



The University of Arizona School of Art
2009 Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition

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Joseph Gross Gallery and The University of Arizona Museum of Art

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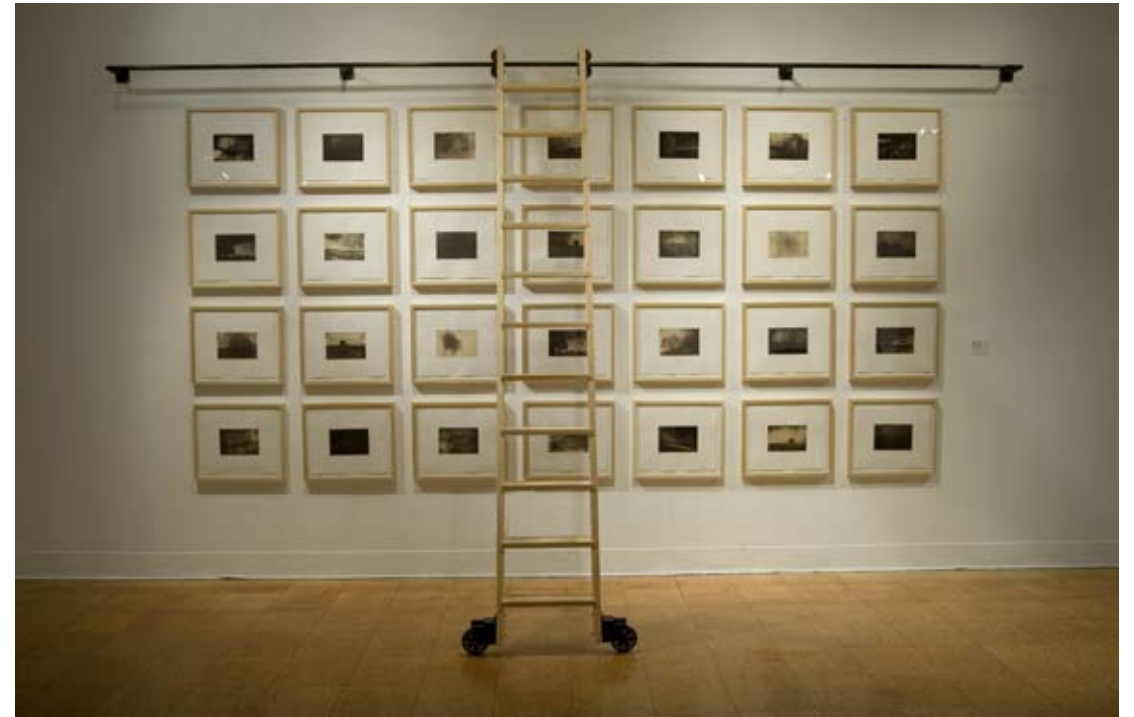
NATHAN ABEL

Recollections. 2009, etchings with chine colle'.

My work surveys my personal identity and history through the decay of memories. In a time when oral history is diminishing I cling to the histories passed on to me by family members. My interpretation of those memories exist between the unconscious and the conscious mind. Through my work I explore the common ground that I feel I share with my father whom I never consciously knew. I utilize the rural landscape (where I grew up and still feel the most at home) in juxtaposition with integrated personal archetypes. The images exist as a dialogue between memories of the old family farm, photographs my father took, and my own personal narratives.

Much like an individual's constantly shifting memories, I use the innate nature of intaglio to create ever evolving images that capitalize on the very nature of fluid recollections. Throughout creation of an image I print the state proofs just as I would the final editions, and utilize them in this exhibition. Thus, creating a dialogue of history where the fragments play off of each other. Just as I manipulate the plate, so my memories and understanding of personal histories shift and evolve.

These memories and histories are destined to become cataloged in one manner or another. This idea of cataloging has become more and more central to not only how I work but how the work is interacted with and viewed. The rolling ladder in the installation acts as an apparatus which will not only allow the viewer access to this card catalog of memory and history but, acts as one of the many archetypes throughout the body of work. The form itself is central to the idea of reaching ones past. It operates as a communicative tool spanning the space between the earth and the heavens. Both the acts of constructing the ladder as well as developing the etchings have become transformative and mediative. It is the end goal to lead the viewer not to connect the dots of my own personal history but to create their own catalogs of memory and history.



KEVIN BARBRO

Vultures, 2009, charcoal on paper, oil, acrylic and spray paint on board.

"In the dark times, will there be singing?

Yes, there will be singing...
about the dark times."

-Bertolt Brecht

This series of work is inspired by Bertolt Brecht's quote. Originally written in 1938, Brecht's quote was a poetic attempt to critique the problems of capitalism realized by a fascist state. Today Brecht's quote is still relevant, maybe even more so, as we face endless cycles of war, militarism, and the chronic violence associated with each. The hyper-accelerated commodity/consumer culture, where advertisements have become the wallpaper of our collective consciousness, and where our public spaces have become areas of surveillance and paranoia.

I am interested in exploring various social, political, and economic relationships impacted by fear, fragmentation, and alienation that typify modern life. The loss of balance between humans and the natural world raises questions concerning the relationships within these various systems we all exist within.

My work incorporates these themes and topics to not only expose and draw attention to the negative conditions that shape public spheres and internal psyches, but also to illustrate my own internal fears and anxieties about my place within these structures. The symbols in my work of people, animals, and objects provide an opportunity to reflect ideas that speak to internal fears and expose the way this leads to an alienated state, both individually and also within group dynamics.



JAMES BENEDICT

Duplex Eviscerated, 2009, fabricated steel.

“The boy himself is at once too simple and too complex for us to make any final comment about him or his story. Perhaps the safest thing we can say is that he was born in the world not just strongly attracted to beauty but, almost, hopelessly impaled on it.”

-Salinger (on Holden Caulfield)



JEFFREY CASE

Monster Safety, 2009, digital.

As an interactive artist in a highly commercialized society, it is difficult to find ways to explore the discipline without being influenced by its parameters. I really wanted to step away from the confines of typical commercialized work for adults and do something to nourish my soul. As I ventured into my thesis research I felt a great need, perhaps paradoxically, to use my exploration to not only fulfill my needs as a visual communicator, but to feed my desires as a problem-solving father too.

And so, a monster was born.

On average, 10 million people visit an emergency department every year for accidental injuries at home, and more than 2,000 children younger than 15 die each year as a result of an unintentional home injury in America. This *Monster Safety* interactive piece on display is a small portion of a larger website developed to help my 6-year-old-son, and other children just like him, to become more aware of home safety issues and emergency preparation.

I consulted with childhood education and emergency preparation experts to ensure credibility, but the idea to create something innovative, artistic, and fun has remained paramount in this process.



LEXI COBURN

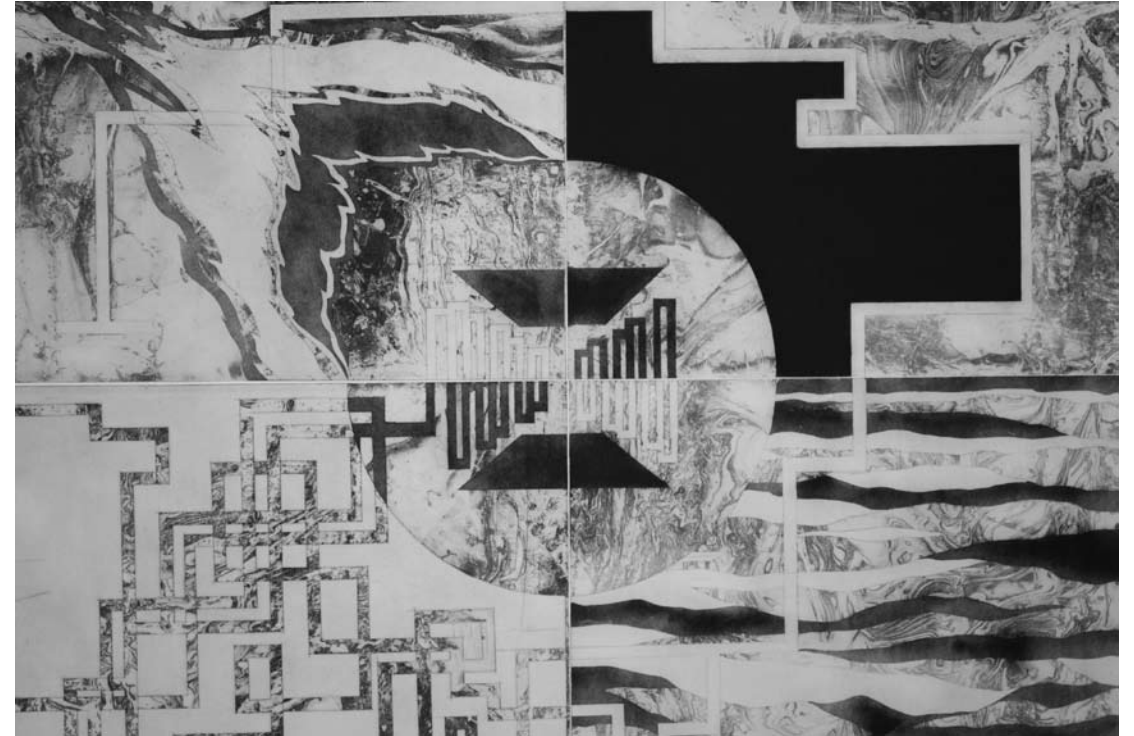
Will Gaia Survive?, 2009, etching.

We humans live in the Anthropocene Era, when all of the planet (all species and all processes) has become secondary to the whims of human beings and the global impact of their economies. We shrug our shoulders or nod with compassionate gestures when we read about massive extinctions caused by our actions. Even now we 'debate' whether we are disrupting the atmosphere of the Earth sufficiently to bring ourselves to extinction. The way in which humans live on earth is destructive to themselves, and detrimental to all species and natural processes. The human population has disconnected itself from nature, using up the materials and resources of our planet to its own demise.

In the 21st century there are no longer many recognizable archetypes that are used for guidance and reconnection as have been present in previous cultures. Archetypes (in the Jungian sense) arise within cultures through ritual awareness and a more immediate connection with the natural world. We have lost recognition of crucial archetypes, including those that remind us of our daily responsibilities to connect and relate to the entire cosmos. For North American first nations' people, there are many such archetypes and signifiers: spiders, ravens, coyotes, water demons, double-faced

beings, wise clowns, backward people, etc. Humans need to reacquaint themselves with archetypes, especially with those that demand their reconnection with the natural world. This can be done through ritual.

The earliest humans on earth used rock formations and materials provided by nature to display images of spiritual beings, animals, and things they recognized within their natural world. The earliest ancient primitive peoples were working within nature's erosive systems, those necessary for life on earth. The ritual and processes of printmaking are ancient implements of art making that still exist today. Printmaking, in this case, is being used as a mechanism and ritual process for reconnection to the original erosive processes of printmaking and nature. Through ritual procedures that were/are used to connect with the elements of nature by the earliest peoples, art making arose as a form to depict relationships and connections with the natural world. The importance for using printmaking today is to reunite human beings and the natural forces, by reverting back to original ways, using ritual, in order to reconnect with the natural world. It is the disconnect or interruption of the free flow of nature by humans that informs my work.



ERIC FERNSTROM

Corporate Playthings, 2009, archival print.

I use the language of play to investigate serious issues, in particular, companies that put financial gain before people as they amass huge profits and power in the global marketplace. I have been researching a biotechnology company based here in the United States that develops genetically modified seeds for farmers. This company aspires to help farmers produce more food, however, this company has developed a track record of causing devastating harm to people, animals and the environment. This company sells genetically modified seeds with the promise that these seeds will yield tremendous harvests with minimal work. Farmers buy herbicide-resistant seeds that are immune to the company's weed killer. This means farmers must purchase the weed killer that is produced by the very company that developed the herbicide-resistant seeds. Many would consider this a brilliant business model because farmers must purchase many products from the same company in order to be successful.

However, this company is taking troubling steps to build a monopoly. Farmers must pay licensing fees each time the patented seeds are used, even when collecting and saving those seeds for the following year. Some farmers are growing genetically modified

products they never intended to grow in the first place. Birds, insects or wind carry genetically modified seeds and pollen onto their property where patented plants can grow without the farmer's knowledge. An organic farmer can lose organic farm standing for years when this happens. Adding insult to injury, the company that develops the genetically modified seeds then sues those farmers for royalties, and the company generally wins these lawsuits. Small farmers lose their livelihood because they are unable to pay these licensing fees and therefore unable to compete with factory farms.

My recent work tells the story of one company, but it represents any company that thinks only of profit, and pushes products that are untested and untrusted by many. To tell these stories, I build sets using extremely small model railroading structures and figures. The process is incredibly time-consuming, but it allows me to create detailed scenes that I could not capture otherwise.



SARAH HURWITZ

What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Up? A. A show horse B. A work horse C. A race horse D. Elmer's E. All of the Above, 2009, mixed-media.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

- A. A show horse
- B. A work horse
- C. A race horse
- D. Elmer's
- E. All of the Above

A good friend once called me passionless. While this quality makes me easy-going it also makes me directionless. As a child I wanted to be an orange (the citrus fruit) when I grew up. In high school I was dying for visceral experiences, and to emerge from what I deemed as the preparation stage of life. Now on the verge of yet another graduation, I hardly feel prepared, in truth I have no idea what I was preparing for? The fact that I could be satisfied doing just about anything or nothing at all makes it even hard to get off the couch in the first place.

Although I may be dispassionate, I am not indifferent. I am wellspring full of ideas. I just falter when it comes to the execution. Ideas are fleeting unless they are captured and transformed into action steps.

The horse is the physical representation of myself, a giant lump on a blue couch that is stuck in that mode of indecision. Its unnaturally sedentary position serves to further emphasize my mode of inaction.

Am I doomed? I hope not. It's time to show those ideas some respect! Some ambition is what I need! I found some solace in the notion that if I can't be an artist than I should just be the art. Furthermore If I can't be the horse-owner than I will just be the damn horse. Giddy-up.



ERIKA JOHNSTON

Nine Loves of Matilda Quincy, 2009, mixed media.

There is, as we all know, a fine line between hilarity and horror. My primary purpose in writing and drawing *Nine Loves of Matilda Quincy* was to explore the dynamic between these extremes as they pertain to romantic relationships. My secondary purpose was to make the reader giggle loudly...then cringe really hard.



JEEJUNG KIM

-- opened eye, closed i – i closed, eye opened --, 2009, video.

i have become much more interested in the art of realization than the realization of art through my use of digital media. i spend time confronting and manipulating images of the fragments of my physical self, examining my past in present time. By employing these unnatural and extremely personal processes that reverse time and alter myself, i am confronting the same, yet different version of i. i am studying my condition both as an object and subject that results in a self-portrait of my mental being. i aim to revisit, recover, and relearn by transforming ordinary things into the extraordinary, the unknowable otherness, to understand my own reason for pursuing life.

One says, i listen, thereby i see things about the one. The i talks, the one receives, this leads the one to see the i.

An ear is playing a passive role by accepting the ineluctability of the impact of the aggressive mouth. Initially, the ear emerges by this contact; however through time the ear transforms to a supersaturated state with the continued impact. It becomes unbearable for the ear, a reservoir for the bullets, to withstand the impact and finally ruptures and disseminates the projected substance. When the flow subsides and settles down on the surface of a closed eye/i, it becomes a metaphoric hindrance and an incitement: the reason for the eye/i to see and the challenge for what it is to see. The eye opens and expresses what it has received.



BENJAMIN KIRKBY

[n] + I, 2009, mixed-media.

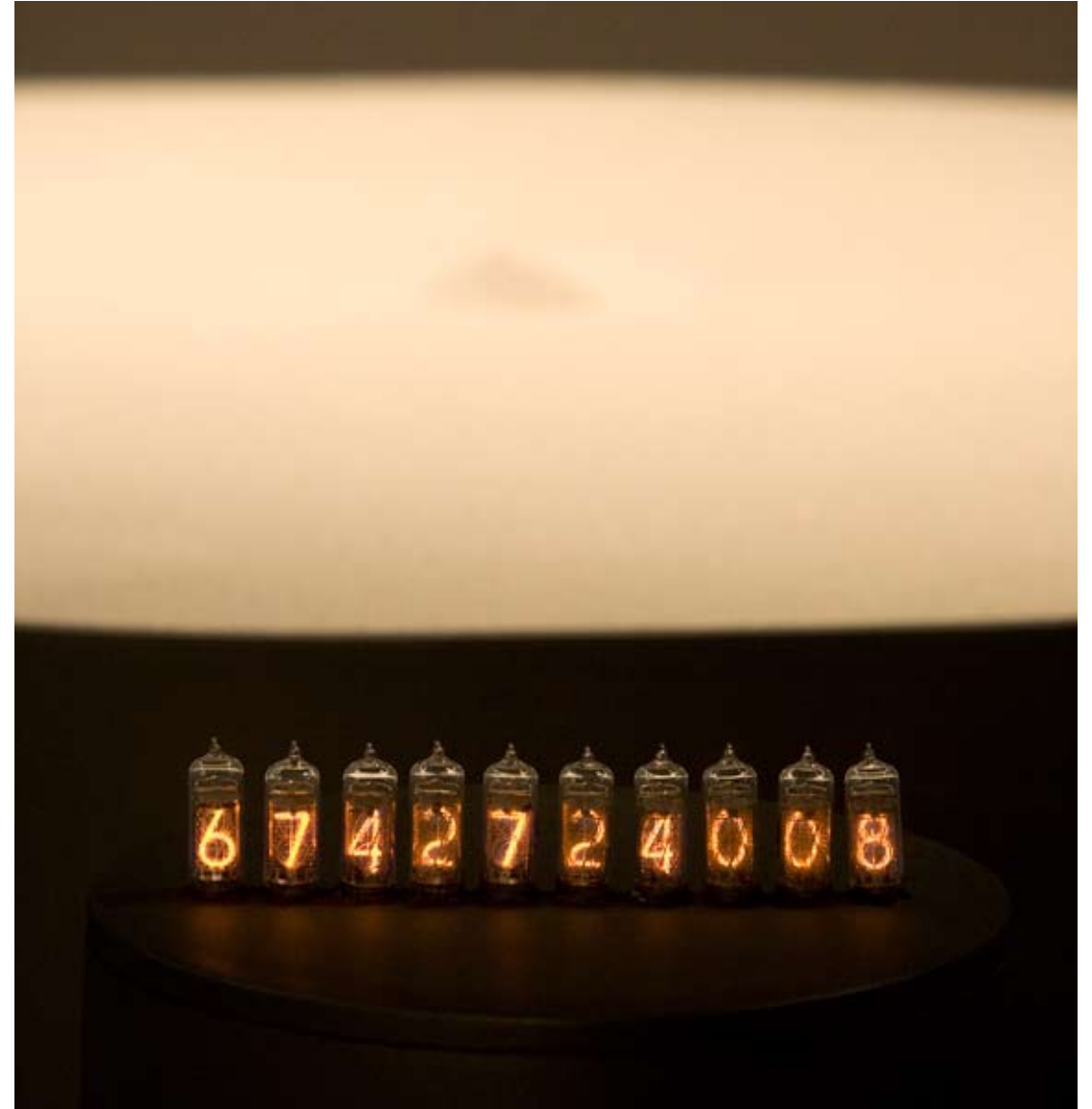
So often we hear numbers like millions, billions and even trillions, they have become ubiquitous in the news and popular culture. But what do they really mean? How many is a million? What does a billion look like?

This project was conceived amidst an attempt to demonstrate the vastness of the human population to a group of students. I wanted to show them what that number looked like and how they fit into it. As I digested the numbers, I began to think about how a single human compares to the whole.

This is 6.7 billion grains of sand.

This is the number of human beings on Earth.

One of these grains of sand represents you.



AARON MILLER

An Iconography of Class, 2009, mixed-media.

My artwork deals with personal history, reflecting on a working class background and on the controversial nature of the mining industry. This installation examines class-consciousness through the lense of my own class hybridity. Raised in a small Wyoming mining town, I am now a fine artist and an academic, pursuits which are historically white-collar and intellectual. Straddling this awkward gulf between laborer and academic forms the basis of my work. The tools for this examination are icons of materialism and utility, representing the two halves of this struggle, trappings of both blue and white-collar. Strange objects, mixtures of industrial machinery and elegant antique furniture, often populate my work.

As much of my life has been spent as a blue-collar worker, industrial images dominate my aesthetic vocabulary. Wyoming is an integral part of my imagination and forms the basis for all of my art, not because of its vast beautiful landscape but because of its abundance of natural resources and the resultant coal, oil and gas fields. My work recalls the sights, sounds, and smells of my background through the use of materials such as asphalt and tar, allied

with both heavy textures and subtle value shifts. I am interested in the history of use as recorded on the surfaces of machinery; the scratches, dents and stains of mining equipment are described in the layering and scarring of my picture surfaces.

As I am no longer living in Wyoming, the images of industrial landscapes are memories located somewhere between reality and the flight of my imagination. In my work, the mining fields have taken on a beauty that rivals that of the elegant decorations of high-class life; even through the applications of tar and grit, these machines and landscapes suggest a wistful poetry, and the haunting instability of personal displacement.



GWYNETH SCALLY

Museum of Dying Giants, 2009, mixed media.

In 2007, I spent the summer at an artist's residency in Newfoundland, Canada. The dire beauty of the icebergs and pine forests compelled me to shift the focus of my work to include not only our relationship with the body, but also with the broader natural world. My current series of paintings, installation and video explores humanity's skewed relationship with nature, through images of displacement. In these works, buildings are found in the fleshy interior of human mouths, icebergs are displaced into bathtubs, and an entire forest is now inside a tent of polar fur (rather than the tent being inside of the forest.) These works describe our romantic, escapist ideas of nature yet also hint at something sinister; our growing ability to contain the natural world, if not to protect it.

My work's recent focus on themes of icebergs and forests reflects my interest in the effects of climate change on our world. The icebergs that I so avidly watched in Newfoundland had calved from the Greenland ice shelf, and were now floating south, slowly melting like forgotten mythologies—the death of gods or giants. The instability of the world's vanishing glaciers represents not only an encroaching environmental disaster, but also the end of our cultural myths of the Arctic. The northern landscape has been an archetype of the eternal—white, pure, unpolluted by the habitation of man, and a powerful evocation of the aesthetic sublime, with its enchanting and deadly beauty. By trapping an actual dying pine forest in a fantasy Arctic diorama, *Museum of Dying Giants* exposes the disparity between our dream of the Arctic, and its imperiled reality.



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