

UTOPIA/DYSTOPIA

Nathan Abel
Casper, WY



“Created from scraps of old work, this book illustrates the tenuous nature of the relationship between utopian and dystopian ideals.”

Excavation: Found Scroll

Woodcut monoprint accordion book created with graphite, gouache, water soluble crayon, western and eastern papers. 6.5” h x 4.5” w (open dimensions vary, up to 12’ long)

Statement

My work is generally autobiographical and this theme for this exhibition presented some challenges. I have spent considerable time considering what Utopia and Dystopia mean to me on a personal level. This project has forced me to turn inward, to think about color and obfuscation while digging through drawers of older incomplete work to find what ultimately become the base layers that I built upon.

In this piece I have tried to compare and contrast how I perceive Utopian and Dystopian aesthetics, each side of the accordion fold book leans to either Utopia or Dystopia with some of each bleeding over. By building up layers of paper, medium and scraps of older work the resulting book structure became lopsided. Which illustrates the tenuous nature of the relationship between Utopian and Dystopian ideals. You can not have one without the other and sometimes there can be a fine line between the two.

I treated book this as an opportunity to take time in the studio to play, exploring media and materials in ways that I had not considered while employing some techniques and practices I regularly use. While trying not to over think things too much and take myself too seriously. In fact one iteration of the covers for this book were cast from mortar and gravel and then partially covered in gold leaf, but that was a bit much for me...

Biography

Nathan is an artist currently living and working in Casper, Wyoming. Growing up in the rural agrarian midwest and the Rocky Mountains has instilled a deep interest in both the untouched and the manipulated landscapes that holds histories and memories. Nathan’s work draws upon these landscapes in his surveying of personal identity, relationships, and history. Through his work he searches for ways to get away from the noise that constantly surrounds us in today’s fast paced media saturated world, and explores decaying memories and oral history through the use of printmaking, drawing, book arts, and installation.

Nathan holds a BA from the University of Wyoming where he studied printmaking and graphic design and a MFA in Printmaking from the University of Arizona. He enjoys teaching and its interaction with his studio practice. Nathan’s work has been included in regional, national, and international exhibitions. He is also co-founder of Lucky Day Press a letterpress and collaborative publishing printmaking studio.

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