

They were able to take her to the hospital and back, and still I had not moved. I had sat behind the couch crying for hours. I had pushed her, I had made her bleed, and there was nothing I could do to take it back. I woke up the next morning feeling guilty, not wanting to go downstairs for breakfast and see her face. She was sitting at our little table eating her cereal as always, not complaining about the huge gash that was now cut into her lip. I apologized, not able to look at her face. It had been the first time I was able to play with her in years and I had quickly pushed her back into the little sister that was too fragile to play with.

I have been preoccupied with my childhood memories from the time I realized I had forgotten many of them. Memories of my sick younger sister outweigh the importance of my mundane memories of play, consequently what I remember of my childhood is illness and solitude. I enjoy working and playing with young children, delighting in their imaginations and their vitality, hoping observing them will help me recover some of my own memories of childhood. In my thesis project, I have created a series of images of children's blocks, my favorite toy during this troubled time of my life. I loved playing with these blocks because it gave me a chance to build my own worlds, ones that could distract me from the turmoil and pressure that surrounded me.

I have chosen these toys as my subject matter because the blocks represent the play and the freedom that was curtailed in my younger life. These explorations and images will be shown in a series of ten woodblock prints containing images of constructions of blocks. The project's aim is to inundate the viewer with these

recognizable large-scale children's toys and evoke a sense of loss and unease. Everyone experiences the loss of childhood, and so I hope, through my work, to connect my audience to both the vitality and the loss.

My own childhood was cut short by my sister's illness and led to my adult curiosity about forgotten memories and their connection to my abandoned childhood toys. The only memories that I can recall now are traumatic events that overshadowed the importance of daily creative and mundane play. As a child, I was cutoff from my sister and was unable to play with her because of my parents' fear of her becoming sicker. Instead, I created my own space where I could play with my blocks and escape into a world that was my own. However, I rarely remember what I thought or did during these periods because of the overarching importance of my sister's health and well-being. I would like to recall memories of playing, creating, and dreaming, all of which happened in the environments I created with my building blocks. This examination of my toys can help the audience and myself remember valuable information, hopefully, helping us to recover memories and desires that will lead us to realizations about the children we were and who we are going to become.

My prints capture the "slow temporal and intimate physical scale of childhood exploration" (Goodenough, 60). Hopefully, by choosing images that show the forgotten vitality of childhood and play, viewers will be able to examine their own memories and leave with a new sense of curiosity about themselves and the world around them. This is a relevant issue for everyone since at one point we have all played and created as children. By exploring this through images, viewers will be able to have their own personal experience with my work.

My memories are often sparked by my interactions with children. While helping the children I worked with through Detroit Connections create their dream homes, I was able to have very honest conversations with them about what they wanted when they grew up, what they dreamed about, and who they wanted to surround themselves with in their future. It made me very curious about what I wanted as a child, and though I tried to remember, I was often left with memories of desperation and loneliness from wanting to play with a sister that was too sick. The images that I have chosen create a sense of longing for the memories and play and hopes that I had as a child.

I have made the aesthetic choice to print images of building blocks in dramatic lighting on birch plywood in order to create the mood of longing for something you wish to remember. The images, shown from a child's viewpoint, will spark the viewer's memory of their own toys from childhood. The images of building blocks will be displayed in close proximity on a gallery wall, each showing details of larger constructions. This will allow for connections to be made between the fragmented images. Together the images create one cohesive display that alludes to the loss of memory. Dramatic lighting, highlighting the many recesses and angles of the structures, creating depth and hidden spaces, will also emphasize the many memories that are forgotten.

Before arriving at my final printing process, I explored different types of woodcut media such as double block printing and reduction prints as well as exploring different materials to use as my matrix. I had originally intended to carve the images on MDF board of varying sizes in hopes of creating dramatic light and dark images through varying textures and cuts. MDF is often a very easy surface to carve into and allows for

more control when carving the images. However, after experimenting with this medium, I felt that the concept and the images were not coming through clearly. I, thus, switched to focus more on the photographs themselves and how these could be better displayed.

Ultimately, I decided that the best way to transfer the images would be through photolithography. Originally, I was not thrilled with the idea of creating simple photolithography plates and printing them on paper; I wanted to push my project further. After many discussions, I found that I could print these stark black and white images on birch plywood. The images are all bleed prints printed in black ink on 18"x 22" sized blocks of plywood. Prints that are not as clear were touched up with Indian ink, which blends well with the printing ink.

Tom Huck is a very important inspiration in my desire to work in print media. His woodblock cuts are gigantic images filled with varying textures and unbelievable light and dark contrasts. I strive to create images that are as dramatic and show depth as well as his pieces. Huck's work tells a story and allows the viewer to get lost in his narratives, not only in one image, but also in the multiple blocks in his series. He is also able to achieve a seemingly multiple color block using just black and white because of his ability to manipulate and cut the wood. I am always striving towards Huck's perfection and this project has given me a new type of print media to explore. I would like to be able to make photolithos that tell a narrative; however, I would like my images to allude to lost memories and not make specific memories apparent.

The photographs that I am using in my project are an integral part of my thesis. Lothar Osterburg, a master photogravure artist, has created multitudes of miniature environments that evoke many emotions. Viewing his work, I learned the importance of

constructing an environment that can create a feeling with simple imagery. His fictional landscapes are awe-inspiring because of their attention to detail and expert craftsmanship. I hope that my own images will lead the viewer to challenge their memories of childhood and explore more deeply what they felt and experienced when they were young.

Finally, after reading Lynn Wards' God's Man: a Novel in Woodcuts, I became very aware of space and cropped areas. Ward was able to achieve not only a story, but also to evoke many different feelings and emotions in the viewer through woodcuts that had different angles, textures, and layouts. She was not constrained by the dimensions of her block and created beautiful imagery that took a different shape on each page. After reading her book, I paid closer attention to the quality of my own images before transferring them to my photolitho plates. While photographing the images for my final prints, I was able to recall her woodcuts and it helped me to see varying angles and layouts that would work for my own pictures. Her book, done in black and white, also proved that monochromatic images can be dynamic and there is no need for color as long as the images are successful and cut using varying textures.

Forgotten memories of childhood is an intriguing topic because it gives hope that the memories may one day be recalled. My time spent with my images and wood blocks helped me to come to terms with a lot of the memories that I had forgotten. Memories of my sick sister, getting hurt, and other events needed to be worked through before I was able to remember the better times of playing with friends, spending time with my sister after her successful surgery, and just being happy spending time by myself. These no longer lost memories can help me improve my life as an adult. Remembering mundane play opened my mind to discovery and creativity that I had not been able to tap before.

Exploring these concepts through my woodcuts was a way of learning more about myself, and hopefully, my audience is able take away the same curiosity about their own childhood memories.

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Lynn Ward



Lothar Osterburg



Tom Huck