

Looming

Essay by Emma Balkind

Looming. Defined as:

A shadowy form that is large and probably threatening.

An event which is threatening to happen.

A (maybe) exaggerated, vague first vision of an object in darkness.

A distant dim reflection barely visible.

Origins in Low German or Dutch such as *lomen* - move slowly.

Or *luemen* - be weary.

It makes me think also of gloaming, the dusk. When we wander out into the dim light, to get a drink. See a show maybe. I came to see your band in 2006 in a Chinese restaurant and karaoke bar. Clad in wood like a cruise ship, with a matching chandelier and filthy carpets.

On the way out the posters cling together crisply on a pylon or boarded up shop window. Some of them have started to peel outward at the edges. Wheatpasted hard in the middle. All intended power to seduce gone, but still they lick out and away from whence they were stuck.

My cousin was a poster guy for a while. He was out in the looming light, the gloaming, with his glue and a set of headphones. Hastily pasting til it's all gone from the bag, and then on to some place he'd postered for a beer.

In Berlin they don't bother to clean up their wallpaper. It reaches out at all of it's edges, trying to creep away, maybe reach and touch you. Eventually folding down the wall or creasing into awkward piles on the pavement at Hermann or Alexander -platz. Music's unintended sculptures.

The poster was always meant for the wall, at eye level. There's something to take away from it. Bike for sale, \$60. Bassist wanted. Kittens! A £5 show at Sleazys. When we're done with it, it's buried or trampled.

In Aberdeen, I remember being taught how to handle the prints. Gentle with the corners, stacked in drawers together. Collated, but only catalogued if you're lucky. After your show someone else took over my role and the prints were sent back in a box, loose, no tissue paper wrapped to save it for the journey. They arrived in tatters like old handbills on the show floor.

In here the room is dark. A tin roof. The floor is orange. Dingy. Exaggeratedly large sheets hang from the wall. Everything you make is process, I know this. So what's that looming in the dark? Shapes take form on the ground, guided by an invisible hand that works out of hours.

This set changes. I need to keep coming back to make some sense of it. Improvised, I can't work out if it's fast or slow. It degrades but it is also built new. I think of Kurt Schwitters *Merzbau*, the ceiling heavy with shapes. The modernism of a man in hiding, destroyed by the great war. It's existence today only in reproductions.

Something is happening, but I'm not sure what. Maybe it's a dream. A giant hand reaches out in the dark, a tent gathers its corners. I wearily remember to myself that if the room spins, I should keep one foot on the floor as I drift off.

One of your posters had an angry bear's face on it. I brought it back from Canada and it always curled off the wall and hit me on the head in my sleep. Startled by a new scrape and a blanket of paper over my eyes. Released by an invisible hand, I wonder? Eventually, too chewed, it was relegated to the poster tube.

Another familiar shape. The scroll. Your works came in the mail, and unrolled outside and bottom first. The edition in the corner with the Seripop stamp. Only this time there's no archival paper. No signature. No edition. The print doesn't appear on the wall, it appends to everything.

Strategy 1: Paper cloaks the space, maps it, defines repeated motifs.

It feels like your paper has grown oversized and is taking over. It does things that it shouldn't. At once the medium seems fragile and yet somehow overpowering, swallowing the space. Impermanent and ephemeral, momentary. Yet it seems like a threat. Scissors beat paper but paper beats rock.

Strategy 2: Planned 'accidents' impose stress on selected elements, often producing results which evolve over time.

In revealing this ephemerality, weaknesses are exposed reflecting on a previous show; *This peculiar bias will nonetheless set up a vast field for the unseen*. Except this time the blanket takes different shapes and we watch it fall and drape. Objects propping, print concealing.

Strategy 3: Shift the perception of depth through use of vivid colours, contrast or reflection.

Uncountable not comparable, but in the dark we don't know if it's a party or if the bouquet of objects is something to be scared of. Exuberant domesticity has given way to something I might trip up on or do I mean trip out on?

A motif becomes apparent in the looming threat of chance, by way of an improvisation with form. The poster, in its different material usage becomes the element of communication. In *J' m'en suis déjà souvenu* we ripped it up, and now you rip it up for us. Degradation replaces text or illustration as the message. By accepting and playing with, even encouraging this decomposition it seems that we get to know that which is looming over us.

Cultural theorists are eager to remind us today that there is little possibility for the new. That we have become doomed to inevitably revisit and recreate old and decaying relics is a given. What tends to be missed in such assertions is the subtlety conveyed by the medium of these reproductions.

It could appear there is a nihilistic tone to Chloe and Yannick's works in the sheer amount of processing that it requires in square meter of prints. Any and every piece of paper saturated with colour by silkscreen. Every show created new, according to the ephemerality of the medium.

Printmakers are notoriously stubborn and dedicated to the production technique. With Looming though, Seripop accept that just as we cannot know what tomorrow holds, neither can we be emancipated from historical forms, embracing both productivism and in turn the production of its negation: destruction.

Emma Balkind is an AHRC PhD Candidate at Glasgow School of Art conducting research on the Commons. She is currently producing a project on female authorship and radical subjectivity in partnership with Laura Edbrook and MAP magazine. In 2009 she curated Seripop at Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen. Emma lives in Glasgow, Scotland, her home town.