

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative
Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design

Art, Art History and Design, School of

4-2021

Short Stories, Tall Tales

Chance Lure Allen

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, chance.allen@huskers.unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/artstudents>



Part of the [Painting Commons](#)

Allen, Chance Lure, "Short Stories, Tall Tales" (2021). *Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design*. 152.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/artstudents/152>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Art, Art History and Design, School of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

SHORT STORIES, TALL TALES

By

Chance Lure Allen

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfilment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Matthew Sontheimer

Lincoln, Nebraska

April, 2021

SHORT STORIES, TALL TALES

Chance Lure Allen, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2021

Advisor: Matthew Sontheimer

It is often said that the truth should never get in the way of a good story. I use painting and drawing to override truth, open a door to imagined lives, reflect on the past from a new perspective, and look to the future from my current perspective. The drawings and paintings in this exhibition combine elements of personal history, historical art references, popular culture, and music, drawing heavily from American iconography. I use the format of the still life to create idiosyncratic pairings of objects and images documenting memories of growing up in Missouri. Some of the images are short stories. Others are tall tales.

I come from a hundred-year line of gravestone makers, and for eight years I worked in cemeteries setting gravestones. What has stuck with me from that period of my life—aside from a fear of my own death—is the realization that I can use my experiences of growing-up in small-town Maryville, Missouri— to discuss more universal themes such as love, death, family, and the mystery of the unknown. The approach and technique of short story telling that all gravestones implement has also stuck with me.

You can't fit a life story on the face of a headstone. The challenge one faces is to focus only on a few elements: quotes and anecdotes, pictures and symbols, all of which exist in shallow space. The way I compose objects in my drawings and paintings are executed in a similar manner. I create a narrative within each piece by limiting the

number of objects in each composition. This creates a standoff within the picture, focusing the viewer to find relationships between the object and image, and allowing the elements in the painting to supersede their literal presence for a symbolic one.

I use multiple images—such as family photographs, copies of famous paintings, and album cover art, to open greater possibilities of how the viewer reads the work’s narrative. The paintings in this exhibition each contain a kind of stage—represented by either a shelf, tabletop, or counter space. Distilling the number of objects within this shallow space allows me to create a set of forms in the painting that carry symbolic, aesthetic, and compositional relationships.

The combinations and comparisons of images and objects in my works at first glance may strike one as funny, absurd, or seemingly unrelated. For example, the painting *Life Cycle* contains a magazine cut out of Gustave Courbet’s image, *Origin of the World*, and is set next to an image of a man grabbing the antlers of a freshly killed deer, and blank check signed by myself. The painting is a memento mori: which means “remember you must die”, a subject that many still life painters have touched on throughout history. In *Life Cycle*, Courbet’s image becomes a stand in for birth, the deer’s corpse represents death, and the signed blank check is a reminder to spend your life wisely.

Short Stories, Tall Tales presents narratives with universal themes of life, love, and death. I hope to give the viewer a way into my world through instances and emotions that echo their own experience.































