"During the Night"

Drawings and Prints

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Abstract

This thesis project consists of a collection of charcoal drawings and black and white relief prints. The drawings are based on the dreams that I had during the spring semester of 2006. During this time, I was completing student teaching in Indiana as well as participating in an overseas program which involved teaching in a small town in Spain.

While discussing these drawings with Spaniards living in my building, it became our habit to try to analyze each drawing, and furthermore, analyze the meaning of the dream. Initially this was not my intention. Frankly, I think dreams are used often as a subject in art; with dream-like states trying to be communicated in different art forms. I feel that this notion is a great one and has been thoroughly explored throughout the Surrealist and Dada art movements. My intention was to use dreams only as an inspiration for drawings and prints, not necessarily to recreate the dream environment.

The original drawings are 9” x 12”, created using vine and compressed charcoal. The relief prints were made using EZcut soft-block and linoleum. They were hand-printed on Japanese mulberry paper with black water-based ink. The prints are two sizes, the larger prints are 6” x 12” and the smaller are 4” x 6”.

Artist Statement

I have vivid dreams. I imagine many people have vivid dreams. Many people claim to never remember their dreams, vivid or dull. I like to sleep. I like to dream. I like to draw and make prints. The physical act of drawing, shading, and erasing; the physical act of cutting, inking, and printing simply feels good. There is no way to explain it without using the most generic, basic word: good. I would like to state that I have acknowledged the fact that dreams are somewhat of a cliché in art, like a bowl of fruit or a vase of flowers. I know that there are entire art movements devoted to the exploration of dream worlds. And while I am being frank, I would also like to admit that I own a dream dictionary. It was a gift.

When I began the drawings, it was not my intention to try to represent the state of dreaming, as in Surrealism. It was not my intention to demonstrate the potential weirdness of art, as in Dadaism. Honestly, I am out of ideas. As I stated previously, I like the physical action of drawing and printmaking. Coming up with an idea is another matter altogether. I do not enjoy this part of the process. In fact, I dread it, I loathe it. Without an idea, without a subject, there are no drawings or prints, and therefore no feelings of “good.” While awake, I am a completely boring artist. I sit, I think, I read, I travel, I visit art museums, I sketch. I live in Spain. Still nothing comes but bowls of fruit and vases of flowers. There is nothing, no firing of synapses, no brainstorms, nothing. I blame the art department; they have sucked the creative life from me. I digress.

But asleep, aha! This is where the ideas have been hiding. Sequences of events play out in my mind. Disconnected snapshot-scenes linger in the morning. And there I have found some new ideas. I am content with stopping here. I do not wish to analyze the drawings, or the dreams. I have not consulted my dream dictionary for this project.

My dreams (probably like many dreams) are disconnected and illogical. I had a dream once that I met a goldfish at a house party. He was sitting on the edge of the countertop, which was littered with empty beer bottles and pop cans. He was smoking a cigarette. He asked me if he could stay at my place for a few days. “Sure,” I said. I prepared for him a fishbowl with all the amenities. I built a wooden deck on the side of the fishbowl; so he would be more comfortable I guess, although in hindsight, I’m not sure why I built the deck. The next day (or sometime
later...you know how time passes in dreams), I found the fish on the floor, flopping about. He said, “I just can’t breathe in there.”

I don’t know what that dream meant. Maybe if I looked it up in my dream dictionary, it would say that I needed a change of scenery. Maybe the goldfish is a symbol of domestication or companionship or something equally unfounded. I’m not sure what the significance of the dream was, but what an incredible series of prints it might have made! So in this project, I have done just that; I have used my dreams as a source of creative inspiration. The dreams that I remember the most vividly, surprisingly, are always in black and white. They play themselves like old, silent films.

The only part of the project that is connected is the first four drawings; the last drawing appears also as a print. The dream went something like this (I am sure that at this time I will destroy the random “dreaminess” of the dream by somewhat forcing a sequence of events, but oh well): I was traveling through some new place with a friend of mine. The place was like Rome. It was old and hot and we were walking for a long time, well it was long for “dream time.” There was a man who was following us and we walked into some shadows. Then, “a little bit later,” we were in a busy city. I put my hood over my head because it was pouring down rain and we were traveling (maybe still traveling from before, maybe not). We decided to take off our socks and shoes and walk barefoot through the city so that we would have dry socks and shoes later. We were at the back of a warehouse, sitting on one of those platforms where trucks deliver goods. While we were taking off our socks, someone came by and grabbed my friend’s backpack, which was sitting near her feet. Without hesitation, she ran barefoot after the thief. I remember thinking how terrible it was because everything she owned was in that bag. Then, she was running toward the end of a pier. Somehow, I had a view as if I was sitting out on top of the water. She was running and I knew that she would jump into the water. At this time, I could see a half screen: above water, my friend was running toward the end of the pier, and below water: a heap of terrifying, sharp-toothed fish were sliding past one another; piles of them, slippery and ferocious. Then I could see the situation from my friend’s point of view, right before her feet plunged into the water’s surface.

Each drawing from this “series” represents the particular scenes from that dream which I remembered in detail when I awoke. The other drawings and prints have been created by the same process, but from different dreams.
I had a dream that I graduated and worked, quite happily, in a Dollar General. I remember helping customers to find certain items. I laughed a lot in that dream. I stayed after my shift to visit with co-workers.

I had a dream that I called my boyfriend and a very playful girl answered, claiming to be his girlfriend. I could see her at the end of the line, absolutely beautiful, with an ethnicity that I could not place, nor compete with. She was intense, she had everything, and she came from somewhere he was interested in visiting.

I’m not sure what the drawings/dreams “mean” and therefore, I cannot explain the exact relationship that they may have with my life. The number of the drawings and the prints is as random as the dreams themselves. I only created as many drawings and prints from the “scenes” that I remembered in detail. I am unable to assign significance or offer much explanation; I can only say that these images appeared to me during the night.