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Art/Des 400

January 29, 2008

Thesis Statement

For centuries artists have created works that have opened the eyes of the viewer though the use of narrative. Ranging from pen and ink to painting, these artists convey the story by either using image to convey the message, or by including narrative in speech, through bubbles or narration to keep the story moving. With the dawn of World War II artists gave rise to the superhero, specifically Captain America, to battle the Nazis and Japanese, eventually this would lead to the comic book boom or as many comic artists refer to it as the "Golden Age of Comics". In recent years comic books and their artists have begun to get the respect and recognition they deserve. Following the greats of the comic industry; Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Todd McFarlane, Joe "Mad" Maduereira, I will be creating a comic book for my I.P project. The project itself has no words, except for sound effects, and picture dependent, the reason behind this idea is because I'm trying to test a persons ability to think about what's going on in a story by only showing them what's going on, and not telling them what's going on.

In the beginning of 2006, I received a call from a friend of mine to help him create a comic book using his story. The story itself dealt with a hitman who had lost his memory, and trying was to get it back. We, sadly enough, were only able to achieve the developing stages of the story with only character designs being created, however, the experience led me to start the beginning process of my own comic book creations.

My first real test of trying to accomplish a comic that I could be proud of doing was in Professor Phoebe Gloeckner's Narrative class. The first piece I did, to me didn't feel like an accomplishment, however, it did give me a starting point to work from. This in mind, I started to buckle down, got over the setback, calmed down, and concentrated on my work eventually creating a better comic. I came across a story of the Norse mythology of Ragnorak[1], which conveyed the story of the apocalypse, this time I created the very beginning of the story. What made this project successful was that not only did my drawings improve, but I worked in inks and color, two things I am not usually gifted in using. This final project got me thinking about what I would be doing for my final I.P project and how I had, like many in the comic book community, to prove to yourself that comics were to be respected and not looked at like they didn't belong in the art community.

I wanted the story itself to be a dark one, where you wouldn't expect to have heroes or villains fighting each other, but having people make the decisions that could be bad or good, or both. Frank Miller's works (I.e. Sin City, Batman Year One, Dark Knight Returns, Daredevil: The Man Without Fear), where he conveyed the dark dimensions of peoples minds, and the grittiness of worlds we tend to over look, was someone who I carefully looked at to tried and emulate that tone. The story was a failure where going to flashbacks and then the present confused people, as did the conversations. I was given advice to do a story that was free of dialog, except for sound effects, and just use imagery to tell the story. I have found out that in many cases my art forms tell a story better than I could put it into words. I think that the text is not the most important thing in a comic if

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[1] Ragnarok – Norse Mythology depicting the end of the world, where the Giants battle the Norse Gods for world dominance, eventually leading to the earths rebirth

the imagery can convey the story. Most comics do in some way have the occasional flashback, but they define who the characters are in the very first comic maybe describing how they came to be, but only briefly. Language in comics depending on the writer ranges from complex dialogue, such as Alan Moores V for Vendetta and Watchmen, where he makes you really think about what's going on in the story. Traditionally and usually American comics read left to right, which is the basic structure for an illustrator. However, the panels on the page range greatly depending on the artist. Joe "Mad"[2] does work that's a combination of things, ranging from slanted panels, ripped ones or the traditional way of rectangles and squares. On the other hand Chris Bachalo[3] works more on the traditional way.

Text in a comic has to be written so people can read and understand what happens in it, but the images are what conveys the story. In some cases the text and images don't go together, which brings me to the point of why does there need to be text? Why can't the images create the story? I began trying to draw images that could possibly tell a story, but would also captivate the readers. I tried to do something that was not of the conventional way of telling a story in the comic book world, and I had to make it work.

The images had to be able to communicate well enough so that people would know what was going on. I began looking at comics that actually incorporated this style of telling a story, but not many existed, one that worked was "Extreme X-Men: Destiny Part 8 of 9"[4] where only pictures existed, even for an avid comic reader I found some of it hard to understand. Breaking it down into categories of what worked and what didn't

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[2] See Picture Reference Page 1
[3] Picture Reference pg 2
[4] Picture Reference pg 3

made me realize, that the full colored pages were what was wrong with it, too many things blurred together. At first I decided against full comic pages, but later on I wanted only a little bit of color to exist, emphasizing on the importance of the panel, and then even going so far as to have full pages colored to set new scenes that are coming up.

The hardest part is bringing it all together and getting a final project for the show. My audience for this is the comic book community will it be liked or not? I don't know. Will they see the deeper meaning in the story? I really doubt it. They will know however, that I put my blood and sweat into this and did it by myself, and I will get there respect.