

Memory Logos

My process of making pictures derives from collecting and accumulating materials: personal photography, magazine and internet gleanings, snippets of conversation, news items, the flora, fauna and cultural detritus of my immediate environs. These materials percolate, collect dust, are hauled out, mulled over, shelved, reconstituted and digested over a period of days, months or many years before they are used, if at all. The act of combining these bits is akin to visual alchemy - there are directions taken but mostly the process leads itself, allowing my augmentations and overlay of craft to converge.

Memory Logos is a new group of paintings and drawings that explores notions of invented memory and iconic imagery between the mid 19th century and now. This title describes the production of memories and conscience in the corporeal body as opposed to a corporate body. These images occur as branding stamped on a very personal interface of public and private information. The drawings feature animal characters engaged in conflict resolution with titles parsed from civil war era poems and songs. The paintings, singular pop-derivations on backgrounds of vintage linoleum, are the distillations of this inquiry.

Motifs from the 19th century and a sensitivity to this period's use of romanticized, dramatic imagery often make appearances in my work. If I happened to be the sort of person who believed in past lives, this alone might be reason enough for its usage. But I'm not. I'm more inclined to regard the experience of time and lives lived as more of a spastic, cosmic occurrence - a continuum of chronologies from the past, present and future simultaneously engaged.

The paintings here were initiated nearly 20 years ago by collecting the materials on which they are painted. At the time I had recovered some small pieces of antique flooring from renovation sites and made a few paintings on it. Then I placed an ad in the Toronto Star newspaper's Sunday section seeking old linoleum flooring. The response was overwhelming and I spent months of weekends one winter travelling to small towns around Ontario, the roof racks on my mini-van loaded with large storage tubes. Had it not been in an age when video recorders were the size of suitcases, and rare in any event, the ritualized gathering would have made compelling documentation on its own. In almost every case the donors were people well advanced in years with whom I sat and enjoyed lunch or a cup of tea and heard their stories. I came to expect a rhythm of introduction, conversation, connection and relinquishment - which generally ended with me pulling up the broadloom of a second story bedroom to reveal the prized article I had come for, loading it onto the vehicle, and driving away.

By researching linoleum patterns I discovered that the materials I collected were produced and installed between the 1920's to 1940's. Very often newspapers of the day were spread out as underlayment beneath the flooring, capturing an additional snapshot of the times. For me these grounds are not simply nostalgic, they possess a richness and warmth which speaks to historical bygone eras. Now, following specifically on the heels of producing these drawings, seems an appropriate time to use this material. These actual housewares were used; they were lived on, trod upon, worked on. Close inspection reveals traces of ambulatory pathways, the scuffs and scrapes of furniture and the weighted patterns of once static objects. Histories, however extraordinary or banal, were made there. My intent is to leap frog this connection into the present as host to images which reflect on the future.