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A Man's His Job: Artistic Possibilities through Craftsmanship

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

A Man's His Job: Artistic Possibilities through Craftsmanship

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Matthew MacNelly

Committee in charge:

Professor Kyle Donnelly, Chair
Professor Ursula Meyer
Professor Charles Oates
Professor Manuel Rotenberg

2013

The thesis of Matthew MacNelly is approved and it is acceptable
in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

DEDICATION

To my mother, who continues to do the best she can.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A Man's His Job: Artistic Possibilities through Craftsmanship

by

Matthew MacNelly

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Performance, Acting)

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Kyle Donnelly, Chair

I subscribe to the belief that we actors are craftsmen, and the usual analogy I make, for no particular reason, is to a cabinetmaker. A good cabinetmaker presumably needs to have a set of tools – hammer, level, saw, measuring tape, drill, sander, etc. For an actor, this is technique, the tool belt we carry with us through our lives from which we can pull. It may be a pitch build, or a resonator, or a dialect, or a change of gait, or a set of questions, or even just a good piece of critical thinking. We use these to shape the raw materials we are given – usually a piece of text. Our tools are intangible, but no less necessary.

Some see being a craftsperson and an artist as mutually exclusive, but I disagree. I find the framework of craft to be the place where I can shine as an artist – I'm given a set of ground rules, and fellow collaborators with whom I must work, and

within those circumstances, I create my art. After all, masons and sculptors, housepainters and impressionists, copywriters and Shakespeare, they all use the same raw materials and tools to create. It is my belief that we actors, as craftspeople, have to determine the artistic value of our work for ourselves. There is artistic possibility in all things, from *Hamlet* to the latest Chevy Silverado commercial, and the onus is upon me, as a new-minted Master of Fine Arts, to bring that spark to the forefront.