POLITE CONVERSATIONS:
Provoking Dialogue through Community Interaction

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POLITE CONVERSATIONS:

Provoking Dialogue through Community Interaction

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Professor Emeritus Catherine Parke
I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Josephine Stealey, for her support and advice throughout my graduate career. Thanks also to Professor Brooke Cameron and Professor Emeritus Catherine Parke who, along with Professor Stealey, were a great help and resource in the drafting process.

This work is dedicated to my wife, Gretchen Vaughn, and to the memory of my father, Ellsworth Sheridan Hartzell.
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POLITE CONVERSATIONS:
Provoking Dialogue through Community Interaction

Robert S. Hartzell

Dr. Josephine Stealey, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This creative research investigated my role as artist in the community and the effect of my activities on both individuals and groups. This work took the form of a series of silk-screened and folded books that were mass produced by hand and given away for free. The books were distributed to both acquaintances and strangers. The intent behind the project was to provoke dialogue through community interaction with the book forms and their content.

The book series evolved through experimentation with text, image, and texture to eventually elicit conversation among diverse groups, hoping that through a series of “Polite Conversations” viewers could find a common ground of mutual experience. My goal was to take my work out of the gallery setting and to bring people into the artistic process, through both conceptual and tactile means.

The later work invited the viewer to interact with the work and to participate in the thesis show through postcards attached to the book meant to be cut out, mailed out, and displayed.
Introduction

The romantic notion of the artist as the victim of the public’s criticism and ignorance - an outcast from society - disenchants the community from the artist and his process. Artistic expression is a birthright for all humanity, and it is to the detriment of all if it is relegated to the hands of a few. The artist that rebukes community action alienates himself not just from society, but also from culturally communal experiences. While an artist may be interested in the root cause of speculated societal ills and those things that make us different or unique, an artist who seeks to create a healthy community must search for the elements that bind us together. I believe art can and should be used to illustrate the traits, ideas and fears that we share and to encourage discussions among viewers that focus on common ground.

Chapter I - Art: Re-enchanted

Suzi Gablik is an art critic, artist and teacher who has explored the role of the artist in the community and the effect of that role on our culture. She argued that artists must undo the alienation and emphasis on the individual championed by the modernist, that “Within modern culture, society has been characterized as a hostile rather than a resonant environment for the self-unfolding of the individual; especially within the avant garde, the radical artist was always ‘against’ society.” (Gablik, p. 169) Gablik wondered, in her book The Reenchantment of Art, whether the “…widely shared disenchantment over the compulsive and oppressive consumeristic [sic] framework in
which we do our work, and from which, it would seem, there is no escape” could be overcome. (p. 3) According to Gablik, the disenchantment with art was a cultural crisis that must be overcome if artists were to return to their most useful roles in society - shamans, preachers, and teachers in the community. (p. 11) Gablik believed that the focus of the artistic community must change and that the new important questions were issues of social and environmental responsibility rather than those of style and content. (p. 4)

A culture suffers when it withdraws from the arts because it becomes limited in its ability to communicate and express itself. The withdrawn artist comes dangerously close to being irrelevant in the very society that she or he looks to for inspiration. Gablik wrote that:

the idea of self-directed professionalism has conditioned, if not totally determined, our way of thinking about art, to the point where we have become incredibly addicted to certain kinds of experience at the expense of others, such as community, for example, or ritual. (p. 2)

The artistic process should include more than just the viewing or possession of an art object. It should also include or reflect the processes, personalities, and histories of the viewer, the artist and the object involved. Gablik wrote that art should move toward “new forms emphasizing our essential interconnectedness rather than our separateness…” (p. 5) She also believed there was a “…new, evolving relationship between personal creativity and social responsibility, as old modernist patterns of alienation and confrontation give way to new ones of mutualism and the development of an active an practical dialogue with the environment.” (p. 6) Gablik referred to the old patterns as a “crisis of disenchantment”, and that overcoming that crisis was the
current “greatest need of our culture.” (p. 11) Gablik believed there was a “…new, evolving relationship between personal creativity and social responsibility, as old modernist patterns of alienation and confrontation give way to new ones of mutualism and the development of an active an practical dialogue with the environment.” (p. 6)

I agree with Gablik that art should be used to facilitate the open-eyed exploration of social conditions, and even as a vehicle for sharing painful personal revelations with strangers. Some critics believe that only mass media has the power to elicit real change. For instance, Robert Hughes, author and long time art critic for Time Magazine, has argued that:

No work of art in the 20th century has ever had the kind of impact that Uncle Tom’s Cabin did on the way Americans thought about slavery...The most celebrated, widely reproduced and universally recognizable political painting of the 20th century is Picasso’s Guernica, and it didn’t change Franco’s regime one inch or shorten his life by so much as one day. What really changes political opinions are events, argument, press photographs and TV (Hughes, 1993, p. 187).

I believe that art can instigate a positive affect on the growth and health of a community, and that artists’ books, while not as accessible or as widely distributed as press photographs or TV, can fulfill a similar role.
Chapter II - The Role of Artists’ Books

My recent work is intended to explore the commonality and duality of the human experience through a series of silk-screened folded paper books. Each book has a theme (for example, paranoia vs. alienation) that explores diverse, yet common, ideas and experiences. I chose the form of the book not only for its history of democratic multiples and the dispersal of subversive content, but also because of its close ties to the development of western civilization. The book’s role in the preservation and dispersal of knowledge, ideas and opinion is an important and a powerful avenue of communication. The use of the book as an artist’s medium combines the power, ease of dispersal and general familiarity with the book form with artistic concepts and messages that are sometimes difficult to convey to a diverse population through other art forms. The book form, perhaps mostly because of its familiarity and tangibility, adds a level of humility to the work that may not be apparent when it is viewed as a commodity in a formal space.

Lucy Lippard is a book artist and art historian who, along with Sol LeWit, the noted American Minimalist, co-founded Printed Matter, Inc. in New York City with the intent to publish and distribute artists’ books. Lippard (1976) felt that:

for an artist, the book provides a more intimate communication than a conventional art object, and a chance for the viewer to take something home. An artist’s book costs far less than any graphic or multiple and, unlike a poster, which may cost as much or more, it contains a wide series of images or ideas. (p. 47)
She also believed that the political possibilities of artist’s books were just beginning to be recognized in the early 1970’s.

Merely presenting work in a book form does not alone achieve the goals of tangibility and wide dispersal of ideals. Like Gablik, Lippard emphasized that artists should strive to communicate with a broader audience, and to expand art’s role in the community. Lippard believed that:

one of the basic mistakes made by early proponents of conceptual art’s ‘democratic’ stance...was a confusion of the characteristics of the medium (cheap, portable, accessible) with those of the actual contents (all too often wildly self-indulgent or so highly specialized that they appeal only to an elite audience.) Yet the most important aspect of artists’ books is their adaptability as instruments for extension to a far broader public than that currently enjoyed by contemporary art.... (Lippard, 1976, p. 48)

Lippard initially believed that book artists were uniquely positioned to de-mystify the world of conceptual art for the public through the economy, duplicity, and dispersal capability of their work. She thought that the future of artist’s books would be as a widely available and broadly communicated form, and that they would fulfill the true “democratic multiple” potential of the medium. Her criteria for artists’ books was quite strict: mass produced, relatively cheap, accessible to a broad public, all art and no commentary or preface or anything that wasn't part of the artwork by anyone—artist or critic; the sequential nature made it a single piece (maybe at times a whole "exhibition")... (Ault, 2006, answer to fourth interview question)

Later in her career, Lippard felt the democratic multiple potential had not yet been achieved, and that as artists’ books became more and more like readily available magazines or other mass media, they might become more mainstream and lose both their edge and their fine art association. She observed, “The reality is that competing with mass culture comes dangerously close to imitating it, and can lead an artist to
sacrifice precisely what made him or her choose art in the first place….” (1983, p. 50)

In describing Lippard’s later opinion about the success of artists’ books in general, Johanna Drucker (1994) explained:

…that the artist’s book had remained a novelty, a curiosity on the edge of the art world, and that where these experimental works did find a wider audience, they left that audience baffled by the esoteric and complex conceptual terms of the work. This is one of the major paradoxes of the relation between artistic vision and the ideal of liberatory [sic] or transformative effects on consciousness within the body politic…But the democratic aspect of the artist’s book could not, in Lippard’s opinion, be recaptured and extended without attending to this basic problem. By her criteria the most striking and representative members of the truly democratic book category were works which politicized the lived experience of the audience through presentation of critical insights into real life, circumstances, or conditions in which people (members of the public as well as the artist) existed. (p. 80)

Lippard has said her belief that the ability of the book artist to create dialogue between individuals on a variety of important cultural issues has largely gone unexplored by artists working today. She has recently expressed disappointment with the direction of most artists’ books. She believes that they have not fulfilled her idealistic, populist expectations for them because, although they might be cheap and easily distributed, they remained avant-garde art. (Ault, 2006, answer to fifth interview question.)

As an American artist I feel privileged and also obligated to communicate and interact with the community at large in an attempt to counteract the alienation caused by the intellectual and conceptual tendencies of contemporary art. I also believe that artists must, in order to remain vital contributors to society, attempt to communicate with their audience and to include the average viewer in the experience rather than appeal to only the elite audience who expects only the experience to which they are accustomed.
It is important to me to create work that addresses my left-leaning social, political, and religious beliefs in a broad sense. It is important to me to emphasize the big ideas and hopes over the restraints of dogma and details. It is important to me to promote social activism and the potential of an artist’s meaningful role in society, not merely by content, but also through the way the work is received by and shared with (and between) viewers. Finally, it is important to me to free the work from the usual setting that an art consuming public has come to expect based upon

the idea of self-directed professionalism [that] has conditioned, if not totally determined, our way of thinking about art, to the point where we have become incredibly addicted to certain kinds of experience at the expense of others, such as community, for example, or ritual. (Gablik, p. 2)

Ms. Lippard’s hope for the future of artists’ books should not be abandoned. Through the Polite Conversations project, I have attempted to explore those ideals that are important to me, and to present them to the viewer in a way that invites viewer response and participation.
Chapter III - Inspirations and Seminal Works

The *Polite Conversations* series was intended to experiment with how the artist, the art object, and the community can interact in a way that allows the viewers to recognize aspects of themselves in the work, in their fellow viewers, and in the artist. I wished to explore, through the combination of serigraphy and simple folded paper books, how to engage the community in which I live and work. The *Polite Conversations* books were hand-printed and folded and then freely given away to people, both strange and familiar. By removing the work from the gallery, shop or formal exhibition space, I intended the free distribution of the books to inspire both diverse and familiar groups to delve into topics that are often universal but largely left unspoken. I also intended my work to be a contribution to the re-enchantment and demystification of the artistic process.

Since I first started creating multiples in my early days of printmaking, I have considered myself a populist printmaker. I empathize with the propagandist, the downtrodden, the disenfranchised, and the plain old grumpy and skeptical. As a poster-maker, I discovered that much of my work had a tendency to travel. I was, and remain, always thrilled to hear stories from friends who have encountered one of my posters, prints or books in an unexpected place: in a shop, in a movie, in a stranger’s home, and most oddly, in a gas station in the middle of nowhere.

Previous experiments with the book form had attracted interaction with viewers. While stories of far-flung work have always been interesting and gratifying to me, for
my recent work I sought a format through which I could more closely track the actual dispersal of the work and viewers’ reactions to it. These concerns led me to the creation of a series of books called *Polite Conversations*.

*Polite Conversations* was intended to find a common ground for diverse groups to come together for the purpose of civil discussion of not only serious adult topics, but also some lighter-hearted camaraderie. I envisioned these conversations as either planned, salon-like discussions or as spontaneous gatherings, long or short, supportive or dismissive. Whatever the response, my intent was to spark interaction between people based upon the books beyond merely the fleeting moment of a viewer’s first encounter with the piece. I wanted to provoke an extensive, durational interaction where the viewers explored social realities and perceptions with open eyes to their own thoughts and through sharing revelations with strangers.

The pursuit of these goals led me down several paths. I experimented with medium, form, color, text and voice before settling on the simple folded book. I also experimented with various ways to approach the desired conversations before taking the approach to dispersal, tracking and interaction involved in the most recent *Polite Conversations* editions. Prior to exploring the *Polite Conversations* series in detail, and in order to trace its evolution, it is helpful to review of some of my influences, other book work and initial decisions regarding the series.

*Setting the Form*

Like many artists, much of my previous work can be classified as attempting to create special or precious objects that were intended to be displayed in a controlled environment and ultimately to be owned by a single entity or institution. Throughout
the books produced during this period, I concealed serious subject matter within repeated symbols and forms. These sculptural objects and structural books became increasingly personal. The messages I hoped to convey became more concealed. These works could be considered those types of “precious objects” that Lippard hoped book artists would move away from in favor of more democratic multiples. (Ault, 2006, answer to fourth interview question.) Examples of sculptural objects and the more traditional structural books I created during this period were *Twilight* (Figure 1), *Aircraft Carrier* (Figure 2) and *Arch* (Figure 3).

The sculptural book approach I took, unfortunately, conflicted with my stated intention to communicate with the viewer by tapping into those experiences that, while still personal, are often common and shared. Because my approach to hidden meaning and obfuscated common truths in the sculptural books was so personal and intuitive, it succeeded (mostly) only in obscuring the intended meaning of the piece. Based upon the opacity of the sculptural books, I decided to return to the medium of printmaking because I believed that it could be used as a more direct form of communication than a
One important initial decision was, since I was moving toward a more “literal” approach to bookmaking, how to deal with the words themselves.

*What the Futura Brings*

An important element of the *Polite Conversations* series was the written component. These writings were classified either as narrative prose or as “concrete poetry.” Like the concrete poets, contemporaries of Futurist and Dada artists, I wished to create unity between the visual and verbal aspects of the work. (Drucker, p. 232) It was important to me that the text itself connected with the intent of each book. Not only did the form, shape and size of the text determine how the books looked and read, but also what they meant.

An early element that I had to address was the selection of type style or font. While in my other print-work type styles I had occasionally chosen type styles based upon their aesthetic interaction with the accompanying images, in *Polite Conversations* I chose to use only the type style Futura. I chose Futura not solely for its relative simplicity, but also because of the history of its origin.

Futura was first released in 1923 by Paul Renner, one of the Bauhaus’s preeminent graphic designers. Futura was created as a modern, sans-serif type based on human proportions, hence its identification as a “humanist” type face. Unlike Helvetica, a transitional sans-serif type, Futura increased the legibility of larger type over seriffed old English and German black-face type. After some experience studying typography, I had already adopted the Futura type style often when pieces called for text. I decided to use Futura for *Polite Conversations* because the more accessible and

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humanist approach attributed to it fit into my desire to be understood by and to influence a large audience.

Though the typeface Futura remained constant throughout the books, the positioning, size, legibility and level of obfuscation of the text (based upon overprinting or the interaction of the overprinted colors) was an intended variable. As the project evolved, I experimented with variations on the preceding book’s approach to text to investigate which approach most closely elicited the range of responses that I had intended or expected.

*Early Inspirations for Polite Conversations*

I have always struggled with trying to unite all of my interests and skills into a single body of work. The direction of my work was driven more often by pieces that I enjoyed creating rather than by what would be successful as an engaging object and comprehensible to a viewer. In a printmaking class during my graduate career, each student was asked to create a series of prints that could be exchanged with everyone else after the final critique. I noticed that when it came time for everyone to collect their prints, my fellow artists and classmates responded to my journal print, a folded book serigraph, very positively. They asked questions. They were interested in the form other than as merely a print. This experience led to an epiphany. This line of work which had been shelved while my printmaking and bookmaking work went in different directions might be a more successful vehicle for the dispersal of ideas than the precious, fine art (and more gallery- or commodity-oriented) sculptural objects and structural books I was creating at that time. The choice to make sculptural books had
limited the work only to exhibition rather than allowing a wide dispersal of anything but
photographic references to the work. (Bright, 2005, p. 244) This book, *It is Funny That
You Think I Do Not Know* (Figures 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d), became a seminal piece for the
*Polite Conversations* series.

*It Is Funny That You Think I Do Not Know*

*It Is Funny That You Think I Do Not Know* became the first book where the
form, scale and intent for *Polite Conversations* began to come together. The color
scheme for this book consisted of overlapping green and gold squiggles. The title of the
book was broken into one- and two-word segments, spread throughout six pages and
printed in black. By repeating the title as the broken-up text over the six pages, I
expected that viewers would consider how alternative groupings of words could change
the conventional meanings of the words, depending on the context of one word to
another, and how the different groupings created layered levels of meaning within the
confines of a simple block of text. By breaking up the text, and by experimenting with
the size and placement of the text, I attempted to slow down the reader’s reception of
information allowing the reader to more deeply absorb the information and its
implications.
Figure 4a: It is Funny That You Think I Do Not Know, Back and Front Covers

Figure 4b: It is Funny That You Think I Do Not Know, Pages 1 and 2
While *It is Funny That You Think I Do Not Know* was popular with some of my fellow printmakers, I did not yet fully appreciate how this form could be used to further my goal of seeking common ground on sensitive subjects with the viewers. Another book, *The Big Red One* (Figures 5a, 5b, 5c and 5d), spoke more directly to the issue of
commonality among viewers, even though its subject matter was much narrower than that of later books.

*The Big Red One*

One does not usually get to choose the defining moments in one’s life or work. During my first year teaching serigraphy, one of my students mentioned that she had multiple siblings currently fighting in Iraq. We discussed some ideas for print projects she might pursue based upon hers or her brothers’ experiences. From these conversations grew the basic idea behind *The Big Red One* (Figures 5a, 5b, 5c and 5d).

*The Big Red One* was created to speak to a specific demographic with which I might otherwise find it difficult to communicate: soldiers serving our country (whether we like it or not) in Iraq. *The Big Red One* was meant to express my pride and appreciation for and to the First Infantry Division of United States Army, without exposing my own strong and personal political beliefs about their current missions.
The background image for this book was a simple flag with text that represented the long history of the unit through this country’s wars. The images were combined with the word “brother”, an important concept to the armed forces, with a brief historical reference to the unit’s service in World War I, World War II, the Cold War,
Vietnam and both Gulf Wars (the “official” Gulf War of the early 1990’s and the current Iraq War). The final page was not overtly military, including only the background flag and the slogan “Iraq, Today, You.” About ninety copies were sent to the unit in 2007 in the hope that, by my actions and through my work, I would contribute to the emotional well-being of people in a horrible situation whom I will probably never meet.¹

*Sabotage!*

Unlike *The Big Red One* which had a simple color scheme and a more specific audience, *Sabotage!* (Figures 6a, 6b, 6c and 6d) was a hodgepodge of color, image and intent. *Sabotage!* was also a seminal work because it keenly illustrated a number of my fundamental influences, not only artistic but also historical and political.

¹ A three-generation family of Bob Hartzells who are all Navy pilots or soon-to-be Navy pilots, recently contacted me after viewing some of my old plane paintings on the Internet. This contact has inspired me to perhaps follow *The Big Red One* with a series of books for Navy pilots, or maybe for other Bob Hartzells who serve in all branches of the military. This is a powerful and emotional line of communication that, and while I intend to expand upon in future work, because of the specifically targeted audience, among other things, this body of work has a different thrust than the *Polite Conversations* series as a whole, though I suspect I will explore this type of book and this theme further in the future.
The inks used in *Sabotage*, along with many of the background images, were hap-hazardously chosen from among remnants of a previous inhabitant’s long abandoned locker in my printmaking classroom. The abandoned locker contained a number of positives,\(^2\) which seemed to have been collected from years of work by
various students. To create the background images and patterns for *Sabotage!* I cut up some of the more geometric and abstract images and combined them into several layouts. I over-printed these background images using the most contrasting and conflicting colors among the old inks from the abandoned locker. I then added a layer of foreground images and text. These images were chosen from my extensive World War II image collection, and included pictures of Japanese war horns, London during the Blitz, and a Nazi marching band, and then combined with planes and flag details.

The text for *Sabotage!* was taken from my students’ written reactions to a Fluxist-inspired play that I wrote and encouraged students to perform during my first year of teaching. Through *Sabotage!* I sought and explored links between random and preordained events and elements, also the overall theme of the play. I was also inspired by how I understand Marcel Duchamp to have approached the creation of his “Large Glass” project, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors Even*. Duchamp created some elements of this work by hanging pieces of paper in front of a fan; other components were taped off and allowed to sit in Duchamp’s workspace to collect dust. While Duchamp may not have purposefully placed dirt or lint on the glass, the activity in his studio stirred up the dust and allowed a direct and indirect connection to the patterns and textures being created over the years Duchamp spent working on this piece.

I learned an important lesson that directly informed the *Polite Conversations* series while making *Sabotage!*: I realized that I could not blindly poke my finger into the dark and hope to hit anything on the nose. In other words, the use of esoteric

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2 The primary process used in serigraph printmaking is photo-emulsion silkscreen, which requires positives. Positives usually take the form of black ink or carbon on a translucent or transparent sheet of acetate or vellum. Through the opaque areas, ink passes through the exposed and prepared screen and onto the paper.
imagery and language might not have been the best choice if my goal was to provoke conversation about universal themes and concerns among the viewers. Each aspect of the books, not only the content, but also color, size and shape of the text, the use and placement of imagery and pattern and the interaction between text and image needed to be closely considered for other *Polite Conversations* editions.

**Personal Insights and Internal Dialogues**

Additional influences for the current body of work were the early editions of what eventually became the *Polite Conversations* series. These early books fell into two somewhat contradictory groups: some focused on my own personal insights and dialogues and others stressed common experiences of the audience. While these books did not ultimately successfully address my original conceptual goal as well as I wanted, both of these directions later led to a combination of approaches which has been more successful in opening dialogues and discussion of potentially divisive topics.

The personal insight books consisted of prose and poetry superimposed with found and altered imagery. The legibility and meaning of the text of these books was often obscured and required considerable effort on the part of the viewers to even see it, let alone read and comprehend the books’ message and intent. I began to experiment with legibility and readability of text through the series of books because I thought that forcing the viewer to study the surface to extract the written information would achieve a deeper interaction with the viewer. Unfortunately, however, I soon discovered that this did not occur.
Doomed Tower at Sea

The inspiration behind *Doomed Tower at Sea* (Figures 7a and 7b) was drowning – both actual drowning and the metaphorical drowning of being swept under by events.

Figure 7a:  Doomed Tower at Sea, Pages 1 and 2

Figure 7b:  Doomed Tower at Sea, Pages 3 and 4
The blue, grey and black color palette combined with illustrations of a featureless character’s misadventures with water was meant to imply foreboding and threat. The text consisted of a prose poem based upon on a childhood memory of almost drowning in a crowded pool, as that childhood experience was revisited through the prism of the then recent tsunami in Thailand. Some of the text was printed black on black and was completely unreadable. Other words and phrases were accessible to the viewer only after considerable effort. Even after the words themselves were deciphered by a reader, fragments such as “…buoyant porous planks…” and “…glowing cold dome…” were all a viewer could access to assist in understanding the piece as a whole.

The problem with these books was (as with the sculptural books) opacity. I did not realize this and continued this method through most of the personal, prose-filled books. This technique created a direct conflict with the central idea of shared experience and movement toward common ground. An outsider might have thought me deluded, or at least disingenuous as to my intended purpose of the work, because the argument that my intent was to explore and expose the commonality of experience was not reflected in the work itself.

_The Secret Life of Objects_

Another personal insight book was _The Secret Life of Objects_ (Figures 9a and 9b). _The Secret Life of Objects_ combined found text taken from over-heard conversations which was interwoven with images of items from my personal “special objects” shelf. My special objects shelf (Figure 8) is a collection of seemingly unrelated items which have been amassed over my lifetime: rocks, fossils and souvenirs
from various vacations; toys which represent memories of people or inside jokes among friends; odd gifts from friends and family – those seemingly random objects and collections that each remind me of a personal story or treasured memory.

Figure 8: Author’s Special Object Shelf

The Secret Life of Objects was inspired by the later works and ideas of Roger Brown, a member of the Chicago-based, Pop Art-influenced, Imagists (and a fellow School of the Art Institute of Chicago graduate). After a visit to the Roger Brown Study Collection in Chicago³ I realized that, left to my own devices and without the insistence of my wife, my own collections would expand to fill our living space in a similar way.

The Secret Life of Objects was intended to demonstrate that by combining the precious and personally meaningful with the mundane or everyday association of viewers to certain objects, words and phrases, underlying meaning could be secretly

³ The museum consists of Brown’s home and studio space, and contains vast collections of Brown’s own work along with his collections folk art, architectural models and drawings, objects related to popular culture, and all kinds of inspirational flotsam and jetsam which influenced and inspired Brown’s painting, printmaking and other fine art pursuits. (For more information about the Roger Brown Study Collection, see http://www.saic.edu/webspaces/rogerbrown/brown/index.html)
transferred through humorous juxtaposition. The images were meant at first to amuse the viewer. Then, over time and repeated viewings, I believed that the odd juxtaposition of image and text would transform the meaning of both.
Many people did react to specific words like “chronic” or to the image of Sponge Bob Square Pants® and found them humorous. However, the viewers generally did not make the juxtapositional leap that I had hoped the combination of words and images would elicit. As a result, it appears that The Secret Life of Objects was most successful in revealing more about my own personality than inspiring the viewer to more contemplative review or reflection.

Coming Attractions

Coming Attractions was another book in the early personal dialogue prose series (Figures 10a and 10b). Coming Attractions was the most personal book. Because it was a book about me, the subject matter detracted from my intent to draw viewers to a common ground or experience.

Figure 10a: Coming Attractions, Pages 3 and 4
The illustrations in *Coming Attractions* were high-contrast self-portrait abstractions ranging over the last twenty years. The text for *Coming Attractions* was based upon my thoughts about moving past the middle of my life on one hand, and just beginning the life I hoped for on the other. I have received feedback that *Coming Attractions* was among some viewers’ favorite books. However, even though general themes were ruminations on death and career, themes which are common to everyone, the self-referential nature of both the words and the images made me uncomfortable with the book.

With all of these “personal reflection” or “personal dialogue” books, I ran into the same problems as early bookmaking artists who thought the book form was a fitting medium for the communication of their ideas but could not separate that goal from the perceived constraints of contemporary conceptual art. Lucy Lippard observed that, with regard to most artists’ book makers, they “…failed to realize that however neat the
package, when the book was opened by a potential buyer from ‘the broader audience’ and she or he was baffled, it went back on the rack.” (Lippard, 1983, p. 50)

Through the personal prose books I began to address my own thoughts and fears with an audience and also sought to remove any guilt or shame from the viewer that may prevent honest thought and discussion. Additionally, I needed to become less specific and more universal in my approach to topics and form because, while viewers were interested in the books as art objects, my goals of inspiring dialogue about common themes and experiences was not coming through. Viewers flipped through the books and “put them back on the rack.”

To address this problem for the more recent books I started to simplify the ideas into themes or slogans. Using concepts universal to the human experience (like paranoia, fear, or guilt) allowed me to share with my audience the catharsis I experienced through self-interrogation. I also hoped to use the multiplicity innate to printmaking, and the power of the pamphlet, to further the breadth of my social outreach and to broach subjects that are often common but often left unspoken or considered taboo.

Common Experiences

More recent Polite Conversations editions can be categorized into what I now call the “common experience” category. Through the more recent pieces I attempted more direct and honest communication with the audience by focusing the text to a single idea, slogan or sentence. I removed references to specific personal experiences and used non-objective imagery and pattern, color and texture to create appropriate
moods for each piece. The books in this category evolved into posing single thoughts or unanswered questions. Instead of wholly formed, discernible images which could interfere with seeking a wider commonality, I used only color, transparency and sequence to create emotional environments. The books became “portable exhibitions” (Lippard, 1976, p. 45) for the viewer to respond to and think about, as well as to keep, display and share.

For example, in It Is Funny That You Think I Do Not Know (#2) (Figure 11) I limited the theme to an emphasis on the dangerous dual nature of paranoia. I have only recently been able to walk through a room and hear laughter and not assume it was directed at me. This book attempted to share this great revelatory moment with viewers. My intention was to explore the underlying problem of paranoia, and how one’s internal voice should best respond to what could be perceived as a threat, or a cry for help.

I also began to limit the color palette of the books. I specifically avoided the over-exuberant color schemes that I developed through years of graphic design and poster printing which seemed distracting in this format. Additionally, I began to experiment with a final, non-text printed layer to break up the readability of the text just enough to slow the viewer down without obscuring legibility to the point where a viewer might wholly abandon the piece.
The theme of paranoia continued in the next book, *Do Not Look At Me Like I Am A Freak* (Figures 12a and 12b). This book utilized one word per page over the first four pages and the word “FREAK” spread in three inch letters over the final two pages.
The exaggerated type size of the final pages was meant to be a visual and tactile (mimicking auditory) way to express frustration and anger. As my use of specific images in the books was de-emphasized or wholly disappeared, text became more important and more powerful. The text provided visual and emotional weight to the idea presented. In the next book, I experimented with text further.

The opposite of thinking everyone is plotting against you is thinking that no one can see you, or that no one cares about you. *I Am Standing Right Here In Front Of You* (see Figure 13) addressed this issue. The internal text, “Can Not See, Can Not Know, Can Not Tell”, was intended as the response to the title phrase. Because it was printed in transparent ink, the text almost completely blended with the background pattern and only became fully legible when the viewer interacted with the book by tilting it back and forth.
I Am Standing Right Here in Front of You was a direct conceptual companion to Do Not Look at Me Like I Am A Freak (Figures 12a and 12b) and It is Funny That You Think I Do Not Know (Figures 4a – 4d; Figure 11 [#2]), as it was meant to reflect upon contradictory nature of the subject matter. While Do Not Look at Me Like I Am A Freak and It is Funny That You Think I Do Not Know focused on the negative reactions to feeling singled out or persecuted, I Am Standing Right Here In Front Of You addressed feelings of loneliness and cries for attention.

The more recent books dealt with common experience. I wanted to explore some of the interactive mechanisms from previous books while creating more standardized layouts and limiting my design options. I also sought to clarify the ideas presented in each book. In I Am Standing / I Have Left (Figure 14), I limited myself to four, non-objective silk-screened matrices that could be used in rotation or combination. Through this method, I attempted to avoid any personally loaded images that might have led to widely varied and unintended, meanings to a broader viewer audience.
I Am Standing / I Have Left stressed the psychological place humans fill in a community or group over one’s actual physical presence. It also explored how our emotional presence, or absence, might affect the people we know both casually and intimately. The previous version of this book was very hard to read without considerable effort by the viewer. Both of these problems obscured the intent of the original book, and limited the time viewers spent with it and therefore the thoughts it could induce. I made a number of changes in I Am Standing/I Have Left to address and resolve those problems.

By combining two lines of different, but thematically connected, text I wished to differentiate between the separate voices and attitudes. I Am Standing / I Have Left consisted of two small bodies of text that were a continuation of the statement, or an answer the question, posed or implied by the title on the cover. Each snippet of text gave a different view of a single idea: What is a person’s place in a community, physically and emotionally?
In order to exert more control over the viewer’s interaction with the books, the
text and the printing technique were adjusted so the viewer was forced to handle the
book. I believed if the viewer must physically turn the book over to access the type,
their interaction with it would be extended. By forcing interaction, and also making the
text easier to read, I intended to deepen the level of the viewers’ understanding of the
central idea of individual books.

The final book in this category, *Do Not Look At Me Like I Am A Freak / Do Not
Leave Me Alone* (Figures 15a and 15b), explored the physical realities of interacting
with a group comprised of both unknown and familiar individuals. This book referred
to the risks and challenges we all face by going out and interacting with the world,
opening ourselves up to praise or scorn. This book revisited the themes of paranoia and
loneliness that were the subjects of *Do Not Look At Me Like I Am A Freak* (Figures 12a
and 12b) and *I Am Standing Right Here In Front of You* (Figure 13). They incorporated
some of the changes in form I adopted in *I Am Standing / I Have Left* (Figure 14), such
as the two different lines of text and the additional interaction required for the viewer to
read both. The background was also limited to non-objective imagery which began with
some of the earlier books.
Ultimately, while some of the personal insight or common experience books were somewhat successful, neither approach was fully satisfying. While viewers found the books interesting art objects and were interested in the process, I had more success with a book that I did not try to force into one category or the other, A Piece of Cloth.
Chapter IV: The Best of Both Worlds - A Piece of Cloth

I produced *A Piece of Cloth* (Figures 16a, 16b, 16c and 16d) during the same period when I was experimenting with the form and intent of the *Polite Conversations* series. However, because my approach to this book combined the personal reflection and common experience approaches of the other pieces, it did not easily fall into either the personal reflection or common experience categories.

At the same time I was attempting to move away from an emphasis on my own personal experiences and focus more upon potential common experiences of the viewers, I was inspired by the idea of the dual streams of thought in some of the other books. For *A Piece of Cloth*, I returned to the personal prose form through an intended internal monologue inspired by actual experience.
While living in Chicago, I had very few dangerous encounters. Surprisingly, the only truly threatening encounter was with drunken Chicago Cubs fans. Coming home very late one evening, I was attacked by a group of five inebriated men who, in the process of attacking me, ripped my shirt to shreds. The shirt was given to me by my brother and was one of my favorites. The tattered remains of my former shirt were later returned to me by the police who declined to arrest the perpetrators - boys just out having a good time. From the tattered bits of fabric, I made a wall light sculpture and presented it to my brother…who hung it above his family’s dining table where it still hangs today.

The text of *A Piece of Cloth* was a prose narrative based upon this personal experience. The narrative was then juxtaposed with questions that I thought would trigger personal responses from the reader. Some viewers have not been able to
reconcile the two separate dialogues until I explained the experience upon which both dialogues are based.

The text was printed on overlapping patterns which required viewer to move the book backward and forward. The reader could not focus upon the meaning or even read both sides of the internal dialogue at the same time. The separate dialogues did not seem to relate to each other to outside viewers. For example, “A shirt given by a brother” was juxtaposed with, “Who is your favorite relative? Least favorite?” “Ripped from my back by an act of violence,” was paired with “What is your favorite sport? Team? Player?”

_A Piece of Cloth_ was widely distributed. The edition contained two hundred books and approximately one hundred ninety of those had been distributed as of April 2008. _A Piece of Cloth_ was also the subject of several arranged salon-inspired conversations. I invited acquaintances to select a group of their own friends and acquaintances to meet for a discussion with the book acting as our discussion starting point. Through these live “Polite Conversations”, interpretation and conversation varied widely according to the participants. The range of responses from a wide variety of people from the same vague text (which text had a very specific and personal meaning to me) has been broad and satisfying.

Some groups immediately identified the subtext of the cloth shirt as a metaphor for “flag” and sport as “violence” or even “war”. While I admit that this subtext was intended, I was surprised at just how many viewers interpreted this to be the overtly intended message. Some viewers, once I explained the story behind the prose, wished to discuss the role of sport in society. Discussions often expanded to encompass
feelings about art, politics, sport, family, gifts or any number of topics which all
generated from the viewers’ interpretation of some aspect of the book.

Through the salons, I also received the very satisfying experience of extensive
direct feedback. In order to collect viewer responses in way that was more true to the
book form than film, I designed a book where interaction was very literally required in
order to complete the piece. This book became a major component of the thesis
exhibition.
Chapter V – The Current Course of the Work and the Thesis Exhibition

The “hybrid” approach to Polite Conversations which utilized both my own personal experiences and those that I believed were more universally common among the audience, like A Piece of Cloth, seemed to be the most successful in exploring social realities, and sharing painful personal revelations with strangers. The most recent Polite Conversations editions, and the theme further explored in additional books for the thesis exhibition, limited the use of my own personal insights to those that are more accessible to a wider audience.

The Polite Conversations series has evolved through several transitions over the course of the work. I moved from focusing on my personal experiences to exploring those that were more universally shared and common. I moved from objective (and sometimes distracting) imagery and exuberant colors to non-objective patterns and muted palettes. I exchanged obfuscated text for more legible and easily read phrases. I also made changes intended to force more interaction and in order to extend the time a viewer spent with the work.

One of the pieces produced for the thesis exhibition was a continuation of a series of books called Second Chance (Figure 17). Second Chance introduced a deceptively simple theme which was followed by text that completes the opening thought: “Give me another chance…and this time I will not ____.” Through Second Chance, I explored the idea that everyone is both a victim and victimizer. This translated into concepts of confession and forgiveness, attributes that are not only
required for any society to move forward for the betterment of all, but are also the keystones of any spiritual belief system. As the work became more widely accessible, I believed that Lippard’s original hope for artist’s books came closer to realization and illustrated Gablik’s and my own view that the work instigated a positive effect on the growth and health of a community through realization of individual, yet familiar, experiences.

The first two printings of this book were as journals that could be completed by the recipient with no further contact or participation with the artist required in order for the book to fulfill my intent.

The most recent version of this book, *Give Me Another Chance* (Figure 18), was produced in three separate editions, each edition containing one hundred books. The editions were distributed at different times to different groups of people in order to further explore the variety of reactions to the books elicited from different collections of people. The separate editions were color coded in order to track the distribution groups.

![Second Chance, Pages 5 and 6](Image)

Figure 17: Second Chance, Pages 5 and 6
The “orange” edition was distributed to individuals in the community with little if any connection to the University of Missouri and colleges in Columbia, Missouri. The “blue” edition was distributed to students and faculty of the University of Missouri and other colleges in and around Columbia, Missouri. The “green” edition was displayed at the thesis exhibition as a grouping of one hundred books and will later be distributed to other community acquaintances, including those who volunteered for the workshops I held to create a large light sculpture for the inside of the local music venue, The Blue Note, for the 2008 True / False Film Festival.

![Figure 18: Give Me Another Chance – Orange Edition, broadside view](image)

The back covers of each of these editions included an outlined box containing a short list of five of my own transgressions, with five blank spaces printed below. These spaces were intended to be interactive. Book recipients could choose to follow the instructions to “Complete, Cut, Mail” their own return card, or could interact with the piece in any other myriad of ways that included giving the book to someone else or
even throwing it away. It was my intention that the individual books would not be "complete" until the recipient interacted with it, just as I would not have been able to complete a major component of the thesis exhibition without the audience’s interaction with both the piece and with me. I had no preconceived idea of how the various groups would differ in their response to this project, but I hoped that the reactions would provide insight regarding different needs of these groups and alternative ways to respond to those needs.

The exhibition component for this particular book edition consisted of two grids of approximately 4.25 inch by 6 inch rectangles, arranged twenty across and five high on the wall. All postcards returned before the date of the thesis exhibition reception were displayed within the grid. The cards were presented in a random position determined by the roll of a die designed to generate two digit numbers (Figure 19).

![Figure 19: Installation View](image)

The action of removing the card from the book and mailing it back, or not, required that the recipients’ participation in the book take on several forms. This component of the exhibition, by design, was doomed to never include all two hundred cards, and its incompletion could be attributed to a transgression or flaw that one might
have used to fill in the blanks…Give me another chance, and I will not: forget, procrastinate, ignore, etcetera.

By the April 25, 2008 reception for the thesis exhibition I had received twenty-eight blue edition and thirty-three orange edition cards. I expected the average participant to interact with the book and to deduce that the blank spaces should be filled with five words that describe actions or personal characteristics for which the viewer sought forgiveness. I was amazed, and continue to be so, at the diversity and creativity represented in the various responses. Roughly half of the returned cards were completed as I expected them to have been based upon my intention. Examples of phrases and single word responses included “embarrass”, “Drown you in my insecurities”, “barf”, “Eat the last cookie,” “abandon,” “roll on,” “rainbowkitten,” and “crucify you.” Clearly, some readers took the project more seriously than others.

Others varied greatly in materials, extent of interaction and viewers’ perceptions. One participating viewer wrote in a language other than English, and so lightly as to be illegible. The same participant appeared to have torn the card from the book so roughly that it seemed to have been removed with their teeth (Figure 20a).
Yet another participant broke the format of the card by altering the preexisting text. They used design elements (squiggles, dots and circles) with a paint pen to alter the visual and tactile plane of the card (Figure 20b).

Another viewer, perhaps wanting to obscure their identity by avoiding handwriting, printed their response and pasted it to the card, evocative of a ransom note (Figure 20c).
Perhaps the most unique response was a viewer who folded the entire book inside out, wholly ignoring the direction to “Complete Cut Mail”, taped the book closed and returned the book in its entirety (Figure 20d). At first, I thought it was someone rejecting the project by mailing it back as if to say, “Here is your stupid book back (expletive deleted).” However, after opening the reconfigured book, I discovered perhaps as elaborate an interaction with the surface and content as any card received.
Of course, had all participants completed the card the way I originally envisioned, the wall display would have had significantly less visual and emotional impact. That the responses were so diverse also illustrated that, at least to some viewers, the book did provoke interaction and force a durational experience with the work. That, coupled with seeing the collected combination of the various types of responses to the work, was the most satisfying aspect of this project.

The thesis exhibition also included unfolded broadsides of each book, along with a variety of ephemera from the process of creating *Polite Conversations* (including misprints, one-offs, and positives.)
Figure 21: *Polite Conversations* Installation Views

Figure 22: *Polite Conversations* Installation Views
Chapter VI - What’s Next?: Future Exploration of Polite Conversations

To pursue my ideas of community outreach and interaction, I previously believed that I would need to turn to modern media outlets including radio and television. However, through contact with my students and their friends, it seems that the internet is quickly dominating all other sources as the preferred communication method among the up and coming generation. As a continuing aspect of Polite Conversations, I intend to channel the ideas behind the books, along with the electronic representations of the books via blogs and chat rooms, into an ever growing presence on the World Wide Web.

Give Me Another Chance and several of the other books in the series are currently viewable via the internet at: www.polite-conversations.com. While the web presence remains a work-in-progress, and though the textural (physical properties as opposed to the written word) nature of the books is lost in the electronic versions, viewers can still interact with an electronic image designed like a book complete with turning pages. Through a section of the website, each viewer has the option of expressing their reactions to the books.

Additionally, many of the live conversations I held to discuss A Piece of Cloth were filmed. I intend to continue experimenting with filming these salons. My earlier attempts awarded me with many new personal contacts, and they helped spread the word about various other projects that were in development. Without any background in film and the several unfamiliar technical fields that I must master (or at least function within) simultaneously, the film aspect of my vision may be a long process, but I am
confident and determined that it will eventually generate content useful to and illustrative of my overall goals.
Chapter VII - Conclusion

Through my experimentation with books that either focused more heavily on my own personal insight, experiences and dialogues, or those books that try to remove those influences in favor of stressing a more common experience, neither approach alone fully fulfilled my ultimate goal. The personal insight books were too personal; the common experience books – while professing to focus on commonality – were too often seen as personally therapeutic. The books that combined the separate approaches have proved the most successful.

Each book, regardless of the category in which I placed it, became an individual vehicle that, as it passed through the community, generated its own history. The fingerprints, dog-eared corners, stains, smudges, and tears all added to the history and character of each individual book.

The total combined effect of all these little interactions and conversations about and alterations to the books, both in form and content, were intended to lead me to take my place in the community as artist, teacher and shaman. I will continue to grow and learn from the support and participation in my work by the community that I am attempting to function within. These interactions add to the meaningful exchange between artist and viewer that I believe will lead to the demystification and re-enchantment of art and allow me to fulfill my personal responsibility to the community as an artist.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


AUTHOR’S NOTE

I grew up in a series of small Missouri towns, averaging about two hundred and fifty people in each. My parents were both art teachers, at the elementary and high school levels, but despite their occupations, they discouraged my interest in the arts. My parents believed that the only viable field of pursuit in the arts was education, and seeing that I spent most of my early childhood teetering on the edge of being held back a year or worse - being put in the special education program - that perhaps teaching was not in the cards.

Both of my parents came up the hard way, working days and nights, until they had the money to take the occasional class and eventually received teaching degrees. They both studied and taught art, but I believe that these artistic activities were done at a financial cost, a socially responsible sacrifice for the community. We could have easily moved to larger schools that had larger budgets and paid better salaries. I personally not only wanted to get away from the small town school systems and into a larger school with better facilities and more staff, but I also craved exposure to a greater number of students, what that exposure could do for the possibility of making friends. All pleas to my father (by my brother, sister and me) to take one of the many offers from better schools were ignored. My parents insisted that they would teach and live in the same kind of communities in which they had been raised. They remembered the teachers from their own past who extended helpful hands during their own education, hands that helped pull them out of the hopelessness of poverty and ignorance.

My father grew up very poor in the Ozarks. He attended a one-room school (that I was always told was a converted chicken coop) with an average of six or seven
students between the ages of five and fifteen. He was unusual in that he did not drop out after the eighth grade like the majority of the males, and he actually finished high school. After serving in the Korean War (during his service, both of my paternal grandparents died while he was away), he began a life long pursuit of higher education on the GI Bill. He spent his whole life giving to family, church, school and community. There was not a sacrifice that escaped his notice, and his sacrifices were constantly pointed out to me, his eldest son. I spent my early years telling him in no uncertain terms that I refused to be like him when I grew up, not even knowing what that meant. I realized far too late that for good reasons, and bad, that I was wrong about that.

After a drawn out, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt at University, I fled to Chicago at my first opportunity and spent almost two decades living and working as a struggling artist in a city whose social and economic problems were so vast that it seemed impossible for me to engage the community in any lasting and meaningful way. I volunteered at local hospitals and with Easter Seals helping to teach art to children and young adults with disabilities. While personally fulfilling, the overall effect on the community was unfortunately negligible, as if I had not even tried at all.

Upon moving back to Missouri to finish my graduate studies, that included the surprisingly irresistible offer to teach while doing so, I discovered a community with the same problems, but on a much-condensed scale. This was a community with which I could interact in a meaningful way. But what would that interaction look like and what would my goals for that interaction be?

My interest in the dispersal of my own art can be traced back to my work in graphic design, from the early days of seeing a Cap’n Crunch commercial for which I
had done the cell painting, or seeing someone on the street wearing a t-shirt I had
designed, to today when I walk around downtown Columbia, Missouri and see not only
my own work, or work by artists whom I have encouraged, but also (and best of all) the
creations of my very own students. There are many things that I was unprepared for as
a teacher, but the greatest surprise is the pride I feel for the work and success of those I
have had the honor to teach. The work of my students is, for me, the manifestation of
the distribution of my ideals of which I am most proud.
Robert (Bob) Hartzell
www.polite-conversations.com

EDUCATION:

2005 - Present
Study toward M.F.A. (Fibers, Printmaking)
University of Missouri
Columbia Missouri
Anticipated Graduation: May 2008

2004 – 2005
Study toward M.F.A. (Fibers, Book Arts)
Columbia College Chicago
Chicago Illinois

2003
B.F.A. (Printmaking)
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Chicago Illinois

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

2007
Art St. Louis XXIII, The Exhibition; Art St. Louis Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri; Regional Juried Group Exhibition; Juror:

Represent: Graduate Showcase 2007; Bingham Gallery, University of Missouri-Columbia; Graduate Student Group Exhibition

Innovations in Textiles Regional Sampler; The Gallery at the University City Public Library, St. Louis, Missouri; National Juried Invitational of MFA Candidates

Gimme Shelter; Spare Parts Gallery, Columbia, Missouri; Local and Regional Artist Exhibition and Benefit Sale

48th Annual Boone County Art Show; Boone County National Bank, Columbia, Missouri. Local Juried Group Exhibition.

Visions; First National Bank, Columbia, Missouri; Local Juried Photography Exhibition

Connections; Cherry Street Artisan, Columbia Missouri; Three Person Group Exhibition as part of Columbia Fiber Art Tour and Exhibition
Printed Matter; Bingham Gallery, University of Missouri-Columbia; Three Person Group Exhibition

2006

Plurality; Graduate Student Group Show, Bingham Gallery, University of Missouri-Columbia

47th Annual Boone County Art Show; Boone County National Bank, Columbia, Missouri. Local juried group exhibition. Awards: First Place -Non-Professional Painting (Corsair); Honorable Mention – Fibers (Reliquary)

Graduate Showcase, Bingham Gallery, University of Missouri-Columbia

12x12; Todd Gallery, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee; National Juried Exhibition

2005

46th Annual Boone County Art Show; Boone County National Bank, Columbia, Missouri Juried: Honorable Mention – Fibers (Twilight)

Chicago Posters; Chicago Tourism Center at the Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, Illinois; Group Invitational Exhibition of Chicago poster artists

Uncommon Ground; Chicago, Illinois; Permanent Installation, Revolving series

Columbia College Center for Book and Paper Arts; Chicago, Illinois; Group exhibition of artist made books

2004

Liminal: An Annual Visual Environments Class Installation Exhibition; 33 Gallery; Chicago, Illinois; Graduate Installation Show

2003

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago Bachelor of Fine Arts Exhibition; Gallery 2, Chicago, Illinois; Graduating Undergraduates Group Exhibition

2002

Solo Exhibition; Revolution Studios, Chicago, Illinois

2001

Kite Nite; Anatomically Correct Gallery – Art in Public Spaces, Chicago, Illinois; Regional Invitational Exhibition

TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2005-present Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Missouri-Columbia
(Serigraphy, Fibers, Introduction to Art)

Freelance artist and cooperative member – serigraphy

2005 Graduate Student Gallery Assistant, The Gallery at the Columbia College Chicago Book and Paper Center, Chicago, Illinois; assisted in curation and installations including Jay Ryan and Archer Prewitt’s “Preparations, Multiples & Outcomes.”

2002-2005 The Art Store (Dick Blick), Chicago, Illinois
University Art Department Liaison, Sales Associate

September 2001 Adler Planetarium; Chicago, Illinois; Exhibit Installation Temporary Assistant

1989-2000 Lounge Ax; Chicago, Illinois; Lighting Director

CITATIONS:


OTHER MEDIA:

Work Featured in Motion Pictures: “High Fidelity” (Dogstar Films, 2000); “Sky High” (Walt Disney Pictures, 2005)

AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS and FELLOWSHIPS:

2008 University of Missouri Department of Arts and Science Student Council’s Green Chalk Award recipient for outstanding graduate student teaching

2007-2008 Verna Wulfekammer Graduate Student Fellowship, University of Missouri; for returning MFA candidates in fibers

2006 – 2007 Verna Wulfekammer Graduate Student Fellowship, University of Missouri; for returning MFA candidates in fibers

2003 School of the Art Institute of Chicago – Recognition Scholar

2003 School of the Art Institute of Chicago – Enrichment Scholarship