

New Gilded Age

By B. Lynch

Puppets have fascinated me for years—from my time studying traditional theatre in Kyoto Japan as an undergrad. The stylized theatricality of my installations are owed to that study but also such sources as Japanese and Russian film, American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge and Commonwealth Shakespeare in Boston and fantasy novels.

My fictive universe of the *Reds* and *Greys* confounds time periods much like my inspirations from theatre and novels. The *Reds*, placed in the stylish 18th century, have all the money, the best stuff and seemingly steer events. The larger *Greys* faction, living in a dystopian setting are the doers, they have work but little else. So who's on top? Revolutions echo down the years, philosophers extol the dignity of work, everybody wants riches and leisure.

The various narratives start with the small figurines. These figures and their attendant props—such as pushcarts, hot air balloons, cooking pots etc are made from limited materials: mostly paper, paint and wire with a bit of wood and foil thrown in. They are created not to be perfect dolls but rather as emotive characters, puppets if you will. Originally they lived in separate Red or Grey environments, but as the project grew, I've come to understand that their fates are entwined.

As the characters assume their personalities and roles, they start to take over the show. Each new character sends a shiver through their world, quivering new alliances beget hither-to-unsuspected narratives. The Sci-fi nature of the project allows freedom for me to explore ideas that are timeless questions for humanity.

Because the characters fascinate me in all kinds of ways I like imagining them in different media. *The Red Baiters*, digitally composed images, grew out of the large 42" high ink drawings that are now free-standing cut-out figures. I began

inserting them into photographs I've been taking for years of my ideas of Red and Grey habitats. Manipulating them in Photoshop they can be projected, or printed for display. These in turn inspired my videos where I have layered iterations of the various characters as drawings or figurines.

The videos are my most immersive work. I can contextualize the characters and suggest narrative despite no dialog, (the exception being the puppet play). I carefully compose the soundscape and music for the videos to create emotional textures.

The installation is not linear, it is the characters and their narratives that are the focus. Find your heroes and villains, think about what you wish these two groups could achieve. Dream a little.