

Hana Holmgren

Mythos Final Reflection

Mythos started as simply an idea to make a book of my own poetry by hand, in an effort to combine my creative writing pursuits and my experiences and enjoyment of print making. I had completed a similar project in the past, and knew that it wasn't outside the scope of possibility, even without the extra sets of hands. What I didn't know at the time was what exactly I wanted it to be about, and how much work would actually go into its completion.

Making a book from scratch is no easy task. I first had to decide what I wanted to say. How would these poems be connected? In the age of a mythology renaissance, the answer came fairly quickly. I had written mythologically based poetry in the past, and I wanted to continue the reflection of personal identity and how it is shaped by stories. By religion. By our own personal mythology, as well as what we learn and are told. The poetry, of course, came first, and was admittedly the easiest part of the project. It was fun to write, and to explore. The hard work came after.

Once I had decided which poems to include, I had to set the type. This probably took the longest amount of time, and was rather tedious. Each poem had to be set character by character, line by line. Including the thirteen poems and the title pages, this took several weeks, and lots of editing. In fact, the decision-making process of which poems to include had a lot to do with both length and format, since both would change and lengthen to type-setting process. On top of this, illustrations needed to be created, carved, and printed. As much as I enjoyed the rest of the process, this was my favorite part. I wanted to enhance each illustrated poem, not overshadow it.

In the end, I decided to only use one color: red. There is quite a bit of blood imagery here, as is only fitting for something so steeped in mythological and biblical violence. I also thought it to be the most striking image, black on red on white. This meant that some of the illustrations needed multiple layers, and multiple carved sheets of linoleum.

I printed enough pages to make forty final copies, which was mostly made possible by a grant from the Honors College, which paid for my material expenses and time. I wanted to make enough that I could give some to my thesis committee, the Book Arts Center, and family members, and have some to keep or sell at my own discretion.

This project was difficult. I spent a lot of long evenings and afternoons alone in the studio, setting tiny pieces of lead type into place or printing forty or more copies of each page. The end result was absolutely worth it, though. I'm incredibly proud of the work I did and the way it turned out and, honestly, I don't think I would have changed anything about the final product. The process taught me a lot about managing my time and workload, especially while balancing it with a massive amount of classwork. I got the chance to do work that I love, in a place that really nurtured my ideas. There is nothing else like holding something that you have created entirely by hand from a simple idea. I would love to complete similar projects in the future.