

"My palette is limited and uses the pure color of pageantry and thus is generic, suggesting any nation or a nation-like sensibility as a way of presenting a critical view towards the potential of art to question the ability of color to command and control. I was immensely surprised and struck by the censorship of John Lennon's song 'Imagine' immediately after 9-11 for its lyrics, 'Imagine there's no countries...nothing to kill or die for', and it seems to suggest to me that we as a nation are still struggling with division and definition more than a century after the American Civil War. Warfare is an economic engine that all too easily plays these dramas against one another for simple economic gain. In rural areas, nostalgia and isolation can play upon fear and engender a love affair with weaponry, and in Maine this took form as the Hiram Maxim Machine Gun Shoot and Expo that ran for six years up until July of 2001. Last attended by 10,000 visitors, it allowed participants to shoot live ammo at junk cars and was billed as a family event. An event organizer stating: 'It may mortify some families, but that's what makes America great.' As citizens and humans we find it almost impossible to untangle ourselves from divisions and definitions that play upon fear and we continue to succumb to the arrogance of weapons technology's promise of power through violence as a solution to conflict. Thus the main thrust for this piece was to imagine how my fictional persona might react, as an artist, to his past war experiences while simultaneously considering a future world with ever evolving weapons technology.

For my fictional character's poetry I decided to turn to the contemporary poet Chris Crittenden. Chris's poems, despite their contemporary context contain deep moral convictions and suffuse the work with an intense undertone. I read each poem that I used with an ear for its ability to match the turn of the century historically and its ability to express what my fictional persona might have been capable of feeling. I took much liberty in allowing these translations to occur (One poem is titled 'Hiroshima Shadow' for example) and in doing so felt that I created an important link or flow between current thought, the historical past and the open-ended future. In all of this I have attempted to create many local connections to larger historical, social and political issues, conditions and state of affairs."

-Kenny Cole, January 2014

*"Parabellum" is an installation piece created especially for the Zillman Gallery at the University of Maine Museum of Art. It is an interactive, Culture-Jamming, Docu-fiction, Artivism work of art, which re-writes the past in order to suggest the existence of a different resource for guiding us into the future. The piece, a false artifact, made as if it had originally been installed in the front parlor room of a home, consists of 82 two-sided canvases. Cole paints faux water stains over a generic tableau of flags that are painted onto vintage 1890's newspaper on their fronts, relief battle maps on each reverse and hidden corporeal landscapes of battered flesh under it all. Visitors to the museum are invited interact with these canvases, which are hinged to the wall, and can be opened like a door to reveal the underlying layers of imagery and text (Chris Crittenden). Further investigation reveals the complex back-story of the installation's creator, the fictional character, "Bains Revere" (Anagram of Brian Reeves), an American Civil War veteran/outsider artist, and his life long connection and eventual disillusionment with his friend Hiram Maxim, the real life inventor of the automatic machine gun both of whom hailed from Sangerville, Maine.*