

Intimates: A Narrative Reflection

Written By: Taylor Bultema

Integrative Project Thesis

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1.

It's late. I can tell it's late because I can hear the trains through my window, a noise that, to me, is only associated with the blurred time period between night and morning. I have been in my pajamas, teeth brushed, eyes closed for about three hours now, but I am not sleeping. Why can't I sleep? I spasmodically pace the small amount of free space that I have in my room before heading down the stairs to the kitchen. If this didn't happen so often I'd assume it was somnambulance, somatization, insomnia. I flick on the light. Dirty dishes everywhere, the remnants of my roommate's culinary disasters spanned across the countertops. I grab the mop, the paper towel, the sponges. Dish soap to sponge, sponge to counter, left to right. I move in circles. I do not think about what I am doing. I think about school, my mother's voice, my best friend's bad news. I grab the mop. Soap to mop, mop to water, left to right. I move in circles. I think about gastrointestinal diseases, about warm showers, about my first pet. I'm mopping from the back of the room to front. Back to front, left to right. Circles. When I turn around, the kitchen is clean. I put the mop, the paper towel, and the sponges back in their carefully assigned kitchen locations before I slowly progress back up the stairs, fall into bed, and hear a single wheezing whistle from a distant train before I fall fast asleep.

2.

I find comfort in repetition. I find comfort in lists, processes, and systems. I am methodical, procedural. This way of thinking is reflected in my actions, in my peculiar preferences for certain movements. It is why I like to clean when I can't sleep and why I like to color code objects when I do not feel like thinking. This order and structure can sometimes become relentless, all consuming, but it is how I make sense of an unpredictable and tumultuous world. Its no surprise then than my art, another means to attempt greater understanding, follows

this same kind of methodology. The way I think, and the images I create are both integral parts of who I am, and I don't like to make distinctions between them.

3.

Soon I will realize that my feet are too sore to make the estimated 376 steps to the bus stop. Soon after that I will realize that my right shoulder is too sore to lift the estimated 11 pounds that constitutes my backpack. Not long after that, I will be aware of the amount of time I have been holding my bladder, an estimated 76 minutes too long. But soon is not now, and instead I focus engrossingly and intently at the colors in front of me. I am trying to make an important decision, a decision that could differentiate between a completed oeuvre or another artistic calamity. The decision is this: aquamarine or teal? To many people this may sound dramatic, silly even, but to me, these types of seemingly simple decisions are everyday internal debates. To me, all artwork (and all of life, for that matter) is comprised of carefully constructed decisions, whether these decisions are being made impulsively or heedfully. What type of paper? What color paper? How tall? How wide? Decaled or smooth edges? What forms? What color forms? Where do they go? How do they relate? The list continues. At first, these decisions came slow for me. Every one was carefully thought out, a perfectly planned construction. Now, the decision between aquamarine and teal (I chose teal) comes to me in an estimated 3 seconds. The shape this color will form takes a little longer, an estimated 7.4 seconds. The accent color for the entire piece, one of the more challenging decisions, takes the longest yet, at an estimated one minute and 24 seconds. The time taken to make these small, yet critical, selections has accumulated to an estimated 11.4 hours, and an estimated 26 final prints. These decisions are why my feet and shoulders are sore, and why my bladder is full. They're preoccupying to the

point of languor, but the most interesting part about these decisions? I am not even consciously aware that I am making them.

4.

I am anxious again, my thoughts cycle and cycle endlessly, like an overworked carousel. Mainly they are memories, memories of the day, memories of childhood, and events to remember for the future. They come in and fade away like the static on an almost lost radio station. I need to trap them somewhere, somewhere that is outside my mind, somewhere where I am not just imagining them, but physically seeing them. I know just how to do this. I grab a flimsy, overused sheet of mylar, twenty-six sheets of large, crisp white paper and six cans of stubbornly sticky printmaking inks and head upstairs to the print studio. I pry off the metal tops to the ink cans and smell their familiar chemically sweet smell. I use cardboard chips to remove the ink, and I place little blobs of each color onto a smooth, glass table. Chip to blue ink, blue ink to table. Chip to red ink, red ink to table, and so on. I think of my little sister's sheepish smile, my friend Alex, whose hands are always the perfect amount of warm, and the last time I saw my dog, Sophie. I miss them. I think of them while I mix my palette of colors with an old putty knife, I find that they inspire my choices of hue and tone. Palette knife to blue, palette knife to red, blue to red, scoop and fold, scoop and fold. Palette knife to crimson, palette knife to blue again, blue to crimson, scoop and fold. This is how I mix my colors. I make an analogous scheme of purples: the purple of my sister's room, the purple in Alex's bedspread, the purple of my dog's collar. I trap my memories in color, and I trap my color in compositions. I make these compositions on sheets of plastic mylar, and transfer them to paper via a large, heavy printing press. I paint them on with cardboard chips. Chip to lavender, lavender to mylar. Chip to violet, violet to mylar. Up and down, left and right, all around, I move sporadically. I repeat these

motions over and over until I reach some sort of visual panacea, captured on a sheet of plastic. I don't consciously think about this creation, I'm too preoccupied with purples, not the ones in front of me, but the ones on the objects that surround the people I love and miss.

5.

Memories are a complex system. I enjoy reveling in them, I would not be who I am without them, but at the same time they make me nervous. They make me nervous because they are uncontrollable; they come and go, selfishly taking up large amounts of real estate in both the conscious and subconscious parts of my brain. Memories also make me nervous because they are transient. A memory that is so vivid and fond to me one day may fade into indistinguishable remnants the next. But mostly, memories unnerve me because they are deceptive. I can remember an event in a certain order, and attach it to a certain emotion in one recollection, and remember it in a completely different order, with a completely different feeling in the next recollection. They are deconstructed and reconstructed, forgotten, and re-remembered. They warp and change, all the while making me feel confident in my ability to know them, but how do I really know what I am remember is the truth? How do I know I am not misremembering?

6.

After I finish my composition, I move it onto the press. I center it perfectly, and cautiously drape a piece of paper on top, also centered. I move the image through the press, completing the transfer. I slowly pull the piece of paper off the mylar, it resists, desperately wanting to stay attached to the clinging inks. As I gradually lift, I anticipate the reveal. If I like what I see, I print it off the same plastic sheet several times. Mylar to press, paper to mylar, push and turn and lift. Mylar to press, paper to mylar, push and turn and lift.

7.

In my research I learned about bidirectional causation: *a* can be a result of *b*, but *b* can be a result of *a*. Therefore, my art can be a result of the act of remembering, or I can remember something by creating a piece of art. I think the reason for this is that both art and memory are constructive processes, linked deeply in emotion. I construct a memory similar to how I construct a print. Both are repetitive, both are systematic. Even though remembering makes me anxious, I like it for the same reason I like making prints, and the same reason I like washing dishes, because they are procedural, in complex and sometimes subconscious ways. I believe that this is also why my art looks like my memories. My art is abstract and organic, suggestive and illusive. It is multi-layered and evocative. My memories have the same qualities, so much so, that it has become difficult to separate the two.

8.

Because my art and my memories are indistinguishable, they are imagined together. The colors of my compositions represent the emotional part of my memories, and my forms, the biological. The forms are organic, and constantly changing. They represent the biological forms involved in remembering, such as neurotransmitters and synapses. I make these forms out of transparent ink. The transparent forms sit on top of the colors, protecting them, and creating white voids in the work. As I print the composition over and over, the transparent forms fade away as the ink is lifted, revealing the hidden colors underneath, while the colors that are unprotected fade away, until they are almost nonexistent. This process, of printing over and over, allows me to add and subtract as I go from one sheet of paper to the next, it allows me to hide and reveal shapes, to move from saturated colors to de-saturated colors and from opaque to translucent. This mimics the ever-changing nature of memories.

9.

Transparent ink to mylar, mylar to press, paper to mylar, push and turn and lift. Mylar to paper, paper to press, push and turn and lift. I repeat this process anywhere from five to twelve times, getting a similar, but uniquely different print every time. I lift the final print in the series, slowly, cautiously, off the mylar, It doesn't cling onto the mylar anymore because the ink has broken down, it's almost completely disappeared, along with my repetitive memories of the day. I think of my sister, my friend Alex, and my dog one last time as I clean up the mess I've created. I look at my work, satisfied, confident that I have captured my memories of them accurately. Knowing this, I can let my mind rest. I can finally take the time to massage my sore feet, my sore shoulders. I feel relief as I empty my bladder. I head home and fall, exhausted, into my bed. I hear the same whistle of a distant train as I close my eyes, until tomorrow that is, when I will inevitably reconstruct new memories, and with them, new works of art.



Intimates, 2013 (Close Up). Monotype on Rives BFK.



Intimates, 2013 (Full series & Installation). Monotypes on Rives BFK.