

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

by

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of the requirements for the degree

of

Master in Fine Arts

in

Art

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Christopher James Turbuck

April 2008

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This body of work is comprised of autobiographical narratives from my everyday experiences. The conflict in the stories comes both from without and within: awkward, frustrating situations force perplexed responses from the protagonist (me) even as I struggle to maintain internal balance between combative contradictory thoughts and impulses.

I adopt many conventions from comic books. They allow me to freely incorporate text and image into the same pictorial space. Additionally, the comic book form possesses associations with “low art” that are valuable to my work. Comics are entertaining and non-threatening – they are perceived as childish and frivolous, and are accessible to a mass audience. I use the formal devices of comic books to raise the viewer/reader’s expectations for a lighthearted, juvenile form of entertainment. However, once the viewer/reader examines the work more closely, I give them something else: a new way of looking at regular life that reveals the profound in the ordinary; a chance to identify with my awkward, deeply personal experiences; a quiet note of encouragement that none of us is truly alone.

The work has a fragmented character, made more chaotic by the presence of an almost unreadable amount of text. Different kinds of texts, images and symbols confront one another in the images, suggesting that the Self is unstable, divided and incomplete, rather than unified and singular. This idea of division is reinforced by the presence of multiple versions of the same characters in the same space, and further underscored by a

combination of diverse materials and processes, such as printmaking, writing, collage, drawing, painting, and simple sculptural assemblage.

The masses of text are broken up into clusters of action, speech and narration, relaying the details of smaller events within the larger overall story. The quotation and narration that I provide are incomplete, however, and the events are not ordered in a linear, chronological fashion. This deliberate transgression of traditional storytelling allows the viewer/reader to enter the work at any given point in the narrative, and take glimpses of brief, tableau-like moments in the plot in no premeditated order. The fragmentation further serves to capture both the episodic nature of ordinary life, and the scattered character of vernacular speech and private thought. What is more, the mere inclusion of long text passages forces a conundrum on the viewer/reader, requiring them to both see and read.

I select particular stories from my life for telling, and discard others. The kinds of stories I choose to disclose are characterized by anxiety, and require me to become vulnerable and expose often-embarrassing events of my life. These personal admissions enable me to make intimate connections with the viewer/reader, simply because we can all relate to moments of shame and self-loathing. Herein is a paradox of the work: it is self-centered, yet designed to achieve communion.

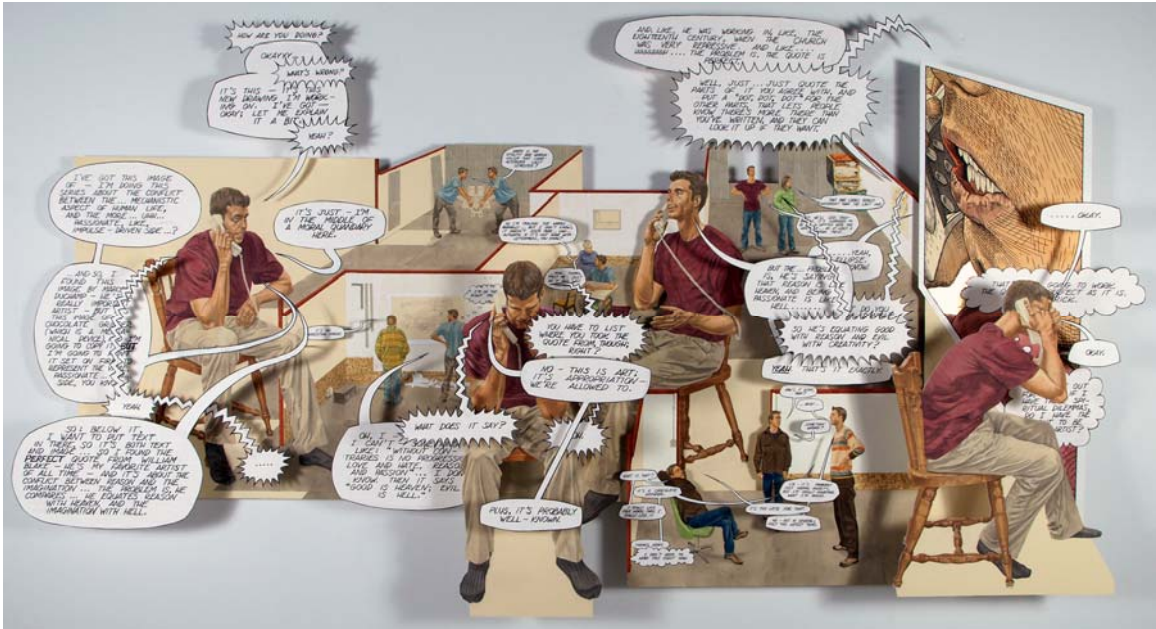


Image 1 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture.



Image 2 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Detail)



Image 3 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Detail)



Image 4 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Detail)



Image 5 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Detail)



Image 6 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Detail)



Image 7 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Detail)



Image 8 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Detail)

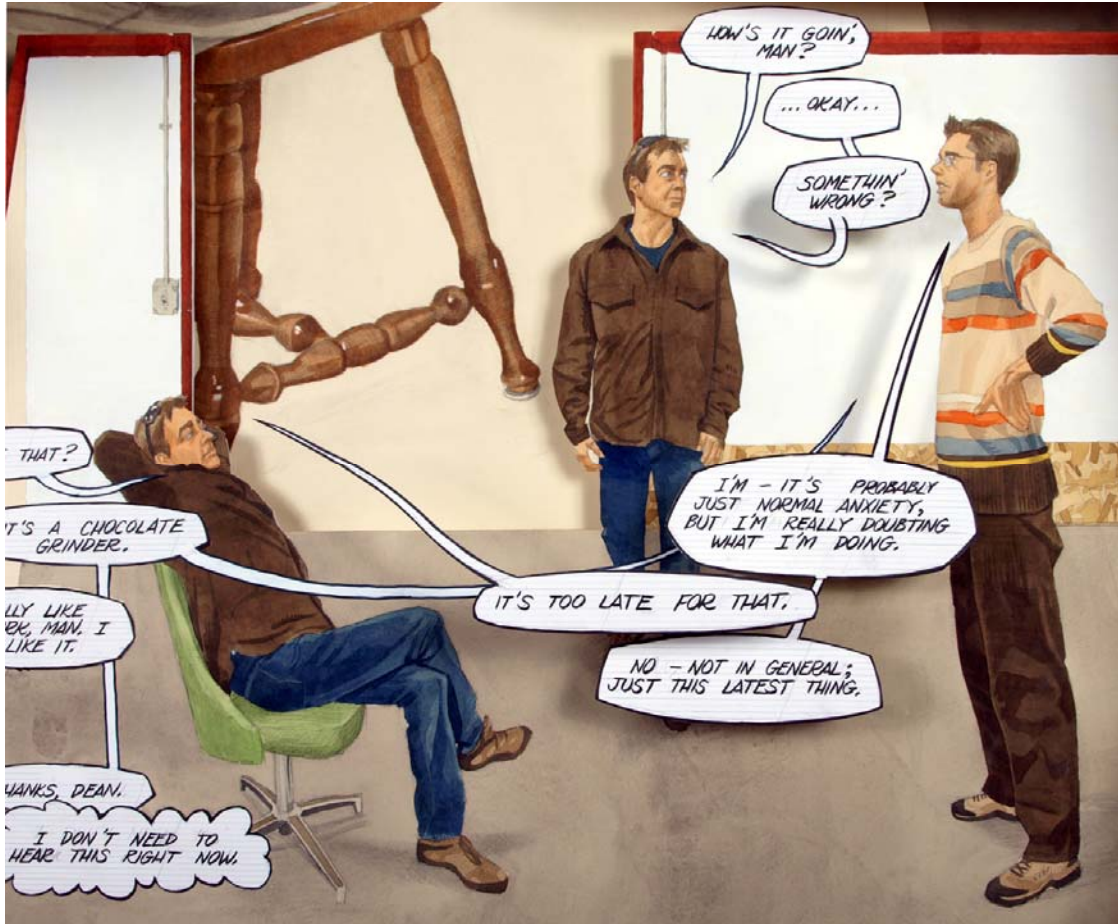


Image 9 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Detail)

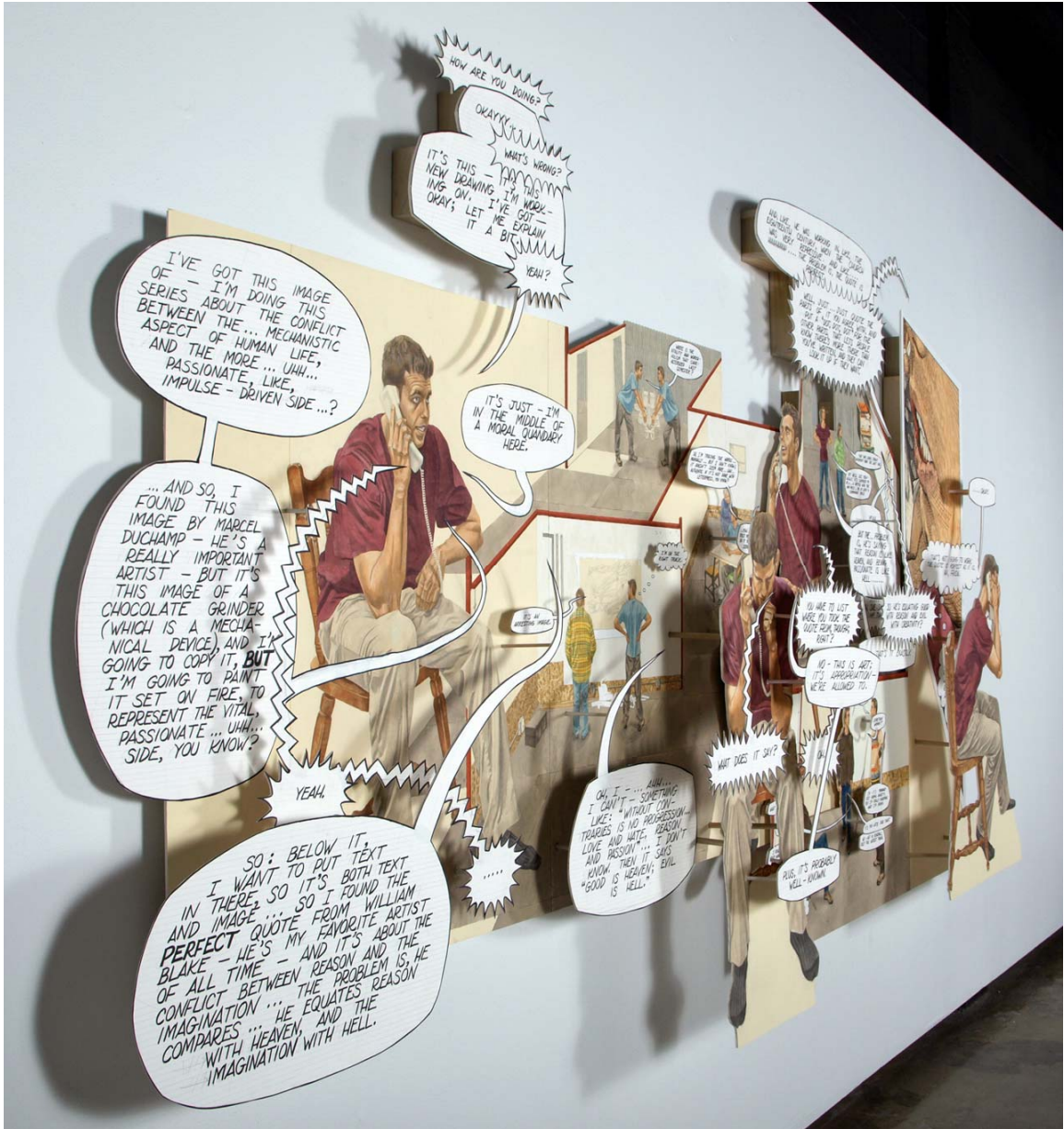


Image 10 - A dry well; a last gasp; a botched heist; a half dozen critiques; a futile, heroic gesture. (Installation view)



Image 12 - Why I don't have a girlfriend; why don't I have a girlfriend?

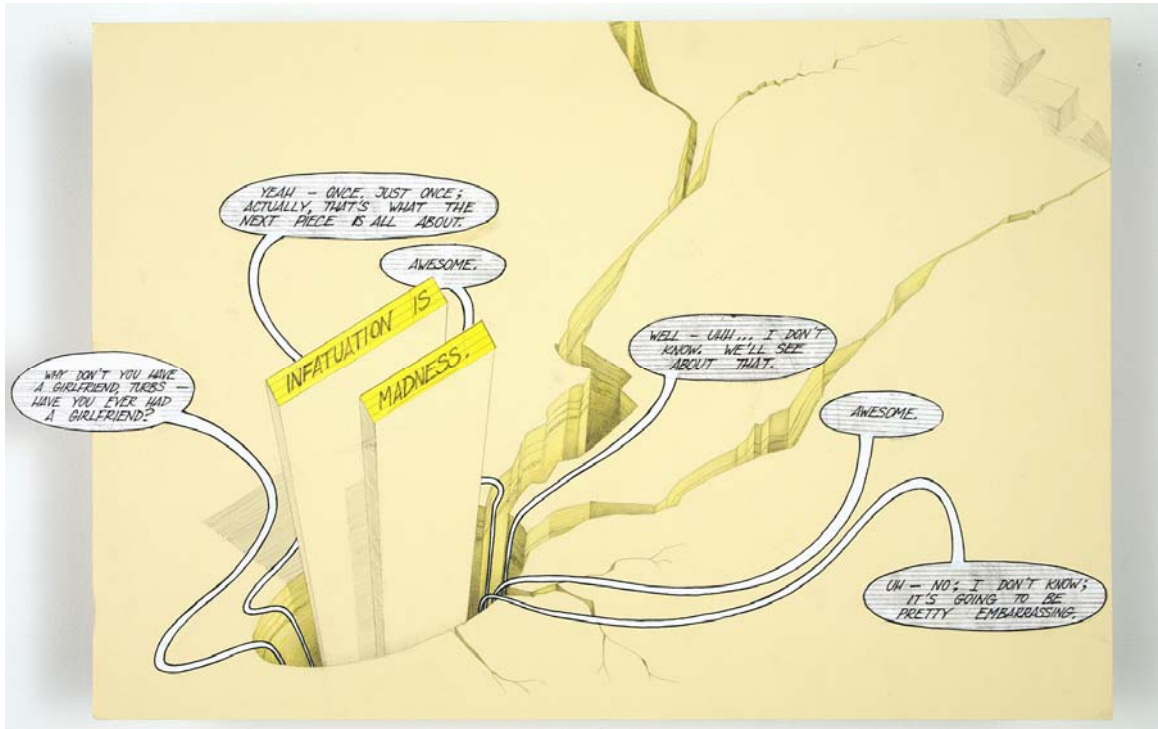


Image 13 - Why I don't have a girlfriend; why don't I have a girlfriend? (Detail)



... SERIOUS...
NOW, MAKE CONTACT...
MY EYE
SHOOT
... IS A WRECK.

I AM SHALLOW AND HYPOCRITICAL...
WHERE IS MY COMPLIMENT?

HER, BUT I CAN
IF I AM
OVER THE
AM I TO
REAL REE
POTENTIAL

... SO WITH ABRAM
PERFORMANCES, THE
HAD TO FOLLOW SA
RULES, THUS TREA
HER LIKE AN OBJ

NOTE: BLUSH;
AVERSION OF EYES

CRAP, I NEED A GIRLFRIEND.
C WHY AM I LISTENING TO LOVE SONGS,
AGGRAVATING THE SITUATION?

I WANT TO HOLD SOMEBODY IN
THOSE ARMS... I WANT TO FALL
ASLEEP NEXT TO SOMEBODY.

WITH KATE, NEVER EVER
EVER EVER EVER
EVER,

OH WAIT ABOUT
MY CHARACTER.
FEARS THE
OFFSHORE, THE
RESIGNING THE
FRIGHT, THE
SOUND, THE
SLEEP AWAY?

HE WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE
WALLED, BY AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN
HIS AND SHEETS, SHE SMILED BE

WISH I WOULD JUST RELAX BACK
TO MY OLD FANTASY OF HANDSOME
ROMANTIC COURTESY PARAGRAH CHILD
TENDING TO MY GAZE, OR BECOMING SOME
KIND OF AROTC - BACHELOR.

CONSIDERING THE S
FEEL BUT I AM
ATTRACTIVE, I FEEL
FEEL BUT MY FEEL
PLAN AND THE
CONCERN ON THIS
OF MY LEGS, I
NOT FINALLY FEEL
THE KIND OF I NE
THAT IS SO BEA

Image 14 - Why I don't have a girlfriend; why don't I have a girlfriend? (Detail)



Image 16 - Why I don't have a girlfriend; why don't I have a girlfriend? (Detail)



Image 17 - Why I don't have a girlfriend; why don't I have a girlfriend?
(Installation view)



Image 18 - Preparations

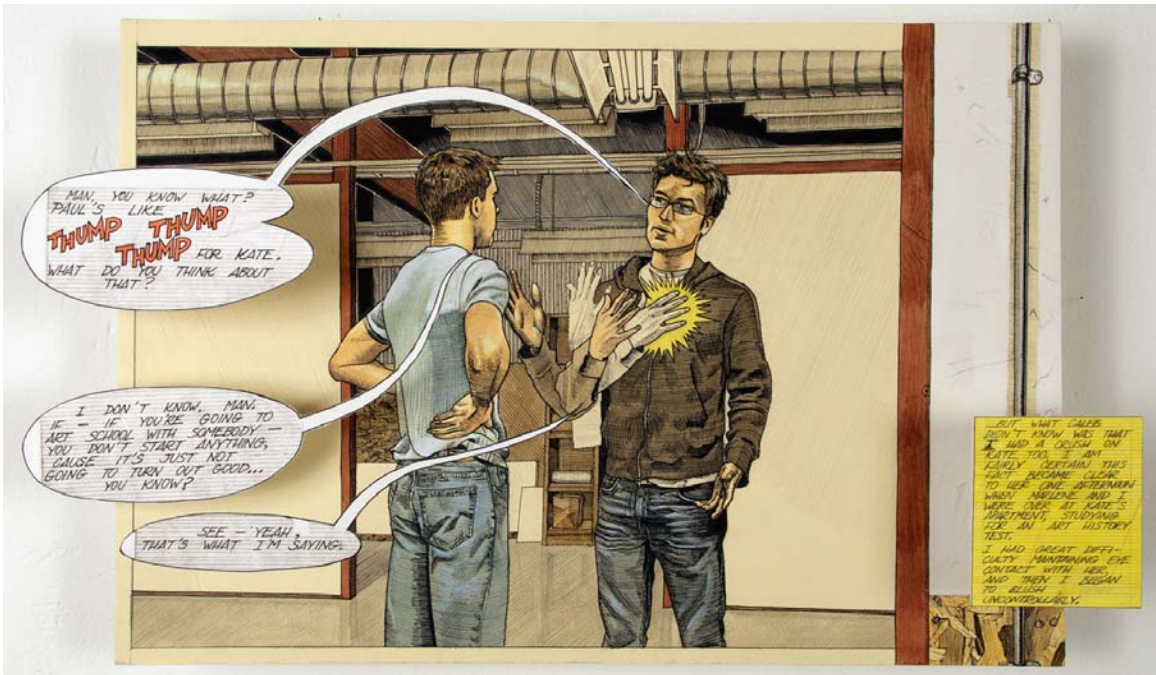


Image 19 - Introduction to the girlfriend sequence

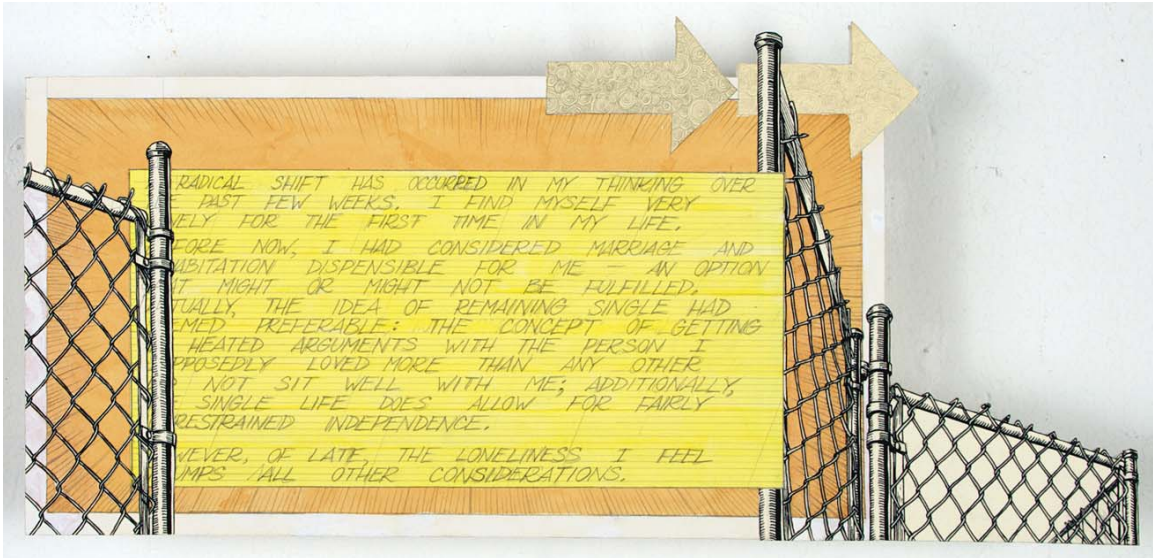


Image 20 - Prologue: a radical shift



Image 21 - Two dancers



Image 22 - I might have had a girlfriend

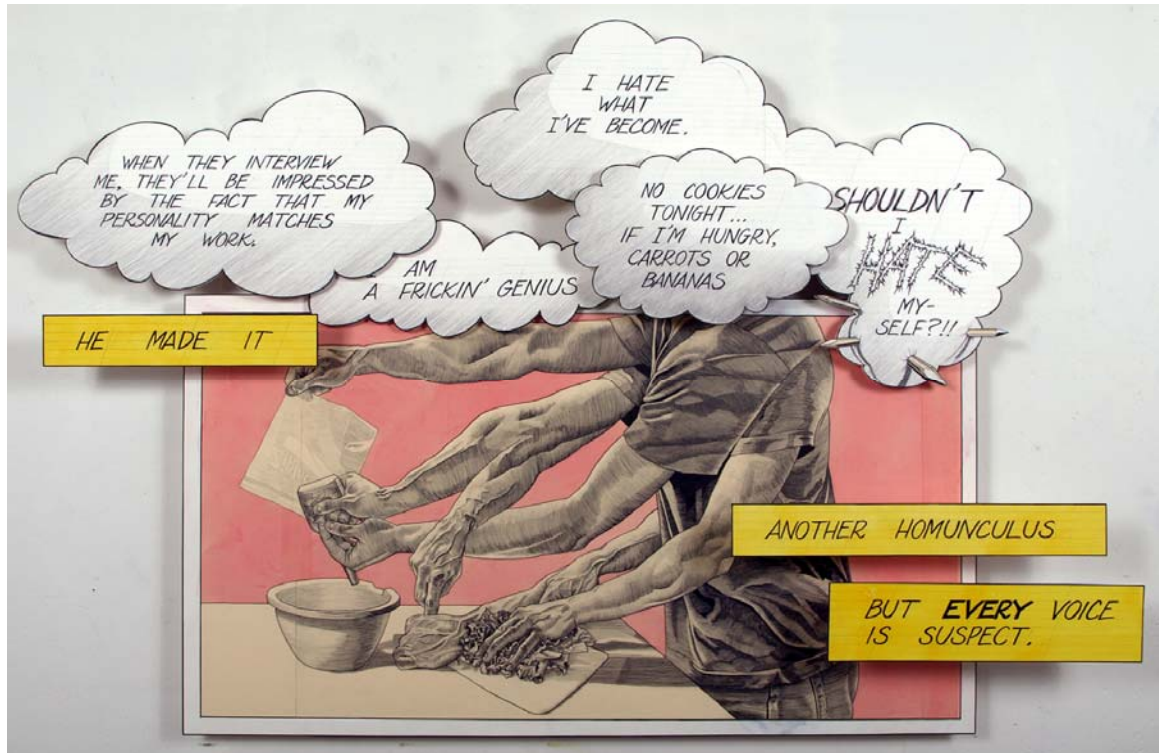


Image 23 - The composition of a salad

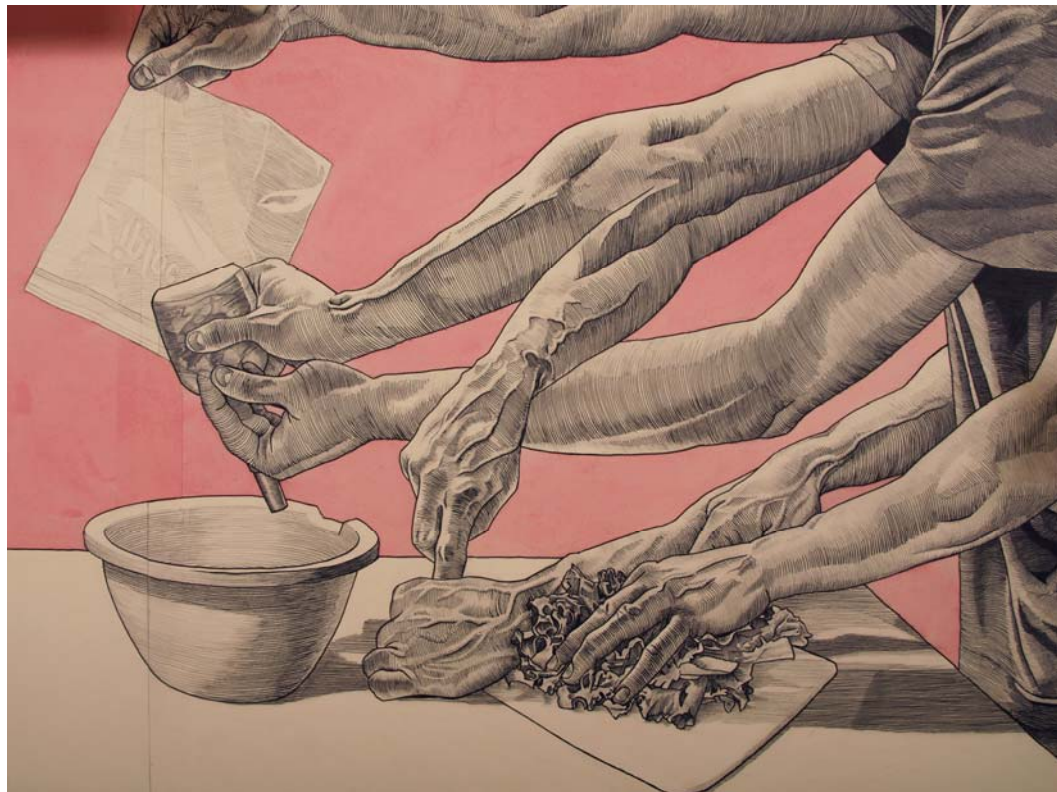


Image 24 - The composition of a salad (Detail)



Image 25 - The composition of a salad (Installation view)



Image 28 - Four sets of a hundred and ten (Detail)



Image 29 - A difference(s) of opinion(s)



Image 34 - An exercise of/for/with/against bureaucracy (Detail)



Image 35 - An exercise of/for/with/against bureaucracy (Detail)

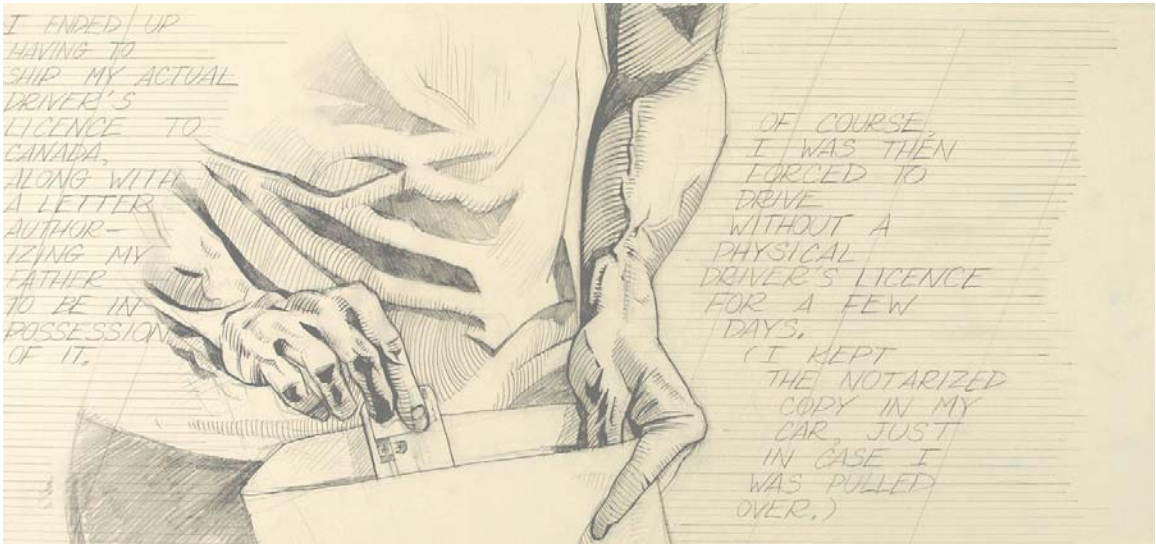


Image 36 - An exercise of/for/with/against bureaucracy (Detail)

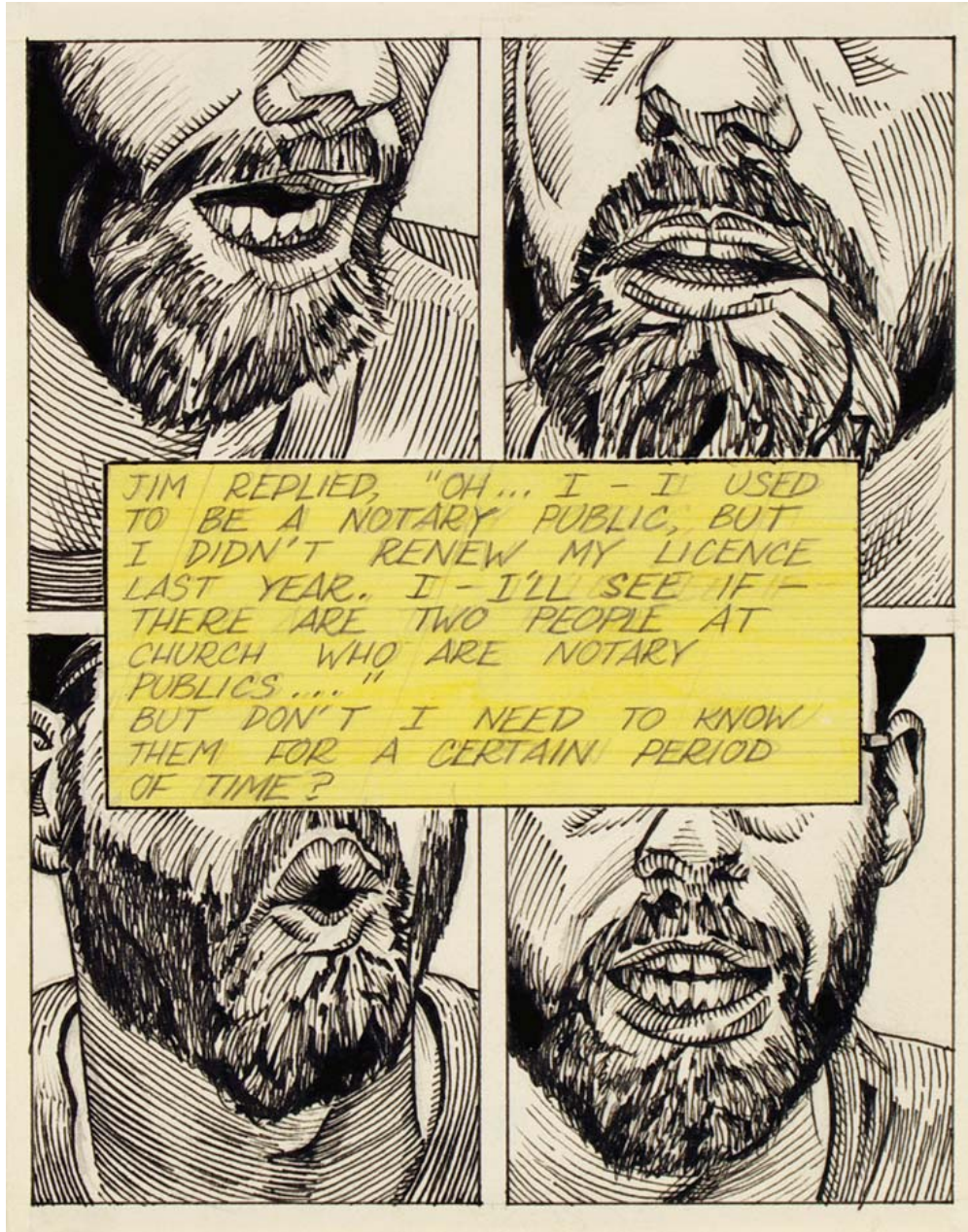


Image 38 - An exercise of/for/with/against bureaucracy (Detail)



Image 39 - View of entrance and south wall



Image 40 - Installation view of south and west walls



Image 41 - Installation view of west and north walls



Image 42 - Installation view of north and east walls



Image 43 - Installation view of east and entrance walls



Image 44 - Installation view around outer west wall



Image 45 - Installation view facing outer and inner west walls



Image 46 - Installation view facing outer west, entrance, and inner south walls



Image 47 - Untitled performance



Image 48 - Untitled performance