

THESIS

FUNDamentalist DOLLS

Submitted by

Nicole L. Arnell

Department of Art

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2010

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

April 1, 2010

We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under our supervision by Nicole L. Arnell entitled FUNdamentalist DOLLS be accepted as fulfilling in part requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art.

Committee on Graduate Work

Matthew Cooperman

Gary Huibregtse

Marius Lehene

Advisor: John Gravdahl

Department Head: Gary Voss

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

FUNdamentalist DOLLS

This installation explores how form affects a viewer's experience of content. These artifacts produce an encounter in three ways: 1) gallery space roped off blocking physical interaction, 2) tangible book complete with magnets and pages, and 3) interactive Flash. Each of these engage the audience differently, sometimes asking for consideration, sometimes demanding complete physical interaction, and sometimes requesting something in between. The viewer's interaction is also affected by the comfort level with each form. Message delivery is intertwined with the engagement of the audience, which is dictated by its approachability. But to demand interaction over three forms, I want the dialogue to be stimulating.

The controversial subject matter is organized religion - specifically Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - and how fundamentalism alters each. Somewhere between approachability and satire, I explore the differences and similarities through FUNdamentalist DOLLS. The style follows the subject matter in its suggested innocence. By flaunting process, handmade elements, and raw materials, I promote the fact that a human hand created this artwork in hopes of a personal connection. But by placing it into the obvious digital - and therefore, mass-produced - world, I toy with the opposition of expected sensory experience.

Paper dolls are a nostalgic and innocent child's toy, requiring interaction by the viewer to dress the figure and add accessories. My dolls are gender-neutral and made of cork texture that suggests multiple skin colors, becoming a universal human archetype. Consistency in style and common glossy output forcing 3-D textures into a 2-D flat streamline the artwork's symbol-laden

message(s). The act of dressing up the dolls suggests both the existentialist choice of becoming part of a religious group and that religious belief is simply a costume.

Depending on prior knowledge the viewer brings to the experience, this message is received to multiple degrees. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are connected in their Abrahamic lineage and monotheism; however, the differences *and* similarities between the branches are explored via costumes and accessories that are allowed per that choice.¹ All artwork is executed as my informed opinion. The mental digestion and simplification of research inevitably dabbles in stereotypes; therefore, the artwork is not meant to educate others on religion. I do not intend any visual information to be a lie, but very little with religion is absolute, empirical truth.

The effect of fundamentalist thought upon orthodox views is the thrust to FUNdamentalist DOLLS. A fundamentalist is orthodox, but orthodoxy is not necessarily fundamentalist. Orthodox takes the social construct that is organized religion and strictly holds to doctrine or ritual, but fundamentalism ignores allegory in these doctrines and rituals. To take allegorical holy text and claim it as literal Truth is dangerous fuel to an already piously detached group.

Therefore, the effect of fundamentalism on religion is the repeated visual relationship of DOLLS through three forms and three religions. The handmade style is loud design glue that holds these pieces together as a series and transforms a complex social, yet intensely personal, subject matter into an innocent and approachable visual. This “innocence” of DOLLS also immediately contrasts with FUNdamentalism.

¹ Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are connected to the Jewish patriarch, Abraham. For more information, see the chapter “THE TIES THAT BIND...AND DIVIDE,” p. 15.

Besides the actual word, FUN becomes a symbol repeated between the three executions. FUN is drastically different in style with a mechanized, modernized illustration that feels like an outside influence. Part of the consistent format is how the stark FUN attaches only to the religious book accessory and then obscures everything below it. This is because fundamentalist religion is a 20th century effect from the Enlightenment Age where championship of rational thought and empirical proof pushed itself on to religious texts. By doing this, allegory is forced into a literal read, obscuring any larger goals of religion to a violently narrow viewpoint.²

Not meant for full education on the subject, my artwork simply begs examination through semiotics and three separate forms. I do not overtly apologize, nor intend offense. Organized religion fascinates me and my installation produces more than I had imagined from this human institution of moral codes.³ More controversial than I suspected, my exhibition is not allowed in the public gallery space of the University art museum. However, this allows me to contain the forms in a space that divorces itself from the outside world and reinforces personal interaction with the forms and the subject. Sparse signage in the installation helps guide the viewer through the interactions. Written in near figurative style, the text does not dictate to the viewer any lofty objectives to reach, nor precise directions to follow.

I encourage comments at the end of the installation space, reinforcing religious and interface choice by displaying a secure, black box *and* an open book. Though I intend to collect information per form, it is inevitable to receive comments per religion also. The latter may build upon itself in the book and ignore the forms completely, which also informs my thesis. All of

² For more, see Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2000.

³ For my personal experience with religion, see p. 26 in "CHRISTIANITY : BOOK."

this will explain individual experiences of the content. And *experience* of this content, rather than complete message delivery, is the goal of my installation.

Nicole L. Arnell
Department of Art
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Spring 2010

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To over a decade in advertising and its insistence on the literal message.

To the challenge of fine arts to *not* be literal, lest the message become pragmatic trash.

To artists from cummings to Carson who DE-con (struct)ed the message to make me notice.

To protagonists from Duchamp to Derrida who enlightened me to rethink every message

To my MFA committee for challenging me to the point of tears. Often.

To my family and friends for thinking I was a genius. Continuously.

PREFACE

I am not a theologian.

This is not a lesson in organized religion.

I attempted to cite and prove information regarding this social construct; however, if I have learned one thing while executing this project, it is that religion is based on a lot of opinions

So think of these as mine.

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STUMBLING TOWARD FOCUS

Until a target is chosen, too much information can muddy the mind. This is my explanation of the journey to my thesis statement. In the second year of my graduate studies, I thought I would do a quick execution of a piece entitled, “FUNdamentalist PAPER DOLLS.” The concept was driven mainly by its title and my fascination with the human need for organized religion. I began by perusing themed paper dolls, as well as biting and ironic visuals depicting religion. This seemed like a quick execution, but my intended non-malicious wit could only be achieved by researching the subject. Therefore, I picked up a seemingly easy book entitled, *Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction* by Malise Ruthven. And this is where it began.

I realized that I did not know what, why, or where fundamentalist religion as a phenomenon exists. As Ruthven states, “Put at its broadest, it may be described as a religious way of being that manifests itself in a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identities as individuals or groups in the face of modernity and secularization.”¹ Besides tracing the term to a 1910 evangelist Christian Protestant movement, the author explains that this widespread phenomenon has common factors amongst multiple religious groups. When I dove into my second book, Karen Armstrong’s *The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism*, I was hooked. I was intrigued by the theories of Armstrong and others in regards to fundamentalism being a symptom of religion trying to find its place in post-Enlightenment empirical thought.

By this time, I realized that the self-assigned “quick execution” of DOLLS was not going to happen that semester. I continued to pore over other books on the subject, including Sam

¹ Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2007, p. 5-6.

Harris's *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*" and "Strong Religion: the Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World" by Gabriel Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan. This, of course, led me to learning more about the political creation of Israel, as well as the repeated violence of individuals done in god's name because a holy text verifies the act.

Realizing that I really did not know enough about all of the religions, I picked up a *Religion for Dummies* guide. (You may laugh here.) Though fundamentalism seemed to concentrate in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, I continued researching non-evangelical groups like Mormons and Zoroastrians, as well as the overall philosophy of Buddhism. I felt I must find a way to educate my viewers about all of these in the modern world. And so I composed a very rough thesis abstract in regards to a book about FUNDamentalist PAPER DOLLS for the different religions. I felt my biggest challenges were how to explain what I left in or out and how it all tied to fundamentalism in the end, because fundamentalism is the only enemy I picked. Religion's existence was not. When I presented my idea to my MFA Committee, I realized I was missing the entire point of my FINE ARTS thesis.

Though I have become accustomed during my graduate studies to balancing the fine line between mass communication graphic design and fine art graphic design, I had stepped too far away from the conceptual aesthetic of fine arts principles. Though typography is a major point of design, it could not be an excuse for overly literal messaging. Strategy is not concept and the obsession with audience reaction seemed to equal pragmatic trash. And no matter how much I enjoy composing with words, my MFA thesis was not the place for this expression.

My committee did not even want to get through all of my ideas for the book, nor how I also aspired to place the information into an interactive format and maybe hang the cover on the wall. Instead the response from my committee was the following. *Do not give a history lesson. Make ART.*

Holding back tears of frustration, I continued by pushing my handmade stylistic choices and the overall concept of FUNdamentalist DOLLS. My committee accepted these two points and then challenged me to *not* educate the viewer, but to present my ideas in a way that was not didactic. A few of my artifacts composed with no words were pointed to as guides.

I was stuck. I had so much to say, but I did not seem to know how to say it according to this sacred Fine Arts world. I scoffed at the idea of the line between high and low art being absent in our contemporary world. The idea that I could not even bring up the idea of advertising – except for its effect or its tendency to evolve into kitsch – made me angry. I felt like a misunderstood outsider who was not cool enough to hang out with the art kids, except the stakes were much higher than this juvenile stereotype.

But frustration evolved into a challenge. And I tend to not walk away from a challenge.

A fellow MFA student showed me the light. She helped me organize my overabundance of information and push my literal message over into the more conceptual. Listening to the long, disorganized list of everything I wanted to accomplish, she helped me to form *one* thesis statement with a style description and an overall subject matter. With this mental compartmentalization, my thesis truly began to take shape.

My thesis explores how form affects a viewer's experience of content. I specifically explore the gallery wall, tangible book, and interactive media. In other words, my artwork is not really complete until the audience reacts to it. Even if my defense of this choice is the applied art of graphic design, I refuse to ignore this pragmatic side. It lives and thrives next to my emotive goals in creating artwork.

The way I accomplish this is by embracing an obviously handmade style that flaunts process. By forcing opposition of this into the digital world and all of its mass-production abilities, I search for the way they complement each other. And in doing so, this style connects to its viewers in a way that is intertwined with its form in today's world. Though this style choice is not my thesis, I devote the next chapter's worth of explanation to it alone.

And finally, my subject is how fundamentalism obscures the views of the three interrelated religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Religion is a major topic to tackle, but making art about it does not (should not!) require me to be a theologian. Religion is a risky topic and borderline cliché; therefore, I make artwork with enough breadth to cause the viewer to consider and experience the content however they read it.

Religion ended up being a pivotal point in my thesis. Religion does indeed change everything.

STYLE

Graphic design speaks in the temporal nature of styles because it is a reflexive discipline that symbiotically lives within cultural constructs. To ignore what the audience will think is nonsense to a graphic designer. When I first returned for my MFA, I realized that I had become a stranger to this fine art world. When I was told I should have an exhibition record, I hardly knew where to begin.

Regardless of my ability to argue for the allowance of mass-produced art in a museum gallery, I could not convince myself. The gallery space *is* sacred. Though Duchamp and others helped redefine definitions of artifacts per context, a toilet becomes art *because* of the art space.² The opposition both reinforces and erodes its target. In addition to this, placing a poster into a frame only seemed to earn the label of “art” to me if it were in similar company or an historic artifact. I had no draw to poster competitions and the latter is impossible without time travel; therefore, I began to make artwork that was anything but mass-produced. Though the style seems to follow many previous movements, like Art Informel and others fond of bricolage, my intensions were not so grand.^{3 4}

The hardware store became my art supply emporium. Polyurethane and chunky acrylic paint, elegantly clumsy metal screws, thick wood with natural grain, and Liquid Nails became the canvas for bits of computer design. Some called it messy. I called it passionate. And repeatedly,

² This refers to Duchamp’s *The Fountain*, a toilet signed “R.Mutt” accepted as art by the 1917 Society of Independent Artists exhibit.

³ A European movement existing in the 1940s and 50s in reaction to the clean, controlled design of the earlier and simultaneous modern movements such as Constructivism and De Stijl. Instead, emphasis on spontaneity, irrationality, and accidental creation became the goal.

⁴ Bricolage refers to an improvised, or seemingly improvised, creation made from whatever materials are available. These available materials are therefore Found Object and bits of cultural remnants and mediated landscape surrounding the artist.

juried art exhibitions accepted it. However, when I printed out photographs of these works or placed them into accepted commercial formats like book covers, enlightenment continued. These pieces also won awards in competitions based around commercial art.



Fig. 1, Nicole Arnell, byHand, 2008, paint, ink, polyurethane, wood, photography, computer, 24" x 36".

As I explain in a paper regarding handmade elements in graphic design:

Emerging from this primordial post-postmodern ooze, it appears we are back to the beginning. Deconstruction to conspicuous transparency of process and preference for the innocence of handmade and traditional materials seems that we have simply come full circle. However, this apparent genesis is not a return to

Old, but a transfer of Old into the realm of Right Now. Designers are using this style of handmade and placing it into the digital world. Though almost as quickly as artists place the genuine handmade bar to be reached, software duplicates the act to a frightfully accurate degree. This has pushed designers to go further. What some would label messy, others claim honesty...

[This] display of handmade, even in messy application, advocates honesty instead of postmodern's apparent disregard to the beautiful. The former claims innocence, while the latter threatens strategy. And innocence illustrated via obviously personal style lends itself to a narrative, whether fictional or non-, led by an individual. The alienated public, overcome with communication's obscene annihilation of anything secret in the world of Reality TV and media's assignment of Truth, is finding its answer in believing there are hidden messages to discover in the details of the handmade.

In addition to this, technology changes how people relate to any visual information. Beyond gallery space and of utmost concern to today's graphic designers, the differences between tangible print versus interactive media are not nearly as subtle as one might think. From the first time I tried to art direct a website, I realized this. The electronic world sheds the linear read and controlled engagement, but also loses the physical, slow, intentional connection that print owns.

But beyond this comparison of forms, what if this handmade style pushed into the 2-D digital world becomes consistent glue that can hold them together?

Success of message delivery in graphic design is essential, so how can designers speak to people who are not listening anymore? The answer is to create an experience. The experience is the merging of reality and its virtual reality... The details of handmade elements and the process of their execution that live comfortably in and with the digital world draw attention to the originator of the message... Placing this exaggerated reality into the mass-produced digital world is not about cheapening the former. The irony of delivery has been explored and it is no longer considering its opposite the enemy. At a time in a disconnected, mediated world when we need it most, the style of graphic design art inevitably speaks of its source to the recipient.

I believe that it can hold them together. And of all personal subjects that can be mediated, religion is king. Therefore, I take a step back from the too-real, manufactured feel of clean and instead, communicate and connect with this messy, handmade style in the digital world.

This handmade feel also complements the innocence of dolls. Oddly, most paper dolls are photorealistic. I take the *idea* of dolls and push the innocence further with the handmade. If my viewers automatically assign childish irresponsibility to religions, this is not my intention.

My intention is to make people consider a touchy topic through the semiotics of all that is mentioned above. *Everybody* comes to this topic and to this visual code with individual prior knowledge.

Amongst the three forms I choose for my thesis, dolls and their costumes use textured, handmade paper and fabric, but they are always the digital reproduction. Even in the form intended as gallery one-off space, this remains the same so that there are not multiple questions being asked by my thesis.

CONSISTENCY

The three forms representing the three religions needed to read as a series, each interrelated but still its own by a consistent overall look and feeling. Below, I have broken apart the pieces and described each.

BACKGROUNDS

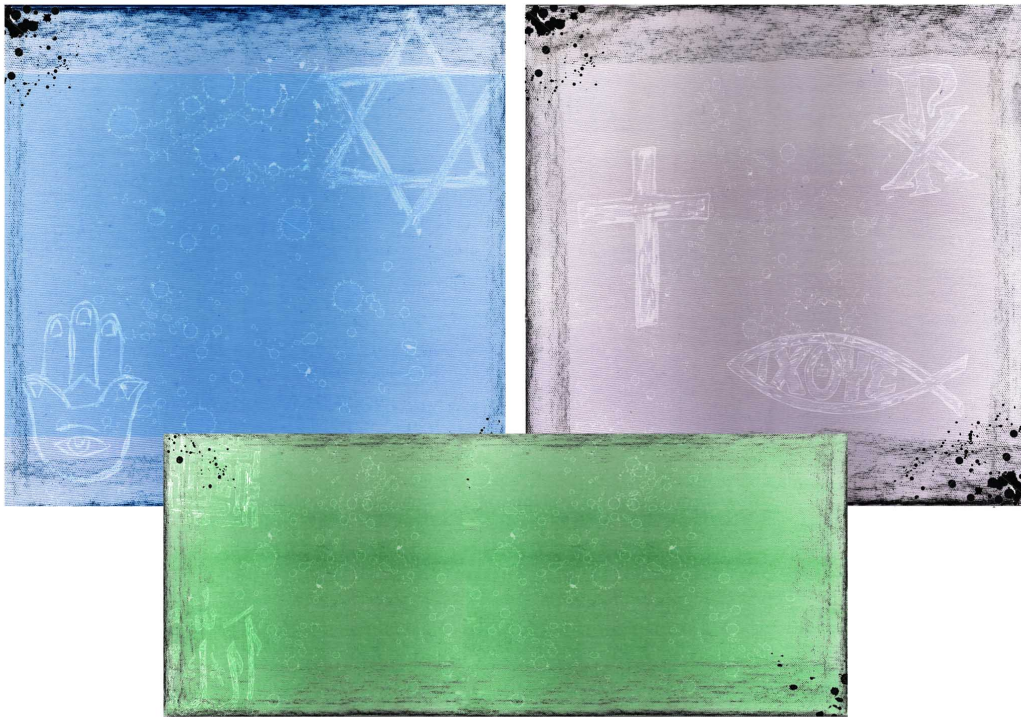


Fig. 2, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS canvas, 2009, paint, ink, canvas, computer.

The background to all of the pieces is painted canvas with apparent brushstroke and texture. I chose blue for Judaism, purple for Christianity, and green for Islam. Besides their relationship on the color wheel and the overall coolness of tone for a fiery subject, these colors

have special meaning to the chosen religion. I also added sketched symbols of the religion and adjusted transparency so that they add to the visual texture while not screaming their message. Once the canvases were scanned into the computer, I increased the texture and grittiness with the help of Photoshop. Black ink splatches to all of them were also added for the visual bookends of a connected series. Black is the color used for extra scenery needed for any of the forms, including the back board for Judaism, the cover for Christianity's book, the dressing screen area for Islam, and multiple materials for the installation.

DOLLS

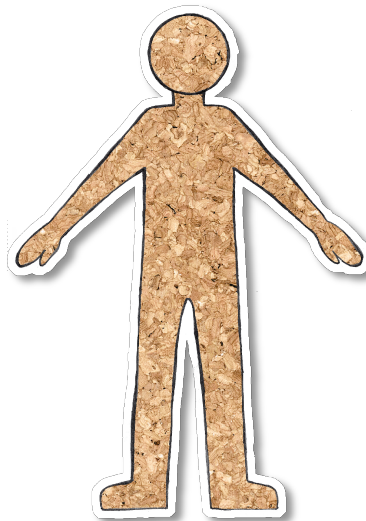


Fig. 3, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS doll, 2009, cork, ink, computer.

The doll is always genderless cork archetype scanned into the computer and reproduced digitally. Cork is used per my love of handmade materials, but also to simultaneously simulate all skin tones. The book and interactive screen show only one doll whose gender is initially defined by the costume chosen. Judaism's form did not allow this, so I chose to show a doll per gender's costume. Dolls forms are reasonably consistent in their cut, but absolute neatness was avoided.

COSTUMES



Fig. 4, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS costumes, 2009, paper, computer.

As mentioned above, costumes are gender-specific. They are created from thick papers and materials that conspicuously display their attributes scanned into the computer. The digital cutting is done in as simple a matter as possible, again screaming handmade, simple, and childlike. My goal was not so blatant as to say religion is any of these things. This child's play is for approachability and innocence; however, if the former is a reader's response to these strong forms it informs my thesis goals. Color is different per religion to set them as groups, but all of the colors used are dull and reference the original materials. The paper texture is roughly sewn

digitally. After attempting to use needle and thread to sew the paper, I found the scan did not do it justice. The digital reproduction was much more clear.

The costumes created also reference the orthodox belief system for each. A key virtue amongst all three religions is modesty. A person should not adorn themselves with colorful or glittery clothing, cosmetics, jewelry, or any other luxurious dress that suggests destructive, sinful inner pride and vanity. Clothing should also not be tight or revealing in any way as to encourage sexual feelings. Gender-neutral clothing is discouraged in the orthodox versions of these religions, as each female and male should stay in their god-given roles in community and family.

ACCESSORIES



Fig. 5, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS accessories, 2009, photography, ink, computer.

Accessories were difficult for me to pick per religious belief. What was too specific and what was not enough? As soon as I would pick what I thought was important, someone's

common and/or academic opinion would suggest otherwise. Therefore, I had to reconnect with the purpose of making art. What do *I* find to be defining accessories per the subject matter? Though I am concerned with how the audience will read the work, it is impossible to know what each individual will think and it nullifies the very idea of *my* artwork.

Reasons for the accessories chosen can be read in the following chapters. The style of the accessories is how they read together. Using actual photographs of ritual items, I then added black, sketchy outlines tracing the objects. This handmade touch gives dynamic energy to the lifeless photos. After all, ritual objects are awarded their holiness by the humans who construct it.

FUN



Fig. 6, Nicole Arnell, FUNdamentalist DOLLS FUN, 2009, computer.

FUN is always obviously *not* handmade. The installation defines it as part of FUNdamentalism. The book and interactive screens both repeat this idea as title pieces.

Though FUN is always a word, its repeated use and its glossy, modern, mechanized feel become a symbol of outside influence that causes something. That “something” is an obscuring of the religious interaction that had been occurring in another view of the religion. All religions appear the same once FUN blocks this view, which is an obscured mess of what was clear before.

THE TIES THAT BIND...AND DIVIDE

The following are common ideas between the three religions, which feed the overall concept of FUNdamentalist DOLLS.

ABRAHAMIC

I chose these three religions for my series because they share a common genesis and are monotheistic. They trace their ancestry to the Jewish patriarch, Abraham. Sharing common pieces of beliefs and even sacred texts, the three are linked at their core. However, they are divided by differences in the narrative and its implementations. In addition, these are considered “western” religions, though the majority of Muslims reside in the Middle East. There are more Christians and Muslims in this world than any other religious group. All three are monotheistic religions, claiming there is only one god. Even Christianity’s belief in the Holy Trinity is explained as ONE god. None of the three believe that humans are naturally free of evil. All believe there is a version of heaven and hell in the afterlife, though Judaism is not as dogmatic per the description as the other two.

Jews believe that Islam and Christianity are false expansions of Judaism. Christians believe that Judaism is a true, though incomplete, religion, but Islam is false. And Muslims respect Jews and Christians as fellow “People of the Book,” but believe that these two have wrong or incomplete beliefs.

FUNDAMENTALISM

Though it received its name from a 1910 Protestant Christian movement calling its believers to return to the fundamentals of its religion, fundamentalist religion is a phenomenon of

today's world. Many scholars argue that it is caused by growing communities of people banding together in today's world to salvage their organized religious belief. It seems to be a "lost souls" support group reaction to the modern world and its love of secular reason. 20th century carried along the age of rational truth through empirical testing by way of the Enlightenment period of the 19th century in the western world.⁵ How can one prove religion as truth, especially when large groups of "others" can claim the same for theirs?

The common answer is to use sacred texts not as interpretive allegories narrating spiritual goals through metaphor, but as the literal word of god. The Word is the Truth. But all words can be interpreted and adjusted per a person's prior knowledge; therefore, there is guidance from a charismatic leader. Words can be twisted for both good and evil. Words are powerfully subjective weapons. And the majority of evidence shows that placing a rational read on a deeply allegorical text allows for inarguable excuses to do violence more often than good.

Allegory has its place, just as religion may have a place for people if they choose. Some things cannot be satisfactorily answered to the human condition. When an innocent child dies, an explanation of Natural Selection is not a comfort. But sanctified murder because the holy text hints that the victim is the enemy obscures any of religion's virtues.

⁵ For more, see Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2000.

JUDAISM : GALLERY WALL

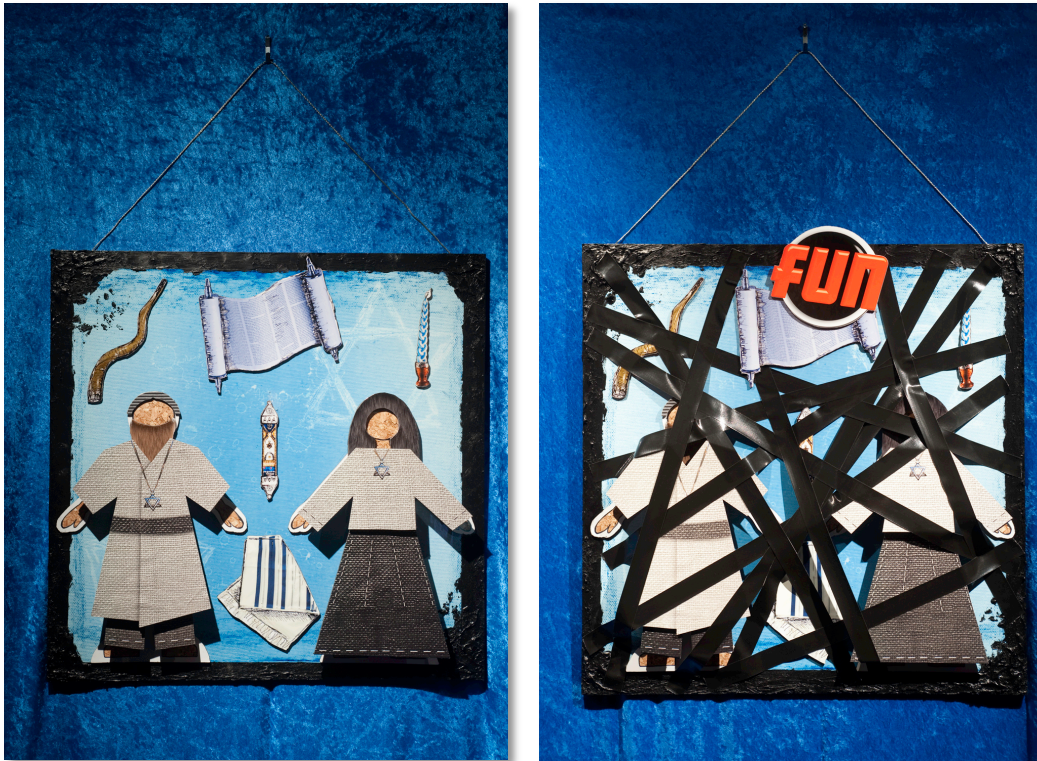


Fig. 7, Nicole Arnell, FUNdamentalist DOLLS Judaism, 2010, ink, paint, paper, board, Gorilla tape, wood, polyurethane, hardware, fabric, computer, 24”w x 24”h.

Judaism is the oldest of the three religions, as the gallery space is older than the other two forms I have chosen. Judaism has fewer sects defined to the same broad manner as I chose to handle the other two religions. According to my evaluation, there is orthodox and not. Though I initially included aspects of Hasidic Jewish dress, this is just an extreme form of orthodoxy. And though there are Reform and Conservative Jews, the differences were not as extreme as the other two religions’.

The Jewish faith is not evangelical, labeling themselves the Chosen People. They are also the only group that is both a religious faith and an ethnicity. If your mother is Jewish, you are

considered Jewish even if you consider yourself a Christian. This unique fact is especially helpful in my choice of form. My definition of gallery wall is the untouchable space, roped off to display an unrepeatable artifact. To parallel my presentation of Christianity and Islam, I wanted to show the original doll. This also reinforces the idea that we are all the same and the religious belief is an existentialist choice; however, by permanently affixing the costumes above the doll ethnicity is subtly referenced.

The color blue is closely related to Judaism. Referencing divinity, this color is also often used in ritual items, like the fringe on corners of a prayer shawl, or within narrative, like the blue cloth covering the Ark of the Covenant. The flag of Israel also displays a blue Star of David between two blue stripes. Sketchy white symbols blend into the canvas. Besides the Star of David, there is also a religious symbol that is repeated in Islam and possibly outdates both religions. The Hamsa hand with an eye is called the Hand of Miriam in Judaism and the Hand (or Eye) of Fatima in Islam. The symbol, often placed in amulets and other charms, is said to protect against evil. Some archaeological data suggests this symbol predates both and has been found in Phoenician remains from around 1500 BCE. Though the Star of David is much more common in Judaism, the second symbol's religious crossover is worth the canvas space.

The costumes reference orthodox clothing. The drab shades claim modesty. I chose not to use black, though many ultra-orthodox Jews wear only this color. The color black references, among other things, the command in medieval Europe's feudal system to identify Jews as non-persons. This ostracizing translates to modern times as a banded community, reinforcing the Chosen People. However, I chose to use shades of grey instead of the Hasidic preference for black. Also both genders include the main Jewish symbol, the Star of David, as a necklace over the rest of the costume.



Fig. 8, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Judaism costume, 2010, paper, ink, computer.

Other costume elements for males include ankle-length pants and traditional robe, fastened with a prayer belt that reminds its wearer to separate his upper and lower body for higher and lesser purposes. A skull cap, also known as a kippa or yarmulka, is worn to separate its wearer from the divine presence above and therefore, show respect. Unshaven beards come from Jewish commandment that shaving or trimming of beards is prohibited on holy days. Some ultra-orthodox Jews, like the Hasidic sect, do not shave sideburns and allow the hair to grow to long spirals. Though I initially included these for the visual dynamic, it referenced Hasidic too much for my goals. The tallit, or prayer shawl, is not worn everyday so I treated it as an accessory.

Female costume is extremely modest, referencing shirts that cover the arms and up to the nape of the neck, as well as skirts that fall to the ankle. It is feared that too much exposure of female flesh is breeding ground for sin, following the tune of Adam and Eve. There are more

constraints concerning nylons, but I stayed away from this visually troublesome element. I also ignored all footwear, as I could not find a satisfactory way to solve it. The wig is a borderline ultra-orthodox demand, but its originality was something I felt worth expressing. The belief is that a married woman must cover her head with a hat, scarf, or wig. This also references the Islamic female head covering and Christian's lack thereof. Many conservative Jews simply ask that a woman cover her head during religious services.

The material I used to create these costumes is a climax to my thesis story. A month before its exhibition date and after a year in the making, my work become far more controversial than I had imagined. A professor outside of my committee took one look at the vertically striped grey corrugated cardboard and was sickened. She validly read this as a direct reference to the holocaust because concentration camp wear consisted of vertically striped clothing (Fig. 9). This also appeared to make my work deeply offensive, which I did not intend. Though I had researched Judaism and its fundamentalism, I had not looked into the details and imagery of the holocaust. None of the many people I shared these images with, including those who consider themselves Jewish, were offended or mentioned the holocaust. The offended reaction not only struck me with painful regret, it also enlightened me as to when the content is so powerful that it blocks any interaction with the form.



Fig. 9, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Judaism dolls, 2009, cork, paper, ink, computer.

Therefore, I changed the texture to a material that was both vertically and horizontally striped to differentiate itself from the other religions' textures and its former self. Interestingly, in reviewing my notes on the religion, I was reminded that orthodox Judaism forbids clothes made of the evil "shatnez" mixture. As it states in Deuteronomy 22:11, "You shall not wear combined fibers, wool and linen, together." Not realizing the "combined," nor that the weave of my chosen cloth did not insist linen as its source, I thought I had failed again. I eventually found that my choice did not violate any shatnez code, but this story is still worthwhile to share because it illustrates how I stumbled through religion's many commandments. I did my best to hold to established laws I did not understand, which sounds to me awfully similar to many fundamentalist believers' "choices."

The accessories chosen include a mezuzah, havdalah candle, tallit with tzitzit, and Torah. These choices by no means exhaust Jewish ritual items, but I found these to be the most important and common. A mezuzah refers to parchment or the container holding said parchment by the front door in a Jewish home. The parchment holds short Torah passages in Hebrew. This is a

mitzvah, or commandment of god, mentioned in the Torah to remind believers of god's laws and presence, as well as Jewish identity. The shofar is an ancient accessory used for everything from calling to assembly to warning of martial advances, but not as a musical instrument. The havdalah candle is braided, symbolizing the diversity of the Jewish people intertwined for strength. It is burned on the similarly named ceremony, ending the holy day – sundown Friday to sundown Saturday - and beginning the new week. The tallit, or prayer shawl, is both an accessory and costume. It is worn by Jews during certain services and holy days; therefore, it is not an everyday garment. The tzitzit, or tassels, are of a specific number and braiding. I did not follow this exactly, because I feared again that if I suggested I knew exactly what it should be that something would be wrong.



Fig. 10, Nicole Arnell, FUNdamentalist DOLLS Judaism accessories, 2009, digital photography, paper, ink, computer.

I considered including unleavened bread for Passover and other symbolic seder foods or a Kosher cookbook. Circumcision instruments were another possibility. Though these elements have undeniable connections with the Jewish faith, they did not seem singular enough or representative enough. Passover's celebration of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt is one of the most important holidays and its celebration composes a major part of Jewish identity, but it didn't seem to be an accessory. Unleavened bread and circumcision tools are also hard to communicate visually in my style.

However, the Torah is the key accessory to my FUN execution. It is the main holy text for Judaism and is the first five books of the Tanakh. Other holy texts include the Talmud, Midrash, and Responsa. I did not include all of them, nor did I specifically name the text shown. The image shown references a holy text read in a synagogue. On the taped board, FUN is on this holy text.

FUNDamentalism's effect for this form required a powerful, though static, read. As I explained, my version of gallery is the controlled space where its audience can simply view and consider. There is no physical interaction allowed. This does not diminish the power of this form, but it forces consideration of the expected conceptual message of this original piece delegated as Art. The consistent effect per series of FUN's appearance to the piece is shown by a second, identical piece with its contents obscured. I considered multiple materials, including a sheet of fabric or spray paint. The former would block instead of obscure and the latter seemed to suggest anarchy. Fundamentalism is much more controlled and constructed than anarchy; therefore, I found thick black tape and obscured away in a controlled manner.

CHRISTIANITY : TANGIBLE BOOK

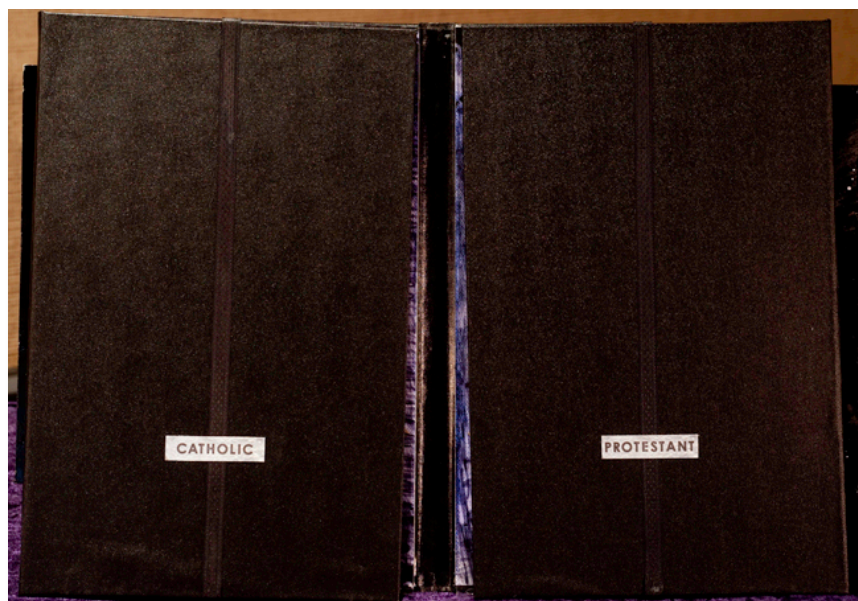
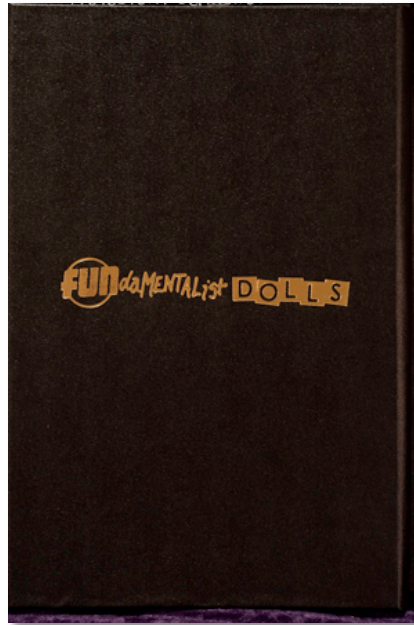




Fig. 11-14, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Christianity book, 2010, ink, paper, board, metal, binding materials, magnets, plastic, computer, 12”w x 18”h folded, 48”w x 18”h flat.

Christianity is next on the timeline of development, founded in the early 1st century CE, which works out perfectly. Besides the fact that the development of books would be the next on form development and usage, the Reformation was an effect of the beginning of mass communication via Gutenberg’s press in the middle of the 15th century. How fitting that a book display Christianity and its two main sects, Catholic and Protestant. The very idea of fundamentalism is similar to the Protestant formation as a reaction to Catholicism, demanding

that the word of god is holy and this word takes precedence even over the teachings of the church. Confession, Penance, Indulgences, and Purgatory are a few of the Catholic institutions with no mention in the Biblical text. The term fundamentalism comes from a label to the 1910 Protestant program created by two religious Californians.

Both Catholics and Protestants believe that Jesus Christ was the son of god - while also god himself - who was crucified and redeemed to save the world. Jews believe that Jesus was a true prophet of god whose message has been corrupted, while Muslims claim that he was a false prophet. Most of the Old Testament of Christianity's main holy text, the Bible, is the Jewish Torah.

But the division between Protestants and Catholics is still present. Violence between the two factions is less common than between the Shiites and Sunni of Islam, but it is still present in countries like Ireland. One may question if there even is such a thing as a fundamentalist orthodox Catholic, as well as how an orthodox Protestant could be anything but fundamentalist.

Though these statements could be considered mostly valid and nullify my entire FUN project, they are not completely true. Today's Catholic clergy encourage their community members to read and study the Bible, an act that was at one time banned by the Church. The papal translation of any holy text is still revered over individual interpretation, but this in itself is one person's literal interpretation of a religious allegory. The denominational branches of Protestantism seems to grow annually, but all believe that the individual has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Father, and the Holy Ghost and that all commandments and guidance are within the pages of the holy text. But a minister or pastor is always there to make sure your interpretation is in line with his.

A side note of explanation here regards my personal experience. For most of my middle school years while others found peer pressure for sports or drugs, I fell into the cult draw of Christianity. Interestingly, I attended Protestant churches that demanded very different things from its members. On Sunday mornings and Thursday evenings, I attended a Lutheran church.

I had been baptized into this faith and my mother felt the need for me to start attending Confirmation classes and attend Sunday school. Lutheranism was the first break from Catholicism, as Martin Luther led the Reformation. However, it is also the closest to Catholicism because it keeps so many of its weekly rituals and esteem for holy objects beyond just the Word. I still consider it “Catholic Lite.” Communion was taken every Sunday, with an unclear explanation if it was really the blood and body of Christ as Catholics believe or just a symbol as most Protestants claim.

On Sunday and Wednesday nights, I attended a fundamentalist Missionary church. Missionary is one of many denominations of Protestantism. This strong fundamentalist group reminded its members to evangelize to as many people as possible, else you risk your own ability to be saved. Countless Biblical scriptures were read and transformed as evidence to this purpose. This is why I also led a prayer group at my school and informed my Jewish stepfather, agnostic father, and cosmetics-wearing sister that they were going to Hell if they didn’t change their ways to mine. The church took communion only on Easter Sunday in celebration of Christ’s ascension to heaven after his crucifixion.

High school came next and caused me to question anything of authority, eventually turning me into an agnostic who did not care for easy labels. However, this experience allows me to insightfully compare Catholic and Protestant in one simple visual spread in attempts to streamline a layered argument. Catholics have a lot of accessories and Protestants have only the holy book.

The costumes for Catholics and Protestants are identical. They follow the gender-specific, loose-fitting demands of the holy book. I chose cardboard for its drab color and handmade feel, which also references the command to be modest. Though there are ultra-Orthodox Christian groups, like the Amish, who wear specific clothing as Hasidic Jews do, the orthodox clothing for both sexes is common shirt and pants or skirt. This clothing covers almost all of the “flesh” and also sport the Christian symbol of the cross. The female costume also

reflects the form of Judaism's female costume, subtly showing another connection and further disconnecting the male amongst these patriarchal religions.



Fig. 15, Nicole Arnell, FUNdamentalist DOLLS Christianity costume, 2009, cardboard, computer.

Again, I did not exhaust ritual items for either Catholics or Protestants, but chose those I felt the most fitting to my interpretation. Beyond the Bible, Catholic accessories include a rosary, holy water, the Eucharist, and multiple pictures of saints. I considered including the Apocrypha or other Catholic holy texts, but decided it would muddy my FUN message. The rosary contains a special number of beads to guide its holder through a set number of prayers and incantations. The rosary is a major symbol of Catholicism's evils to Protestants. In the Middle Ages, the church decreed that indulgences could be earned by the repeated prayers via the rosary. Indulgences were earned to decrease the length of time a soul spent in Purgatory, a dimension between Heaven and Hell. Holy water is that which has been sanctified by a priest or bishop for the purposes of baptism, blessing, or a symbol for repelling evil. This is held true by many – though not all – Protestant groups, but orthodox Catholics believe it is an outright tangible protection against evil. The Eucharist is a fancy name for communion, which celebrates Christ's

crucifixion to redeem mankind's sins and replays the story of The Last Supper. While all of Christianity observes this ritual, Catholics believe that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus once the priest places his hands upon the sacrament. And finally, the saints are only for Catholics. Protestants believe that no other prophets, including the Virgin Mary or any other apostle mentioned in the Bible, can replace or be a liaison to Jesus. Many Protestants would view Catholicism's array of saints as evil polytheism, which is ironic considering Judaism and Islam don't agree that THREE (Christianity's Holy Trinity) equals ONE (monotheism).



Fig. 16, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Christianity accessories, 2009, digital photography, paper, ink, computer.

The form used for Christianity is the slow, tangible read of a book. One would think that this would be the easiest to solve per my thesis because the original idea was paper dolls, but paper dolls are used only once using sharp scissors and fragile paper. How could this live with integrity in my installation? My solution took demanded physical interaction to a new level. Instead of paper, I created the equivalent of Colorforms™ by using thin magnets and hidden metal sheets. Eight months working with a professional bookbinder, we produced a large and heavy book bound in black imitation leather whose regal appearance creates an experience. The book is foil-stamped with FUNDamentalist DOLLS (Fig. 11) and opens to two pages that simply state Catholic and Protestant (Fig. 12). The viewer opens these two so that four panels show with the familiar glossy digital output of canvas texture with cork dolls and handmade elements for costumes and accessories (Fig. 13).

The color used is purple for reasons beyond the continued cool tone. Purple is created by mixing blue and red. Christianity takes Judaism (blue) and adds some more to it to create something new. Purple is also often associated with Christianity for the holiday of Lent, as well as the color of royalty that Christians assign to Jesus Christ. The Christian symbols display simply the cross for Protestants and additional symbols for Catholics.

I show only one doll and two costumes. Though one may argue this could read as Christianity's acceptance of cross-dressing because of the interchangeable gender-specific costumes, this is not my intention. Once a costume is adhered, another costume put over the top does not work; therefore, I still consider one costume equals one gender. I also include a sketchy white outline of where these elements should be returned to when finished "dressing." This sketchy line repeats the background visual texture of Christian symbols.

A major challenge was how to solve for FUN. According to my interpretation and research, it must adhere itself to the holy book and obscure everything else. It should also appear as a choice to the viewer who is physically interacting with the book. My answer is a substantial

transparent sheet that is “unlocked” and pulled over the assembled doll, obscuring the view while keeping the holy book and its attached FUN absolutely clear.

My first execution of the FUN page was an expensive purchase of tabloid-sized ink jet transparency paper. I was happy with the transparent digital execution of crumpled paper, but not the transparent FUN and book. Next I visited my local Staples with handmade paper that resembled black tissue and had it laminated with a printed FUN and book, but the tissue paper evenly blocked the image underneath instead of obscuring. However, by watching Staples’ lamination process, I came up with a perfect solution. First, I asked for the lamination sheet, which was composed of two transparent plastic sheets that held the material to be laminated. I took a Sharpie marker to the inside of these sheets and scribbled a dense mess, leaving an open area to which I placed the printed FUN and book. Then this was laminated and voila. This sheet was added to the spiral bind within the book’s custom design and obscured perfectly (Fig.14). Though its scratches may seem akin to the graffiti I refused for Judaism, the *choice* to unlock it and place it over the dolls references the intentional choices and effects of fundamentalism.

ISLAM : INTERACTIVE SCREEN

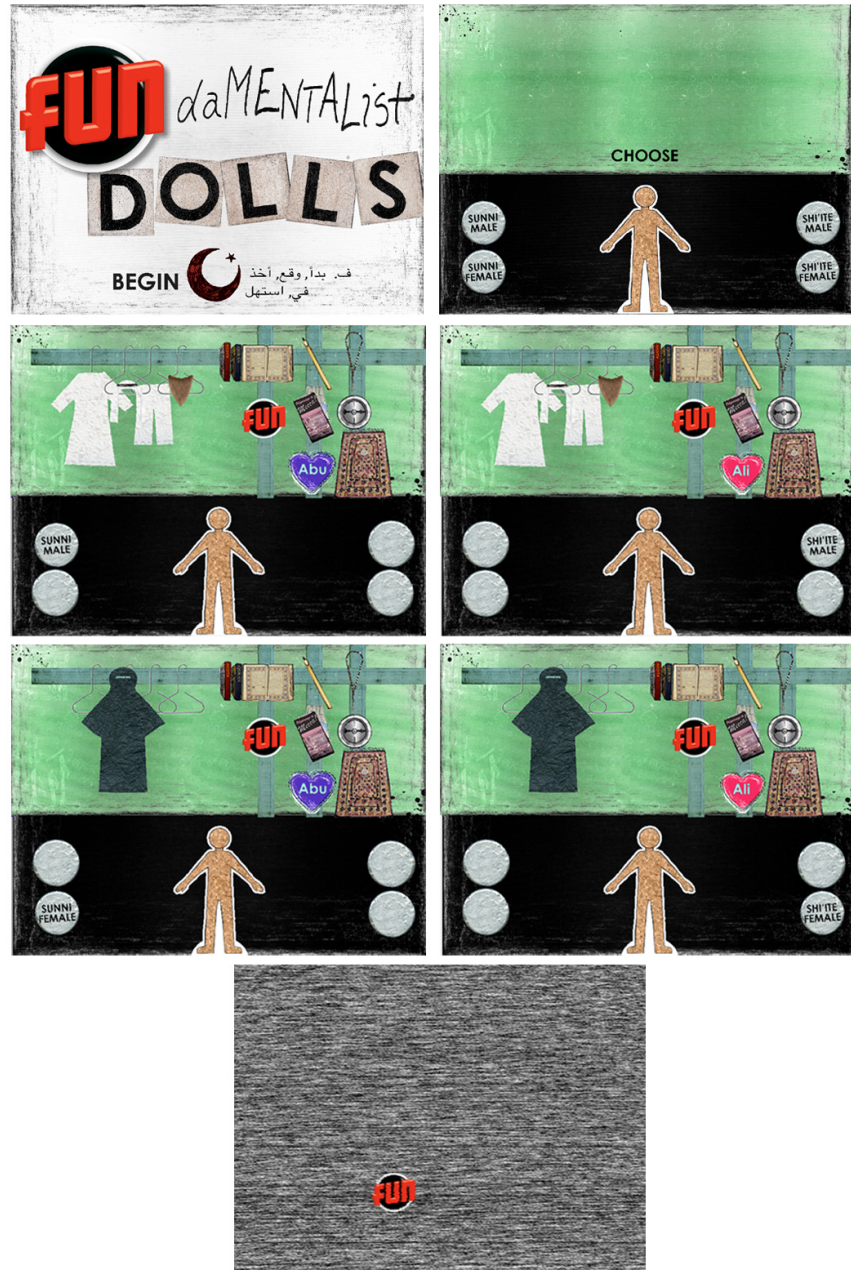


Fig. 17, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Islam Flash program, 2010, ink, canvas, paint, paper, cork, computer.

Islam is the youngest of the three religions, forming in the early part of the 7th century CE. I present Islam on the same level via the visual series, but do so in interactive Flash; therefore, I use the newest form for the newest religion. The two main divisions of Islam are Sunni and Shi'ite. Sunni or Sunnite make up the much larger majority of believers, while Shi'ite or Shi'a comprise about 10-15% of all Muslims and includes subgroups. I was tempted to acknowledge Sufism, a classical tradition of Islamic mysticism, because of the visual fun of representing whirling dervishes; however, mysticism adds an entirely new sublevel that would reduce my message.

Islam is the second largest religion in the world, but the smaller Shi'ite group is concentrated in Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. All Muslims believe that the prophet Muhammed received divine knowledge from god, or Allah, including how to live righteously and continue monotheistic worship of said god. These instructions were recorded verbatim in the Qur'an, the holiest book of Islam. In addition, all Muslims believe in the Five Pillars of Islam, including confession of faith (shahada), ritual prayer (salat), alms tax (zakat), fasting during the month of Ramadan (sawm), and pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj).

Because the Qur'an is considered direct commandment, it is sacred only when read in the original language of Arabic. Perhaps this directness via the text with no excuse for subtle translation mishaps is the flame that feeds Muslim fundamentalism. Perhaps it is because it is the youngest religion. Many would say it is because of the Islamic belief in Jihad, or struggle, since it is used as a religiously valid excuse to fight for god. This is unfortunate because it is the lesser Jihad and should only be performed when fought in defense of Muslims under attack; however, the definition of "under attack" is also subjective. But greater Jihad is personal and involves overcoming one's own wrongdoings, which while also subjective, seems only beneficial for worldly good.

This lesser Jihad's violent acts are verification for terrorist Muslim groups by another reason. There is no separation of church and state in the very core of Islamic identity. The line between politics and religious belief is blurry - if even present - in comparison to Judaism and Christianity. This violence of fundamentalist Islam is heard on American news daily. However, *Islam is not a violent religion*, or not any more so than Judaism or Christianity taken at its overall spiritual goals. And the point of FUNDamentalist DOLLS is to show how fundamentalism obscures the religion underneath. It is not to comment on any violence to this religion, though any interpretations to this are individuals' valid reactions.

My presentation of the separation between Sunni and Shi'ite, as well as the orthodox Islamic strict separation of genders, is complemented by the use of interactive Flash. After the introductory screen, the doll appears with four choices: Sunni Male, Sunni Female, Shi'ite Male, and Shi'ite Female. Once one is chosen, the other three disappear and cannot be chosen unless restarted. At restart, the entire introductory screen must replay, pausing for the viewer to realize that this does indeed mean they have started with a new doll.

Though the effect of one detail has grown into deep separation between Sunni and Shi'ites, I had trouble believing the simplicity of the core difference. As I have repeated many times, I am not a theologian. But after numerous paths of scholastic research, I found the difference between the two groups comes down to who is the acknowledged successor after Muhammed's death in 632 CE. Sunnis feel that a line of committee-selected caliphs, beginning with Abu Bakr, should follow. Shi'as believe that only the Prophet's bloodline is correct, beginning with Ali, Muhammed's son-in-law, and continued allegiance to the successive imams, or living heirs. The visual differentiation between the two created in my handmade, approachable style is by a purple "Abu" heart or a pink "Ali" heart (Fig. 19). My intention is to obligingly point out the core of this deep division, though a reader may take offense at all of the details I have ignored. This reaction is also valid and I would then encourage an individual to consider why this bothers him/her and what my interpretation means to him/her.

The color used for the consistent canvas texture background is green. The Abrahamic roots claim this Jewish patriarch as part of the overall narrative, so again I took the primary color blue that I used for Judaism and created the secondary color of green. Mix the primary with something else and get something new. Green is also a color strongly connected with Islam for many reasons. A common color in mosques, and the graves of Sufi saints, green was said to be Muhammed's favorite color. Green is used on flags for many Islamic countries, most notably Saudi Arabia where the holiest city of Mecca exists. It is said that green silk is the make of garments worn by those who will inhabit paradise. And interestingly, there is no green present in any medieval European coat of arms because Islamic soldiers used green during the Crusades. The background symbol rendered in the series' sketchy transparent white is the symbol for Allah, or god. I did not use a star and crescent, the most common symbol, because it is already used on the introductory screen as the start button.

Costumes and accessories for male Sunni and Shi'ite are exactly the same except for the afore mentioned heart accessory, just as the Sunni and Shi'ite female costumes and accessories are identical save the reference to Ali or Abu. I chose to present orthodox costume for my dolls, rendered via crumpled thick paper scanned into the digital world. For female dress, I chose to only show a full-body burqa. Though this borders on ultra-orthodox, I wanted a quick read on the extreme gender separation that is also commonplace in orthodox Islam. I also did not show any clothing underneath because I wanted there to only be the choice of the burqa as limiting and singular in comparison to the male costume.

Female and male costumes oppose in the extremes of black and white purposefully. Not only is this common in reality, it also reinforces the gender separation. Orthodox Christianity and Judaism also separate the genders, but this extreme position fascinates me in Islam and so I wanted to call attention to it. It is not that Islam is patriarchal to the point of misogyny, but it appears to be more extreme to me perhaps because of the blending of church and state.

The male costume is similar to Judaism's with extra addition for the head and face. Shalwar Kameez, or loose trousers, are shown with a long robe called a thobe. The common square or rectangular head scarf, or ghutra, is rendered with crumpled graph paper as the material is often checkered. I also consider the beard as part of Islamic male costume instead of accessory. Though a beard is not demanded in the Qur'an, Muslims believe that Muhammed wore one and demanded his male followers to do the same. Some recognize this as direct lineage from the orthodox Jewish beard requirement. Another "fact" suggests that wearing a beard separated Muslims from their Pagan counterparts on the battlefield and in life. The beard is required for orthodox male Muslims.



Fig. 18, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Islam costume, 2009, paper, computer.

The accessories shown include a travel brochure to Mecca, compass facing east, and prayer mat, all referencing the Five Pillars of Islam. The Kaaba, a mosque - built by Abraham according to Muslims - that surrounds a black stone, is located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. This

qualifies Mecca as the holiest place to all Muslims. Believers are required to pray at least five times a day, genuflecting toward this city. Though the direction is not always east, I wanted to show direction to visually define a compass and used my home location's relation to Mecca. The travel brochure humorously explains the Hajj, another requirement of all Muslims who are able to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once. If you are not Muslim, you are not even allowed into Mecca.

Also shown are prayer beads and a reed pen. The beads, known as Misbaha or Tasbih, contain 99 (or 33 to repeat three times) beads for the 99 Names of Allah. The beads are used to count recitations in a similar fashion to Catholicism's use of the rosary. This direct parallel is the reason I include the accessory for Islam. The reed pen is a roundabout way of acknowledging the Islamic reverence for Arabic calligraphy. To Muslims, portraying people was akin to idolatry; therefore, mosques appear very different than high Gothic cathedrals full of every kind of art emulating holy figures. Instead the calligraphy is the breathtakingly beautiful counterpart of Islamic surface decoration.

And finally, I chose to include both the Qur'an – opened to show a spread of Arabic calligraphy – and the Hadith. The holy texts act as one accessory to be added. Only when this accessory of sacred text is selected does the FUN symbol appear. *If* the viewer chooses FUN, it travels directly to the books and causes the stage to obscure. Only the book and FUN are left on the static background for a moment, followed by the white introduction screen to drop and restart.



Fig. 19, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Islam accessories, 2009, digital photography, paper, ink, computer.

I am the most satisfied with this execution of FUNDamentalisms' effect on religion. It is the strongest and most direct message delivery, as it takes a previously viewer-controlled environment hostage. Once the choice is made, there is no going back; however, before FUN is selected, the viewer is simply innocently playing dress-up with the doll. I forcefully differentiate religion and fundamentalism's effect clearly through the interactive environment (Fig. 17).

This interactive environment should also appear surprisingly different to the viewer than the other two forms; however, generation gaps and/or an individual's natural comfort with

computers will play a major role. Cognition of a 3-D environment on a screen with the only physical touch being a mouse should seem constrictive. But Flash's allowance for drag and drop provides the freedom that print does and reminds complete opposition to the roped-off gallery space.

The three forms are singular, yet connected via the consistent style and subject matter. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are each their own, but the three share both Abrahamic lineage and the possibility of fundamentalism's obscuring effect.

INSTALLATION : THE FULL EXPERIENCE

This final step had to be re-developed at the last minute due to a revised exhibition space. My artwork was considered too controversial for the new museum. Though I realized that religion was a powerful subject matter, I imagined my artwork to be approachable and not overtly offensive to anyone but a Fundamentalist. Evidence shows that Fundamentalists would be offended by most anything outside of their religious community, as this is part of the identity of a piously detached group. But I had not considered that artwork meant to challenge the public would be too much for an Art Museum. Therefore, the public relations responsibility of a new museum was also a learning experience for me.

Though the overall image used in publicity was allowed to hang in the university museum with the rest of the MFA 2010 show, my installation was kept to the Directions Gallery in the Visual Arts Building. Though this was mentioned in the advertising materials, its remote location allowed it to be not as public. In the end, I found this to be the better outcome for my professional and artistic goals. Besides showing work in two spaces, I could now control and contain the gallery environment for a full experience. Within a large museum space, I would need to rely on visual cues to attempt to hold the three pieces together while still keeping them individual, plus encourage engagement of the viewers.

The Directions Gallery is one room, measuring about 31 x 16 feet and 9 foot ceilings with a wood floor and controlled lighting. It is the space within the Visual Arts Building where faculty exhibits work throughout the year. For FUNdamentalist DOLLS, it became a controlled, quiet space. Though I considered the disclosure that was discussed for the museum that openly explained the religious subject matter's noncontroversial goals, I reconsidered after discussing with my committee. We agreed to neither apologize nor blatantly offend, but to just let the

exhibit BE. Allow the viewer to come to the experience with his/her prior knowledge and judgments. For some, the subject matter would block interaction with any form. Likewise, many would not find any offensive material unless encouraged to do so.

I also considered making this installation ripe for reception theory, pushing the audience to complete the artwork by an overall engagement.⁶ Repeated soundtracks of religious texts, outright reference to the camera in the gallery as the Eye of God, and background visual noise of my personal thoughts about religion all over the walls were just a few of the methods to installation madness. However, each of these seemed to push away from my thesis goal of how the form affects the experience of the content. I was already walking the line with the morally noisy content and I did not need to add more to such a small space. My hopes were for the viewer to walk in and disconnect to a quiet world, then engage in each of the three forms completely and reflect before exiting.

The overall image of FUNdamentalist DOLLS was placed on the outside of the Directions Gallery door. *As soon as* the viewer walked through this door, I wanted him/her to be in MY world and divorce him/herself from the outside.

⁶ A version of reader response literary theory, made popular in the 1960s by Hans-Robert Jauss, where the recipient completes the work by individual interpretation instead of passively accepting it.



Fig. 20, Nicole Arnell, FUNdamentalist DOLLS, 2009, canvas, cork, paint, polyurethane, paper, ink, computer.

Besides color-coding to separate the three areas, I also brought them together visually with painted black boards that I wrote on with white and red paint pens. Fonts are a predictable visual system and handwritten fonts are an outright lie. Therefore, I flaunted *my* obviously handwritten messages. These are *my* thoughts written by *my* hand for *my* artwork. These are near-prose explanations and directions. I wrote in this style purposefully to give just enough of a literal message and left the rest for interpretation, paralleling the fundamentalist read on the holy texts. I used subtle visual hierarchy to organize the small amount of writing to encourage reading, but I knew that some viewers would read everything and some would read nothing, regardless.

Though the three forms did not need to be viewed in chronological order, I encouraged them to be. Below, I will walk you through the space as I intended the viewer to experience it. I use present tense to enhance the read.

OVERALL

The room is darker than the hallway outside, with spot lighting to four areas. The areas highlighted are the three forms created for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, then a fourth table for comments. On each side of the four areas are two flickering LED candles in dark metal wire holders. The flickering light is for cultural reference to a quiet space to cradle individual reflection.

ENTRANCE



Fig. 21, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS installation entrance sign, 2010, wood, paint, paper, 24" w x 16" h.

A black board hangs from the ceiling to immediately communicate with the viewer. After many versions of this important message, I decided on two simple definitions.

JUDAISM : GALLERY WALL



Fig. 23, Nicole Arnell, FUNdamentalist DOLLS Judaism installation, 2010, ink, paint, paper, board, Gorilla tape, wood, polyurethane, hardware, fabric, computer, LED candles and holders.

The two *unique* artifacts, or three-dimensional, graphic design as they might be labeled, hang on the wall. The two show a sort of Before and FUN After via intentionally placed black tape on the latter covering everything but the holy text accessory and the FUN symbol. The two boards hang from a thick wire and over a long strip of heavy blue imitation velvet. The velvet touches the floor and continues beyond the black rope that hangs between two low poles painted in thick, glossy black. These two poles on the floor reinforce the distance between the art and the viewer. The explanation references the role of the museum and its ability to define art, as well as postmodern realization that the audience defines the meaning instead of the artist. “Chosen

artifacts” references The Chosen People, or the Jewish group. “How to have FUN” mentions the artist’s intentions, as there is nothing for the viewer to physically do.

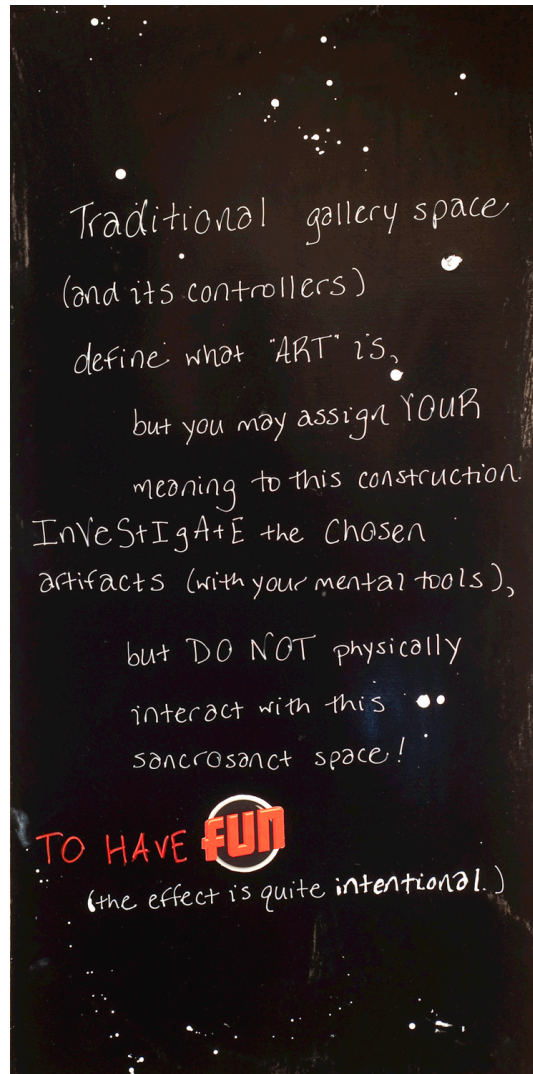


Fig. 24, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Judaism installation sign, 2010, wood, paint, paper, 12”w x 24”h.

CHRISTIANITY : TANGIBLE BOOK



Fig. 25, Nicole Arnell, FUNdamentalist DOLLS Christianity installation, 2010, ink, paper, board, metal, binding materials, magnets, plastic, computer, fabric, LED candles and holders.

The next stop is at a large table draped in purple material. The viewer must stand and examine the book below them. Directions are necessary for this piece to encourage Doll adornment, especially after leaving the “gallery” where physical interaction is refused. Therefore, the instructions are intertwined within the pun references and explanation of how similar Catholics and Protestants are in core appearance. FUN directions are also clearly stated, as well as a PLEASE to explain how to return the book to its beginnings.

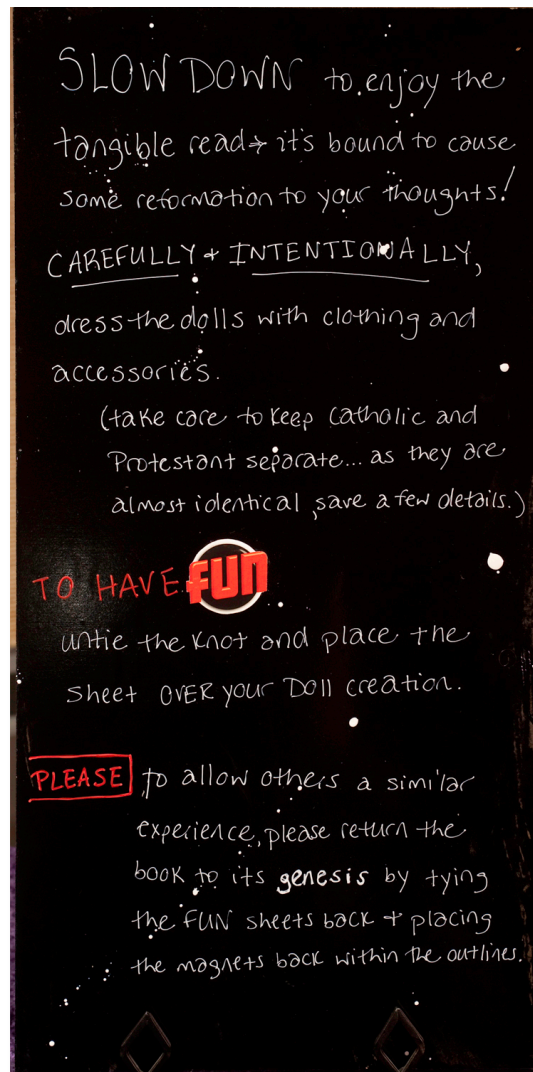


Fig. 26, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Christianity installation sign, 2010, wood, paint, paper, 12"w x 24"h.

ISLAM : INTERACTIVE SCREEN

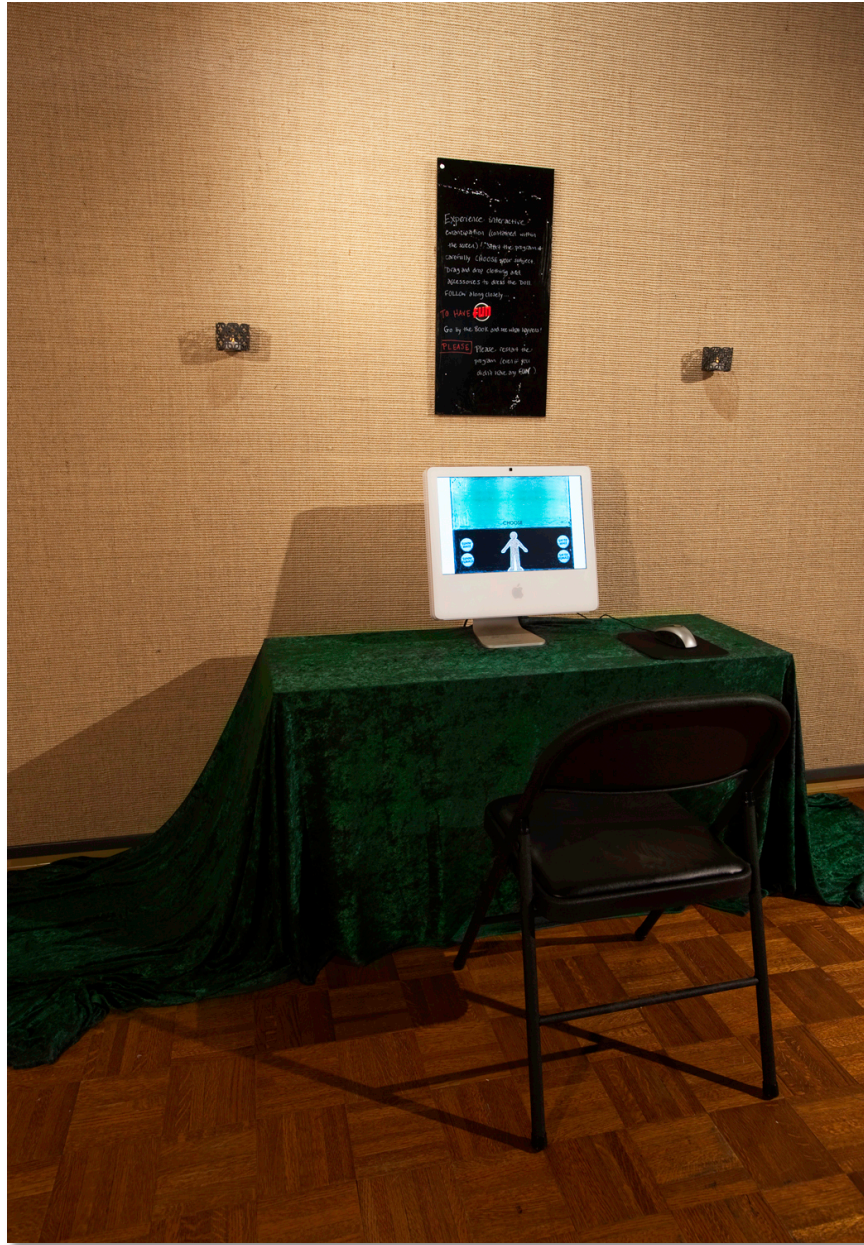


Fig. 27, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Islam installation, 2010, ink, canvas, paint, paper, cork, computer, fabric, LED candles and holders.

This final form's placement encourages intimate interaction with technology, as well as divorces itself from the previous Christianity table. The computer screen is placed on a desk draped in green material with a chair in front. The CPU is contained within the screen and a mouse is connected to it, streamlining the presentation. No keyboard is attached and the Dock is

hidden so that the viewer cannot go outside of the Flash Player. Directions of “drag and drop” are adequate because this phrase is understood even by those who are not comfortable with computers. The command to “follow” is a subtle reference to the difference between the beliefs of the Sunni and Shi’ite groups as to who followed Muhammed.

The freedom of Flash allows for physical interaction via a mouse or “interactive emancipation contained within the screen”. The interaction with this form per individual is the most influenced by demographic. Everyone knows how to stand and appreciate art, just as everyone knows how to interact with a book. However, comfort with computers differs greatly. How interesting!

The FUN directions are perfect in the balance between literal and metaphorical directions. Interacting with the holy text accessory causes FUN to appear. If FUN is chosen, it will automatically attach itself to the book and cause the screen to go to static and restart. Therefore, the idiom “go by the book” is used. The viewer is also asked to restart the program regardless; therefore, the next person can have a complete experience.

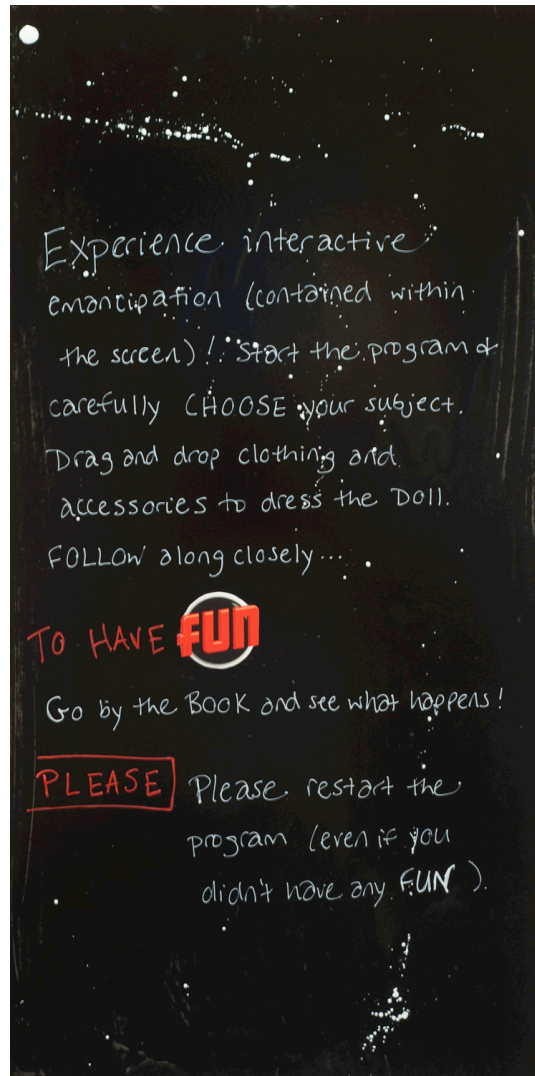


Fig. 28, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS Islam installation sign, 2010, wood, paint, paper, 12"w x 24"h.

COMMENTS



Fig. 29, Nicole Arnell, FUNDamentalist DOLLS installation Comments table, 2010, wood, paint, ink, polyurethane, fabric, LED candles and holders.

Besides wondering what the viewers experienced, this final step is the punctuation per religion. There are two ways to leave comments and they are both available with its consequences to the individual. Some will not care to leave anything. Some will want to share, but keep it private. And some will want to announce their opinions, which may start a textual conversation. With religion as the subject matter, the form may be ignored and the comments may be about the content. And who knows where that will go?!

If the individual would like to keep his/her opinion private, there is a ballot box and index cards. This box is made of heavy wood that is covered in thick, glossy black paint with two gaps in the top. It can only be opened with a power drill to unscrew the bottom, ensuring privacy of the comments. On the other side of the table is a large leather book holding heavy-weight parchment-like stock. The lack of lines is meant to encourage visual and verbal communication,

perhaps allowing individuals to build on each others' thoughts. Multiple black pens lay between the two.

The directions are the final words from me, the creator of the experience. I use the last two words as the final point per the content of religion and its effect (or lack thereof) on individuals and society as a whole. I direct the audience member loudly in large capital letters what to do. CHOOSE WELL.

JUDGMENT

Feedback on form favoritism was surprising. I expected the comfort level differing between book and computer per one's coziness with technology; however, reaction was much more than this. A few comments are paraphrased below according to the viewer's favorite form's experience.

GALLERY SPACE

Reply: Definitely this form. It makes me think. Stop and think about it. Plus that [pointing to the FUN Judaism] is very powerful. The book and the computer are fun to play with and I interact with them, but they don't make me really *think* about what the point is. This makes a much more memorable statement.

TANGIBLE BOOK

Reply: I am more comfortable with the book than the computer, plus it's quick. I can walk up to it and walk away. I have more choices; however, it bothers me that the person before me didn't put the magnets back where they belong – like there is something left behind from the person before. Also placing the FUN sheets over the top scared me until I read your sign. I didn't know what to do, but I didn't really care because I was having fun with the magnets. The stuff on the wall is nice, but I walk right by it.

Reply: [Observing two little girls playing with dressing the dolls with absolutely no concerns or hesitance.]

INTERACTIVE SCREEN

Reply: The book is too fragile. With this, I can just restart the artwork at any time. There is no commitment and it's quick. Even if somebody left this dressed and didn't clean it up, I just hit restart. I can be free with the interaction. Plus, I get to sit down. [Gallery wall] is nice, but I don't really interact with it.

Reply: The limitation of choices is an interesting parallel to religious choices. There is so much you left out or forced accessories per the initial choice that it narrows the viewpoint. How powerful.

So then how does form affect a viewer's experience of content? After the last month of whirlwind reaction to subject matter, I was not sure how this installation would be received. Though empirical testing was never the goal, my comments box, personal conversations, and simple observation proved one thing. Experience is an individual affair, which is a direct parallel to the content of religion. Prior knowledge of the recipient in both completes the artwork.

Though it is possible for viewers to be so offended by the content that they would be blocked to experience the form, I had no evidence of this at its completion. This could be because the viewer did not want to share, but the fire of fanaticism is usually vocal. It seemed that once the pieces were in the installation's calming room with no attachment of offense or apology, it achieved what I had planned. The viewer considered both the form and the subject matter and had an *individual* experience that could not be easily categorized or expected.

And what will I do with this? What was the enlightenment per this terminal degree? I will further develop my style and usage of forms for the means of message delivery. My style encourages artwork outside the expected computer, which can be seen flooding into mainstream from design circles. In addition, interactive software and print are evolving to a new and exciting form. Dating this thesis, Apple releases its iPad two days after I defend and this will surely catapult the design industry – and eventually mainstream – into new ways of communicating much more than iPhone and Netbook users are predicting. *All* of these elements are exciting as they grow together. This is why my overarching interest is not indecisive curiosity, but a keen awareness of where the field of graphic design is going.

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