

UNCONVENTIONAL MOBILE DOMICLES

A Thesis

By

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BA, Texas A&M Corpus-Christi, 2016

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the degree of

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in

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This thesis meets the standards for the scope and quality of

West Texas A&M University and is hereby _____...

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ABSTRACT

My thesis explores the fascination I have towards unconventional mobile domiciles, or, in other words, non-traditional residences that are also moveable or mobile. My adolescent years were unconventional, as I was raised by parents who maintained a variety of odd jobs and lived a transient life, especially as missionaries. During my adolescence we lived in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Canada. During our travels, we often housed in personalized recreational vehicles, often cobbled together from recycled or found materials. My thesis exhibition examines the meanings—social, personal, and creative—that one can find in these strange and dynamic structures.

My art portrays “domiciles” or residences that are attached to vehicles that normally wouldn’t be found within the common range of housing structures. By avoiding conventional mobile homes, recreation vehicles, and other mass-produced manufactured mobile houses, I am able to explore the endless combinations of creative domiciles and a wide variety of modes of transportation, thereby creating a new language of domesticity and mobility, home and movement. The meanings I hope viewers find in my work include questions of conventions—what makes something normal or conventional, and are these norms always the best way to live? What does it mean to have a home? Does a home always have to be fixed in space or can it be mobile and dynamic? If it can be unfixed in time and space, how then do humans relate to their domiciles? What does it mean to reside somewhere? I believe these questions go to the very core of our humanity and our relationship as humans within our environment.

DEDICATION

I would like to thank my wife, Brittany, for all of the support and love she provided throughout the duration of my education. To my mother, thank you for all the motivation and positive messages you have provided throughout the years. I would have not gotten this far without the support from these special women in my life. I would like to thank my wonderful instructors: Dr. Amy Von Lintel, Jon Revett, and Scott Frish. I greatly appreciate all the guidance I have received from each and every one of them.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	IV
DEDICATION.....	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	VIII
INTRODUCTION.....	1
INFLUENCES.....	8
PROCESS.....	13
DESCRIPTION OF WORK.....	22
CONCLUSION.....	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	46

LIST OF FIGURES

- 1.1 That Nationalist Dude
- 1.2 Example of Shadows
- 1.3 Border and Gradient
- 2.1 The Bean Farmer
- 4.1 The Energetic Individual
- 4.2 The Bean Farmer
- 4.3 That Nationalist Dude
- 4.4 The Minimalist
- 4.5 The Cholo
- 4.6 The Missionary
- 4.7 Boat house
- 4.8 Pop Art Inspired Hybrids (Diptych)
- 4.9 The Older Gent Silkscreen
- 4.10 The Bean Farmer Silkscreen
- 4.11 The Minimalist Silkscreen
- 4.12 Boat House Silkscreen

INTRODUCTION: UNCONVENTIONAL MOBILE DOMICILES

As a child, I lived in an assortment of unconventional housing structures that were built by my parents and older siblings. These domiciles were built to provide affordable mobile housing for my family. Growing up as part of a non-profit nondenominational missionary family, my upbringing was out of the ordinary; our income was low and there was a need for flexible and affordable ways to travel and live simultaneously. The experiences of living in these alternative mobile residences instilled in me a sense of curiosity towards life on the road and a fascination for unconventional aspects of life. It also showed me that creativity can be brought into every aspect of life, even if it means scraping together a home from recycled and found objects. I learned to have a fluid and flexible relationship to my homes, and to question what home even means. My thesis project allowed me to push the exploration of this theme to its extreme—building a wide range of combinations of handcrafted original structures for habitation combined with modes of mobile transport. In so doing, I hope to share that same creative and nontraditional views of home and habitation with my audience, inviting them to rethink where and how they live in their own world as a result of my work.

As an artist, I value the quality of a handcrafted object; not only does this come through in the hand drawn designs of my mobile domiciles, but also in the printing and painting of my works. In a world that is heavily laden with mass-produced objects and

digital and virtual things that have no material qualities, my works offer a material, personally crafted thing for viewers to experience. Part of my dedication to the handmade item comes from my own family, who renovated, for instance, older model school buses into homes on wheels full of personalized touches put together by hand without high-tech equipment. By hand, I replicate wood panels, metals sheets, and bricks within the visual construction of these domiciles.

Another aspect of my designs includes the lack of any human figures, and yet each hybrid home-vehicle seems to embody a human identity. I even pictured the humans I believed might be driving these vehicles and living in these domiciles when I gave them forms, colors, and titles. And when one brings in humans, then politics comes as well. These traveling residences suddenly took on issues of current political movements, such as the militaristic tank with a lighthouse on top (Fig.1.1). Does this represent the enlightenment of the military arms race, the promise of peace through war? Such ideas were counter to my own pacifist upbringing but yet they show the variety of ways humans make sense of their world, how they carve out spaces of safety and move through the environment to reach those safe spaces. While politics are inevitably present, though, I still wanted my images to convey an overall positive message. Rather than a post-apocalyptic scramble for resources, my works show the ingenuity of humans to survive, recycle, reuse, and continue to create. They also capture the freedom and promise of setting out on an open road, on living while moving, of nomadic lifestyles. This can be seen as something “American”—the freedom of the American open road—but it also draws on the nomadic lifestyles of humans that date back to prehistoric times. Humans used to live more simply, to move more freely. In part, my work responds to

the “tiny house movement.” For example, Charlie Kilman’s *Small House: Big Impact* presents the benefits of living in a tiny house. Kilman states, the “tiny house is efficient both in its minimal square footage, limiting the utilities needed to create a comfortable living environment, as well as in allowing for change in appliances as the occupant sees fit.”¹ Kilman continues, noting that life inside a tiny house forces oneself to analyze the necessary items in their lives: “Culturally, by moving into a tiny house, owners are no longer buying large quantities of goods. Instead, they adopt a lifestyle built around common experiences and recognition of what is important to them.”² I can account for this from firsthand experience—living in a tiny area for a certain amount of time, an individual will eventually conform to the environment of his or her surroundings. Tiny houses have the same benefits of simple living as the unconventional homes where I grew up; and yet, they are mass-produced in ways that my crafty, hybrid creations are not. Another aspect of my thesis work is the fact that the central image—the unconventional mobile domicile—is unhinged from a context; it floats in spaces. At times, I created a shadow that gradually fades towards the audience; this shadow is used as a technique to ground the vehicle to the foreground (Fig. 1.2), but elsewhere, no such shadow grounds the form. The background includes a gradient partly reminiscent of the effect that one sees in landscape painting to enhance pictorial depth. The fading acts to create some sense of space; but at the same time, that space is nebulous, blank, faded, almost like the viewer is seeing through a cloud or haze of color. I also use irregular frame shapes for

¹ Charlie Kilman, *Small, Big Impact: The Effect of Tiny Houses on Community and Environment* (Charleton College: Undergraduate Journal of Humanistic Studies, 2016), 4.

² Ibid., 6.

my images, again emphasizing variety rather than the expectations of the rectangular “normal” frame. Outside of the gradient there is a white border that leads the audience to the edge of the panel (Fig. 1.3). This white gap between the gradient and the edge of the panel mimics the borders seen on road signs. This highlights that aspect of the “open road” again, that freedom felt when you are guided by signs but also out on your own, setting your own pace.

My work draws in part on the methods of semiotics, or sign theory and the ways signs or symbols make meaning in text and images.³ First off, the format resembles a sign in its flatness, bright colors, and white-framed design. Second, the central form by itself mimics the clarity and simplicity of a sign trying to communicate something fast without hesitation or distraction. Third, my images consist of a single form coming from a hybrid idea: part vehicle, part domicile. This hybrid structure guides my viewers to question what each of these signs mean. What does vehicle mean? What does domicile mean? In fact, my work invents its own language of communication.

³ Marcel Danesi, *Messages, Signs, and Meanings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2004), 5.



Fig 1.1 *That Nationalist Dude*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 24" x 32"



Fig 1.2 *Example of Shadows*, 2019, Digital Composite

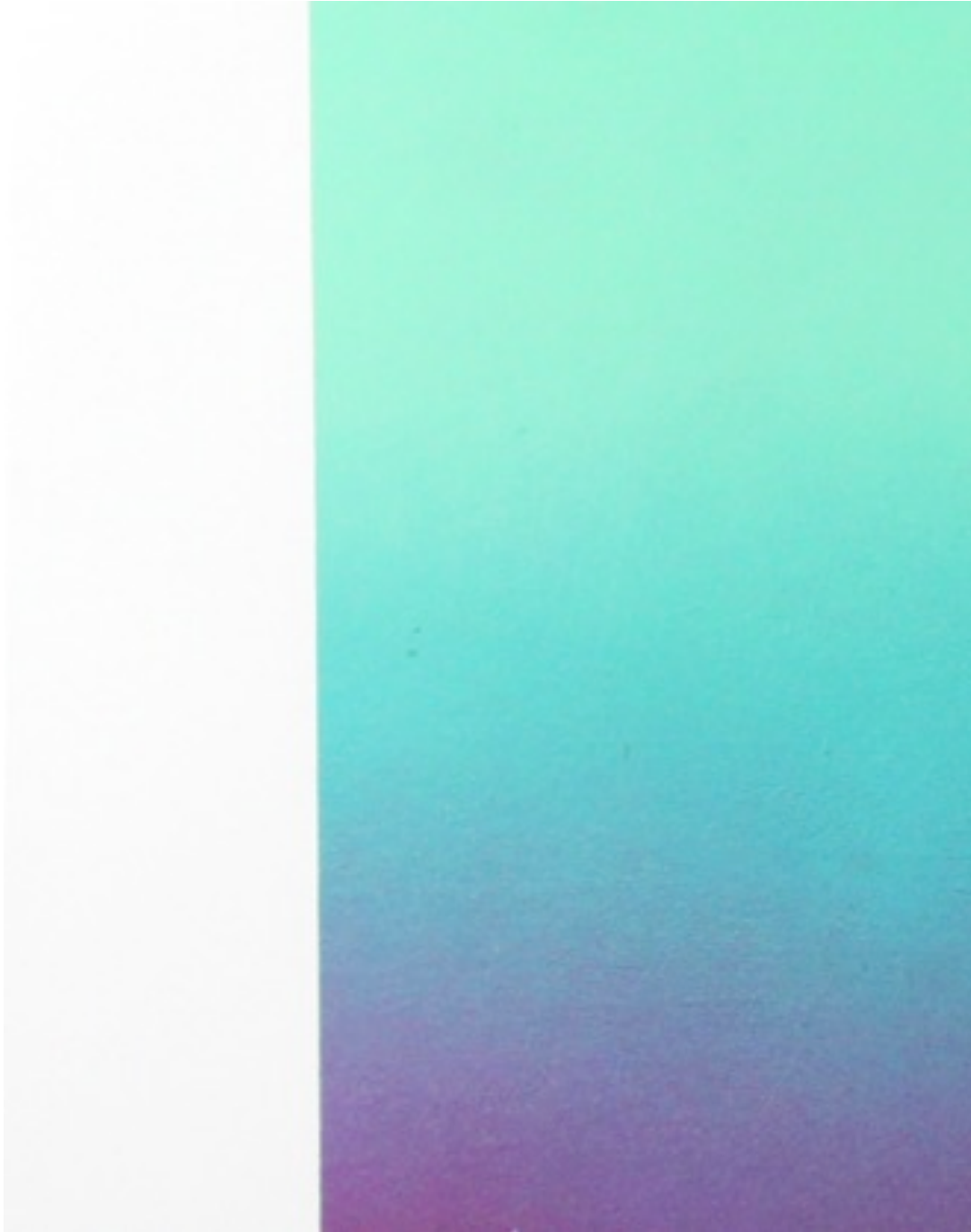


Fig. 1.3 *Border and Gradient*, 2019, acrylic on panel, digitally impose

CHAPTER 2: INFLUENCES

According to one of the founding theorists of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure, “A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable. It would be part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology. I shall call it semiology. Semiology would show what constitutes signs. What laws govern them.”⁴ As mentioned above, each of my mobile domicile images functions as a “sign” on several levels. It looks like a road sign and takes the flat sign format as its basis. It also includes images of hybrid house-vehicles that themselves become signs with meaning. American Semiotician Charles Morris divided the semiotic method into 1) the study of the relationship between a sign and other signs, which is called Syntactics; and 2) the relations between signs and their basic meaning, which is called Semantics, and 3) a study of signs in relation to the user, which is called Pragmatics.⁵

The syntactics of my thesis uses the relationships between various signs to create meaning, such as how a tractor and a shack or cabin together creates a new form or structure (Fig. 2.1). Two existing signs come together to create a new sign, one that is my own creation. Then the semantics of my new signs draw on novel combinations of mobility (the vehicle) and domesticity (the residence). Mobility can represent homelessness and nomadic lifestyles but also the freedom to build and create new things. The cabin then brings to mind camping, sleeping close to nature, having a shelter but one that is not removed from the environment but rather part of the environment. Finally, the pragmatics of my work includes how viewers receive and make sense of these signs.

⁴ Marcel Danesi, *Messages, Signs, and Meanings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2004), 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

They should be both instantly recognizable and equally strange because of their hybridity. They are normal things when separate, but unconventional when joined together. The human brain's capacity to produce and understand signs is called Semiosis.⁶ According to one theorist, "signs constitute the 'conceptual glue' that interconnects [our] body, [our] mind, and the world around [us] in a holistic fashion."⁷ In my work, I have used similar "conceptual glue" to bring together two items making a new item, creating what I call "unconventional mobile domiciles." My work also draws on the work of Ed Ruscha, a Pop artist who uses everyday culture, such as American gas stations on the open road, as the basis for his art. Ruscha likewise employs semiotics and sign play in his work. He balances the industrial and the handmade, as I do; he photographed gas stations and then silk screens them into prints, but also paints them by hand. As Ruscha draws on the open road as a theme in his art, and on signs as meaningful on the road as well as on signs as symbolic cultural forms, his work has been an important influence for my own. Finally, my gradients that look almost mass-produced and airbrushed mimic the effects of Ruscha's work as well. For example, in *Hollywood*, we see a dramatic sunset gradient.⁸ As with my works, Ruscha uses that gradient to dislodge the viewer from space and place, keeping him or her hovering in an absence of place, in a kind of nowhere that feels both promising and eerie. One difference between my work and Ruscha's is how Ruscha predominantly used text in his works. Ruscha

⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁸ Mary Richards, *ER: Ed Ruscha* (London: Tate, 2008), 92.

makes meaning from word play and painting or printing text directly into his pieces. My works are devoid of text; rather, they communicate through images alone. They equally use signs and the play of signs to create meaning, but my signs are visual rather than textual.

In addition to semiotics and the work of Ruscha, my thesis draws on the Pop art aesthetic of Andy Warhol. Warhol's work is known for its replication of the same image, as if in an assembly line, like his piece *Two Hundred Campbell's Soup Cans*.⁹ Other pieces by Warhol, repeat the image but vary their color, like his portrait of Frances Lewis.¹⁰ Within the portrait of Frances Lewis the audience is provided twelve rectangles with a repetitive key image repeating throughout, the key drawing or contexts stays the same, as the content changes throughout. My work plays with the same bright colors and repeated simple forms of Warhol, but balances that industrial element of Warhol with the handcrafted aspect mentioned above. Part of my thesis references Warhol's concept of the multiple and the series. I also work in series, but I don't repeat the same image each time. Instead, I design a new hybrid image from commonly known vehicles or domiciles.

Ronald Feldman, stated within *The Andy Warhol Show* "While it could be said that the majority of the images Andy made in his lifetime were advertising someone or something, these works confronted the underlying subject of ads directly."¹¹ My work is suggesting the possibilities of living within a uniquely crafted hybrid domicile vehicle.

⁹ Hal Foster, *Two Hundred Campbell's Soup Cans, The First Pop Age, Andy Warhol*, (2012): 131.

¹⁰ Tony Shafrazi, *Francis Lewis, Andy Warhol Portraits, Andy Warhol*, (2007): 57.

¹¹ Morera, Daniela and Givonni Mercurio. *The Andy Warhol Show*, New York: Skira, 2005, 51.

These unconventional mobile domiciles resemble portraits similar to that of Warhol's but instead of advertising an individual, I offer an alternate way of living, a life void of grandeur, a minimalistic approach to daily life. According to Domenico Quaranta, "Faithful to the lesson of the Bauhaus, his teachers had passed on to him the belief in the importance of design, and in the parity of 'pure' and 'applied art' as well as the idea of a art 'for everybody,' accessible to ordinary people."¹² I find a connection to Warhol within my replication of recognizable forms of vehicles and domiciles to visually connect my message to the audience. Aesthetically, the design, composition, and color palates are visually pleasing to promote this connection to the audience in a positive manner. My work is an art for everybody; each piece references a culture and/or a character trope of an individual. I wish to create images that are pleasing to diverse viewers and cultures.

In conclusion, I use the language of signs and visual cues alongside inspiration from two prolific artists to promote this alternative lifestyle with a positive spin. By using the core principles of semiotics, my work is able to speak to the audience within a clear and distinctive manner by dividing the image into recognizable signs. The visual cues within my work are read as independent objects by themselves, but when combined they become signs with meaning. The content of my work was partly influenced by iconic artists Ed Ruscha and Andy Warhol. I incorporated a background gradient reminiscent of a fading sky from the work of Ruscha alongside Warhol's bright colors and repeating forms. Together these are tools used to further the visual connection between my work and the audience.

¹² Ibid., 314.



Fig. 2.1 *The Bean Farmer*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 16" x 20"

CHAPTER 3: PAINTING AND PRINTING PROCESSES

This chapter discusses my process and techniques I employ to make a work. The first step is to develop my concept sketches. Next, I start collecting source material that best represent the content. I get inspiration from vehicles seen throughout daily commutes, road trips, and the Internet. I chose to use a wide variety of vehicles to approach the many different aspects of transportation with the hopes to resonate within a culturally dispersed audience. From these sources, I create a composition that eventually manifests in both paintings and prints.

The works within my thesis exhibition use source imagery that tends to sway away from nowadays-contemporary vehicles. A section of my thesis focuses on the recycling of vehicles into handcrafted motorhomes. Within my personal experience, handcrafted domiciles are generally refurbished from older model vehicles, and/or out of the ordinary vehicles. The domicile aspect is built upon the composition of the vehicle, and the content of the image. The domiciles imagery found within my thesis exhibition appear to be built using wood paneling and sheets of corrugated metal. With this in mind, I proceed to produce preliminary sketches to further develop the composition of the image within the picture plane. The next step is done with digital photo editing software to further visually finalize the arrangement of content, color, and composition. Within this process I use the Adobe Suite Programs to create a visual representation that is then used as a reference image.

My work combines different types of vehicles with a variety of handcrafted domiciles to convey a simpler fashion of life. Once satisfied with the digital composition, I proceed to the actual artwork. For my paintings, I start by masking the borders of the background to the edge of the prepared panel. Using blue painter tape on prepared wooden panel I create the borders of the picture plane. After the tape borders are secured, I use a clear acrylic medium to seal the edges of the tape to the ground. The process of using a clear acrylic medium enables the painting to have clean and precise edges once the masking tape is removed. Once the compositional background is masked; I apply a horizontal gradient with acrylic paint. This gradient is generally a three-step blend that inspired by the horizons found within the work of Ed Ruscha. The colors of the gradient are selected to enhance the pictorial depth of my images. I use warm colors towards the bottom of the composition and cooler colors towards the top of the painting to enhance pictorial depth.

Once a smooth gradient is applied onto the surface, I transfer the chosen reference image onto the gradient using a digital print and iron oxide powder. I lightly rub iron oxide powder on the back of the reference image then trace the source image on to the ground. Once finished this process leaves behind a subtle iron oxide schematic drawing on the panel. Once the traced image is secured onto the picture plane; I paint the outlines using a darker analogous color referencing the base color of each compartment of the mobile domicile.

After the process of outlining each compartment is completed, I block-in each section with a slightly lighter color of the outline as a base layer. While blocking in the painted region, I also lighten the value of the original base tone as each layer progress

through the piece. This process creates contrasts in tonal values that enable a push and pull sensation, which causes the highlights to pop forward while the shadows and generally dark tones reside in the distance. Contrasting color groups isolate each compartment of the unconventional mobile domicile. Each compartment is often monochromatic, I use a dark tone as a base layer, and the color is manually mixed to create lighter tones for each consecutive layer thereafter. This process of mine consists of six to eight steps within the monochromatic spectrum. I repeat this process for each compartment of the unconventional mobile domicile.

Another important aspect of my work is the usage of differential layers of actual textures. The textured aspect of my work relays the semiotic message of a sign to the audience by creating a texturized difference between the pictorial plane and the smooth white borders. This textural shift implies that the painted area is raised above the smooth sides mimicking that found on street signs. After the piece is finished, I remove the masking tape from the panel box. Once the masking tape is removed, I gently sand down the texture of the gesso borders. When the borders are thoroughly sanded to a smooth finish, it allows the border to mimic a sign signifying those found traveling. Sanding the edges eliminates brush strokes, which allows the painted region to show a differentiation in the texture compared to the borders of the panel.

Along with paintings, I also make serigraphy or silkscreen prints. The process in which I create these begins similar to that of my paintings with a reference image. This reference image is the same image used for one of my paintings. The difference between my print and painting is seen through: size, color, background, and a subtractive drawn key. These slight deviations are done through analog and digital outputs. For the digital

output, I use Adobe Photoshop to edit the size of my reference image, composition, and the background. The reference image is that of a vehicle adhere to an original hand crafted domicile that best represent my thesis statement to the audience.

The next step in my print process is to use a lightproof paint mixture, consisting of equal amounts of tempura paint and acrylic paint, to make a drawing on mylar. This step allows my drawing to work successfully in the photo emulsion process of a screen print and has the ability to dry thin create a flat surface when the mixture is pulled through a silkscreen. My unconventional mobile domiciles are developed as subtractive drawings. I use a twisted scribe, commonly used in the intaglio, to draw the image. Prior this reductive process, I use iron oxide to trace the image onto the Mylar sheets of acrylic and tempura paint. Once transferred, I subtract or scratch away highlights from the drawing material, using a twisted scribe, until what remains is a distinctively drawn outline of an unconventional mobile domicile.

Once the drawing is finished, I use an exacto blade to remove the drawing from the rest of the Mylar sheet. Creating the key for my print. I then use clear tape to adhere it to a clear sheet of Mylar and add registration marks using a lightproof pen on the sides and top of the drawing on the Mylar. Once completed, I then tape the Mylar sheet to a silkscreen coated with photosensitive emulsion. I use an exposing unit to burn the lightproof drawing into a silkscreen creating a stencil. Once the photo process is completed, I rinse out the unexposed emulsion from the screen, which remains water soluble, after my light proof drawing blocks out the UV light. I set aside the screen to dry for an extended period of time. While the silkscreen is drying, I gather supplies such as:

black acrylic screen ink, lightproof paper, plastic spoons, and a screen-print squeegee larger than the stencil.

The first step of the printing process is to secure the silk screen onto a screen-printing table, which allows for perfect registration for each sheet of paper. Once secured into position, I use a plastic spoon to scoop enough ink on the screen to cover the entire image, on the bottom section of the screen. Next, I use the squeegee to flood the ink upwards through the stencil. Once ink is initially flooded through the screen, I inspect it for any discrepancies. Once the flooded area of the stencil receives my approval, I place the squeegee back at the bottom of the screen preparing a tiny amount of ink along the length of the squeegee, lower the screen into place and push ink through the stencil with the squeegee to transfer the image through the screen onto lightproof paper.

After I pull a few proofs onto the lightproof paper, I begin to cut out sections of the unconventional mobile domicile. When I prepare these layers, I use the outline of the key to create color layers that over print into the edges of the outline of the subtractive drawing. Allowing for smooth registration between layers. Each section of the mobile domicile become shapes, that are the base color layers of the screen print.

Once the parameters of the base shape are determined, I draw on sheets of clear Mylar, creating two to three color layers using a lightproof pen for each compartment of the unconventional mobile domicile. The usage of clear Mylar is important because it doesn't block ultra violet light from the exposing unit. To accomplish successful registration, I develop registration marks on each layer of clear Mylar that line up with one another. For accurate placement of each layer, I secure a sheet of clear Mylar larger than the image and the registration marks of the image below, after placement, I adhere

the shapes to Mylar using clear tape and replicate this process for each layer of the print. This process allows for the accurate placement of the lightproof paper cut outs, and registration marks, which are secured to the Mylar in conjunction to the registration of the image.

Once the layering is finished, I precede to replicate the photo stencil process of the subtractive key from earlier for the rest of the layers. After rinsing out the stencil of unexposed emulsion, I let the screen dry, While the screens dry, I prep a registration sheet on a sheet of newsprint that helps center the screen print on the paper throughout the edition.

Once I have a subtractive drawing of the image on Mylar, the next step is to figure out a complimenting irregularly shaped background with equal distance on both sides of the image, and a shorter distance to the bottom of the print compared to the top. This aspect ties the mobile domicile to the center of the background while placing it closer to the bottom than that of the top of the page. Once the shape of the background is determined, I cut out the background on lightproof paper; it is than used to create a successful photomechanical stencil.

The background layer is first to be printed using a split fountain or a gradual gradient. I use these gradual gradients to represent an illusionary depth, In *Silk Screen Printing Production*, Jacob Biegeleisen discusses the steps behind a split fountain or a gradual gradient.¹³ He describes the process as follows, “for instance, to stimulate a

¹³ Jacob Biegeliesen, *The Complete Book of Silkscreen Printing Production*, New York: Dover Publications, 1968, 117.

blended sky, from deep blue on top to pale blue at the horizon, several different blues will be required, ranging from deep blue to a medium blue and a pale blue, these would be carefully placed onto the screen in a successive order, and squeegeed evenly across the screen.”¹⁴ From my experience with the subject, one must pull a few proofs before a successful gradient or split fountain is achieved. It is very interesting to watch a gradient develop through a screen. According to Biegeliesen, “The first few prints would show distinct bands of different blues, but as the printing operation continues, the colors within the screen would gradually run into each other and blend to produce a print corresponding to the mixed values of the colors within the screen.”¹⁵ Once I successfully achieve a split-fountain on the registration sheet, and throughout the edition of the screen print, I pull the next layer.

The next step often uses a light gray ink of the subtractive drawing printed onto the registration sheet to secure accurate placement of each layer throughout the edition, which allows for easier registration within my screen prints. After this registration trick, I pull the second layer of the print that covers the compartment of the print with a base color, which is generally the domicile part of the print. If the domicile in my images has wood paneling, then I use a lightproof pen to render features found within wood. I replicate the grain using two to three different variations of the base color.

After the domicile layers are established, I proceed to the layers that defines the vehicle portion, and these layers mimic reflective surfaces within two to three screen-printed layers. The vehicle is a particular color that visually stands out from the

¹⁴ Ibid., 117.

¹⁵ Ibid., 117

background. The last layers of the print pertain to the shadows, mechanical parts, window frames, and a highlight. These layers overlap the other compartments of the unconventional mobile domicile, and they tie the image tighter. These are done in black and white tones and they are done last because they are opaque and lay over the other colors more successfully.

The final layer is the key, which is a version of the reductive drawing that brings everything into perspective once applied on top of the underlying layers. The key locks the all the layers together. Which means, the lines of the subtractive drawn key cover all of the color layers' edges. After I finish a screen print edition, I place them securely on the brackets of the drying rack for at least twenty-four hours. I generally wait a day or two before curating the prints and fastening them under paperweights in hopes that they remain smoothly flat within in the flat file. The last step in curating is to choose the most successful screen prints of the edition. Then I add my signature, edition number, and title of the piece. And store consecutively within professional standards.

In conclusion, this chapter discusses my process and techniques employed to produce the work within this thesis. I developed the necessary steps to create the context of my thesis within a cohesive aesthetic that is replicated throughout the paintings and screen-prints in this body of work. Although, the reference image is created using photo editing software, the physical work is produced by hand to stimulate the authenticity of these handcrafted hybrids. My work is developed through the collaging of a vehicle attached to a domicile in a unique and handcrafted manner. I also anchor the hybrid creation in the foreground by using a shadowing technique that forces the background gradient to reside. I use vibrant oversaturated colors within the rendering of

unconventional mobile domicile to further the dialogue between foreground and the background. The language of signs, helping to identify visual cues within people and/or culture, further develops the context. I use the key factors of semiotics to finalize my work for a culturally dispersed audience.

CHAPTER 4:

Descriptions of the Work

The Paintings:

THE ENERGETIC INDIVIDUAL

In *The Energetic Individual* (fig. 4.1), I chose to render a velomobile, which is a human-powered bicycle. This vehicle has an infrastructure similar to that of a recumbent bike. These three-wheel bicycles are recognized as a vehicle used within long distant competitive races. I think racing competitively and/or recreationally is generally reserved for athletically energized individuals, so I titled my work with this concept. I use a graphic approach for the rendering of the vehicle. I also render the domicile within a shape similar to that of a camping tent. Tents are easily recognizable as a sign for temporary shelter used for recreational excursions. I render the creation of the domicile using wood and metal paneling, which portrays the handcrafted quality of this structure. The audience is provided a figure-ground relationship. The background irregular shape is linear with a succession of intrusions on parallel sides of the composition. In conclusion, I provided the viewer with a vehicle attached to a handcrafted domicile in a unique and creative way. In essence, by combining two known signs, I create an entirely new sign.



Fig. 4.1 *The Energetic Individual*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 16" x 20"

THE BEAN FARMER

The Bean Farmer (fig. 4.2) investigates the relationship between a tractor and a handcrafted cabin. I want my work to resonate within a diverse culture. The farming community within the Texas Panhandle, my current home, is predominant. The gradient within this piece starts with a lilac transitioning into a light blue reminiscent of an early morning and a big West Texas sky seen daily by a farmer. Tending to the fields is generally reserved for the early hours of the workday. The tractor is painted in a graphic manner similar to the rest of the vehicles within this body of work. Many farmers I have found have a similar intensity and passion to artists. They appreciate the simple life, but they also work hard to create their existence directly from their environment, not unlike my family crafting their unique domiciles. For the housing portion of this unconventional hybrid, I used wood paneling for two reasons: one to emphasize yet again the handcrafted aspects and the use of natural materials like the farmer using the earth to grow crops; but also for the fact that the region of West Texas has so few trees, making the use of wood somewhat ironic. The background gradient is contained an irregular shape. There is a linear protrusion within both sides of the composition. Alongside the other works within this exhibition, I stray away from the generic borders found within street signs, even while my aesthetic clearly references signage. In essence, this hybrid provides the viewer with visual cues referencing a vehicle used by farmers, and additionally you will find an attached cabin, which is representational of a home. By using the language of signs, semiotics has allowed my work to create a unique perspective surrounding mobile domiciles.



Fig. 4.2 *The Bean Farmer*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 16" x 20"

THAT NATIONALIST DUDE

That Nationalist Dude (fig. 4.3) provides the viewer a Russian Soviet Tank attached to a lighthouse. The content I created for this exhibition shows human creativity to repurpose, recycle, and the continuous urge to build outside of the box. This hybrid combination is discussing the repurposing of two completely different objects; when combined, they create something new. I render the base color of the tank green commonly seen in Soviet tanks and I also extend a camouflage pattern onto the body of the tank. Instead of building a handcrafted wood domicile upon the tank, I integrated a prefabricated lighthouse as the domicile. Upon doing so, I created a design with political pretense by acknowledging the symbolism between the two objects I combined as one. A tank in general is seen as military weapon that enables individuals to bring about death and destruction, but perhaps too to fight for freedom or an ideal. Tanks can bring both war and peace, in theory. A lighthouse is usually seen as the opposite; lighthouses are known to prevent destruction and death, and to provide protection and safety. But again, a tank by extension could also provide protection for the soldiers within it, and safety to those it fights for. What at first might seem a clear contrast, begins to have some things in common to. My work is meant to be read from these various perspectives, rather than just a simple or single point of view. Since this unconventional mobile domicile is a larger creation, I provided the viewer a larger amount of color shifts within the background gradient. The gradient starts with a warm color than gradually fades to cooler colors as the horizon raise mimicking pictorial depth. The border that contains the gradient isn't irregular in nature; it is a rectangle with rounded corners, which relays a clearer message of the signage aspect within this body of work. Alongside the signage aspect I also reference the tank as the vehicle, and the lighthouse as the domicile. Doing so, I created an unconventional structure within a cohesive standard similar to the rest of this body of work.



Fig. 4.3. *That Nationalist Dude*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 24" x 30"

THE MINIMALIST

The Minimalist (Fig. 4.4) is one of the smallest hybrids within this series. It is meant to inspire the audience to question the basics needed to survive, and to analyze their attachment to material things. Speaking from experience, living within a tiny space forces us to analyze what is necessary and what is excess. Here, I render an electric tricycle as the vehicle attached to the domicile because of the simplicity of the machine. I wanted to best represent minimalist living by choosing a teardrop camper, which is one of the smallest recreational vehicles available. The term minimalism is not referencing the contemporary art term, but is indeed referencing the bare minimal aspects of maintaining a functional life. The domicile is a refurbished teardrop camper trailer modified with wood paneling. There are three intrusive linear shapes protruding into the contained gradient. This is referencing the endless arrangement of street signs seen while traveling. I chose to render an electric tricycle as the vehicle because of its simple, yet impactful design; these vehicles are visual cues relaying to the audience as a minimalist structure. Alongside the tiny vehicle, I attached a modified teardrop camper as the domicile. This unique combination is referencing the bare minimum needed to produce an unconventional mobile domicile.



Fig. 4.4. *The Minimalist*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 16" x 20"

THE CHOLO

The Cholo (Fig. 4.5) was inspired by experiences from my youth living in predominately Hispanic communities throughout South Texas. I chose to render this sport-car type of vehicle purposely alongside a colorful small domicile referencing the neighborhoods and cultures I saw as a child. The vehicle has an abundance of highlights to mimic the glossy or candy paint seen on vehicles I admired in my youth. Candy Paint is term for clear car paint with translucent pigment used to embellish the appearance of a vehicle referencing hard candy. For me, this shows the pride that went into the cars in Hispanic communities, the beauty and self-expression they communicated. Cars were extensions of their owners' identities, and I used this as an inspiration for my work here. They also allow the freedom of mobility when other resources might be limited; when houses may be too small for too many people, for instance. I wanted to capture some of this smallness plus freedom in the design for this piece. The contained gradient has complementing parallel intrusive linear shapes similar to the other work within this thesis. Within this piece the audience is given visual cues which relays information through shared imagery and/or iconography. By combining certain visual cues, I created a new structure from two independent objects.

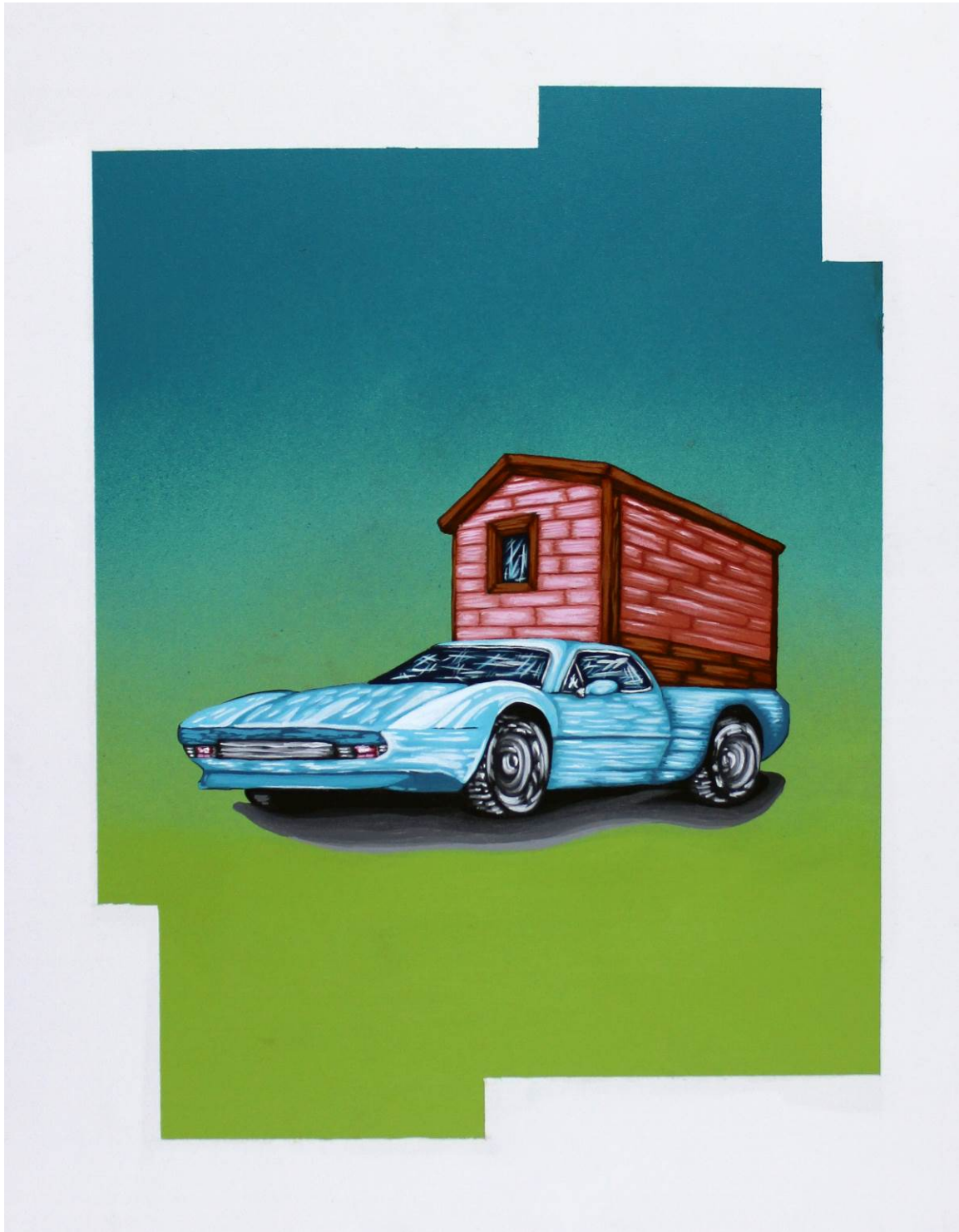


Fig. 4.5. *The Cholo*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 16" x 20"

THE MISSIONARY

The Missionary (Fig. 4.6) is the largest piece within my exhibition. It depicts a handcrafted domicile attached to a bicycle. The bicycle acts as the vehicle within this piece for a reason. I have seen countless missionaries riding bikes through neighborhoods evangelizing the gospel during my adolescence. From personal experience, I can state that life as a missionary is hugely spent living on the road. Whether we resided in a hotel, or a recreational vehicle, on mission trips, we generally only brought only necessary items needed to function. The vehicle is the front portion of a green mountain bike which has been fabricated into the under-compartment of the domicile. The housing portion is presented to the audience within a three-quarter perspective, which is used throughout my body of work to further an investigation into illusionistic pictorial depth. In many ways, it evokes portraiture, like famous sitters showing themselves not straight on and not in profile but halfway between. It adds depth not only to the space of the object, creating believable volume and roundness, but also psychological depth and the sense of dynamism or mobility rather than the static views of straight on from the front or totally from the side. The shape of the domicile resembles a cage, or prison, which references the constraints that arises from a life as a missionary. Growing up as a child in within a missionary family, I can account to the constraints of our beliefs. As an example, as a child, my father was abusive towards my mother. She stayed married due to her Christian beliefs circulating around the idealization of a divorce was not possible for a woman. In a metaphorical reference to this part of my life, I presented the audience a modified bicycle attached to a handcrafted domicile in a unique and creative way.



Fig. 4.6. *The Missionary*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 36" x 42"

BOAT HOUSE

Boat House (Fig. 4.7) shows a handcrafted domicile that is attached to a canoe. This hybrid creation is unique within this body of work because of the buoyancy aspect of the recreational vehicle; it can float. It can survive a flood, but it can also tip over or fill with water easily. It is both safe and dangerous at the same time. I also presented the audience with a trailer structure attached to the canoe making it into a kind of houseboat. It is also strange because it looks like wood, the material traditional canoes are made of, but the shape of the trailer looks more like it should be made of metal. Here I am blending the traditional and the modern in new combinations. I also wanted to blend the ideas of dry land and water together, reminding viewers that we need both, but often they are at odds with one another. During a drought the dry land doesn't have enough water; during a flood, dry land can't be found. The canoe is rendered in the same fashion as the vehicle in *The Cholo* (Fig. 4.6), a glossy candy-like spray finish. I went canoeing often as a teenager; what I remember most from this experience is the glossy finish on the outside of a new canoe, and the adventure a canoe represented. The domicile has an organic shape to compliment the shape of the canoe. The domicile appears to be handcrafted using wood paneling. The wood paneling is painted with a brush stroke esthetic to further resemble various wood grains. There is also a chimney atop of the domicile, which is commonly seen on cabins, houses, and apartments. I personally feel that a chimney is a visual cue hinting towards a kitchen of some sort. I want my work to resonate within a diverse culture; I have plenty of hybrids meant for land, so I presented the audience with an unconventional mobile domicile meant for both land and sea.



Fig. 4.7. *Boat House*, 2019, acrylic on panel, 16" x 20"

Pop Inspired Hybrid:

The next work, *Pop Inspired Hybrid*, is a combination of painting and printmaking. I have a personal fascination for the subtractive drawn key present in my silkscreens. Due to this interest, I feel it is necessary to describe in detail the subtractive drawn images (Fig. 4.8). The process for these pieces draws on the work of Andy Warhol and Ed Ruscha. This project is influenced by the Pop art culture and especially the work of Andy Warhol that deals with his ideal of multiplicity. Gianni Mercurio and Daniela Morera's *The Andy Warhol Show* exhibits a piece titled *Four Colored Campbell's Soup Cans*, silkscreens combined with variations of under paintings.¹⁶ My project is likewise a hybrid combination of a painting that is layered on top of a silkscreen print on top of an acrylic gradient. The gradient is to represent an illusionary depth within the work similar to that found within a landscape painting. The contemporary works of Ruscha, especially his beautiful gradients, influenced the gradients within my thesis. I present this ideal of combination within two pieces from my thesis exhibition. I use the drawn key as the underlying stencil to render these simplistic paintings.

This project is meant to leave a remnant of the screen-printed key showing the dark outlining values within a painting. I paint the compartments of the unconventional mobile domicile using acrylic paint leaving the outline, windows and shadows visible to the audience to pay homage to the screen-printed key. The color schemes I use for the unconventional mobile domicile offer the audience a different view of the same image using a variety of color palettes. I use variety in the same aspect seen in a car rental agency. Generally, agencies will offer the audience multiple options for a series of vehicles. And yet, my hybrid vehicles could never fit in a standardized car rental space. They are too unique, too awkward, and yet also much more individual and beautiful than the sameness seen at a rent-a-car business.

¹⁶ Gianni Mercurio and Daniela Morera, *The Andy Warhol Show* (New York: Skira, 2005), 123.

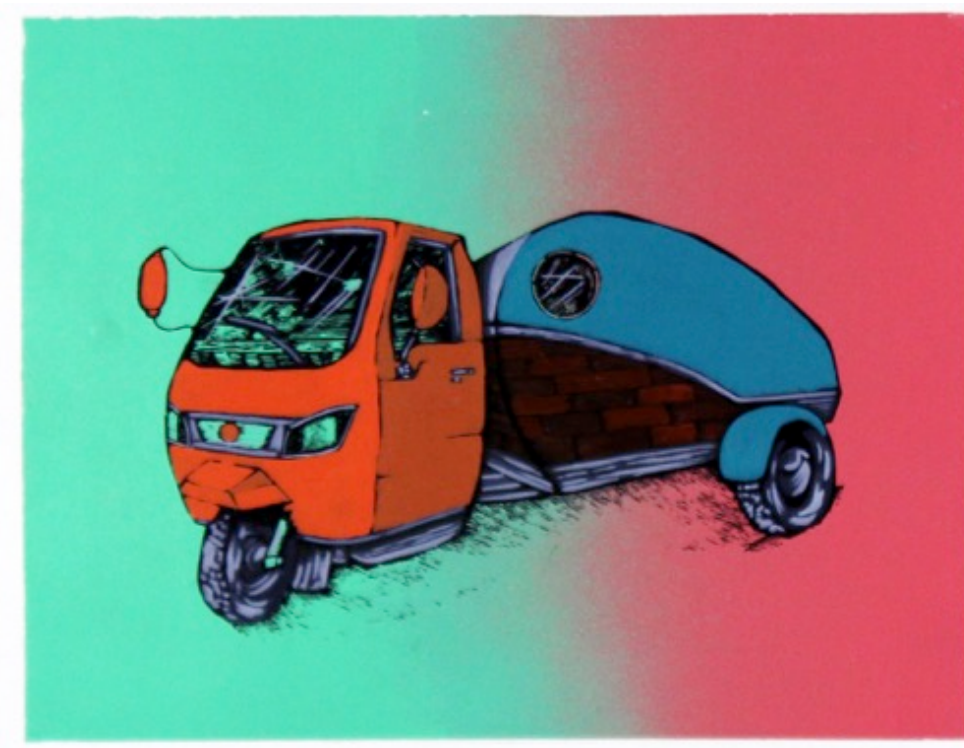
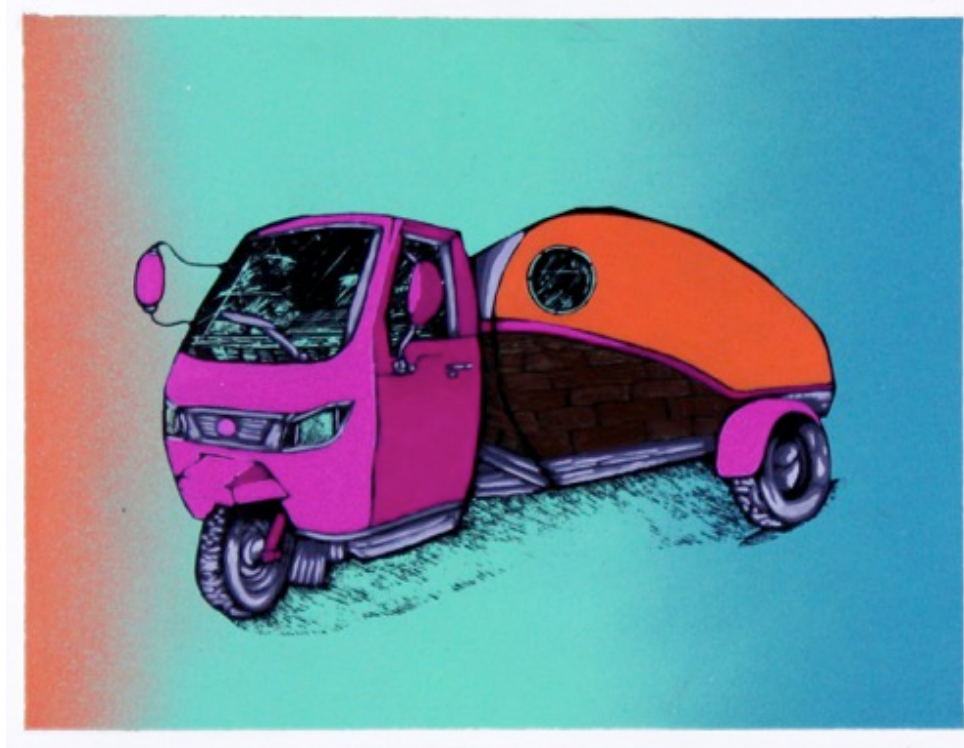


Fig. 4.8 *Pop Art Inspired Hybrid*, Diptych, 2019, acrylic and screen-print on two panels,

9" x 11" each

Works on Paper:

Within this thesis, I produced four unconventional mobile domiciles silkscreen prints on paper. I replicate three images on paper with slight deviations from the paintings within this exhibition, and also presented the audience with a silkscreen that doesn't appropriate any other image produced within this exhibition. I provided the audience a few visual differences within the work on paper than my work on panel. The thing I am most fascinated with, is the reductively drawn image of my screen prints. *The Older Gent*, (Fig. 4.9), the only non-repeated image in my prints, represents. I use this particular subtractive drawing method because working reductively forces one to work backwards, scratching away highlights until the final drawing is revealed. This silkscreen is discussing the stereotypical truck attached to a camper. I provided the audience a basic traditional hybrid. The generation before mine was known for their conservative nature. To best represent my message, I created an older fashioned truck attached to a domicile, physically creating a unique approach to the traditional truck camper. This process rearranged the way one approach a drawing. This reductively drawn aesthetic of a scratch away is extremely pleasing. The rough aesthetic is what I cohesively reproduced within the works on paper, I reproduce this aesthetic because of the resemblances it has with reduction wood block keys used in printmaking techniques. I subtract the drawing material until what's left is a gestural outline of the unconventional mobile domicile.

The subtractive drawing is inspired from those older truck campers commonly seen camping inside of Wal-Mart parking lots. *The Bean Farmer*, (Fig. 4.10) is the second print I have produced for this thesis exhibition. The image is the similar to the painting, but it does contain noticeable different variables. The quality of the print is physically different: it is vacant of brush strokes, lies completely flat within each layer, I present the audience with slight color variations, a drawn subtractive outline, and a different shape background.

The Minimalist, (Fig. 4.11) the third print, discusses a minimalistic approach towards the tiny house movement, which is a common motif throughout this body of work. This print varies from the original within the content translated through the layering of the silkscreen. Each compartment is slightly different from the painterly version whether it is the usage of colors, aesthetic of the vehicles, and/or the domicile. The domicile contains a consecutive layering similar to that to the original work on panel. The irregular shape of the background contains a split fountain to further investigate illusionary pictorial depth. *Boat House*, (Fig. 4.12) the fourth print, depicts the same context as the work on panel, the content has been rearranged to include a rectangle with curved edges for the background, a split fountain gradient, and a drawn subtractive key similar to the other prints on paper within this body of work.

The works on paper are silkscreens, which allows for the reproductions of multiples. Each image has an edition of six prints, I then reclaim the silkscreens so the image is no longer reproducible. I highly value the ideal of a multiple because it allows my work to reach a more dispersed audience than a single work on panel. It also references the idea that the unconventional domiciles could be mass-produced if my ideas became popular.

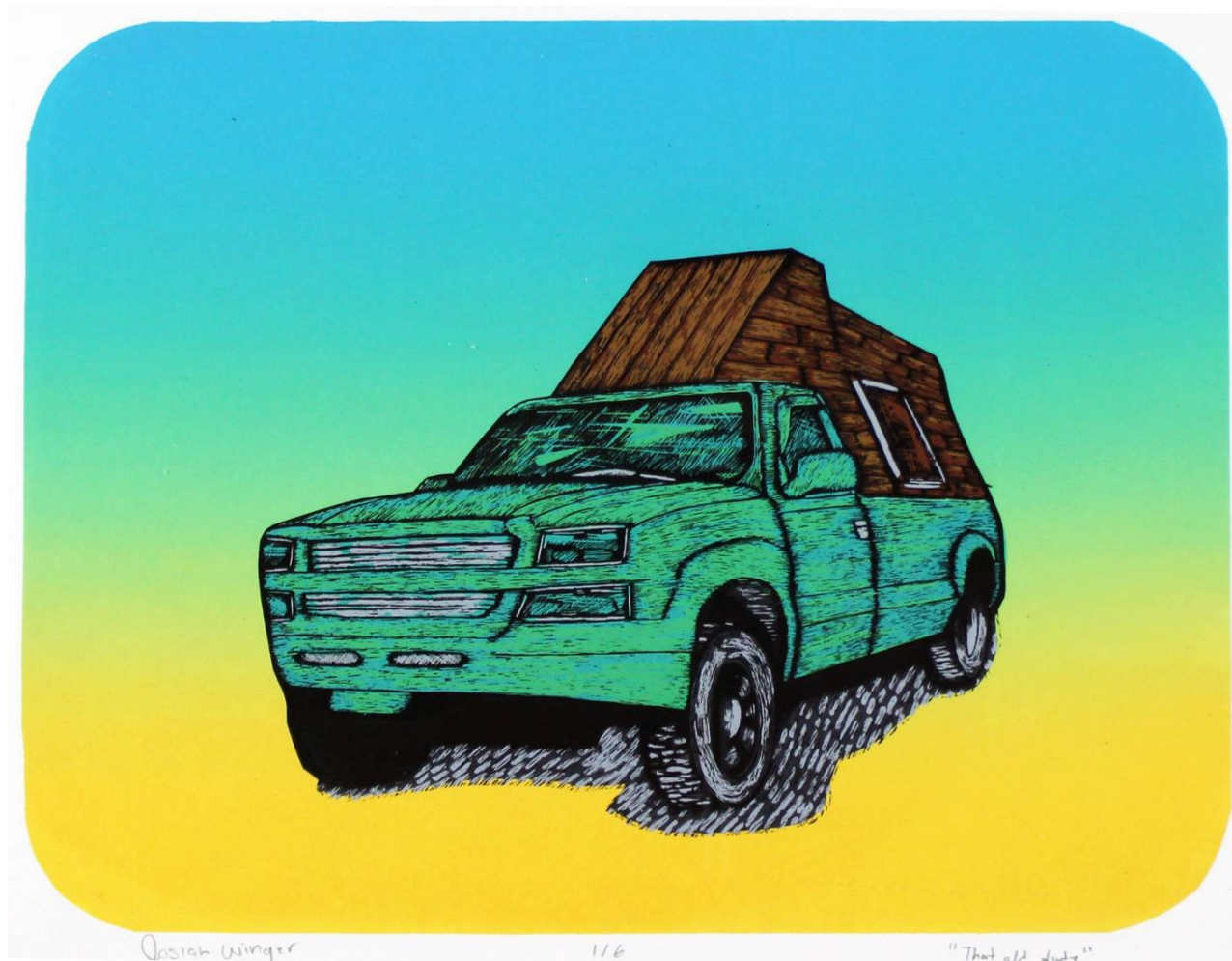


Fig. 4.9 The Older Gent, 2019, silkscreen on paper, 18" x 24", Edition # 1/6



Fig. 4.10 *The Bean farmer*, 2019, silkscreen on paper, 18" x 24", Edition # 1/6

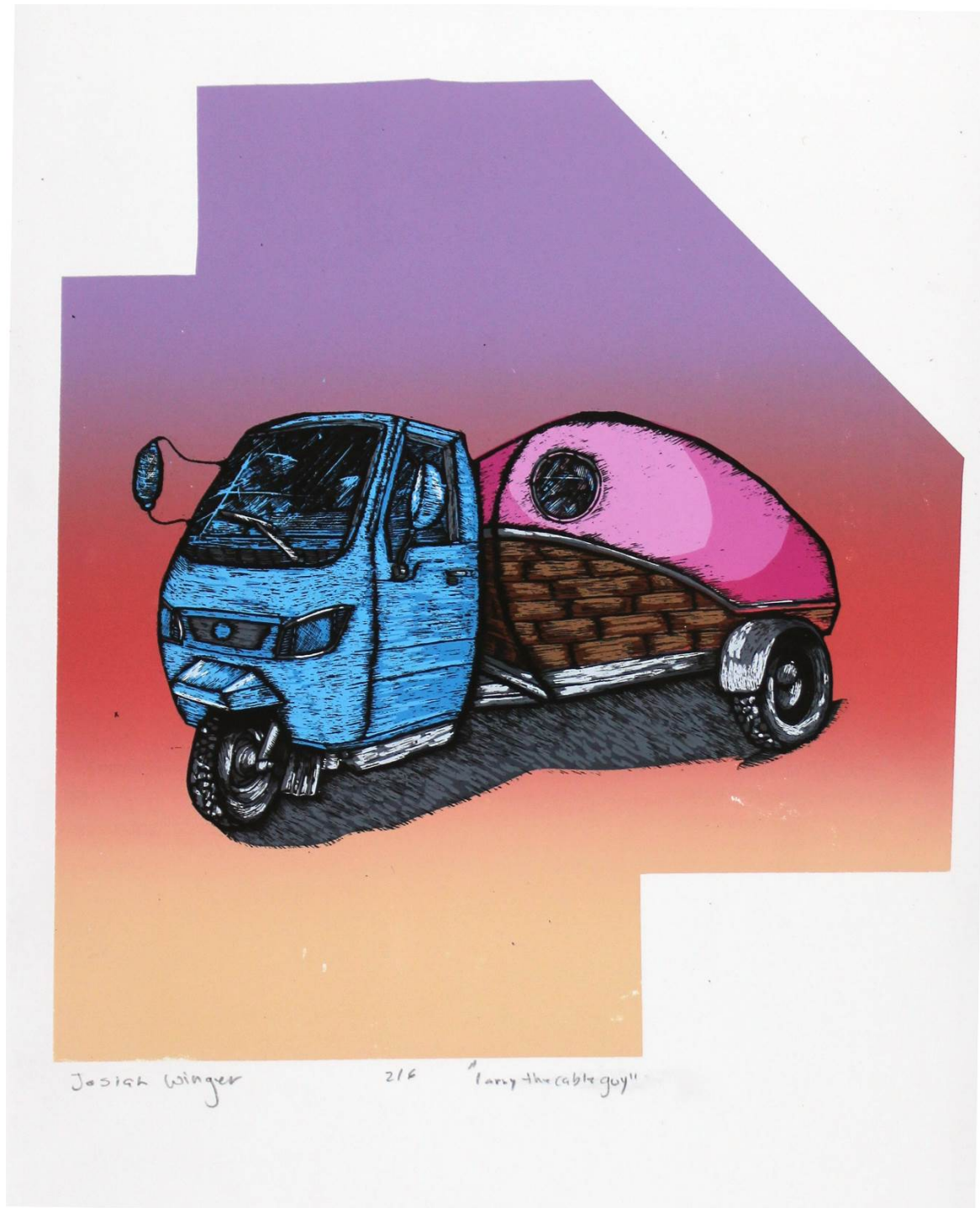


Fig. 4.11 *The Minimalist*, 2019, silkscreen on paper, 14" x 20", Edition # 1/6



Fig. 4.12 *Boathouse*, 2019, silkscreen on paper, 14" x 20", Edition # 3/6

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

During my adolescence, my parents built unconventional mobile domiciles to help ease the financial burdens of being non-profit missionaries and I found these endeavors fascinating. This thesis provides the audience with insight into the endless possibilities of creative domiciles attached to a range of vehicles. Through this work, I hope to create a new visual language to describe domesticity and mobility. I incorporated digital software programs for this project; the context of the image derives from digital combinations of forms and structures. The paintings and prints within this body of work depict a separation from the traditional figure-ground relationship in that they have two backgrounds. The irregular shape of the image references the vast quantity of informational road signs seen while traveling. The contained gradient within the background functions as a point for illusionary pictorial depth. The background gradient helps to reinstate the unconventional mobile domicile as the main focal point. This thesis draws inspiration from the work of Ed Ruscha and Andy Warhol, as well as the theories of Semiotics. It also responds to the Tiny House Movement, because they deal with unique views on materialism, transportation, advertising and customized production. I am really fascinated with the combination of two independent objects that when combined creates an entirely new object. The “domiciles” I propose normally wouldn’t be found within commonly mass-produced recreational vehicles. By avoiding conventional mobile homes, recreation vehicles, and other mass-produced manufactured

mobile houses, I am able to explore the endless possibilities of creative options. I develop these hybrids to question the stereotypical norms set forth by society, and my work also evokes questions pertaining to materialism, and the cost of living in societies of global capitalism today. Creating one these unconventional mobile domiciles generally will cost the owner a lump sum of money upfront. While living in a tiny space is a means to cut monthly costs dramatically, it also forcibly creates a dialogue between what is necessary and what is excess. I also believe the decision to live in a tiny house is a conscious choice, whether you are avoiding a large mortgage, or a large carbon footprint, or even appreciating the freedom to travel and live simultaneously. I use the term vehicle as a description for a motorized object that has the ability to transport a person from one location to another. Generally, a tractor and tank are not a means for transportation within vast distances. As most artists, however, I repurposed ordinary things into extraordinary occurrences, which creates something new. I think this transformation is the most fascinating aspect of my work.

In conclusion, my investigation of unconventional mobile domiciles creates a dialogue between traditional and non-traditional mobile homes. I hope viewers question what makes a residency a residence, what makes a home a home? And what makes a vehicle a vehicle, and where do these things meet. This thesis explores the relationship between the creator and creation, humans and their environment. An interesting query, and my thesis work presents several answers as works of art.

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