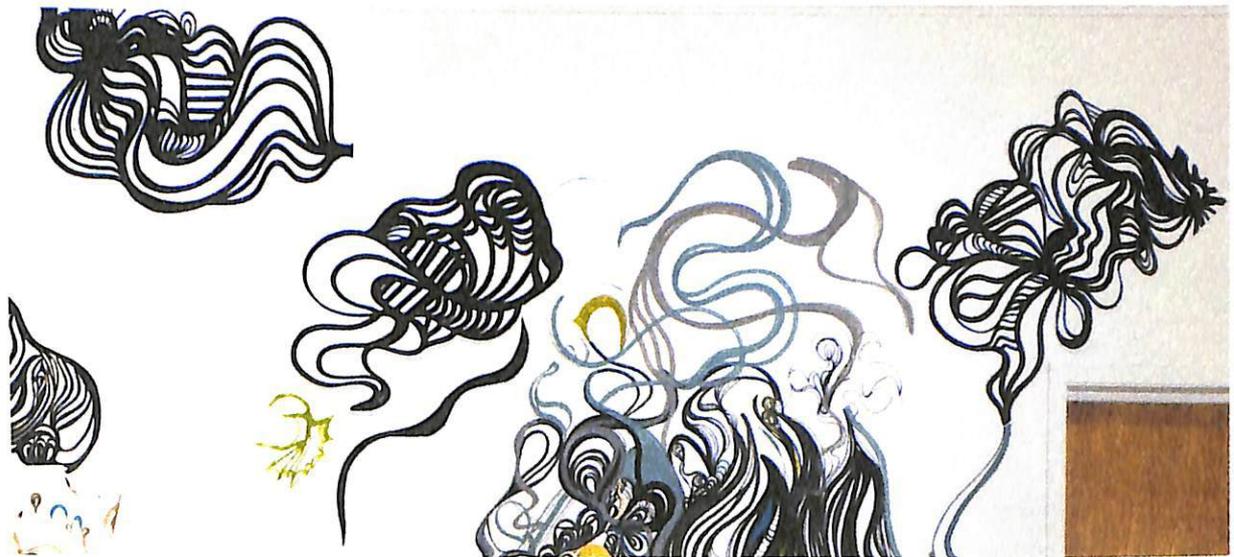


Figure 141. Cloud-like shapes and green antler. 2011. Marker on foam core and marker on acetate by author.



Figure 142. Creature illustration. 2011. Pen, colored pencil, and gold leafing pen on paper by author.

Sometimes a drawing begins as a representational image but quickly becomes abstracted. While drawing, the marks and the movement of the ink on paper take over, and consideration for realism is gone. The objective becomes to capture the nature of the thing represented, rather than the thing itself. For example, fig. 143 began as an illustration of a deer. Encouraged by a miss-mark, the deer quickly became an energetic pattern of flowing lines. Rather than illustrating the realistic deer, the concern changed to translating the idea of the deer as a whimsical creature of the forest. Deer are associated with trees and the woods, a place where mysterious and magical things happen.



Figure 143. Abstracted deer. 2011. Graffiti marker on paper by author.

Line

I understand the fluid and continuous movement of the lines I draw in ink, and I can sense when they are right. As Georgia O’Keeffe wrote in 1923, “I found that I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn’t say in any other way – things I had no words for” (qtd. in Sweeney). There is a certain type of beautiful fluid movement that I want to convey to viewers through linear elements. To do this, a balance between chaos and control is maintained (see fig. 144). Uncertainty is explored through certainty in mark making and crispness of line. Ink allows for a clean and smooth mark. I make definite marks about indefinite ideas. The result of the drawing is a balance of chaos and calm connected through linear elements.



Figure 144. Plume cut out and blue creature. 2011. Cut paper, marker on paper, and marker on wall by author.

Line is the most important element of design used in the creation of the piece. The whole drawing is made of lines, and many different kinds of line are used. The many diagonal lines in the work emphasize the importance of movement. Long, winding lines, bending lines, intersecting and overlapping lines, and lines defining shapes and segments and smaller areas are frequent in the drawing. Fluid lines, heavy lines, black lines, repetition of line, edges and outline, expressive line, and the repetition of line to create pattern and texture are all used. Contour and gestural lines are varied thick and thin to create interest. The lines are smooth, energetic, busy, and moving. Line is used to define shapes, form, and texture as well as to imbue the subject matter with expressive energy.

Scale

The scale of the work is related to the EGD function of *communicating through spatial* experience. Scale is one of the most important and *pronounced elements of design in Currency*. In order to preserve what is deemed as most important to the success of the overall work – the spatial experience – scale trumped other formal concerns. Physical space is utilized so the viewer may experience the work bodily. Though the original small-scale drawings communicate the elegant, intertwining movement that I envisioned for the thesis, the small drawings do not create a human-scale spatial experience. It was the overwhelming sense of interconnection and fluid movement that I wanted to communicate with the viewer. I want my work to draw the viewer in almost physically. The best way to communicate the unending connections and constantly expanding concepts addressed in the work was to make them big.

Color

Initially, the work was designed to be black lines on a white wall. Developing the work by hand, however, instead of having it produced as a black vinyl decal, provided the opportunity to add color. The majority of the color used in the exhibition is black line *on white background*. The black lines are used to define the forms and create shapes and movement.

Color is minimal as to not overpower the line work, and the palette references festivals and celebratory events (see figs. 145–150). Bright colors including lime, teal, and pink contrast muted and neutral colors of tan, beige/fawn, and grey. Light pink, turquoise, and olive green allude to gems and fine jewelry. Ballet pinks, sea foam green, and metallic gold were drawn from photographs of European towns and romantic villages. These colors gently reference something whimsical without being overwhelming or too loud.



Figure 145. Teal, olive, fawn, and pinks are used sparingly amidst the overall black and white palette of the work. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 146. The giraffe on fawn colored paper adds color emphasis to the upper region of the installation. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 147. Pale pinks and soft greys contrast with hot pink and thick black lines to give the piece interest and variety. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 148. The rhino's blue horns are two of the brightest areas in the work. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 149. Gold leaf and gold colored pencil refer to luxury items and antique jewelry. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 150. The different intensities of black used in the work provide dimension in the installation; the blues are added subtly on top of black lines. 2011. Photograph by author.

Varied Repetition

The varied repetition of organic shapes and never-ending movement of fluid lines allude to ideas of continual transformation and evolution of images and ideas. Intersecting and overlapping lines break down shapes in the work. Organic forms resemble water droplets, crescent moons, streams, rivers, amoebic shadows, leaves, and cellular organisms (see fig. 151). Spirals, swirls, and contour lines also contribute to defining shapes. These formal aspects also reference conceptual ideas of growth, change, and consistency.



Figure 151. Varied repetition of organic loops, teardrops, circles, and crescents. 2011. Photograph by author.

Texture

Layering is used to create depth in the work and to reference overlying memories, altered perception, and finite details. Smooth and textured paper, thin applications of paint and ink, and paper collage are materials used to create texture. The cut out nature of much

of the work gives depth and dimension to the installation (see figs. 152–157). The texture of the pink paper material on the cake and on the circle is shiny and glossy, as is the acetate used for the antler and the deer. The foam core clouds are thicker than the other materials and create a raised planar area in relation to the overall work.



Figure 152. Cut out aspects of the work add depth. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 153. Cut out tear shapes continue the installation to the floor. 2011. Photograph by author.

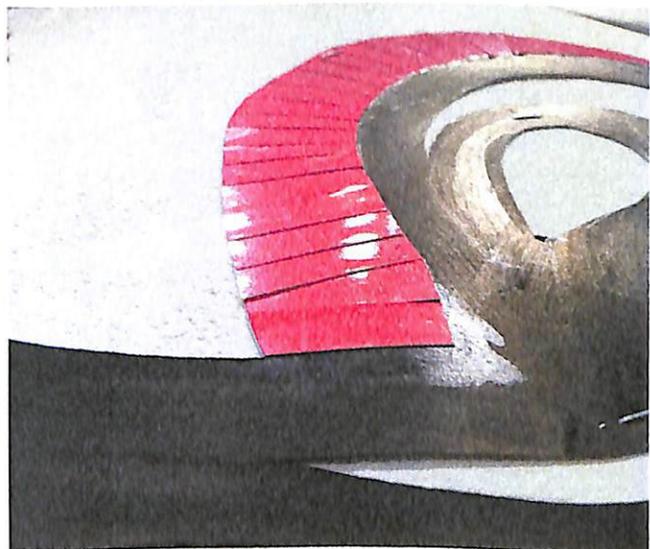


Figure 154. Cut rectangles from found paper arranged to follow to curve of a teardrop shape. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 155. Cut paper attached directly to gallery wall. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 156. Cut paper on top of more cut paper attached to gallery wall. 2011. Photograph by author.

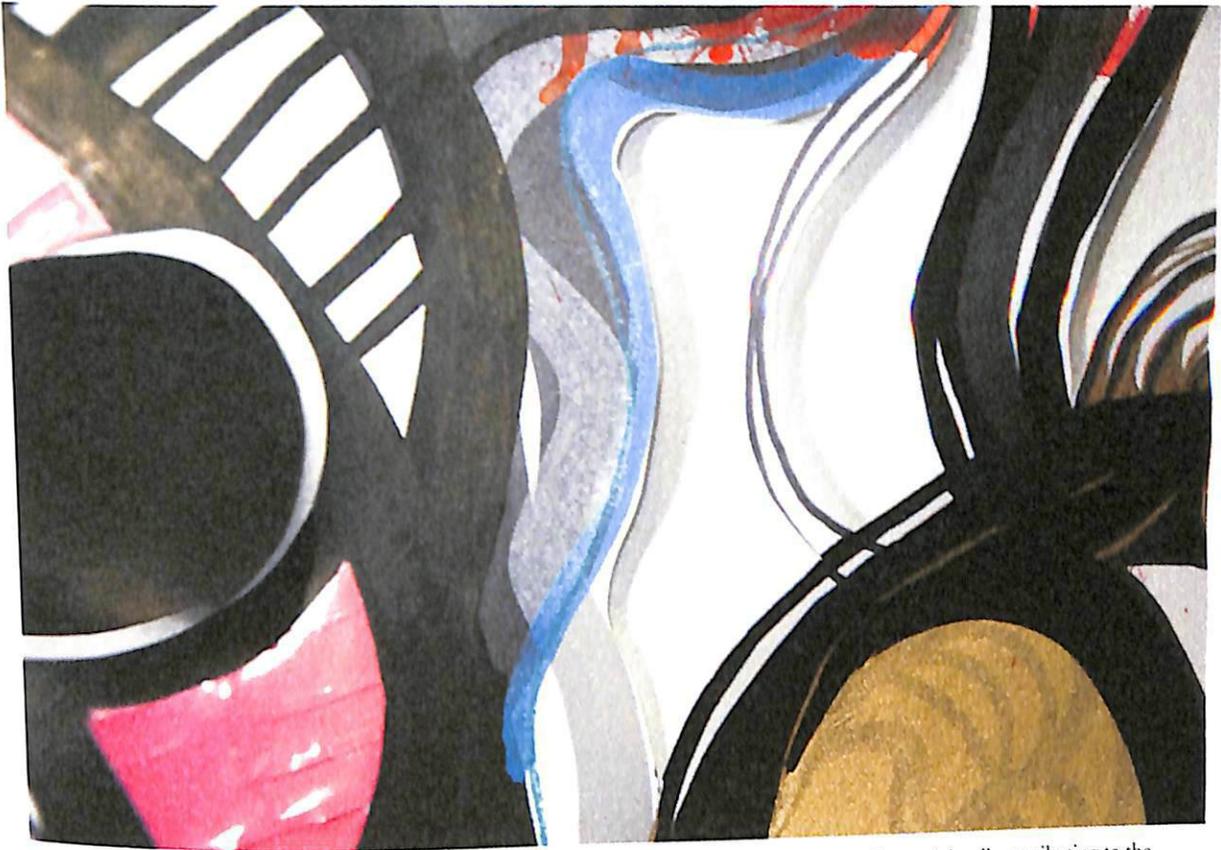


Figure 157. Close up view of cut paper, tissue paper overlay, pasted shapes, and variety of materials, all contributing to the work's texture. 2011. Photograph by author.

Found Objects and Collage

The birthday cake in the work features broken colored-pencil tips as sprinkles (see fig. 158). The sprinkles reference the wonder of small, overlooked objects. These small bits of color incorporate found objects into the work without compromising the overall media integrity. In addition to the “sprinkles,” found paper collage elements are also incorporated into the work. The glossy pink paper material in the work is cut from a recycled shopping bag. I collect these shiny pink bags as treasures, embossed with gold lettering and tied with pink satin ribbons. By using the shopping bags as paper collage elements, I reference my background in graphic design and tendencies towards collecting and found objects. The paper of the bags become rectangular cutouts, arranged in patterns to form overall shapes – the pink icing decoration on the birthday cake (see fig. 158), the circular rim of the clock face, etc. Glidden paint chips in the color “Extra Virgin Olive Oil” are also used as collage elements. Teardrop shapes are cut from the

paint chips, leaving a tiny bit of printed lettering to allow the viewer to catch a glimpse of the found material (see fig. 159). Found, scrap, collage, gold tissue, Canson textured, and Rives BFK fawn papers are all used.

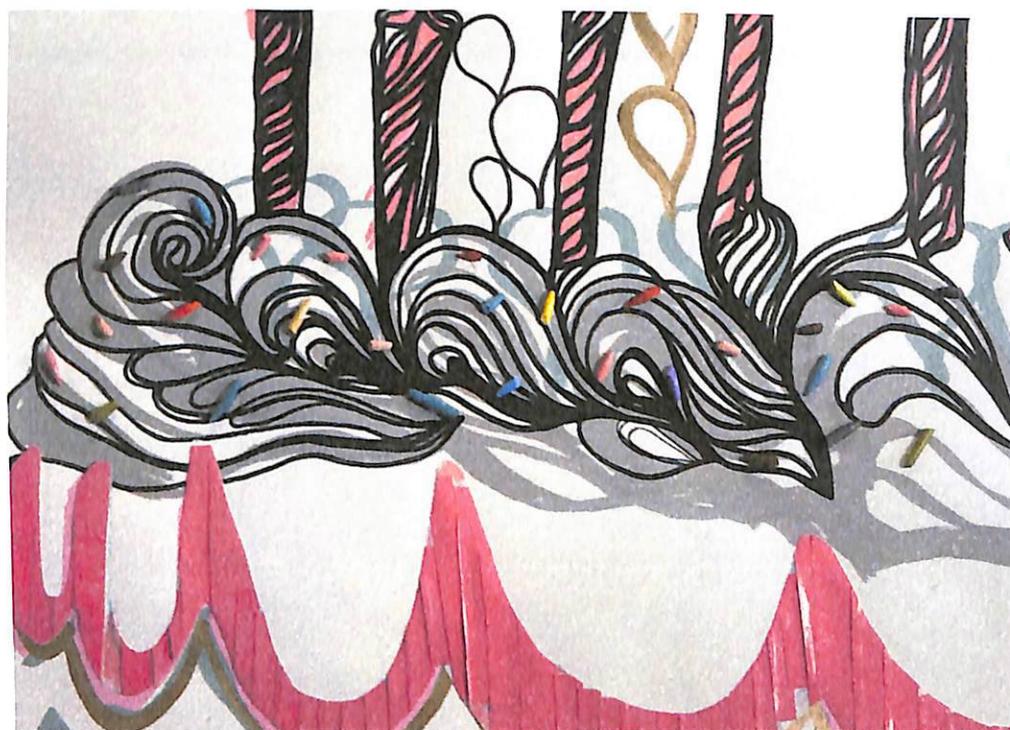


Figure 158. Birthday cake "sprinkles" are broken colored pencil tips; the pink icing is a recycled shopping bag. 2011. Photograph by author.



Figure 159. The olive green teardrop shape is cut from a Glidden paint chip sample; on close examination, the word "extra," part of the color name "Extra Virgin Olive Oil," can be seen on the top curve of the cut out. 2011. Photograph by author.

Effect

The overall visual effect and mood of the exhibition is energetic, fun, exciting, magical, festival-related, expressive, happy and positive (see fig. 160). The childlike associations of the animals, the cake, and the numbers, in addition to the simplified confetti-colored palette, reference the conceptual idea of an essence of wonder and whimsicality.



Figure 160. An essence of wonder and whimsicality, seen through a lens of memory and transformed perception, illustrated. 2011. Photograph by author.

CHAPTER V — DISCUSSION

CONTEXT

The design process is a problem-solving method which can be applied to problems beyond identity design or website design. Design is a way of thinking, a way of approaching the world. The design process seeks to identify problems, to research possibilities, and to develop solutions through system design.

The similarity in process and approach to problem solving across creative design disciplines seems natural considering “...the roots of modern art and design accept no distinction between fine and applied art” (Kovic). This results in complication when one tries to classify complex projects and creative ensembles as precisely this or that design category. I see art and design as intricately linked. It is the overlap and uncertain, undefined region between art and design that I explore.

Designed as a large-scale vinyl decal and executed by hand rather than machine, *Currency* is difficult to classify within a particular genre of art or design. Executed as an experiment in the grey area between art and design, or more specifically, between graphic design, installation art, EGD, and illustration, the project is unique because it seeks to communicate a notion and a sense, not a strait forward message. This differentiates the work from a more traditional design-based project, where the communication message is definite. The purpose of this project is the communication of an essence of wonder complicated through memory. I will define my work as a large-scale drawing installation

along the following idea of installation art: “In the world of gated communities; of specialized ‘professionals;’ and of purity of backgrounds and educations, artistic installations, whether done by artists, architects, designers, or any creative group...present a truly liberating bastardization” (Kovic).

CONCLUSION

Perhaps my thoughts on the underpinning essence of wonder were not so complicated and undecipherable as I originally thought, but properly elemental, simple, and essential. The investigation of something so vague and uncertain ultimately exemplified a most appropriate connection, one of visual simplicity and beauty: repetition of shape and pattern, rhythmic circular and spiral motion, and organic lines and curves (see fig. 161).

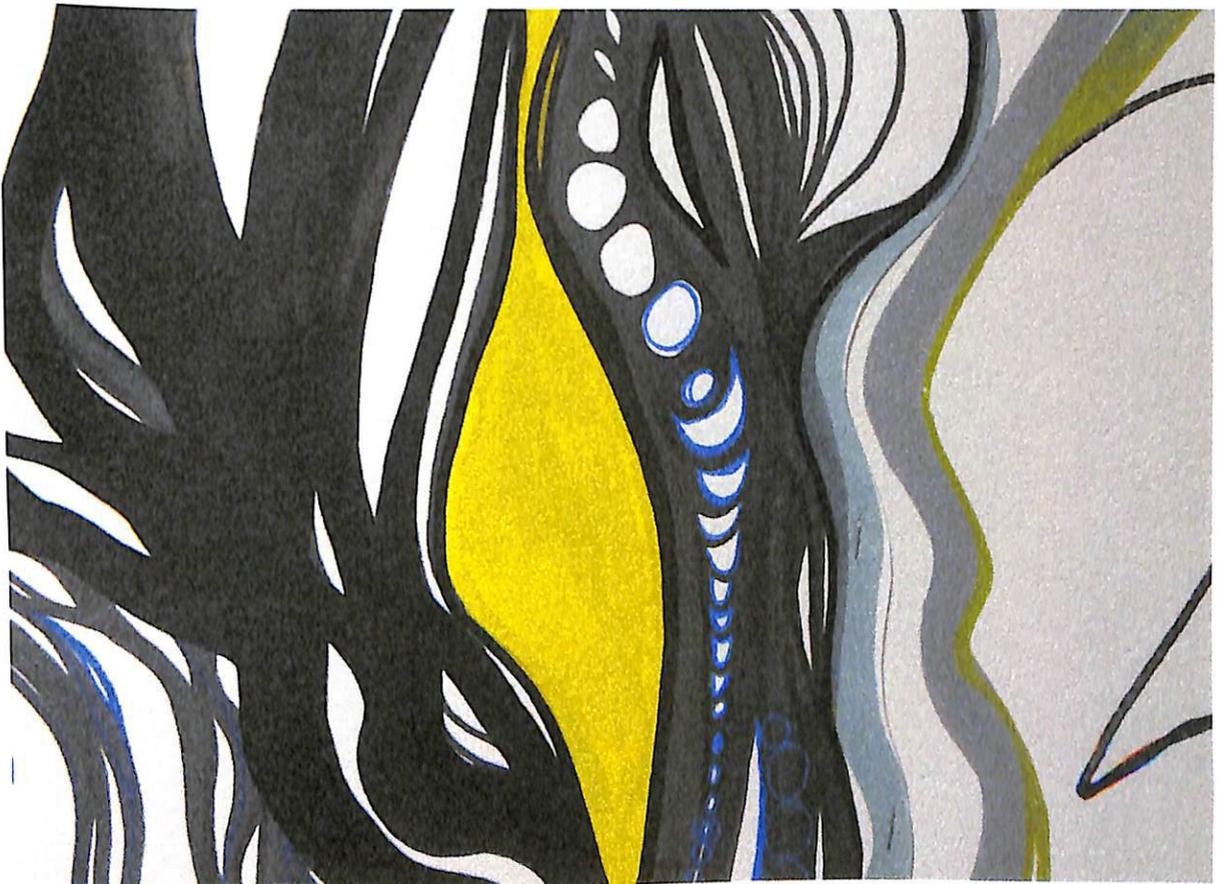


Figure 161. Repetition of organic shapes, winding lines, and touches of bright color become a world of wonder for the viewer. 2011. Photograph by author.

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