

# IMAGINATION Aaron Wallis



## ***Young Boys Incorporated (Reverse)***

Letterpress, silkscreen and gold leaf. Crane Lettra, rubber base ink, water base ink and gold leaf.

### **Artist's Statement**

The Street Bible is an evolving series of prints depicting first rappers, then eventually drug-dealers and gang leaders in the context of Christian iconography and the illuminated manuscript. Through a process of counterculture deification, these figures have become lionized in a manner similar to Christian saints. Their rags to riches struggle against the established class structure, and their subsequent persecution, mirror the struggles of early Christian martyrs.

The Street Bible questions our societies' assumptions of morality as inherently subjective and class based. In the U.S., millions of predominately poor people are trapped in a racist, for-profit criminal justice system. Bankers and CEOs live above the law and place revenue above their fellow human beings and the planet. All while the government has engaged in drug trafficking to fund covert operations. Can the American power elite legitimately claim moral superiority over the criminal?

In a morally ambiguous era, in which criminals and governments employ identical methodology, good and evil become increasingly subjective. In 1980, CIA-backed, rightwing death squads murdered Óscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador. In 1993, the Tijuana Cartel murdered Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo, Archbishop of Guadalajara, when his limo was mistaken for El Chapo's. The difference: government operatives encouraged the murder of an archbishop, while the cartel accidentally murdered one.

I chose printmaking for the The Street Bible because it is an inherently populist medium, historically linked to pamphleteering, propaganda, and religious texts. The series consists primarily of silkscreen and letterpress but also intaglio, woodblock and lithography on paper. Gold leaf or chine-collé are also incorporated. I believe in the continued relevance of traditional printmaking in a digital age and the intrinsic and unique feel of a hand-printed image.

## **Biography**

Aaron Wallis is a printmaker specializing in silkscreen and letterpress. He also works in lithography, intaglio, and woodcut. Aaron's print series "The Street Bible" draws upon two disparate influences from his adolescence: being raised by evangelical Christians, which gave him an appreciation for iconography in the illuminated manuscript, and Rap Music, which gave him an escape from evangelical Christianity. The Street Bible can be viewed as an attempt to reconcile the two. Exploring the deification of drug dealers and gang leaders by examining morality as a social construct based in class.

Since 2017 Aaron has worked as a printer at Quality Letterpress in San Diego printing a variety of fine art, commercial and boutique design oriented projects. Previously Aaron was a founding member of Teton Artlab in Jackson Hole, WY. He also supervised the Big Haus Studios project in Jackson an independent artist studio space.

Aaron has taught silkscreen, etching, and letterpress to a diverse group of students ranging from children's summer camps to working individually with professional and resident artists. Aaron was the recipient of a 2014 Visual Arts Fellowship from the Wyoming Arts Council, and he exhibited in the 2015 Wyoming Arts Council Biennial. He holds a BFA in Painting and Printmaking from Virginia Commonwealth University. Born in Tacoma, Washington, Aaron considers himself a Virginian though he also lived in Jackson Hole, Wyoming for almost a decade. He currently resides in San Diego, California.

[www.thestreetbible.net](http://www.thestreetbible.net)

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