

"Flood: From Noah to Babel and Beyond"

"Flood" was generated, for me, through a random Yahoo News item that caught my attention. The article was about the vanishing Moken Sea Nomads of Thailand/Myanmar. Every once in a while I'll read most or all of a comment stream. I love their often wild and woolly nature, have transcribed some into past drawings and after reading this article I felt ready to try it again.

A quality that conventional art possesses is its concreteness. The magic of our times is that electronic communication allows for unlimited interconnectivity. The tragedy is the loss of concrete action and experience engendered by the virtual world. By transferring the content of the virtual world onto the convention of a traditional art form, I can illuminate through concreteness, scale, complexity and pictorial relationships, sensations, new meaning and trajectories. Underlying our interconnectivity is a nascent morality - what do we say? What do we do? The story of Noah seemed a fitting starting point to begin weaving a secondary text into the thirty thousand word comment section of a news story about an ancient race of sea dwellers on the verge of extinction. The implications and trajectories here become multiple: Climate Change, Industrialism and any and all of the myriad of pursuits and activities of the human species that are destructive to our survival and ability to flourish. Ultimately this piece asks the question: "Are we in control of humanity and the earth?" Both texts anguish over the fate of humanity and consequently both texts include words like "destruction" and "earth". Part of the pleasure of painting and drawing the texts was lucking out when a chance confluence of the two texts shared a complete word as when both texts contained the word "bird", "water" or "days", or when the comment stream actually referenced the bible by odd chance.

My desire is to create a piece whose experience has multiple facets: of scale, of a conceptual dialectic in pairing the biblical excerpt of Noah through Babel with a selection of contemporary electronic "babble", the simple poetry created through the chance parallels between the two texts and lastly the visual compositions of the meandering linear loops of lassoed words. Underlying all of the texts are fuzzy horizontal bands of color that might suggest flag-like schematics representing the triumph of nationhood over the aboriginal or simply the misty atmospheric renderings of a sea's horizon. "Flood" is, at its core, about Paradise Lost, which is the quintessential myth of humanity.

Kenny Cole,
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