

TRIALS THROUGH INK AND WATER

The SMP Experience of a Sincere and Unprepared Studio Art Student

Leah Moreno, Fall 2012

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Introduction

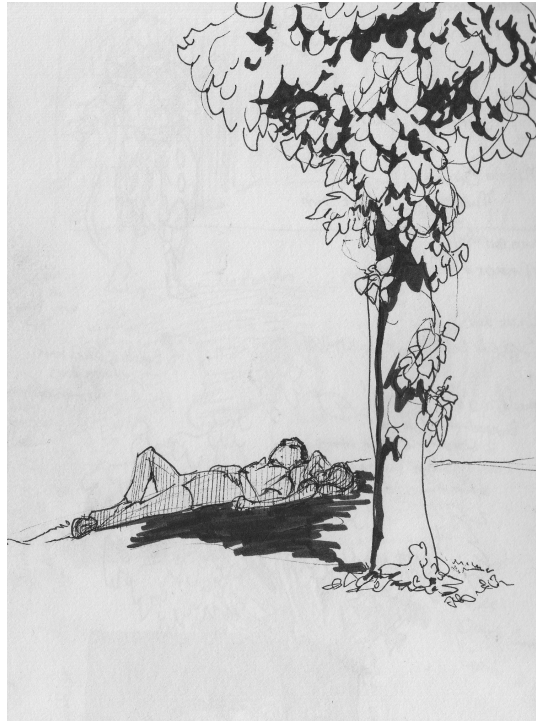
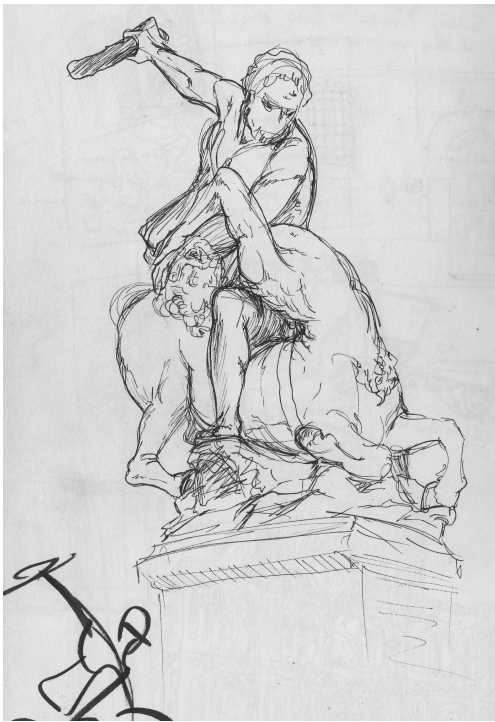
This book documents my Saint Mary's Project (SMP) experience in the realm of Studio Art.

Unlike many SMP's, it was undertaken as a group, with some structured assignments and stages, and under the guidance of our mentor Sue Johnson; my fellow SMPers include Michael Bargamian, Kat Eisenberg, Chance Hazelton, Amanda Schmeltz, and Garrett Zopfi.

For me, SMP started as a floundering and grasping for ideas, involved a continuous struggle against doubt, and, for now, has expressed itself in a series of illustrations of Mozart's opera, *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*). This document's title comes from the final trials of the opera's heroes, Tamino (Tamina) and Pamina, through fire and through water.

Prelude: Summer

In the first part of my summer, I had the opportunity to travel to and study in Italy, in study tour under Carrie Patterson. Much of the time was spent in the small town of Alba, where St. Mary's has its own campus; I also had the immense privilege to visit Florence to study the artworks and palaces there. Most of my time during this tour was spent sketching landscape, architecture, art, and people.



sketches from my travel sketchbook, in pen and ink



A Lunch in Alba, watercolor

When I returned from Italy, however, I immediately started work at a full-time job, and so artmaking was tragically minimal for the remaining summer months. When I had the time, I busied myself with assignments all the art SMPers were given before summer began, such as keeping track of new words we learned, and reading the immeasurably helpful and encouraging book, *The Art Life*, by Stuart Horodner, and studying art and artists of interest.

Before the first meeting of the SMP group, I wrote a short statement about my preliminary thoughts and intentions:

“My current occupation, as an artist, is to address the challenges of communicating visually. With a focus on narrative illustration, I mean to convey moods, stories, and ideas effectively and with a compelling visual look. My favored media are pen and ink, watercolor, and paper cutting. With these tools, I aim to intrigue the viewer such that they are not irate with confusion, but rather curious about the story I offer. I may incorporate this visual literacy with my own stories.”

The Marathon (Weeks 1-3)

The “Marathon” was the SMP group’s first major undertaking. As soon as we had settled into the semester, and our studio spaces, we embarked on a series of works that I imagine are meant to compel us to “hit the ground running.” The mission was to complete at least 20 works of varying subjects, processes, methods, concepts, etc. Basically: there was no time for pondering- it was a time to make- now! Whatever it is, and whatever it takes!

To my shame, I think this Marathon was my first major failure of the semester. Rather than adopting a motto of “Go! Make! Now!” I tried a flawed tactic of only proceeding on something that I thought was going to turn out well, viewing this as a challenge for showing off, like a reality TV show maybe, rather than an exploration.



Entranceway, pen and ink

I found myself overall rushing to come up with 20 works that were “good enough” for display, and in the end I didn’t have 20 good works. In this, I missed the joy of this assignment: the chance to play and explore. It should have been spent making as much art as possible without care for the result, instead of some sort of boastful display of my artistic prowess (which I do not think I have available for boasting).



Untitled, pen and ink

Weeks 4-5

On the fourth week of SMP, all the Marathon works were displayed throughout the studio floor, for any available students and faculty to peruse.



Fairytale Work, charcoal

I got some preliminary feedback from both faculty and students, most of which was pretty non-critical in this early stage. All in all, the exhibition of the works went well enough, though I was a little ashamed at the lack of creativity (or sheer number of works) I displayed. Nonetheless, there was some enthusiasm from students and faculty over a few of my works, so I cannot call them a total collective failure.

“Pecha- Kucha”

The following meeting, we each gave a brief presentation of our influences and interests- all in the span of 20 slides, with 20 seconds per slide.

My own major influences include illustrators of the “Golden Age,” Japanese aesthetics (especially of kimono traditions), and literature and stories.



Of Junihitoe, acrylic
(a Marathon work about a type of layered kimono)

From this Pecha-Kucha, I got a lot of feedback noting my interest in textual work. It sounded to me also that the group at large was most interested in my writing my own text, and mainly offered advice on how to improve my writing. It seemed a daunting task, and my artistic intention statement immediately following written thus:

Intention Statement:

“I am primarily an illustrator, and of illustration, I focus on illustrating narratives. In the past I have focused on illustrating stories and poems in particular, and I will continue along that vein as I move forward. I will continue to use pen and ink for my illustrations, with watercolor when I feel the need to use color. In the case of watercolors, however, I will continue to use ink as in a Chinese painting philosophy: that ink acts as the "host," or structure of the image, while color is a "guest." Aesthetically, I hope to include more influence from kimono aesthetics, such as concepts of *ma*, *iki*, and the use of color as a way of communicating feeling as well as taste, as seen in *junihitoe* kimono. I feel that I have, unfortunately, failed in addressing kimono aesthetics in the marathon, but I think it will be both an engaging visual experiment and a useful limitation to employ.

Comments I received at the review of my Pecha Kucha were largely focused on the hope that I would write. This extends from the fact that much of my works are inspired by text, and I suppose it is a logical extension to write my own narratives to be illustrated. However, I think the class misunderstood my desire to do so: while I think it is worth trying, it is not as though I have a strong desire to write stories, which is only suppressed by an insecurity in my writing abilities (admittedly, however, the insecurity is present). I am just as happy responding to text written by someone else, as I have done in the past; I can always add my own interpretation of the text, without being saddled with the responsibility of developing it from scratch. Nonetheless, I am willing to give it a try given the overwhelming interest that I do so from the group.

My goals therefore include, as an experiment, some creative writing. Perhaps I will write independent poetry or stories as a way of practice, but I am most interested in writing comics, as they exist in a middle ground featuring both text and visual communication. I hope I can do more singular images as well so that I can address my visual-specific goals such as addressing kimono aesthetics. In the meantime I will also continue my studies of visual storytelling through compelling and telling compositions and framing. I have read books on these topics recently, and now I mean to practice them.“

Despite the slight disinterest I even expressed in that statement, I went ahead and pursued the idea of writing my own graphic novel as an SMP. The previous semester, the Spring of 2012, I had engrossed myself in the poem “The Raven” by Edgar Allen Poe. I had already imagined the Raven as an anthropomorphic allegory-character in print, and so I thought a natural extension would be to expand on that character.



early concept for the Raven

My concept was a story of the Raven, standing in as an allegory for truth, on trial for murdering the persona-narrator of Poe’s poem. There would be two stories happening simultaneously: The story of the Raven standing trial before three allegorical Judges, and the story of the death of the poem’s narrator as the Raven relates it.

The prose that follows was written as a way of introducing my idea:

“Why did you kill him, Raven?”

From their illustrious seats, the Three Judges loomed over the defendant. Having pressed their grave question, they waited with ears tuned for a reply. His response might be his salvation or his damnation, and so they huddled toward it eagerly, ready. They were most of all prepared to declare “guilty,” but nonetheless it stood to reason that they hold trial and *consider* first- but they needed a reply to set their judgment in motion.

The Raven, not a feather flustered by their charge, turned his head up to address the question bearing down on him. His eyes, staring back at them, were observing of course, but also reflecting, as a mirror; thus emotion was difficult to find therein. His reply was spoken plain:

“I only speak truth.”

The Judges were silent a moment, until the middle Judge, in the highest seat, broke the stillness with a chuckle. Leaning back in his chair, he folded his hands, weighing the Raven’s reply with a smile and something like patient reflection. Or, this First Judge imagined himself patient and reflective, and so acted in accord. The Raven’s gaze remained trained on the First Judge, reflecting his haughty performance. And waiting.

“We are all aware of your occupation, Raven,” the First Judge quipped, drawing sneers from the other two, “but your post does not excuse your actions. Unless-” the Judge leaned forward again for emphasis, “Perhaps you deny our claim? I will give you the opportunity to refute us: did you not kill that man?” There was hardly a pause at all before the Raven replied a second time.

“I only speak truth,” he repeated.

Silence stifled the chamber once more, the Raven’s words so bitterly ill-received. It was with more exasperation that the First Judge barked another laugh. “Your insistent mockery of this court is condemnable enough. Nonetheless, I will play along. By all means-” said the First Judge, throwing up his hands. “-lend us your illumination. If you speak only truth, you can explain for us exactly what happened that night.” The other two Judges, who had been watching the First perform, looked down on the Raven once more.

The Raven, in turn, lowered his gaze. Hesitation, thoughts of futility, prickled through his mind.

But finally, he nodded.

Weeks 6-7

I formally introduced my *Raven on Trial* idea to my fellow SMPers, and while it seemed like there was some interest, my presentation was largely met with confusion. This was due to the fact that I hadn't much to offer in the way of actual artwork- even the concept art was minimal, and there were no pages of the graphic novel to show. Part of this was because I had been focusing almost entirely on writing the plot and script of the comic, but the fact was that I had also already lost interest in the project. The writing was tough to accomplish in such a short time, and when I couldn't enjoy the text, I wasn't finding myself connected to the characters or spaces enough to make good artwork.



some character concepts for *The Raven on Trial*

Sue Johnson noticed this perhaps more astutely than I did, and offered that I should make work that was interesting to me. Specifically, she saw more care and interest in the doodles taped to my wall than in the character sketches I had worked out for this *Raven* comic.

Admittedly, I panicked at the prospect that I had been moving in the wrong direction, and I was terrified that I would have to begin again (after all, a Mid-term Review in front of the art faculty was to occur in less than a week from this chat). In the midst of my terror, however, a breakthrough came in the form of these two paintings, both executed that night:



Untitled, black gesso on paper



Sparrow on a Branch, ink painting

I realized immediately that my greater work came from something that seemed to emerge naturally, or that I was somehow already inclined to do.

My goals to prepare for the Mid-Term Review changed drastically. I abandoned *The Raven on Trial* in favor of a broader exploration of the things that I knew interested me. I started copying some of these things- making colored sketches of Edo-period kimono, and drawing the basic compositional shapes from thumbnails of works by Yoshitaka Amano and Henry Fuseli. (use of ink and watercolor) Literature and poetry remained important sources of inspiration and subjects to illustrate, and so I kept poetry books around to refer to for potential subjects.

I even went to an on-campus concert, and made rapid illustrations based on the classical music as I was listening to it.



drawn while listening to a performance of *Sonata No. 3 in D minor*, by Johannes Brahms



Untitled, watercolor and ink

Interview with Garrett Zopfi: Round 1

Zopfi: What kinds of things about art making practice are really mysterious to you?

Moreno: I don't know how people are found. So many people make art but so few are recognized.

Z: What's the worst fear you have about your own work?

M: That it is not "deep" enough. I don't want people to brush off my work and not view it as being intellectual.

Z: Who was the last person/thing you were afraid of?

M: I get afraid of my Dad. Its not a major source of fear. I get afraid of not doing well enough. Also, I'm afraid of the dark.

Z: What natural occurrences do you find inspiring?

M: When the moon is bright enough to illuminate the world, even when there is no sun. When everything is covered in snow the world is so clean. I sometimes wonder if minimalism was born from the snow.

Z: Is your work aligned with order or chaos?

M: Order. I get pretty anal about controlling how things look. I suppose I could use more chaos. I wonder...

Z: Do you prefer tactile or visual art making?

M: Depends. I like to use my hands. But I don't like to sacrifice the way something looks for a physical experience.

Z: Which artists do you admire most?

M: Yoshitaka Amano.

Z: Why?

M: He has a way of charging spaces with a lot of energy.

Z: Do you think this stems from his use of mixed media?

M: It may. I think he must have drawn a lot because his marks seem instinctual. His marks don't read of too much planning. He has enough experience that he knows exactly how to move in and react in his work.

Z: What do you and Takashi Amano have in common?

M: We like to tell stories. I think we both have our own romantic concepts and ideals of stories.

Z: When you work, do you love the process or the result?

M: Ideally I love both. I'm always working towards something. Sometimes the process is tedious.

Z: What do you draw when no one is looking?

M: Potty Humor. I sometimes draw myself. Also, I've been drawing a lot of butts. Though that's more of an exploration, because I just don't draw butts.

**Weeks 8-9,
The Midterm Review**



Swifter Than the Wandering Moon, watercolor with ink

The Mid-Term Review went swimmingly, much to my relief at the time. Professors of the art department seemed as excited as I was that I was getting in touch with the things that genuinely interest me. The only major confusion at the time is what kind of subject I should pursue. The faculty could see that I was interested in narrative illustration, but they wanted to know if I had thought of utilizing different time structures, making kimono works... and admittedly, those are areas that remain a little over my head (and, honestly, not of particular interest).

Later that week, I met with Donna Richardson of the school's English Department.

I thought meeting with someone with more expertise in poetry would be helpful as far as helping me to engage more thoughtfully with poetry as I illustrate it. Dr. Richardson was a little less optimistic, insisting that my lack of rigorous, college-level study made it difficult to discuss poetry interpretations at length.

Part of the reason I sought her out, however, was that I had heard she wrote a book on the importance of visually illustrating poems as a vital key to understanding their meaning. The majority of the meeting, therefore, was spent discussing some of the points of her book, *Visual Paraphrasing of Poetry*, which she gave me access to at the end of our talk.

Her book is essentially about using drawings as a way to record, or diagram, the visual elements of a poem. She considers this a vital part of understanding a poem, and thus is more interested in illustrations that in some way literally contain the objects and symbols present in the poem.

The Intention Statement that followed:

“These preceding weeks, I had been focused on the too-narrow concept of writing and illustrating a short graphic novel. This proved to be a failing and unproductive direction, as it did not draw on my strengths, nor did it allow for much exploration and growth. Instead, I am exploring the things that excite me, because I believe truly engaging artwork comes from an engaged artist. On one end of the spectrum, I am studying my visual influences with greater depth. These include artworks by artists such as Henry Fuseli and Yoshitaka Amano, the shapes and colors of kimono and the concepts of kimono aesthetics, theater sets, and subjects from life such as the human form. At this point I am merely copying these things in drawing (but in the case of artworks and kimono, I am reducing them to simple shapes, colors, and values). As for a subject, I am working with my mentor Donna Richardson to engage with poetry on an interpretive level. I am currently undecided as to what mode to take when illustrating poems; I could make work that is explanatory, or describes the content and meanings of the poem, or I can make work that adds meaning or derives new content from the works. As of now, I am doing both.”

The next meeting with the group at large, however, saw issue in the fact that I hadn't settled upon a particular poem, or even movement, to illustrate. And to be honest, that was an issue. The best thing that came out of that meeting is that Sue Johnson told me to say the first literary work that came to mind—and then focus on that. Strangely, no poems came to mind, but rather an opera: *The Magic Flute* by Mozart, an opera I had seen when I was a child, but had not much explored since then.

Random as the choice may seem, I think now that there is a fantastical element to that opera that never left me, and it was the perfect time to revisit that magic.

Weeks 10-11

Hurricane Sandy interrupted my work to a degree, keeping me out of the studio the weekend it blew through. The time was spent instead, however, viewing various performances and other interpretations of the story of *The Magic Flute*, while I waited for the power to go out, including:

- A performance by the Royal Opera House
- An abridged, animated version, as part of BBC's *Operavox*
- the Ingmar Bergman film, *The Magic Flute*
- *Papageno*, a short shadow-puppet animated film by Lotte Reiniger

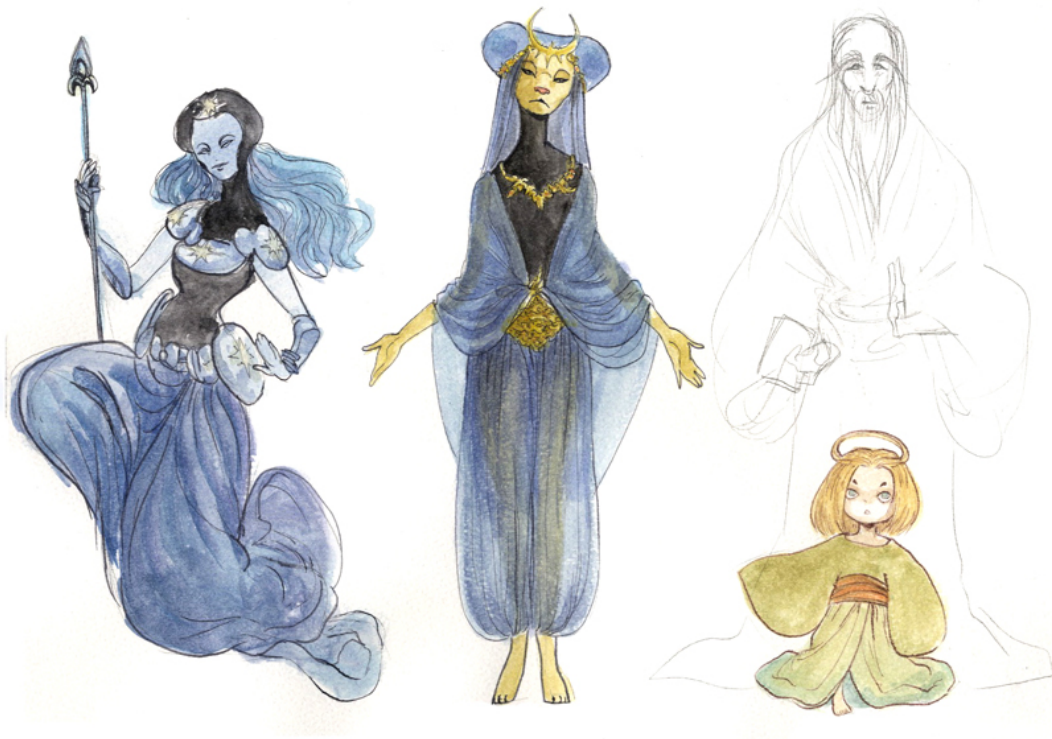
The following week was spent developing my own interpretation of the story, making character sketches, and, most of all, listening endlessly to Mozart's music and incessantly working on my character concepts.



character concept art:
Tamina, Pamina, and Papageno, with flute



Monostatos and Sarastro



One of the "Three Ladies," the Queen of the Night, the Child-Spirit, and a priest.

The Plot of Mozart's Opera, and my Modifications:

Several of the artists who have interpreted the Magic Flute before me have left out, added, or completely changed elements of the story to suit their needs. I too felt compelled to change the story, in slight but impactful ways. Much of this is due to a degree of misogyny the original holds, that I felt I needed to change before I could engage with the more fantastical aspects of the tale; thus, most of the changes involve gender, whether by changing or minimizing its presence in some areas.

The original tale is basically as follows:

Act I:

Tamino, a prince¹ from a foreign land, flees from a pursuing snake, calling for help. As he falls into a faint, Three Ladies, maidens serving the Queen of the Night, appear and slay the beast. They fawn over the handsome appearance of the young prince, and, after fighting over who should be left alone with him to stand watch, they all leave to tell their Queen of him.

As Tamino wakes, Papageno, a bird catcher², appears, singing to himself; most of the song is in longing for a wife. Tamino mistakes Papageno as the one who rescued him, which Papageno readily plays along with, happy to take the credit. This earns him the scorn of the Three Ladies when they return, and they padlock his mouth shut to keep him from lying further. The Ladies then appeal to Tamino to rescue the Queen of the Night's daughter³, Pamina, who was kidnapped by Sarastro. To this end, they present Tamino a portrait of Pamina, and Tamino falls instantly in love with her image. The Queen of the Night then appears herself, reasserting this appeal and offering Tamino Pamina's hand should he rescue her.

The Queen of the Night Departs, but the Ladies remain to present the gift of a Magic Flute to Tamino to protect him. They also remove the padlock from Papageno's mouth, only to send him to protect the prince. Papageno protests, fearing the danger of such a journey, but he finally complies when given a set of magical bells for protection. The Ladies direct the pair to follow three flying child-spirits⁴, who lead the way to Sarastro's domain.

Later, within Sarastro's palace, Pamina is being tied up by Sarastro's servant, the moor Monostatos⁵. Papageno appears, having separated from Tamino to find Pamina. At the sight of each other, both Monostatos and Papageno flee the stage in fear. Papageno reappears to untie Pamina, telling her of a prince coming to rescue her. The both of them sing an ode to love before escaping the palace.

In the forest, still following the spirits, Tamino comes upon Temple doors, two of which he is turned away from before entering the third door. An old priest within informs him that Tamino has allowed himself to be misled by women⁶, and that the truth is that Sarastro is good. Tamino, confused and downhearted, leaves the temple, and begins to play his flute in hopes of

summoning Pamina somehow. The animals of the forest become tamed by the sound, but Pamina does not appear. Trying the flute one last time, he hears Papageno's whistle in return. He runs off-stage excitedly, presumably in the direction of Papageno's call.

As Papageno and Pamina enter the stage, it is revealed that Papageno did indeed whistle in reply to Tamino's flute. The pursuing Monostatos and his servants immediately capture them. Desperate, Papageno tried his bells; their captors, entranced by the sound, are compelled to dance, exiting the scene. Papageno and Pamina are relieved only for a moment, when the sound of Sarastro and his retinue are heard approaching. When Sarastro appears⁷, she kneels before him and admits that she did indeed try to run away, but that it was because Monostatos was trying to force himself on her. Sarastro forgives her, but expresses that he cannot let her free to return to her mother, because she needs a man to guide her⁸.

Monostatos enters, with Tamino captive. Tamino and Pamina immediately embrace at the sight of each other, already in love. Monostatos separates them, trying to place the blame on Tamino, but it is Monostatos that is punished by Sarastro, for advancing on Pamina. The First Act ends with Tamino and Papageno receiving blindfolds before they are sent to the Temple of Ordeal to be tested.

Act II:

A council of priests of the Temple of Wisdom, led by Sarastro, determine that Tamino and Pamina will be married, and that Tamino will join their order, if he passes the trials. Sarastro explains that the Queen of the Night aims to bewilder and frighten people with superstition.

Tamino and Papageno are briefed that the completion of the trials will lead to wisdom. Tamino readily accepts the challenge, while Papageno is dismissive, due to the suggestion of danger, until a priest informs him that Sarastro has a wife for him too, should he complete the trials. The first trial is to remain silent as women tempt and threaten them. Papageno has difficulty remaining silent, while Tamino remains steadfast and says nothing, except to hush Papageno.

Meanwhile, while Pamina is asleep, Monostatos attempts another advance on her, but is frightened away when the Queen of the Night enters. She gives a dagger to Pamina, ordering her to kill Sarastro, or be disowned. After she departs, Monostatos attempts one more advance, threatening to reveal the murder plot, but Sarastro enters, sending Monostatos away, and choosing to forgive Pamina and her mother, the Queen of the Night, rather than exact punishment.

Back in the Temple of Ordeals, Tamino and Papageno undergo another test of silence, which Papageno fails by engaging an old woman in conversation. Joking, he asks if she has a sweetheart, and she answers, "yes," and that it is him, and disappears. As Papageno rushes out in confusion, Tamino plays his

flute, accidentally summoning Pamina. In keeping with his vow to silence, he refuses to speak with her, which she takes for a disinterest in her. The priests then congratulate Tamino on his success so far, but Pamina is not told what his tests were.

Papageno enters after they have all left, and sings a song, while playing the magic bells, about his wishes for a wife. The old woman enters again, and presses Papageno to swear engagement to her, or else to remain lonely forever. Reluctantly he does, and immediately the old woman transforms into the young and beautiful Papagena. Before he can embrace her, the priests drive her out of their temple.

Elsewhere, the child-spirits spy Pamina with the dagger, about to take her own life⁹, as she believes that Tamino no longer loves her. The spirits stop her, insisting that Tamino still loves her, and that they will meet again soon. In the presence of two armored guards, Tamino approaches the doors to the last two trials- one of water, and one of fire. Tamino steps forward, ready, but Pamina calls for him to wait for her. As the guards inform him that his trial of silence is over, he excitedly greets her, and they proceed together through the trial through fire, and then through water, all while he plays the magic flute for protection. As they emerge unscathed, the priests hail their triumph. Elsewhere, Papageno prepares to hang himself, fearing that he has forever lost Papagena, but at the last minute, the child-spirits appear and remind him to try calling her with his magic bells. He does, and Pamina appears again, leading to a duet proclaiming their happiness together.

Meanwhile, Monostatos leads the Queen of the Night and her Three Ladies to the Temple of Wisdom, indulging her desire to destroy it on the promise that the Queen of the Night will give Pamina to him. Before they can attack, however, they are magically cast out into the night forever. Sarastro then welcomes the united couple into the Temple, as their endurance of the trials are praised by the priests around them.

The changes I've made:

1. Tamino the prince is Tamina the princess in my retelling. This is to help remove some of the favoritism toward males in the original. It also changes the way that the forces trying to keep them apart may be received by my audience.
2. Despite the fact that contemporary retellings of the opera depict Papageno as merely a human, I am sticking to the original concept of Papageno as a man-bird hybrid creature. As a character, he features more attributes of instinct than of "manliness," or of what we value in humans.
3. The Queen of the Night in my version has the head of a lioness; I want her supernatural status to stand out more than her gender.
4. The three spirits have been condensed into one.
5. Monostatos is not a moor, as I do not want race to be the basis for his status as an undesirable.

6. Rather than emphasizing a feminine deceitfulness, I will refer to it more in terms of the superstitions and concealment embodied by Night.
7. Sarastro, rather than a man, is instead a large lion with a man's face. This is, again, to downplay gender while emphasizing a supernatural nature.
8. The conviction that a woman requires a male handler is absent from my retelling.
9. Pamina will instead be setting out to kill Sarastro, believing him to be the cause of Tamina's aloof behavior, and trying to keep them apart.

While it was unclear to what extent these changes would be evident in the resulting illustrations, it was important that I at least be grounded with a sense of what I wanted the story to be. I did not, however, go about painting the illustrations in chronological order, but rather worked on whatever episodic moment of the story excited me most at the time of painting.

The first was a painting that, while spontaneous, seems now a perfect beginning; as our hero looks to the next stage of her journey, I too felt that my Ordeals were just beginning.



Tamina and the Three Doors, watercolor

Second Interview with Garrett Zopfi

Zopfi: Is spatial illusion important in your illustrations?

Moreno: It depends on the image. In general: not really. Come to think of it, I don't think spatial illusion was ever all that interesting to me. But, that said, there are times where a deep sense of space serves the image. Something that looks far away in space is also farther from the foreground in time, for instance. With this project, I'm making a greater effort to utilize illusionary space, at least to some degree, when I think it serves the image, but I'm not striving for that kind of space overall.

Maybe it'd be helpful to add that I tend to think cinematically with space- it's something Catherine O'Connell pointed out as well. If I think of my illustrations as "shots," there are times where it's prudent to have a close-up, and other times it's more appropriate to zoom out.

Z: How is making images from The Magic Flute out of sequence affecting your process?

M: To be honest, it's not all that different from working in order, because even when I set out to do something chronologically, it always gets to a point where I start jumping between works, depending on what's calling my attention at the time. I suppose the only major difference is that even the beginning of this process wasn't so rigorous. It was maybe easier to get excited about an image that way.

Z: What was the process of character design like? Which characters did you design first?

M: Perhaps nobody knows this, but character design is sort of a hobby of mine. It's kind of an intuitive process at this point, and plenty of fun. I usually start out pretty literal with these designs. I get to know the material well first- in this case, I watched a lot of Magic Flute performances. For Tamino, for instance, I just started by drawing what I think a prince in this opera would look like. From that first drawing, I made more sketches, changing things depending on what was or wasn't working in the last sketch. In Tamino's case, nothing seemed to work or make me even like Tamino, until I changed him into Tamina. Solutions for all the other characters came easier after that.

Since you asked specifically, the first characters I designed, actually, were the maidens that work for the Queen of the Night. Because I had a sense of what I wanted them to look like before I'd figured anyone else out yet.

Z: How is color playing a role in your illustrations?

M: I think, largely, it softens things? To be honest, I haven't thought about it too much, but the use of color just seems "right." That's how a lot of my color choices tend to work too- more based on instinct than some rigorous system. I digress- I think the most important thing is to create magical, delightful, musical images, and I need to work in color for once, instead of black and white, to achieve the effect I'm looking for. The sharp, bold lines of pen and black ink, though I love them aesthetically, wouldn't work. They're more like stark statements; I want something a little more elusive in this case. Magic comes from things that aren't so easy to read.

Z: You're working with wet media. What aesthetic are you going for in your illustrations and how is using watercolors allowing you to attain that aesthetic?

M: Oh, oops- I think I answered this sort of in the last question.

I think, more so than oil or acrylic, which have to be dragged across a surface, watercolor is freer to move, to mingle with nearby colors. And the way that the paper and glazes shine through the layers of color is more evocative of light, or maybe of an aura. So, movement and transparency of color are important to me, and I think both help to evoke the music and magic of the opera.

Week 12 and the Final Crunch

This week begins with a new Intention Statement, revised to indicate my focus on the opera in particular:

"In my continued interest in illustration as a way of interacting with and re-telling literary works, I am illustrating Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)*. The opera, as one I was introduced to as a child, has a way of awakening a sense of wonder and, in the music and the non-definition of particular time and place, create a mystical space, which I think allows the audience to both observe and journey with the characters. This inviting, fantastical space is what I hope to project in my works.

While my illustrations will generally follow the plot of the original opera, I have made changes, particularly in gender representations, to combat what I see as a misogynistic bent inherent in the piece, despite the fact that it was a common perspective of 18th century Austria. Major changes include changing the heroic prince Tamino into a princess Tamina, thus making her relationship with Pamina a lesbian coupling, and adding animalistic aspects to both the Queen of the Night and Sarastro as a way of subduing the human gender dynamic between the two. These changes are necessary, I believe, to preserve the fantastical without being obstructed by the original gender-biased ideals.

While it has been my general inclination to work with black ink, I will be using watercolor in rich, expressive hues to communicate the sense of ephemerality, magic, and music inherent in the opera. To further impart the energy of Mozart's music, I will paint while listening to such music, and spend much more of the drawing and painting process standing up. Perhaps standing is something like a stage performance in itself, or the role of the conductor, who, in standing, can better see and direct his pit. "

There was also a gallery visit, in which, though through much head-scratching and bewilderment (for none of my group have installed work in a gallery before), and the guidance of Cristin Cash and Sue Johnson, we came to realize that our work would fill out the space better than we imagined, and could even communicate peacefully beside each other and across the room.

By Cristin Cash's advice, I am working with the premise of affixing my work directly to the wall, protected behind sheets of floated Plexiglas.

Beyond that, it was a matter producing, producing, painting and painting, and diving into the world I had set up, and the music I was coming to know by heart.



Tamina Following the Child-Spirit, watercolor



The Circumstances of Tamina and Pamina's First Meeting, watercolor



Purification By Fire, watercolor



Purification By Water, watercolor

Reflections and Closing Thoughts

Regrettably, the last month or so of SMP was more exhausting than it ought to have been. With commitments in other classes I had to attend to, I often had to put off illustrating for the sake of writing a paper, or preparing a work, etc. The final efforts to finish the paintings were long, bitter, exhausting, and miserable.

I think this, in the end, reflected poorly in my work as well; such that rather than soft, lovely brushstrokes, my work is scrubby and frantic- the result of a frazzled, rushed mind.

To be fair, however, this might also arise from a general lack of experience with watercolor; I am much more comfortable in black and white, with ink, than I am with full-color paintings.

For the future, I would like to not only practice painting in watercolor, but I will also try Chinese ink painting, which requires swift, confident brushstrokes. I am currently capable of drawing confidently with a pen; now I need to achieve that confidence in a brush, on a larger scale.

A note to any future SMPers:

I hope you will not over-commit yourself as I have. Take the opportunity to get to know and understand yourself. And in SMP- as well as in whatever other classes you are taking in tandem- resolve only to do work that is reasonably accomplishable within the necessary timeframes. Get to know what it is you want with your art, but do not neglect to get to know your limits.

Annotated Bibliography

Instances of *The Magic Flute*

Amano, Yoshitaka. *Mateki: The Magic Flute*. Carpinteria, CA: Radical Books, 2008. Print.

This book is perhaps what set me on the path to looking into the Magic Flute. It features a loose interpretation of the opera's story by Amano, and is filled with his energetic, surging illustrations. The book was an end goal in itself, though some of the illustrations were also made into a motion graphic by Radical Books.

Amano's retelling is mostly about a powerful love, and how it smites evil- a recurring theme in Amano's work (see 1001 Nights in "Visual Influences" below). It is a theme strongly supported by the plot of the opera itself.

Bergman, Ingmar, dir. *The Magic Flute*. Gaumont, 1975. Film.

This is a clear, filmic retelling of the opera, though it includes some changes. Perhaps most notably, it is sung in Swedish, rather than German, the English translation of which (which I encountered via English subtitles) is more direct and easily understood than even versions of the opera I've heard sung in English. Other changes are to the plot itself, and are said to be for ease of understanding the opera. While I agree that Bergman has been made it extremely accessible, I would add that his changes also serve to correct some moral issues with it. For instance, Sarastro, who has kidnapped Pamina, is presented as her father, and therefore seems to be protecting rather than imprisoning her.

The film is also noteworthy in its many nods to the fact that his source is theatrical. It references theater by using largely flat, theatrical space, showing an on-off stage dynamic, and suggestions of an audience. They led me to wonder about how I might relate my work to the medium of my source (performance).

McVicar, David, dir. *Die Zauberflöte*. By Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Royal Opera House, London. 27 Jan. 2003. Performance on DVD.

This was the first performance I saw since my childhood, and the only traditional stage performance that I returned to again and again over the course of my project.

"The Magic Flute." *Operavox*: Image Entertainment, 2000. Film.

The thirty-minute animated film of *The Magic Flute*, was produced by the BBC as part of a larger project of animating several operas. The music is condensed, and much of it cut out to fit the time limit, and it is translated into

English- both of which are near crimes in my eyes, but the animation at least is spirited. The fantastical character designs were the most influential elements of this telling.

Reiniger, Lotte. *Papageno*. Charlotte Koch-Reiniger, Berlin, 1935. Film.

Papageno is a short animated film written, created, and directed by Lotte Reiniger. Employing her shadow-puppet style of animation, the short film focuses exclusively on the character Papageno, who longs for a Papagena (a wife), in a way that is entirely isolated from the plot of the opera, despite the use of Mozart's music. It is another case of the source (Mozart's opera) slightly tweaked.

Works About *The Magic Flute*

Brown, Jane K. "The Queen of the Night and the Crisis of Allegory in *The Magic Flute*." *Goethe Yearbook* 8 (1996). 142-156. Web. 2 Nov. 2012.

I imagined this would deal with what I saw as a misogynist bent in the opera. Basically: if you take the allegories in the opera for what they were meant to stand for, the opera is full of problematic meanings and ideologies- one being that women with power are evil, and only those that submit to the will of men are good. This is the reason why I've decided to change the hero into a woman in my retelling.

Prandi, Julie D. "The Road to Wisdom in Mozart's *Magic Flute*." *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 26 (1997). 273-285. Web. 2 Nov. 2012.

Visual Influences, and Works about Artists

1001 Nights. Dir. Mike Smith. Hyperion Studio, 1998. Film.

An animated work designed and conceived of by Yoshitaka Amano, it takes his experience in the animation field to add a new dimension to his paintings- as if his illustrated works had been given life. Figures float and traverse the surface of the screen in the same way that his illustrations seem to swim and writhe into themselves.

As his own interpretation of the traditional folktales, the film features elements that would later play into his later take on the Magic Flute, *Mateki*. Some similar elements include the emphasis on the male and female lovers; a sense of ecstatic euphoria in their union, and bleak sense of loss in their

separation; an anthropomorphic but all-powerful force of evil that threatens their union; and the ultimate, fantastical triumph of love, which destroys that evil. Another point is that both stories have a vagueness to them, or rather a simplicity. Neither feature particular origin stories, background details, grounding in a defined world, character dialogue, or established goals and motivations.

Amano: The Complete Prints of Yoshitaka Amano. New York, NY: Harper Design International, 2003. Print.

The complete catalogue was instrumental in helping me practice composition; I drew the shapes and spaces of Amano's images to see what essential elements I am drawn to, distilling his works into their essential arrangements.

It features an essay afterword by Hiroshi Unno, an author who collaborated with Amano in an adult picture book, *Alice Erotica*. From this I learned that Amano and I share much of the same influences, including Art Nouveau, golden age illustration, ukiyo-e prints, and fantasy stories.

Beckett, Sheilah, illust. Golden Book. *The Twelve Days of Christmas: A Christmas Carol*. Racine, WI: Western Publishing Company, 1992. Print.

A significant childhood influence.

Carter, Anne. *In Powder and Crinoline*. 2nd ed. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1979. Print.

Republished from the original 1913 publication, this book features Kay Nielson's illustrations for the book in their original context.

Malan, Dan. *Gustave Doré: Adrift on Dreams of Splendor*. St. Louis, MO: Malan Classical Enterprises, 1995. Print.

Full of Dore's prints, as well as information on his life and work.

Omega Books. *Sinbad the Sailor, and other stories from the Arabian Nights*. 1914. Hertfordshire, England: Omega Books Ltd, 1986.

Print.

Features the illustrations of Edmund Dulac in a republication of the same 1914 book. Like the illustrated *In Powder and Crinoline*, this book provides context to Edmund Dulac's lush illustrations.

Technical and Craft Guides

Bang, Molly. *Picture This: How Pictures Work*. Boston, MA: Bullfinch Press, 1991. Print.

A book on pictorial composition, using simple shapes cut from paper to demonstrate. This has been a phenomenal help and resource from the beginning of the semester.

Ebrahimian, Babak. *Sculpting Space in the Theater*. Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2006. Print.

The book features interviews with various theater/ stage designers. Before I knew that I would be illustrating a performed work, I recognized that it was always placing characters in settings that gives me trouble; in this book I sought the advice of these accomplished theater designers. It covers the gamut of ways that theater reaches its visual look- from costume to lighting.

Gurney, James. *Color and Light*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing, LLC, 2010. Print.

This was a summer read of mine, though I didn't realize how much I would rely on the information it taught me as I pursued painting in watercolor. The book mainly focuses on mixing and selecting colors for lighting situations and to effect mood.

Gurney, James. *Imaginative Realism*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing, LLC, 2009. Print.

I read this before *Color and Light*, and it immediately gave me greater confidence that I can make successful work of an imaginative nature. The book is filled with tips on translating the imaginative into reality in ways I'd never thought of- such as by building models and sculptures to refer to.

Mateu- Mestre, Marcos. *Framed Ink: Drawing and Composition for Visual Storytellers*. Culver City, CA: Design Studio Press, 2010. Print.

This book was more significant when I was looking into making a graphic novel; nevertheless, it speaks at length of composing sequences of images so that they best tell a story.

Informative/ Misc. Disciplines

Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1968. Print.

A book about various problematic ways that theater can play out. I bought this book at first in hopes that it would literally be about empty spaces (as in negative space on a canvas). Serendipitously, it turned out to be about theater, and various things to keep in mind when interpreting works for the stage, so that the performances are alive and relevant.

Chung, Sheng Kuan. "Aesthetic Practice and Spirituality: Chi in Traditional East Asian Brushwork." *Art Education* 59, 4 (2006). 33-38. Web.

It reminds me of the *kabuki* play, *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy*, which involves a master calligrapher who becomes deified.

Ciuraru, Carmela, ed. *First Loves: Poets Introduce the Essential Poems That Captivated and Inspired Them*. New York, NY: Scribner Poetry, 2000. Print.

This book introduced me to several new poems that I'd never read or heard of, back when I was sure I would be illustrating poems. Perhaps more helpfully, it offers several perspectives on why poems "mean something" to people, or what draws people to poetry.

Dalby, Liza. *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993. Print.

Covering all the major bases as far as kimono history, tradition, practice, and wear, this book is a frequent source and friend.

Kimono finds its way into my artistic sensibilities in many ways- color sense, curvaceous treatment of rectangular space, and in an aesthetic concept called *iki* (roughly, a quite or hidden elegance).

Dobyns, Stephen. *Next Word, Better Word*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

I first picked it up at the suggestion that I write my own text for my art; it also gave me a greater appreciation for reading poetry.

Also helped me to see art-making a little differently; concepts such as a sparing choice in words relates to a restriction in artistic elements and details. The way that the sounds of the words and their order and staging and rhythm effect the poem's presence is not unlike the effects of color and compositional arrangement in an image. Though I don't have a clear one-for-one relationship in mind for these elements, the comparison was thought-provoking, and meaningful to one who hopes to illustrate text.

Horodner, Stuart. *The Art Life: On Creativity and Career*. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, 2012. Print.

This summer reading assignment offered a holistic view of the activities an artist undergoes, and was an eye-opener to various approaches and reasons to artmaking.

Koren, Leonard. *Wabi-Sabi, for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*. Point Reyes, CA: Imperfect Publishing, 2008. Print. With my continued interest in Japanese art, I was curious about this book on one of the most widespread aspects of Japanese aesthetics, *wabi-sabi*. The author is not an expert in Asian Studies, but rather an architect with a history of producing his own books about design and aesthetics. Rather than a textbook or formal essay, the book reads like a series of notes or reminders of the key goals and interests of this aesthetic principle- like a manifesto for the cause of wabi-sabi.

Melançon, Mei. "Scared Artless." *Giant Robot*. 26 Sep. 2011. Web. 02 Oct. 2012.

This article discusses a common public anxiety about entering into the art world- that one needs expertise; self-consciousness keeps people from attending art events or engaging with the art scene.

I, too, tend to be self-conscious from the creator perspective. I have anxieties that my work isn't intelligent enough, that I'm just an amateur, etc. The fact that the anxiety is double-sided is, strangely, encouraging to me, or at least makes me a little less afraid of my audience. For both parties, the end goal should be to learn by doing, or learn by going.

Richardson, Donna. *Visual Paraphrasing of Poetry*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1993. PDF file.

Richardson's book is basically about how we need to recognize what's actually, literally, happening in the poem, and visualize it, in order to understand it. She argues that creating a visual log of the literal visuals (that is- drawing them) should be a necessary component to properly understanding and interpreting poetry.

Upon meeting with her, Dr. Richardson and I also spoke about how, as an artist, it is my job to take illustrations of poems beyond the immediate visuals, making them somehow evocative of the greater meanings embedded in a given poem. The final chapter of the book, too, addresses the fact that the imagery in poetry can get extremely elusive and non-specific, even when describing specific figures and objects, and so such poems are more open to expressive illustrations, rather than simply literal drawings or diagrams.