

**Project:** *print and the relational aesthetic*

## Summary

As a supplement to the research I hope to participate in through the Distinguished Majors Program during my fourth year, I want to explore further printmaking practice and how it might develop into a relational aesthetic. Additionally, throughout this upcoming year, I plan to experiment with the concept of environmental art and how this might relate to a relational aesthetic, or not. What might an environmental ethic look like or mean in printmaking? Switching from oil based inks to soy based? This process will involve experimentation, trial and error and therefore will necessitate a plentiful and diverse range of materials.

In my third year arts award, my original intention to create an Artist's Book gradually turned into the desire to make 'zines' (cheaply printed and self-published print material). I intend for this project to be similar in scope in that it will transform as time goes on, and as different processes are explored.

I want to explore this theme of environmental art, and the relational aesthetic in as many ways as I can. As I have a background in analog photography, I wish to still use this medium integrally as a way to inform my printing and the topics at hand. The format of the book has been always been fascinating to me, and I hope to examine further what an Artist's Book is and is not. Therefore, I intend to produce prints, books (or some form of the book, e.g. zine), and photographs during this time of research.

## Content

While camping in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, writer Annie Dillard recounts an experience of moths flying into her candle at night.

One night a moth flew into the candle, was caught, burnt dry, and held...her moving wings ignited like tissue paper, enlarging the circle of light in the clearing and creating out of the darkness the sudden blue sleeves of my sweater, the green leaves of jewelweed by my side, the ragged red trunk of the pine...Had she been new, or old? Had she mated and laid her eggs, had she done her work? (Dillard, *Holy the Firm* 16-17).

The moth here dies, is sacrificed to the flame but in doing so creates light. In this light Dillard is able to see more clearly. Suddenly there is color amidst darkness. While this has nothing explicitly to do with the role of the artist, I think it is an interesting metaphor to draw on. If we see the moth as artist, the artist becomes an agent of transformation, e.g. sacrificing the role of self for the greater purpose of light. Perhaps the

moth embodies a shamanic identity or that of a nun—but I am more interested here in the role or lack thereof of self in art making practice.

A relational aesthetic might be the antidote to the modern condition of solipsism. I am interested in how a relational aesthetic might work, especially in its ability to dismantle the role of artist as self-affirming or egocentric. How might art and artist work within their social prescriptions and limitations to transform its passive experience into one of engagement?

While I am not driven to work in a way that is considered traditionally ‘relational’ such as in the case of Rirkrit Tiravanija’s *Free* (1992) where his artwork becomes the sharing of curry and rice to all participants. I am still deeply interested in central components of relational aesthetics that I could bring to my own art making practice as it exists now. Two aspects of relational aesthetics I find particularly relevant are 1) the role of the artist as selfless and 2) the role of the artwork and artist as engaged with current ecological, social, and cultural environments in which they find themselves.

I find myself particularly drawn to print (printmaking) as medium for this upcoming project because of its reproductive abilities. Prints can be replicated and distributed for purposes of touching as many people as possible. In this sense, in the democratic printing methodology, we find community around print culture. I am interested in the ability of print culture to create and sustain a sort of community-feeling especially one that is engaged and empowering, and considerate of modern dilemmas we find ourselves in, e.g. the ecological crisis etc.

An artist I have found to be of particular interest and relevance is photographer Paula McCartney who blends the distinction between natural and artificial environment in a pseudo-documentation of birds found in the woods (*Bird Watching*, Artist Book). Authentic experience is questioned in her work. I find this feigned authentic experience as a notion particularly interesting, especially if a relational aesthetic could be developed from it. Furthermore as part of my research, I intend to look more deeply into more environmentally sustainable and healthful alternatives to current printmaking practice. This might include the use of soy-based inks instead of oil, for example.

## **Timeline**

### *Summer 2015*

I plan to take Intermediate Printmaking (with Dean Dass) during the summer to further explore the bounds of printmaking practice, learning new print processes such as how to make paper. This will be a crucial time for reading material and gathering research for the project as well. It will be helpful to have studio access during the summer. I also intend to take a printmaking course at the non-profit community print shop, Studio Two Three, in Richmond, VA in order to learn about art practices I might not otherwise be exposed to at UVA such as screenprinting.

*Proposed summer reading includes but is not limited to:*

Duncombe, Notes from Underground: Zines and Politics of Alternative Culture

Gablick, Has Modernism Failed

Gablick, The Re-Enchantment of Art

Lampert, A People's Art History of the United States

Westin, Monica. "Recuperating Relational Aesthetics: Environmental Art and Civil Relationality." *Transformations* 21 (2012). Print.

*Fall/Winter 2015*

This will be a time where the research will be made use. I plan to employ the printmaking practice (or other) that I have found to be most relevant to my research. I will seek out critiques and further develop my aesthetic.

*Spring 2016*

This will be a time of critique and fine-tuning of the work. I will seek regular critiquing until the awards outcome in March/April. Artist's books would be bound at this time.

**Budget**

<i>Film/film processing</i>	500
<i>Japanese Papers</i>	500
<i>18 x 24 Copper plates</i>	400
<i>Printmaking Papers</i>	300
<i>'Green' Printmaking Supplies</i>	250
<i>Bookmaking Materials</i>	250
<i>Linoleum Blocks 9x12</i>	250
<i>Color/BW Xeroxing</i>	200
<i>Screenprinting Class at StudioTwoThree</i>	150
<i>Shipping Costs of Materials</i>	100
<i>Unanticipated Costs</i>	100

**Total: 3,000**

**Arts Involvement**

*Courses*

I have been enrolled in at least one studio art course every semester since my enrollment in the University. In my first year I took Drawing I and Intro to Photography I (black and white processes). In my second year, I took Photography II (color processes), Drawing II,

Special Topics in Printmaking: The Artist's Book, and Intermediate Photography with a focus on the photo book. In my third year I have taken Introduction to Printmaking I (intaglio) and II (relief processes). Besides my involvement in studio courses, I have taken art history courses, such as Feminist Aesthetics, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, and Arts Since 1945. I have also experimented with mediums outside of visual art. In the Fall 2013, I took a music course with Ted Coffey, Make Rock, where we were familiarized with Digital Audio Workstations and worked collaboratively and individually on creating our own expressions of sound. I am also DJ for the student run substation of WTJU, WTJx and host a weekly music radio program.

I am a declared Studio Art major concentrating in Printmaking, and am hopeful to participate in the Distinguished Majors Program in my fourth year.

#### *Seminar*

I have been enrolled in the Arts Scholars seminar for five of my six semesters, and was not enrolled in the Spring of 2014 because of a time conflict with another Studio Art course. I am currently involved in our social media presence and am responsible for updating our tumblr blog.

#### **Images**

*A Monday Night In Portland, Linoleum Cut, 12x15, 2015*

*Flower 14, Double Exposed Film, 2014*

*Flower 23, Double Exposed Film, 2014*

*Flower 25, Double Exposed Film, 2014*

*The Hands Feel It, Woodcut, 24x36, 2015*