

Documentation Through Printed Matter

Thesis Proposal

Reece McAndrew

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My name is Reece, I am a printmaking major at PNCA. For my thesis project I would like to explore two ways of self-documentation within printed matter; Experimenting with the system and methodology behind that documentation. I will have one publication dedicated to focusing on risograph as an additive form of documentation. Another publication will be dedicated to intaglio as a subtractive form of documentation. Documentation takes many systems in printmaking. Using the knowledge I have surrounding print history and the technical skills of printmaking, I will make two publications that reflect my experience at PNCA.

I have three central questions I'll be investigating. How does time and process affect documentation? How do our physical and digital environments affect us? How can I use risography and intaglio as a record keeping tool? This is important to me because how we learn about past events is filtered through the media we consume that information from. Stuart Hall talks about this concept as [Reception Theory](#). "The producer encodes messages and values into their media which are then decoded by the audience. However, different audience members will decode the media in different ways and possibly not in the way the producer originally intended." This is key in understanding that all media, including documentation, can be subjective. By applying different encoding techniques, I will be able to create distinct methods of documentation.

I consider risography to be a modern medium. Colorful and bright, it's the latest trend; An outdated technology with a mishmash of screen and photocopier methods built into it. Riso prints, made of non-archival materials, are an impermanent form of documentation. I want to highlight this impermanence in the way I distribute this publication. Two ways I am considering temporary distributions are wheatpasting and instagram stories, both of which have half life dependent on the environment. A wheatpaste can last if it's out of the rain and out of reach of anyone who might want to take it down. A standard instagram story lasts 24 hours but if someone reposts or screenshots it, it could effectively last forever. The aesthetics of my risograph work references Walter Hamady's Gabberjabbs. Hamady's Gabberjabbs are a testament to his work ethic (creating because you must) but also as a record of symbols kept by printmakers. Typically discarded printed matter will be piled on top of each other. I will use bright primary colors to draw the viewer's attention towards the recycled imagery. The scanning and colored drums of the risograph homogenize the symbols. This functions as an analogy for modern media consumption in some respects. In 2021 we consume more media than ever before!

I am a mass consumer of digital media. There is a stochastic feeling to both the digital realm and the printed matter realm. Seemingly random posts following one after another. Just as an algorithm decides what you see next on a social media platform, so will I decide what to put on the page. But I do not work inside a computer. With print there is a randomness that is enjoyable. The process and medium is connected to the artist, collectively changing the outcome. One of my favorite examples of artist and medium affecting each other is Robert Rauschenberg and his cardboard series. Rauschenberg highlighted the art of packaging by displaying discarded cardboard boxes in a formal gallery setting. Rauschenberg's cardboard

pieces could be seen as garbage if they were placed in the street but by changing the context he changed the message. The work in the gallery acted as documentation for the state of the Gulf Coast when he made them. The area plagued by corrupt oil companies and the constant growth of capitalism. This framing of garbage as critique of society is very thought provoking for me.

Intaglio is more historically tied to print. Originally stemming from goldsmithing, it is a form of engraving; Bougie but dirty, rooted in fine art but a messy practice. My preferred technique, mezzotint, uses a rocker (a edged blade with a hundred points at the tip) to mark the plate. As you mark the entirety of the plate, you then have a complete black image that you can reduce with a scraper and burnisher. Mezzotint is different from most intaglio methods. It's a reductive process. It's easier to evoke space by working dark to light. You quickly get dramatic contrast in tones. To prepare the plate for printing, you must cover it with ink and wipe away the excess to find the image below the inky mess. This process of reduction is connected to the imagery I am sourcing. I intend to source all of the intaglio plates I have used during my time at PNCA and reduce the imagery to a single sheet of BFK (22x30in). By doing this, I am creating a revisionist history by manipulating what is left. Making this sheet into a book form will connect this piece to all the connotations of a book. The connotations I am interested in are documentation, story telling and the dissemination of information. This work is meant to be a more private reflection of my time at PNCA. Artists that inspired me for this are Peter Ilsted and Fransisco Goya. These artists both have work that relates to their personal lives, acting almost as visual diaries. I'd like to make the point here that documentation is not always created intentionally. Ilsted's and Goya's reasoning for making prints varies but both artists' works, when put in the context of their time, can act as a view into what life was like while they were alive.

For this experiment I've set two strict methods of record keeping. The risograph publication will consist of media I consume over the course of the semester. The intaglio publication will consist of media I have created during my time at PNCA. Both publications are attempting to articulate a certain aspect of my time at PNCA. The Riso represents an additive process; The constant movement and colorful possibilities of the future. The Intaglio represents a subtractive process; A refinement of what I have, a centering of what I've learned. In the end, I hope to have two publications interconnected through a shared process and space.

Wright, Erik Olin. *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Verso, 2021.

- fun graph about eroding capitalism.
- Pg 46 “ anti-capitalist reforms are forms that induce in one way or another egalitarian, democratic and solidaristic values and principles into the operation of capitalism.”
- Pg 47 “ what had changed was that the state took responsibility for partially correcting the three principle failures of capitalist markets: individual vulnerability to risks, under provision of public goods and negative externalities of private profit-maximizing economic activity.”
- Pg 51 “ an intrinsic feature of exploitation is that exploiters depend on the effort of the exploited. And since human beings are not robots, this means that in one way or another people are able to withhold their maximum effort and diligence. This is the most basic form of resisting capitalism. “

Liptak, Adam. “U.S. Prison Population Dwarfs That of Other Nations.” The New York Times. The New York Times, April 23, 2008.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/23/world/americas/23iht-23prison.12253738.html>.

Vestel, Leora Broydo. “Second Lives for Newspaper Dispensers?” The New York Times. The New York Times, June 1, 2009.
<https://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/01/second-lives-for-newspaper-dispensers/>.

Henwood, Doug. “Take Me to Your Leader: The Rot of the American Ruling Class.” Jacobin. Jacobin magazine, April 27, 2021.
<https://jacobinmag.com/2021/04/take-me-to-your-leader-the-rot-of-the-american-ruling-class>.

I’d say the ruling class consists of a politically engaged capitalist class, operating through lobbying groups, financial support for politicians, think tanks, and publicity, that meshes with a senior political class that directs the machinery of the state. (You could say something similar about regional, state, and local capitalists and the relevant machinery.) But we shouldn’t underestimate the importance of the political branch of the ruling class in shaping the thinking of the capitalists, who are too busy making money to think much on their own or even organize in their collective interest.

DeLaure, Marilyn, and Moritz Fink. *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance*. New York: New York University Press, 2017.

Sommer, Lauren, Connie Hanzhang Jin, and Rina Torchinsky. “These 4 Charts Explain Why the Stakes Are so High at the U.N. Climate Summit.” NPR. NPR, October 29, 2021.
<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/29/1045344199/cop26-glasgow-climate-summit>.

Rauschenberg, Robert, Bois, Yve-Alain, Elliott, Clare, Helfenstein, Josef, and Menil Collection. Robert Rauschenberg : Cardboards and Related Pieces. Menil Collection. Houston, Tex. : New Haven ; London: Menil Collection ; [Distributed By] Yale University Press, 2007.

- Book discusses and shows rauschenberg's cardboard works. Focusing on the materiality of cardboard and heightening the importance of it by placing these works in a gallery setting.

Davidson, Susan, White, David, and Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Robert Rauschenberg : Gluts. New York, N.Y. : Venezia: Guggenheim Museum Publications ; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, 2009.

- Book discusses rauschenberg's metal trash sculptures. Thought to be a critique of overabundance and reference the decay of the gulf coast. I find the source of street signs and road side waste interesting. I relate to his empathy for the discarded.

Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2010.

- Listened to the audio book narrated by Russell Brand. Made me very depressed.

Ayto, John. *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

- Gotta love idioms, proof that sometimes words are meaningless without context behind them

Whitaker, John O. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals*. New York: Knopf, 1996.

- Possibly the most impactful book of my early teens. I remember it being the only book I had at camp. One summer all I read was this. This was a successful piece of art for me, **escapist but also informative**.

Yoder, Don, and Thomas E. Graves. *Hex Signs: Pennsylvania Dutch Barn Symbols & Their Meaning*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000.

- Page 77 gives basic information on making a hex sign. Interested in the iconography of my supposed ancestry.

Knight, Cher Krause. *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2009.

- They mention the work *The Gates* by Christo and Jeanne Claude. An installation in Central Park. "**a position must be taken not just by art folk but by the immediate public**". Pages 33, 70, 84, 101, 107, and 115.

Shivaram, Deepa. "A Crypto-Trading Hamster Performs Better than Warren Buffett and the S&P 500." NPR. NPR, September 25, 2021.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/09/25/1040683057/crypto-trading-hamster-goxx-warren-buffet-s-p-500>

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- In the age of capitalist collapse articles to come from a reality like the onion. Additionally, this article supports my feelings that money is fake and the stock market is dumb pseudoscience for stock bros. Money, to the affluent, is nothing more than a joke that can be toyed with for your own entertainment.



Table 3. Prevalence of depression and anxiety across traditional measures of socioeconomic status

SES	N	Depression				Anxiety			
		Lifetime		12-month		Lifetime		12-month	
		%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
60,001-80,000	1536	14.15	.47	4.82	.31	5.85	.36	1.40	.18
80,001-100,000	756	11.19	.38	3.49	.16	5.39	.28	1.49	.14
100,001-120,000	235	10.13	1.25	4.01	.55	5.85	1.11	1.05	.03
> 120,000	570	15.13	.55	3.49	.33	6.22	.56	1.91	.48
Highest level of education									
None - grade 8	882	9.52	.69	3.82	.32	3.57	.30	1.70	.16
Some high school	1552	15.47	.54	8.05	.39	6.64	.37	3.26	.26
High school or GED	5949	14.97	.28	6.29	.24	6.82	.21	2.78	.13
Some college	4656	19.59	.33	7.01	.22	7.46	.20	3.07	.12
Associate/2-year degree	2277	17.91	.48	6.31	.29	9.37	.47	3.05	.20
College	3432	15.07	.29	5.25	.16	5.45	.15	2.17	.07
Some grad/professional	928	20.26	.65	6.07	.40	7.60	.52	1.95	.31
Grad/professional	2183	19.11	.40	6.57	.27	7.44	.25	2.67	.20

Note

Depression includes major depression. Anxiety includes generalised anxiety and panic disorder. In the USA, high school includes grades 9-12. GED, or general educational development, is a series of tests demonstrating skills equivalent to completion of high school. Associate/2-year degrees are awarded by community, junior or technical colleges and are often equivalent to the first 2 years of a 4-year bachelor's degree. College is typically a 4-year bachelor's degree.

Table 1. Prevalence of lifetime and current depression and anxiety across class locations

Class	N	Depression				Anxiety			
		Lifetime		12-month		Lifetime		12-month	
		%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Private sector									
Worker	3047	11.72	0.45	5.22	0.29	4.90	0.27	2.25	0.19
Supervisor	1483	18.83	0.48	6.15	0.37	10.71	0.58	3.88	0.31
Manager	1039	13.71	0.58	4.36	0.31	6.56	0.27	2.48	0.19
Owner	227	11.08	1.06	4.47	0.90	2.29	0.58	0.43	0.02
All sectors									
Worker	3430	11.88	0.41	5.29	0.29	4.94	0.25	2.30	0.18
Supervisor	1867	18.73	0.38	5.78	0.31	11.29	0.50	3.63	0.25
Manager	1557	16.08	0.57	4.95	0.24	6.56	0.23	2.56	0.15
Owner	227	11.08	1.06	4.47	0.90	2.29	0.58	0.43	0.02

Note

Workers identified their occupation as private household; farming, forestry, and fishing; operators, fabricators, and labourers; transportation and material moving; or handlers, equipment cleaners, and labourers. Managers identified their occupation as executive, administrative or managerial, and had ≥ bachelor's degree. Supervisors meet the same criteria as managers but have < bachelor's degree. Owners identified as self-employed and earned ≥ \$71,500 (the 90th percentile) in annual income. All sectors includes private for-profit company, business, or individual; private not-for-profit, tax exempt, or charitable organisation; and federal, state and local government (excluding armed forces).