

RAVEN

LED ZEPPELIN
LZE 3 00

Expansion

1920-1929

RIA-NBC 1926

Metals - ~~Aluminum~~ ~~Steel~~

CB KR 1927

Antenna Broadcasting System 1928

1930-1938

Depression

Networks - ~~Radio~~ ~~Television~~

Competition

Advertising

Radio - theatre of the masses

No competition - new entertainment

Radio - theatre of the masses

Radio - theatre of the masses

MICHAEL KRUEGER

FULL METAL JOURNALS

1948 - TV - 1955

Networks - Public

Audience

Talent Robbing

Advertisers

Radio - Independence

MICHAEL KRUEGER

FULL METAL JOURNALS

SEPTEMBER 5 — 26, 2008

In the series entitled *Full Metal Journals*, Michael Krueger has created prints that evolve from a select appropriation of his teen life. Personal and biographical in nature, Krueger mines a retrievable past in the form of high school journals, tardy slips, notebook pages, and scrapbooks. In a humorous approach to reality, he relies on his own memory and the largely overlooked memorabilia of youth—which luckily for him had been preserved in his mother's attic. These documents provide a curious record of a meandering imagination, distraction, and obsession with rock music, cars, sex, and doodling. Krueger conveys nostalgia for things past and an amusing self-irony that undermines any self-absorption. However, he also examines notions of masculinity and adolescence through a subversive lens, that—although subtle—reflects a larger impulse and cultural curiosity.

The series is characterized by the ironic inventory of boyish obsession and a unique materiality evidenced by the creative process. Krueger uses traditional printmaking medium of lithography wherein his affinity for drawing is apparent. Layers of information present a non-linear narrative as image and text exist in a dialectical relationship. To achieve this, he scanned the original notes and pages and printed them out at a larger-than-life scale on an ink-jet printer. New drawings, often hand-drawn in ink, ball point pen and pencil are printed over the scanned imagery. The scale of the notes is approximately four times the size of the original and works to establish the historic backdrop for current narrative. Despite the enlargement of the original sources, the overall scale remains intimate rather than overtly

confrontational. To give the prints an authentic reading and most importantly, an object quality, Krueger then physically duplicates the tears, folds, stains, and imperfections found on the two-decade-old papers. He uses a thin and elegant Japanese paper called Gampi that best mimes the quality of the original notes while also possessing its own unique textural qualities.

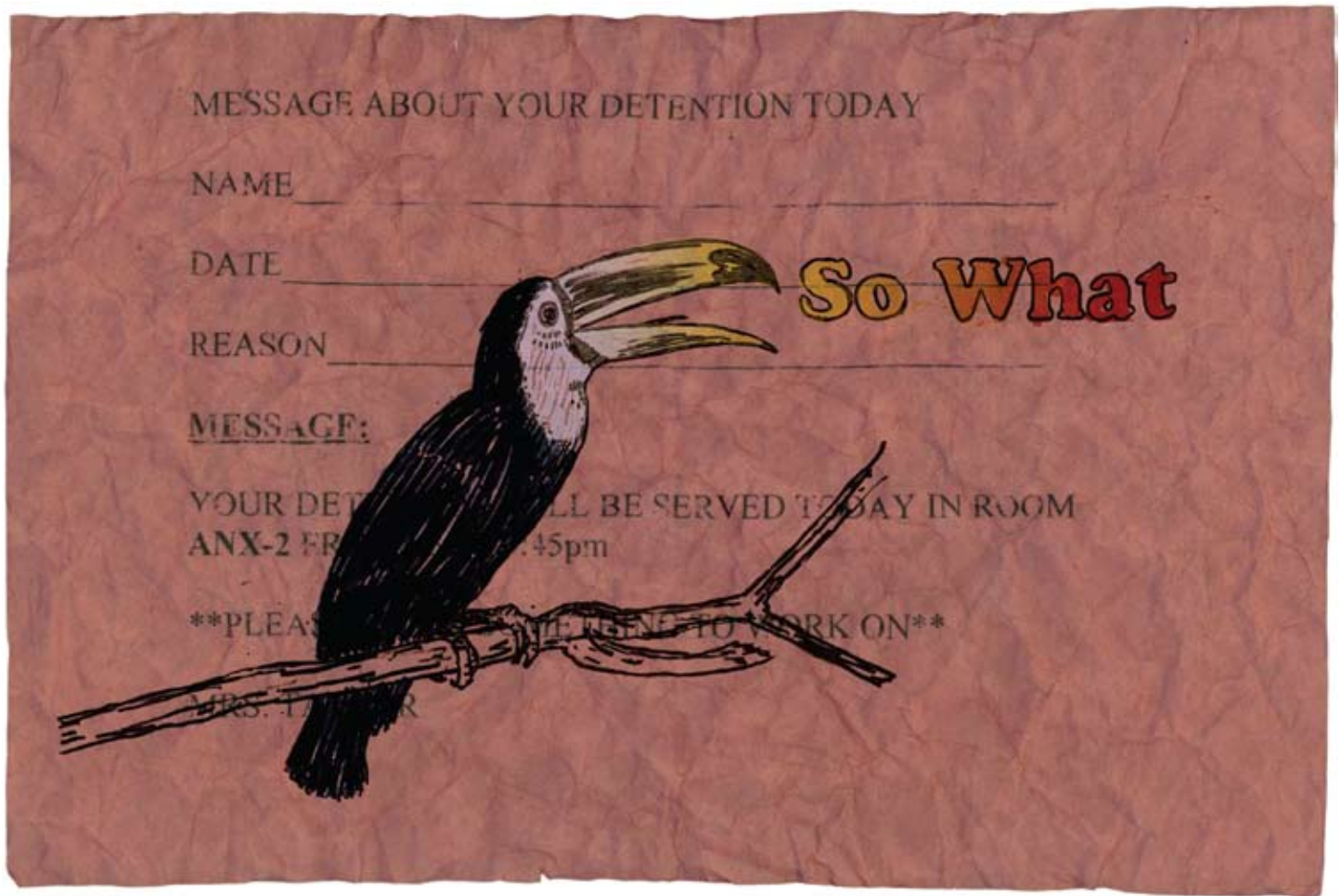
The pale, fragile appearing notes and near transparent and weightless paper signifies a time slippage that the artist has effectively captured. The thematic thread is Heavy Metal, a style of music that emerged in the 1970s, reached its zenith in the 1980s, and continues to lure teens today. Inspired by metal aesthetic and rock heroes, art and life collide in irreverent combinations culled from a mundane past and now re-articulated into full fetishizations. With a nod to the Pathetic Art movement that emerged in the 1990s, Krueger is adept at mining the personal, delving into private feelings, and utilizing low culture to address weightier issues of identity, play, politics, and cultural tension.

Emblazoned on the lined notebook pages and official discipline notes are the graphic brand and names of Heavy Metal and Rock stalwarts like Twisted Sister, Motley Crew, Blue Oyster Cult, April Wine, Motorhead, Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendricks, Deep Purple, Krokus, and Metallica, among others. Heavy Metal is generally loud, aggressive, and with a combination of darkness, morbidity, and masculine prowess—is all about power. With a list of sub-genres like Black, Death, Doom, Power, Progressive, Thrash, and Folk, the reference base is loaded and resonates 20 years later as feelings of discontent, alienation, dissent, anger, loss, and hopelessness are still prevalent. This subtext considers psychological concerns that are prominently facing a generation thought to have been bored, frivolous, and uncaring. In these works, Krueger articulates that perhaps that is not the case.

Utilizing the minutia of teen years—although his are far more interesting and aesthetically pleasing than most high school notebooks and already indicative of the hand of a young artist—Krueger rejects the idealism of high art, lofty concepts, and any reference to the art world itself in a refocused look at discontent and escapism. The works are more than a reflection on fanhood and idolatry, but rather a compellingly layered examination into a psychological state describing past and current cultural phenomena. The prints address a broader cultural identity gap specifically the gap that occurs among the post-Vietnam generation and current Iraqi War generation (this complex exploration is the subject of several beautifully rendered drawings also included in the exhibition). This generation has grown up in times of turbulence and uncertainty, yet with enormous access to knowledge, desire for success, and a new sense of social and cultural entitlement. Krueger's additive method of introducing characters and metaphors stem from his own "personal free associations combined with more direct images that conjure war, drug culture, and early American history."¹ This fusion of visual elements with conceptual underpinnings creates a synergized two-dimensional simulacrum of youthful pastimes that address social belonging and/or isolation.

These small edition prints made in combination with ink-jet printing portray a witty consideration into the experience of male bonding, but also functions as a broader artistic inquiry. In a recent artist statement, Krueger writes:





I am interested in reexamining this time in my life to better understand the events that helped shape it. This time period, shortly after the Vietnam War and the waning years of the Cold War, is a strange and psychologically complex period in U.S. history. It was also an extraordinarily decadent time for youth culture. Bands like Black Sabbath and Napalm Death among others replaced 1970s bands with a more cheery and hopeful tenor like Strawberry Alarm Clock and Country Joe and the Fish to name a few. The Heavy Metal movement that grew out of a post-Vietnam War era obsession with decadence, death, and nihilism continues to fascinate me.

This fascination drives a unique coupling of genres and history to yield an overall temperament to the work that moves from the mythos of the rocker/metal head (real or imagined) to a visual surrogate for a misunderstood generation. Krueger's visual vocabulary evolves from vintage white male adolescence into a broader cultural longing for a perceived simpler time. His juxtapositions counter a particular cultural mythology with visual gestures that are both humorous and poignant. Through a consideration into indulgence and obsession, irreverence and boredom, Krueger's collection re-articulated and re-invested here has blossomed into a curious "post-mature" narrative.²

Recurring motifs and design elements associated with Heavy Metal and Rock (the thunderbolt, skull, owl, fly, and spider) become adornment and decorative in their repetitive patterning. Pattern is amplified in *Jimi*, as an elaborate overall design that alludes to Native American glyphs and indigenous mark making and mapping, envelops the words Jimi Hendrix. In *Heavy Flies*, the adjective "heavy" is spelled out in ink-drawn flies, anchored by two colorful thunderbolts and in *Flying V* owls (birds of prey) hover in the fore and background to surround four floating electric guitars. In a witty character study of sorts, on a scanned rock concert handbill, *Iron Creek*

features individuals in various rock postures. The figures depict famous gestures in the Metal and Rock genre and are isolated here as monuments. The work *Alice* portrays a humorous pairing; amid the backdrop of an admittance slip, a naked character exhales from taking a bong hit and engulfed in his own smoke sits in resignation, contemplation, or sheer boredom. In another compelling work, *Detention*, a mocking tone is reflected as a hand-drawn Toucan exclaims "So What" to the punishment of an after-school detention. This print was inspired by a late 1970s poster that featured a toucan in the jungle with the words "So What" next to its beak. For Krueger, this image is emblematic of the time, as an increasing dismissive attitude was felt in regards to the war and its aftermath. He recognizes it as a post-Vietnam War self-preserving ambivalence akin to the slogan "It don't mean nothin'" which was often used by soldiers to describe the horrors of war in the jungle.³ Below the surface of many of the prints are the actual notes Krueger took in History and Algebra classes. His notes indicate the subject of study, but his method seems incomplete and suggests a lack of concentration, and alas, the perfect environment for daydreaming! The transient moments of youthful yearning, rebellion, mis-conduct, and learning are presented as ephemera worth archiving and sharing.

While Krueger's point of departure extends from internal and private musings, the popular and cult imagery along with his hand-written scrawl communicates a dynamic energy that is simultaneously funny and unsettling. One imagines Krueger making these works with a grin and a slightly self-conscious ting of embarrassment that creates an avenue and accessibility that enables the viewer to locate themselves in the narrative (or at least someone they know). Michael Krueger's work is a sincere homage to the power of the music that he grew up with and loves still and a refreshing tribute to youth culture that does not cease to inform maturity.

— Shannon Fitzgerald, independent curator and writer, St. Louis, Missouri



MICHAEL KRUEGER RÉSUMÉ

EDUCATION

- 1993 University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, MFA, Printmaking
- 1990 University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD, BFA, Printmaking

PROFESSIONAL

- 2000 — University of Kansas, Associate Professor of Art, tenured, Lawrence, KS, Digital Art, Drawing & Printmaking
- 2005 — 06 College Art Association, Chair, Distinguished Teaching Award Committee, New York, NY

SELECTED AWARDS AND GRANTS

- 2007 Lighton International Artists' Exchange Program, Kansas City, MO
Roger Shimomura Research Fund, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, KS
Stern Foundation Grant, Commerce Bank, Kansas City, MO
- 2006 Roger Shimomura Research Fund, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, KS
- 2005 Hall Center of the Humanities Travel Grant, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, KS
Faculty Research Grant, (GRF), University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2007 Solo Exhibit, Sunday, New York, NY
Solo Exhibit, Same Town, TAG Art Gallery, Nashville, TN
Solo Exhibit, Michael Krueger, Kansas'land, Beach Museum of Art, Manhattan, KS
- 2006 Solo Exhibit, Michael Krueger, Works on Paper, OSP Gallery, Boston, MA
- 2005 Solo Exhibit, Everyday Prints, The Gallery at UTA, University of Texas, Arlington, TX
- 2004 Solo Exhibit, Drawing Lawrence: Drawings by Michael Krueger on the Occasion of Lawrence's Sesquicentennial, Lawrence Art Center, Lawrence, KS
- 2003 Solo Exhibit, Pathos' Fantastic, Recent Drawings & Prints, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, UAE
Solo Exhibit, Pathos' Fantastic, Recent Drawings & Prints, Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH

NOTES

- 1 All quotes from Michael Krueger are taken from a prepared artist statement, July 2008.
- 2 The New York Times visual arts critic Holland Cotter first coined the term "post-mature" in an article considering the work of Cary Leibowitz, an artist associated with the Pathetic Art Movement. Cotter, Holland. The New York Times, December 14, 2001.
- 3 From email correspondence with the artist, July 15, 2008.

All images by Michael Krueger, archival digital print and lithography w/hand cutting and folding. All images courtesy of the artist.

front cover image: *Drowning Giant*, 19 x 15.5 inches, 2007
inside left: *Iron Creek*, detail, 11 x 15.5 inches, 2008
inside right: *Detention*, 11 x 17 inches, 2007
above, left: *Flying V*, 19 x 15.5 inches, 2007; right: *Jirni*, 19 x 15.5 inches, 2007

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