**Systems of Absurdity, Memory, and No-Thing-Ness**

*An Essay on My Artwork by Kirk Miller*

My artwork exposes the instability of systems we use to construct order, value, memory, belief, and the self. I subject these systems to repetition, contradiction, displacement, and erasure until their internal logic begins to break down. Across sculpture, installation, performance, digital imaging, 3D modeling, and bronze casting, my work demonstrates what remains when established structures of meaning are stripped away.

My early work confronts this condition through existential absurdity. Influenced by Ionesco and Beckett, *The Square That Rotates*, *Sisyphus*, and *30 Balls Moved 30 Times* enact repetitive labor without progress. A level remains perpetually imbalanced*Ye*. A spring winds and snaps only to begin again. Thirty balls are moved each day without producing any meaningful result. These works embody what I call the **development of non-development**: systems that function continuously while accomplishing nothing.

This critique extends into systems of value, ownership, memory, and identity. *Take-A-Number* organizes viewers into a line that leads nowhere. *Untitled*, a digital slot machine, reduces ownership and monetary value to chance. *The Book (*An Exhibition*),* and *Wrecks, Accidents, & Collisions* construct histories from lost artworks, appropriated images, and fabricated associations. These works materialize Alison Landsberg's concept of "prosthetic memory": memory acquired through images, objects, and cultural experience rather than firsthand events.

My understanding of emptiness—**No-Thing-Ness**—has changed fundamentally. In the earlier work, emptiness signified futility and negation. Through Zen meditation, I came to understand emptiness as potential. *Light & Air* transforms an otherwise empty corner into a sacred space through attention and presence. In *SacredTextSacredSpace* and *Fragile*, I remove words from sacred texts and allow light to pass through the resulting voids. Erasure is not destruction. Absence becomes material. Nothingness becomes generative.

Technology intensifies these concerns by destabilizing the relationship between representation and reality. In *monaLisa.jpg (C++)*, Leonardo's image is replaced by the computer code that constitutes its digital representation. *What's In A Name* dismantles the idea of singular identity by reducing a name to an online accumulation of strangers who happen to share it. The body undergoes a similar displacement throughout my work. The inhaler, an object inseparable from my life, becomes a surrogate self-portrait. In works such as *Empty Head*, identity is reduced to shell, mask, void, and absence.

In my current project *Domestic Memories*, I'm working with my grandmother's original sketches of family events, created during the 30s and 40s, and reimagining them with illustrations generated by AI. My grand-parents both died of alcoholism so many of stories in the sketches are dark. The sketches – original and AI – are printed on fabric and deploy the feminine in the form of a quilt, which transform and memorialize my grandmother's stories.

Throughout my practice, value is arbitrary, ownership is unstable, memory is constructed, and identity is never fixed. Systems continue operating after their original purpose has disappeared. Meaning survives only temporarily before another structure replaces it.

I do not resolve these contradictions; I make them visible. My work occupies the tension between absurdity and possibility, absence and presence, negation and potential. Meaning collapses, reforms, and collapses again. What initially appears to be nothing becomes the space from which something else can emerge.