Between Friends.

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Between Friends:  
A Supporting Paper for a Graduate Exhibition

A Thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Art & Design  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking

by  
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May 2011

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ABSTRACT

Between Friends
A Supporting Paper for a Graduate Exhibition

by

Greg Howser

This paper correlates with a Master of Fine Arts graduate thesis exhibition held at Slocumb Galleries in Ball Hall at East Tennessee State University March 21 through 25, 2011. The exhibition contains a mixed media body of work including prints, metal point drawings, and quilts. These works are an exploration showing the artist’s voyeuristic studies through line, texture, form, pigment, and wax.

This thesis goes into detail about how the artist came to create this group of art by discussing tools, printmaking processes, encaustic, metal point, and his influences.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As long as I can remember, I have been making marks and using color. My first realistic forms were images of cats sitting straight up in the Egyptian style. Around the age of eight, I started drawing and coloring images of people I knew, such as my mother and my teachers. In these drawings, I exaggerated features that I particularly liked, such as lips. I still find myself making such exaggerations today.

As I grew up, I became interested in observing the people around me. I would simply sit back and watch their interactions. I did not just watch them in school and home but secretly watched them in places such as malls and parks. Society would most likely consider me a voyeur.

My voyeuristic ways is what got me interested into doing art about the human figure. It gave me the foundation of observing people and seeing the true them. This inspired me to do work about my friends and family. My art is a study of their mannerisms, the way they interact with each other and with me. I have revealed a glimpse of these people through my eyes in a visual interpretation. The viewer may not always understand the meanings behind my works or what I am communicating; it is not my intention that they do. Sometimes, things are better left between friends. This thesis is about my very special people and how I reveal their private lives.
CHAPTER 2
HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

I’ve had several important artistic influences since my early adolescence. Most important of these were Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. They could literally bend the medium to conform to the power of their will, literally capturing the essence of a living person.

Leonardo da Vinci was a unique and legendary person and is widely regarded as one of the world’s greatest artists. His many achievements in art and science are recorded in his notebooks and paintings (Wohl 5). I was in awe not only of his paintings but his drawing as well. I was amazed by the way he could render hands and capture the beautifully subtle expressions of the human face. Like many others, I fell in love with the *Mona Lisa*, widely regarded to be the most famous portrait ever painted. The *Mona Lisa* embodies a lot of questions such as what behind that smile? Who is she and what is she thinking about? Leonardo da Vinci painted her smile with subtlety, endowing it with life and mystery. As humans, we are fascinated with the quest to understand each other and ourselves. The *Mona Lisa* touches upon these mysteries and this enigmatic quality becomes a recurring theme in my work as well. (Wohl 46).

Another significant influence of my work is Michelangelo, an artist who greatly contributed to the innovations of figurative art in the Renaissance. I find Michelangelo’s sculptures breathtaking. Looking at them, it is amazing to know that the rippling flesh was drilled and polished from hard marble. His sculptures look like real people frozen in time (Reuhring 9). Michelangelo’s *David* has captivated me since I first saw a picture of it in an encyclopedia during childhood. I believe it was the first adult nude body my young eyes had ever seen. The sculpture of *David* depicts a young firm athletic male with knotted muscles, a
massive rib cage, and a confident stance. The body of David expresses the power of inner strength over brute force. Michelangelo made his body soft, yet the figure has many other manly attributes such as firm hard muscles. Michelangelo also includes extreme details in this sculpture, showing the muscles and tendons in the neck and hands and forming soft full lips and a determine expression on David’s face (Reuhring P32-35). This attention to detail makes Michelangelo a great hero to me. I use Michelangelo’s work as a guide to help me create beauty in my figures.

My more recent heroes or artistic role models have ranged from the ancient Greek artists to contemporary artists such as Paul Cadmus and Nan Goldin. The Greeks have taught me the most about the male nude form. The Greeks set the standards for me about how to create the beauty and proportions of the human form. They began with simple forms such as the marble male sculptures of Kleobis and Biton, with their archaic smiles, to highly defined sculptures such as Hermes of Praxiteles (Pollitt 8, 9, 153). Hermes of Praxiteles is one of my favorite Greek statues because it goes beyond the beauty of the forms. There is also a very human narrative between the figures and how Praxiteles employs humor as a thematic device. The humor is found by the way gods behave as mortals, dangling grapes playfully out of the reach of the infant god Dionysus. Praxiteles shows a tender moment of an adult interacting with a child. Hermes, with a subtle smile, is depicted as a fun-loving god dangling (Pollitt 153, 154).

I discovered the work of Paul Cadmus while studying human forms in drawing and printmaking classes. The themes of Paul Cadmus paintings and drawing are about homosexuality. However, this has little to do with the theme of my work. My work goes
beyond depicting gay relationships. It explores my entire circle of friends and the special ways they interact with me.

Paul Cadmus drawings demonstrated a love for the beauty of the male form. Cadmus’s drawings are a well-crafted reflection of contemporary American thought in relation to social conditions and perception of the male form, especially with regard to physical beauty, sexuality, and domesticity (Spring 7, 64). Paul Cadmus’s drawings appeal to me more than his paintings because his drawings were created by a more exciting mark making technique. I adore how he created his own grounds on which to draw. One of my favorite drawings of Paul Cadmus is *Male Nude NMA*, done in the year 1965. As in many of his other drawings, Paul Cadmus created a colored ground for his drawing, and in this one, you can really see the artist’s hand in the ground. The ground has watery puddles through it, adding interest and depth. I enjoy how Cadmus makes the couch fade into the ground, how he uses contour lines and marks to build layers in the figure’s muscles. Paul Cadmus has the nude male figure lying on the couch and the male form mimicking the curves of the couch. Paul Cadmus had a brilliant eye in pulling the composition together with such subtle details. (Spring 100).

Another significant influence of mine is photographer, Nan Goldin. She called her photographs a visual diary or record of her world. Nan Goldin’s subjects included not just her family, but also her friends. She thought of them all as her family or tribe, as she called them. Her photographs are about her relationships and are meant to preserve the people in her life. She wanted to show her people’s strength and beauty, the truth about each person. These photographs mark a moment in time, preventing others from revising her world into something it was not. She had recorded both good and bad memories, a record of the truth.
Unfortunately, Nan had learned that photography does not preserve the memory perfectly as she hoped. She thought these pictures would keep her from losing the past, but instead they have shown her what she has lost and what has changed (Goldin 6, 145). The real world of Nan Goldin is so powerful to me. It relates to the way I wish to capture the moment. This moment is a record of how I feel and see my people, a truth that will keep me from forgetting.

I feel as though my art is an amalgam of artists’ influences with my own personality, experience, and flavor of life. I mix the mystery of Leonardo da Vinci with the sexuality of Michelangelo, Praxiteles, and Cadmus, with the truth and memory of Nan Goldin. The record I seek to create is a reflection of my world and those who inhabit it.
I have always enjoyed experimenting with different mediums and materials. Having knowledge of different art forms is priceless to me, whether that art form is printmaking, quilting, or drawing with some form of metal point. These experimentations have helped me become a far better artist. I have learned to combine things like wax and prints and to use fabric, computer, and printer together to express my ideas. Most viewers would say that I am a mixed media artist, although the core of my work is printmaking, quilting, and metal point drawing.

I regularly do two different types of printmaking processes, intaglio and lithography. In each, I have experimented with mixed media including fabric and encaustic. My favorite media are those using patterns and fabric. The fabric experiments work better with lithography than with intaglio. I am able to create wider, darker marks on the litho stone than on an intaglio copper plate.

The encaustic wax is an ancient art form used by the Greeks and Egyptians. Contemporary artists have recently re-discovered this ancient technique, using it with innovative results. Experiencing encaustic wax is fascinating for both the viewer and artist. At first, individuals are lured by the enchanting smell of hot pungent wax, which some feel as aromatic and therapeutic. This is followed by an appreciation of its depth and luminosity and how it begs to be touched. Encaustic is truly a seductive entity (Womack 5, 7). My experience dealing with encaustics involves the beautiful layering effects it creates and the ability to create textures, embed objects, and image transfers to create patterns. All these qualities symbolically
relate to the subject of the prints. The medium is a mixture of beeswax and dammar resin, which I personally mix to my own specifications. The more dammar resin mixed with the beeswax, the harder and more brittle the medium can become. Many different recipes for making encaustic wax may be found in books and on websites. The one I use most often is taken from the book *The Art of Encaustic Painting*. The formula is one part dammar resin to eight parts of beeswax. Typically the artist will mix up a batch in a pot over a stove. The hot wax mixture is then poured into muffin pans to create smaller, easier to use pieces of encaustic wax media (Mattera 95).

With intaglio I begin with a line etch. Depending on how fine I want the lines, I either use a dissecting needle for normal lines or a diamond pointed scribe for really fine lines. Afterwards, I would apply water-soluble graphite, pigments, or sometimes encaustic wax.

I have researched soft ground techniques to create my intaglio prints. Lines etched using this method resembles the appearance of metal point drawings. The process begins by coating a copper plate with a sensitive layer of wax, also called ground. This is accomplished by laying newsprint and then the copper plate on top of a hot plate. After the plate it heated apply the ground over the surface of the copper plate and evenly smooth out by using a roller. The plate is first coated with Graphic ball ground and Extra Soft Opaque ground and then covered with cloth or paper. Canson tracing paper works best because of its high transparency. This property is important because the artist needs to see the inscribed lines underneath. After placing the tracing paper over the plate, I draw on top of it. The pressure of the drawing tool will press into the ground, causing it to adhere to the paper. Once that is done, the paper is removed and ground lifts wherever a mark was made on the paper. How dark the mark will
etch is determined by the amount of pressure applied with the drawing tool. Typically if I want really dark lines, I will have to layer the soft ground processes two or three times (Brooks 122). In addition to using Graphic Ballground, Extra Soft Opaque soft ground can be used to produce textures and patterns in the plate.

In lithography, I exclusively use Korn’s lithographic pencils to draw my images on either plate or stone. I appreciate how loosely I am able to draw on plates and how much easier they are to process, due to their lighter weight. However, I prefer drawing on the heavier stones because of the richer range of tones and the reductive qualities. These are far superior to the quality achieved through plate processing. The lithographic process greatly resembles drawing. Even the word lithography means “stone writing” because whatever you draw on the stone with a lithographic pencil will print that way (Griffiths 100-104). The successes I obtained in lithography led me to experiment with different types of paper and eventually to printing on fabric. I have concluded that the lithographic process is far superior to intaglio for printing on cloth materials.

Images can be printed on just about any kind of paper, but some papers work better than others. Synthetic fibered paper usually does not work as well as soft, heavy handmade or mold-made papers (Brooks 150). As a printmaker, I have become very critical about papers. All papers have a different feel and the texture about them, each displaying its unique characteristics when printing. An experienced printmaker can tell the quality of good paper and how much better it will print over a cheap paper.

I do varied editions using different kinds of paper and cloth depending on my temperament and process. Hahnemühle German Etching is a greenish-yellow paper that I use
for everything except mixed media. It prints wonderfully for most purposes but does not hold up well when applying multiple materials and many ink layers. Magnani Revere, Pesica, and Rives BFK are my other favorite papers for printmaking. They all are mold made papers that vary in surface finishes and weights (Devon 111). Overall, I use Rives BFK most often because of its durability with paint, water-soluble graphite, or wax compared to other printmaking paper that are more fragile and break apart when worked back into such as Hahnemühle German Etching.

The color of the printmaking papers can affect the mood of the print as well as how it brings out the images. I tend not to use the darker tans papers such as the ones Rives BFK makes but instead I use the blues, ivories, creams, whites, and off whites of Magnani Revere, Pesica, and Rives BFK. I feel these papers lend themselves towards the softness of my figures.

Ink is also another important consideration for the printmaker. A printmaker will spend a long time learning to mix colors and an even longer time acquiring just the right ink consistency. To create the right consistency printmakers spend a while mixing the right amounts of burn plate oil into the ink.

When printing with black ink, I prefer Frankfurt Black because of its rich darkness and intense line quality. These last few semesters I have experimented with colored inks such as blues, greens, and browns to see how those colors will affect the outcome of the prints.

In addition to printing on traditional materials, I often integrate quilting into my work. This is allowing me to assemble the love of quilting with the beauty of printmaking. I have been interested in the beauty of quilts ever since I can remember. As a child, I often saw quilts in stores, craft fairs, and most importantly enjoyed our family quilts. These were handed down
from many generations and were a profound influence on my present direction. Quilts are wonderful collages of colorful textures and patterns arranged into a design. They reveal a story and hold memory. Pieces of a quilt come from everywhere, from friends and family, from old shirts and other miscellaneous fabric. The artist may reuse cloths from personal remnants, fabrics dyed or stained for other projects, and even materials bought new. Fabric for a quilt can come from any number of sources, giving each quilt its uniqueness (Ickis v).

Quilts have allowed me to explore images of the special people I know, using textures to represent parts of the individual. With the power of collage, I am able to combine string, cloth, and computer images to create a lasting memory of my people. This task would be far more difficult without the use of digital technology. Without the computer, I could not combine images, patterns, and textures with such ease. The computer allows me to add elements quickly and remove mistakes in seconds. In contrast, traditional corrections in drawings and prints may take hours.

When printing on fabric, I first decide what kind of material to use and whether to manipulate it with such as stains as coffee, tea, or rust. Following that, I soak the fabric in Bubble Jet Set 2000. Bubble Jet Set 2000 is an ink fixative. Without this step, an artist cannot print on fabric successfully. After the fabric has soaked in this solution, I use an iron to adhere freezer paper to the fabric. This is done to ensure that the fabric will run through the printer (Hesch 10, 11). I use the Epson WorkForce 1100 wide format printer with Dura Brite Ultra inks because these inks are pigment-based. Pigment-base inks hold up better in the fabric and are light fast (Hesch 13).
After the printing stage is over, I then decide what other kinds of fabric, quilt patterns, and colored threads I will use. This all depends on my knowledge of the person and how the materials will symbolically represent him or her. If the quilt is about a particular friend then I will incorporate fabrics that relate to his or her favorite color, hobbies, and experiences.

When constructing the quilt, I create three layers, the top, the batting, and the backing. The top is the layer that contains all the subject information such as photographs and patterns. The batting is the middle layer and adds the thickness to the quilt. I use a special type of fusible batting for my quilts. This type has a sticky bond that fuses to the surface materials when ironed. It temporarily holds the pieces in place, allowing me to sew it with a more permanent stitching. As for the back of the quilt, I use an inexpensive solid piece of fabric. I am not too concerned about the selection of this material because it is not seen by the viewer. My only concern is that it remains durable, keeping the integrity of the quilt over time.

The threads and sewing of the quilt are significant as design elements, ultimately determining the aesthetics of the final piece. When selecting threads, I choose colors that harmonize with the basic color palette of the quilt pieces, helping to unify and organize my design. I use the stitching of the quilt to help create an illusion of depth and space for my images. I consider this the same as a drawing process, where threads can build surface interest and also help define the images and their placement in space.

Metal point drawing is the act of drawing with a rod of metal in a pencil holder; often the rod is silver, onto a coated surface. In my drawings I have been using other metals like gold and platinum. The ground that is applied to the surface of the paper is a special water-based paint that will react to the metal, creating a mark. It takes time and numerous marks to achieve
darks. It was one of the first methods for writing and is an ancient form of drawing. It reached its peak during the Renaissance. (SilverPointWeb.Com). My introduction to this process occurred during my undergraduate studies. It was important in my development because it helped to slow me down during the drawing process and pay closer attention to detail. The act of drawing in the metal point proved to be a meditative process. Its lines were beautiful and elegant, bringing out the soft human forms and symbolic qualities such as vulnerability.

Another aspect that makes metal point different from other drawing materials such as charcoal and graphite is that metal point marks are nearly impossible to erase. Once an artist puts a mark down, it is there permanently. Knowing this, I began transferring images onto the prepared surface using graphite transfer paper, but I found out those graphite lines were difficult—and sometimes impossible—to erase. After thinking about this problem for a while, I came up with the idea to back my images with charcoal powder. This worked well, as the transferred charcoal lines came off very easily.

The first metals I used were pure silver and sterling silver. After working with both, I decided that I preferred the pure silver above the sterling silver because the pure silver will tarnish over time making the drawing darker. In my graduate studies I started seeing how other metals such as gold and platinum wires could produce marks and create dark values. The marks and dark values that the gold and platinum wires created were nice, but the color of the mark is unchangeable.

In metal point drawing the artist needs a ground that will accept a mark from metal. From my studies of different grounds I have learned that zinc oxide is one of the major things that affect how the metal will react, creating ranges of tone (SilverPointWeb.Com). Some
common metal point grounds are Sherwin Williams flat latex white house paint and the old master ground made from rabbit skin glue. They both worked well but I preferred the Sherwin Williams flat latex white because it has more of a tactile quality. A good source of commercial ground can be purchased from the art supply company, Golden. They developed a metal point drawing ground that works extremely well and can develop a wide range of tones. I mostly use that now with a small mixture of the Sherwin Williams paint to add a little more tangibility to the ground.

In addition to experimenting with the consistency of the grounds, I combine paints and pigments to the ground to introduce color in the work. Color created mood or brought subtle hues to my figures. Furthermore, the addition of color added atmosphere to the picture plane without having to physically draw one. It directs the viewer’s eyes around the entire composition.

The three art disciplines that are most significant to my work are printmaking, quilting, and metal point. Each brings something unique to my work and are most suited to my artistic temperament. Printmaking brings precision and control in line quality. Quilting helps me organize larger scale compositions that deal with collage and flat shapes. With metal point, I find a greater sense of patience, the need to slow down and better understand the anatomy of the human form. Alternating between three processes keeps my work fresh and helps me maintain a level of excitement.
CHAPTER 4

HOW IT CAME ABOUT

During my first year of graduate school, I explored ideas about gender roles, events in my life, and the people in my environment. This was my way of incorporating the use of the human figure. I explored many new art techniques, searching for the most appropriate method of expressing the beauty of the human form. I began my investigation with encaustic wax, chine-collé, graphite, line etching, and photosensitive intaglio film. Many of these pieces failed to create the effects I desired. For example, the photosensitive intaglio film never produced a successful print. But by the end of the spring term, I had created two prints with which I was pleased: First Impression and Growing Up. Each print was created using different techniques, and both spoke much about the individuals depicted.
Figure 1: First Impressions

First Impressions is a mixed media line etching about my friend Reece. I met Reece in an encaustic class my first semester at East Tennessee State University. At first I thought Reece was a homosexual because of his feminine mannerisms, his hair style, and his attire. Later on, I was a little surprised to learn that he had a girlfriend. This event, combined with the notion that I might leave an odd first impression myself, caused me to create this piece. I named the work First Impressions because I believe that most of the time first impressions of someone can be all wrong.

In First Impressions Reece is dressed as my idea of the male version of a Playboy bunny. He is wearing nothing but tight white briefs and white bunny ears. The figure is arranged asymmetrically to the right with the ears slightly bent instead of sticking up vertically. These
angles add interest to the design. I went back into the print with water-soluble graphite to create a sense of light and dark and depth. This was the first print in which I experimented with encaustic wax and I really liked the effect it gave to the print. Encaustic wax not only allowed me to experiment with transferring objects, the wax also gave the piece a mysterious translucent quality. The text used in *First Impressions* came from a Greek art history paper in which I was writing about beauty. The text imagery resembles a fog composed of sounds and voices from which the figure emerges.

![Figure 2: Growing Up](image)

*Growing Up* is a print about my friend Tanner. Tanner and I met in a physical education bowling class, required for our undergraduate studies. We quickly became bowling buddies and...
friends and socialized outside of class. Tanner is one of the smartest men I have ever met. He studied engineering and could work a Rubik’s cube in less than sixty seconds. He now lives in Texas with his boyfriend, where he is working for the government.

I took many pictures of him doing activities like getting dressed, playing with the Rubik’s cube, tying his hands with rope, and knotting a necktie. Images of him putting on the tie became a recurring theme because it was an important symbol of growing up. There were serious and significant overtones of how putting on a tie can resemble wearing a noose.

During my first year in graduate school, Tanner called me one day and was acting strangely. During the long conversation that followed, he told me that he had gotten HIV from his boyfriend. I remember in particular how difficult it was for him to tell me. I created the line etching called, Growing Up, as my reaction to this event. In the print I have him tying a tie with a light brown color of chine-collé which was also used to match the color in his hair. By using only one color and applying it in the hair, the chine-.collé draws interest to the figure’s face. After inking the plate, I sprayed it with some mineral spirits to see what distorting effects it would have on the image. I was pleasantly surprised at the outcome. The spray of the ink created this weird body fluid-like barrier between the viewer and the figure. For me, this shows the feelings of isolation someone can have even when they are with others. These two prints were the beginning of the journey that created this exhibition.
CHAPTER 5

PRINTMAKING

Reflecting and studying on my first year of work. I have noticed several things. First, the prints that people seem to respond to most were those using encaustics, transfers, and the water soluble graphite. Second, the prints I enjoyed most were those built around the theme of the human figure. The figure acted as a matrix that could be combined with colored waxes and image transfers. Thus, the same printed figure could create many variations of a theme, each with its own color and mood.

Finding oneself is a difficult process and can sometime occur in the most unexpected moments. During a photo shoot for an earlier project, I took pictures of my friends. Surprisingly, the pictures taken between the photo shoots proved to be more interesting than those of the main project. I think this was because these allowed for more casual expression, playful humor, and candid shots. I could more easily see and feel their quirky personalities without affectation or staged poses. I now knew how to show my friends in a very pure and honest light, all attired in their favorite underwear.

I wanted to show people as themselves with all their vulnerabilities but have them comfortable during the process. I asked the question, what do I need to do to show this in my artwork? It occurred to me that underwear was a perfect symbol of intimacy and vulnerability, so I read more about its history. I learned about the progression and evolution of how and why underwear has become a main stream essential in today’s fashion world. Now it is acceptable
to wear underwear in public (Cunnington 11-20). Knowing that I had a favorite pair of underwear led me to question whether others also had a favorite. I wondered what this says about their personalities. This led me to creating underwear prints of my friends and to ask them the story behind what makes those special, their favorite pair of underwear. With these principles in mind, I was able to demonstrate the wearer’s quirks and personality. Additionally, my friends brought an interesting insight to my original premise of vulnerability. Even though they were dressed only in underwear, they appeared most comfortable while posing and socializing within our group. Vulnerability and underwear were not necessarily the norm among friends.

An equally important part of my creative process is how I title my works. My first thought was to use the person’s name, but I decided that this method was not very exciting. Since I may have created many prints of a particular friend, using his or her name for a title would not give enough identification between the pieces. After much thought, I decided that the best solution was to title according to the main theme or emotion displayed in each print.

Irritation and Femininity are subjects of one lady I know named, Jessica. Jessica came to me with two pair of underwear.
Figure 3: Irritation

Those were her favorite depending on her mood. *Irritation* is showing Jessica in a black bra and also wearing what is called, “boy shorts ladies underwear.” I am capturing her sense of stress yet having ladylike control. I create this stress by laying her hand against her forehead and also giving her a strained facial expression. I used the encaustic wax tinted in a pale pink to create the mood of a lady. Layers of text create a mysterious veil that partly covers up her body. The Xerox transfers placed over the figure is of a floral pattern that I created in Photoshop. The patterns emphasized the inherent beauty of the figure. I used a heat gun to melt way the floral pattern and wax, revealing her form underneath. This allowed me to truly make a one of a kind print about Jessica.
Figure 4: Femininity

Femininity is the second print I did of Jessica. In this print I am showing Jessica in the process of putting on her stockings. This image captures Jessica in a provocative pose. She wears what she calls her sexy underwear, distinguished with a bow and tux pattern. I wanted to catch her in the process of putting on her stockings. This would show off her leg and lead the viewer’s eye up and down the figure. Furthermore, this adds to the sexy femininity of the piece. The encaustic is tinted with a light purple color in some areas and natural in others. I chose to use the floral patterns, which would also emphasize the feminine qualities.
*Figure 5: Bashful*

*Bashful* is a piece about a male friend, who I am just getting to know in my last year of grad school. He was there for me when I needed a friend; his name is Andrew. I first became acquainted with him in intro to print class. Andrew is very shy, bashful, and old fashioned. His innocence and sweetness drew me to him; he blushes so easily. These qualities are endearing and I wanted to capture his true essence in this print. His favorite type of underwear is the classic briefs and his favorite color is blue, so Andrew wore light blue briefs. Whenever I photographed him, he would cover his face with his elbow, showing his very shy and innocent
qualities. Soft ground is a technique I often use. It allows me to etch textures of cloth or paper into the plate surface. With this process, I was able to create tone in Andrew’s figure and also to impress textures in his underwear.

After the completion of Bashful, the soft ground became the next evolutionary step in my intaglio process. With soft ground I could easily duplicate lines of my metal point drawings.

![Figure 6: Dancing](image)

The next piece created was called Dancing. In this piece I decided to move away from the underwear idea because I wanted to capture my friend Stacy and her love for dancing,

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using contour drawing. I felt that using the underwear motif would not appropriately symbolize this concept. Instead, I had Stacy pose in her favorite dress. I took many photographs of her dancing around the studio. Once I had chosen the picture, I had to select the best process and technique to use for the print. I decided that soft ground was the most appropriate medium. Because of its transfer properties, I was able to create the dress image using textures from actual materials I finally found some lacy fabric that matched the real texture of her dress. I cut out a stencil in the shape of the dress and aligned it with Stacy’s image. This was transferred, etched, and printed, creating the illusion of a real cloth dress on her body. I am really fond of the results and how it presents the illusion of her really dancing.
The Mitchells is the print I made as a humorous reaction to my best friend, Jody, getting married. I knew that once he got married that our friendship would change. I would not see him as much or play the same role that I had been playing in his life. That there would be a new person in his life and mine; this print was a way for me to process this idea and to accept this aspect.

I created the print with him and his wife appearing as gnomes. This occurred mainly because Jody and I had been talking about gnomes, and how he obsessed with the gnome in a neighbor’s yard and how he wanted one just like it for his garden. I created this image using the soft ground techniques and producing their faces in the style of Renaissance art. This image is
printed on a piece of paper that was previously used to press flowers. I found that the mold and traces of the left over flowers added much to the concept of a wedding portrait.

Figure 8: The Gemini

*The Gemini* is about my friend Brian, who thoroughly lives up to his Gemini horoscope. Depending on what factors are present on any given day, the viewer could see his many sides. In the print, I have Brian looking at his hands as if trying to make a decision on which person he was feeling like at the moment. I ended up printing him on this green and yellow flora hydrangea fabric to show his strong feminine side that contrast with his beardy masculine side. He can be very emotional at times.
Golden Girl is lithograph about my mother. Unlike many of the other pieces in the show I exaggerated a few aspects in this piece, such as the curliness of my mother hair to the textures of the fur of her coat. I depicted her as having an older and wiser appearance. I did this because a child often sees his mother differently than she really is. This print truly represents how I see my mother, despite the exaggerations. The other reason I named the print, Golden Girl, is to pay homage to my memory of watching the T.V. program, Golden Girls, with her. She is my true golden girl, someone who makes me laugh, and yet shares life’s wisdom with me. To celebrate this fact, I printed on a material, having a vintage golden color of printed roses; these represent motherhood and femininity.
Figure 10: Our Long Way Home 66 Years

Our Long Way Home 66 Years is a lithograph of the last time my grandparents were able to go out together, my grandfather became too ill to leave the house before passing away. It is a very special and heartfelt piece to me. The title is about their life’s journey together and their marriage of 66 years. It shows them leaving the house that my father built for them on their way to some forgotten place. My grandparents are wrapped up because of the cold weather. My grandmother is in her thick coat with her scarf, and my grandfather is wearing his well known cap and cane. This lithograph is printed on rusted fabric. I chose fabric because it has a potential to retain memories, or what I call memory quality. As an example, the rust stains
represent the stains of life, experience by my grandparents. These memories spanned many decades. My grandmother was barely eighteen when she married my grandfather, who was then twenty-two. Just recently, my grandfather died at the age of eighty-nine and my grandmother is now eighty-five. It is important that I record and retain the legacy of their existence through my art.
While I was working on prints of my friends and family, I began to explore quilt-making with similar objectives. One such piece is called, *Boy and Boi*, which explores the concept of self and identity.

The subject matter of the quilt is about two different male friends of mine. I have my friends Brian and Adam posing for this quilt. Brian is posing in a more timid, conservative pose, while Adam is standing strong in command. The rust stains represent the stains of life and how
experiences may leave a mark which can never be washed away. The spelling of the title tells
the whole story and is based on slang found in the gay culture. The “boy” means young male
and in gay slang “boi” refers to a young gay male in his early 20s. The quilt reveals other
significant hints about identity. The straight male wears the cheaper, more common
underwear, or “Hanes Classics boxer briefs,” while the young gay male wears a more costly
brand, the “Express boxer briefs.” This clearly shows that in some circles the type of underwear
can indicate a great deal about the identity of a person.
The quilt, *Friendship*, narrates a story about how relationships change and people sometimes grow apart. This often occurs over the course of time, whether they want it to happen or not. It is not a bad thing; it just happens. We as a human race move away from each other and lose contact. Situations occur where friends stop speaking, and they stop having the same interests. *Friendship* quilt is a reflection of how I see friendships change. This observation is mainly focused on my three friends, Jason, Brian, and Jessica. In the work, we see Jason and Jessica both looking in disgust and frustration. Their gaze is away from the center figure, Brian. Brian is oblivious to the situation around him. This narrative represents how my
very close friends gradually moved in different directions. Brian no longer spends as much time with his friends after he began dating a new person. Like Brian, Jessica’s life is also busy with other pursuits. Since her graduation, she is increasingly preoccupied with work and is planning her next move to graduate school. While all these transitions were taking place, Jason was also led in a separate direction. New employment took him to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where he now resides.
My last two quilts have taken the subject matter to even a deeper direction. I better integrated the patterns of the fabric with the subject of the quilts. *Best Friend* is a quilt about my best friend Jody Mitchell. The quilt is executed in browns because that is Jody’s favorite color. Also I stained the quilt with coffee because of Jody’s love of it. Most of the other patterns in this quilt have to do with his love of gardening and our time spent together working in the garden and picking berries. It is just about things we love to do. I am showing various expressive

*Figure 13: Best Friend*
portraits of him in this piece while framing the central part of the quilt. The full body portraits in the center panel come from images I have taken of him over the time we have known each other.

![Quilt - Boy in Blue](image)

*Figure 14: Boy in Blue*

*Boy in Blue* is a quilt that is a narrative of my friend Andrew’s life. His favorite color is blue so the quilt is executed in shades of blue. Andrew has this great interest in space, spaceships, and astronauts. He even includes this interest in space into his own collage art work. With this in mind, I searched for fabric with similar themes in order to best integrate the
essence of Andrew into my compositions. Another one of his interests is monsters, which he imagines and draws. He has fabricated lives for his monsters and created their themes as well. I incorporate this monster theme into the quilt to reflect Andrew’s creations and to add his hand to the piece. I decided to use fabric pins and allowed him to draw monsters on the different fabric squares. On other parts of the quilt, I sewed a group of expressive portraits, built around a center frame. The full body portraits of him are similar to the ones in the Best Friend quilt.

In my study of making quilts, I have learned much about both fabric and people. Using image transfers on the quilt surface, I have depicted the qualities of my friends and how each posture represents something unique. I have shown how friendships change with time, as friends leave the circle and form new relationships. Using thematic patterns, I have given homage to my special friends, using the symbols that are meaningful to them. In a real sense, the quilt is a wonderful metaphor for my circle of friends. It is an organization of complex pieces held together with a common thread. The parts are bound with interrelationships that may transform or even disintegrate with time. It is my hope that this brings richness, greater warmth, and increased value as the years pass.
CHAPTER 7

METAL POINT

Figure 15: Ladies Man

Doing metal point drawing taught me to slow down and really enjoy drawing the human form. It became a way to relax, escape this world, and express my love for the human figure. *Ladies Man* is a gold point drawing of my friend Jason. The drawing depicts Jason in his favorite underwear with his slightly curly hair doing that charming “come hither” smile of his. He is standing in a confident superman contrapposto, his left foot turned outward engaging the viewer, ready to take on the world and win the heart of his newest girl.
The Oath is a very special metal point drawing and is the largest piece in the show. It is fifty-four inches tall by forty-five inches wide. The pose I chose for this piece is a classical one, after Jan Van Eyck *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait*, a portrait of much mystery and debate. It is one of my favorite paintings and has been commercially reproduced in many different ways. Art historians have spent decades discussing the symbolism of the piece and trying to solve the
painting’s mystery. Some historians think that it represents a business arrangement, about a legal document, or about a wedding (Kanz 30).

*The Oath* is a metal point drawing created with platinum wire. Platinum is one of the most precious metals in the world. The reason I used this precious metal was to emphasize how precious the drawing is to me. Its subject is a humorous reaction about my best friend Jody and me. In the pose, I decided to dress us in our nicer, modern clothes; the hat Jody is wearing is one I bought him for his twenty-ninth birthday. The hat will later provide significant symbolism to the piece. Some would say the drawing is an account or fairy-tale about our relationship. We became very close over the last year and pretty much inseparable. You would not see one of us without the other. Some people began wondering how close we really were. Some people even said we argued like a married couple or two old women. This perception became a real kick for us, so we played along.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

My work is created through multiple media. It is more than printmaking, more than quilting, and more than drawing. It is a collage of my life. It is my voyeuristic journey with two families, the one I was born into and the one I have created. Since childhood, I have felt like a misfit, not quite sure how to deal with my quirks and the world around me. With the nurture and love of two families, I have learned that we all feel unsure of ourselves from time to time; that we all have things we hide from each other. We unknowingly shun those things that make us outcasts even though they are our true nature. We voyeuristically know our family secrets, those very special attributes that are not seen by others. We do not seek judgment, only acceptance.

This body of work gives the viewers a glimpse into my worlds, of what makes each of them different and unique. I cannot show the viewer everything, only hints and undertones. These are our secrets that we share just between friends.
WORKS CITED


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