King Pirate Dog and Mates

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My project consists of a series of broadsides (single sheets printed on a letterpress) which depict my whippet, Solomon, and other characters based around him.

Much of my art work portrays Solomon. I wanted to expand my cast of characters. Considering that these characters are not from this world, but from a fictional world, my intention is that these broadsides appear as if they were constructed by the characters themselves. I have considered the physical and mental characteristics of each character, and their appearances reflect their individual personalities.

I have approached this project slightly differently than past projects. Generally, I plan the whole project and then produce it, with a few changes and additions in response to the process. With this project I have allowed myself much more freedom to "feel out" what I should do with the broadsides as problems arise.

I began the project by researching images of various animals. I then selected those to whom I thought Solomon might be drawn. I drew each character with colored pencils to indicate possible color choices and number of runs (each color requires a run through the press).

I photocopied and transferred the drawings to linoform blocks in preparation for relief printing. Relief printing is where the material (i.e., wood, linocut, etc.) is carved away, leaving raised areas. Only the raised portions print, leaving impressions on the paper. I printed these lino blocks using reduction and two-block methods. A reduction print is where the block is printed at multiple stages of carving. Two-block method is where two blocks are used for one image. In trying to stay true to my original drawings, I carved the blocks in much more detail than I have carved in the past.

I had planned to print the title of each character in large wood type, and then print the character on top of that. After printing the wood type, I realized that I would have more freedom to respond to the previous run if I printed the characters on a separate piece of paper then cut them out and applied them to the larger broadside. I also feel that mounting the images of the characters adds another layer giving the animal's inherent importance, as well as giving the prints a "hand-made" and primitive look. Both of these concepts further my intention of the printed environments appearing as if constructed by the characters themselves. I am considering adding elements to the larger broadside that further describe each character.

Approaching the project in this way has forced me to look at the process of producing my artwork and these individual characters in a way I hadn't before. The project has increased my letterpress printing and carving capabilities and has allowed me to create an entirely new group of characters from which to draw.