

Over the course of three years I have been mining the relationship between boxers and Italian-American gangsters. Both groups consist of a constructed family, and each constructed family is invested in the public performance of a private moment. I am fascinated by the intimate battle between two boxers, judged by one man and leered at as a spectacle by thousands. I see a similar physical closeness in the way Italian American gangsters express their shared affection. The most recent iteration of this idea introduces the three-ring circus, the epitome of the spectacle and of exploiting the ambiguity between private and public moments.

My research provides the phrases and words that become both the titles and content of my work. Over the past two years I have depicted boxers and gangsters using these five titles as umbrellas for my ideas: Sing Sing Canary, Ascension, Self Portraits, All My Hero's Cheat On Their Wives and Winners and Losers. I went from depicting these men in a familiar, macho and upright pose, to depicting them in vulnerable positions, limp figures reminiscent of Italian Baroque paintings and religious scenarios. At times I quiet the violence associated with crime and boxing by removing the blood or isolating it from the corporeal; alternately the blood is so exaggerated that it appears to be a decorative appendage. In later works, the fighters and gangsters are martyrs and emphasized as publicly charming but privately frightening figures.

Eventually I began photographing myself in the death and fallen poses of these men. By replacing their image with mine I break the mechanism of their scary world and save myself rather than wait to be saved. Using my sensibility as a printmaker I created drawings as multiples, owning through repetition the violence that would otherwise be beyond my control.

Once committed to an idea I am able to explore materials in ways that lead me to unique mark making. I take the idea and push it through the processes of printmaking, drawing, painting and other media. Jasper Johns' advice to, "Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it. Do something else to it." is continually influential. Currently, I am using cut paper to make small cameos while also working on a large-scale installation consisting of silkscreens printed with graphite powder and transparent tint base.

My recent installation, *Versus*, included three walls covered floor to ceiling with silkscreened images of spectators. On the remaining wall of the gallery were three illustrated scenes: myself in a boxing match, as a dead gangster and as a lion tamer. The works were executed in the style of circus posters. Presented in three acts these drawn theatrical scenes stretch the bounds of believability. The insertion of myself in contemporary garb signals to the viewer that however familiar the spectacle may be, the private moment is unreal. Using the audience to complete the concept, as do the lion tamers, boxers and Mafioso, the spectator becomes the spectacle.

Lately, I have been turning to film, video and live performance to further develop the connection between my subjects. I'm struck by the boxers parading into the ring, the circus parading through town and the gangsters solemn funeral parade to the cemetery. I am heading towards an installation where these three parades will be allowed to interact in ways, both formal and conceptual, that they have not before.