1. Political Passion, A series of Woodcuts

2. Significance: Art has always been the greatest means of self-expression, a way in which people from all walks of life could express themselves like nothing else could. Looking at an original Kathe Kollwitz (German Expressionist graphic artist in the early 20th century who made work about struggles of the working class) anyone can see the passion and emotion that the artist had for her work. There is such a relationship that exists between the artist and their image that makes me, as an artist, driven to create and pass on this feeling to anyone who views my work.

   Art today seems to have drifted away from this idea of zealous image making. Modern artists are more concerned with the obscureness of materials and experimentation in process, especially in a university setting. We are encouraged to try new things and experiment in new method and media, and to me this is causing a loss of traditional craft and Expressive image making. An abstract artist trying to display sorrow by painting triangles will never be able to match the image of a mother crying over the body of her son.

   With all of the political issues in our society today I draw on the influences of the German expressionists to create graphic woodcuts displaying issues that people have been desensitized to. This work would use techniques and materials that have been used by some of the most passionate artists who have ever created. The URC grant would enable me to use the highest quality of wood and paper to produce my prints.

3. Process: The process I intend to use is one that has been around for nearly 1800 years. Originally used in Asia to print religious texts, woodblock printing has become one of the most important discoveries in the world. An artist, with the help of skill and very sharp tools, was able to carve away at the surface of a piece of wood to create a raised surface that could be covered in ink and then that ink could be printed on paper. This relief printing process was
brought to Europe in the 1600s and eventually led to the invention of the letterpress which launched the world into the modern age of printed material. Information could be spread, written work was easier and cheaper to produce, education became easier and more accessible to people, and artists were able to create images that could be reproduced and spread throughout society. Woodblock printing was one of the most important discoveries in history.

The process of creating a woodblock print is simple in concept but difficult in the execution. The artist starts by selecting a piece of wood in which to use for the print. The best type of wood has a thin grain, is free of knots and impurities, has a smooth surface, and is not warped. The ideal wood with all of these properties is a specific type of cherry wood that comes from Japan (which is what I intend to use). Once the wood is selected it can then be sealed with shellac and then sanded in order to get a perfect surface to draw and carve on. Next comes adding the drawing to the block. This can be achieved by either transferring an already established drawing onto the surface with the help of a printing press, or the drawing can be directly applied to the surface of the wood.

Once the image is on the wood, the next step is to begin carving. The idea is to create a raised surface on the block, essentially creating a stamp, where the raised surface will hold ink to be printed and everything carved away will remain white. This is the most difficult and delicate step in the process. Using extremely sharp carving tools, the smallest slip could result in a completely ruined image, therefore much care and craft is required to carve out an image. When the artist decides that the block is ready to print, the block is prepared to take a test proof. The desired color of ink is mixed and with the help of a rubber roller, the ink is rolled evenly onto the block. Paper of the highest quality is then laid on top of the inked block and both are run through a printing press that applies a light and even pressure over the entire block. The paper is
then pulled off and the finished print is on the paper. If the artist believes that the block is complete, the printing process can be repeated many times over to get as many nearly identical prints as desired. If the block needs more work it is cleaned and the carving tools are brought out again for more carving.

4. Outcome: I believe there is a lack of beautifully crafted, well thought out, and passionate work in the university art community. Creating these prints would show a timeless tradition that is slowly beginning to disappear. The prints produced would not only show a continuation of craft and tradition, but also bring to light current political issues in a graphic display. There would be a series of three prints, each with a large edition, displaying emotional political issues in the world today. A few of the prints would be presented in handmade wooden frames, and could be hung in galleries across the country and used as a part of my senior exhibition at MSU. Due to the multiple copies, the message could be spread throughout the county.

5. Timeline:

   **November:** Acquiring materials and preliminary sketches for three prints

   **December:** Week one and two- Finalizing the drawings and preparing the blocks for working. Week three and four- Carving of the blocks

   **January:** Week one and two- Complete carving and proofing. Week Three- Printing the woodblock in a large edition

6. Budget:

   Paper: Kitakata Roll, 38”x30’, $115.00 +$20 for shipping

   Wood: Cherry Plywood, Three Pieces, 14”x18”, $77 each + $20 for shipping

   Frames: Wood: Maple Board, 1”x6”x8’, $28.65

   Glass: Clear Acrylic, Three Sheets 18”x24”, $16.97 each

   **Total: $481.54**

   Backing: Acid Free foam core, two sheets 24”x40”, $7.99 each
7. References

Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988, Print.


Portland Art Museum. *Masterworks in Wood: the Woodcut Print from the 15\textsuperscript{th} to the early 20\textsuperscript{th} Century.*


Other Resources

Minneapolis Institute of Art Print Collection
Portland Art Museum
Printers.org
McClain’s Printmaking Supplies
“Trinity”

Woodcut on paper

“Lady I”

Woodcut