

Laser Cutting Through History: Exploring the Process of Art Curation and Fabrication



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Introduction:

Being struck with inspiration, unlocking your creativity and expressing yourself on a canvas or other mediums are fundamental parts of the art process that many artists go through. This process can be very tedious and detailed when artists are trying to convey a specific message through their pieces. Art allows individuals to be expressive of their emotions and feelings or even tell stories and portray issues that they are passionate about, which can be seen through the process of art curation. Art curation is a process that involves “selecting, organizing and presenting artworks” in a manner that aims to convey a specific and “meaningful message” when the pieces are displayed together” (Mehlhaff, 2023). This project investigates the processes of art curation and fabrication and how they are used to convey themes that involve climate change and land ownership.

Abstract:

Art curation and fabrication can be a very tedious process for many artists, which is the focus of this research project. This project emphasizes the importance and significance of meticulously crafting and arranging pieces to convey a message or information through artwork. In order to better understand these processes, I was able to assist Professor Meredith Lynn with the curation and fabrication of her artwork, which focuses on the “impacts of climate change and land management and ownership” (meredithlauralynn.com). Collaborating with her partner, Katie Hargrave, Professor Lynn utilizes multimedia to highlight our environment and the profound effects of capitalism and tourism on our land. Their work draws inspiration from William Henry Jackson, who is known as the first person to photograph the area of Yellowstone (nps.gov). Jackson’s work played a pivotal role in passing a bill to establish Yellowstone as the first national park. Professor Lynn’s artwork skillfully captures the experiences of Jackson and his colleagues, while they surveyed and explored various landmarks. Through this research, I’ve had the opportunity to experiment with a variety of fabrication techniques including file sorting, laser cutting, and laser engraving to assist Professor Lynn in effectively conveying her message through her artwork.

Method:

We began by sorting through photographs from William Henry’s Jackson’s “Hayden Survey” from the US National Archives. After sorting through the photos using specific criteria, the photos were then printed on silk fabric and laser cut in the shape of leaves using a Trotec laser cutter. We created a vector file using Adobe Illustrator to digitally sketch out leaf shapes and then measured the file and aligned it with the fabric on the Trotec bed to ensure that leaves were being cut precisely in the correct location. After the leaves were cut, Professor Lynn then sewed the leaves onto the same image that was replicated through the leaves. We incorporated multiple layers to display the leaf imagery.

Results:

Laser Cut Leaves

References:

Jackson, William Henry. *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson, Frontier Photographer*. 1959.

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Wikimedia.org, 2024, [commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:US National Archives series: Hayden Survey](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:US_National_Archives_series:Hayden_Survey).

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