Kill line

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Kill line

by

Jeff Miller

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major: Integrated Visual Arts

Program of Study Committee:
Austin Stewart, Major Professor
Jennifer Drinkwater
Alex Braidwood

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2017

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to William and Phyllis Miller. It is through their love and support that I have the courage to follow through with my dream of becoming an artist.
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The struggle of ambition against the realities of faceless labor has been a driving force in my art. This body of work draws from labor-based jobs that exist within a hog slaughtering plant located in my hometown and from childhood interests in arcade games, Halloween costumes, and horror movies. The juxtaposition of these topics combined with a mixed-media approach provides an alternative method with which to approach issues such as working class struggle and the fear of failure.

Repetition through imagery and motion is a constant throughout my work, such as in the *Kill Line Arcade*. This project presents six different video games that display various jobs on a hog processing line. The games are presented within an arcade-style cabinet and provides players an 8-bit voyeuristic view into the real-life monotonous job tasks that others go through. Other projects such as *The Worker Line* and the *Kids Projects* touch on the consequences of giving into failure and lack of identity within factory settings.
CHAPTER I

PRE-IOWA STATE

Art is something that has always played a role in my life. It began with abstract crayon
drawings in coloring books and branched out to doodles on all of my homework assignments and
notebooks. My mother took notice and enrolled me in various weekend art classes throughout
my middle school and junior high years. I continued to take art classes in high school, which led
to me deciding to major in art.

I earned my associates degree at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, IL. It
was here that I got my first glimpse of the process of printmaking. Like many students, I had no
idea what the medium entailed. That all changed after I had a meeting with the print professor.
When the meeting was over, he asked if I had any experience with printmaking. This led to him
pulling a bunch of books of his shelf, with the most memorable containing a series of Max Ernst
prints called *A Week of Kindness* and the illustrations of Gustave Dore. I was instantly intrigued
by the medium, especially the emphasis on black and white. After that, I signed up for a print
class when the opportunity arose. Eventually, I transferred to Western Illinois University in
Macomb, IL.

I continued to take printmaking classes like etching and lithography, but relief is what I
enjoyed the most. Relief printmaking consists of using carving tools to remove areas from
surfaces such as wood or linoleum. Ink is rolled across these areas, with paper placed on top
along with pressure from a printing press, or by hand. This pressure transfers the ink to the page,
giving a replica of the lines and areas that were not carved away. Relief is the oldest form of
printmaking, dating all the way back to ancient China, and it is typically the first print process that people try. I started to make various relief prints that gradually increased in size, until I decided to try make a life-size print.

The idea of making a life-size print came about from seeing Leonard Baskin's relief work. He made large, figurative prints in a time when printmaking was thought of as being limited to the length of a printing press. Baskin's black-and-white prints such as *The Hanged Man* and *Hydrogen Man* projected a raw power that I was attracted to. These images contained line work that interweaved in various ways to define the human form. He abstracted areas within, while staying close to the boundaries of a realistic human outline. *The Hanged Man* (1954, fig. 1) follows this formula to represent its title, but the *Hydrogen Man* (1954, fig. 2) distorts its proportions to have a grotesque look that represents the feeling Baskin had when the first hydrogen bomb was tested. He was not conceptual with his work, but I found his carving style to be exciting. He was also the first artist that cued me into the idea that printmaking does not have to fit a certain mold. At the time, size seemed like a way to make people around me look at printmaking in a different light.

![Image of The Hanged Man](image)

Fig. 1, Leonard Baskin, *The Hanged Man*, 1954, woodcut, 67x21 in
My first life size woodcut, *Degenerate* (2012, fig. 3) was figure driven. This work began with tracing a silhouette of my body, and then filling it with a large volume of lines in various sizes and shapes. Drawing consisted of defining an area based on various simple things like feelings at the time and responding to other previously drawn areas. I tended to draw and carve areas in one sequence, as opposed to drawing the whole thing out and then carving it, which made the process feel more spontaneous. I continued to do this throughout the entire body. The image itself is of a single black-and-white figure against a completely white background. Lines entangle in various volumes through the relaxed body pose. The head is slightly enlarged, with the complete absence of eyes.
It was also during this time that I started on another series of life-size prints. Everything I was doing up until that point had something to do with lines. I wanted something to contrast the visual presence of *Degenerate*, so I came up with the idea of making a print that mainly consists of one large line. I had recently bought a cheap roll of twelve inch thick linoleum that was long enough to produce my series of six individual six foot prints known as *The Crowd* (2012, fig. 4).

![Image of The Crowd](image.png)

Fig. 4, *The Crowd*, 2012, linocut, 76x116 in

These prints were of humans made out of solid black rectangles, but the only defined features were in the hands and face. The thinking behind this series was to contrast the many small lines of the other life-size print I was working on. I liked the idea of a solid rectangular body, which I saw as representing one large line. This idea also came from looking at Kathe Kollwitz's work. Kollwitz's prints have a deep emotional impact, but her woodcuts resonate the most within me. Works like *Widow* (1920, fig. 5) and *Hunger* (1920, fig. 6) employ a certain stylist choice of having detail only within the head and hands, while the body is solid black. *The Crowd* followed that style by having hands and faces designed differently for each print, and rendered in the same way as works like *Degenerate*. All six were meant to be placed together and function as one piece. The order of figures was also important because the hands of every print displayed gradual movement of hands folding and unfolding.
It was around this time that I began to investigate Atari 2600 programming. Released in 1977, it was responsible for the proliferation of video games in the home market. There is a lot of information on how to program games on the internet because enthusiasts still create new cartridges to play on home consoles. Eventually, I found a program that would allow photographs to be displayed on Atari 2600 systems. Basically, the program would split an image into three different color gradients that the system recognized. It would then rapidly flash all three simultaneously on a screen which created the illusion of one solid image. I found this fascinating because the console is very primitive in the images it can produce; the system could only render basic shapes and color that never looked like the things it tried to represent. Eventually, I used an image of one of my woodcut and liked the results.
I came up with the idea to make an Atari 2600 release of a previous print I had done called *Condemnation* (2012, fig. 7-9). The actual artwork on the game box, and cartridge label came from a linocut also called *Condemnation*. This print depicts two individuals surrounding a kneeled over distressed person. One individual extends her/his hand open to comfort, while the other is turned back in disapproval. This image also drew from Kollwitz's use of black silhouetted bodies and Baskin's intertwined line work.

![Condemnation Atari 2600 box](image)

Fig. 7, *Condemnation Atari 2600 box*, 2012, lithography, 8x5

![Condemnation Atari cartridge](image)

Fig. 8, *Condemnation Atari cartridge*, 2012, lithography, 3x4

![Condemnation linocut](image)

Fig. 9, *Condemnation*, 2011, linocut, 16 x14 in
I wanted this project to be in the standard way of how video games are presented, so I created packaging in the form of a box and label art. I designed some simple packaging and labels in Photoshop that resembled actual Atari 2600 imagery and transferred them over to photo lithography plates. These plates were then printed on paper using black ink and assembled to become three-dimensional objects. I then ran my *Condemnation* print through the photo program and had it burned onto an actual Atari cartridge. This meant it could be played on an Atari 2600 system. The traditional printmaking aspect was being used for the packaging, which is usually thought of as being disposable, while the real version of the “print” was contained within the cartridge that could only be seen under certain circumstances. To me at the time, it felt like how most people generally see printmaking. They are constantly surrounded by it in the form of t-shirts, billboards, packaging, magazines, books, and other mass produced items, but they only really recognize it as printmaking if it is contained within a gallery or museum setting.

This new photo program got me to think about the similar qualities that the Atari 2600 and printmaking share. Both fall into the category of “old school,” as opposed to “out dated.” Something that is old school has certain qualities that are inferior, but still hold characteristics or a charm that people connect with. On the other hand, something that is outdated serves no real purpose because better things have taken its place. Although better technology has come along, people seem to really enjoy certain qualities of printmaking and the Atari 2600 that make them “old school.” I got pretty excited about the combination of these two things as a means to make artwork. It also raised a lot of questions in my head like, “Is mass production printmaking? Does a print have to come from its original matrix in order for it to be considered a print? What if the print is just a digital file that placed on something else?”
Printmaking encompasses several things that I appreciate about art. The invention of the type-based printing press is easily one of the greatest inventions ever created. Johannes Gutenberg's creation of the type based printing allowed for a huge increase in the spread of information and ideas, thus helping to usher in what we see as modern society. To me, this alone makes it more valuable than every painting that has ever been created. The obscurity of printmaking gives it real appeal, and the feeling that I can do whatever I want within it. Its mass production ability gives it the feeling of being an art form that is “for the people”. Printmaking also put me in the process of learning one of the most important lessons for making artwork: you have to put a lot of time and effort into it.
I entered graduate school knowing that I might end up working at the hog slaughtering plant located in my hometown if I did not make it as an artist. My contemporaries associate this plant with failure because working there was seen as a wasted life. The median hourly wage for workers nationally is $12.78 an hour, with an annual wage totalling at $26,590. (51-3023 Slaughterers and Meat Packers, 2016) The jobs themselves can be hazardous to the employee's health. A 2016 report from the Government Accountability Office, show that injury and illness case rates in meat packing plants are well above all other U.S manufacturing industries. Injuries are down from 9.8 per 100 works in 2004 to 5.7 in 2013. However, under reported injuries are suspected to be a problem and sanitation crew cases are not included in these statistics because there often contracted out to other companies. (Gerlock, 2016), (WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH, 2016)

The rate of slaughter has continued to increase, which leads to employees having to work harder with no pay compensation. Interviewed workers often cite the difficulty to keep up, which can lead to injury. The repetitious nature of the jobs themselves can cause various injuries. Plants have no problem firing worker that cannot keep up, leading to high job turnover rates with the industry. (Gerlock, 2016), (Lowe, 2016)

Sadly, many people within my age group have ending up working there after they fail to achieve their goals, some of which that were similar to mine. I wanted to make a print that expressed the anxiety that I felt and do it in a way that showed the situation I seemed to be
facing. This anxiety was not just limited to my situation back home, but also in how I saw printmaking as an art form. I have always felt that printmaking is seen as a “low” art form, and I wanted to make something that would go against that status. I decided to expand on the Leonard Baskin-inspired life size woodcuts I created during undergrad and make a print that was eight feet by eight feet, that captured my anxiety.

*Untitled* (2013, fig. 10) depicts three men assaulting a naked man who is unwillingly being taken to the factory. They stand upon a pile of scattered books that have lost their ability to prevent individuals from ending up working in the factory. Piles of human skull flow throughout the landscape as a reminder of the many lives that have been wasted from having to work in that environment. Various people wearing business suits and masks of severed pigs heads stand holding signs with words that spell out the sentence, “NOW YOU BELONG TO US!” The massive factory sits in the background with its only detail being downward lines. These lines suggest teeth, as if it was some kind of monster that has to be given sacrifices to eat.

![Fig. 10, *Untitled*, 2013, woodcut, 96x96 in](image)

People who viewed this image interpreted the individuals wearing pig masks differently than I did. I was only thinking of them as a reference to the hog slaughtering plant from back home, but viewers often assumed that the whole print had a political agenda. They saw the
combination of business suits and pigs as symbols of greed, big businesses, and corruption. There seemed to be enough interested from other people that I started to plan other projects that dealt with class-based issues. What had just started out as a personal project had become something that took on a political theme that I had not previously recognized.

In addition to *Untitled*, my art-making focus rapidly moved toward not having to make prints that were framed. It was at this time that I started to explore installation art. This included projects like *The Worker Line* (2015, fig. 11). It consisted of a series of life-sized black-and-white prints of identical hunched-over human figures aligned in various rows that give off the look of several people standing in a group. The figures were created by carving a life-size woodblock, and printing it with black ink on white paper. They were then cut out with a half inch border that follows the contour of the body. Typically, several are hung from the ceiling with clips and clear nylon string. This enabled me to adapt in terms of size and shape depending on the ceiling it is placed.

![Figure 11: Worker Line](image)

*Fig. 11, Worker Line, 2015, woodcut, varies*

This work was meant to replicate the long distance that employees have to walk in order to reach the entrances of factories. Typically, no one is pleased to be working in a factory, so I wanted to make something that conveyed this feeling as they make the journey to work. The
decision to use only one source for figures comes from the way that factories, or jobs in general, see unskilled laborers as the same, with nothing that really makes anyone stand out. This makes everyone potentially expendable and easily replaced.

The first time I set up this project was at a group show called *Art Vacancy*. It was an exhibition that allowed artists to display projects in unoccupied spaces around Ames, IA. I had just finished completing the woodcut portion when I was asked to be part of the show, but it was only a week away, and I had no idea how many prints it would require to fill the space I was given. So, I produced as many as I could before I had to start hanging them, and hoped it would work. I had never hung anything from the ceiling before, which I had to figure out on the fly. There was no time to perform tests, so anything that went up was going to stay. Thankfully, I finished putting up prints an hour before the show was set to open. It went over well, with common comments being about its repetitious and oppressive look. People did not necessarily get that it was a work line, but the mood and feeling definitely came through.

I later installed this work in an empty part of the College of Design's third floor at ISU. It was a pop-up style version because I just went in and set it up without permission. Once again, I had to hang based on the layout of the ceiling and to do it fast to make sure no one saw me. I did not hear any in-person feedback, but it seemed to go over well judging by the number of images of the installation that people posted to Instagram.

Fig. 12, *Worker Line at College of Design*, 2016, woodcut
A third major project I created while at Iowa State came out of my long-time interest in Halloween costumes. *The Kids Project* (2015, figs. 13-15) revolved around children wearing labor worker costumes. I wanted the costumes to be reminiscent of the cheap, mass-produced sets that I wore for Halloween as a kid. I cut up an existing outfit to get a basic pattern and transferred it over to several woodblocks that I carved texture into. This texture consisted of repeated line work that resembled folds in various spots throughout the block. I then printed each block with black ink on white muslin fabric and sewed the pieces together with the help of several people. Halloween costumes typically come with a mask and I wanted the design to also be a woodblock based. I carved my mask image and printed it on polystyrene plastic. I had to figure out how to add depth to a two-dimensional print, which turned out to be through vacuum forming.

Vacuum forming is an old industrial process that allows plastics and other materials to be quickly stretched around objects. The machine itself consists of three layers that are bound together: a perforated board on top, a middle frame layer, and a bottom where a hole can be cut to connect a high suction vacuum. Using it is very simple. Place an object on the perforated board area. Next, take a thin sheet of plastic and clamp it between two frames. Heat the plastic until it is pliable, then turn on the vacuum. Stretch the plastic until it creates a seal that causes it to form around the object.

After building a vacuum forming machine, I built up a three dimensional form of the mask that would serve as a shape to provide depth for my woodcut prints. I initially had problems with registration, but I then attached a pin-hinged frame to my vacuum former. I got permission to work with a class of forty fourth graders at the school located in my hometown. The plan was to document the entire day through video and photography. The main
goals I wanted to achieve were taking photographs of every child in costume by him/herself, with a drawing, and in various group shots. The drawing was of what that particular child wanted to be when he/she grew up. At first, the kids did not know what to think of this project, but they came around after I started to hand out the masks. From that point on, they had no problem posing for the camera. Several kids had to have their costumes adjusted to fit, while others just tore them apart. This led to splashes of color from the clothes they were wearing that broke the monotony of the black and white outfits.

The idea behind the project was to show that kids at that age are at a crossroad in terms of how their education can go. For the most part, children in the fourth grade still have a positive association with school. I had the kids draw what they wanted to be when they grow up (2015, figs.15). None of the students had aspirations to work within a meat processing plant. It did not really matter what the kids drew, so much as the idea that they could conceive what they wanted to be when they grow up. Out of the entire group, not one kid struggled to come up with an answer. The costume and mask are the contrast to their drawings, representing the outcome of the unskilled workforce. It is a possible scenario that increases in odds as these children become older. They can easily slip between the cracks, dropout, or graduate with no real direction.

Specifically in my hometown, 64% of students qualify for free lunch programs, with another 9% receiving reduced-price lunches. (Beardstown Jr/Sr High School Student Body, 2014) The dropout rate for rural areas is 11%, with students under the poverty line increasing up to 23.2%. (Status of Education in Rural America, 2007) The kids wearing the costumes serves as a reminder of the consequences that neglect can bring.
Fig. 13, *Fourth Grade Class*, 2015, photography, 48x36 in

Fig. 14, *Fourth Grade Girl*, 2015, photography, 24x12

Fig. 15, *I Want to Be An Artist*, 2015, photography, 24x12
My thesis project Kill Line Arcade draws from my passion for video games. I have always wanted to create something art related that dealt with the medium. There were a few experiments in the past, but none with anything conceptual behind them. However, that all changed after I had the idea to make several video games that replicate a series of jobs that exist on the kill lines of hog processing plants. These games would go within their own theme-decorated arcade cabinets with the intention to be played by anyone. I narrowed down the kill line to six essential jobs and named each game after them: Pig Sticker, Neck Breaker, Brisket Cutter, Stomach Slitter, Gut Snatcher, and Carcass Splitter (Appendix figs. 16-16. E). Players take control of a nameless worker who performs one repetitive action through the use of simple controller inputs. For example, the game Pig Sticker (2016, fig. 16) has the worker stab oncoming pig in the throat. Each game consists of levels that last eight hours in real time to complete, and points that are increased every hour in the form of an hourly wage. Players receive a thirty-minute lunch break after five hours of work (Appendix fig. 17). The player is fired if they ever miss more than three pigs within the level (Appendix fig. 18).

Fig. 16, Pig Sticker In Game Screenshot, 2017, digital image
In order to build these game, I had to use a few different computer programs. The graphics (2016, figs. 18-18. E) were designed to resemble the pixel art of arcade and home consoles of the mid 80's to early 90's. They were all done in a piece of software called *Piskel*, which made things fun and simple to create. I have had a lot of experience drawing, but I had virtually none with programming. So, I decided build the game itself with the program *Stencyl*. The great thing about *Stencyl* is that it is visual interface with drag and drop commands. This allowed me to figure things out without having to take any programming classes. However, I did get a lot of help from Austin Stewart, an instructor who is well versed in that area.

Video games are considered to be a fun, leisure activity where people trade time and money for enjoyment. On the other hand, jobs have an individual trade time and enjoyment for money. The premise of these games is to make something that takes the joy out of the medium, making them more of an anti-game. Most people would prefer not to work, and I think it goes without saying that those same people would not want to partake in media that replicates boring jobs. However, those who do choose to play will be given a small glimpse into the monotonous tasks that real-life workers go through daily. The player can walk away at any point with no real-life consequences, which is a luxury that workers do not have. The players may not be entertained, but they may have a better understanding of the things that other people have to do in order to make a living.

Several of the general design decisions for the cabinets *(Appendix figs. 19-19. E)* came from games produced in the late 80's and early 90's. It became more prevalent in this time period for game manufacturers to make general-sized arcade cabinets that would fit most of the games they put out. This meant they could produce cabinets in advance and print artwork that was always the same dimensions. Another reason for this method was that arcade owners could
purchase conversion kits that allowed for new games to be installed without having to buy a whole new cabinet. Companies like Capcom produced a cabinet style that fit a lot of the game they put out in this time period including *Final Fight* (Fig. 20), and *Magic Sword* (Fig 21). I am most fond of games from this time period, so I wanted to replicate these “cost-cutting” methods. This allowed for a uniform look in terms of shape and size, while showing glimpses of uniqueness through artwork. I felt this reflected the nature of the jobs within the games within the *Kill Line Arcade* in that each has a certain difference that makes them unique, but all of them boil down to either cutting or removing something.

![Fig. 17, Final Fight Arcade Cabinet, 2016, laminated MDF, 70x26x28](image1)

![Fig. 18, Capcom, Magic Sword Arcade Cabinet, 1989, laminated wood, 70x26x28](image2)
All the cabinets within the *Kill Line Arcade* were constructed by CNC cutting ¾ pieces of MDF board and applying black laminate siding. Cam lock fitters were attached to allow each cabinet to be taken apart for easier transportation and storage. Every cabinet has a red Sanwa joystick and button that are soldered to an Arduino Leonardo R3, which allows both their inputs to be recognized like a computer keyboard. The games themselves run off a standard pc tower and monitor that are installed inside each one.

The process of designing all the arcade cabinet artwork was simple, yet challenging. I had the task of creating interesting images for jobs that are very similar with only two characters. I tended to concentrate on one game at a time, which allowed me to make sure that all of the pieces of art responded well with one another. Once I had a drawing finalized, I inked it by placing a piece of Bristol board over my pencil drawing and traced it using a light table. I then transferred this over to a woodblock and carved it. The printed images were then scanned and colored in Photoshop. I wanted to maintain a style similar to the cabinet art of the late 80's, early 90's, which tended to fall into comic book-like illustrations with basic, flat color. All the games had unique art pieces that had to meet certain size requirements. These came in the form of a marquee, bezel, control panel overlay, and side design.

Historically, a marquee is words or a sign over an entrance that tells people what is inside. An arcade marquee continues this tradition by letting people know the title of the game. They are placed above the game screen, and tend to be made out of either glass, plastic, or semi-transparent Mylar. Those materials allow marquees to be backlit, which draws more attention to the arcade cabinet. All of my marquee designs were based on the title screens of each game. The title screens themselves drew inspiration from various game logos, such as *Pick Sticker* (2016, fig. 22) from *Castlevania* (2016, fig. 23).
Arcade bezels are a wooden rim that goes over the game monitor portion of the cabinet. It functions to cover up the outer areas of the monitor, so the player can only see the game screen. Art has traditionally been placed on top to provide another opportunity to entice onlookers to play. Generally, bezel art is designed to reflect certain aspects of the game such as characters or scenes, while others provide information on how to operate the controls. I wanted all of my bezels to follow the theme of replicating the work level screen of each individual game within the Kill Line Arcade. This amounted to everyone having a white, tiled background with two pigs on the upper right and left sides of the bezel. The pigs’ appearance changed to fit the job process of each game. There were also unique details like a vat full of blood for Pig Sticker (2016, fig. 24). These themes and thus the cabinets have a sequential order that also follows the kill line job process. I liked the idea of every game running at the same time so that it appears that the pigs on screen are traveling from game to game. This kind of continuity will become impossible once people start playing at different times. The bezel art serves to keep aspects of that, even when the game screens are out of sync.
My control setup for each game only consists of a single joystick and button, which meant that neither would really interfere with my art. However, the control panel area is 24x7 inches which makes it awkward to fit things in. With this in mind, I decided that every panel design would contain either some kind of pig body part, power tools, or both. For example, *Pig Sticker* (2016, fig. 25) has the joystick and button in a pile of blood that is next to a knife. I placed the knife in between the joystick and button to make it appear that the player is holding it in their own hands. *Gut Snatcher* (2016, fig. 25 D) shows intestines that entangle and flow throughout the entire length of the control panel area.
The most challenging aspect of designing this series was the side design. Like every other piece, it serves to draw passersby to the game, but it is the largest piece on the cabinet. Typically, the same artwork is applied to the left and right sides of each cabinet after it has been transferred to a vinyl decal backed with adhesive, but some companies used other means for side art like paint through stencils. I decided to use vinyl decals as this was the primarily method used on everything I played as a kid, with the size staying within the 34x20 inch range. Each side design was rendered in a way that resembled the look of my previous woodcut prints. This whole project concentrates on interests that developed in my childhood, so I chose the side artwork as the area to reference who I currently am as an artist. This seemed like a way to combine an aspect of my adult personality with my younger self. The side artwork was the only aspect that broke away from the typical late 80's, early 90's arcade aesthetic. My main inspirations for this aspect came from looking at various arcade art and 80's slasher movie covers.
Arcade imagery was the main force that drove most of the design aspects regarding this project. I started by looking at side art from arcades that have always stuck with me, and games I enjoy playing. I felt that 80's slasher movies were very appropriate because of the gory nature of the jobs depicted in *Kill Line Arcade*. I have always had a fascination with schlocky B-movies, and imagery from them tends to appear in my work. Arcade art and horror movie posters are very similar in the use of over-the-top imagery and compositions to entice people into playing or watching. In fact, most of the storylines within arcade games would fit perfectly within the realm of schlock movie standards. Typically, one of the gimmicks within slasher movies is the different ways that people are killed. Knives and power tools have always been a staple dating back to John Carpenter's *Halloween* and Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and it seems that the tools depicted in *Kill Line Arcade* series would fit right in. Several slasher movie covers follow a design pattern of having an enlarged killer that is hovering over potential victims, or a city. These killers are often posed in action or motion based ways such as having hands outstretched.
or a weapon held in a striking position. I wanted the workers throughout this series to have these poses, but not in way that is intended to be scary. Rather, to potentially harness some of the power that I see within the compositions of covers like *The Burning, A Nightmare on Elm Street Part Three*, and *Silent Madness* (1984, fig. 27).

![Silent Madness Movie Poster, 1984, 27x40 in](image)

**Fig. 25, Silent Madness Movie Poster, 1984, 27x40 in**

The Kill Line Arcade strives to engage audiences by filtering real-life hog processing plant jobs through kid based imagery in the form of arcade games. The cabinets themselves serve as objects decorated to persuade individuals to experience the games contained within them. By doing so, players are given a glimpse into the monotonous jobs that others go through on a daily basis.
CHAPTER 4

THESIS EXHIBITION

It was important for this exhibition to find an alternative space to the gallery at Design On Main. I wanted to find an industrial-like space, which was challenging as all landlords I talked to were not interested. Fortunately, a fellow former graduate student I know purchased an old grain mill building, and asked if I would be interested in showing there. It turned out to be a great fit as the space provided my original desire, along with a run down, decrepit look. Several rooms were off limits because of safety concerns, so I decided on a space located on the ground floor.

The space consists of The Worker Line and Kill Line Arcade, both of which are installation pieces. It is a wide open space, so tarps and other items are implemented to stop intrusive lighting from appearing. The only light to come from the lit up arcade marquees, the game monitors, and a red neon light that says, “KILL LINE.” The arcade cabinets are placed up against the wall that faces The Worker Line figure installation, and serve as their lighting source. The figures are hung from the ceiling using nylon string and clamps to hold them in place, and layered several rows back. The low light situation serves to create a visual of the figures being gradually less lit the further they go back, and give the impression that the line is limitless. It also replicates the dimly lit conditions that arcades are often in.

Visitors will enter and exit through the same door way that leads to a small space in between the two pieces. All five games of the Kill Line Arcade will be running, which onlookers can watch or play. Once they turn around, they come face to face with The Worker Line. These
two pieces are a good combination because of the way both play off each other. *The Worker Line* represents the feelings that individuals have walking into a factory to work the kinds of jobs that the *Kill Line Arcade* depicts. Both contain certain adult realities that are portrayed in very different ways. The arcade games have a goofy, colorful visual approach that tries to pollute childhood memories, compared to the worker installation that has a stern, monochromatic appearance of information gained from adult experiences.

Lines to play popular arcade games are also another element. People tend to stand in lines to do things that they hope are worthwhile. No one wants to be in a line for something they would rather not do. In the same way, no one wants to spend time playing video games that are bad. The figures within the *Worker Line* have no choice other than to stay where they are, as opposed to the people viewing both pieces. They have the ability to walk away from this scene at any point.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

After completing my thesis exhibition, I plan to continue the exploration of the themes that are within my thesis body of work. I have several other ideas within the same aesthetic approach as projects like *Kill Line Arcade* that I am eager to work on.

The first major project I will start on is my *Kaiju* idea. I stopped working on it to fully concentrate on the *Kill Line Arcade*, as I did not believe I had time to complete both projects. This idea consists of creating a costume and set that is reminiscent of Japanese monster movies and shows like *Godzilla* and *Ultraman*. For this piece, I will build a monster suit that looks like a giant mutant pig, along with sets that are semi-reminiscent of places within my hometown, such as the town square and hog slaughtering plant. I will put on the pig suit, and destroy those sets in the same manner that *Godzilla* would destroy Tokyo. I see the hog monster as being a manifestation of the negative feelings that people within my hometown have towards the hog slaughtering plant. I like the idea of having these feelings morph into something that lashes out and becomes the town's undoing. There is also the humorous aspect of a giant monster wrecking a small, Midwestern town, which is never shown in monster movies.

I have another costume project in the planning stages. This one would be part of a larger project that has kids wear costumes while playing with a hog processing plant play set. The idea for this comes from the job-based toys that are available at toy stores. They tend to be things related to construction, the police, medicine, the military, and various others.
The play set will consist of a conveyer line that kids can move manually. Plush pigs will be hung from these lines that will have certain body parts that are held together with Velcro. The children will have certain plastic or wooden tools, like knives and saws, that they can use to take these Velcro parts off with and re-enact real life hog processing jobs.

The future seems uncertain at this point, but the ultimate goal is to always be in situations that allow my continued pursuit to make artwork. That, and to make sure I do not end up back in my hometown hog plant.
REFERENCES


"Beardstown Jr/Sr High School Student Body."


Fig. 1, Leonard Baskin, *The Hanged Man*, 1954, woodcut, 67x21 in

Fig. 2, Leonard Baskin, *Hydrogen Man*, 1954, woodcut, 62x24 in
Fig. 3, *Degenerate*, 2012, woodcut, 76x24 in

Fig. 4, *The Crowd*, 2012, linocut, 76x116 in

Fig. 5, Kathe Kollwitz, *Widow*, 1920, woodcut, 37x71 cm
Fig. 6, Kathe Kollwitz, *Hunger*, 1920, woodcut, 30x40 cm

Fig. 7, *Condemnation Atari 2600 box*, 2012, lithography, 8x5 in

Fig. 8, *Condemnation Atari Cartridge*, 2012, lithography, 3x4 in
Fig. 9, *Condemnation*, 2011, linocut, 16x14 in

Fig. 10, *Untitled*, 2013, woodcut, 96x96 in

Fig. 11, *Worker Line*, 2015, woodcut, varies
Fig. 12, *Worker Line at College of Design*, 2016, woodcut,

Fig. 13, *Fourth Grade Class*, 2015 photography, 48x36 in

Fig. 14, *Fourth Grade Girl*, 2015, photography, 24x12
Fig. 15, *I Want to Be An Artist*, 2015, photography, 24x12

Fig. 16, *Pig Sticker In Game Screenshot*, 2016, digital image

Fig. 16. A, *Neck Breaker In Game Screenshot*, 2017, digital image

Fig. 16. B, *Brisket Cutter In Game Screenshot*, 2017, digital image
Fig. 16. C, *Gut Snatcher In Game Screenshot*, 2017, digital image

Fig. 16. D, *Carcass Splitter In Game Screenshot*, 2017, digital image

Fig. 17, Capcom, *Final Fight Arcade Cabinet*, 1989, laminated wood, 70x26x28

Fig. 18, Capcom, *Magic Sword Arcade Cabinet*, 1989, laminated wood, 70x26x28
Fig. 20, *Pig Sticker Marquee*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x7 ½" in

Fig. 19 A, *Neck Breaker Marquee*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x7 1/2" in

Fig. 19 B, *Brisket Cutter Marquee*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x7 1/2" in

Fig. 19 C, *Gut Snatcher Marquee*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x7 1/2" in

Fig. 19 D, *Carcass Splitter Marquee*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x7 1/2" in
Fig. 20, *Castlevania Title Screen*, digital image

Fig. 21, *Pig Sticker Bezel*, 2016, printed decal, 24 3/8"x22" in

Fig. 21 A, *Neck Breaker Bezel*, 2016, printed decal, 24 3/8"x22" in

Fig. 21 B, *Brisket Cutter Bezel*, 2016, printed decal, 24 3/8"x22" in
Fig. 21 C, *Gut Snatcher Bezel*, 2016, printed decal, 24 3/8"x22" in

Fig. 21 D, *Carcass Splitter Bezel*, 2016, printed decal, 24 3/8"x22" in

Fig. 22, *Pig Sticker Control Panel*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x6 ¾" in

Fig. 22 A, *Neck Breaker Control Panel*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x6 ¾" in
Fig. 22 B, *Brisket Cutter Control Panel*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x6 ¾" in

Fig. 22 C, *Gut Snatcher Control Panel*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x6 ¾" in

Fig. 22 D, *Carcass Splitter Control Panel*, 2017, printed decal, 24 3/8"x6 ¾" in

Fig. 23, *Pig Sticker Side Art*, 2016, printed decal, 34x24 in
Fig. 23 A, *Neck Breaker Side Art*, 2016, printed decal, 34x24 in

Fig. 23 B, *Brisket Cutter Side Art*, 2016, printed decal, 34x24 in
Fig. 23 C, *Gut Snatcher Side Art*, 2016, printed decal, 20x20 in

Fig. 23 D, *Carcass Splitter Side Art*, 2016, printed decal, 34x24 in

Fig. 24, *Silent Madness Movie Poster*, 1984, 27x40 in