This book titled *Connections* is a compilation of essays and visual projects created in response to the exhibition *Crescent City Connection*, curated by Megan K. Young, Director of the Dishman Art Museum, and Jonathan Ferrara, of the Jonathan Ferrara Gallery in New Orleans, on display in the Dishman Art Museum from September 27–November 22, 2013. The show featured artwork by contemporary New Orleans artists. The work in this book was created by Lamar University students in the Fall 2013 Design 1 course with Assistant Professor Sherry Saunders. The assignment was to select a particular artwork from the show and to write an essay describing what about the work was inspirational to the individual student. The students then had to create a visual response to the selected artwork. This response could be reflective of the original work’s content, medium and formal qualities, or both.
Christopher Saucedo is a sculptural artist originally from Brooklyn, New York who currently teaches and resides in New Orleans. The theme of his work is to visit man made objects which he uses to draw a parallel to the human condition. His portraits that were on display at the Dishman gallery are a perfect example. The work shown at the gallery were metal pennyweights. What made these objects portraits is that pennyweight was made in the exact weight and volume of the person that it was intended to symbolize. At the top of the penny weight is the title of the family member it symbolized; in front of a portrait of the entire family. Saucedo’s penny weight was positioned away from the other weights he created, painted black and had a portion removed from it. The reason being he’s the black sheep in his family, and he’s lost some weight. His portraits hold more weight than just a tangible representation of a portrait. It revisits the idea of how we measure our reality and sense of self. By making a tangible representation of himself he turned himself into a unit of measurement. He can measure the world in “Saucedos.” This reflects the same way people are accustomed to measuring things. Not just in how as a society we arbitrarily pick units of measurements as a standard (i.e. The king’s foot ) but, on a deeper level as well. In the way that a human measures himself and his surroundings based on themselves. Chris’s work is highly relatable because it deals with the human condition. I measure my world in “Everetts” because (like everyone else) I am the one perceiving my environment. The only way to quantify my environment is based on the previous circumstances that create the weight of who I am. Chris Saucedo took the very essence of the human condition and simplified it into a representation one of the smallest measures. He made the pennyweight into a iconic image that intends a lot more than it implies.

—Everett Beaujon, 2013
THE GRIMM VERSION OF CHARLOTTE’S WEB

Michael Pajon was born in Chicago, Illinois and his main medium of work is making photo collages. He attended the Art Institute of Chicago and majored in printmaking in 2003. Pajon likes to assemble random collected items (such as maps, postcards, children book pages, stickers, music sheets, matchbooks, etc.) and then paste them down onto old black and white photographs. He says, “by collaging these elements amidst drawings and other media, I create small relationships to arrive at a whole image.” His work has subtle dark colors and each one includes at least one human and/or animal. Pajon’s work ranges from the size of baseball cards to the size of large tables.

The work that stood out the most for me was a photo collage called “Lies Unfurled Like Cheap Ribbon”. It’s a small photo collage of a man surrounded by eyes, hands, smoke, stars, ribbon and a skull. Eyes represent truth, the two hands represent a choice, smoke represents confusion, stars represent light in the dark, a ribbon represents awareness, and the skull represents death. I believe the artist is trying to say that the truth is out there, even if we cloud our own judgment, all we have to do is open our eyes. I did feel a personal connection to Pajon’s work because it reminded me of my own. The artist likes to add a lot of detail and symbolism, then scrambles it into a collage to make the viewer have to really study the work to appreciate all the little hidden details and messages waiting to be discovered.

—Crystal Calhoun, 2013
LIFE’S A BEACH

I was very amazed by the art work I saw at the Crescent City Connection show in the Dishman Art Museum. There were different artists that showed their many talents. As I looked at the different artist’s work, I saw a sense their of personality. There was one piece of work that I was particularly astonished by.

Hannah Chalew was born in 1986 in the city of New Orleans. While living in New Orleans Hannah would spend most of her time drawing and sewing. After she graduated high school she went to Brandeis University. After, she graduated with a B.A. in fine arts. Hannah was one of the founders of T-Lot. T-Lot was a studio that held many local inspiring artists. In this studio upcoming artist would express and showcase their work in many different contests.

Hannah Chalew’s amazing work has been featured in The Oxford American, Art Voices, Pelican Bomb, Satellite Magazine, Designtripper, New Orleans, Nola Defender, Times-Picayune, and in the Dishman Art Museum in Beaumont, TX. The first piece I saw was called “Between 2010” and this piece reminded me of when I was bored in class and I would draw on my handouts. Her work really connected to me in many ways. I can tell when Hannah made her “Between 2010” piece that she put a lot of time into it. She only used a pen and ink. Her creativity made her work stand out not only because it was in pen but it was also in 3D. She had drawn power lines and made the line out of yarn.

Now that I have learned a lot about Hannah Chalew, I will be looking forward to more of her work in the future. Female artists always inspires me because they always have a more unique way of making art.

—Djuan Douglas, 2013
Hannah Chalew was born and raised in New Orleans where she studied visual arts at NOCCA. Just as Chalew was commencing her Freshmen orientation, Hurricane Katrina struck her hometown, diluting the lively city with water and devastation. The aftermath of this tragedy left most of southern Louisiana in shambles. It was among these shambles that Chalew found inspiration for her future masterpieces. She found a certain fascination with the “transitional spaces left behind by Hurricane Katrina”. Chalew explored this unwonted subject and injected this concept into her art.

From her artwork *Between*, it can be inferred that there is some sort of inner struggle between human infrastructure and Mother Nature. This assumption is made evident by Chalew’s use of texture and balance.

She illustrates man made pieces such as fences and houses being surrounded by flora. The edifices in the work are created with geometric shapes and appear to have a smooth surface. Chalew depicts her vegetation with erratic, whimsical lines. They demonstrate a rugged, natural texture. Chalew balances out her work in a way that the trees and buildings are equally represented. Chalew neglects the use of color to possibly allow the viewer to not be focused on either the flora or the infrastructure. It is likely that Chalew does not want there to be a main focal point. Instead, she wants to create a balance between the two subjects. An inner struggle can be identified; upon closer inspection the long standing battle between man and nature.

The unique city of New Orleans still bears the scars of Hurricane Katrina’s wrath. Not many would look at these wounds and find inspiration for beautiful art. Hannah Chalew was able to look at this destruction and inject it into something that is tangible. She was able to capture conflicting emotions that inspire feelings of melancholy and pride for her city. She successfully portrayed the ongoing struggle between “human infrastructure and the power of nature” in her profound masterpiece; *Between*.

—Courtney George, 2013
MONEY MAKE$ THE WORLD GO ‘ROUND

Dan Tague’s artwork is one of a kind. He was born in the United States in 1974. The title of the artwork is called “Reality Sucks”. It is made of Archival inkjet print on a rag loan courtesy of the Jonathan Ferrara gallery. The texture of the work is rough because it is made out of rag paper. The colors in the artwork are quite simple; they are green and white just like money. The color is one of the things that really made me like the artwork because I love money. The artist’s use of lines in this work caught my attention. The shape of the artwork is not definite. It almost has its own weird rectangular shape. I think that the artist is trying to tell us that the real world is not easy. “Reality Sucks” is telling us that real life sucks. Almost like the artist would rather live in a fantasy then to deal with all of the problems that the real world has. Also, it is almost like the author is being sarcastic yet telling the truth.

I have a personal connection with this artwork because sometimes reality can suck. Having to deal with football and school it becomes really hard to balance them both. Sometimes I wish that I could be in a dream world or a fantasy and just live the life that I want to live. I know that it won’t come true but at least it is a cool thought to have. Overall I love the artist’s work, this piece did a great job on getting my attention.

—Gratian Gladney, 2013
Bob Snead’s unique and well-crafted display “Stock, 2012,” was among my favorite works in the Crescent City Connection show. Snead is popular for incorporating craft and humor into his works. Snead utilizes a wide range of media to express his deep commitment to humor. “I have used the spaces, times and patterns that haphazardly compose domestic life to build this body of work that focuses on process—investigating where a harmony can develop between the chaotic and the controlled through oil paintings, digital drawings, prints and collage,” said Snead.

Bob Snead’s display “Stock, 2012,” consisted of a Dollar General scene crafted entirely of recycled cardboard. It is obvious that Snead spent a lot of time into making sure the lines and cuts were crafted perfectly. Snead used a variety of three dimensional shapes to represent everyday items people find in the grocery store. He used space to make sure the items were aligned in an orderly manner. Every piece in his work was different, but the consistent quality of his craft and color of the cardboard gave cohesiveness to the entire display.

I believe that Bob Snead’s work is trying to make a statement about the value of things we do not appreciate. When we purchase items, many of us neglect the packaging that comes with it by throwing it away. I also believe he is using his art piece to show us that we can create art with practically anything we get our hands on, which relates to his idea of creative humor. I connect with this work because I like to make art out of recycled scraps. In the eighth grade I created a bracelet made out of broken necklaces that I would have thrown away.

Bob Snead’s art is more than just an interesting sight; it is a harmonious balance of humor and creativity. I am familiar with the Dollar Store, so seeing a small creation of it made out of cardboard was definitely intriguing to me.

—Lexia Knowles, 2013
Since the first man, human beings have come up with different inventions and beautiful forms of art. Various branches of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, and dance are what define Art. Justin Forbes is a highly recognized artist. He was born in Hollywood, California in 1967 to a professional photographer and professional dancer. He fell in love with art at an early age, which led him to Cabrillo College in Aptos, California and the School of Visual Arts in New York, New York to sharpen his artistic skills and become the talented, highly recognized artist that he is today.

One of my favorite works of art by Justin Forbes is his oil based painting by the title “Day at the Lake”. His use of color helps bring the painting to life as it makes a viewer reminisce of a childhood memory or takes one to his or her happy place. One can tell a lot of time and hard work was put into this painting due to its even texture. He also has a good use of line, which helps bring the characters on the painting to life. Looking at Forbes’s paintings, one gets the feeling of being invited to watch a performance because of his mixture of warm and cool colors and vivid details.

The message that Forbes was trying to send with his “Day at the Lake” painting is that life is beautiful, take every minute to enjoy it and God’s beautiful creations. It impacts me personally because it takes me back to my childhood days of fun and adventures. “Forbes art is narrative in a nature as they always seem to tell a story or an event taking place. There is a sense of irony alongside the often brutally honest story lines alluded to in Forbes’s composition.” Justin Forbes skilled perception of life and his use of different art mediums depict his skill set and talent. He is seeking that perfect energetic, loose mastery of detail and mood.

—Charles Maende, 2013
A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

In the Crescend City Connection, many pieces if artwork were sketched, painted, digitized, sewn, and collaged to create a gallery of lush color and extravagant taste. Out of the numerous pieces in the gallery, I was drawn to one that seemed more humble than most: Dan Tague’s Young Patriot’s Flag. This piece was collected and made by Tague to show how everything comes together for the greater good; specifically through his personally experiences in the 80’s as long as many other adolescents who grew up to raise my generation. Through the use of quilting, he took iconic symbols from his generation to produce this work, specifically those he attained over the years. I enjoy the concept of his perception, but my mind immediately reflected on another period of time that I went through personally as he did in the 80’s.

As soon as I saw the piece, my mind developed a story. Since art is made to be perceived in a creative way, my thoughts directed me to a modern catastrophe: Hurricane’s Katrina and Rita. Since these artist are all New Orleans based, I generally thought of Katrina. I imagined a group of kids on a roof with all of their belongings trying to keep out of the debris, bacteria infested salt water that had just flooded their home as well as thousands of others. Stranded there, they all decide to make a symbol of hope, a symbol that will show people that they are still there. They take their shirts off of their backs as well as the ones they saved and their blankets that kept them warm and dry to create this enormous American flag. They would wave this flag to sign for help to the helicopters over head and it would soon become a symbol of their survival.

Young Patriot’s Flag ultimately portrays that there is always a greater good. People can come together to create something amazing. This is reflected through theatre arts, musical arts, and in this case, fine arts. Dan Tague does a wonderful job of portraying this concept as well as leaving it open ended for the viewer in an unknowing way for their own creative minds to conceptualize.

—Zachary Martin, 2013
“The artists I look up to are the ones who push their own limits” (Christina Aguilera). As said best by Christina Aguilera, the best artists are those who are always changing, never the same, and are always bringing something new. The Cresent City Connection show in the Dishman Art Museum wasn’t the first art show I visited, but it was by far one of the most interesting and creative shows.

Bob Snead was the founding director of Redux Contemporary Art Center until 2005, when he left his hometown of Charleston, SC to pursue graduate studies in painting and printmaking at Yale University School of Art. After his exposure in 2007, he helped form the artist collective Transit Antenna, and spent the next two years on the roads of North America in a vegetable oil-powered bus producing various community-based art projects along the way. In 2011, he was honored with the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the College of Charleston for his extensive work with nonprofit art organizations. Snead is currently a board member of the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Organization, and director of the Hand-in-Glove 2013 conference. Snead’s work in the Crescent City Connection show was so good it can’t even be measured. It was so pleasing to the eye it was art that literally jumped out of the page. His attention to detail and creativity is really what drew me to his work. Snead’s art to me was making a really bold statement. In his artist statement, he mentions that his work is something monumental that haphazardly develops harmony. I think his art speaks about the materialistic things in the world that really amount to nothing just as the cardboard boxes they are shipped in.

Bob Snead’s work in my opinion was my favorite piece from the Cresent City Connection show in the Dishman Art Museum. It wasn’t his first time making life-size art out of cardboard but the first I had ever seen. I really think he expressed his creativity in the simplest way but as I have always heard the best art is simple but effective.

—Alexis Moore, 2013
OLD MEMORIES

A video of an endlessly growing house and a deserted yet living billboard with trash and flooding water is an inspiring work by the artist, Dan Rule. The animated works from this artist make the viewer see a surreal, yet great form of art.

Dan Rule was born in Belleville, Illinois in 1977. After studying printmaking in Southern Illinois University and Northern Illinois, Rule would use his skill of drawing, printmaking, video and animation to make his artwork. Rule’s work soon became popular, having been exhibited nationally in Japan, Canada, and Europe. Rule is currently an Assistant Professor of Art at the University of New Orleans. The artist would use everyday objects and shapes and form them into a pattern or rhythm. In nature, nearly all of Rule’s work seems to be abstract and surreal in nature. His artwork in the museum seems to focus on representation of human lives, such as “Authentically Lived Their Lives”. There are two reasons why I picked this artist. One is that I am always fascinated by animation. Since I never really saw an animated work in an art museum, I was surprised to have found Rule’s piece. Second is that every time I look into his artwork, I seem to look through a strange landscape, much like Salvador Dali’s and Maggie Taylor’s work.

Although there are many other great, interesting artists in the Dishman Art Museum, like Dan Tague and Generic Art Solution, I find myself fascinated by Dan Rule’s artwork.

—Marcus Owens, 2013
“Holt Cemetery, 2013” by Gina Phillips uses an intriguing technique of creating a simple under-painting of acrylic, and then adding fabric and thread to create a very interesting texture that is reminiscent of quilting. That aspect of quilting is very personal and struck a resonant chord with me, because I grew up in a home with a quilter. Phillips really plays with scale in this piece, using an almost larger-than-life child standing on a mound of giant teeth with roots exposed. An oak tree that is nearly life-sized towers overhead and dominates the work with dismembered body parts hanging from a branch, its own roots trailing down onto the floor.

Phillips was raised in Kentucky, and in a video interview with her posted on www.jonathanferraragallery.com the artist retells growing up without a hot-water heater and air-conditioning, then sharing a room with her mother until she was fifteen years old. Phillips uses imagery from Kentucky and New Orleans in her artwork.

Phillips mentions in her interview that she frequently visits the Holt Cemetery and walks up the trunk of a very large live oak tree on the site, finding it a quiet and peaceful place to think and reflect. She mentions finding bits of bone while walking through the cemetery on these visits and she connects this discovery to the large oak preserving the cemetery’s memories through tree roots.

In her artist’s statement, Phillips mentions having recently discovered the origin of the word “nostalgia.” “Holt Cemetery, 2013” explores this theme. This piece contains what the artist calls “life flash[es], like the moments before death or near death...the ultimate nostalgic experience.” The message that I gathered personally from this piece was that our memories are roots that ground us and give us permanence. Art makes this reliving of our memories possible, and it gives us the opportunity to share those experiences with others, externalizing our own unique understandings.

—Melyni Revia, 2013
Post-Hurricane Katrina inspired a variety of visual creations. United States born artist, Johnathan Ferrara, used acrylic, sand, and gesso on canvas to convey to viewers his experiences of the horrific visual blanket that Hurricane Katrina laid over New Orleans, Louisiana.

Thirty, equally-aligned, canvases of blue are each dripped in a thick coat of gray haze on their upper halves. The use of sand in the gray coating enhances the texture of rough and uneven surfaces that Johnathan must have wanted to duplicate from the fallen debris and broken buildings found around New Orleans. The sand also creates a majestic glisten that gives true meaning to the portion of Johnathan’s artwork titled “Midnight.” I believe that Mr. Ferrara used a square canvas and a geometrical line-up of such canvases as a statement to his viewers that what was once a very structured and organized environment was ruined by the unfortunate occurrence of a tropical storm.

“As an artist, my work is very textural and somewhat political in nature. I strive to remove the hand of the artist from the expression and to allow the painting process to replicate the actual process of the meaning I am trying to communicate.”

I truly agree that Johnathan Ferrara’s “Overtopped (Midnight),” 2009 has replicated the visual affects that were placed upon the city of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina swept through. Not only does the rough, gray coating give a dark shadowing affect to such an original structure and color but the texture and appearance of the drippings gives viewers a true understanding that Hurricane Katrina completely flipped New Orleans 360 upside-down. The amazement that one feels from visiting New Orleans is similar to the breathtaking affect that viewers feel after scanning over Mr. Ferrara’s masterpiece.

—Makenzie Walker, 2013