Matthew Hall

I crawled inside the book and made it my home.

MFA THESIS

It's when we stumble or hesitate or lose our words that we reveal ourselves to each other.

Sherry Turkle: Connected, but alone?

I am interested in narrative. Specifically, what we infer with limited amounts of information available to discern what transpired. I choose small moments—which I have observed—and then combine them to create a narrative flow.

Drawing and writing both function as visible language. Neither offers perfect communication, nor the ability to recreate reality in its entirety. Both offer different paths and implications to meaning. Using text and images in the same space entangles our experience of interacting with both. My choice to use both text and image together in my work amplifies the nature of each experience.

My gestural drawings capture aspects of experience instead of a naturalistic rendering. They reinterpret the experience both as I see it, and within my use of the image as a visual narrative element. This style of drawing, that interprets the world as fleeting in nature, creates an expression from small highlights. These small vignettes demonstrate idiosyncratic moments, rather than describe all the details of the experience. Powerful moments come from someone searching for their keys, standing in line, waiting for a friend to arrive, or even stumbling for a word.

My drawing builds on lessons learned from three generations of artists Leanne Shapton (21st century), James Rosenquist (mid 20th century), and James Abbot McNiell Whistler (Late 19th century). Each works with series and images. Shapton's books find a dynamic between text and image, developing a narrative which the viewer must find for themself. In *Was She Pretty?* (2006), her choice to depict a series of friends, ex-lovers, and friends ex-lovers builds a narrative of reflection on breakups through repetition of similar circumstance, but asks the viewer to fill in the story between moments, opinions and artifacts. The pop artist Rosenquist's paintings show a distinct manner of layering images. His painting *F-111* (1965) layers common, every-day images of pop culture references to tell stories of his contemporary social experience. His graphic sensibility informs the way I combine silkscreened drawings to build visual narrative. Whistler invested time working in both painting and printmaking, but more importantly his visual compositions developed as an effort to associate his work with musical composition.

He titled the series of works *Nocturnes* (circa 1866-76), lifting the reference from the musical tradition and informing the viewer about the intent of his drawings at the same time. My work on *Villanelle* (2013) developed through an understanding of how Whistler and Rosenquist worked visually and conceptually. Where they applied pop culture and musical form to paintings, I applied my record of lived experience through a visual adaption of the repetitious villanelle form with silkscreened drawings.

All three artists—Whistler, Rosenquist and Shapton—have the common experience of working in a design related field, and allowed that practice to inform their works. Whistler worked as an interior designer and a typesetter, Shapton as an art director and publisher, and Rosenquist as a sign painter. This precedent for both parallel practice of art and design helps shape my decision making in drawing. Working in parallel as a graphic designer and an artist allows me to pull knowledge of typesetting, layout, legibility and typography into my drawings and books as specific decisions, and pairs with understanding how image and text work together in the common publishing medias of books, magazines and websites.

The season graphics I produced for Salt Lake Acting Company's 2011–12 and 2012–13 seasons demonstrate the largest connection to my current work. On their covers, the entire narrative must be depicted in a single image and title. The graphic for *A Man Enters* (2011 – World Premiere) shows the entire narrative of a woman waiting through only her lower leg and foot pressing a heart-shaped balloon on a string to the ground. Although simple, the graphic paired with the title suggests notions of waiting, and insecurity depicted in the play. While serving the purpose of a graphic, the intent of translating an idea quickly functions the same with these graphics as each image I create when I draw and write.

Sherry Turkle's quote, "It's when we stumble or hesitate or lose our words that we reveal ourselves to each other." from her TED talk titled *Connected: but alone?*, references how identity can depend on our representations of ourselves in social media through carefully chosen text and image. In fact, we reveal the idiosyncrasies of ourselves when we fumble our words. Everything starts there for me. The distinctions I found in my work that separate it from stagnant moments,

are the lines and the places where the details stray from perfect. Each moment I catch seeks this in both the subject of the drawing and in my hand as I work. Each small piece of fluster, relaxation, introspection, laughter, or pause builds character and story into a figurative drawing. Rumblings and slight shifts of discomfort speak more clearly than any form of translucent and somber technique.

The vast majority of my textual components come from an investigation of found materials. Alterations and appropriations into a decontextualization of the original text allows me to collage text into new books, drawings and collages. While many of these sources begin as artifacts from personal experience, the textual components function as active forms of communication. The choice to use appropriated and altered text includes the history that comes with the text itself. When I alter text to write, the original text lends tone and diction specific to the intention of the story I tell. When I quote from books on social etiquette, the specifics of the text lend the premise of societal power structures.

My choices with text reflect my reading of artists/authors David Bunn, Kenneth Goldsmith, and Glenn Ligon's text-based works. Each of these make decisions around use of appropriated text written into a new context that creates a new, specific form of communication that is separate from the original use. David Bunn uses the book titles from salvaged card catalog entries to write poems. His works build on the associative knowledge of the book titles themselves, the material reference to a period of history when the card catalogue was indispensable, to create a larger context for the poem itself. Kenneth Goldsmith collects text, retypes it, and in doing so makes a statement about either what was collected, or uses that text to portray something else entirely. Glenn Ligon uses specific texts and layers the visual presentation of text into the meaning of the text. My works separate from these artists because I am appropriating, borrowing, and altering specifically to create a new narrative.

I play off of these artist's techniques. In my book *A Decision* (2011) I created a story by physically altering a found book chapter, drew imagery to change the narrative, and bound the two into a folio series. This work was similar to the process of David Bunn, in which we would both

use a previous text, and alter it through the recontextualization of the original and in my case the additional alterations to the flow of the originals. I started to work with involving the text and visual elements involving in an intricate manner. The book *Darkness* (2011) used the same reductive form of writing and abandoned the original depiction of text in order to create a five plate narrative. Then, using the plates in repetition and cutting areas of the pages to open into the following page, I rewrote the series of etchings into a 13 page book. In the accordion fold *Drift* (2012), I used selections of found text to create a contrast to the visually depicted actions which shift the understanding of both the images and the text into a distinctly different narrative.

The Cooper Black Series (2012–ongoing) and the scroll book *Derivé by Virtue of Mouse* (2012) began with a distinct awareness of the works of writer Kenneth Goldsmith, and artists, Paul Pechter and Jorge Macci. These works and influences share relevance as purely text-based constructions. *The Cooper Black Series* developed as a series of word-based instructions and aphorisms out of encountering Paul Pechter's *Proposal for Device entitled Discriminations* (1970)[1]. Having an awareness that the work could be created by speaking to reader through text, I experimented with creating an action, and an understanding of the result and implications of the action, without the necessary execution of the action in the silkscreen-print *This implication applies to the rest of your life*[2] (2012 part of *The Cooper Black Series*). *Derivé by Virtue of Mouse* (2012) shares many of the compositional traits of Kenneth Goldsmith's *Traffic* (2007) and Jorge Macchi's *Doppleganger* (2005) series. Each of the three began by collecting news reports of a specific nature, then compiling in different ways to create a final work. The meaning created through these three works differs greatly. *Derivé by Virtue of Mouse* used my movements through the internet as a method for choosing sentences. Each time I browsed the internet over the course of a month, a section of the scroll was compiled. Goldsmith's work

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1   Full text: "This device is composed of many individual works: the one presented here is intended for insertion in a magazine:
Take a 10-page section of page numbers and randomize their order. Example: pgs. 23–33; change order to 25, 26, 31, 29, 27, 24, 23, 32, 28, 33, 30. List in tavle of contents as follows: "Discriminations by Paul Pechter… pgs. 23–33"
2   Full text: "Stand up turn around/three times and take a/ step the the left then sit/ down where you are./ Realize you have given/ control to a system/ that disregards you/ current situation."

becomes a biography of the traffic movement within New York City, Macchi's works ask you to see the relation between two extremely similar pieces of writing, and my work becomes both a cultural biography and a personal journal.

Author Mark Z. Danielewski's books taught me the importance of specificity in the appearance and positioning of text both on a page and in relation to the flow of a sentence, and how a reader can understand visually each word's value. In *House of Leaves* (2000) his implementation of the paradigms of a book—shifting the expectation of what one would even find on a page through involvement in writing and typesetting—instill a need for me to understand why I would use text in any manner. While I would not say that any particular piece derives from his work specifically, my exploration of what it means to work between text and image works in parallel to his projects. In *The 50 year Sword* (2012), Danielewski worked with seamstresses to build a visual component that interacts with and gives the viewer a visual reference in parallel with the writing and typesetting. This effort mirrors my own work. In my book *While Apollo bids Thanatos to delay the death of Alcestis* (2013) I use a much tighter integration of the text and the images to the point that the images themselves use the text as mark making. In the final book, writing, drawing, and typesetting became inseparable in creative practice.

In three etchings, *Regretful Morning* (2012), *Disappointments* (2012), and *Difficult Landing* (2011), I shifted my concentration from text as communication to work with specifically palimpsest text as a drawing practice. These three etchings all used writing as a ground for the final drawing, by etching with the drawing into the writing at different pacing, and scraping and burnishing back into the plate. The images created out of these stream-of-consciences writings used the subject of the writing as the motivation for the included images. While text as communication was abandoned in these projects, the accumulation, alteration, and content of the text itself remains paramount to the meaning of these works.

I favor ink on paper as a medium, and material, because the permanence offered by ink—both visually and conceptually when it embeds itself within paper—invokes the idea of knowledge transfer and significance. The history of ink as a delivery platform for ideas is paramount in my

attraction to the medium itself, and balances the distinction of recorded permanence against the moments I depict. Other artists and writers chose different mediums because of these same distinctions. Glenn Ligon would have us understand that many of his paintings of text slow a viewer down and ask us to study further. However paint suggests that the works are a visual experience, allows for the text to become illusion and the message possibly dismissed in the same way. I choose to work with the medium in a manner that uses the expectation of the reader to interact with text as verbal communication.

Although I do use forms of printmaking—primarily silkscreen—to apply ink in many of my works, this often works against the notion of multiples. In using reproducible materials, the process serves to develop a repetition of imagery within works and across a series, rather than create multiples of the same. I employ the print process to develop serial images, which build upon experience through time and observation.

By working with serial imagery, I am exploring how to build context. Within a view of work that repeats, layers, and develops in series, the viewer learns from and is informed by the pieces around it. Repetition calls attention to central elements.

My work in series gained a distinct perspective from poetic forms. Within every line of a poem, and specifically in poems by contemporary poets Todd Boss, Elizabeth Bradfield, and Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon, each line suggests two types of Information. One is the line in itself, as it is read without any context from previous lines, the other is the line as it sits within a sentence. Three lines from Bradfields *Polar Explorer Douglas Martin Accomplishes the South Pole (1909) (2010)* demonstrates this better than most:

<div align="center">

No dogs, they've hauled

sledges and themselves up Drygalski Glacier to

plateau, searching.

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The three lines read as separate statements, and we understand both the statement "No Dogs, they've hauled" and "No dogs, they've hauled sledges and themselves up…". The third line

leaves more intrigue, where the sentence refers to the top of the Drygalski Glacier plateau, and insinuates—in the line alone—that their journey has stagnated using another meaning of the word plateau.

In my book *While Apollo bids Thanatos to delay the death of Alcestis* (2013), each page functions as the line of a poem—working as a statement of its own, while also shifting meaning within the sentence. The focus drifts from narrative into a pause and meditation on each series of words presented. The resulting selections play within the composed original sentence. Three pages that read: "voice, waning warmth, she relinquished/any desire to stay. Apollo held/Thanatos at bay, delaying Alcestis' passing." demonstrate this same concept through calling attention to the middle page as a separated statement. This isolation notes the desire to keep Alcestis alive as Apollo's desire alone. While working in serial imagery, the tools of poetry—e.g. rhythm, rhyme, assonance, alliteration—resonate on the repetition of images.

Each narrative I create builds around the viewer's ability to bring their own world to the work, apply their own understandings, and take the narrative into their own world as they do. I present images, and vignettes of moments, compiling several moments into a narrative, as I have in the accordion fold *Drift* (2012), the book *While Apollo bids Thanatos to delay the death of Alcestis* (2012), and the silkscreen series *Villanelle* (2013). The viewer's understanding of my work comes through their own life story, and resonates for their own reasons.