

Senior Integrative Project Thesis- "Whirling Dynamics"

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"Rhythm is the basis of life, not steady forward progress. The forces of creation, destruction, and preservation have a whirling, dynamic interaction."

-Unknown

Rhythm is everywhere. You can find it in music, visual art, literature, speech, and almost everything in everyday life. Rhythm is the element that is all around us but is barely ever noticed. Most people only think of music or percussion when being confronted with the word, but there is so much more to it. "Rhythm is a principle of art that's difficult to summarize in words. Assuming that you've picked up on a rhythm in music before, take what you heard with your ears and try to translate that to something you'd see with your eyes. Rhythm, in art, is a visual beat" (Art History Glossary).

For my IP project I will be making a series large-scale drawings of interpretations of rhythm. Rhythm will be represented through the illustration of repetition, depth, movement, and dynamics.

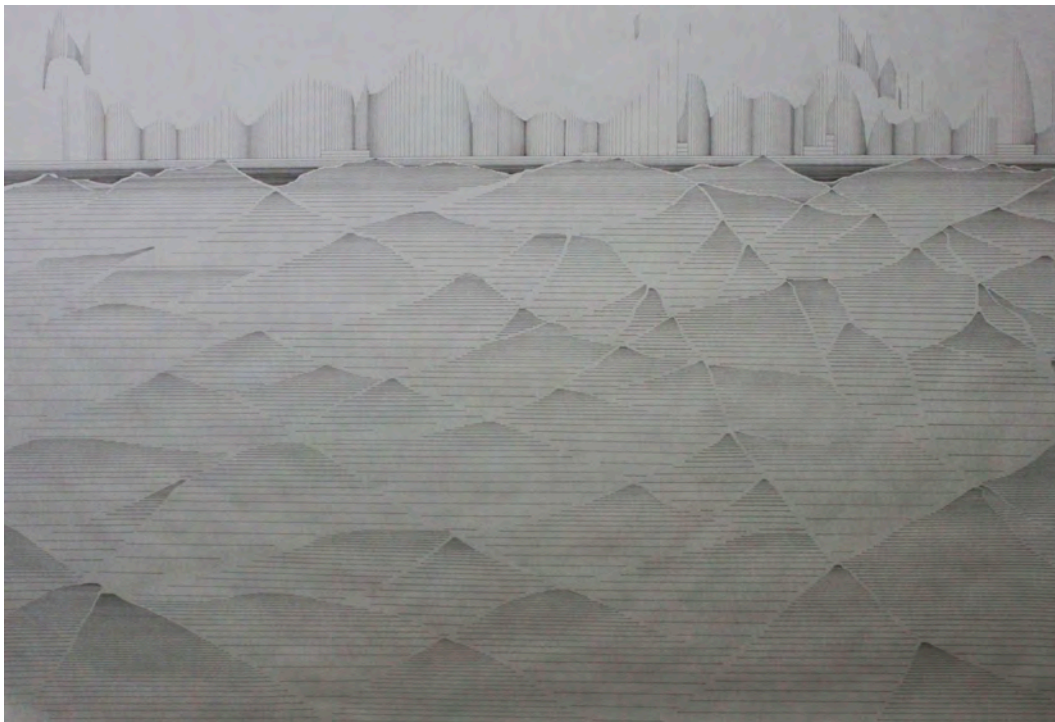
I have been a percussionist since I was seven years old. I grew up being dedicated and involved in both music and art, but I always saw them as separate

spheres. I was either doing music, or I was doing art. I was never thinking of ways I could bring them together. This project is about combining those spheres.

I have been doing illustrations for a long time and I am familiar with charcoal, graphite, and ink. I have done many large charcoal drawings dealing mostly with a stylized realism, inspired by the drawings of Chris Van Allsburg. What I find interesting is that rhythm can still be portrayed in drawings that are not literally about music or sound waves. Through my drawings I hope to show how rhythm is involved in everyday life.

I have done many drawings this semester exploring different ways I can portray this idea. I started with separating two different styles of drawing. One of the styles is of more realistic charcoal pieces, usually depicting scenes of water. I chose water because of the inherent movement and rhythm in the waves. The waves work together to create a very musical setting. They also represent how music and sound are usually interpreted visually and metaphorically through sound waves. The other drawing style I was exploring was the repetition of many straight inked lines, using a ruler and a micron pen. These lines would work together to show depth and movement through proximity-how far and close together the lines are from one another. I think this process worked well to define rhythm because of all the repetition involved with making mark after mark. With this style I did more abstract drawings dealing with specific songs and figuring out how to represent them visually. This is a very different look and process from the charcoal one. It is much cleaner and tighter, where as the charcoal drawing is messier and looser.

I enjoyed both styles of drawing but I needed something to bring them both together, so the drawings could relate and respond to each other. The next drawing I did is much larger. It is about six feet by four feet. It is being done in the style of the micron pen straight line drawings, but makes up a more realistic water scene, like the ones I drew with charcoal. The idea was to bring these two different styles together, in the way that I am bringing my two passions together: drawing and drumming. This large drawing is made up of many thin lines, which give it an abstract feel up-close, but when you step back it makes up an entire different scene. This water scene is more intense than my previous drawings of water.



After my IP consultation, I decided to slightly change my project. Instead of sticking with the ink-line style, I am going back to straight charcoal drawing. I made this change because of the exemplary feedback I was getting from my charcoal

drawings. I also decided this because it's the medium I am most fluent and comfortable working with. The medium is the only aspect that has been adjusted. I will continue to portray rhythm through repetition, depth, movement, and dynamics in my work. These drawings will be big and powerful, depicting realistic scenes of intense weather in the horizon of the ocean. I am sticking with the subject of nature or weather to show natural rhythm and music in the world. Using dark darks and light lights that fill the massive, approximately six feet by four feet frame, I will hopefully lure the public to my pieces. I want people to be absorbed and impacted by my drawings. The drawings will be displayed in a gallery setting. They will have much space between them and will all be hung on the same wall. The pieces will all be of similar styles and subjects, acting as a series, but each stormy scene will be of a different intensity. The intensity of the storm will change in the different drawings to create dynamics. The goal of these works is to show a different feeling of rhythm in each piece, while being aware of the harmony that the drawings create as a series.



Many artworks that deal with rhythm have taken it on in a more literal sense, making it obvious for the viewer. They usually are abstract, involving extreme repeating patterns and bright colors. "A pattern has rhythm, but not all rhythm is patterned. Really, it's easier to "see" rhythm in just about anything other than the visual arts. Literally-minded types should stick to music for rhythm" (Art History Glossary). The pieces I am more inspired by are the ones that don't make the elements of rhythm so obvious. One artist that does this exceptionally well is Chris Van Allsburg. Allsburg is a working author and illustrator from Grand Rapids, MI. He attended the University of Michigan School of Art and Design, and created many famous books such as, *Jumanji* and *the Polar Express*. Allsburg has been a huge inspiration to me since high school. What really captured my attention from the start was his style of charcoal drawing. He has a very stylistic realism that he uses in

his drawings that give them an almost dreamlike feel. His attention to detail, composition, lighting, and rhythm has always been an aspect I strive to achieve. “When you first look at my illustrations, you see ordinary, everyday things. But if you look closer, things might not seem quite so simple. When I'm writing a book, I always try to create something strange or puzzling in each picture. By using artistic strategies of perspective, light, and point of view, I can give the drawing a kind of mysterious quality. In other words, the style I use allows me to make a drawing that has a little mystery to it, even if the actual things I am drawing are not strange or mysterious” (Allsburg).



Rhythm is one of the most important things in my life. Visually and musically I am drawn to it. It has, is, and will be my passion for the rest of my life. This IP project is about me. It is about making the best work that I can make, that represents who I am as a person and creator. I want my love for illustrating and music to be exemplified in these drawings. They will be powerful, bold, and dramatic, showing my artistic background and how I have grown through this project, as an artist. When people view my drawings I want them to see the

relationship between my passion for both percussion and my charcoal work, and see how rhythm can be created in the world other than through a song.



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