



Exhibition Show Card

Callous Mind

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MFA Thesis Exhibition

Printmaking

Acknowledgments

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Artist Statement

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a life altering condition that impacts millions. It changes the way we think, see, feel, act and live our lives. Witnessing those suffering from this mental disease that often goes untreated due to poor acceptance, misdiagnosis, and lack of awareness brought me to create these series of monotypes. This selection of five monotypes captures moments within the lives of those who are and have suffered the wrath of this debilitating illness.



Installation at the Samuel Dorsky Museum-1 (Alice and Horace Chandler)

Callous Mind

There is an old idiom that comes to mind when it comes to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder *too understand someone you first must walk a mile in their shoes*. You must see through their eye, hear through their ears, feel through their skin and experience what they sense before you can truly understand what it is that those who are suffering from PTSD are going through. For it is a life altering condition that impacts millions. It changes the way we think, see, feel, act and live our lives. Those whom are suffering from this mental disease often go untreated due to poor knowledge or acceptance of this condition. Experiencing firsthand the suffering from this mental disease that often goes untreated due to poor acceptance, misdiagnosis, and lack of awareness, brought me to create these series of monotypes. This suite of five monotypes captures moments within the lives of those who are and have suffered the wrath of this debilitating illness.

The reason behind this work and why I chose to focus on this topic is a result of events from my past that have shaped and are still shaping who I am. I am a private person and tend to avoid talking about my past, but after the sudden passing of my father I started to look into his past. I knew that he and my mother served in the armed forces and that is where they met. What I did

not know what that my father was a part of the medical intake unit while he was stationed overseas. What his job composed of was ascertaining the condition of his fellow soldiers as they were being admitted for medical treatment. This is like a position held by interns and nurses in the emergency room at the local hospitals but instead of dealing with everyday mishaps he was dealing with the repercussions of war. Upon learning this, things began to fall into place from his alcoholism, mental breaks, his paranoid delusions and his anxiety in public. To confirm my suspicions, I begin doing research into PTSD and two studies struck me, the Rand Corporation's study: *Invisible Wounds of War Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences*, and Jessica Morgan's graduate study: *Services to Assist Recovery and Examining Growth Outcomes in Military Veterans: Posttraumatic Growth, Core Beliefs, and Temporality*. What drew me to these two studies was the context of the research conducted. They focused on active duty service members and nonactive services members (veterans) and they kept track of specific statistics regarding the symptoms of PTSD, reporting said symptoms, seeking help, those that did not seek professional help, amount of time for cases to develop and how long the it takes to recover.

Historically this mental disorder has gone by many names: shellshock, soldier's sickness, combat fatigue syndrome and finally during the 1970's with Veterans returning home from the Korean and Vietnam wars it then came to be labeled Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This label came about due to necessity and at the time was closest description for this condition and has become a stigma. The stigma that is associated with mental health, where people are viewed as less than competent, damaged goods that should be thrown away or avoided. Due to the large numbers of veterans suffering from it, it became a classification system to be used to explain what modern science is just beginning to try to understand. It has been linked to traumatic experiences, and can causes depression, excessive irritability, guilt (for having survived while

others died), recurrent nightmares, flashbacks to the traumatic scene or events, and overreactions to sudden noises and situations, emotional numbness, jumbled memories, hyper awareness and emotional instability. The exact reason why people develop this disease is still unknown but there are many factors that tie into it, such as stress, coping skills, support systems, job security, family and environment. Veterans today are returning to a different social setting than those of thirty to forty years ago whom returned to a populous that hated and disrespected what they were doing. Yet with this change there are still those who are suffering from some form of mental illness that is related to PTSD. A sad fact is that every day twenty active and inactive members of the armed forces commit suicide due to service related mental illness (Steele). This reflects on how poorly equipped the United States of America department of Veterans Affairs is at

identifying and helping those potentially at risk, again this is born out of neglect of our veterans and the lack of knowledge of this condition.

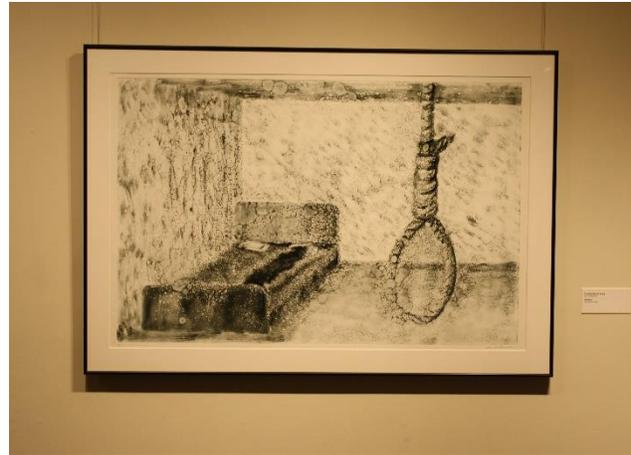
The Rand study focuses on PTSD and traumatic brain injury in veterans. In other



Detail: Is this the help I get?

words, to see if there is a link between head injuries and PTSD in veterans. There is a link between traumatic brain injury and mental illness but the connection with PTSD is not present, for it surfaces in uninjured brains. The statistic that caught my eye were the number of veterans with in the first year of nonactive duty (20 to 26%) suffer from mental illness, as times goes on that number increases to 50% and eventually 80% (Jaycox). The two studies I am referencing

were conducted about seven years apart and the numbers are nearly identical regarding those suffering from PTSD or mental illness and the what can cause an attack. An attack can be cause by anything often referred to as “trigger points” and that stress can make one more susceptible to said outbreak (Brandt).



Detail: Untitled

Stress may make a person more susceptible to an attack, but is not the real culprit it is just the scapegoat. The issue lays within the human mind and how it processes the external stimulus that it receives on a regular basis. This is what cause many returning veterans to develop symptoms



Detail: Lost and Forgotten

later in their lives and often begin to self-medicate through alcoholism and other drugs. Their minds are now given time to process the events that have occurred while they were in active service. This is the result of being removed from the regimented support structure one receives while on active duty. In a recent study, there have been instances that some people are more resilient to developing PTSD while others are not (Morgan). What this study does in comparison to others is explore the *post-traumatic growth* of veterans who are suffering from it by keeping track of those who report and seek help, those who report symptoms but do not seek help, those who do neither and their support structures

later in their lives and often begin to self-medicate through alcoholism and other drugs. Their minds are now given time to process the events that have occurred while they were in active service. This is the result of being removed from the

(Morgan). It is examining the benefits of PTSD, while documenting how people are affected differently and what may influence their results. They checked genetic histories, support structures to see if they could explain why some people are less prone to



Detail: Life Time of Suffering

developing it. PTSD is not isolated to military personal, for anyone to whom has experienced a traumatic event can potentially develop it, examples are: victims of assault, terrorist attacks, mental, and physical abuse, natural disasters and the sudden loss of a loved one can lead to anyone developing it.

To understand how best to capture and express this condition in my work I referenced the works of many artists to see how they captured the emotions and feeling. I started with the classics, Goya and his *Los desastres de la Guerra* (*Disasters of War*) series. At the time this



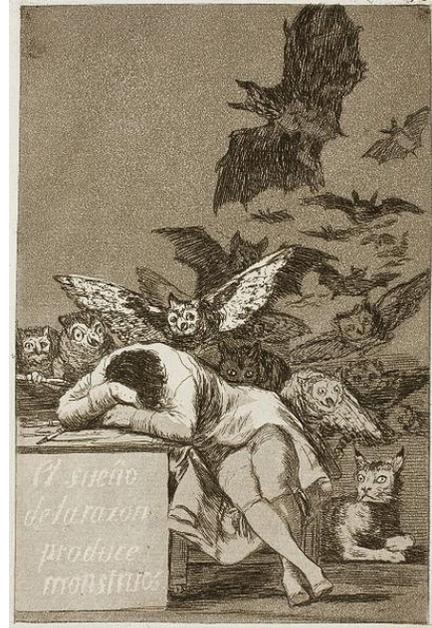
Goya: Tristes presentimientos de lo que ha de acontecer

work was done in protest of the Napoleonic War and was printed after his death for fear of repercussions from the Spanish king Fernando VII which would have brought him to live in a life of poverty due to his sudden loss of financial support from the court or imprisonment. This work at the time was to capture the worse of human nature

during and after the war had ended. The cruelty that humans can inflict upon one another by creating a moment of time much like a photographic picture.

What this series doesn't show is the toll these events take on the mind. From this suite of prints:

Tristes presentimientos de lo que ha de acontecer is a foreboding look as to what is to come as the malnourished figure is emerging from darkness, a prelude to what is about to come. Another suite of prints from Goya the *Los caprichos* was a critique on humanity and the new enlightenment. From this series of prints *Sleep of Reason* abstractly expresses the troubled mind with the figure's dreams becoming a nightmare. I read it as the nightmare (madness) entering the mind, a prelude to mental illness. What I am taking from these bodies



Goya: El sueño de la razón produce monstruos



Kollwitz: Woman with dead child

work is the method in which he is depicting and commenting on what is transpiring at the time and how it provokes the senses of the viewers. This led me to look at German Expressionism and the works of Kathe Kollwitz, Otto Dix, Anselm Kiefer. With their work, I looked at the mark making and how it communicates emotions and feelings.

Kollwitz whom lived through WWI and WWII and how her work transitioned from a call for change to expressions of lost and death. This change was brought about by the loss of her own children during the two wars. It was her way to deal with the depression and trauma of her loss but a way to provoke a similar response in the audience. Dix's work was more confrontational and



Dix: Wounded Soldier

almost cartoonish at times, moments from within the trenches of

WWI again showing the worst of mankind but still capturing the fear and tortures that soldiers went through and had to live with. He was showing events that caused productive men to become broken and useless. Whereas Kiefer invokes a more somber and remorseful tone to the work by showing the loss of life with the subject matter through the choice of materials and by the scale of his work. The work



Kiefer: Les Femmes del la revolution

encloses around the viewer with an imposing feeling that is by the subject matter becomes mournful as the subject matter tends to deal with the loss of many lives due to human conflict.

This lead me to look at Michael Mazur's work *Closed Ward* and *Locked Ward*, which explored the mental health system and captured the emotions and troubles of the subjects with in the series



Mazur: Closed Ward 1

of prints. These works do is call attention to the condition of the subjects and express the troubles within that each one suffers from by using expressive mark making. I started to look at Sarah Sudhoff a photographer who documented her own trauma by photographing herself in locations that she spent time in due to the ordeal she had gone though, while expressing the anxiety as she explains what the cause of trauma. What this work does is explain what caused the changes to her life and how her actions were changed by it while giving her a vehicle to process what has transpired.

These works gave me ideas which I explored to best show the aftermath of PTSD. I first started working with abstraction focusing on the material and how that could express the trauma one goes through. This work was based of a series on interviews I



Detail: This is not where I am meant to be!

had conducted with veterans, starting with members of the armed forces some whom severed with my farther and others that I had gone to school with. This work on its own was to easily miss read into something different based upon the viewers own experiences and the message was getting muddled along the way, for example one viewer would see a forest until they looked closer at the marks upon the blocks and within the print. This lead me to begin making monotypes that capture and express different senses and feeling in the work. Monotype is a printmaking technique that utilizes mark making and painting practices upon a printable matrix to create a singular print. Taking note at how the artists I have referenced approached their work I chose to use locations and subjects that provoked key emotions while capturing the aftermath of PTSD. I used areas associated with the locations in which I conducted the interviews and composite images based on memories. I utilized mark making with in the monotypes to express how the subjects become isolated and dwarfed by their surroundings capturing the difficulties they face when and if they would seek help, what happens to them when they become overpowered and can no longer function normally in society and either end up locked away or ignored on the outskirts of society? Even those that have gave up because they can no longer

handle the psychological and physical burden of this disease and chose to end their own life so not to be a bother onto others and themselves.

Experiencing firsthand the suffering from this mental disease that often goes untreated due to poor acceptance, misdiagnosis, and lack of awareness, brought me to create these series of monotypes. Through these prints, I bring to attention the lack of knowledge, assistance and the way in which those still suffer to provoke change. A change through the critique of the treatment of society when viewing those whom suffer from PTSD. So, before you look away at your neighbor who is suffering or behaving differently do not judge or ignore them till you have *walk a mile in their shoes...*



Installation at the Samuel Dorsky Museum-2 (Alice and Horace Chandler Gallery)

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