

# COMPOSITE

{Arts Magazine}

## No. 6 Process

Winter 2012



# COMPOSITE INFO

## *No. 6 Process*

**Composite** is a quarterly electronic magazine showcasing the work of artists from multiple disciplines, each issue focusing around a specific theme.

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*It's 9 pm Pacific time*, the night before this issue is supposed to be released to the internet (it wasn't). We're still working on last minute edits, writing some pieces that slipped our mind, and waiting for a few final things to flow in. To say holidays let the whole process get away from us would be more than an accurate statement. We're normally much more put together than this, but in the spirit of process and the honesty that comes with it, I think it's important to be upfront about this. It's important to be open.

When we brainstormed this issue, it was heavily informed by process art in the typical form, artists more invested in the how than the why. There are definitely some of those artists in this issue. However, once the work from this issue's contributors started to flow in, we realized that without even asking for it, they all gave us exactly what we really wanted.

This is easily our longest, heaviest, and possibly densest of issues yet. For all the same reasons, I think this could be our most approachable and purposeful issue yet, giving each reader opportunities to connect with a medium, an experimentation, or even a personal creative struggle.

Comprised in this issue, we were lucky to work with 11 immensely talented artists who not only were willing to share their work with us, but give us an honest, behind the scenes look at how they make their work. To call it a vulnerability would be slightly hyperbolic, but the way they are willing to let us, and in turn you the reader, into the how and why they make their work is something special for sure.

It may have taken longer than intended, but in the end it's worth it. It's the extra days taken, the extra beers drunk at the computer, and the 15 proofs necessary to realize Jesse's background is an 87% grey that hopefully begin to make this a venue for doing the work of these artists justice.

**Zach Clark**

Composite Editor

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***Creating art is a solitary act;*** there is no doubt about it. You sit alone, in an office, in a studio, roam the streets for that perfect photograph. Someone pushes paint across a canvas, writes words on a page, opens a shutter and lets light in. In the most basic sense, this is how art is made.

But once the creation process is complete, art must be accessible. Art is a shared experience, the point where artists' intent and viewers' experiences meld together. And it is in this conversation that art finds its meaning. But, it is also in this conversation that the process by which art is made is lost, left only to the lonely pages of a textbook or a book on craft.

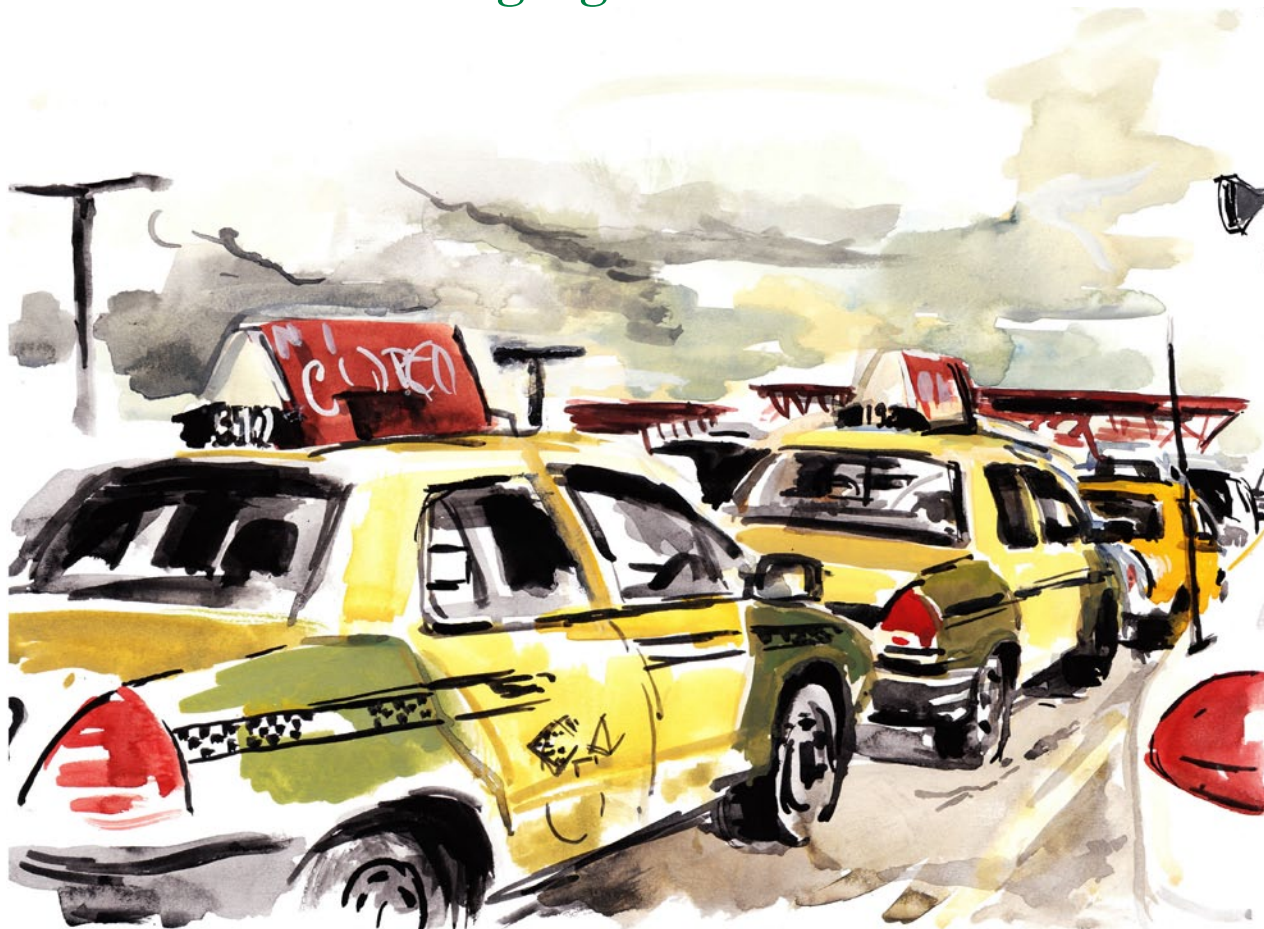
Scores of artists place a system of limitations or conditions on their work in order to create an outcome. Henry David Thoreau shut himself in a cabin for two years as he drafted *Walden*; Jackson Pollack painted standing above his canvas, which lay on the floor beneath him; Milan Blatny, a Czech photographer known as Fano, created images by rotating the same photograph around a canvas, exposing it four times to create a photo-mandala.

# Process

For some, the process is just another step in the equation. Yet, for others, the entire equation is about the process.

# Dmitry Samarov

## *Staging Area*



*Staging Area. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.*



Staging Area #10. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.





Staging Area #12. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.

***I've driven a cab for over eleven years.*** When I first started, I used to doodle little self-portraits in the rearview mirror to while away the wait on cabstands. Gradually, I started sketching and painting the ever-changing views of the city that driving afforded. The eleven gouache paintings presented here come from a series done at O'Hare and Midway Airports in 2009. In addition to the usual problems that any perceptual painter might face, like changing light, weather, and nosy onlookers, the special challenge of these pictures was trying to finish them before it was my turn to be dispatched out to the terminals to pick up a fare. Not unlike the job itself, the meter was always running while these taxi pictures were painted.

Dmitry Samarov



Staging Area #15. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.







Staging Area #19. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.

On Previous: Staging Area #17. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.





Staging Area #20. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.



Staging Area #22. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.





Staging Area #3. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.



Staging Area #6. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.





*Staging Area #5. 9"x13" 2009. Gouache on Paper.*

# Sarah-Margaret Gibson

## *On Process*

***I was once asked whether, given the chance,*** I would want the ability to materialize my paintings directly from my mind, like some sort of cross between Leonardo Da Vinci and Gandalf the Grey, and forgo the whole drudgery of actually having to paint them. Notwithstanding the simple fact that I love to paint, the answer was still ‘no’ for a much more fundamental reason: I don’t know exactly how I want a painting to come out until I have actually tried to paint it. For me, a painting is not a pre-determined fact, fixed in my mind from the onset. Rather, I usually begin with a nebulous idea—a seed—inspired by something I’ve seen or perhaps felt subconsciously. And it is only through the artistic process of trying to actualize this seed that I arrive at the painting. For, the fact of the matter is that an artist simply cannot create without some sort of process. And that process, consuming the majority of the artist’s time, energy, and thought, directly determines the nature of his or her work, and at the same time serves as a reflection of the nature of the artist themselves.

There seems to be a belief floating around today that artists are endowed from birth with the ability to penetrate the mysteries of the universe and express them at will—that all that the artist needs to do in order to create a masterpiece is to look deep within his very nature and then regurgitate whatever he finds onto the canvas. Well, if such a creature does exist, I certainly have never met it. There may be something inherent within the nature of the artist that predisposes him to this ability, but it seems to me that one’s insight simply cannot exceed one’s abilities; the two grow together—indeed, grow out of one another. And it is only by attempting to express our subject that we actually come to understand what it was about it that moved us in the first place. In coming to understand our subject, we learn to appreciate it on new levels and for new reasons. These realizations then naturally transform our minds and our artistic goals, so that our artistic intention grows. And this augmented insight, seeking expression, demands a new process to express it justly; for in all great art—be it music, poetry, or painting—the message and the mode of it’s expression are always united. And thus one might say that the creative process is truly a dialogue with nature—the creative process being the connective tissue between the artist and his environment.

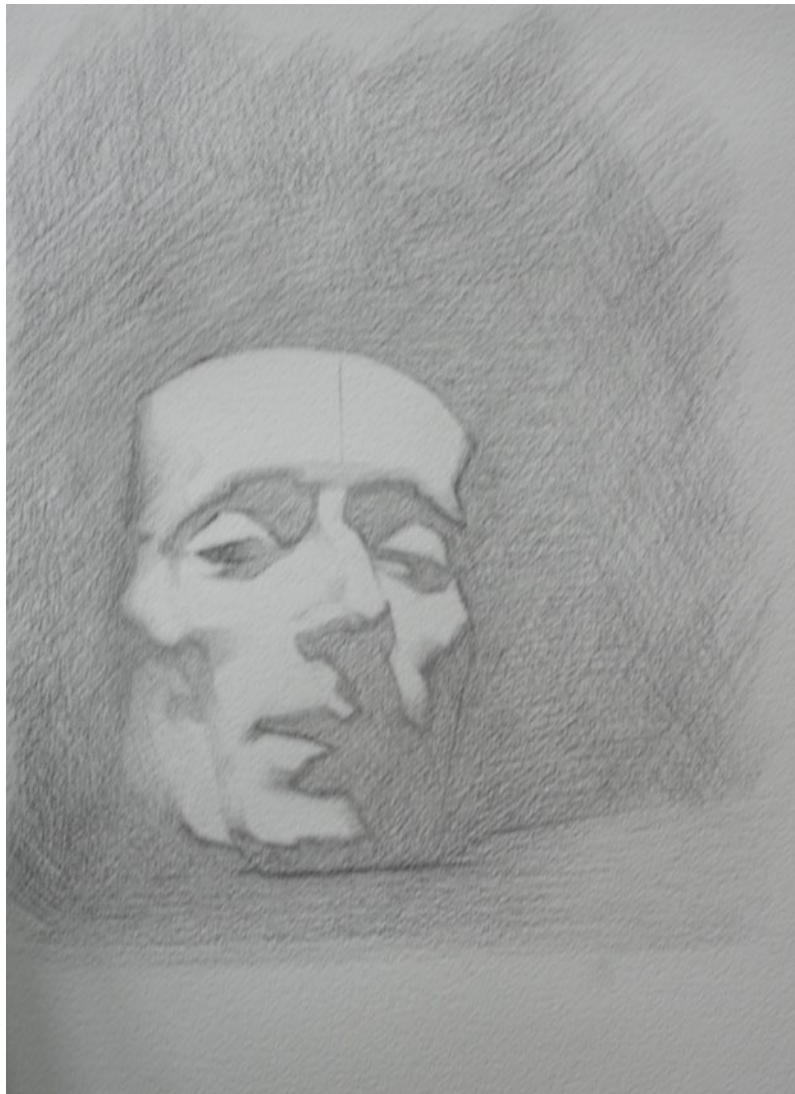
When I myself first entered into this dialogue, it quickly became apparent to me that in order to express anything with intention or authority, I first had to learn the grammar of the language used in said dialogue. For I believe an artist can only truly learn to express her vision—no matter how abstract—by first coming to understand

how it is manifest in nature. How can we paint color harmony in itself if we cannot even paint the simple color harmonies found within a sunset? Or how can we express rhythm itself if we cannot even identify the rhythms found within an orchid or a cypress tree? It is in the process of studying these concepts as they are found in nature that we learn to understand them, and indeed, how to use them compositionally and expressively.

It is for this reason that I have spent the past four years of my life in an intensive study of technique, at a classical atelier in Florence, Italy. At the atelier, great emphasis is placed upon method. In fact, I would even say that for the first couple of years, far more energy is devoted to how a painting is made, than to what the painting actually looks like in the end. Painting becomes like an act of meditation or a game of chess: every stroke we make must augment what we have already done, whilst simultaneously preparing the way for what we will do next. The process must be broken down into a series of stages that, when executed well and in the right order, facilitate the final painting; every mark made must satisfy the requirements for both its given stage within the process, and also for the conception of the piece as a whole.

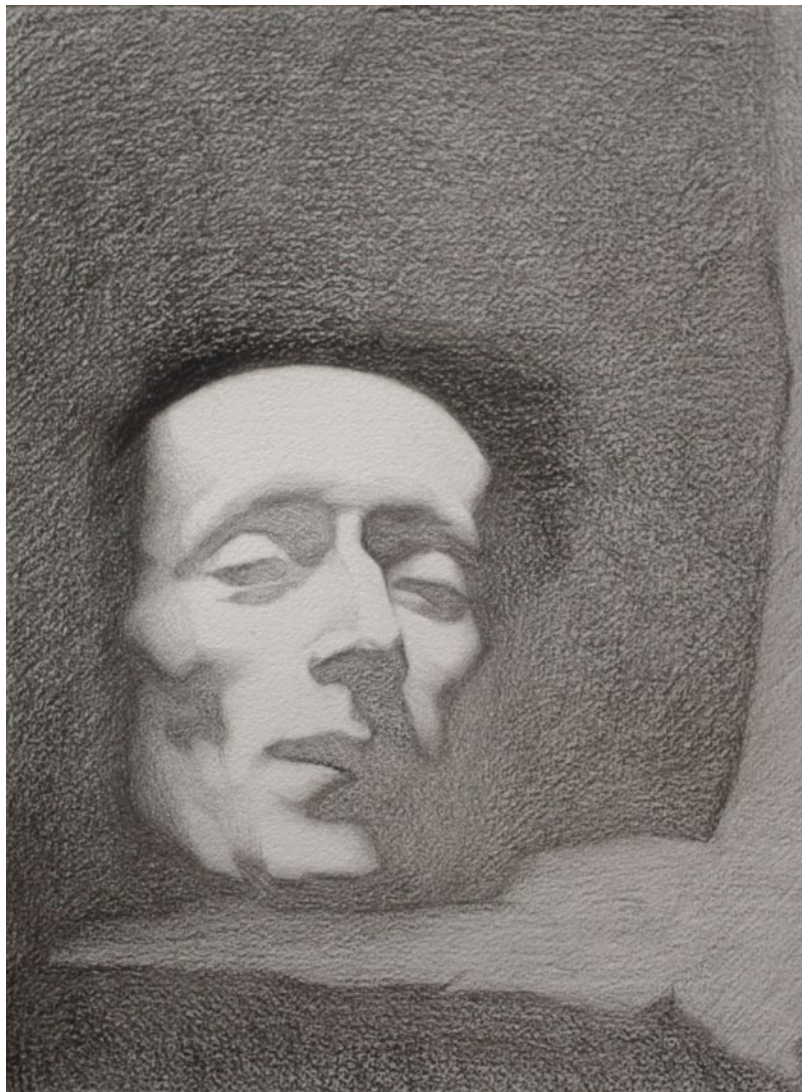
Though the beginner often sacrifices the beauty and vitality of his or her work by over-analyzing and systematizing the artistic process, for the master, the process and the final work are beautifully united. Having studied his process utterly, the master is then able to internalize this process—one stage melts gracefully and seamlessly into the next, and the entire process seemingly becomes an extension of the artist's will. He no longer thinks about how to make a form turn or a color pop out; he simply sees that something must be done and does it out of instinct. In this way, while the artist's subconscious is dedicated more and more to technique, his or her conscious efforts are turned increasingly towards the higher problems of art: composition, meaning, expression, harmony and discord. And so, just as our subconscious and our conscious thought are inextricably linked, so is the artistic process linked with artistic produce; simply put, art could not exist without process.





*The Death Mask: a Drawing In Four Stages of the Process.* 11"x15.5" 2011  
Charcoal on Paper. (Stage One: 4/28/11)

Sarah-Margaret **Gibson**



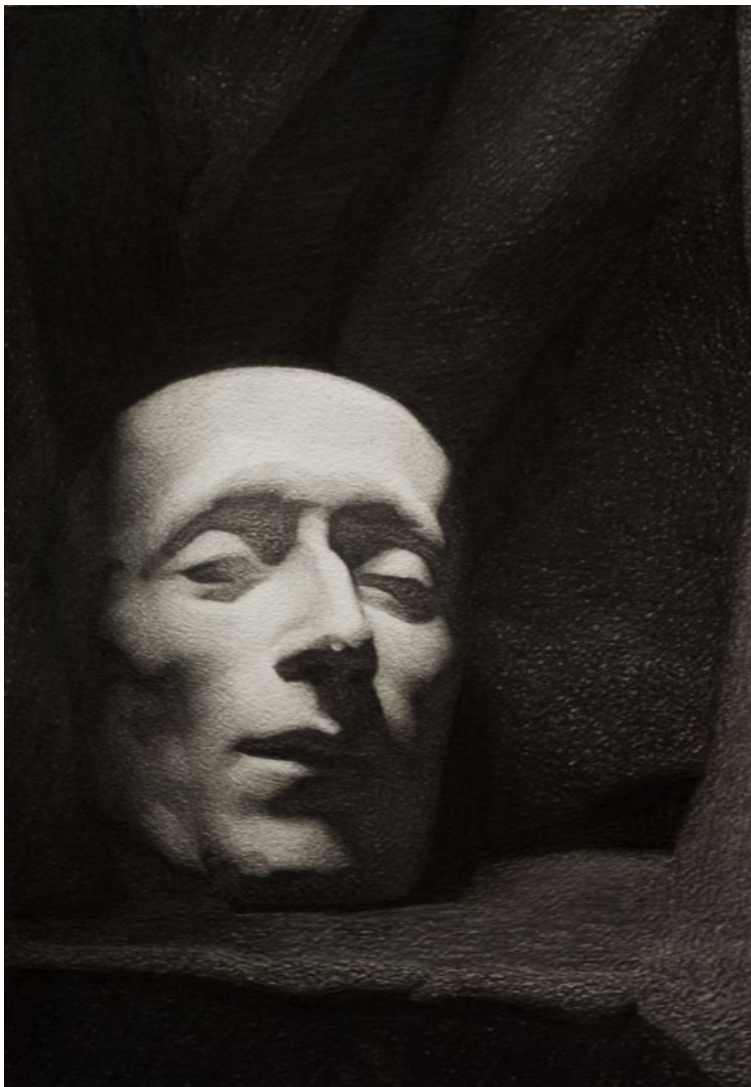
*The Death Mask: a Drawing In Four Stages of the Process.* 11"x15.5" 2011  
Charcoal on Paper. (Stage Two: 5/11/11)

Sarah-Margaret **Gibson**



*The Death Mask: a Drawing In Four Stages of the Process.* 11"x15.5" 2011  
Charcoal on Paper. (Stage Three: 5/18/11)

Sarah-Margaret **Gibson**



*The Death Mask: a Drawing In Four Stages of the Process.* 11"x15.5" 2011  
Charcoal on Paper. (Stage Four: 6/9/11. Completed.)

Sarah-Margaret **Gibson**

# Maude Larke

## *Dappled Genesis*

***Billie’s silence and absorption continued as she got home and checked her mail.***

She went into her work room and paced for a moment, then stopped at her stereo. She sifted through her stack of CDs, then chose one, put it in the cradle, forwarded it to a specific track, and pushed “play”. She settled in the corner of her couch and took up her clipboard.

She came back to a few lines that she had written a few days previously. She had been working on the image of shadows on the ground after an eclipse. They were truncated, chopped in half, she remembered. Like half-moons. From an eclipsed sun, half-moon shadows. She had noted that down. Just that.

half-moon shadows  
left behind after an eclipse

Then she had become discontented with the word “after”. She tried “left behind by”. Then she shortened it to “left by”. That was when she had seen that “half” and “after” had created an assonance. She concluded that assonance had not been what she wanted there. Then just as she had been about to leave the fragment aside, the coolness of the eclipse came back to her. Coolness and “half-moons”? She remembered that the coolness had had a small bite to it. Like . . . mint? Grapefruit. Right from the fridge.

half-moon shadows  
left by an eclipse  
tart and cool as grapefruits

Once more, she had been about to set the fragment aside, but on an impulse she had written a title at the top of the page: “Dappled”.

Now she reread those words and slipped back again into her absorption. It took her repeatedly to the train trip to New York. It took her insistently to the moment when she had realized that she had just spent an hour sitting still and calm. A painless hour. Her first naturally painless hour since May.

Billie thought now about her notion of “left by an eclipse”.

*I am “left”. I am coming back after the “eclipse” of the accident. That dizzying, nauseating pain is letting me go after all these months. Never for long, but long enough. Coming out of dizziness. Coming into balance. Standing up straight. Inner ear that doesn’t have to work so hard anymore.*

*Fiction*

as the gyroscope stills  
the ear reposes  
the vertical asserts

*Yes, moving toward repose now. Beginning to be able to let go of the months of difficulty.*

I, become forgetful,

*Would the reader understand? Fill in the elided "having" before the "become"? I hope so. I'll try it. No spilling into the literal.*

*But the letting go is not permanent.*

only forgetful  
then  
for that

*Those last three syllables. That rhythm. I can keep that. Bring it into the relief of the forgetfulness.*

but relished  
for that  
then

*I have to place this forgetfulness somewhere. Why not in the train? That's where the play of sun and shadow told me I was going to write something. As in the train, the forgetfulness can free my gaze.*

allow my eyes to flit  
from

*. . . from the tree trunks with sun on them to the ones in the shadows. "Sun-drenched"? Clichéd. "Sun-caressed"? Wordsworth.*

from sun-molded tree to shaded tree

*To "shadowy tree"? Too sinister. So, the train . . .*

trees make sunlight fitful  
as the train window passes them

*Yes, the train window. Fragment the train. Isolate one part of the surface and make it dialogue with the trees. That was it, the train disappeared, everything disappeared during the time I forgot the pain and watched the sun and the trees. Use that one spot.*

I slide from that surface  
to mottled depths of memory

*Good. We're coming now to the shadows. But I need more than one memory. Besides the poverty of having only one image, there's not enough rhythm.*

*Childhood. Adolescence. The lake in summertime. The woods in the autumn. The wild fruit.*

a water snake unzipping reflections

*Yes. More light to go with the eclipse.*

grapes

*Yes, but what about them? More contrast with light and dark? On the ground?*

grapes that had fallen in grass

*Yes. Then the eclipse image comes in. Then what? Then where am I? Slipping away from the present into memories, then realizing that I've done so. Free enough of pain to go all the way back to my childhood.*

mapping the slide comes afterward

*Yes. I'm really taking the full measure of that peace. But I don't say peace. It's too pat.*

the measuring  
the wonder at how

*How what? Say it plainly?*

hovering between ill and well

*Now how do I get back to the idea of balance? Vacillation? Compass needles? Not settling to north because the compass is being jiggled?*



*OK, but not literal.*

the magnetism flutters

*OK so far. At this point, the gyroscope, the balance, the vertical, which*

asserts  
finally anew  
imposes

*Yes. "Asserts . . . imposes". I need to insist on that arrival of stability.*

*And I need to remember that I've had that beginning forgetfulness, so the other one should come at the end.*

I again become forgetful

*That takes care of the "having".*

*Now where am I? I need something to bring this all together between "imposes" and "I again". But what? I need to recopy all this in order.*

Billie pinned the scribbled-on sheets to the back of her couch and began on a new sheet.

trees make sunlight

*No, not fitful.*

shy

*Too anthropomorphic?*

*I'll decide later.*

grapes that had fallen

*Make the image more immediate.*

grapes that have fallen

*But do I want a suggestion of movement? I want the image.*

grapes fallen

*But that breaks the rhythm.*

wild grapes

*Better, but still . . .  
I'll decide later.*

mapping the slide comes afterward

*No. More urgent, immediate than that.*

mapping the slide then surges

*Hm. I'll decide later.*

sun-molded tree

*Tree? Trunk?  
I'll decide later.*

Sour grapes

*I'll see.  
No. Not "sour" if the shadows are "tart".  
And I can't say that it is "relished". What is? I am relishing.*

but relishing  
that  
then

*"Fitful" is too pat. "Shy" too anthropomorphic. What do the trees do? Make the sunlight intermittent. Chop it up and dole it out. You have the hot then the cold on your face. Yes, but that's too long to say. Eliminates . . . cancels out . . . hides . . . elides . . .*

trees elide sunlight

*Too short. I've lost the rhythm.*

trees elide or pronounce sunlight

*Cool comparison, but I don't want anthropomorphic.*

trees elide or accent sunlight

*Still too anthro. But I'll keep it for now.*

*"how – hovering". That's good alliteration. I hadn't noticed that.  
Not "that then". Too short a rhythm.*

just that  
then

*Too long?*

*I'll decide later.*

mapping the slide then surges

*Well, yeah. Suddenly noticing that you weren't noticing something. But . . .*

*I'll decide later.*

accent sunlight

*Yes. Interrupt and make it present by the interruption. OK.*

*But that missing part. Bring together the dappling – mottling – half-shadows. Include the ill-well slide.  
Let the in and out of sun and of pain show. I am almost whole. I am both of two notes almost in tune. I am a  
sectioned, sliced, split person almost closing the split. Almost.*

I fail to flicker

*NO.*

*"Dappled". Sometimes in pain, sometimes not. This new phase is intermittent. Strobe. But a mild strobe.  
Like the sun in the trees.*

I become  
elision and accent

*OK to repeat? I'll decide later.*

I  
elided  
accented

*More passive. This happens. I don't will it. I can't.  
Heads/tails. But too lewd. Ish.*

firmed or dispersed

*Maybe.*

*But "I" can't do anything. "I find . . ." "I . . ." Connect the dots? Sort of. Revolving door. Through the revolving, becoming whole. "To turn, turn, will be our delight . . ." Yes, but I can't quote the song. From the fragments of broken bone to the fragmenting of the day into "pain" and "not pain" . . . then later to "me" again.*

exchange fragments

No.

refragment

Yes.

to a new spectrum

*Yes, but what kind? milder? duller? flatter? two-toned? softer? And can the train's rhythm come in here? I think not. Sound is out. Image and sensation only. A non-rhythm in the non-pain. Except in the words.*

refragment  
into pulse and lack of pulse

*No. Just "lack".*

clench and unclench

*that's the idea.*

clench and release

*Something else.*

clench and open

*Maybe.*

*Put all this aside and recopy it later. See what happens when I recopy.  
Too “concrete”? I’ll decide later.*

Next morning Billie put the same CD on again and picked up her clipboard. She recopied the words all in one go, without making any decisions, then reread it.

*. . . Hey, it works. Still don’t like “flit”. Stagger is more like it but it doesn’t go with the rhythm. And it gives the eyes personality. Not good. Ping-pong? Not here. Dart? Dart! As birds would. But it’s not enough to take the eyes out of the head. Dart. Yes. Done.*

*And the grapefruit and the grapes reinforce each other. A touch of something living. Nourishing. Good.  
Not trees. Not trunks. Bark. More fragmenting.*

Billie set the clipboard next to her computer and walked to the window to feel the beginning warmth of the low March sun.

***Dappled***

trees elide or accent sunlight  
as the train window passes them  
I slide from that surface  
to mottled depths of memory –

a water snake unzipping reflections  
wild grapes fallen in grass  
the half-moon shadows  
left by an eclipse  
tart and cool as grapefruits

mapping the slide then surges  
the measuring  
the wonder at how  
hovering between ill and well  
the magnetism flutters

as the gyroscope stills  
the ear reposes  
the vertical asserts  
finally anew  
imposes

I  
elided  
accented  
firmed or dispersed  
refragment  
into pulse and lack  
clench and open

I again become forgetful  
allow my eyes to dart  
from sun-molded bark to shaded bark

only forgetful  
then  
for that  
but relishing  
just that  
then

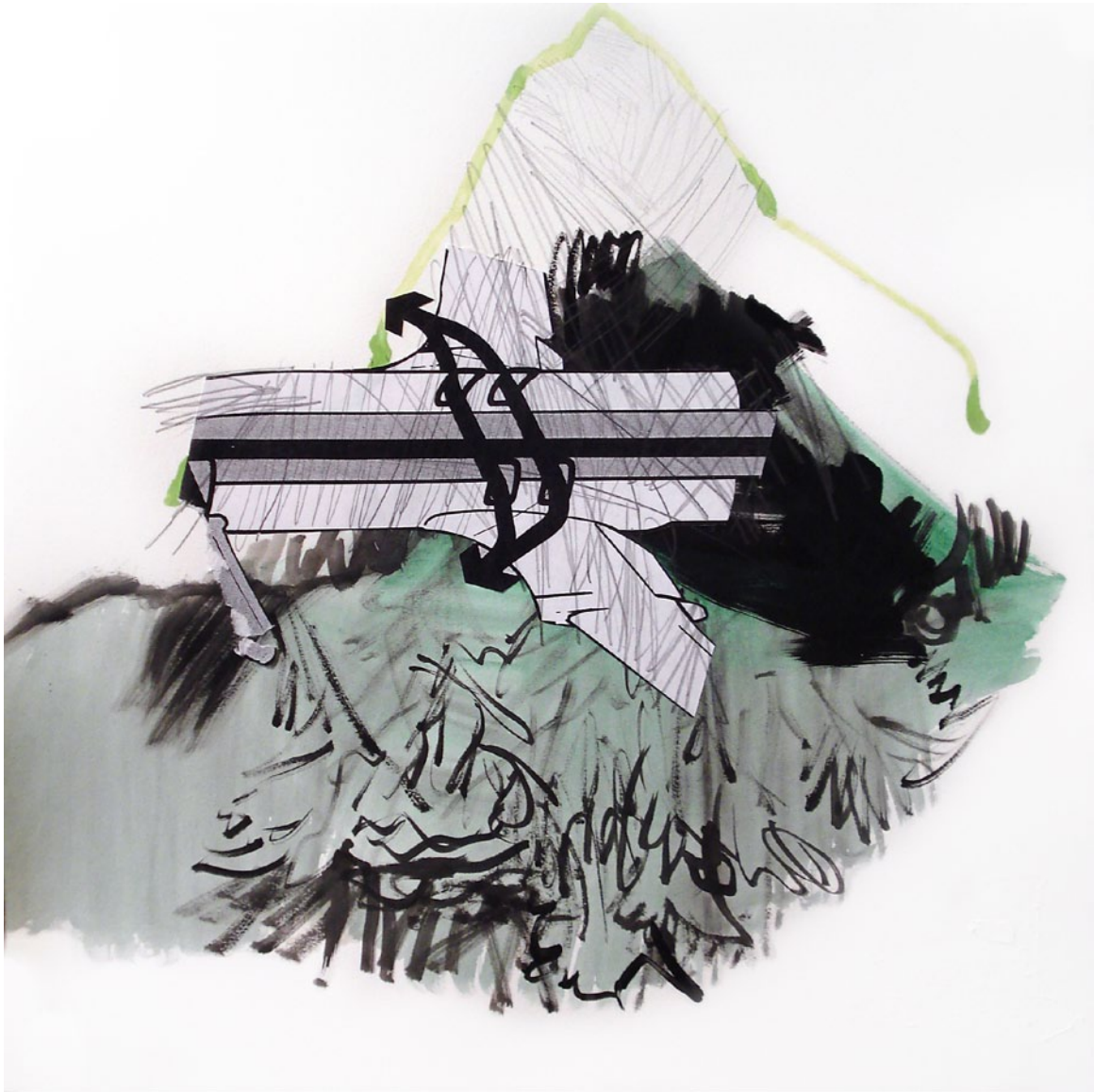
# Adam Grossi

## *The Endlessness of Images*



Drawing #0020. 20"x20". 2009. Acrylic, ink, and Collage on Paper.





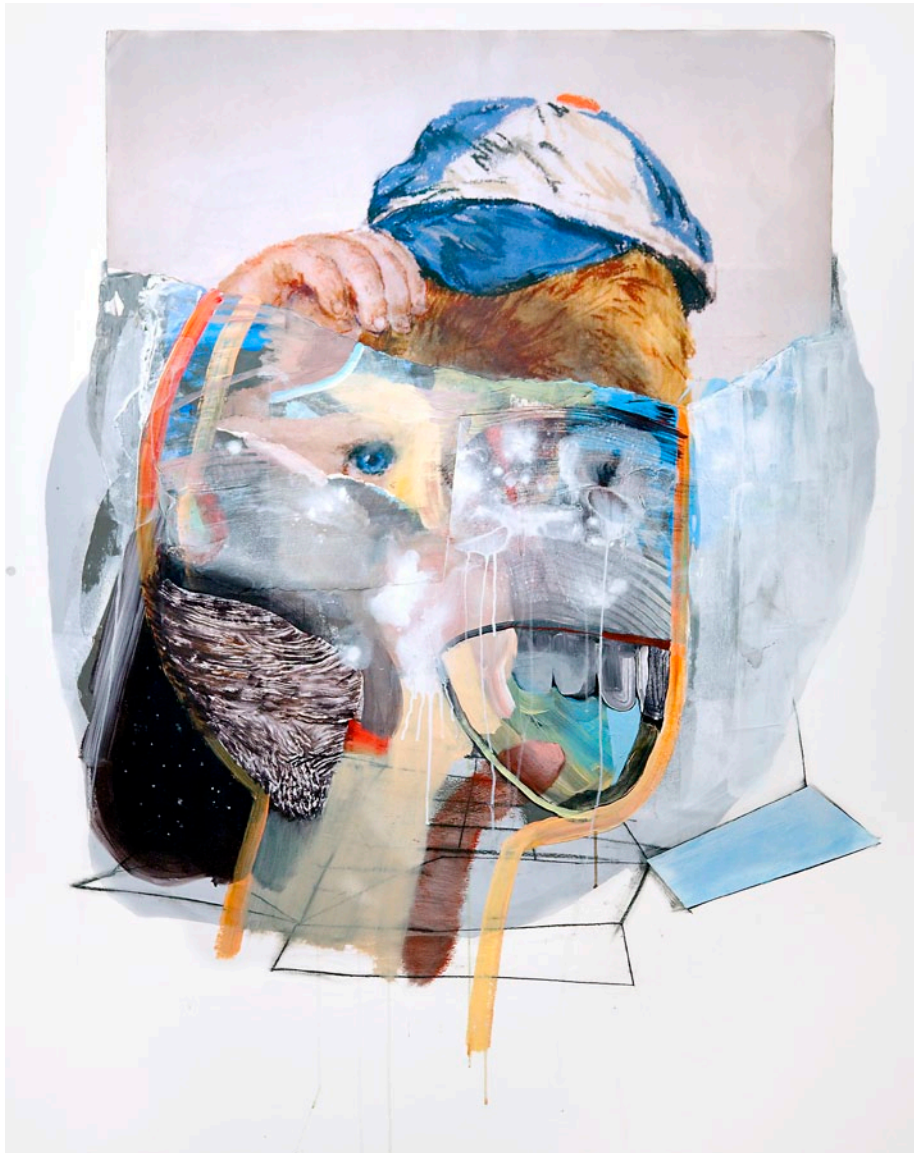
*Drawing #0021. 12"x12". 2009. Guache, Graphite, and Collage on Paper.*

Adam **Grossi**



*Drawing #0043. 12"x16". 2009. Acrylic and Collage on Paper.*

Adam **Grossi**



*Interim*. 40"x50". 2009. Acrylic and Collage on Paper over Panel.

Adam **Grossi**





*Into the Void*. 12"x12". 2007. Acrylic and Collage on Panel.

Adam **Grossi**



Adam **Grossi**

*If a picture is worth a thousand words* then it holds that a collage of multiple pictures is an entanglement of texts, if not an outright collision of languages. Combining fragments of pictures into a new picture destabilizes all speech while also introducing a strange new voice.

Over the tenure of humanity's engagement with picture planes, a massive index of visual languages has developed. Some visual languages are instructive, some are expressive, some are prescriptive, and some are illustrative. No matter the inflection, style, or intent, all visuals share the fact that they are constructed. I don't mean that in the obvious sense that someone created the image; I mean that the premise of the visual language is constructed. The effect or affect of the image emerges from a field of possibilities that is culturally inscribed. A diagram of a plane's emergency landing procedure is instructive and a Mark Rothko painting is emotionally stirring. These qualities are learned.

When I look at a billboard, a magazine illustration, or a painting, my eyes are feeding my mind according to some underlying rules. To interpret visual information is, in part, to agree with its assumptions about the world. This holds true even for the most seemingly fringe or experimental attempts at visual expression. A painting which actively disavows the boundaries of every conceivable net of logic is still unable to escape the expectation that its surface means something. The mind craves the evidence of intention and it will create it even when it apparently isn't there.

To cut up and combine divergent visual sources is to love a good fight. Perhaps nothing makes an image's rules clearer than juxtaposing them with the rules of a very different image. When this happens, the form of an image becomes as prevalent as its content, if not more so: the visual language stops speaking about the topic it carries and turns its attention inward, trying to explain itself.

I am often driven to respond to normalcy. I'm fascinated by the way that pleasantness is represented in general culture, and I turn to collage often as a way of working directly with images whose rules I'm so inundated by that I have a hard time actually sussing them out. Every constructed image is, despite appearances to the otherwise, fabulously complex. The most banal of advertisements can hold my attention for years.

To cut into an image which attempts to engage you emotionally is a cool-headed act of detachment. It is often the only way to see how a really manipulative image works instead of remaining under its seductive spell. Parts of an image, viewed in isolation, can reveal some insight into the nature of their initial context.

As a visual method collage is a way of surrendering to the endlessness of images. Without it, the production of images seems a very linear process. But as soon as you introduce the possibility that any endpoint can also be

the beginning of something else entirely, the possibilities for visual communication and expression swell.

In this sense, working with collage can be a way of lightening up: there is never really any certainty about where the finish line is. There is always license to pull the carpet up from under the intention of any work and simply claim it as part of the production of another work entirely. This is great therapy for any tendency toward rigidity, perfectionism, or timidity in the practice of pursuing ideas.

The merging of images offers the opportunity to fuse contrasting information and agendas under the guise of formal similarities, like harmonious line quality or color. As such, collage is a fertile site for the production of visual cognitive dissonance, a state where incongruous ideas cohere through the fabric of the visual environment. Cognitive dissonance is really ever-present under the surface of most facets of contemporary cultural life; to see it given visual form may be initially jarring, but quickly it becomes soothing to the mind. It is a way of approaching realism through the back door.



# Jeanne Lorenz



*Joy Division - She's Lost Control*. 2011. Oil on Panel.





*American Vinyl Install View. 2011.*

My process uses the medium of printing to transform cast-off technology and out dated techniques into statements of potential change. I hybridize the early traditional print processes of Relief, Intaglio, and Lithography with new industrial materials and digitalia.

Researching cultural phenomena, I scratch, slash and clone the imagined forms into foam PVC or polyester litho plates.

I'm currently using the record as a place holder for our time of change. By printing, then painting the circular lined LP, the grooves evoke the sedimentary layers of human culture. The multiple of the print becoming painting is a layering of the digital present under our analog past – witnesses to evolving technology that circles back to eternal ideas of communication.

Vinyl Records with labels pirated from the internet are reconfigured with text that reveals dualistic realities. By injecting the archaic forms print forms with punk/pop Americana, I move through images with a self-conscious and rhythmic irreverence.

Drawing on the history and techniques of printmaking, I'm able to physically embody the basic theme that all human endeavors build and recirculate collaborative ideas. As technology changes, artists transform and adapt new industrial materials to better communicate their ideas.



*American Vinyl Install View. 2011.*

This detail of my American Vinyl installation at the Compound Gallery in Oakland, CA uses hand printed relief wallpaper and vinyl records printed intaglio. Polyester lithoplates were used to print the record labels.

Drawing round connections and combining techniques, I use printing as a way of experiencing evolving technology while reinvesting the AURA into the not so mechanically reproduced mix. I print in a freewheeling, painterly way, enjoying the careless freedom an indirect mark allows. If something does not work well, or I don't like the color, I get endless do-overs often arriving at better and more complex solutions.

Working in series allows me to make connections subliminally. As I work on groups of images meaning shifts and develops.



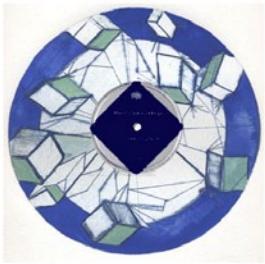
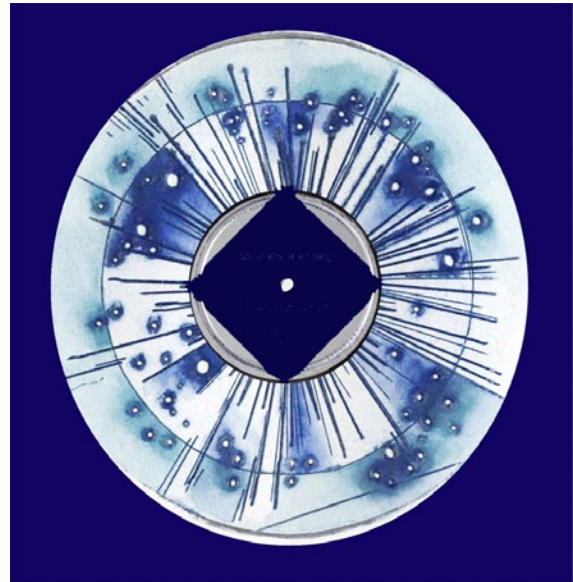
Before/After. 64"x72". 2011. Oil on Canvas.

I am currently in the process of remaking alchemical engravings of the seventeenth century, combining them with Wolfram's New Kind of Science.

The cosmological engravings of Robert Fludd remind me of piles of American vinyl, Joy Division and losing control.

I use a sharp needle to scratch into PVC plastic, emulating the tight lines of copper engraving. Filling the lines with oil based ink I wipe the surface of the plate with pages from the endangered, soon to be extinct, phone book. Then I print the plastic plates onto damp paper with an etching press.

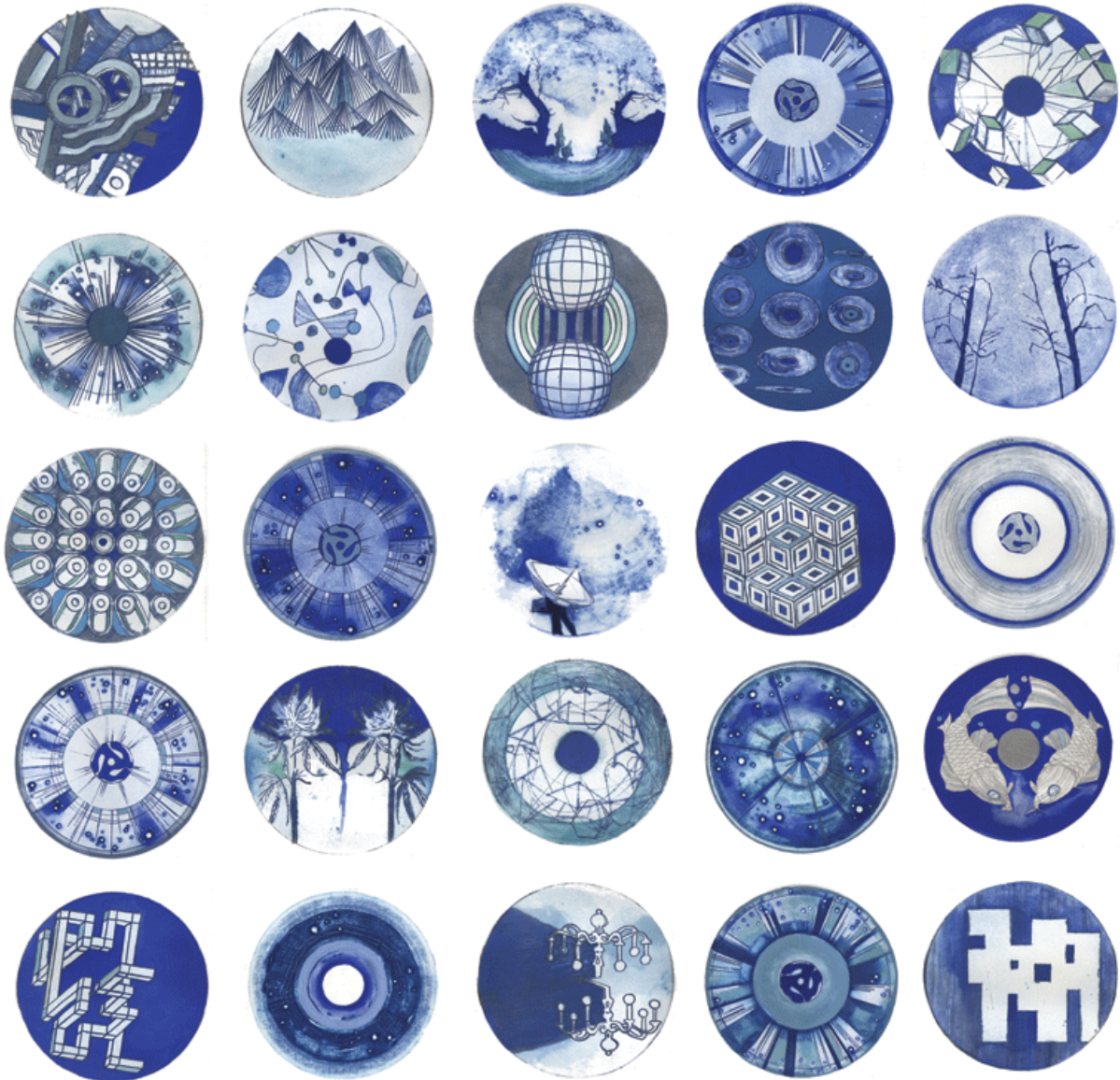
I paint in and out of the lines with gouache and watercolor.



Editor's Note: Check out our blog for links to videos and further reading material explaining Jeanne's process.







*Powers of Ten*

Jeanne **Lorenz**

# Danielle Sepulveres

## *It's a Square World After All*

***It started with a cubicle.*** Or maybe it was the liberal arts education with various concentrations just because I felt the need to be well rounded within...well, the liberal arts. But my professional start was definitely the cubicle.

Ahh the cubicle: what a joyous place. Three half-formed, interconnected walls, one of which would be shared with another-likely-to-be-irritating-co-worker, designed for the sole purpose of ensuring maximum productivity out of the employee. There was no way these walls were structurally sound and clearly there would be no sense of privacy. Rules of the cubicle, as I learned quickly, included no personal phone calls, no procrastinating on Facebook or shopping online. Just work, work, work out there for all the world to see. And by world, I mean the pompous, mostly-hidden executive team who sit in their four-walled, enclosed offices so that they can have the privilege to check their social networks and privately ponder the reasons why no one has accepted their friend requests.

I was not longed for that world, even though at the age of sixteen I was lead to believe that was what I could expect for myself down the road. A gender debate, inspired from a shouting match in my honors English class over medieval literature, turned into a school-wide event. Complete with other faculty presiding as judges—as well as the presence of the local media—I was right there, front and center, leading the charge. My argument that women's "emotional intelligence" clearly gave the fairer sex an advantage and won over the judges. The debate was called in our favor by one vote. The local newspapers and TV news stations covered the debate and interviewed all participants, remarking that I particularly had laid down a clear track to my future corner executive office with my presentation. And so after college graduation, armed with the debt of my college loans, I set out on this pre-determined career path. I headed deep into the world of possessive stapler owners, lunch thieves and overpaid imbeciles. But yet, I still can't fault the corporate environment—at least not all of it. It was in some ways a strong foundation and an important building block towards the bigger and better: my own four-walled office. An office where I would be productive and successful under my own supervision and discipline, not the watchful eye of those without a creative bone in their body and outdated visions on how to grow a business.

I spent most of my time in my three-walled existence listening to the woman on the other side converse



with her daughter about how, in fact, you could get crabs from hotels that did not wash their sheets properly. Never mind that her daughter had not actually been in a hotel.

Just a dorm room.

In college.

Forget trying to save money and bring lunch to work, by noon the refrigerator had been cleaned out, the perpetrator long gone and probably ecstatic that you'd chose to spring for the Cracked Pepper Boar's Head turkey. And the "Efficiency Expert" who was known mostly for his pedophilic mustache and for holding meetings in order to schedule other meetings, found reasons to drop by my desk and comment on my seeming lack of file organization, even after I landed new accounts and re-signed former struggling ones in an economy gone crazy. But, I suppose that is nowhere as important as the correct color-coding on defunct files that sit in a drawer collecting dust.

He employed all the down and dirty tricks intended to reveal the employees who coasted along versus the ones who worked long hours and generated more money for the company. E-mails sent out at 11 p.m. asking questions about the day's events or particular accounts, if left unanswered, resulted in him copying your address on a new e-mail sent the next morning to all the executives admonishing you for not checking e-mails outside of working hours. He instructed all employees to spend money out of their own pockets for gifts for their clients; to buy a nice pen; for women to not wear jewelry or have their nails done, as this was distracting to clients. Spend more money on more name brand label clothing to wear to work because clothes without expensive labels deter clients. All of this led to the near certain demise of the company and the very certain termination of my employment in a round of mass layoffs. It seemed that the law of opposites was at work. Hired for "efficiency", he effectively helped drive the company morale so low that every day felt like a prison sentence—all over a pen and some nail polish (or lack thereof).

The fateful day that I was called into the conference room to meet with him and the Human Resources Director, I was prepared for the news and even managed some good humor. What I was not prepared for was Efficiency Man asking me for a hug afterwards as I was leaving the room.

And then there I was, not even one wall to call my own (and a general icky feeling I refer to as "hug residue").

My debt started to pile up. As a dutiful employee, I had actually heeded the advice to purchase holiday gifts for clients and the arrival of my credit card bill coincided with being laid off. Plus all my usual bills and doctor's appointments which would no longer be covered by insurance, making it quite clear that a bi-weekly unemployment check—equal to a quarter of my salary—was not going to cut it.

Interview after interview ensued, with each company more corrupt than the previous. At that point, I could spot the danger signs five minutes into a first meeting. Disillusioned with my job search and the state of most mid-size businesses today, I kept track of it all, finding it depressingly humorous. And while I was recording the daily

*Hired for "efficiency", he effectively helped drive the company morale so low that every day felt like a prison sentence—all over a pen and some nail polish (or lack thereof).*

idiosyncrasies and delicate nuances of the corporate world—a place clearly dripping with esteem—I found my way into the world of entertainment as an extra.

Now as glamorous as the average person may think it is, to be an extra is the equivalent of being a turd in the toilet of the star of the film or television show. Disgusting, but necessary.

The very first film I was hired for was a romantic comedy destined to be condensed and played on network television with limited commercial interruption, but I was still fascinated. There were over two thousand people for three days straight and my check-in number was 888. One thing that the corporate world has over entertainment is the whole “check-in” number you need to know each day you work. Talk about dehumanizing. And coming from six years within corporate positions, finding myself at the bottom of the totem pole again was a very humbling experience. A check-in number and waiting in line for a box lunch that consisted of two slices of white bread, one slice of bologna almost made me miss the cubicle.

Almost.

*...to be an extra is the  
equivalent of being a turd  
in the toilet of the star of  
the film or television show.  
Disgusting, but necessary.*

I managed to get chosen to be featured with one of the lead actresses in the film and get a real taste of how a scene is created and all the elements that make it up. I learned how important lighting can be to demonstrate what time of day it is when the scene is taking place. Where the cameras need to be situated. How many times the actors have to recite the same dialogue in order to get the perfect shot. I kept hearing things like “check the gate”, “everyone on your ones” and my favorite: “this is the martini!” When that phrase is uttered, it means that you are

on the last shot of the night and very close to wrapping for the day. Something very pleasant to hear when you’re embarking on the fifteenth hour of your workday. I was determined, and confident that I could and would find a way to climb my way back up to a more stable career, but one in which I could utilize my creative ideas.

For a good stretch of time, I sustained on extra work (or as we call it: background work) in order to stop filing for unemployment and keep the one thing in this world that I consider an absolute necessity: a cell phone. During this time, I observed everything. I began to see similarities between the world from whence I had come and the world in which I now found myself. Backed with the knowledge and experience from corporate, I worked my way up in this foreign yet not so unfamiliar industry.

Somewhere in the middle of all of it, I began to love going to work every day. In addition, I graduated from background actor to stand-in, which means that I walk through each scene with the lighting and camera department while the actress makes her rounds with hair, makeup and wardrobe. This way, when she arrives on set, cameras can almost immediately start rolling. You might say being a stand-in is one version of being an efficiency expert. But there’s actual work involved, so maybe not.

Day after day, watching the creation of a film unfold before my eyes while playing a small part within the process thrilled me and inspired me to create one of my own.

So I did. It was a short film, just shy of seventeen minutes, that snarkily commented on the parallels between any and all jobs in the workforce. Naturally, it was inspired by my foray into the entertainment industry and saying piss off to the corporate life. Instead of budget meetings and sales quotas, I researched and rented camera and lighting equipment, hired a boom operator (that’s the guy who records the sound) and a grip (that’s the guy who handles the lighting). I used my slightly rusty sales skills to raise money for the project, so we could rent the equipment and feed ourselves, a rarity in a low budget production scenario.

I spent months learning the differences between a 5D camera and a 7D. What a Kino Flo and C-Stand were used for. Why we needed windscreens for the boom poles.

And then, for two days, I was the one shouting “Action!” and, “this is the martini!” while I dreamed about downing several to alleviate the stress that comes with my first attempt at writing, producing and directing.

Thankfully, the cast and crew came together beautifully. The actors knew their lines and ad-libbed appropriately—and often very comedically. My crew worked diligently and took every step to ensure that even though our project was small and under-funded, it looked creatively impeccable. Every aspect was harmonious and it was one of the best hands-on learning experiences I have ever had, not to mention a supreme privilege that no one had handed me. I had created it for myself—a truth that still confounds me. Months after I had called out, “that’s a wrap”, I sat in the theaters for the Big Apple Film Festival and the Williamsburg Independent Film Festival watching my film “No Offense” on the big screen, listening to the audience laugh at all the right moments. I took a second and contentedly looked at my surroundings. I had found my long-anticipated four-walled office.

# Jessie R **Morris**

*She's Tight / Splayed Hard*







The sculptures *She's Tight* and *Splayed Hard* are a union of two ongoing agendas of mine: craft and bodily deconstruction. Craft deconstruction meaning a systematic analysis of process through reworking, altering, and destroying a given object's technical construction. Bodily deconstruction meaning a study of form in relation to anything it may interact with through my own experimental methods. For the work, I used patterns of historical corsets from the 1800's. *Splayed Hard* is a tedious reconstruction of a full corset through felting that has transformed from a soft and delicate object to an armor of ribbed texture. *She's Tight* is a tailored outfit applied to a column shaped body form and cast so as to reveal the internal view of its figure. In this work I take liberties with techniques and materials and code them to particular meanings. I imagine it as a scientific system that exacts the forms created between the merger of something bodily and something constructed. Once the form exists, I manipulate its surface and adorn it with techniques used in pattern making.

(R) *She's Tight*  
approximately 8" x 8" x 54"  
Flex foam it, glue, enamel paint, wood

(L) *Splayed*  
approximately 25" x 20"  
Wool felt, wool roving, glue, enamel paint

Jessie R Morris

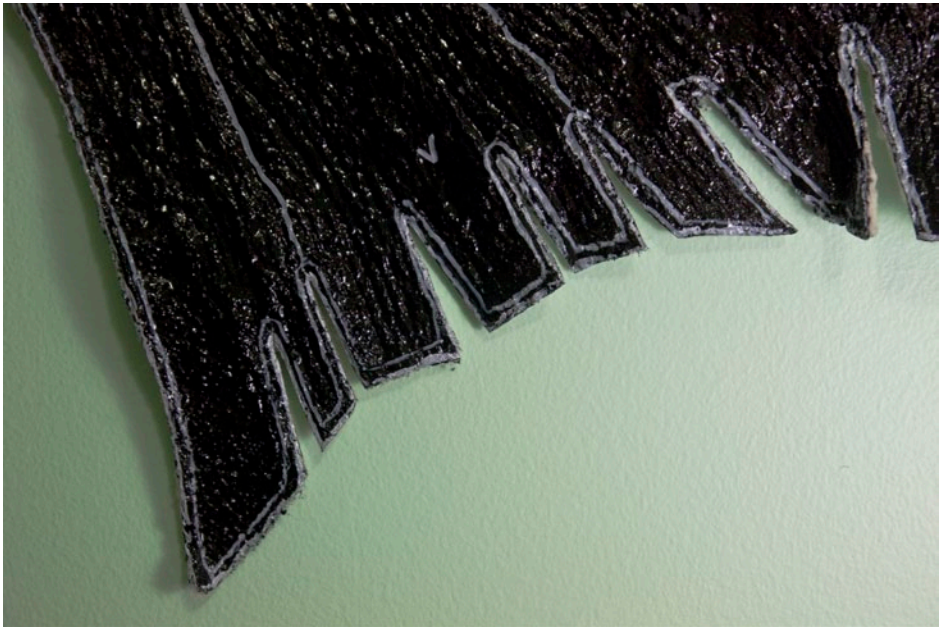












# Aline Dargie

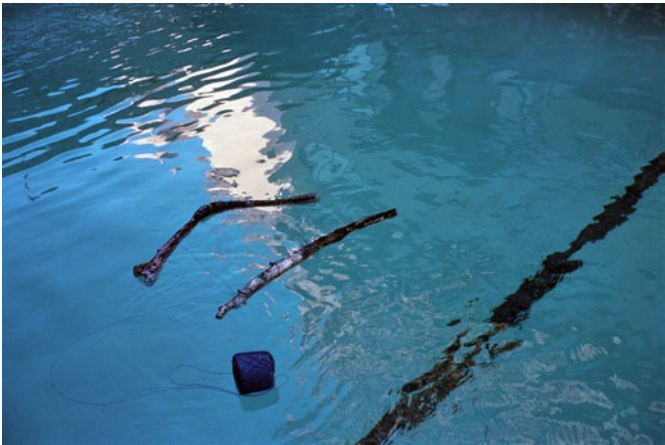
## *Make Hang*



Make Hang Gallery is a project space and studio owned and curated by Alan Robin and I. The gallery exists in the oldest part of SF, in the overlap of 1960's beat generation, Italian origins and the largest Asian community in America. I invite local emerging craft artists to work with me, creating dimensional objects and installations based in textile arts. Using Make Hang, opened June 2011 (while still a student), as space for people to learn and create together, often collaboratively, I stimulate creative approaches to textile forms.

Make Hang, inspired by Flux Projects in Atlanta, and Southern Exposure in San Francisco, both artist-run, enables and promotes contemporary underrepresented artistic voices. In this time of booming technology and economic angst, people yearn to create with their hands, but often do not have the resources. At Make Hang, supplies, tools and expertise are provided.

In an ongoing piece, *Culturitized Sticks*, I combine disparate, gathered materials to create conceptual weavings in site-specific public locations. I weave local, layered, diverse communities together by ‘Culturitizing’ fallen branches from windstorms in San Francisco, with gold leaf to bling, textiles to clothe, and paint to embellish. When ‘natural’ limbs fall on city sidewalks, they are widely perceived as problematic, and become culturally abject: put in compost or the chipper. I gather the fallen sticks, as a metaphor for giving voice and care to cast off people in San Francisco, like nomads living on the street, or immigrant sweatshop laborers.



Install Views of *Culturitized Sticks*, Installed around North Beach SF in November 2011 by Aline Dargie. Images by Joshua Cobos





Install Views of *Culturitized Sticks* Installed around North Beach SF in November 2011 by Aline Dargie. Images by Joshua Cobos



The studio was a Chinese sewing sweatshop until 2010. Illegal immigrant workers made mass-produced clothing at all hours, living in the basement. I radically transformed the 2000 sq ft space with support and embrace of neighbors. In honor of its textile history, it's now a textiles laboratory for the artistically inclined, attracting many. Make Hang is constantly evolving to better accommodate artists, and excite visitors, kindling a fresh renaissance of craft dialogue in San Francisco.



Make Hang now has monthly rotating shows, and about one event a week related to the work shown. Some events I plan include First Fridays in North Beach, the North Beach Holiday Crawl, the North Beach Art Walk, artist talks, workshops, parties, local music, and alternative art performances like fish carving and meat sculpture.



Indigo Ikat dyed silk and copper wire weaving, woven in Make Hang, as visitors pass through and openings take place, the weaving evolves as a part of the gallery. Images by Alan Robin.



Install Views of *Collect, Skin, Dry, Stitch, Repeat*. Victoria DeBlassie, 2011-12. Images by Alan Robin.

This month, Make Hang is displaying Victoria DeBlassie's orange textiles, hanging in space, creating a glowing, scented, architectural spiral. *Collect, Skin, Dry, Stitch, Repeat*, explains DeBlassie's process which will be illustrated and performed throughout the course of the show from December 2<sup>nd</sup> through February.





Install Views of *Collect, Skin, Dry, Stitch, Repeat*. Victoria DeBlassie, 2011-12. Images by Alan Robin.

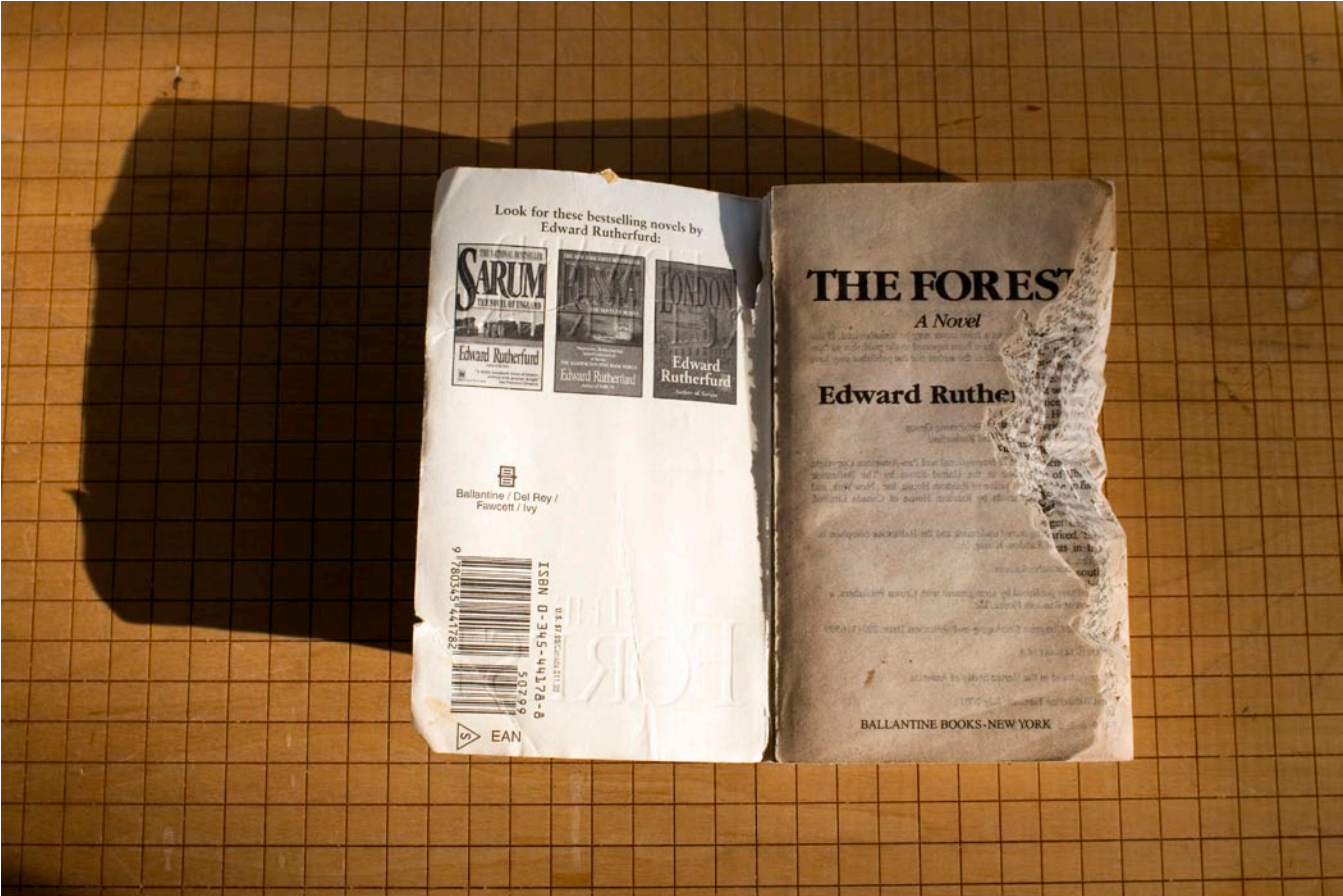
# Karen Bovinich

## *A Lingering Curiosity*

***The idea originally came as a sculptural project.*** I resolved to carve the surface of wood onto collective pages of books. The texture of these elements: tree, wood, pulp, paper—would carry the conceptual weight of the project: the return to a previous material in the process.



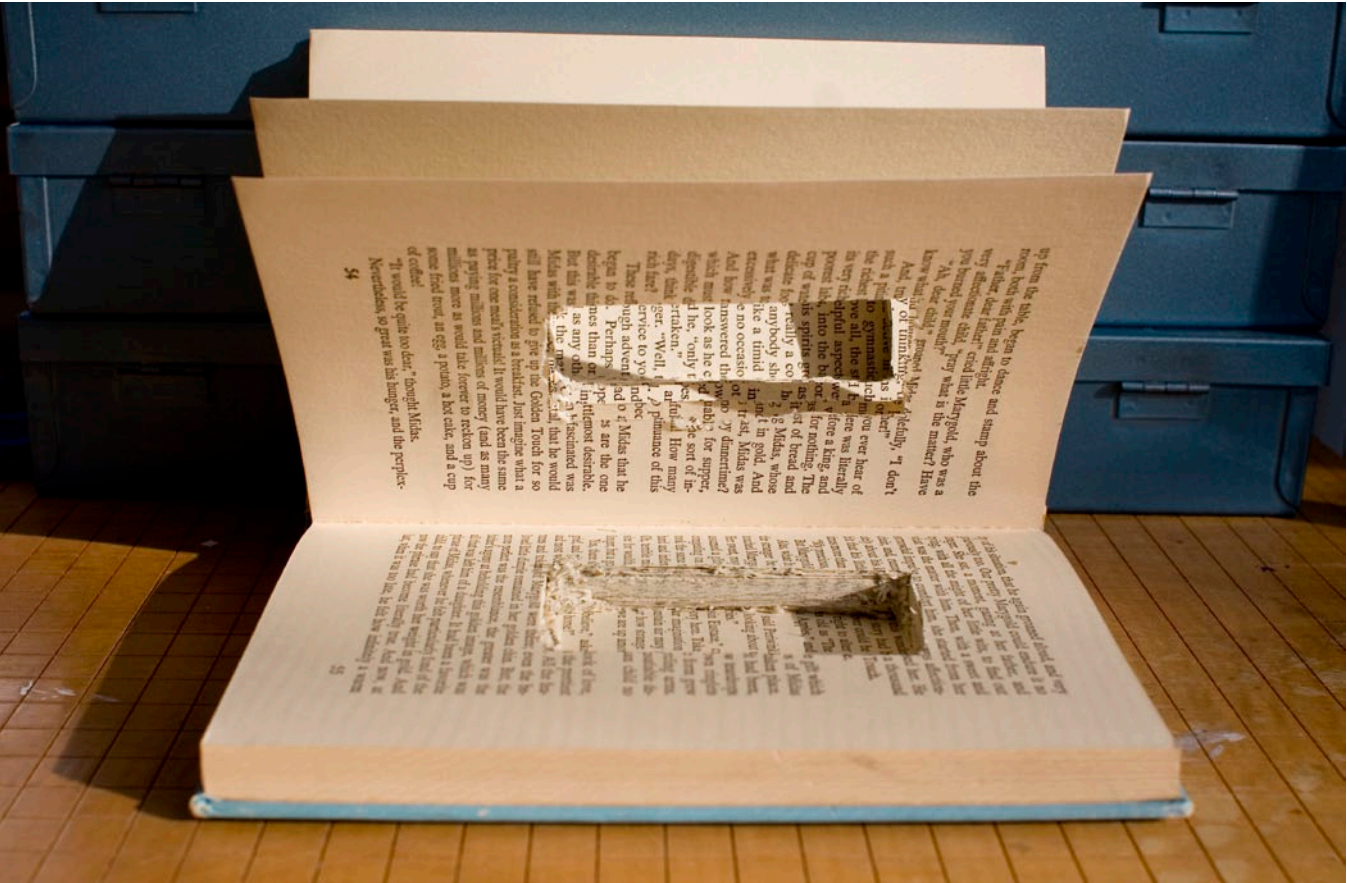


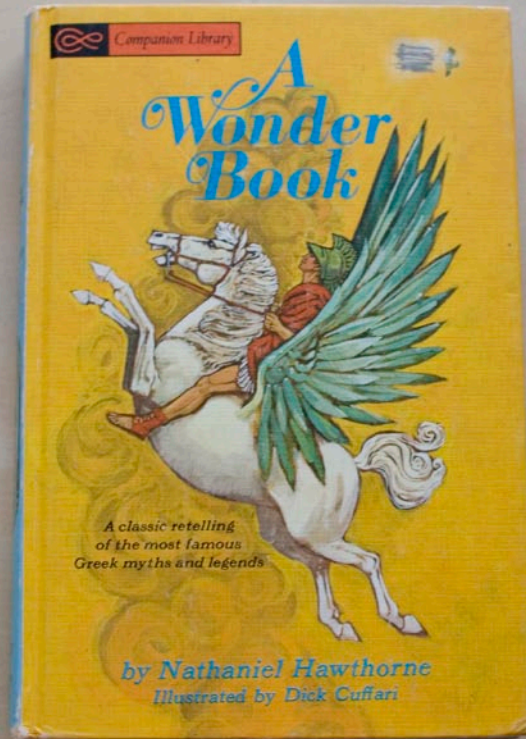


After collecting over a hundred books to start carving, I picked up a book entitled *A Wonder Book* and started to go through it, mulling over my next step. When I opened it up, there was a neat little box cut out of the papers, a vessel to hide something in. I had just experienced a moment of discovery and curiosity. I realized I was not the only or last to use a book other than to read it.







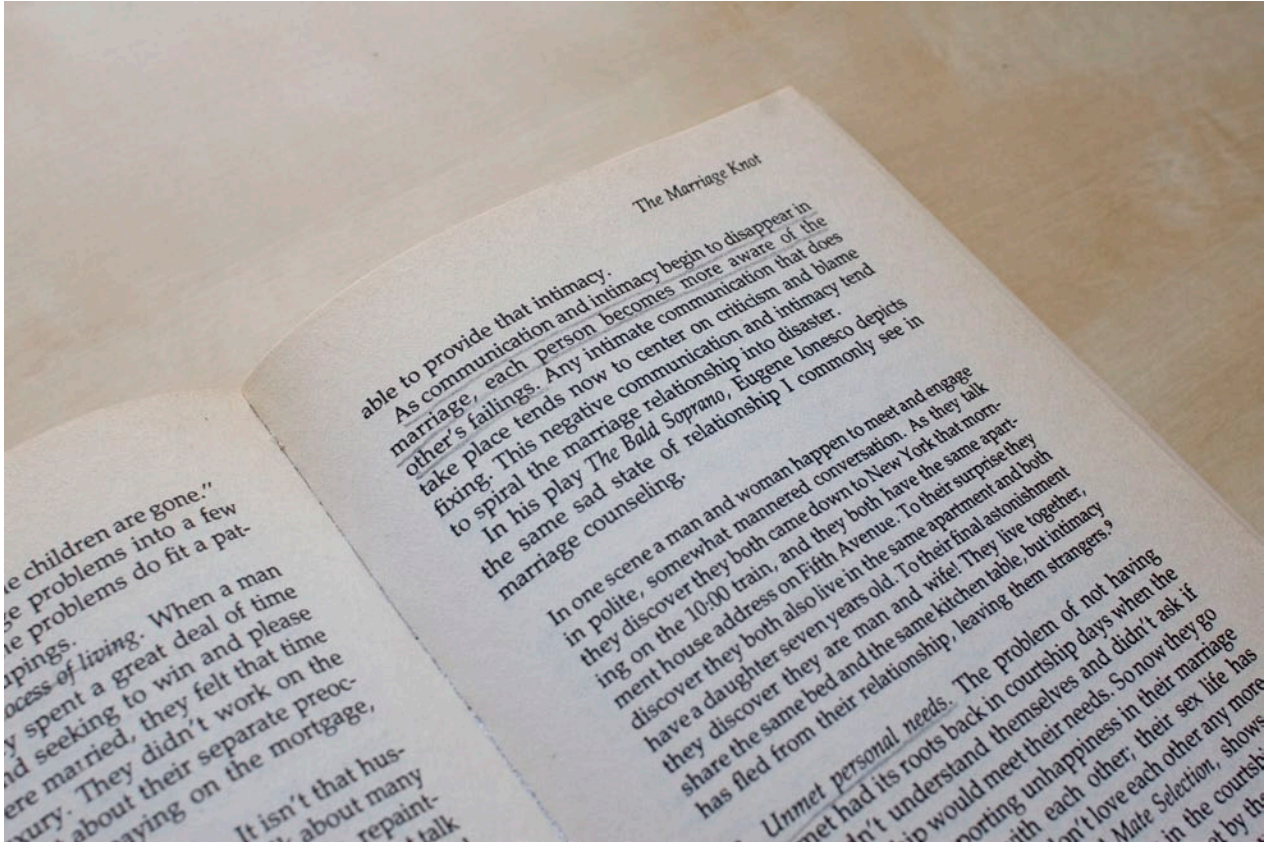




At this moment, my process with this body of work expanded. By participating instead of originating, I could borrow the sculptural and gestural ideas of these books—either found edited by their previous owners or edited by myself.

The books had history as objects: the wear and tear, breaking spine, folded pages, pencil markings, or notes scribbled in the margins. They have another history as well, that of the anonymous owner: the previous reader.

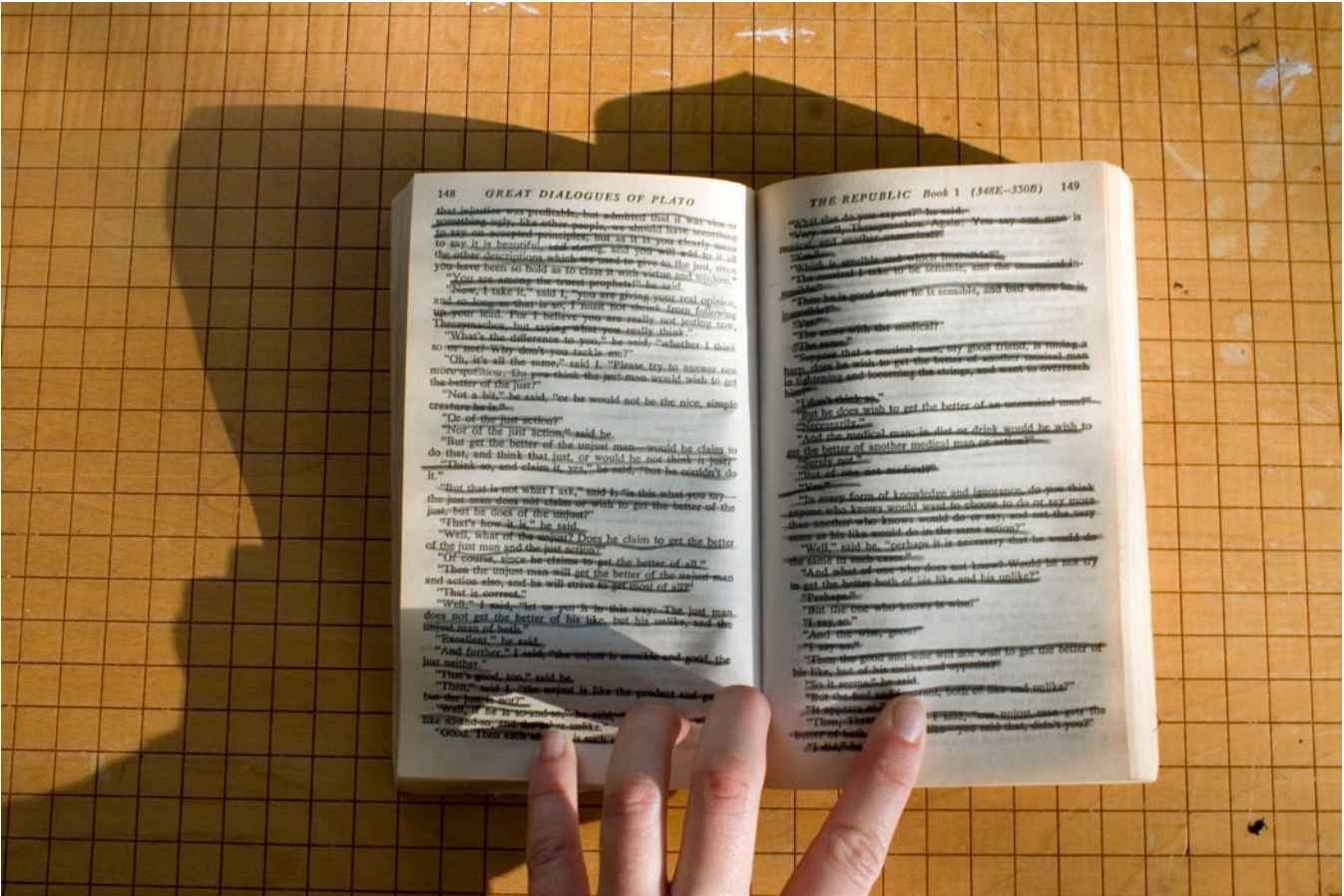
I searched the rest of the books for these moments of discovery. My curiosity intensified as I sought out more evidence of editing. As I perused the used books, I found a book entitled *Mid Life Crisis* that contained the faintest pencil markings, underlining points in the book that he felt connected. Another had note cards in the folds of the pages, with the US Constitution written down. And yet another, I discovered leaves being pressed in a book called *The Winds of War*.







To experience an anonymous gesture, to browse through a used book invites a curiosity into the previous reader's past and the levels of importance of the book. There is recognition of shared intimacy with the anonymous, the author, and the artist; all editors out of the necessity and desire to know. These books became moments for the individual to experience the art at present, the history of the texts and the sub-tiers of authorship. Most importantly, the art came from a lingering curiosity.





In 1967, Robert Irwin was asked to participate in a program that brought artists and scientists together to collaborate. Irwin-Turrell-Wortz's Report entitled the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967-1971, explained,

“All art is experience, yet all experience is not art. The artist chooses from experiences that which he defines out as art, possibly because it has not yet been experienced enough, or because it needs to be experienced more.”

It's strange to find an artist thirty or so years my senior to articulate the essence of my practice. Curiosity: the individual's desire to know, to hold it in the mind a little longer sometimes comes from our curiosity of others and their creative practices, whether artists or not. For the audience to pause with an artwork and to stay with the idea is the aim of my process. I pay attention to my moments of curiosity, like opening a book to find a neat little box cut out of the papers, a vessel to hide something in: it is our curiosities, experiences and collaboration with the audience and authors of any object that I find my practice.

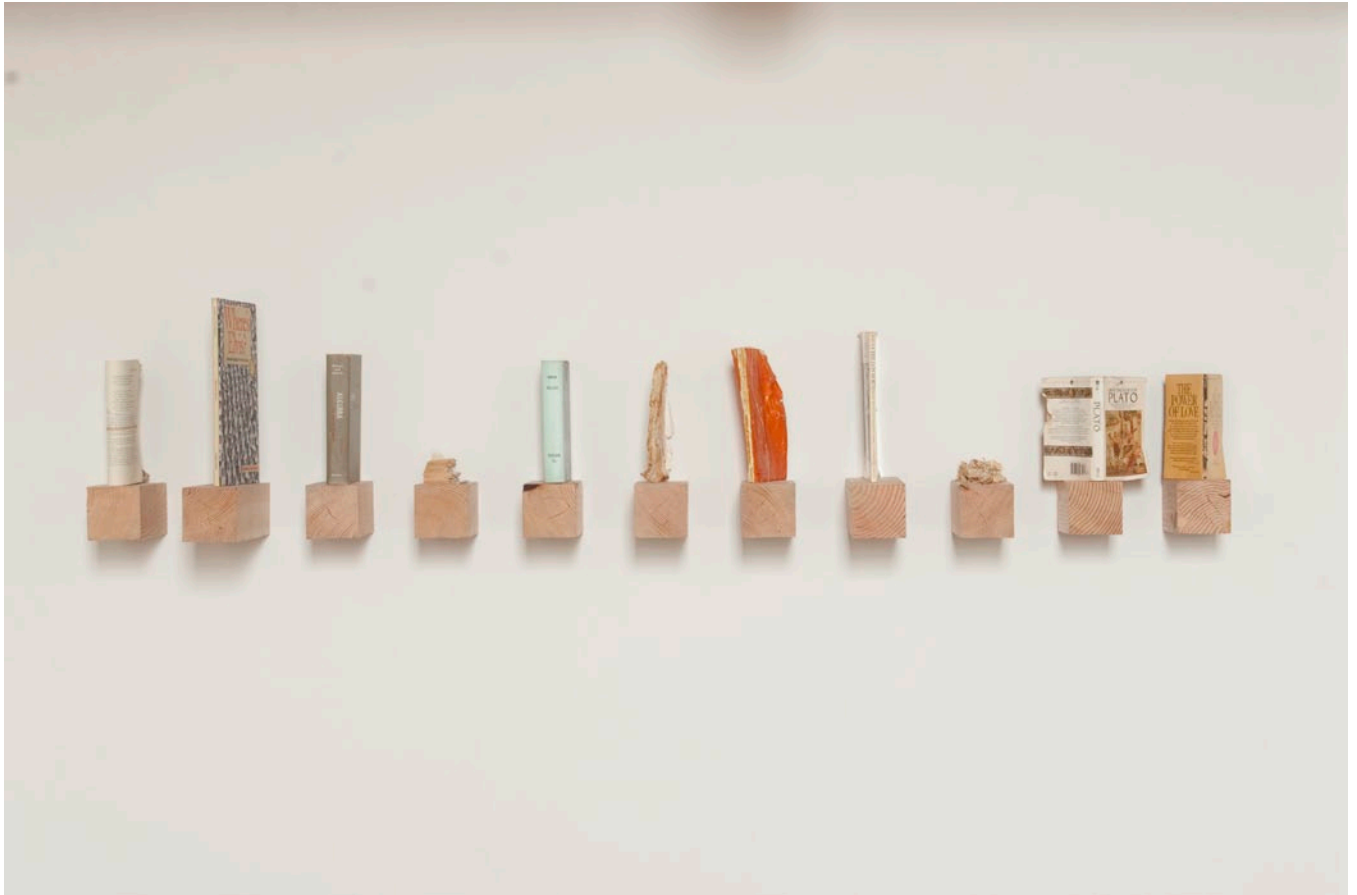




Installation View

Photos by: Zacharias Abubeker

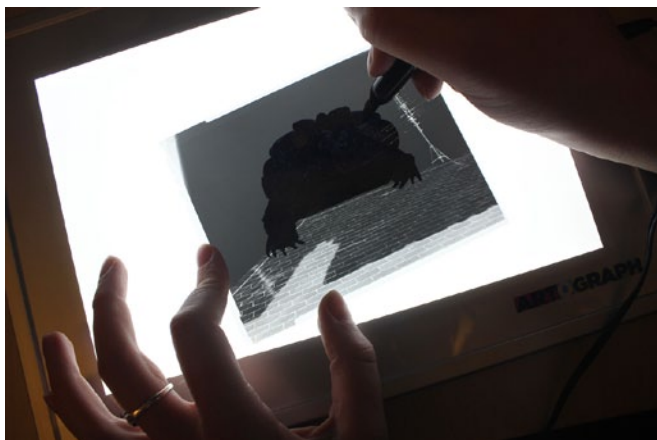
Karen **Bovinich**



Installation View

# Kara Cochran

## *With Teeth*



***The process that I call “drawn negatives”***, combines the mechanics of the photographic image with the artist’s hand. I begin with black and white film and a large format camera. On the resulting photograph, the form is drawn onto the emulsion, blocking light from passing through the film, and shows up as a white creature. The areas scratched away allow light to pass through and result in the delineation of their features. The areas that I photograph are the spaces in which I live, and these creatures are seen out through my windows.





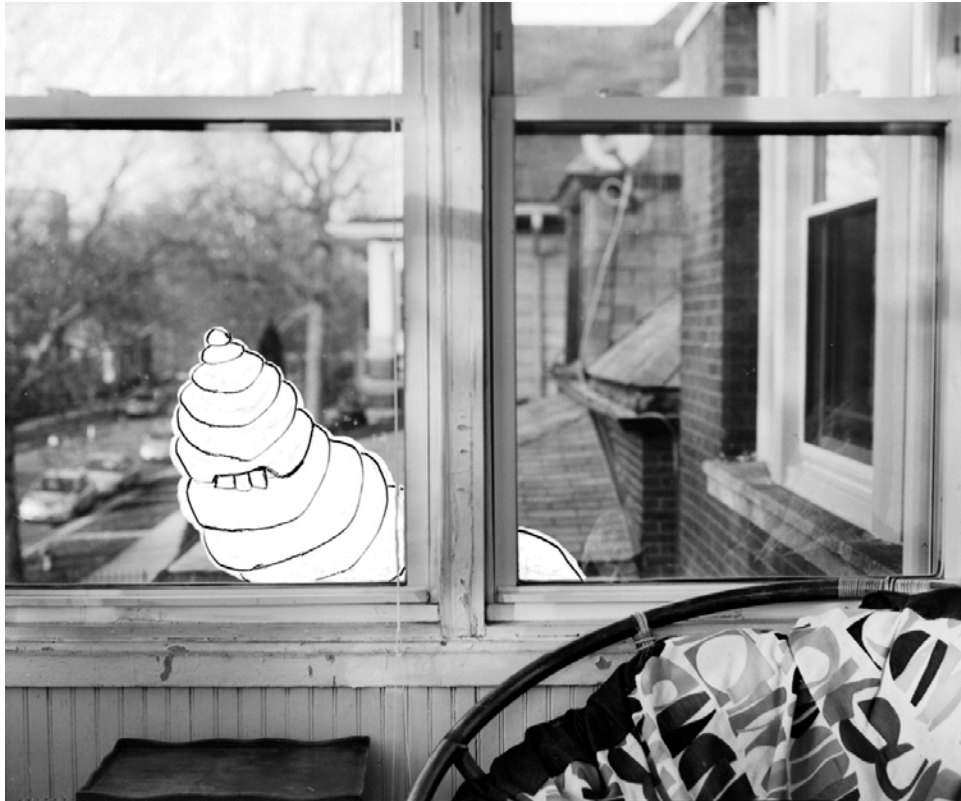












# Jesse Boardman Kauppila

*Remastering the Anthology of  
American Folk Music*



REMASTERING  
THE ANTHOLOGY OF  
AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC

FROM SIX COPPER PLATES

Jesse Boardman Kauppila



Remastering the Anthology of American Folk Music

Jesse Boardman Kauppila

January 22, 2012

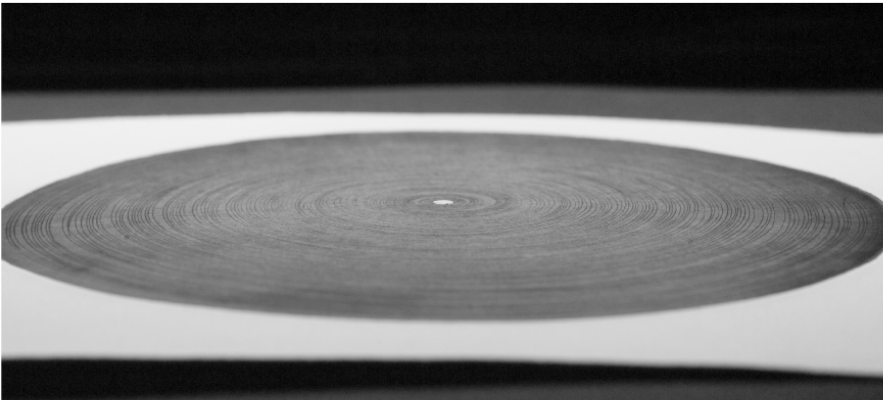


Figure 1: *Trompe-l'œil* record engraving printed from a hand-engraved, playable copper plate, created while listening to Harry Smith's "Anthology of American Folk Music."

Harry Smith's "Anthology of American Folk Music" was remastered. Copper plates were engraved while listening to the "Anthology [...]" so as to create a new master that could both be played as a record on a turntable and printed on a press as an engraving.

Those originally exposed to the "Anthology [...]" were inspired by its revelatory strangeness. A remastering was necessary to elicit a similar response today.

Results are currently inconclusive and it remains to be seen if the "Remaster [...]" has had this effect.

1 Introduction

By simultaneously engraving a rotating copper plate and listening to the "Anthology [...]," analysis and creation occurred simultaneously and became psychosomatic.

This methodology was based on the work of psychologist Joachim Entremmer. He describes his walking cure as an "approach rooted in the many alternative traditions of circle dancing [...] dervishes that enter into the circle of repetition to achieve ecstasy through psychokinetic travel." Entremmer's opposes the hierarchical analytical techniques of Freud *et al* which emphasize the specialized training of an elite expert rather than a personal journey of self

discovery.

“The basic technique,” Entremere explains, “emerges from a series of experiments that I performed on myself beginning in the year 1995 and it involves dissolving the self into a circle of time in a way that releases what I call the existential gramophone.” Practically this involved walking in a five-foot diameter circle while talking at one’s leisure in sessions lasting up to twenty four hours long. In the circle’s center a recording device is placed to record one’s “essential broadcast.”<sup>1</sup>

Entreme describes this broadcast as:

[G]iving voice to anything and everything that comes up through the circle, through your nervous system and larynx and out into the world. We need to imagine that the inner part of the circle is a record for the inner part of ourselves and that the feet are frictive needles releasing the information on the record through the application of sustained animal energy<sup>2</sup>

To remaster the “Anthology [...]” this process was reversed in the way a speaker can be transformed into a microphone and made to pick up sound and convert it into electricity, rather than converting electricity into sound. Through intense concentration, this sound became electric “animal energy” that was deposited into a copper plate through engraving. Essentially the engraving burin became a “frictive needle,” which rather than playing sound, deposited sound into the copper plate. This process, of course, necessitated entering into a meditative state in which the body became a conduit through which the “Anthology [...]” could flow from the ears down through the fingers and into the new master.

2 Materials and Methods

What you will need for remastering:

- 6, 12” Diameter copper plates with 1/4” hole in it
- Turntable felt
- #2 Burin
- Sturdy table with 1/4” hole and 1/4” dowel in the hole
- Compass with permanent, fine point, red marker lashed to its “business” end
- “Crocker” style, sharpening jig
- Screwdriver

- Black, thick permanent marker
- Course sharpening stone
- Medium, white arkansas stone
- Fine, translucent sharpening stone
- WD-40
- Leather strop
- Strop dressing
- Magnifying lens
- Drafting broom
- iPod
- Headphones
- Pitcher of water
- Glass
- Thermos of coffee
- Mug
- Ibuprofen
- Tiger balm
- Powerbar

This experiment took place on six different evenings on September 18th and 21st as well as Oct. 7th, 11th, 17th and 27th. The experimental sessions occurred in Jesse’s studio at the time in West Oakland’s “Ghost Town.”

Each experimental recordings session was treated as a performance piece for videographers Chris Edley, Karl Nelson, and photographer Ethan Raffel. The evening started as a meal and bled into the “event” as Kauppila sat down in front of his tools, turned on his iPod, and picked up his engraving burin.

The iPod was used to listen to the volume of “The Anthology of American Folk Music” being re-mastered that night. The copper plate was placed on a wooden spindle embedded in the table. The burin was positioned on the copper plate. The copper plate was pushed (clockwise) on this spindle into the hand-held engraving burin while Kauppila looked down, focusing intensely on this process with a suspended magnifying lens.

A process had been experimentally derived to create a spiral a normal record player needle could remain in while spinning on a turntable. It was discovered that a line engraved with a small

<sup>1</sup>Whitehead, Gregory, “The Bottom of the Mind.” Kassel: documenta 12 magazines, 2007.  
<sup>2</sup>*ibid*

<sup>3</sup> burin and a light touch, could be played, but only for so long. However, what started as a circle eventually turned into a ellipse, the sharper turns of which would throw the record needle. This was due to the accumulation of minute inaccuracies in hand engraving. To combat this technical challenge, after each track of the "Anthology [...]" a compass was used to calibrate the engraved spiral. The circular mark of this compass would then be used as a guideline for remastering the next track.

Between remastering each track the cutting faces of the burin were sharpened using successively finer grades of sharpening stones culminating in de-burring with a leather strop. This process was repeated for every track of each volume.

Each volume of the "Anthology [...]" was remastered in one, non-stop session. Each of these lasted approximately two hours. To enable the completion of each session water, coffee, and sometimes Ibuprofen, Tiger Balm, and an occasional Powerbar were employed.

The remastered "Anthology [...]" can also be used as a printing plate to create a the visual corollary to the sound that the remastered "Anthology [...]" creates on a record player.

Experience in intaglio printing is necessary to create these prints. The grooves of the plate are essentially filled with ink and the surface of the plate is wiped clean. A piece of black gampi paper is the lain on the surface of this plate and then manually cut down to the size of the plate. This plate is then placed on a press, a piece of paper is put on the plate, and the whole package is sent through the press.

### 3 Results

Originally the "Anthology [...]" revealed a strange new aspect of America. Kauppila similarly revealed other American traditions that are also home grown, but of another ilk. These include both noise music and minimalism. Not exactly two things as American as apple pie. But could they be? Folk music was not always the national symbol it is now. School children didn't sing Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land," they were singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"<sup>4</sup> and swinging to Glenn Miller's "Chatanooga Choo Choo." Perhaps it is possible to similarly understand these art forms as strange American traditions in their own right with similarly broad appeal.

Minimalism has a certain democratic impulse in its simplicity and the necessity that it be activated by the viewer.. Noise music

is a grass roots, DIY culture. They both resist commodification because they loose so much when photographed or recorded. As Michael Fried writes in "Art and Objecthood", minimalist art has a certain theatrical presence. I would argue that noise music is similarly theatrical, you have to be there, *in situ*.

Kauppila attempted to avoid the temptations to stage a nostalgic reenactment, the sort which classic rock cover bands and folk music groups often cave into. Indeed, this whole process involved an attempt to listen to and understand but also move beyond avante-garde and alternative culture of the sixties. The "Anthology [...]" stands with such totemic volumes of the sixties as Stewart Brand's "The Whole Earth Catalog", Llyod Kahn's "Shelter", and Bill Holm's "Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form."<sup>5</sup> All these volumes were uniquely formatted, creative text books, which mapped out manners of living, building, making art, and making music. They were not, however, the dry prescriptive "How-to-Books" which overpopulate pristine "ticky-tacky" book stores. Instead, the author had their own voice. They had something to say, to say for themselves, and didn't just want to tell you what to do. In many ways not just the content, but the form of the presentation of this content was itself, dare I say, inspirational. Kauppila's experiment is an examination of the appeal of the structure of these totemic volumes.

As one might suspect, and as writer Charles Bernstein articulates, this process of "revealing code" can be poetic in its own right.

It's like swimming or something. You move from one part of the pool to the other, you never completely reveal the entire system. That's impossible, but you use the reflection, the making visible that which was invisible, making audible that which was inaudible or not noticed or being aware of things which you were otherwise not aware of. [...A]nd once you are aware of something you were not aware of a whole realm of other things fall into the realm of non-recognition. It's always a partial process of moving through, traveling through a space, that is ultimately extremely dark, [sub voice: the world in which we live] you can create this little reflection of light within that darkness almost as a self generating engine of the poetic imagination.<sup>6</sup>

This project is an attempt to jump-start that "self-generating engine of the poetic imagination" off Harry Smith's "Anthology of American Folk Music." Whether the charge of "animal energy" remains long enough to jump start other imaginative engines remains

<sup>3</sup>E.C. Lyons 2

<sup>4</sup>My octogenarian highschool Latin teacher Graham Newell's favorite song.

<sup>5</sup>Bill Holm's book similarly became the bible for Native American and First Nations artists. Incidentally, Bill Holm was childhood friends with Harry Smith. Bill Holm was an artist in his own rite, but stopped making "northwest coast Indian art" after the movement he helped found became a significant source of native income. He now makes history paintings.

<sup>6</sup>Stahl, Ola with Charles Bernstein. "Interview 001a/ Tape works" Malmö, Sweden: IEM Press and Verbale Pupiller, 2009.

to be seen.

#### 4 Discussion

One evening while attending college in Portland, Oregon, Jesse Kauppila was double booked. Two different sets of friends were putting on concerts. One was put on by a very good, but dissimilar friend of his. It was a noise concert. The other was put on by a group of his friends and was to be all folk music.

Kauppila went to the noise concert first. It wasn't really his scene. It was in a big house with a lot of older goths, punks, and drugs. Kauppila knew almost no one, but here people were just having fun making the sounds, building (and sometimes even destroying) their own physical and digital instruments with their friends. It was pretty pure, unbridled, creativity, but he had to go. Kauppila had friends across town that were putting on their own show.

In a clearing, in an old orchard, between the art building and the "psycho path" a group of Kauppila's friends were putting on a folk concert and potluck. They had brought in hay bales and beer procured from a legendary dumpster. Everybody sat around and stared as the performers sang. There was none of the give and take, the irrational exuberance, there was a clear line between the performers and the audience. It felt too staged. Basically it felt like everyone was pretending to be Bob Dylan, clearly these were all friends and Bob Dylan was not in attendance.

This project has been an attempt to synthesize these two cultural experiences.

One of Bob Dylan's, not to mention many other folk revivalist's main influence, was the "Anthology of American Folk Music." Indeed, Greil Marcus, the world's foremost Dylanologist states the "The Anthology of American Folk Music" was Bob Dylan's first true map of a republic that was still a hunch to him<sup>7</sup>.

"Noise" music is similarly a hidden genre. It has been resistant to commercialization and commodification. It has a storied, but underground, secret quality, stories and music is traded by friends in small intimate settings and in this context it is something that can be truly strange and weird. I wanted to connect the glory of this strangeness back with folk music. Harry Smith originally used art to communicate the power he found. I'm trying to do the same thing.

The "Anthology [...]" popularized folk music through technology and its contextualization as art.

Hence the Folkways anthology in effect legitimized its material investing it with the cultural authority both of its advanced technology, and its rarefied sociopolitical connections. What had been, to the people who originally recorded it, essentially the music of the poor, the isolated, and the uneducated, the "Anthology [...]" re-framed as a kind of avant-garde art.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, Harry Smith in addition being a musicologist was an avant-garde artist. He was primarily preoccupied with film but also created paintings that were meant to be watched to music. As Harry Smith described one of his paintings:

It is a painting of a tune by Dizzy Gillespie called "Manteca." Each stroke in the painting represents a certain note on the recording. If I had the record, I could project the painting as a slide and point to a certain thing. This is the main theme there, which is a-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot those curved lines up there. See, ta-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot, and so forth.<sup>9</sup>

According to Smith's friend Luis Kemnitzer he would actually do this, "He would then stand to one side of the painting, long pointer in hand, slightly huddled over, and formally point to one small area after another in succession as the music progressed."<sup>10</sup>

Harry Smith was also a shaman. He grew up in Portland, Oregon and from an early age recorded and learned various Native American songs and languages and also collected religious objects.<sup>11</sup> At the end of his life he was shaman-in-residence at the Naropa Institute. Through his vast collection of early folk music recordings Smith similarly attempted to capture ritual, as Greil Marcus explains, "it was the scent of ritual Smith pursued." Interestingly enough Bob Dylan saw a similar link between folk music and ritual.

Traditional music is based on hexagrams. It comes about from legends, Bibles, plagues, and it revolves around vegetables and death. There's nobody that's going to kill traditional music. All those songs about roses growing out of people's brains and lovers who are really geese and swans that turn into angels - they're not going to die. It's all those paranoid people who think that someone's going to come and take away their toilet paper - they're going to die. Songs like 'Which Side Are You On?' and 'I Love You Porgy' - they're not folk - music songs; they're political songs. They're already dead.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan Basement Tapes." New York: Henry Holt, 1997

<sup>8</sup>Cantwell, Robert. "Smith's Memory Theatre," from "When We Were Good Folk: The Folk Revival." Boston: Harvard University Press, 1996. pg. 190.

<sup>9</sup>Perchuk, Andrew. "Struggle and Structure" from "Harry Smith: The Avant-Garde in the American Vernacular" Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010. pg. 26.

<sup>10</sup>West Coast Collector, "Anthology [...]" Reissue liner notes, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1997. pg. 31.

<sup>11</sup>www.harrysmitharchives.com/1\_bio/index.html

<sup>12</sup>Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan Basement Tapes." New York: Henry Holt, 1997. pg. 113.



Obviously, death is not very universally accepted. I mean, you'd think that the traditional-music people could gather from their songs that mystery is a fact, a traditional fact ... traditional music is too unreal to die. It doesn't need to be protected. Nobody's going to hurt it. In that music is the only true, valid death you can feel today off a record player.<sup>13</sup>

In this statement Dylan to subscribes to a shamanistic view of art. The work of art acquires agency. Anthropologist Alfred Gel explains art as a sort of shamanism, "[A]rt as a system of action to change the world rather than encoding symbolic propositions about it."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, when recognized for the 'Anthology [...]' with a lifetime achievement award by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, Harry Smith perhaps remarked at the success of his shamanism when he stated. "I'm glad to say that my dreams came true. I saw America changed through music."<sup>15</sup>

It is because of the power, the influence of this album, and indeed, its shamanistic qualities, that it has been re-mastered by hand as an avante-garde art piece.

By creating a print from this plate Kaupilla also intended to create an homage to the talismatic quality of the history of the "Anthology [...]" Even when the recordings compiled in the "Anthology [...]" were first sold in the '20's they were often bought as objects and were never played.

Many copies of these records were bought by people without phonographs. They bought the discs as talismans of their own existence; they could hold these objects in their hands and feel their own lives dramatized. [...] Why was it inexpressibly more exciting to hear a song you could hear next door or at a dance next Saturday night coming out of a box? Precisely because you could have heard it next door or even played it yourself - but not with the distancing of representation, which made a magic mirror and produced the shock of self recognition. (Marcus, "The Old, Weird America," "Anthology [...]" liner notes, 21)<sup>16</sup>

It is this distancing effect of representation which Kaupilla sought to recreate. It was not only Kaupilla, however, in a way the

entire project was an attempt to create a mirror that reflected the story of Harry Smith's "Anthology [...]" This started with listening to the most recent re-issue of the "Anthology [...]" by Smithsonian Folkways on an iPod and creating a physical record from this act of listening. Simultaneously, however, videographer Chris Edley taped this process on a handheld black and white tube camera. Photographer Ethan Rafal photographed both the engraving and the videotaping of the engraving using first both a digital and a large format, hooded camera.<sup>17</sup> These anachronistic processes both documented and recreated a new "Anthology [...]" that similarly built upon both old time music as well as several different centuries of technology to continue a tradition of appropriation and re-contextualization.

Kaupilla also wanted to be part of a radical tradition of aural disruption. He wanted to create something that was radically strange, but yet attached to tradition. The power of this contrast is profound. Ironically, this technique of aesthetic contrast also has something of a tradition. Not only was the "Anthology [...]" powerful because it coupled strange sounds with traditional American culture, so too was Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring", which started with a Lithuanian folk song and whose subject was a pagan ritual (and which incidentally sparked a riot). This tradition of the radical power of sound goes back even further, argues Luigi Russolo:

[T]he first sounds that men were able to draw from a pierced reed or a taut string were stupefying, something new and wonderful. Among primitive peoples, sound was attributed to the gods. It was considered sacred and reserved for priests, who used it to enrich their rites with mystery. Thus was born the idea of sound as something in itself, as different from and independent of life. And from it resulted music, a fantastic world superimposed on the real one, an inviolable and sacred world.<sup>18</sup>

This experiment is an analytical search and an attempt at a historic re-enactment. A meditation, and mechanical incantation conducted to create something new and strange from cultural artifacts and technology in the same way that Harry Smith's "Anthology of American Folk Music" elicited a response that changed America through music.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* pg. 103.

<sup>14</sup> "Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory," Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, pg. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Harry Smith continues, adding, "And all that stuff that the rest of you are talking about." "Harry Smith: The Avante-Garde in the American Vernacular" Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010, pg. 55.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Kaupilla was first intrigued by the physical presence of the "Anthology [...]" itself, albeit the distinctive red box set reissued by Smithsonian Folkways. Kaupilla saw this box in the personal collections of two master printers he worked for: Peter Pettengill and Niels Borch Jensen.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Nelson also videotaped the proceedings using more "up-to-date" digital recording technology.

<sup>18</sup> Russolo, Luigi. "The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto," from "Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music" Ed. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner. New York: Continuum, 2007.

# William Staples

## *Picture Making*

***As an undergraduate student,*** I recall an art history seminar where the professor presented a slide of Rembrandt's *An Artist in His Studio*, (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). The painting depicts a dimly lit workspace. In the foreground, on the left is a large canvas on an easel seen from the rear. Standing in the background, is a figure dwarfed in contrast to the picture support, staring resolute at perhaps what is an untouched work. This image made an impression on me as a young artist who was struggling to make paintings. It seemed like a clever narrative revealing the angst of ogling a newly stretched canvas and not knowing what to do with it. Today, after many years of trying to paint, Rembrandt's painting can still stand for the struggle to resolve difficult and painful pictorial problems that can leave me woefully bewildered.

I continue to be interested in paintings, which draw on the studio or the artist working as a motif. The idea of creating in paint what one does when painting fascinates me for the possible inferences found formally and conceptually regarding a studio practice. A picture such as Henri Matisse's *The Painter and His Model*, (Musee d'Art Moderne, Paris) shows a black and white room with a plainly rendered, pale orange male figure in profile representing the artist. The painter is sitting in front of an easel, which is set at an angle. Resting on the easel is a painting of a female figure in a green robe seated on a violet chair surrounded by a black field. Directly in the background, near a corner, one can see the subject in the denoted canvas. Above the woman is an ornate mirror and to the right of the painter is a large open window with a view of a city. One meaning implied in Matisse's work is the idea of looking and reflection. The artist scrutinizes his subject matter and paints her likeness – turning back and forth between the model and the representation while working through formal problems. Likewise, we stare at mirrors, which echo our image, and we gaze out of windows.

*Easel Painting*, (Saatchi Collection, London) by the contemporary artist Merlin James is another work in this theme. Here we see a flatly painted interior of a studio. Placed on the right of the picture plane is an empty easel against a wall or partition. Just behind it, in the center of the composition is an entryway and filling out the rest of the space is a bare wall. James creates his easel in simple line made out of paint and pieces of wood. The color scheme

is analogous employing various tones and shades of greens. Underneath the layers of opaque paint and transparent washes, are noticeable pentimenti suggesting reworking or possibly an older piece. The design of this representation is minimal and abstract. However, a perception of three-dimensional space is created with two white bands and brighter color within the area of the easel, which indicates a light source coming from outside the edge of the frame, guiding the eye to the dark doorway. With the directness of paint handling, one can see the process while the depiction of a stark studio, open door and a vacant easel point to works to come.

Where Matisse gives us multiple views and mirroring, presenting an artist painting, James' picture centers our focus on material and illusion with the promise of pictures to be made. What I find engaging about these works is not their presumed "painting about painting" context. Rather, it is the reflection on the studio as a place for invention and the formal experimentation in the paintings made there. As I see it, the process of solving pictorial problems while also finding a connection to tradition, is an essential part of visual art. Paintings do not come from waiting for inspiration but from working, internalizing previous precedents and profiting from your own vexing failures. Making art objects is as much an intellectual activity and a part of the human experience as any component of our existence. Of course, this is not an original insight but one worth restating if only because I still believe it to be a forward leaning viewpoint.

The idea of a studio practice has changed since late modernist trends and conceptual art where some artists have turned away from making objects and working in studios – a few calling their spaces offices. Today, there are those practitioners who refer to themselves as visual artists while using a diverse range of cross-disciplinary methodologies and stressing the importance of a post-studio practice – a term that seems purposefully open-ended. In my view, the timeless import of visual art is the human endeavor of taking malleable materials to create work that could become significant to someone else. My interests lie in painting and sculpture because I see these disciplines' creative processes evoking a wide-ranging need in society to construct things that, in turn, go out into the world for some use or function. For sometime, in the political sphere there are those who have been debating what afflicts the American economy is we no longer manufacture hard goods, citing that a high percentage of our GDP comes from financial institutions and the insurance industry. This may or may not be true, although one can make a range of cynical comparisons to today's art world. That said, I like to think of these paintings by Rembrandt, Matisse and James a part of a continuum of artists through out history working alone in spaces, taking material in hand that until manipulated had no real consequence out side its intended purpose. This outlook may be out of date humanism. Still, I would like to think, no matter how quixotic, no matter how much culture evolves and changes, it would always be meaningful to make stuff in one's studio and share it with others.



*Picture.* 9"x8". 2010-11.

Oil, acrylic, string and linen on canvas with oil on wood panel.

William **Staples**



# CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

## *No. 6 Process*

**Karen Bovinich** is an installation and performance artist. She received her BFA in Fine Arts from Columbia College in 2010. In 2008, Bovinich started a collaborative live sculpture group known as Before Cake, After Dinner (BC,AD). She now participates as half of the newly formed collaboration, Jesus Mejia & Ruth and is preparing for a solo show at Roxaboxen Exhibitions, opening January 22nd 2012. Bovinich currently lives and works in Chicago, IL. For more information, visit [www.karenbovinich.com](http://www.karenbovinich.com).

**Aline Dargie** (b. 1991, Andover, MA), curates and weaves tactile, sculptural artwork, involving indigo ikat dyed threads and painted sticks, at Make Hang Gallery in North Beach San Francisco. Aline earned her BFA from California College of the Arts in 2011. Visit [www.Makehang.com](http://www.Makehang.com) and [www.Alinedargie.com](http://www.Alinedargie.com) for more.

**Sarah-Margaret Gibson** born and raised in Cincinnati, OH, is a 23-year-old classical realist painter. For the past four years she has been training in Florence, Italy, learning the techniques of the Old Masters. Having first attended the Angel Academy of Art for two years, Gibson is now currently enrolled at the Florence Academy of art. To see more of her work please go to [www.sarah-margaretgibson.com](http://www.sarah-margaretgibson.com)

**Adam Grossi** is an artist living and working in Chicago. He is originally from Reston, Virginia, one of the country's first suburban environments to manifest from the utopian spirit of "new town" development. The triumphs and failures of Reston's intentional landscape have formed a kind of locus for Adam's work, which relies on reading, interpreting, and reconfiguring the meaning embedded in the conventions and rhetoric of American middle-class culture. He received a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University in 2003 and an MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2009. His work can be seen at [www.adamgrossi.com](http://www.adamgrossi.com)

**Jesse Boardman Kauppila** tinkers with printmaking in the avant-garde tradition of the "bricoleur," using it to recreate records, lace, and barcodes as works of art. In this and other work he uses and imbue subjects with historical and cultural significance. He also establishes performative processes for making art that are then enacted. And documents these processes through photography, video, and text, using these mediums to tell stories. Jesse lives in Oakland, CA. [www.jessekauppila.com](http://www.jessekauppila.com)

**Maude Larke** lives in France. She has come back to creative writing after years in the university system, analyzing others' texts, and to classical music as an ardent amateur, after fifteen years of piano and voice in her youth. Publications include Naugatuck River Review, Oberon, Cyclamens and Swords, riverbabble, 52|250, and Sketchbook.

**Jeanne Lorenz** draws round connections between archaic technologies using the image of the vinyl record as a symbol of our changing times. She unites industrial hand printmaking with her love of records to re-animate the so-called outmoded form of technology into a new familiar experience. Lorenz inks, prints, and paints records obtained from the big dumpster of America in an attempt to make sound waves visible. Her work can be seen at [www.jeannelorenz.com](http://www.jeannelorenz.com)

**Jessie R Morris** is a sculptor, and textile crafter living and working in Chicago. She received her BFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago. More work can be found at [www.jessiemorris.tumblr.com/](http://www.jessiemorris.tumblr.com/)

**Dmitry Samarov** drives a taxi and paints pictures in Chicago, Illinois. He's the author of Hack: Stories from a Chicago Cab. More of his cab stories can be found at <http://chicagohack.com> and much more of his artwork is at [www.dmitrysamarov.com](http://www.dmitrysamarov.com).

**Danielle Sepulveres** is a graduate of the University of Delaware and resides in northern NJ. She works in the film and television industry in New York, spending her days working on the CBS show The Good Wife, and moonlighting as a writer/producer/director of short films for the film festival circuit. Her debut memoir Losing It: The Semi Scandalous Story of an Ex-Virgin has just been released by Bryce Cullen Publishing. Follow her on Twitter @ellesep.

**William Staples** is a painter living in Chicago.

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# COMPOSITE INFO

## *No. 6 Process*

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**Kara Cochran** is in the process of processing her processes. Her work can be seen at [www.karacochran.com](http://www.karacochran.com).

**Xavier Duran** hasn't gotten there yet. Wherever the hell there is. You can view his work at [www.xavierduran.com](http://www.xavierduran.com).

**Suzanne Makol** loves the process of printing photographs in a black and white darkroom, because that's where all the magic happens. Her work can be viewed at [www.suzannemakol.com](http://www.suzannemakol.com).

**Joey Pizzolato 's** process changes on daily basis He can be reached at [joeypizzolato@gmail.com](mailto:joeypizzolato@gmail.com).

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