Taken of the Land.

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Taken of the Land

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A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Art and Design

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art

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by

Charlesey L. Charlton

December 2009

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ABSTRACT

Taken of the Land

by

Charlesey L. Charlton

This thesis supports the Master of Fine Arts exhibition at the Reece Museum at East Tennessee State University from April 28 - June 25, 2009. The exhibition is comprised of 19 monotype prints on paper. The exhibition presents the artist's investigation using natural materials combined with traditional printmaking techniques. Subjects discussed include ideas, methods, influences, and process of integrating natural materials that evoke a sense of place, earth, and memory.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself...At times I feel as if I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and am myself living in every tree, in the splashing of the waves, in the clouds and the animals that come and go, in the procession of the seasons....there is nothing with which I am not linked.

-- Carl Jung

(Rolston, 254)

I have a profound passion and love for nature and the region in which I was born and raised. My work as an artist stems from this passion. Nature, my deep-rooted connection to the land, and the knowledge of the struggle of every living being propel me forward. My life as a child has had an undeniable influence upon my work. Growing up in the Appalachian Region on a family farm where the culture was rich and deeply ingrained in my life and work, I have developed a strong sense of personal aesthetic. My work is an interpretation of my memories and life experiences that serve as rich sources in informing my art work.

_Taken of the Land_ is a collection of monotype prints combining the use of natural materials, ink and paper. By portraying nature through the means of representation and expressing both internal and external concerns of my own, I feel that I am engaged in the timeless struggle of the human condition concerning place and being. The internal concerns are those about significance and relevance, while the external concerns involve consequence and repercussions. The monotypes in the exhibition explore both self-examination and a reflection of my life. I am seeking answers concerning the reality of the land and the idea of personal history. It is from these concerns that my art originates and ultimately finds completion through the process of printmaking.
CHAPTER 2

THE REALITY OF THE LAND

Why of course! It’s your native land, the soil of your homeland,
What you search for is near, will encounter you soon.
And a wandering man doesn’t stand there in vain like a son
At your gates lapped with waves, searching for names
Of love for you with his song, O blissful Lindau!
This is one of the welcoming gates of the country,
Tempting to leave through her out to the promising distance,
There where the miracles happen, there where that godly wild beast
The Rhine hurtles down its reckless path from the heights to the plains,
And beyond the rocks the valley expands in delight;
To wander there through the sunlit mountains toward Como,
Or to drift on the water as the sun moves through day;
But you tempt me more, hallowed gate,
To go home where the blossoming paths are known to me,
And to visit my land and the beautiful vales of the Neckar,
And the woods, the green of the holy trees, where oaks
Gladly gather with silent birches and beeches,
And a place in the mountains holds me captive in kindness.

(Hölderlin, 149)

The fourth stanza of the poem “Homecoming, to my relatives” by Johann Christian
Friedrich Hölderlin, a major German lyric poet born in 1770, addresses a connection
between home and land. The poem touches on what is tangible and is relevant to my
work. It stirs me on a level that is both natural and fundamental. The idea of home and a
native land has captivated my intentions as an artist and has led me in search of information
pertaining to and supporting his assertions of land and home.

Professor Isaac Phillips Roberts, who was educated at the Iowa Agricultural College
in 1869 and taught at Cornell University as a Professor of the Department of Agriculture,
stated about the land: “This Earth...is the nursing mother of mankind. Upon its products
we depend, by its fertility we are fed; from its breast come fruit and flower and to its refuge
return alike animal and man (Lord, 202).” Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, an American paleontologist and geologist who wrote at length on the theological and scientific implications of the theory of evolution during the mid to late 1880s, states that: “Soil, ever slipping away in streams to the sea, is a kind of placenta that enables living things to feed up on the earth (Lord, 23).” Interpretation of both Roberts and Shaler’s communications could be that Earth is a mother who provides sustenance to her children, which include all living plants and animals. Their views about nature and that the land is a mother figure that provides and cares for her children were common place in the nineteenth century.

To the romantics, nature was alive and suffused with God's presence. Nature stimulated the creative energies of the imagination; it taught human beings a higher form of knowledge. Nature did not consist of mechanical parts but of trees, lakes, mountains, clouds, and stars; one experienced nature with feeling, seeking mystical union (Balwin, 1). In line with the romanticized notions of the nineteenth century, mother Earth not only provides nourishment but also a sense of belonging in man’s pursuit of connecting humanity and nature.

Holmes Rolston III, a well-known Professor of Philosophy at the University of Colorado, asserts in his book Philosophy Gone Wild that “Our homes are cultural places in their construction, but what we add again is that there is a natural foundation, a sense of belongingness to the landscape (Rolston, 252).” Rolston also touches on the idea of home and place being a personal experience that allows us a sense of “belonging.” Concerning both culture and nature Rolston states, “We are born clean of culture....but we are not born clean of nature...We are born to die, but it is life rather than death which is the principle mystery that comes out of nature, and our emotions are stirred proportionately (Rolston, 255).”
Concerned about the future of mankind and Earth, Kenneth Hamilton affirms in his essay “In Search of Contemporary Man” that a connection exists between the artist and his or her inherent responsibility toward the land. “Mother Earth is in imminent danger of being trampled to death by her own children...The artist, whether his medium is verbal, pictorial, plastic, or musical, is the man equipped with radar to penetrate the cultural fogs of the age. Like the canaries that used to be carried aboard submarines, this race of mankind knows, before the rest, when the air is becoming poisonous or exhausted. And what the artists have given us is a series of variations upon one insistent theme: a cry that has steadily grown more shrill in each decade; a long lament over the loss of man’s wholeness; and a running commentary on the stages of his disintegration (Hamilton, 15).”

Hamilton’s assertion gives rise to the idea that artists have an innate responsibility to uphold all that is worthy and to protect “Mother Earth,” the land that is our home or suffer the loss of our humanity.

These statements of Hamilton, Roberts, Rolston, and Shaler, though they be either historically romantic ideals or contemporary concepts, have given me much to think about. All four individuals seem to relate to Hölderlin’s assertion of “home.” The idea of the land providing a personal experience in which we have an ownership and also of our home and culture has gradually invaded my work, along with the awareness of self and personal history. The work is a projection of my inner vision and reflections of my thoughts, insecurities, and revelations that manifest themselves through the process. Like Hamilton’s assertion the themes that evolve from my certainty of home and self are those that are constant and encompassing. For my purposes the land, nature, home, and culture are intertwined and evanesce, escaping capture.
CHAPTER 3

CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

“We grow almost everything we need to cook a meal: Potatoes, corn, tomatoes, peaches, chickens, cows, hogs, four goats – you name it – and about a dozen hound dogs” (Murray, 23). This quote was taken from a book on the people of Appalachia during the 1970s. Even today, forty years later, my family still lives this way. I grew up in the foot hills of the Appalachian Mountains; my grandmother’s family moved down to the “flat lands” in the 1940s to escape the poverty of the mountains. As stated before, my life as a child had a great and profound influence on my art work. My connection to the land, use of natural resources, and the dynamics of roles of rural farmers and women from this area are the major cultural influences upon my work. One might not see the connection directly, for me the connection is there in the marks and lines created by the impressions of the materials. I am interested about the immediate feeling one gets from the work. I would like the viewer to feel my personal struggle through the use color, forms, and lines.

My work has also been influenced by the work of Mark Rothko, Anselm Kiefer, and more recently Deborah Muirhead. Understanding the work of these artists has been crucial in the advancement of my work. Mark Rothko’s paintings have always spoken to me; the vibrancy of the colors that he used seem to push and pull each other are in my view the most beautiful in the world. Rothko’s paintings have been described as “sheer emotion, beyond form (Zelanski, 45).” I have always responded to his transcendent and nonobjective paintings with powerful emotion. During a career that spanned five decades, he created a new form of abstract painting considered “multiform” painting. Rothko’s work is characterized by a precise attention to formal elements such as color, balance, shape,
depth, composition, and scale; yet, he refused to consider his paintings exclusively in these terms. In a letter to Mr. Aldan Jewel, Rothko stated, “It is a widely accepted notion among painters that it does not matter what one paints as long as it is well painted. This is the essence of academicism. There is no such thing as good painting about nothing (Anfam, 78).” In the book _The Art of Seeing_ Paul Zelanski quotes Mark Rothko, “I communicate with basic human emotions...The people who weep before my paintings are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them and if you...are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point (Zelanski, 45).”

Kiefer’s use of landscapes as a subject to express his feelings involving not only national identity and collective memory but also occult symbolism, theology, and mysticism has been very influential and important to my process, and although Kiefer would do away with the landscape, I would lift it up. The premise of his work is an expression of the suffering experienced by entire societies and the continual rebirth and renewal in life. Kiefer’s work with the “blackened landscape” has been compared to Cezanne’s emphasis on Mont Saint Victoire in that each artist employs a landscape subject to express his or her profound feelings (Rosenthal, 155). The use of natural found objects has been a major revelation for my mixed media pieces. Kiefer’s work embodies a physical presence with his use of unusual textures. His expert use of natural materials and collage combined with his seemingly spiritual knowledge of the land has heightened my awareness to material use and concept. The use of a high horizon line in many of his works has been revisited in several of my monotype prints. Anselm Kiefer, a visionary artist, has contributed to the rebirth and resurgence of modernism as we know it.

Deborah Muirhead has visually influenced my recent and current work. Her work from the 1990s is deeply influenced by the 1991 discovery and excavation of the oldest
known colonial cemetery for Africans and African-Americans in Manhattan. Upon discovering her work I have been heavily influenced visually and conceptually.

Muirhead’s paintings, drawings and books are fictional narratives that investigate historical invisibility. Her work combines fragments of text, lists of names, and layers of wax, with paint, and collaged pictures that reflect an examination of history, identity, presence and absence. The approach of Muirhead’s use of color and layers as forms of expression have inevitably changed my approach to printmaking by making the process a more in depth examination about the underlying cause and effect. Muirhead’s more recent work tends to reflect an interest in the organic world.
My color choices have changed dramatically over the years going from the earth tones of my mixed media work to an intense and saturated color palate in my prints and then, finally, to the use of minimal earth tones infused with slight saturation. These steps show an important connection to the intensity of the work and a connection to my own emotions. Nita Leland in the book *Exploring Color* quotes Wassily Kandinsky speaking of an “inner necessity” of the artist to express oneself freely, without constraints of theories and rules to limit their expression. He affirmed that “everything which springs from the inner spirit – whether harmonious or discordant – is beautiful (Leland, 32).”

The idea of color as emotion or color for its own sake stems from the twentieth century Expressionist movement. My response to color as emotion is reflected in my own work. An example of this is my piece *Personal History III* in which I used a strong saturated red against a coffee stained paper with complementary greens and blues. The use of the red was a reaction to the sheer saturation of the color juxtaposed against the warmth of the stained paper. The use of negative space plays off the concentrated layer of ink to create a sense of depth in a relative flat space. The specific emotions I felt when making this piece would be those of sadness and balance. This piece is representative of my life in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. A time of great emotional growth and determination; it has come to represent a time in my life that is both poignant and impassive.
My visceral and intuitive response to color is reflected in my choices while working on a piece. Josef Albers taught that a color system alone is incapable of developing sensitivity to color in an individual and to regard color as a relative factor in art and that one should learn color through experience (Leland, 23). I feel that my experience with color is a definite one. My clear distinct use of intuitiveness only captivates my intentions as an artist and signifies my unquestionable passion toward the work.

My work shows growth through the experimentation with color. The representation of emotions and feelings through color association has allowed certain memories to emerge. The use of such colors is my response to those memories, and so the colors hold personal meaning and significance. Given that humans in general have their own responses to color, this only intensifies the work and makes each piece a connection to the individual viewer’s personal experiences.
CHAPTER 5

CHANCE AND OCCURANCE

The monotype print is hard to define, mainly because a monotype can be almost anything. The usual definition is that a monotype is made by painting a design on a surface and then transferring it to paper or another material using pressure. *Mono* meaning *one of a kind* and *type* which means *impressed form of a print*, then when you put the two together you have a meaning of *single impression* (Rasmusen, 3). The monotype has been used as a method of printmaking since the early 1600s, and, although often considered the “bastard” of the printmaking processes, artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, William Blake, and Edgar Degas all produced monotypes.

Henri Matisse did a series of monotype prints in 1914. The series of monotypes were black prints with incised thin white lines. The subject matter varied from nudes to portraits. These images were made by covering the plate with ink by using various instruments to scratch lines into the ink and then printing the plate which resulted in the finished prints (Rasmusen, 42).

For a print I generally start with a copper or plexi-glass plate. I begin the process by inking up or painting the surface. For the first impression I lay grasses or other natural native materials onto the plate, thus creating a debossed negative of the plant. I generally continue to strategically place ink and plants until the final composition is achieved. I sometimes stop the process and let the ink dry before continuing printing, depending on how the image is developing. I also tend to tear images down if something in the composition is not working. Sometimes this works and other times I lose the image totally. Depending on the image I sometimes will work back into the print after the ink has dried.
It is important to not get attached to an image; therefore, the image cannot become precious. By this I simply mean that accidents do occur when dealing with layers of color and sometimes an image starts out life as a beautiful thing, but, due to the inherent process of layering, the image may become lost. To say that I am leaving my planning at the door once I start to print would be a folly, every mark made and every plant placed is important and thought through process. Process sometimes takes over and the final image is of little consequence during that period of time.

Madame Marie Elizabeth Cave asserts in her book *Color* that “gifted artists, who have began to draw from memory, work at first on a small scale. In the presence of nature they are able to place a figure in the desired movement...The expression of form is given only by memory; it is feeling expressed by movement, gesture and physiognomy (Cave, 84).” I work instinctively as I concentrate on a memory for my compositions. I bring up those memories and try to place the color and composition that best support the memory.

The overall inherent aspect of a monotype involves a bit of chance no matter how well planned out the process. Ian Hacking states in the book *Taming of Chance* that throughout the Age of Reason, chance was called “the superstition of the vulgar.” Hacking goes on to say that “the world might often look haphazard, but only because we do not know the inevitable working of its inner springs (Hacking, 200).” C.S. Peirce on the other hand believed in chance and stated that: “For a long time I myself strove to make chance that diversity in the universe which laws leave room for, instead of a violation of law, or lawlessness. That was truly believing that chance was not absolute chance. It was recognizing that chance does play a part in the real world, apart from what we may know or be ignorant of (Hacking, 200).”
Like C.S. Peirce I feel that chance and accidents happen, whether or not you know the “working of the inner springs,” and from that I have learned to embrace my failures as well as my successes. There is an ever-evolving process that lends itself to chance and through these chances lies the reality of my work. Generally the accidents of chance are revisited and used in other projects such as hand bound books or mixed media drawings.

Printmaking to me has become a means to an end. The need to layer, the need of expression, and the intrinsic need of process have led me to printmaking. I find that though I do not consider myself a “printer,” I do consider myself a “printmaker,” a maker of prints.
I have always considered myself a mixed media artist. I have always loved to draw. I was in the first grade when my mother enrolled me in an after school art program. I still remember the lady that taught the class, although I cannot recall her name. She was tall with sandy blonde hair; I remember thinking how I could never be able to draw as perfectly as she. Years passed and I continued to draw on my own. Then, when in high school, I took painting under Urban Bird in Johnson City, Tennessee, for 2 years. My high school drawing teacher at Washington College Academy in Telford, Tennessee, also became influential to me by showing me new ways to express myself through mixed media. It was only natural for me to continue taking art classes in college, even though I was majoring in Agriculture with an emphasis on Animal Science. I had a short stint at Pellessippi State Community College while I was attending the University of Tennessee where under the instruction of Mr. Mike Rose I explored the use of metals and also took a drawing class taught by him. I then transferred to Middle Tennessee State University and along with my major of Animal Science added a Minor in Art. I enrolled in several drawing classes taught by Ms. Tanya Tewell. Tewell taught me to think about subject matter and my own personal beliefs in my art work. Her work was and is rich with meaning and subject matter, seeming to ask questions concerning femininity and roles of women in society such as in her drawings *Conundrum* and *Gecko*.

When I first contemplated coming to graduate school, I really had no idea how much my work would change. I had a set plan and a set idea. My work before and at the beginning of my graduate career was simple and straightforward imagery of family
members from the East Tennessee mountains from the turn of the century up to the 1940s, mainly dealing with personal heritage and the ideas of home. These images were and are dear and close to my heart. I found by taking old family photos and changing the composition to fit a central theme that I was giving the images a personal validity. A couple of good examples would be the pair of intaglio prints done early in 2006 – *Death to Serendipity* and *A Long Walk*. Both these images started life as photos taken around the turn of the nineteenth century. Going with a central theme of separation and longing, I composed these images based upon the story of my grandmother. Though these are not images of her, they are images that I felt could connect to her life experience. The loss of love and the entrapment of marital bonds that confined her in a harsh and unrelenting union were the basis for the separate prints. Both images make reference to isolation and alienation by pushing the individuals to the sides of the compositions with the use of asymmetry. In *Death to Serendipity* my grandmother is surrounded by the dark landscape and has a forward stare that both connects the viewer and also draws attention to her isolation. In *A Long Walk* my grandfather is only somewhat in the composition signifying his role of only being partially committed to the relationship. Both are printed using black ink. The lack of color is symbolic of the past and things left undone.
During my first semester in the graduate program, Fall 2006, at ETSU I took a mixed media drawing class with Anita DeAngelis. As I said before, I have always been interested in mixed media, but I had no idea how that class would ultimately change everything. I began to explore the female figure in my work as a symbolic image in the mixed media class leading me to the creation of *Rest*, which is now on permanent collection at the East Tennessee State University and General Shale Brick Natural History
Museum at the Gray Fossil Site. I was subsequently introduced to the work of Anselm Kiefer which reaffirmed my use of natural materials.

![Figure 4 - Rest](image)

**Figure 4 - Rest**

Rest has been the foundation of all my work thus far in graduate school. This image is so fundamentally important to the development of my style and technique that without this exploration I feel that my work would have ultimately suffered greatly. The female form is hidden by the use of texture. Representative of a landscape I used paper, gesso, native grasses, and ink wash to complete the piece. The figure is lying horizontally and facing away from the viewer. Both an image of landscape and female form together, this piece becomes crucial in the further exploration of form.

The search of the female form led to many experiments with ideas dealing with the view of women from this area and the incredible importance of the matriarch such as in the image *Matriarchal Ties*. The figure is bent over as in a state of prayer or meditation symbolizing the strong sense of faith that is present in many families from this area, mainly my hometown and own family. The other forms are vague shapes that represent thoughts and concepts. The color is an earth tone made by a coffee wash and pastels, symbolizing solidarity and strength.
I continued to play with the female form only to lose her to complete abstraction in the works *Diffusion of Rest* and *Rest II*. In the case of *Rest II*, there are three different female forms in the composition that are now completely unrecognizable due to a paring down of the form. I found that I had to lose the figure to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the form and the function it was playing in my work.
In my prints in 2007, however, I was still experimenting with the female form, and the process of working with collage eventually bled over into my printmaking. It only seemed natural to start applying the grasses and weeds to the images of my monotypes. It wasn’t until after mediocre success that I had an epiphany. Why not apply the plants to the surface of the plate similar to the collage method but reversed? The first successful prints incorporating the collaged grasses is the series of prints: Native Grass I, II.
& III. These images incorporate both native grasses and a hint of landscape. I had thus replaced the female form with that of the landscape in my prints; I felt that the landscape could serve as an alternate to the female form, drawing upon the notion of both mother earth and fertility.

Figure 9 - Native Grass I, II, & III

The image of a landscape is so proverbial that it connects on a rudimentary level in my imagery. The landscape can be seen as the essence that binds and ties humanity. The grasses are an expression of my memories that coincide with my attachment to the land, agriculture, the usage of natural materials and the area in which I was born and raised. These landscapes are ones I have looked at going on 30 years now. The memories from my early days of lying in the open fields with grasses hiding me from the world are still as fresh in my memory as waking this morning. It is essential to my work that both the landscapes and the natural material lead back to my upbringing and also tie in with my background in agriculture.
CHAPTER 7

EVOLUTION - Taken of the Land:

Catalog of Exhibition
This monotype print uses the layered grasses as directional line to lead the eye upward to the horizon line. This is the second in a series of three images pulled from the same plate. By adding additional grasses to each pull I ended up with a series of images that incorporate different layers of the same horizon line. This piece was inspired by Anselm Kiefer’s *March Sand V*, which is a bound volume that incorporates photographic images with sand, oil, and glue. Kiefer’s volume includes images similar in overall design - horizon line integrated with the lines of the grass.
This debossed monotype was the first in a series dealing with the idea of Contradictions. I used a single layer of ink on a copper plate and placed native grass on the plate to create the image. I was concentrating on using suggestion of form and space to create subtle contrast with the combined flatness of the single layer of ink against the debossed grasses. The overall feel is what was important to the completion of Horizon Line I - Contradiction of Place.”
This debossed monotype was the second in a series of six dealing with the idea of Contradictions. I used ink layered on a copper plate and then placed native grass and clover on the plate to create the image. By combining layered ink with the use of asymmetry and line I gave the composition both depth and movement.
Native Grass III is a mixed media Monotype that was made by using a collagraph plate and then drawing back into the image with ink, gouache, and coffee. The image is the third in the series dealing with contradictions. The colors were chosen by looking at Matisse’s painting *The Snail*, in which he deliberately used shapes and color that interacted and communicated with one another to create a tranquil feeling.
Native Grass IV is a mixed media Monotype that was made by using a collagraph plate. I paid close attention to detail in this image by going back into this piece with gouache, coffee, and ink with a small brush for clarity. In contrast to Native Grass III, I wanted to show a distinct landscape and horizon. This image led me to the creation of my memory landscapes.
This was the first in a series of memory landscapes that incorporated natural materials other than the native grass. I drew the image on the plate and applied large dandelion leaves to the plate and printed the image. I then stained the paper with coffee and ink wash. The use of horizon line is still an important part of this composition.

Made up of four layers of ink, this image is of the Quaker Knobs that are visible from my grandmother’s house. Like some 11th – 13th century Northern and Southern Song paintings that used the use of memory landscape, it has strong use of line, asymmetry, and directional movement.
Figure 17 - View From Thornburg Farm

This small memory landscape print is made up of several layers of ink. The use of line, scale, and visual texture are important aspects of the composition. The scale of this image shows vulnerability and also conveys and intimate portrayal of the place that it represents.

Figure 18 - Greene County Knobs

This memory landscape uses both horizon line and vertical line to create balance and movement with use of simplified forms, contrast of light, and dark and asymmetrical composition. I was particularly thinking of a memory in which as a child I would hide from my parents in the grasses near my grandmother’s house and peek out at the horizon overlooking the nearby Quaker Knobs located in Greene County, Tennessee. The overall composition was somewhat inspired by looking at Xia Gui’s Twelve Views from a Thatched Roof which is an “intimate and lyrical view of nature...and a deep feeling for what lies beyond (Stokstad, 365).”
This image was printed on a used zinc plate which was given to me by John Hilton to reuse. He had printed an edition titled *Leap of Faith* from the plate and no longer had use of it. I left the etching on the plate and made several images that incorporated Hilton’s designs. By covering or layering on top of Hilton’s plate I was making it my own, claiming it so to speak. I was particularly influenced by the imagery on the plate and wanted to have a sense of space that also incorporated softness. I was also thinking of the property that I own and the small hillside that is steep enough so that you cannot see what is beyond it when you are standing at the base. I was looking specifically at Joseph Mallord William Turner’s painting *Rain, Steam and Speed* which is a romanticized and unearthy idealization of “progress” – man conquering nature by utilizing its forces (Hartt, 819).
This image was created by taking honeysuckle vines and running them through the press on an inked up plate. The plant stained the paper and blocked out parts of the ink. The colors and methods chosen were heavily influenced by looking at Helen Frankenthaler’s woodcuts and paintings that are dramatic and abstract rather than realistic. Her piece *Essence Mulberry* has transitions of color and contrast that are echoed in *Dissention*.

This image is a memory landscape from my past. It deals with my divorce and the separation of my ex-husband’s family from my life. The strong horizontal composition and red color is representative of my personal experience. The illumination to the left is
balanced by the directional line that leads to the darker right hand side of the composition, where there is a small point of yellow that is meant to represent hope.

Figure 22 - *Taken of the Land/Personal History I*
Figure 23 - *Taken of the Land/Personal History II*

Figure 24 - *Taken of the Land/Personal History III*

Figure 25 - *Taken of the Land/Personal History IV*
Figure 26 - Taken of the Land/Personal History V

Figure 27 - Taken of the Land/Personal History VI
The *Taken of the Land* series was started after a particularly bad critique of my work that made me question everything. Afterwards during the process of printing I started making prints and then discarding them. I was feeling emotionally drained and the images became increasingly darker to the point of obscurity. I happened to run across the art work of Deborah Muirhead and saw in her paintings similarities to my latest images. I was looking primarily at the paintings that were made during the early 1990s. Muirhead’s paintings are dark and abstract in design and seem to suggest something felt and experienced. Her work stems from her compelling interest in researching her roots and represents an exploration of the use of abstraction as content-based work. Archeological findings, particularly the African Burial ground in lower Manhattan and her investigations of personal genealogy, serve as the impulse for work that explores identity and historical invisibility (Zelanski, 500). She was quoted in the book *The Art of Seeing* by Paul Zelanski.
Zelanski and Mary Pat Fisher stating that “One of the things I’ve tried to do in my painting is to create a surface that could resemble a water surface with indefinable objects, forms, or implements. They seem to arise mysteriously from all of this stuff that I’m thinking about and reading about and totally immersed in (Zelanski, 500).”

In my own prints I was on the edge of finding my own personal meaning. I had been experimenting with color and form for so long that I felt a connection to the materials that I was using to create my prints. The underlying layers are essentially the layers of my life and my personal experience with the land. I struggled with the heaviness of the images trying to discern the forms that were evolving. The overall mood that I was experiencing was dark and seemingly tragic, but at the end there was a feeling of survival and a feeling of completeness through the process.
CHAPTER 8
CESSATION

My work has always been and always will be an inner vision of myself; I have laid myself bare in my work by making it a personal history of my life through the work. My struggles have motivated me to place marks and color. I have had a sense of completion through the process of printmaking. Process has in essence become the catalyst that connected me to nature not only physically but also spiritually. I have tried to create work that would embody nature and the land conceptually, theoretically, and physically. It has also been an adventure into the unknown depths of my personal thoughts and ambitions.

Because I have always been close to nature, I often confused my relationship with nature to the whole of humankind. I thought that most people were concerned with the things that I held dear. The essence of the work came from the thoughts that formed through personal introspective into the subconscious and became a common stimulus for conveying a mood, memory or powerful emotion. The integration of the natural materials helped convey a sense of earth, place and memory in my prints. We live in a time of recreation, a time when anything is possible if one only pushes for it. The process and experience of graduate school has only given me a desire to push forward and to recreate my ideals. Chance happens. Change is inevitable. Herein lies my reality of nature.
WORKS CITED


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