

2020+





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Reflections on Recent Events

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BLACKFISH GALLERY

420 NW Ninth Avenue, Portland, OR 97209

503.224.2634 Tuesday - Sat 11- 5pm www.blackfish.com

Exhibition October 5th - 30th, 2021

Photo on opposite page courtesy of Steven Horan

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2020+ is a visual interpretation of 2020. Loosely chronological, these images represent a window into the year's news stories along with my personal experiences and observations. The "+" in the title signifies that my imagery spills over into early 2021. I acknowledge that I have left many serious issues unaddressed due to limitations of space.

The first six images concern my life and thoughts before COVID arrived. This type of imagery would have constituted the straight trajectory of my whole show except for COVID's disruption.

Lunaria annua, otherwise known as the 'money' or 'silver dollar plant' is a recurrent image throughout this work. It represents our society's most commonly accepted currency for expressing value — the dollar.

As I have put this work together, I have realized how much it reflects my perspective as a white male. I'm still learning how this shows up in my work, and I welcome the conversations that this could bring up.





Bag of Life



Satisfaction



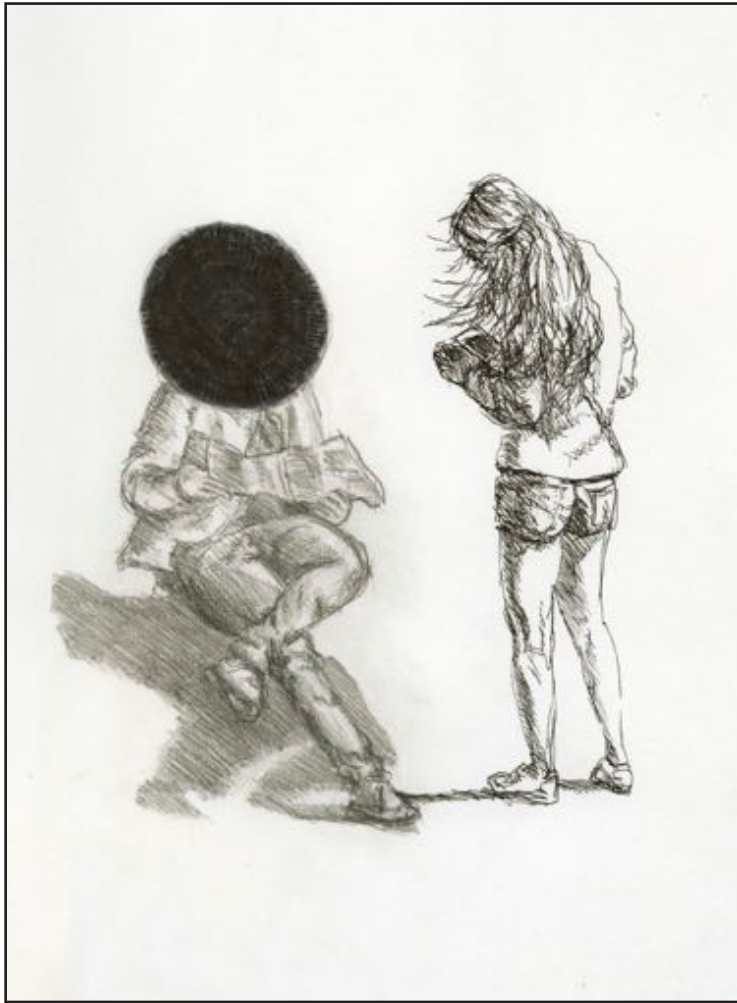
Out



Digging



Constancy



Pen and Pencil



Soursop



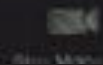
Screen time



No Admission



Selfie



Mute

Video Off

Participants

Screen Share

Chat

End Meeting



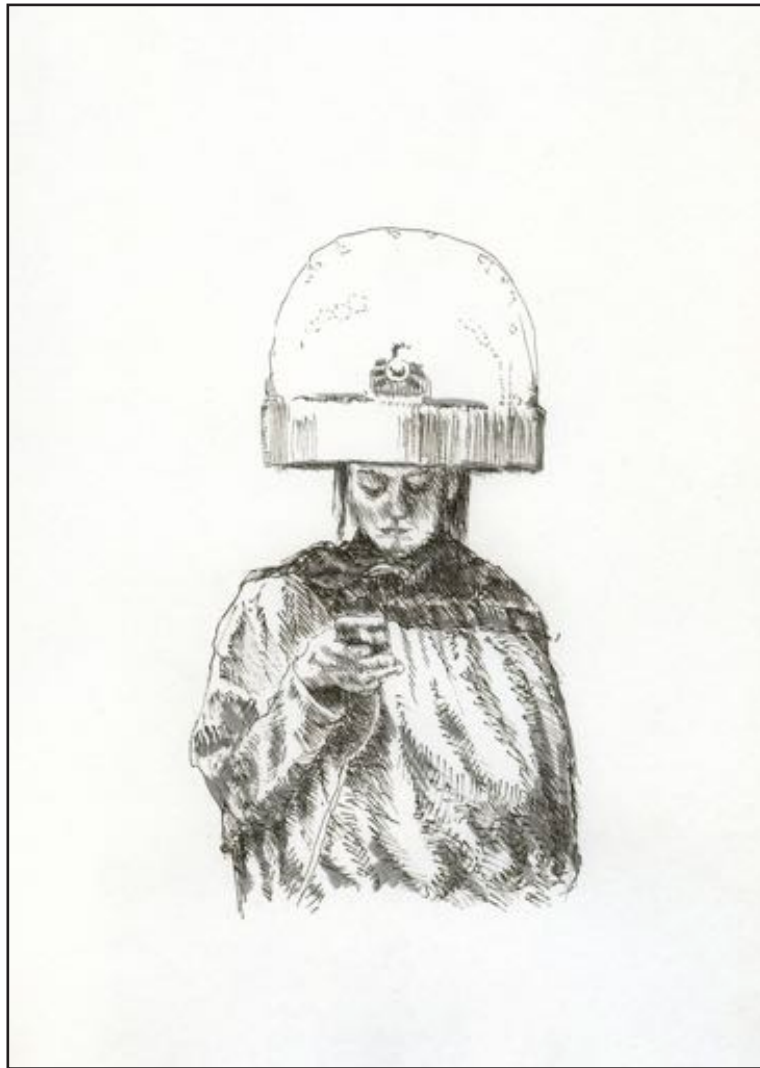
Heat



Floating world



Blue / Red



New Gaea



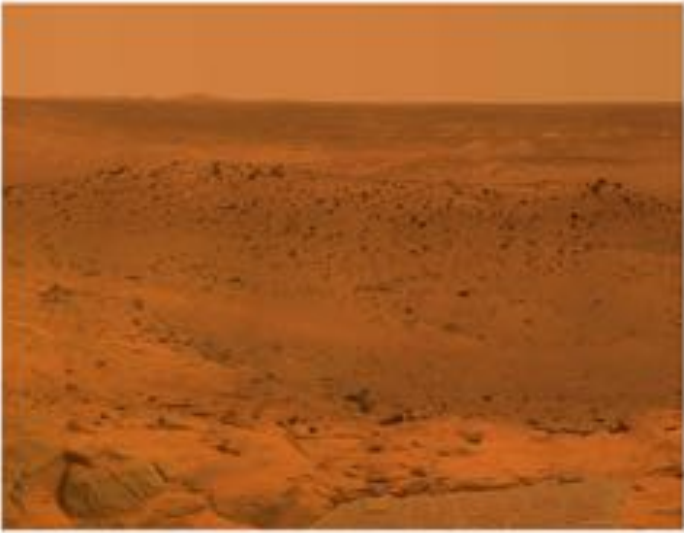
Mars Disappointed to Discover Life on Earth



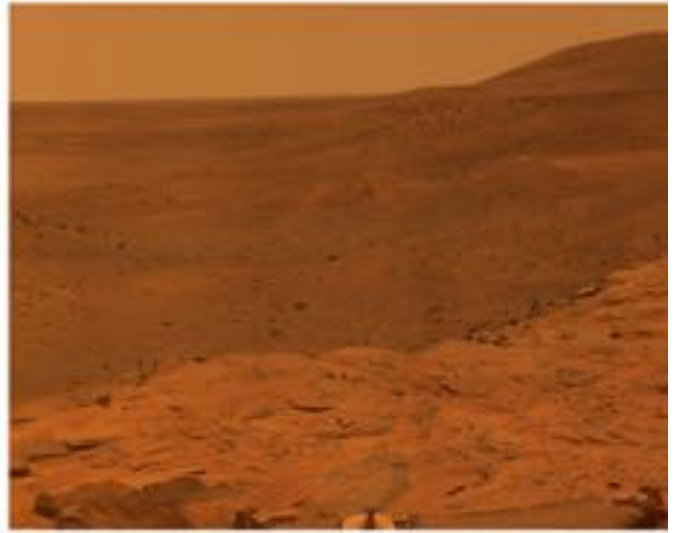
The



Blue



Red



Divide



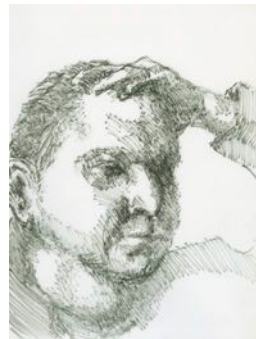
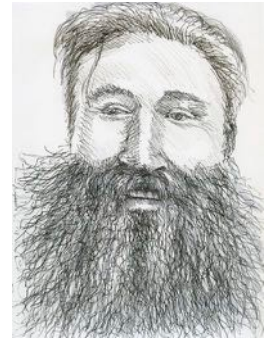
Nine Twenty Nine



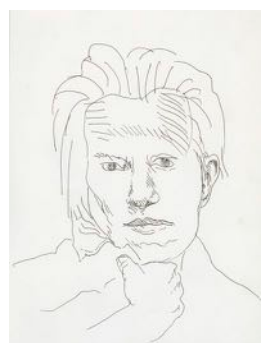
Bitterness

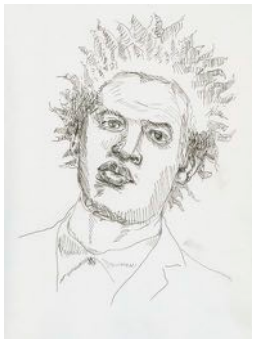


Personization.











Past and
Present







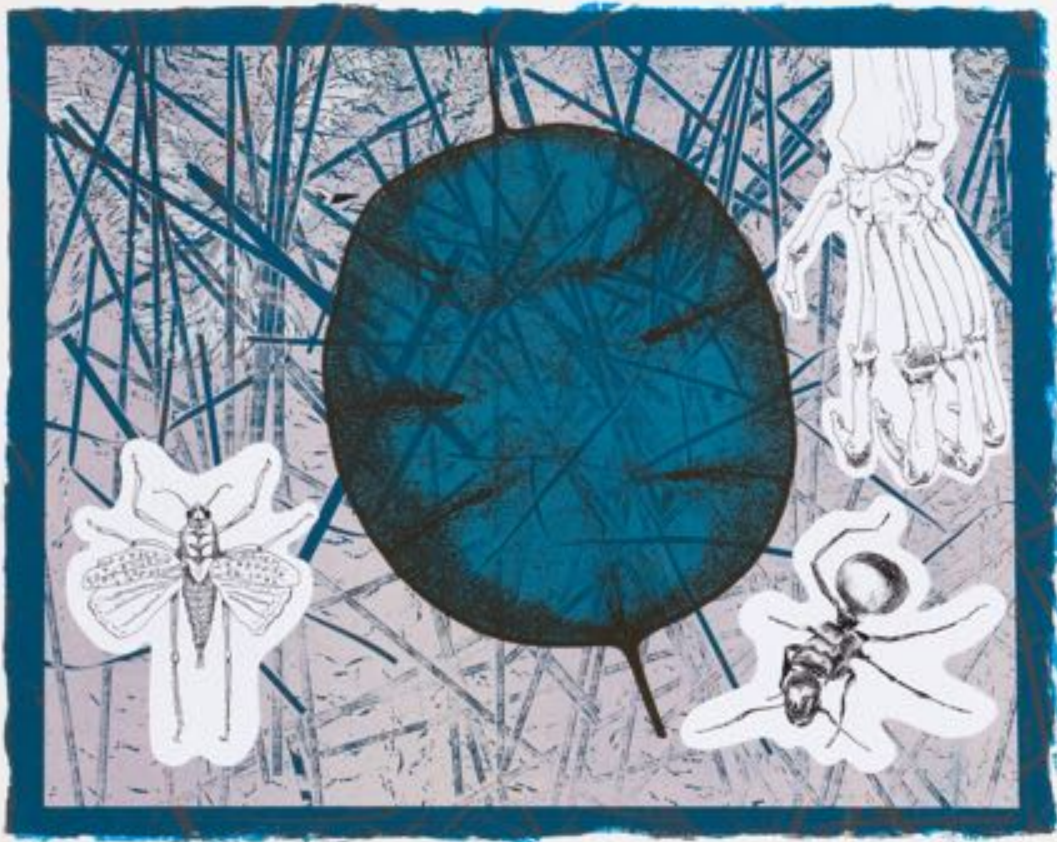
LGBTIQA2P+



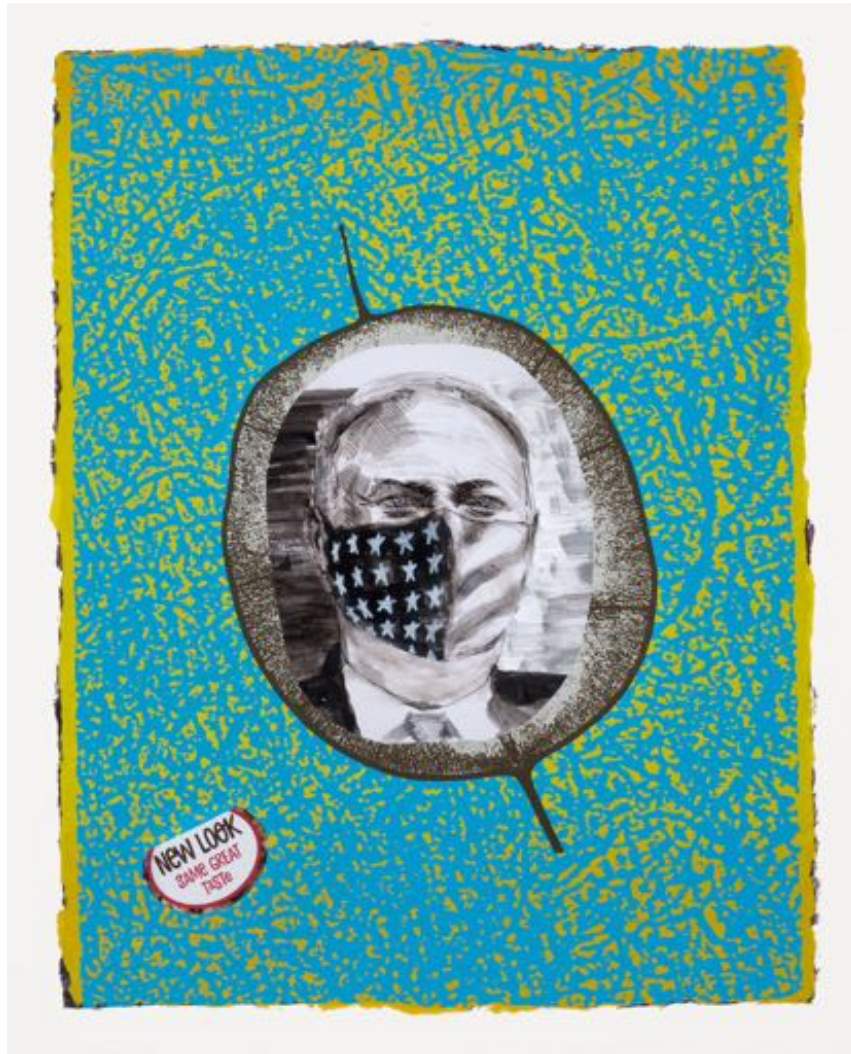
The Weight of History



Spot Removal



Odd Nature



New Look



Time Is Up



Holiday Snap



What to Wear?



The Answer

Cover- Arrival

This grainy, indistinct image of the virus is modeled after vague news stories from the time of the Loch Ness monster. In early 2020, little was known about COVID and rumors flourished about its nature, strength and whereabouts. It was pure luck that I got this shot of the virus coming in for a landing. You can even make out its spike protein quite clearly.

Digital print on Kodak paper, 13" x 19" / edition of 5

Page 2- Sitting Duck

Already suffering the ignominy of fried eggs for plumage, this mallard wears an additional insult of a coat of oil. At the close of the show this duck was given to the lucky visitor who wrote up the best connection between two works in the exhibition.

Wood, acrylic, sponges, coins, spray paint and photograph.
Wood carved by John R. Stahl in the 1950s. 10" x 10" x 10"

Page 4- Bag of Life

A pedestrian carries a huge bag. It looks light and the implied contents might be something like cans. His arms are crossed like a crucifix. Carrying this bag is the burden of his existence. Surrounding him swirl endless sets of numbers which relate to a life of counting change. The large shape surrounding the figure is a Luniaria annua, otherwise known as the money or silver dollar plant.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé and ink, 17" x 13"

Page 5- Satisfaction

A woman holds in one hand a carbonated beverage and in the other some unleavened baked item. Around her are bits of words, some running backwards, some forwards in Spanish and English. She is rotund and seems happy. The words allude to happiness. Contemporary Western culture portrays women one way and that is never this way. I decided to portray this woman as whole and happy in her own right.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé and ink, 15" x 11.5"

Page 6- Out

A man is out with his dog in an electric wheelchair, looking like some modern-day version of a centaur.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé and ink, 13" x 17"

Page 7- Digging

I was reading Dick Gregory's Reading *Between the Lies* at the time I came across this image somewhere completely unrelated to his book. An African American man holds a shovel and what he is digging is not revealed and is not relevant. The digging is meant to represent physical labor, centuries of labor, unpaid labor. It is an outgrowth of my attempt to become more aware of the white-centric interpretation of history I was fed in school. I placed the man within the framework of the dollar plant since that is what so much of what centuries of African American exploitation centered around. I've also realized that the exploitation isn't just economic, it's also about creating a story that in itself makes someone "less than" and gives more advantage to white people.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé and ink 17" x 13"

Page 8- Constancy

A wheelbarrow, a dog and a bee reference fixtures in my life that have remained constant in a quickly changing world. I juxtaposed them with leaves for the reason that the environment has been, at least until recently, quite predictable.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé, ink and pastel 20" x 12"

Page 9- Pen and Pencil

These two media are trying to decide where to go for dinner. The huge dark circle obscuring the head of Pencil is a safety sticker placed on a large glass panel. It is obscuring our view of Pen and Pencil as we see them from a distance. Bon appetite.

Pen and Pencil 11" x 8"

Page 10- Soursop

The soursop has been touted for a long time as a cure for cancer but remains unproved. It reminded me of the way our president suggested ingesting disinfectants to treat COVID. Though the soursop fruit is actually sweet, I chose it for the name's allusion to negativity. Dr. Anthony Fauci is depicted in the lower left with a video player symbol partly obscuring his face. Clouds pour rain and a couple evince uncertainty, suspicion or depression through their body language. In the center shines the ever-present dollar plant symbol with a soursop inside it.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé and ink, 13" x 18"

Page 11- Screen Time

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Silkscreen with Chine-collé, pencil and pastel, 13.5" x 17"

Page 12- No Admission

A statue is only partly revealed. This was the closest I could come to expressing loneliness and emptiness in a public setting. Although the museum is seen from the outside there are no human figures present. The museum is closed.

Ink on paper, 6" x 9"

Page 13- Selfie

I drew the center figure from a newspaper photograph by Beth Nakamura about a graduation ceremony during the pandemic. We are all surrounded by electric windows.

Silkscreen, Chine-collé, ink, pencil and acrylic, 13" x 16.5"

Page 14- Present

At a fictionalized digital meeting of artists, works of art hover near each person. I am intrigued by the way pastoral scenes (which I lifted from famous works) seem to impart meaning when placed close to a person. Each becomes a metaphor for a thought or mood. Any resemblance to current or former members of Blackfish is purely coincidental.

Pencil, Chine-collé, ink on paper on foam core, 50" x 47"

Page 15- Heat

While smoke from multiple fires engulfed Portland as it did much of Oregon, I couldn't help but think of the decades-old corporate play book regarding climate change:

No. Doesn't exist.

Okay. Exists. Not my problem.

Okay. Problem ... future problem.

Okay. Present problem. No solution.

Pastel and ink, 9" x 5.5"

Page 16- Floating World

If Eden gets soiled there is always vast, cold, dark, empty space. A gray dystopian smoky planet contains an escape window into space through the symbol of a dollar plant.

Silkscreen, Chine-collé, ink, pencil and pastel, 12" x 15"

Page 17- Blue / Red

Our burning blue marble is flanked by the Martian red desert. The words printed below indicate just a few of the great number of species of plants and animals on earth. The zeros dropping down from each side of the Martian surface indicate in a single numeral the lack of life and diversity on Mars.

Digital print, ink drawing, watercolor and acrylic and pastel, 23" x 28"

Page 18- New Gaea

I have drawn an update to our ancestral mother since she was first depicted in Greek mythology. The hair dryer is metaphor for the warming earth while the cell phone is a symbol of our obsession with things that interest us. Gaea, as a personification of mother earth, has always been depicted as female. I do not mean to disparage woman through this depiction. I see her as being shaped by our collective human actions.

Ink, 9" x 6"

Page 19-Mars Disappointed to Discover Life on Earth

A capsized roll on / roll off ship is depicted inside a dollar plant symbol. Seeing such a huge ship lying prone, listless, dead in the water seems absurd and symbolic of our times. I thought of this from a Martian perspective of earth.

Silkscreen and pencil, 13" x 17"

Page 20 & 21- The Blue Red Divide

Contrast what is known to be on Mars and Earth. This beautiful river is located a pleasant afternoon drive away from Portland. As for Mars, it costs an incalculable amount of money, resources and energy to leave Eden for a wasteland.

Digital metallic print, 11" x 43"

Page 22- Nine Twenty-nine

In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd I felt helpless to do anything meaningful. Publicly acknowledging that his experience in the face of police violence is the story of many African American people is important to me. Creating this work was my way of visually processing that incident.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé, ink, pencil and watercolor, 22" x 15.5"

Page 23- Blue

An unidentified assailant shoots and runs. The images of the shooter I gleaned from a security camera video, revealing just before, during and after two police were shot point blank in their vehicle. The blue of the sagittate plant references the police while behind it is a confederate flag alluding to the origins of policing as a means of catching fugitive slaves.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé and pencil, 17" x 13.5"

Page 24 thru 29- Personization

These people appeared in my consciousness in 2020. I found I began seeing a greater diversity of people than ever before throughout many media. The work spans floor to ceiling, which forces people to either step on, or around the works, to see them at eye level as well as overhead where, metaphorically, they have been absent in most peoples' consciousness until present.

Ink pen and sometimes pencil, 8.5" x 11" individual sheets

Page 30 & 31- Past and Present

Portland's graffiti and garbage are two issues that have become like the pandemic — seemingly everywhere. I chose a painting by Aelbert Cuyp from the creative commons which depicts a scene of tranquility that is about to be shattered by a shooting. Notice the shooter to the left and that someone pointing him out stands on the right. I placed garbage from a downtown Portland street in-between them and reproduced two iconic Portland buildings in the far distance as geographical markers. My point is that what we see is not just physically before us but lingers in our subconscious and permeates how we see things around us.

Digital metallic print. Edition of five. 8.5" x 16"

Page 32- LGBTIQA2P+

Anonymous and androgynous, a figure is juxtaposed upon the slightly abstracted word "flow." I depicted the figure in a vague way to recognize the fluid, non-binary interpretation of gender — self-identification without borders.

Silkscreen, Chine-collé, ink, pencil & pastel, 12.5" x 14.5"

Page 33- The Weight of History

An African American man lifts a box laden with significant dates, mostly negative, in African American history. I am Caucasian and do not pretend to have experience relevant to, nor to viscerally understand or be able to explain what

it is like to be African American. This is purely my visual reaction to a slowly evolving societal acknowledgment that African Americans carry an extra burden.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé, ink and pastel, 13" x 17"

Page 34- Spot Removal

The figure in the center is a volunteer I met while cleaning up the park blocks after another of so many nights of protests following the killing of George Floyd. The crossed out words represent ideas whose time has not yet come, or which have been erased due to social sanction.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé, ink and pencil, 16" x 13"

Page 35- Odd Nature

Nature perceived in context of the dollar plant. At last check the Dow Jones Industrial average was flat.

Silkscreen, Chine-collé, ink, pencil and acrylic, 13" x 17"

Page 36- New Look

Our international policy makers turned masks into aggressive statements. More specifically, a less-than interesting, less-than original statement of fact. Stars and stripes forever.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé, ink and acrylic, 16.5" x 13"

Page 37- Time is Up

Upside down and encapsulated within a dollar plant symbol, the former demagogue-in-chief is polarizing his environment, trying to extend his time in office.

Silkscreen with Chine-collé, ink and pencil, 14" x 20"

Page 38 - Holiday snapshot (upper image)

Vigilantes took it upon themselves to kidnap the governor of Michigan. They are depicted here standing outside the governor's office. I was thinking about the lightness with which they viewed their actions. It seemed to me they could all be posing for some holiday snapshot. I wanted to depict a visual stench for their actions.

Oil pastel, 5" x 11"

Page 38- What to Wear? (lower image)

Being human beings of the vigilante variety, I imagined that the kidnappers-to-be probably spent as much time thinking about how to look tough and noble as they did pondering the consequences of their actions. I also imagined them reprimanding me with: "Obviously we are not the Taliban. We wear baseball caps."

For *What to Wear* I depicted the figure on the right in six different outfits. Which one would have suited him best, I wondered. I chose a teddy bear to symbolize the immaturity of their political philosophy. I set up six click counters for visitors to register their tastes in apparel (see detail on back cover).

Ink, colored pencil, pastel, 11" x 39"

Page 39- The Answer

At present everyone I know is inundated by objects which require programming, assembling, specialized installation or maintenance. Tending to these objects saps us of time and robs us of our freedom to ponder more meaningful aspects of existence. In this image, a modern day oracle magically appears, patiently waiting to answer our questions about one of these objects.

Ink on paper, 8" x 11"

Page 40- Waste O' Money I (Solution to a Solution)

Acrylic on canvas, chop-sticks and belt strap, 12" x 40"

Page 41- Waste O' Money II (Breakthrough solution)

Acrylic on canvas, chop-sticks and belt strap, 12" x 40"

Page 41- Waste O' Money III (Solutions after the passage of time)

Acrylic on canvas, chop-sticks and belt strap, 12" x 24"

These three works address America's on-going huge waste of money to build a border wall between the USA and Mexico. I am opposed to stupid, ineffectual approaches to border protection and impressed with human ingenuity to overcome it.



Cast your vote here for
The Dress Most Likely to Impress
Sorry - only one click per vote please