Abstract

Creative Project: Fragments: Works on Paper

Student: Keegan Adams

Degree: Master of Arts

College: Fine Arts

Date: July 2011

Pages: 31

This body of work exhibits watercolors, intaglio prints, and relief prints in the formal and conceptual framework of fragmentation. Fragmentation as it pertains to 21st century identity creation and societal stratification. The works Six Memos for the New Millennium written by Italo Calvino and Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity written by Richard Rorty outline the two aims of the project. Rorty explains identity as groupings of idiosyncratic contingencies that amalgamate in different ways to create individuality and personal autonomy; he calls this someone’s “final vocabulary”. Calvino outlines six qualities of literature that need to be kept to battle a “pestilence” that has infected contemporary society. This pestilence has combined with other factors to efface and destroy diversity of thought and identity. My work aims to highlight this phenomenon in a creative and fully autonomous way, through the process of printmaking, which as a medium, occupies a unique interstice of different ideas and ways of creation. Printmaking the most appropriate medium because it reflects how contemporary identity is made.
Statement of Problem

The motivation for this body of work began out of an investigation of my identity. I discovered that my “identity”, which until this point I considered whole and immutable, was in actuality a diverse grouping of contingencies in a progressive state of change. These pieces amalgamate into a single identity in a number of ways, some are smooth, others rough, others in subconscious ways... Hypocrisy, contradiction, and paradox are of equal weight as integrity, virtue, and pride. This has become especially poignant to me in view of my Native American heritage (while being a white, upper middle class male) and my upbringing in three different cities (and regions) Kansas City, Missouri, Spokane, Washington, and Cleveland, Ohio. What is clear is that contentious, complex relationships are intrinsic in the formation of every identity. Identity is not a product of unremitting essentialism as has been posited by much of metaphysical philosophy. It is instead, a continuous evolution of multifaceted pieces, and out of this seeming randomness a rich depth of meaning is discovered.

This conception of identity was expanded into societal observations. How is the 21st century global society similar to identity formation? In the techno-consumer media age it seems that much of the organization of society is based on fragments; pieces of information or imagery that are consumed at an increasing autocatalytic pace that are neither substantive or necessitating a need for analysis. Furthermore, this
fragmentation has the effect of effacement. The coupled events of fragmentation and effacement irreversibly destroy other modes of thought and understanding, the most obvious example is the situation of many indigenous cultures. This loss and destruction is leaving 21st century society decrepit, wounded, ignorant, and incurious. Many authors have spoken of the symptoms of this kind of society and its effects on individuals (hyper reality, simulacra, leveling, etc…). What I’m curious about is how to transform fragmentation from a negative signifier for society into one that is positive. About discovering that rich depth of meaning in an age of constant incuriosity, mediocrity, consumption, and feckless relationships. I see a benevolent balkanization as a form of trenchant resistance to the formless rendering of globalization. With the works I hope to use fragmentation and amalgamation to create visual images that incur attention, analysis, reflection, and an appreciation for difference. The images create a unique form of narrative using characteristics (albeit conceptual) of the 21st century to critique the effects of the 21st century. However, I am not overly concerned with accessibility; my images are foremost personal expressions. My works are a call to intellectualism, a rigorous endeavor whose faculties of analysis should be used with unbridled expression. On the other hand, my work clearly exhibits a love for material and the labor involved in creating an image. In these ways, my images occupy a unique position between form and content, physical and cerebral, traditional and contemporary.
Review of Literature and Influences:

The single greatest influence on this body of work is the Iowa Print Group established by Mauricio Lasansky. The work of Lasansky and his students has been the compass by which I guide my printmaking practice. The technical mechanisms used by the Iowa Print Group are heavily drawn upon for my work. Intaglio was given an unprecedented exclusivity and depth by Lasansky; it was used as a brilliant metaphor to govern artistic practice. The need to print many states and rework plates and other matrixes dramatically has shaped my beliefs on the importance and relevance of intaglio printmaking to contemporary life. The constant exercise of artistic investigation and evolution of solutions is a hallmark of Lasansky’s teaching. A profound understanding of the self was another quality espoused by Lasansky. The artist’s image is a manifestation of the workings of the artist as a person. There was no division between art and life for Lasansky. To quote Charles Dickens, “Whoever is devoted to an art must deliver himself wholly up to and to find his recompense in it.” The creation of an image was to ask everything of the artist. This cathartic work ethic to discover the image is what has left an indelible mark upon my artistic practice. Lasansky, when asked what his students should learn from his teaching replied,

“[… ] You see, to me the most important aspect of a work of art is the image. Now mind you, the image does not always mean that you can read it, that is, realistic; it
can be a very abstract image. But it has a moment of truth, let us say, that lasts only
maybe two minutes. You work like hell, maybe two years on the plate or painting and
for two minutes this fullness, this universe, this whatever-you-want-to-call-it, comes
ture. This is what keeps you working. The point when this comes, and it does come, you
need to be trained so well, otherwise you will miss the train, she will just pass by you.
That is why the kids should revise their vision, and still have heart for the freedom as a
means for truth and inspiration. You know it is true. Freedom is a discipline, otherwise it
is anarchy.” (Lasanskysy)

The way I search for the image in my intaglio prints follows this unparalleled
chapter of art history in America. Lasansky’s students, Lee Chesney, John Paul Jones,
David Dreisbach, Wendell Black, Takeshi Takahara, and many others have had a distinct
influence on various aspects of my work, but especially the formal elements. Also the
unconstrained and fearless manner of working is crucial. One must be free to make art
and fear is the most brutal oppressor. The mental and physical sensitivities to
investigate something as commonplace as a “line” is a simple encapsulation of
Lasansky’s influence. The love of rich, complex, slowly developed ink surfaces with
elegant, ephemeral tints and voids of the darkest blacks is something that I will always
thank the Iowa printmakers for. Scraping and burnishing as subtractive and expressive is
another element that is invaluable to my work. The scraped tone is one of the most
beautiful surfaces I have ever seen. My love of technique, and especially surface, is
Iowa. The idea of printmaking as a way of life is also Iowa.
Atelier 17, a print workshop established by Stanley William Hayter in Paris in 1927, is another distinct influence on my work. Mauricio Lasansky studied with Hayter while he was in New York during WWII. The democratic style of the shop with its emphasis on technical experimentation and innovation helped many of the world’s most famous artists enhance their capabilities, especially the Abstract Expressionists. An intense intellectual dimension was given to printmaking through Hayter; the necessity of conceptualizing printmaking beyond reproductive and commercial applications was introduced to many students working at Atelier 17.

My work is influenced conceptually and philosophically by two works, Italo Calvino’s *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, written in 1985 and Richard Rorty’s *Irony, Contingency, and Solidarity*, written in 1989. The former work was a transcription of a series of lectures Italo Calvino was scheduled to give as the Charles Eliot Norton series at Harvard University. Unfortunately, Calvino died before he was able to do so and the book was subsequently published posthumously in 1988. The book lists five values that Calvino believes are necessary for literature to continue undiminished into the 21st century. The values are: Lightness, Quickness, Exactitude, Visibility, and Multiplicity (with a sixth, Consistency, but it was never written).

These values are really qualities to keep within literary writing. Lightness to Calvino is a way of approaching the world; keeping our thoughts and perspectives open to change easily as opposed to ossifying them. Quickness is the ability to express engagement with a directness of purpose, in a sense, the ability to use time well.
Exactitude, in my opinion, the best part of Calvino’s book, is the sharpness of analysis, the focus of reflection. It is the ability to critically engage material to develop insight and understanding. Critical thinking is a term that is not taken seriously enough for Calvino, in fact, he is quite cynical about the situation, he says,

“Why do I feel the need to defend values that many people might take to be perfectly obvious? I think that my first impulse arises from a hypersensitivity or allergy. It seems to me that language is always used in a random, approximate, careless manner, and this distresses me unbearably […] It sometimes seems to me that a pestilence has struck the human race in it’s most distinctive faculty- that is, the use of words. It is a plague afflicting language, revealing itself as a loss of cognition and immediacy, an automatism that tends to level out all expression into the most generic, anonymous, and abstract formulas, to dilute meanings, to blunt the edge of expressiveness, extinguishing the spark that shoots out of the collision of words and new circumstances.”

“I would like to add that it is not just language that seems to have been struck b this pestilence. Consider visual images, for example. We live in an unending rainfall of images. The most powerful media transform the world into images and multiply by means of the phantasmagoric play of mirrors. These are images stripped of the inner inevitability that ought to mark every image as form and as meaning, as a claim on the attention and as a source of possible meanings. Much of this cloud of visual images fades at once, like dreams that leave no trace in the memory, but what does not fade is a feeling of alienation and discomfort.”
“But maybe this lack of substance is not to be found in images or language alone, but in the world itself. This plague strikes also at the lives of people and the history of nations. It makes all histories formless, random, confused, with neither beginning nor end. My discomfort arises from the loss of form that I notice in life, which I try to oppose with the only weapon I can think of, an idea of literature.” (Calvino)

Exactitude is giving form to your ideas. Form is the outcome of sustained analysis. Form is content for Calvino. This criminal “pestilence” must be apprehended and duely processed, so that inoculation can be achieved. Inoculation through a flourishing cognition with a creative curiosity that is exhibited with a precision of application. It is the call against ignorance and incuriosity.

Visibility is the merging of the imagination and experience within an image. Everyone has an inner creative force that gives rise to an imagination. Calvino investigates the profundity of the imagination by delineating to two historical conceptions; one, the imagination is a way of communication with a “world soul”, a kind of theosophical language and two, the imagination as an instrument of knowledge that enhances and complements other instruments of knowledge, such as science. Visibility is the ability to transform a very personal language (imagination) into a component that can be linked with direct experience into an artistic creation that can be shared. It is a unique way of transferring both knowledge and experience to others.
Richard Rorty’s *Irony, Contingency, and Solidarity* emphasize the importance of idiosyncratic contingencies. To Rorty, it is these contingencies that create new societies, new ideas, and new forms of expression. Essentialism is repugnant to Rorty and metaphysics is uniformly false, though capable of teaching valuable lessons. There is no “core” to humanity other than the particulars and peculiars. It is the most important task to create a new “vocabulary” to define the contingencies that make up a society’s particular historical place. Everyone, according to Rorty, has a final vocabulary, a way of thinking and expressing themselves, that is wholly contingent. It is up to us to redefine and recontextualize our present, by continually exchanging with other final vocabularies (through books, and interaction). In these ways we become “ironists” that to Rorty fulfill three conditions:

“(1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself.” (Rorty)

Rorty argues for the importance of self-creation (private autonomy) and the ability to find commonalities with others through contingency. Re-creation by reshuffling the pieces (contingencies) that make up societies is tantamount to Rorty’s political ideas. First, by being “self-creating” in our vocabularies we can, secondly,
become politically democratic. By understanding our contingent nature, we no longer can intelligibly talk about “us” vs. “them” for there is no essentially “true” or “false”. We need to continually expand our definition of “we”. This is done by re-introducing our vocabularies to one another. Rorty’s insistence on contingency is the biggest influence on my work. The piecing together of languages and ideas to create our own vocabulary for our particular situation, while also being open to continual evolution is well stated. His dual project for personal autonomy and political freedom is exemplary. Rorty embodies the American intellectual that is also remarkably sensitive to aesthetics. His writing resembles a masterful collage that when viewed up close, flourishes with detail, but when taken from a far, encloses you within the cathartic stillness of a complete transformative thought.

The fragmentation inherent in my body of work follows a Rortian definition. Fragmentation is the immanent characteristic of our 21st century society. It is capable of being the source for autonomy and benevolence. Thus far, it has been viewed with derision and disdain. My work looks to the complexity of fragmentation as both a positive and negative, using negative imagery to engender critical reflection and analysis, which in and of itself is positive, in my opinion. I look to make works using fragmentation, works which carry qualities that Calvino and Rorty have described to comment on particular situations. My work certainly expresses a deep fear of the destruction of diversity and of the culture of incuriosity. One of the most dreadful trends currently happening is intellectual leveling, or cultural debasement through
various media outlets and institutional procedures, not to mention extreme consumption. It seems that there is a fragmentary mechanism that nonetheless is webbed together in a drive of reduction. The human remains of which are hardly functioning. This undefined, yet powerfully reductive drive is, in reality, unstable, feeble, and unsustainable. Its tenuous nature is supported by seemingly robust theories such as neoliberal economics, new world order, university corporations, mass marketing strategies, and global terrorism. These theories, however, are proving to be increasingly barren. It seems as if there is developing two separate conceptions of fragmentation; one which divides to render formless, confused, and insubstantial and the other, which is a celebration of difference and autonomy. The former conception is pernicious and much is effaced. The collective loss orchestrated by reduction/fragmentation is evident environmentally, culturally, educationally, and I’d say psychologically. This link between fragmentation and effacement conducts what I believe to be a societal sclerosis; a spiritual torpor. This predicament becomes the site of incredible tension, which is exhibited in my imagery. This can be a violent and aggressive process; however, the act of bringing together our fragmentary pieces can be euphoric.

At this point, I think it necessary to delineate the reasons why I use the different elements in my work. First, intaglio, as stated previously, is conducive to intense experimentation and evolution. Also, intaglio allows for a unique layering process between imagery. One layer will sit atop another, while still being translucent, incurring a rich interplay of solid and ephemeral forms. Intaglio enables us to understand the life
and history of an image, through proofs, but also through “ghost” traces of previous states in the plate itself. This complex edifice of malleability and solidity is a thoroughly appropriate medium to express my ideas. Intaglio is reflective of the process of fragmentation and amalgamation of difference we all experience. Woodcut, is awfully expressive, but limited. The limitations of the medium allow to express all the more fully what is left to it. For me, woodcut is saturated with symbolism. It harkens back to a different era of intimacy with natural materials. As such, it represents, to me, a chapter of human history that has been forever changed. It is a sullen trace of a memory of interconnection with the natural world. It conjures images of cave painters and ancient Chinese scholar poets in an anachronistic episode. Woodcut forces an acknowledgement of the past; of things that we can’t quite remember as individuals.

The power of woodcut lies in its ability to unburden us of our short memories and leave us to wonder in the emotional power of human history. Watercolour is immediate. It is a medium that allows for the direct interplay of ideas. Watercolor has a reputation for patience and meticulousness, but that is not my sensibility towards the medium. Watercolor is direct, but elusive too. Watercolor brings forth the nuance and depth of directness. Watercolor is close to the way Calvino spoke of quickness and lightness. It is also very simple, dry pigment with water, but with the simplest of materials some of the most intricate layers develop. The drying process of watercolor is mysterious and there is no way to know exactly how certain washes will coexist. The element of uncertainty is one of the most appealing qualities of the medium. Directness with uncertainty brings about intricacy and surprise; certainly an appropriate medium to render my ideas about
the effects of deforestation and animal extinction. There is a kinship between watercolor and natural phenomena that is mystifying. The history of watercolor is the littered with natural scenes, or of qualities of the natural world. Watercolor quickens and sharpens cognition through its fluid nature and the strange relationships of control and autonomy that develop therein. Lastly, it shows us the viability of transparency within difference.
Descriptions of Works:

The color intaglio print, *Self-Portrait* (fig. 1) is an important work in the development of my thesis ideas. It began initially as homage to Lasansky, and carries similar formal qualities with Lasansky’s, “*My Boy*” (fig. 2). The print brings together many different kinds of intaglio processes, and it took a number of proofs to resolve the image. What began as a straightforward self portrait turned into an exacting investigation of the structure of my identity. Intaglio forces a shift in perception and thinking. It forces the artist to pay acute attention to the construction of an image, due to the severe technical side of printing plates. By working slowly on concurrent pieces of the same image (master plate and color plates) I was in a perfect creative situation to examine the pieces of my identity. Intaglio printmaking has literally provided a platform to investigate fragmentation, precisely because fragmentation is intrinsic to it. The self-portrait is a slowly built image delineating the different “pieces” that are brought together. I hold my native American heritage as the leading quality that influences my work. However, this passionate attachment is created from hypocrisy and falsehood. One of the most important components of how I conceive of myself is predicated on an acknowledgment (or acceptance) of speciousness. The print shows a fractured portrait, components of color and shape with feathers and geometry to exhibit the instability of my condition. Yet, the portrait has a strength, a power of the gaze of understanding. The formal qualities of the print stand to be symbolic and technical. The self-portrait is a fully rendered depiction of a psyche. This depiction gathers depth from the intaglio
matrix, without the process necessary to build the print, the process necessary to deconstruct my identity would not have taken place. This portrait uses the specious aspects as formal qualities. It is a visual compensation for a deep personal tension. Aquatinted shapes, rough but elegant hatching, primary earth tones, these qualities carry symbolic depth. Working the plates equates to existential investigation. The portrait displays a very personal experience of fragmentation and its psychological effects. What the portrait also displays is sincerity about the complexities of a “singular” identity. The portrait asks many questions; why must our identities be unified? How can we web together our contingencies, tensions, and speciousness? How is fragmentation beneficial? The creation of a personal identity is one of the most important faculties inherent to humanity, maybe the most important, because it is where consciousness begins. So why not accept all of the nuance, struggle, complexity, and joy that human identity is. An asymmetric harmony of difference. The self-portrait carries this spirit.

Identity is defined as “the set of characteristics that somebody recognizes as belonging uniquely to himself or herself and constituting his or her individual personality for life”, I can’t find a more daunting statement.

The color intaglio/relief print, Type 1 (fig. 3), pushes this idea of fragmented portraiture further. The plate is cut into pieces, it is literally fragmented. I believe it to be a more complete work in regards to the thesis. The conceptual qualities of intaglio combine with the woodcut to bring together elements in a disjointed way that reflects the impacts of type 1 diabetes on my father’s personality. He is a man of dynamic
extremes that suffers from depression and alcoholism, related directly to his diabetes. Yet, on the other hand, he is a warm and generous person who indulges in cooking, art, and gardening with gusto. He is a person who is prone to melancholy and sentimentalism. He has described himself as “lost”, “spiritually bruised”, or “a failure”. He is a stoic example of the erratic nature of identity. Someone beset by conflict, yet able to hold it together, and indeed flourish in many ways. However, the rough, worked intaglio plates provide a structure for the bruised coloring of the woodcut. Not only does the fragmentation of the plates show the nature of the metal matrixes, they act as the fragments of his personality, the rough-edged components that work against and with one another. It compartmentalizes the portrait into areas of black tone (aquatint) showing a very dark and opaque side to him. The hatched rendering exhibits a person who has had to carve out an identity through years of struggle and adversity. Colored using bruised yellows and blues to fully flesh out this portrait, it brings these ideas of fragmentation and identity together in one image. The woodcut is used to represent his bruised body. The blue circle in the upper right is the universal symbol for type 1 diabetes. The grinded edges of the plates make it so that the pieces don’t exactly fit, though it’s clear they belong in the same image. The raised crack of paper rifts the face, further emphasizing the fissures in a “whole” identity. It also reflects the kind of degeneration that type 1 induces in the body. My father is dealing with the complications from his illness such as neuropathy and retinopathy which destroy nerves in the extremities and capillaries in the retina, respectively. So, the shaped plates deal with a dual process of physical and psychological fragmentation and disease. When
someone is prone to sudden mood shifts and extreme emotional acts, but at the same
time a devoted father and husband, there is undeniable evidence of deep a conflict
within this person. The portrait stands to celebrate my father and his personality. It also
stands to illicit sympathy for and acknowledgment of fragmentation within one man’s
identity. Shaped plate intaglio and woodcut seem to me the most appropriate way to
encapsulate these vexing personal issues.

The color intaglio print, Sheep and Raven (fig. 4), was completed in between Self-
Portrait and Type 1. The edge of the plate is partially manipulated. The idea for the
image is the reductive forces at work in contemporary society. The mindless conformity
(sheep) that erodes and destroys other forms of knowledge and understanding (raven)
that have been present for centuries. The partial shaped edge indicates erosion and
degradation. The raven is aggressively pushed into an eroding corner. The edge
precipitates fragmentation; it is in process of breaking down. From Self-Portrait to Sheep
and Raven and then to Type 1 a conceptual arc is drawn in fragmentation. The images
show a continuous drive of breaking down. The raven face was printed in an earth red
and drawn with a dry point needle to exhibit the spiritual nature of the raven and it’s
fragility. Dry point lines will only last for a few impressions. The ominous green cloud of
sheep and shadow is at that dramatic moment just before it can overtake the raven.
This moment is where I believe society stands in regards to conservation of other
systems of knowledge and understanding. It is increasingly evident that the world is
being impoverished, left only with the ideas and thoughts needed to achieve
increasingly inhuman goals; the by product being a culture of automatism. Ravens have been used by Northwest tribes as symbols of creativity and trickery. Ravens symbolize the complexity of human nature. Sheep have been used often to depict a herd mentality, docility, and submission. Thus, these animals represent these different ideas of society. One, diminished to automatism with little creativity or autonomy; the other, multi-faceted with spaces for contesting dialogue and investigation. We need to keep alive the Rortian emphasis on idiosyncratic contingencies between cultures. The image is working with the long history of these two animal symbols, Northwest native American mythology and art, Nietzsche, and Orwell come to mind. The image is dealing with rather abstract thoughts on the state of society and so animal symbols seemed to be suitable because of their links between abstract concepts and the natural world. There is an urgency to this because I feel as though we are at a precipice. We are very close to losing out to this pestilence Calvino spoke of. The amounts of human ingenuity that could be irretrievably lost are terrifying. Native American cultures are just one of the more obvious losses.

The color intaglio/relief print *Loss in Consumption* (fig. 5) follows closely after *Type 1*. It combines many of the techniques and qualities from *Type 1* and *Sheep and Raven*. As described earlier, consumption is supported by barren ideologies that appear strong. This spurious conception hides the fact that the consumptive drive of contemporary society is unsustainable and fragile. The specious nature I found within my own identity, which acted as a catalyst for this body of work is used here to
elaborate on the duplicitous relationships of consumption. Interconnected in the print is
the effacement that consumption has orchestrated environmentally and culturally and
the paradoxical power of this fragmented force of consumption. Woodcuts have been
effaced using a power sander, book plates have been completely covered so that
nothing of them can be seen except for a vague embossment. The gaping maw of
consumption appears to be breaking apart or converging together, it’s in a state of
frenzied, mindless destruction. Is consumption destroying itself? This print asks some
interesting questions of the force of consumption. What is clearly evident is effacement
and destruction is taking place. The Lakota language book plates are lost and scattered,
only pieces of the colophon remain, ruining the message. The celebration of the Lakota
language that those plates display and the language’s connection to Lakota spirituality is
consumed by a fractured force that has no temperance. Woodcuts are symbolic of the
connection between humanity and the natural world. These meaningful relationships
are disappearing without being adequately replaced. The maw of short-term gains and
momentary convenience; of educational shortcomings and intellectual leveling; of
cultural conformity and aggrandizement of mediocrity; of collateral consequences and
innocuous politics is immortalized in all of it’s dramatic infamy in the print. Whereas
fragmentation is used in *Self-Portrait* and *Type 1* as a quality of identity as a catalyst to
understand our identities, it is used in *Loss and Consumption* to describe a societal
situation. Consumption is fractured and can be dismantled if the proper actions are
taken.
There are also three black and white intaglio prints, *Fragmentation and Miscommunication* (fig. 6), *Evolution* (fig. 7), and *Global Terrorism* (fig. 8). These three prints were done in the fall semester 2010 and were the very first prints done with the ideas of fragmentation, contingency, and societal critique in mind. *Fragmentation and Miscommunication* is about the ways that people communicate, which is increasingly dehumanized and meditated by electronics. I’m fearful of the increasing dependence on this mediation. It divorces people from human contact and, I believe, wears away solidarity. The less and less we exchange between one another the less we can understand each other, there is a timeless necessity for human contact. The cell phone texting and laptop with their bizarre symbols of communication (emoticons) create an automated language that is extremely convenient and vacuous in a way that letters never were. *Evolution* is an extremely experimental plate that went through as many as fifteen proofs. It is a technical exposition, but also a testament to the malleability of intaglio and it’s ability to reflect the evolution and change we find in life. *Global Terrorism* is a rumination on the dehumanizing effects of the ideology of global terrorism. The effacement of human features is analogous to the effacement found in *Loss and Consumption*. The connections between consumption and terrorism are vexing. The materialism prevalent in consumer societies has an unacknowledged connection to foreign resource wars and international terrorism. In the ideological sphere *Global Terrorism* and *Loss and Consumption* are closely linked, especially in the context of late 20th and 21st century American history. The use of black ink on white paper adds a distinct starkness to this series of prints. Black and white typically
conotates binaries. Grim is a word I think of. The relationship of the black and white
prints to the color shaped-plate prints is interesting. It speaks to a broaden perspective
that developed from the fall semester to the spring semester thanks to writers like
Calvino, Rorty, Derrida, David Foster Wallace and Nicolas Bourriaud.
Methods

The intaglio prints were made with zinc plates and etched using an asphaltum ground and nitric acid. Hard grounds and soft grounds were used. A variety of tools were used to create marks through the grounds. These tools included etching needles, a diamond point dry point scribe, steel square burins #4 and #5, roulettes, a palette knife, a razor blade, scraper, and burnisher. Aquatint was created using spray paint and clear contact paper. Photo etching using ImageOn photo paper was used to etch type into the book plates. Woodcuts were cut from ½ inch birch plywood with gouges. The plates were cut using a band saw, following designs drawn on the plate with a felt-tip marker.

The prints were printed with colored inks and black ink. Inks used were made by Charbonnel (soft black), Dan Smith (#99 intense black, Alizarin Crimson, Yellow Ochre, Process Blue), Faust (Etching Black), and Graphic Chemical (Miori Blue). Prints were printed on various papers, Hahnemule Copperplate warm white sheets, Rives BFK bright white sheets, and Arches cover stock. The presses used were a Conrad American French Tool floor model and a Charles Brand floor model.
Conclusion

Building up images slowly, using different pieces of plates and different techniques, the inherent transfer from a heavy material (metal and wood matrixes) to a light one (paper), and the ability to be fearless in reworking an image are the intimate connections between printmaking and the writings of Calvino and Rorty. Printmaking acts as an interstice in the art world. It is where many different ideas converge and interweave. It is mechanical and handmade, high and low art, it has a relatively short history, reproductive, and commercial. I believe printmaking to be a fantastic medium for the new millennium because of it’s openness, it’s non-tessellated nature. Proofing and working the plates are the most important aspects of printmaking for me. I’m not concerned with printing large editions, I’m concerned with the creative aspects of printmaking and working in metal and wood. I greatly admire printmakers who have a democratic bent to their printing practice, and those who use printmaking as an instructive tool. I use printmaking for it’s uniqueness as a medium, it affords an artist a way of working and thinking in particular materials that is irreducible to another kind of work. For my work, the ideas of fragmentation in personal identity and society could not have come about were it not for printmaking’s inherent qualities. Watercolor has acted as an enlightening counterpoint in technique and medium. Watercolor has reaffirmed a need for lightness and quickness (a Calvino) in my work. Throughout the ten weeks of thesis work (and before) I have discovered that fragmentation can be a wrenching and terrible experience for people (my father is an example, but my own experiences with
my identity count as well) but in the end, having taken the time to fully explore the
creation of an identity, with all of it’s surprises, curves, and tribulations with
intelligence, diligence, and passion one can be wholly satisfied with the webbed union
of all of our parts and pieces; the “idiosyncratic contingencies” that allow us to create
our own vocabulary. The ability to change and evolve through interaction with one
another is something that Calvino and Rorty make hallow, it is the way that our
fractured, oppressive ideologies can be replaced by asymmetric harmonies.
Fragmentation can be a vehicle for exercising the powerful, but latent creativity in each
of us. This body of work has taken the large part of nine months, 5-6 days a week in the
studio with literature read and notes taken. Hours printing, etching, reading, writing,
thinking, and talking for weeks. Dozens of proofs have been pulled and editions
sporadically printed.
Bibliography


Figures

Figure 1; *My Boy*; Mauricio Lasansky

Figure 2; *Self Portrait*; Color Intaglio
Figure 3; Type 1, Intaglio and Relief
Figure 4; *Sheep and Raven*, Color Intaglio
Figure 5; *Loss in Consumption*, Intaglio, Relief, and Watercolour
Figures 6, 7, 8, Clockwise: *Fragmentation and Miscommunication, Evolution, Global Terrorism; Intaglio*