Narrative Extrapolation

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NARRATIVE EXTRAPOLATION

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

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August 2015
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My thesis exhibition *Narrative Extrapolation* will showcase the culmination of my interests in woodworking, sculpture, and literature in the narration of a tale told through visual means. A mixed media installation will be constructed in which furniture, dioramas, and found objects convey events from a psychological story that combines fairy tale and horror genres and features an archetypal hero.

My story will correspond to the traditional role of the fairy tale as a narrative meant to entertain, inspire, and enlighten through the actions of a one-dimensional character involved in a successful quest. Investigating the role of installation and performance art as narrative storyteller, I will focus on creating an environment that will be as much about expressing a story as creating an atmosphere. Using dioramas and personally acting as the narrator of my tale, I will ask the viewer to step into my fabricated environment to determine what occurred.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

*Narrative Extrapolation* began with my love affair with horror fiction and my desire to present my enigmatic horror tale through installation and performance art. Within the walls of the Annex Gallery, I challenged myself to design levels of interconnectedness between the events in my story, dioramas representing scenes from the tale, and the construction of my narrator’s fictional interior. By rendering scenes from my story into 1:72 scale dioramas, I presented a series of gruesome acts either resting on top of burned oak pedestals or secreted within niches in scorched faux walls. The dioramas depicted scenes from my story but were left intentionally vague; this allowed the viewer to form their own questions while they explored the gallery. To complete my vision, I assumed the role of my storyteller as he/I sat typing the notes that would become the clues to the exhibit. Within the blackened interior, I created an all-encompassing environment that transformed the viewer into a participant in my fabricated world.

My inspiration came from the artists Do Ho-Suh, Kara Walker, and Susan kae Grant and the horror fiction of H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allen Poe. These artists informed my decisions about the conceptual and spatial aesthetics of the exhibit while the films of David Lynch, Ridley Scott, and John Carpenter shaped the atmospheric qualities. By transforming the Annex Gallery into a disturbing environment, I designed and conceived my tale to be expressed through the eyes of my storyteller.

My exhibition was inspired by the aforementioned artists, but was also combined with studies into the philosophy and psychology of space and horror. Readings in horror criticism by Cynthia A. Freeland and Ken Gelder shaped and focused my understanding of the emotional impact horror has on the psyche and how to convey it to the audience. What developed was an
installation that presented fragments of a complete story, which left the tale’s conclusion to be determined.

A brief description of the Annex Gallery will elucidate how my exhibit transformed the gallery. The Annex Gallery is comprised of two sections: a vestibule measuring sixteen feet long and eight feet wide, and the main exhibition space, which measures twenty-three feet long by twenty-one feet wide. The ceiling is ten feet high with track lighting throughout the gallery, and a wall that contains two entrances separates the vestibule and the gallery space. To control the flow of the audience and provide a linear progression for my exhibit I chose to board up the doorway closet to the gallery entrance (Fig. 1.)

Fig. 1 Annex gallery floor plan
Using a Japanese technique known as shou-sugi-ban, which translates as burnt cedar board, I blackened and charred the wood that was used for the exhibit. This burning technique brought with it aesthetics qualities that heightened the atmosphere of dilapidation I desired for the show, while imbuing the gallery with an overpowering odor. In Pittsburgh, I observed that many houses were constructed with lath and plaster walls, whereas this is rarely see in Texas. The architecture of Pittsburgh inadvertently provided me with the visual cues I needed to form the correlation between the written word and the design of the exhibit.

I chose to arrange and segment the gallery into three distinct sections, thus mimicking the narrative format of a beginning, middle, and end. The beginning of the exhibit took place in the vestibule. Upon entering the Annex Gallery, the audience was confronted with an ill lit hallway filled with the smell of burned wood. Before them was a boarded up doorway formed from charred pine boards, with newspaper crumpled between the boards (Fig. 2.)
As viewers turned right, they encountered five illuminated sculptural pedestals constructed of charred oak, and topped with dioramas. These five pedestals ran symmetrically along the vestibule, and introduced the viewer to the opening scenes from the story.

I designed the pedestals to mirror each other but I chose to alter their dimensions as befitted the vignettes they presented. The pedestals measured between forty-six and forty-four inches in height, and twelve by twelve and twelve by thirty six inches in width and depth. All the pedestals were comprised of two and a half inch charred oak slats with spaces between the slats measuring three quarters of an inch. Through these gaps, internal lighting in the pedestals escaped and provided additional illumination to the gallery, while LED lights hidden in the dioramas directed the audience’s attention to events pictured in the dioramas (Fig. 3.)
The twelve by twelve inch pedestal dioramas contained figures waving on the left and a group of figures surrounding a deceased body on the right. As the viewer walked down the hallway the next two pedestals exhibited a boarded up and derelict warehouse surrounded by cars with a figure pointing towards the interior of the building (Fig. 4.), and opposite this a scene in which police are investigating a boy drowned in a pool of water. These scenes were left vague and mysterious to heighten the audience’s interest, and it wasn’t until they progressed further in the gallery that they were given clues to what occurred in the dioramas.
Fig. 4. *Narrative Extrapolation* Narrator’s Home detail, mixed media. 2013.

The last pedestal was centrally located at the end of the vestibule and presented a dilapidated house with boarded up windows. Surrounded by police and citizens, a lone figure stood at a window and viewed the approaching audience. As my miniature narrator stood at his window watching the crowd surround his home, I orchestrated a correlation between the miniatures and the performance I played during the opening reception. I envisioned this house and diorama to be a microcosmic representation of my narrator’s domicile, and by blurring the line between the miniature and myself, I hoped to transport the audience into the middle and end segments of the gallery (Fig. 5).
To truly immerse the audience and make them part of the storyline I had to make my surroundings as believable as possible. This was accomplished in the construction of a broken up and labyrinthine hallway formed by five walls. The hallway measured sixteen feet long hallway and diagonally bisected the main gallery. This secondary hallway was formed with my faux lath and plaster and became progressively narrower towards its apex (Fig. 6.) Dioramas were illuminated and placed in the niches of the walls, which I envisioned as photographs, paintings, or my narrator’s memories. The hallway became a way to provide further scenes from the narrative and to transform the hallway into a perverse cabinet of curiosities.
I arranged and situated thirteen individual dioramas at varying heights in the walls. These dioramas depicted outdoor scenes of implied violence with only one interior scene. Two of the vignettes displayed a congregation at church while another showed a tranquil park scene where a man is holding a child in the background (Figs. 7 and 8.) Individually, the scenes conveyed little malice but it was in combination with the notes discovered father into the gallery that their true implication was gleaned.
Fig. 7. *Narrative Extrapolation* Park detail, mixed media. 2013.

In my tale, an unknown assailant has been slaying people in a small, unnamed town. My protagonist has discovered the antagonist’s true identity, but what he sees is a monster in human form. My narrator tries to inform the town about what he knows, but in doing so he becomes the suspect of the crimes. In deciding how to form the connection between my story, the dioramas, and my performance as the narrator, I placed more than fifty distinctive notes on the gallery floor.

Fig. 8. *Narrative Extrapolation* Church detail, mixed media. 2013.
I conscientiously placed the notes haphazardly on the ground to erase any linearity in their order and to force the reader to dig to find new clues. While some notes provided details about the dioramas others gave the audience a glimpse into the mind of the narrator as his sentences began to reveal his paranoia and helplessness.

A sampling of the notes follows:

A group of campers found the fourth body today. He was found hidden in the bushes in Grace Park, out by route 22.

The weather has grown cold. Maybe using newspaper as insulation will keep me from freezing?

The police still have no clue what they are looking for. They think they are looking for a group of men but oh how they are wrong.

They are here!

It knows where I live. I swear I can’t live with this knowledge much longer. Why will no one listen?

And Leave this place, and burn it once you go. I don’t have the strength to do it myself.

At the terminus of my diagonal hallway a tiny fissure was left in one wall. This gap measured one and half inches high and eight inches wide, and presented a view of a darkened void-like chamber. In this chamber, a lone figure could be seen typing at his desk with only a single light for illumination. Separated and inaccessible but still a direct player in the story, I sat typing the notes that became the clues to the story’s events. This portion ended the exhibit and broke through the fourth wall between voyeur and participant. The narrator and audience now found themselves cohabitating the same space at the same time.
The conclusion of the exhibit may have ended with the viewing of my narrator but to understand the atmospheric elements that transported the viewer into the heart of my story the color, lighting, auditory and olfactory sensations must be examined. The colors red and yellow dominated the exhibit, and provided the emotional and atmospheric triggers I desired. This red and orange tint was devised to simulate fire and the burning that occurred on the walls. I desired the entire exhibit to be placed in a burned-out shell of a house and to bring about this facet I chose lighting that would simulate the colors radiated by a fire. Faux flame light bulbs spotlighted the dioramas and provided a flickering light that threw the miniature figures into shadows.

With the olfactory sensation added by the burnt pine and oak, I imbued the gallery with an aroma that transported the audience into my narrator’s charred home. This alone would have provided a suitable ambiance, but to heighten the sense of anxiety and agitation I added a tension-heightening soundtrack to bring the spectators into my horror tale. The soundtrack played for eleven minutes and twenty-two seconds and was orchestrated in Apple’s program Garage Band. Through experimentation with various versions of the soundtrack I determined what would be the sound of fear and agitation in my exhibit. My looped soundtrack dominated the gallery, and consisted of a synthesized tempo altering heartbeat overlaid with many digitized sounds such as the crackling of a fire, rain and wind, and pitch altering gongs.

Smells and sounds were intended to tell one story and to engage and intrigue the audience to ask who is the narrator and what is the story he is relating? Is he a reporter who is transcribing the events as they occurred in this imaginary town? Is he a fiction writer working on a new book, or has he lost touch with reality and the images shown in miniature are only in his mind? These are the questions that began and ended the exhibition and inspired me to go to such lengths to
express one story. I answered none of these questions and instead left the audience to ponder the narrative as they explored and investigated the gallery.
CHAPTER TWO

ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

To begin an examination of horror in art, I looked at the emotional impact art possesses and how best to utilize that strength to plan the audience’s experience. I desired the audience’s full immersion in my tale while physically drawing them into my world and parable, and with this in mind I studied the artists Do-Ho Suh, Susan kae Grant, and Kara Walker. To enhance the audience’s understanding of my exhibit I questioned how a story can be told without words and what visual clues were needed to develop a fully-formed environment. Suh’s attention to repeated and intricate detail and the inclusion of miniature figures in his sculptures focused my understanding of the physical elements required to envelope the viewer. Grant’s installations and Walker’s photographs of myths, parables, and fairy tales shaped my urge to employ shadows and silhouettes to express my tale.

Through my examination, I found that their inclusion of narrative elements enhanced the audience’s interaction and responses. Suh’s sense of home, memory, and environment, coupled with Grant’s and Walker’s use of shadows and silhouettes became the impetus to design and orchestrate a visually engaging environment. Both my pedestal and wall-embedded dioramas presented vignettes from the chronicle but each asked the viewer to study the scenes in different ways. The entire exhibit became a set with static actors and actresses frozen in their portrayal of the tale.
Suh’s Apartment A, Unit 2, Corridor and Staircase, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA, and Home Within Home Within Home Within Home Within Home (Figs. 9 and 10.) present pleasant memories of his past reproduced in diaphanous fabric. The installations invite the viewer to walk into his memories of his past domiciles while the transparency allows them to stay firmly rooted in their present location. While his sense of memories in Apartment A and Home Within Home Within a Home Within Home Within Home draw the viewer into a comforting home and location, I desired my installation to project a sense of foreboding and danger. I constructed my environment to lure the viewer into my story and present them with a world in which the desire to explore is distrusted because of what might be found next.
In determining the role of my storyteller I connected to Joseph Grixti’s statement, “The fear of the dark has often been associated with the unease of separation and with the absence of the comfort and security provided by loved ones” (Terrors of Uncertainty pg. 155). This passage led me to isolate and seclude myself from the audience in a darkened void-like room as I wrote the clues to the story. Isolated in an expansive room beyond the charred walls I, as narrator, was separated by more than physical space. I sat and existed outside of the perceived confines of the exhibit, but I was still a part of the audience’s environment. Through the connection my narrator’s notes provided he became more than a phantasm or memory, he became a player in as well as the creator of the story.

While his unadorned room was cloaked in shadows I chose to interpret the emotional darkness of the gallery in a different way. By mimicking the charred remains of a derelict building, the gallery’s darkness became another player in the events. This darkness, along with an overpowering odor of burned wood, enveloped the audience.

Fig. 11. Susan kae Grant Unconscious Memory, There is an Understanding, #046. 44 x 46 in. Giclee 2002-2006.
The use of shadows to heighten the viewer’s involvement was inspired by experiencing first hand the effects Susan kae Grant was able to invoke through her photographs (Fig. 11.), while the artwork of Kara Walker demonstrates how a simplicity of form can transmit a powerful and detailed narrative. These two artists let silhouettes and shadows describe the unfolding storyline. Through the inclusion of miniature lights disguised as bushes in the pedestal dioramas and flickering red lights positioned above the figures in the wall dioramas, I was able to direct the audience’s point of interest and force them to search the dioramas for meaning. The directional lights had a secondary effect of providing vitality to the miniatures’ static poses. Disguised as bushes, or placed above the wall dioramas, the lights allowed the miniatures to writhe and dance on the walls within their rectangular prisons.

Kara Walker’s installation *Insurrection! (Our Tools Were Rudimentary, Yet We Pressed On)*, creates an ephemeral effect through the use of translucent fields of color projected onto her silhouettes. Her *Rise Up Ye Mighty Race* provides only a few two-dimensional figures to illustrate the tale. Grant in her series *Theatrical Realms of the Whimsical and Tragic* photographed shadows to capture her dream-like images. Their works allow the audience to envision and enter the artists’ mind solely through observation and interaction with the flat two-dimensional images.

Carl and Diane Royer shed light upon the role I performed during the exhibit through a passage in *The Spectacle of Isolation in Horror Films*” pg 93: “We want to see without being seen and to touch without being contaminated.” This passage inspired me to isolate myself from the audience and to step into the skin and role of chronicler mentally and physically. Through my role as narrator, I remained separated from the audience while providing clues to the exhibit. In researching a technique to present my narrator’s fear and paranoia, I examined the writings of
Lovecraft and Poe and their use of first person soliloquies and fictional journal entries to portray a mind on the brink of insanity.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERARY INFLUENCES

The problem I set out for myself to resolve was how to tell a story with brevity of words, while actively engaging the audience in the storyline. To nonverbally portray a horrific narrative, I first examined H. P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe. These two writers influenced my idea of how a proper horror tale should be written, and an examination of their tales convinced me to take on the role of narrator during the exhibit.

Lovecraft and Poe transmit the agitation, fear, and anxiety their characters experience while providing the reader with abundant environmental details. The physical locations appear plausible and familiar, and through this attention to detail, the authors breathe believability into their characters’ fates. The information provided concerns the ordinary and common lives of their characters, and through this ordinariness Lovecraft’s and Poe’s characters become believable. Be it through a description of their characters’ environment or a simple explanation of their professions we see and feel for their characters as they face the horrors to come. The characters, either as protagonists or antagonists, make their worlds real and vibrant and it was this energy that galvanized my exhibition.

Lovecraft is able to transport the reader to his doom-shrouded locations where creatures hide in the shadows, while Poe’s descriptions of madness or derangement, transport the reader into the mind of his characters. These aspects needed to exist in my exhibit. My narrator was the single witness and voice to the violence that beset his fictional town. Without the narrator, the dioramas and the environment would have felt flat and shallow. The inclusion of the narrator and his notes allowed the audience to experience the events portrayed in the dioramas as more than pages from the story.
Fiction allows the reader to step into the mind of the narrator thereby living the events as described. Lovecraft and Poe express their narratives differently, but it is their similarities that focused and articulated my story. Lovecraft’s environments and Poe’s depictions of mental derangement provided the model I used to form the clues about what occurred in my tale and town. I dissected one short story from each author: Lovecraft’s “Pickman’s Model” and Poe’s “Berenice.” Lovecraft’s protagonist Thurber in “Pickman’s Model” and Poe’s Eageus in “Berenice,” relate the events that have transpired to rationalize and explain the protagonists’ actions.

Lovecraft’s story “Pickman’s Model” introduces the narrator Thurber as he speaks to his associate Eliot. Thurber begins his tale by saying he has no knowledge of where Pickman has gone and speaks about why he dropped him as a friend. The reader learns that Pickman was a great painter of faces, but the subject matter he chose to paint led to his exclusion from Thurber’s group of associates. The reader learns the titles of a few of the paintings and the imagery they contain. Titles such as, “The Lesson” and “Holmes, Lowell, and Longfellow Lie Buried in Mount Auburn” are provided but it is Thurber’s description of the canvases that speak to the effect his paintings have had on audiences.

Lovecraft describes details in the paintings, but leaves the particulars to the reader’s imagination. Through the omission of a highly detailed account of the paintings, the reader must provide the answer to what was witnessed. The climax of the story, while not unforeseen, horrifies Thurber and gives credence to his previous actions. Lovecraft now provides the details so that the reader empathizes with Thurber’s fear of Pickman. Lovecraft builds Thurber’s tension until, we the readers learn about the photograph that inspired Pickman’s paintings. My dioramas followed Lovecraft’s technique and consciously omitted information, thereby forcing
the viewer to imagine what has occurred. My dioramas became symbolic representations of any park, or any open space. The story did not take place in any particular city; instead it existed anywhere and everywhere.

In Poe’s “Berenice” we listen to the main character, Eageus, as he describes his past and the monomania that afflicts him. The author gives us details early on about his mental instability but the reader has little reason or cause to foresee the dreadful events that occur. The grisly events that transpire tell the tale and the psychological breakdown that Eageus goes through, as he realizes the extent of his actions. The narrators’ mental state in these two authors’ tales led to my interpretation of the role of my narrator would play.

Lovecraft provides clues in the form of notes or journal entries taken from his narrator’s diary that moves the story to the climax. While the audience was free to roam around the gallery, my narrator was secluded and isolated in a void-like space that existed beyond the confines of the claustrophobic hallway. This void recreated my vision of the narrator as he sits in his home typing about the grisly murders. By utilizing performance art I was able to assume the role of the narrator and blur the line between an artistic exhibition and the performance. The interaction between the narrator and the audience allowed both parties to travel between the worlds created for the exhibit.

Examining Lovecraft and Poe’s writings led to my obfuscation of the facts and made the exhibit enigmatic. The exhibit told a story, but it was a story, which left the viewer with more questions than answers. The presentation and performance allowed the viewer a certain verisimilitude, by creating environment with layers of reality, which transformed the gallery into a stage on which the audience played a part in my tale.
CHAPTER FOUR

CINEMATIC INFLUENCES

I orchestrated and presented my exhibition to disturb the audience not through overtly unsettling imagery but through an alteration of a familiar space. Devices such as dim lighting coupled with a tension-building soundtrack, transported the viewer into the heart of the action. It was during the design of the exhibit that I consciously included elements from cinema and theatre to heighten the viewer’s anxiety. The audience became voyeurs of my installation, watching from the shadows as the narrator spins his tale.

Cinema’s and theatre’s greatest attributes are that they can express and exhibit a multifaceted narrative to further the plot and storyline. In determining how to portray a seemingly ordinary town beset by horrors I examined the directors David Lynch, Ridley Scott, and John Carpenter. In the films *Alien* and *In the Mouth of Madness*, Scott and Carpenter present lone individuals who endure the horrors and survive to the tale’s conclusion. Ellen Ripley in Ridley Scott’s *Alien* series must confront her horror and fear alone as her companions are slaughtered one by one while John Trent in John Carpenter’s *In the Mouth of Madness* confronts the supernatural with denial and rationality. These films show the mental state of the protagonists erode and unravel as their ordinary surroundings shatter piece by piece.

For the exhibit my narrator became the single voice of what occurred in his unnamed town. As he wrote his tale, the audience watched from a safe and isolated location, free from the horrific events but witnesses nonetheless. The audience became the voyeurs of my horror exhibition. My viewers could take no part in the scenes I set out before them. They were powerless to alter the events around them, and instead found themselves included in my tale.
David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet*, while not in the supernatural horror genre, provided this voyeuristic attribute in the guise of Kyle MacLachlan’s performance as Jeffrey. A scene in particular depicts Jeffrey being forced to hide in a closet by Isabella Rossellini’s character Dorothy. As the scene progresses we see as Jeffrey, “uses the closet both for concealment and for voyeuristic observation” (Royer pg. 92). This scene is very fitting for the emotional response I desired from my audience. I wanted to elicit a shock when the spectators realized that the typing they heard came not from a layer in the soundtrack but from my narrator typing. It was at this point of the exhibit that the actor and audience became aware of one another.

In Carpenter’s *In the Mouth of Madness* the mental breakdown of the main character John Trent, played by Sam Neil, occurs as he comes face to face with the supernatural and is subsumed by the knowledge he has acquired. The audience witnesses Trent as his ordinary world is shattered by supernatural events. During his quest to find the missing horror writer Sutter Cane, Trent realizes that he himself is a construct of the author’s tale. Trent’s confinement in a sanatorium is orchestrated by Sutter Cane simply because that is how Trent was written. The character of the movie becomes the character from the unfinished novel. This is what I wanted to express in my exhibit. The audience became a participant in the exhibit through their interaction with their surroundings and was accomplished with the notes left at the end of my narrator’s imagined hallway floor. The notes also allowed the narrator to converse with the audience through his single line sentences. A portion of the notes dealt with what occurred in the dioramas but a few notes related directly to the audience. I presented hints that my narrator could see and hear the audience’s reactions and exclamations, which further enhanced the unease that I wanted the audience to experience.
Color was an important consideration for the exhibit due to the psychological and emotional effect it has on our dispositions. It can turn a placid and comforting space into a place that triggers dread. To charge the atmosphere of my exhibit I determined that red would be the dominating color. Bathing the gallery in red combined with the scent of burned lumber, allowed me to focus the audience’s emotional response to the exhibit. The audience could intuit that something unpleasant had occurred and that this was not a safe and amiable space.

Through the utilization of Apple’s music composing program Garage Band, I orchestrated a looped soundtrack to heighten the fear and unease of the viewer. The pace of the soundtrack ebbed and flowed, and due to this alteration of tempo the audience experienced moments of calm before the imagined action would begin anew. Using this auditory device was the last addition to the exhibit and through this addition I was able to turn a serene and quiet gallery into a fully realized narrative. Whereas art and literature began the exhibit, cinema and theater provided the emotional impact, and what developed was an art installation that became a portion of each of these mediums.
CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF THE EXHIBITION

An analysis of *Narrative Extrapolation* begins with an examination of the success and strengths of the exhibit and the ideas that led to the development of an installation designed to present my horrific tale. The exhibit’s plausibility and juxtaposition of common objects placed in uncommon circumstances provided the elements that strengthened the exhibit and allowed the entire gallery to become a storytelling device. What began as a horror story told with dioramas, developed into a fully formed atmospheric environment that transported the viewer into the heart of my tale. Through my inclusion of emotion inducing lighting, a tension building soundscape, and dioramas placed upon pedestals and within reimagined walls, I provided the audience with an experience that was mystifying, engaging, and conceptually rich.

Fig. 12. *Narrative Extrapolation* Junkyard detail, mixed media. 2013.

I critiqued the exhibit to determine the particular strengths that enticed and tempted the audience. Through my observations, I validated my belief that the combination of atmospheric and performance elements in conjunction with the physicality of the exhibit elicited and transmitted the emotional and conceptual themes inherent in my horror narrative.
The visual aesthetic I sought for the exhibit revolved around my imagined appearance of a town and narrator who are both falling into decay and decrepitude because of the events that have transpired. It was through the burning of the wood and the simulation of lath and plaster that I was able to convey an air of abandonment and age and situated the audience in my interpretation of a derelict and burned out apartment.

I imagined the audience becoming characters in my narrative, and by surrounding the audience with text I was able to make them a part of the exhibit. The newspapers and notes left on the gallery floor reinforced the concept that the viewer stepped into and became a participant in the story being written. I sought to make the audience imagine themselves in the role of the miniature characters seen in the dioramas. This inclusion in the narrative was the cornerstone of the entire exhibit.

The levels of complexity and interconnectedness between the dioramas and this portion of the exhibit were done to further immerse the viewers into the tale. I had one goal in this

Fig. 13. *Narrative Extrapolation* Wall detail, mixed media. 2013.
portion of the exhibit, and that was to force the audience to explore their surroundings and discover further clues to the story. An unexpected situation developed because of the notes the audience found. As the audience read the notes they travelled back and forth between the dioramas and excitedly discussed what the notes contained. The audience was lured into going back and forth between the dioramas to determine which diorama corresponded with the notes.

The final question I presented to the audience concerned the mental state of the narrator. Is the story he presented a series of factual events or did it exist simply in his mind? These were the questions I desired the audience to determine and formulate on their own. No proper horror story tells the reader exactly what happens and in this tradition I only provided clues to what occurred but no more. As with Lovecraft and Poe, the end of the story is merely the end of that particular chain of events but the questions remain while the veracity of the narrator’s tale is left to the reader to determine. If the author succeeded, there is no right or wrong answer; the events described begin contemplation and in this fashion my dioramas provided no answers, just more questions.

The exhibition encompassed my artistic, literary, and cinematic inspirations and brought about an interesting and engaging artistic horror narrative. The audience participation and the comments I received at the completion of the exhibit confirmed my belief that an installation-based story could reach a diverse and educated audience, while remaining gratifying and thought provoking. The show challenged my original view of how the exhibit should be organized and pushed me to devise new and hitherto untried material. These challenges forced me to think what and how to express my narrative and through these challenges I was able to bring about a fully realized atmospheric environment that drew from all that I have gleaned over the years.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In order for a story to have an ending there has to be a beginning. This does not occur in my thesis exhibition specifically because I have no desire for the tale to end. My story leaves the story open to interpretation and expansion. Since there is no end to the narrative, there is no reason why the room cannot continue to acquire more space as it presents further scenes and secrets to the audience.

The potential for this narrative exhibition to grow and add chapters allows me to increase the scope, size, and complexity of the exhibition. With the addition of new media elements and imagery, the events that occur can grow exponentially and I can add elements from my present location. As Do Ho-Suh has done in his work, this piece could become my version of a memory box and the locations and people I meet in the future could be rendered in miniature so that they too could become dioramas placed within the exhibition’s walls and become part of its secrets. This burned out shell of a house does not end with this exhibit; new stories and scenes could be imagined with currently unknown victims who will be memorialized through the words and imagination of my narrator.
Works Cited


