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Fragments & Context

A Thesis Presented

by

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Abstract of the Thesis

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I intend this thesis to be a narration of my thoughts about the artwork I create. This thesis is divided into two parts. In part one, I explore the conceptual aspects of my work and discuss my use of fragments, grids and context, and why the formal qualities of my work are derived from semiotics. In part two, I discuss six bodies of work.

Dedication Page

For Lynnie.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people: My family for always supporting me, especially my mom, Mary Lou, and my dad, Greg. To my fiancé, Lynnie, for always supporting me, challenging me, and sticking by my side. To Stephanie Dinkins for supporting my various endeavors and consistently providing thoughtful feedback. To Mel Pekarsky for his persistent questioning and always pushing me to go one step further. To Dr. Eduardo Mendieta for following and supporting my work, and agreeing to be a part of my thesis committee. To my graduating classmates Fatima, Gina, Joanna, and Kate. And to everyone else that has helped me along the way.

Introduction:

What I do not appreciate in doing this kind of writing about my work is that it becomes prescriptive. It becomes me-the-artist telling you-the-viewer/reader how to approach my work, rather than allowing you to figure something out for yourself. My work requires patience and thought and I hope that those who put forth such efforts will discover something they can enjoy. Making and discussing art is an ongoing dialogue, and I am constantly trying to figure out my thoughts about my work. I do not intend the writing that follows to be so much an explanation, as I intend it to be a narration. This writing is a narration of my thoughts about my work; what I think about and what I direct my thoughts toward while I am making my work and after my work is complete.

An artwork is a hinge between the artist and the viewer. The motivations of the artist are any number of impulses and reasons for an artist choosing to make something, both consciously and subconsciously. These motivations exist before the work is started and as the work is being made. Once the work is complete these motivations are sealed within the work, but perhaps are not visible. If the motivations are not visible it is of no consequence as long as the work is engaging and challenging for both viewer and artist. When a work is finished and presented to viewers it takes on a life of its own – separate from an artist's motivations. I count on people to view artworks with baggage. Artworks are not made in a vacuum; they do not exist in a vacuum, and they are not viewed in a vacuum. In my work I want people to make connections between the images, signs, and formats I use and the world outside the artwork. Viewers should forge connections, generate narratives, and develop explanations.

It is not important for my work to deliver a clear message. Rather, my work is an environment for thought and discovery, it is a place for a viewer to find something within the limits I place. This is why my work requires patience on the part of the viewer. It is important for me to have an idea going into a work in order to produce the work – my motivations – but after the work is completed and displayed, my ideas do not matter anymore. Now, the work is a place for the viewers to explore and generate their own ideas.

As I think about my work I am developing two theses. First, I am attempting to create a visual and spatial continuity of time through the use of graphs, fragments, and quantity of fragments. In doing so I am attempting to extend a bridge between two types of images that are commonly referred to as representational and non-objective. I believe there can only be the representational. And second, I am exploring themes of consumption and consumerism, destruction, technology, and representation, and the various connections that can be made between these themes.

To do this, I will introduce three topics that are vital to my thoughts about my work; these topics are 1) fragments, 2) using the accumulation of fragments to create a context of imagery and to work against hierarchies and timelines, and 3) using formal elements derived from signs, phenomena, and structures from the world outside of the artwork, a semiotic approach to abstraction.

Part I. The Theory: Fragments, Context, and Formal Elements:

I. Fragments

The wall is covered side to side and top to bottom in a grid of postcard sized images. The images are transferred, drawn and painted, some are obvious as to what they

represent and some are not. There are numerous portraits of Dr. Oppenheimer, text that reads, "Now we're all sons-a-bitches… now", dots, grids, images of a girl wearing some kind of a helmet, flatbed scans of plastic shopping bags, aerial imagery, and a scattering of a few other less recurrent images. Many of the images are layered, mixing motifs and mediums, obscuring, creating the sense that the true meaning or content is obscured, hidden behind a layer of paint or a series of lines. The eye jumps between images, moving left and right, up and down, scanning and pausing. There is a portrait next to a graph, next to an aerial landscape, next to a series of dots, next to a grid, placed in a grid. This is a description of my piece, *Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now*. The title is a riff on a comment Dr. Bainbridge made to Dr. Oppenheimer immediately following the Trinity Test[1]. This piece is exemplary of the themes I want to discuss in my work as well as the way I approach my work. It is composed of fragments, each postcard-sized image is a fragment of the whole, and it utilizes these fragments and a grid format to employ various representational styles, and references to various points in time, flattened into a single space.

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[1] The Trinity Test was the first detonation of an atomic bomb; it was part of the Manhattan Project, and took place in the White Sands Desert of New Mexico on July 16, 1945. Dr. Bainbridge and Dr. Oppenheimer were both scientists working on the project.

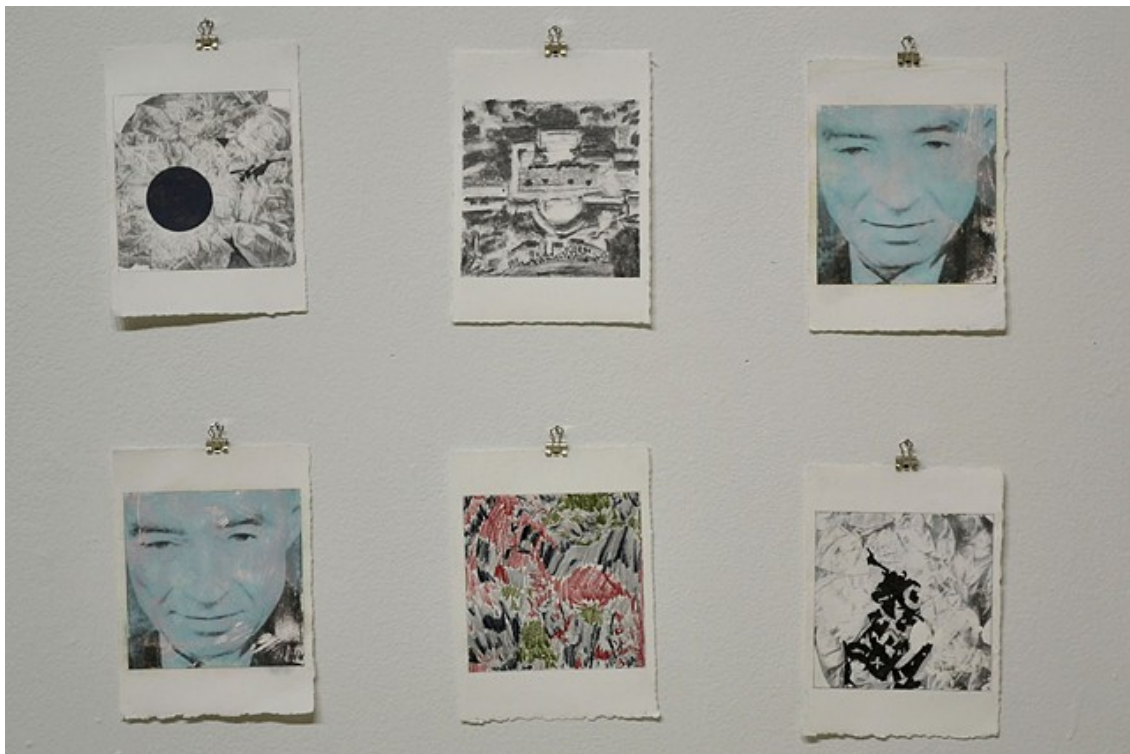Figure 1. *Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now,* 2013. Dimensions Variable.

Figure 2. *Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now,* 2013. (detail)

Fragments are a vital element in creating several of my pieces, and are becoming an important part of my studio practice as a whole. A fragment is a piece or a part of something. A part removed from the whole – perhaps given or received out of context. It is the result of a fracture, a removal, or an extraction. A fragment is also something that never reaches completion. A fragment can only exist outside of the system in which it originates; this is assuming that within a fragment's original system it is made whole, either by the system itself or completing parts within the system. In my use a fragment can be a passing glimpse, a small window to another place, a shard of something, or a hint or an allusion to something. On its own a fragment might not offer much; the hint it provides, the allusion it creates, or the reference it makes cannot adequately satisfy. A fragment will always fall short of its target. It is like a broken linguistic sign where the signifier and signified do not connect. But, when fragments are accumulated, pieced together, and arranged next to each other they start to offer a bigger picture, they develop a context and a system in which they can function, and when this accumulation happens one can start making connections between the individual fragments, piecing them together to form a new whole. A single fragment lacks the ability to fully determine itself; rather it must rely on its relation to its neighbors, the accumulation in which it is placed, and itself. For example, an image of a grid with two dots drawn on it: On its own, this image might just be a minimalist painting, but when placed between aerial photographs, the grid becomes a map and the dots mark specific locations. It is placed in a context.

Working with fragments is a reflection of Now. Accumulations of fragments represent the abundance and saturation of information, images, and text, scanning radio stations, channel surfing, and passing advertisements – all of which suggest movement. In

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his book *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger writes, "One may remember or forget these messages but briefly one takes them in, and for a moment they stimulate the imagination by way of either memory or expectation. The publicity image belongs to the moment. We see it as we turn a page, as we turn a corner, as a vehicle passes us. Or we see it on a television screen whilst waiting for the commercial break to end. Publicity images also belong to the moment in the sense that they must be continually renewed and made up-to-date. Yet they never speak of the present. Often they refer to the past and always they speak of the future" (pgs. 129 – 130). Movement is key, and there are two types of movement being described here: First, an active movement in which we are in control, our bodies in motion or controlling the pace of incoming information. And, second, a passive movement where the incoming information is acting upon us, Berger writes, "Usually it is *we* who pass the image – walking, traveling, turning a page… Yet despite this, one has the impression that publicity images are continually passing us, like express trains on their way to some distant terminus. We are static; they are dynamic…" (pg. 130). All of this information, the text and images of advertisements is made to be concise and easily absorbed. They are just a frozen piece of time set in place to see, absorb, and pass by, slowly working us over, as Marshall McLuhan suggests – massaging us, fragmenting our sense of time and focus. My work, and my use of fragments, does not directly deal with the content of advertising, but does deal with the experience of being acted upon and engaging with the bombardment of information Berger describes.

And so far this is without mentioning ourselves. We are multitasking people. We engage in multiple dialogues simultaneously. We occupy multiple spaces at once, both physical and virtual. We present multiple versions of ourselves appropriate to the time and

place. We take on many roles: artist, student, instructor, fiancé, etc. My work is a reflection of this experience; it is a mirroring, mimicking, and translation coupled with confusion and disruption. The images, symbols, and modes of production I use take fragmentation as a source, the fragmentation of information, place, identity, and consumption, whatever I am interested in pursuing. I pull these images and symbols out of context – out of their original systems – to distort, abstract, and disrupt them. Obscuring their surfaces to place them behind metaphorical screens. This reflects mediation, showing the degradation that occurs in transfer after transfer, translation after translation, and mediation after mediation, developing confusion through disruption and abstraction, and amplified by the quantity of fragments arranged in close proximity.

II. Creating Context

The imagery within my work may appear to be in contradictory styles, or at least a wide variety of styles, and in a purely visual sense this might be accurate, but in reality it is all united under a conceptual roof that allows me to work freely in a multitude of ways. I have already said that I conceive of my work as a reflection of the abundance and saturation of information we deal with on a daily basis. My work is the turning of a mirror to all the fleeting information, all the information absorbed and then forgotten, and the white noise. In doing so bits and pieces of information are pulled out of their original systems, creating fragments, in the form of images, text, and symbols, this information is then layered and disrupted. As the fragments build up and they are arranged into grids, all styles and contents are forced to work with each other, whether it is harmonious or dissonant. The grid is a forced union that flattens the multitude of styles, contents, and

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sources onto a single plane and into a single system – creating a new context in which all the fragments must function. This is done through the repetition and variation of a few source images, developing a quantity of fragments, and composing them into large groupings – typically a grid. This is where I am attempting to create a context in which abstract and non-objective images can function as representational.

By placing the photographic and the representational next to the abstract and non-objective, I am creating a space to view the abstract and non-objective as representational. This method might appear to highlight differences, rather than similarities, but by placing large quantities of fragments into a grid I am developing a context where everything can function within the realm of the representational. Remember my previous example of a drawing of a grid with two dots on it; in one sense, it is a minimalist composition, and in a second sense, it is a map locating sites. A piece such as this, or a fragment of any kind, is read according to the context in which it is situated and received. By placing what might be initially read as an abstract image, when placed in the appropriate context can be read as representational. Context is transformative. In a work such as, *Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now*, a context is created amongst the accumulation of fragments, and this context guides interpretation.

When a context is developed through the organization and accumulation of fragments, it is able to guide interpretation, creating the possibility to present the representational and non-objective as the same.   If any further differences exist between them it is a matter of perspective and scale. For example, one quarter inch of a photograph enlarged to five feet will appear as something other than representational, perhaps a geometric abstraction based on pixels, or even an abstract expressionist color field

painting. But, I am still left to wonder what is more representational than a photograph?

Maybe the image created as a result of this extreme kind of cropping and enlarging ceases

to be a photograph. It might be the case that one is left with just an abstract cluster of

pixels, but even in this kind of extreme cropping and extraction the pixels still have a

photographic referent. On the other hand, a small black and white painting of delicately

smeared and smoothly rendered brushstrokes and gradations might appear to be a section

of a photograph, but the painting lacks the referent of the photograph. Without knowledge

of referents each can appear to be the same based on surface information. As a painter,

Gerhard Richter moves between the photographic and the abstract, he states, "When we

describe a process, or make out an invoice, or photograph a tree, we create models; without

them we would know nothing of reality and would be animals. Abstract pictures are fictive

models, because they make visible a reality that we can neither see nor describe, but whose

existence we can postulate" (Elger pg. 314). Richter seems to be saying that all pictures,

realistic or abstract, represent an aspect of reality; he is suggesting that both kinds of

images are united as one in this pursuit of representation.

In contrast to a grid is a line. A line is a timeline, a narrative, where each spot on the

line is important for the order, clarity, and meaning of the narrative. A line is controlled

and controls a viewer's eye in a specific and guided way. Images placed in a grid do not

have to be particularly important. They relate or contrast to the images next to them, but

they do not hold a place in time – they do not have to be just one thing. An image in a grid

can be many things, at least four[2]. An image in a grid can tell multiple stories and

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[2] This hinges on my idea that a fragment, placed within an accumulation of fragments, is partially determined by the fragments that surround it. In this instance, I am considering a traditional rectangular image, that when placed in a grid, will have an image to each side of

communicate multiple messages. An image in a grid does not have to be specific or unique.

An image in a grid can be a token replaceable by any other image of the same token. For

example, in my installation, *Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now*, I had approximately 10

source images that were repeated many times with variation. The final images were placed

in a grid to create a homogenous mixture of the ten source images, so that each quadrant of

the grid might be equal and replaceable by any other quadrant of the grid.

     A grid is a network. It is not a narrative and it does not directly deal with time.

Rather, it is a space – such as the streets of a city – where one is able to drift and roam

freely within set parameters. This is my work; it is a grid, a network, a place, a city to

explore. I set the parameters and viewers find their way. Lev Manovich writes in *The

Language of New Media*, that, "In short, time becomes a flat image or a landscape,

something to look at or navigate through. If there is a new rhetoric or aesthetic which is

possible here, it may have less to do with the ordering of time by a writer or an orator, and

more with spatial wandering" (pgs. 86-87). Manovich wrote this sentence about the

organization of information through hypertext, random-access storage over sequential

storage. Despite the fact that Manovich is talking about technology, this thought is central

to the conception and organization of much of my work, and after all, my work is an effect

of the kind of technological influence he is describing.

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it. It might be more accurate to say that an image in a grid can be six things: it can be itself,
what it is paired with on its left, right, top, and bottom, and how it functions within the grid
as a whole.

III. The images and symbols I use/ Formal elements with baggage

Now, the wall is covered with another grid, however, this grid is irregular because the panels that compose it are made of three sizes, a small, medium, and large that are 6", 9", and 12". This grid seems to wander across the wall in a somewhat linear fashion; it is positioned to occupy a space reminiscent of landscape. For the most part, the panels contain a clean, smooth white border surrounding or capping the imagery inside, with the exception of panels where the entire surface is covered. On the panels are images of a house, bucolic landscapes, fingerprints, the security patterns from the backs of paystubs, grids, dots, plus signs, and what are either references to aerial views of urban areas or just black and white, geometric abstractions. The styles of the images seem to create a survey of modern art history moving from impressionism to pop and minimalism. Overall, the piece takes on the appearance of information, but the information it presents is scattered, confused, and displaced. One cannot focus on a single panel for too long, it is distracting. This is my piece, *Untitled*, 2013-2014, and like the piece preceding it, *Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now*, it is composed of fragments, and perhaps the fragments form a broken language or text.

Figure 3. *Untitled,* 2013 – 2014. Dimensions Variable.

Figure 4. *Untitled,* 2013 – 2014. (detail)

Aspects of this piece, *Untitled*, 2013-2014, as well as others, are often referred to as abstract or non-objective. The term abstract is accurate because abstraction is a range of representations from the slightly distorted but recognizable to the unrecognizable, although there is nothing non-objective about the abstract and graphic qualities in my work. These are the grids, dots, plus signs, and repeated lines. Every shape, mark, and pattern is derived from somewhere; it is linked to, and indicative of something – even if it cannot be adequately articulated. In many instances these elements are derived from technology: They reference pixels with grids of squares, and a printer on its last leg, test patterns, television bars, and interlacing are referenced through repeated rows of rectangles. In some instances repeated and layered plus signs create grids that reference urban and suburban mapping. The formal elements I employ come from more sources than just the technological; I also look to the iconography of maps, graphs, science, and culture.   I deconstruct, build, and rearrange systems by removing basic visual structures from their natural systems to place them in a new context, or to at least place emphasis on them by way of their basic visual structures.

It is the graphic and abstract qualities in my work and the immediately recognizable, the representational, and the photographic qualities in my work that I am attempting to unite as one. It is between these two styles that I am attempting to create a continuum. I do not want to present the representational as abstract; I want to present the abstract and non-objective as representational. Conceptually, all of these elements, the abstract and graphic qualities, and the immediately representational qualities, are derived from the same place, they come from the realm of information, organization, mapping, graphing, and plotting. A mapping, graphing, or plotting of information is inherently representational. It

presents, delivers, and communicates information in an accessible way, in many respects more efficiently than a photograph. My version – my representation – of mapping, graphing, and plotting, is a meta-representation. I do not present readable information as a map, graph, or plot; rather I present the notion of a map, graph, or plot of information. This is the way in which all of my work is representational. These are the graphs, dots, and plus signs in my work.

In a sense all images are representational. Any time a painter makes a mark that mark becomes representational of the action that created it. In another sense, the same is true of a printer. When a printer prints an image there are two representations occurring simultaneously; the first representation is whatever it is that image represents, the things happening inside the picture plane, and the second representation is of the processes and functions of the printer itself. The second representation is harder to recognize, it does not become apparent until the printer malfunctions or begins to run out of ink. When either of these happen it creates glitches or artifacts that present its processes and functions. These are the repeated lines and pixels in my work. When I talk about representational qualities in my work, I suppose I am referring to textual qualities. Qualities that can be read and point outside of themselves.

Part II. The Work:

I. Copy & Scan (Drawings on Graph Paper):

In *Copy & Scan (Drawings on Graph Paper)*, an ongoing series, I attempt to mimic the

processes of a printer or scanner – naively. When a printer produces an image it does so

one line at a time, the print head moving side to side, while the paper is pushed forward,

producing an image. When a scanner scans a document, there is a light that moves slowly,

in one direction across the document, the reflection of this light on the document is

recorded by other parts of the machine to finish the reproduction process. What I have

taken from both of these processes is the notion of linear movement to produce an image –

forfeiting the ability to make corrections or go back in any way. Each drawing has a clear

beginning and a clear ending – there is no room for intuitive decision-making. These

drawings are produced in accordance to a strict set of rules: 1) make each drawing on

graph paper 2) work from a referent (usually photographic) 3) shade one square at a time,

in vertical lines, moving from left to right – generalizing the corresponding data from the

referent into a single shade of grey or color 4) produce a pixelated, generalized version of

the original. In doing so, I am working with two representations; 1) the image within the

picture plane, and 2) the representation of a machine process, represented here by the final

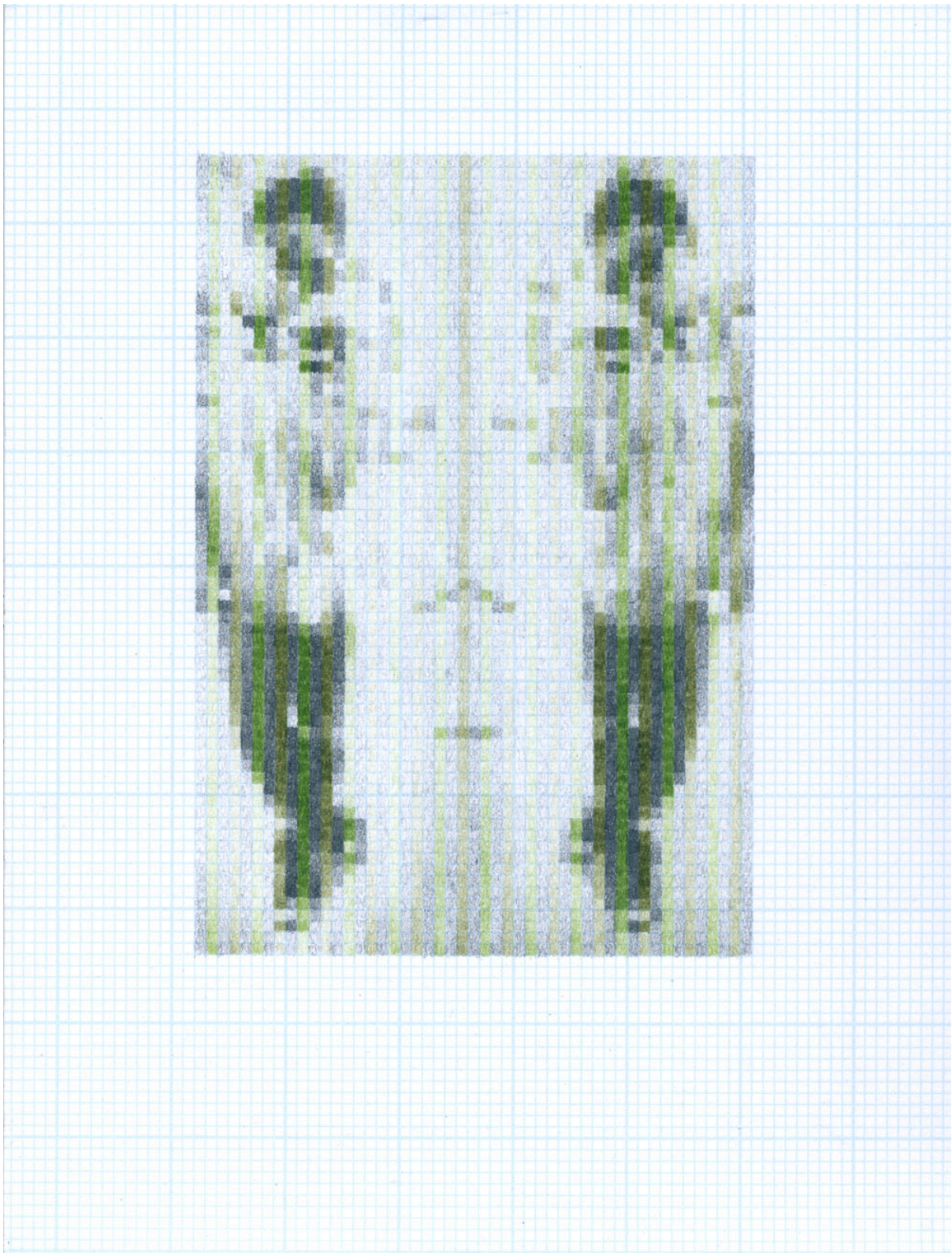pixelated appearance and the process by which each drawing is made.

Figure 5. *Narcissus,* 2012. 11 x 8.5"

This series came from the desire to eliminate decision and choice in my work. A set of rules instructed me on how to make each drawing, and just as a printer or scanner only needs information to function, I only need an image source to draw– anything that catches my eye. *Copy & Scan* succeeds and fails in fulfilling this desire. The process by which each drawing is made is successful in that it removes intuitive decision-making and dictates a clear start and finish to each drawing. The process is also the point of failure in that it requires me to re-insert myself into the work on a micro level. I have to be aware of every individual square I shade, making a decision as to what shade or color a particular square needs to be, forcing me to make between 2,400 and 3,500 decisions for every drawing. I cannot forget what is probably the most important decision in producing one of these drawings, choosing a source image.

I have been criticized in that the images selected for the *Copy & Scan* drawings are not significant, they are arbitrary, and they do not compliment the process. These might be valid criticisms, but it is also somewhat beside the point. The point is to use any image that catches my eye, without concern of what it is about, or what it represents, or how it compliments the process. As I've already said, just as a printer or scanner only needs information to function, I only need an image that catches my attention to draw. However, here is a second point of failure, or rather contradiction, in the *Copy &* Scan series; after producing many drawings, I noticed there was a certain kind of image that caught my attention, and these were images that dealt with consumerism on some level. The series includes drawings of the bull sculpture on Wall Street, oil pipelines bursting, crowds of shoppers on Black Friday, loan documents sent to me in the mail, and many other images as well. These kinds of consumer-based images seem appropriate for a process meant to

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imitate the linear processes of printers and scanners. The process speaks to automation, technology, reproduction, and consumerism, and the images speak to consumerism and excess. Technology and consumerism make a great couple because each enhances the other.

II. Artifacts:

To stretch, repeat, fragment and stitch together an image around a room, engulfing a space with next to nothing – this was the goal of *Artifacts*.

Figure 6. *Artifacts*, 2012. Dimensions Variable.

Referring to my cut paper installation, *Artifacts*, the word has come to mean more to me than the work itself. Maybe this means the concept of the work is more important than the physical manifestation. However, the word and concept "artifacts" is meaningful to me

now with my interest in fragments. There are two ways in which artifacts relate to

fragments: 1) the technological, and 2) the cultural and historical. Regarding technological

artifacts, I am attracted to the formal qualities of glitches, chance occurrences, and

unintended by-products of various processes; this is where many of the formal elements in

my work are derived. This is another iteration of the two representations that occur in a

printed image – there is what is represented within the picture plane, and there is the

representation of the physical processes of creation. In *Artifacts* the second layer of

representation is exposed through the distortion and fragmentation of the image in the
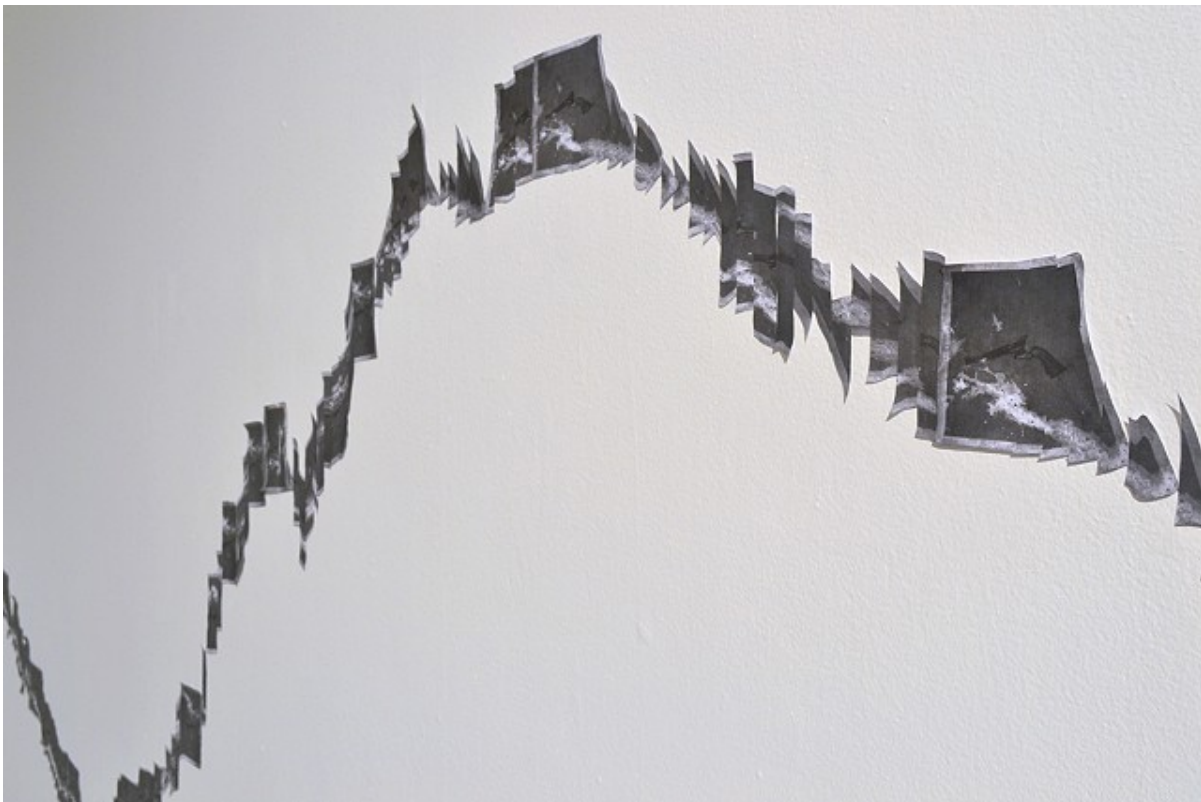
picture plane.

Figure 7. *Artifacts*, 2012. (detail)

The visual and formal qualities of technological artifacts relate to fragments and

what they do to an image. Artifacts distort and disrupt the image. They compress, confuse,

and scatter information. Artifacts rupture the surface of the image, allowing the technological basis of the image's formation to show through. It is through rupture, distortion, and disruption that artifacts also fragment images, breaking the continuity of the surface, and mixing what the image represents and what the image is made of, or how the image was made.

I am also attracted to the idea of cultural and historical artifacts from past civilizations, from our own time, and from fictional or hypothetical places. A historical artifact, or a cultural artifact from a remote or unfamiliar place is probably the most obvious example: For example, the countless shards of pottery, tools, text, religious objects, and ruins. All of these artifacts exist as fragments for two reasons: 1) time and degradation have fractured and scattered these objects, making physical fragments of them, and 2) these artifacts have traversed time, distance, and removal from their time and place of origin, leaving even the most complete, untouched, mint-condition of artifacts to exist as a fragment because it no longer exists within its original context. Nothing exists in a vacuum. We cannot receive the object as people did in the time and place of its origin.

My work takes on the dual function of being a work of art and a cultural artifact from not necessarily our own culture, but rather a similar and parallel culture – a fictional culture. I am mining the time and place that I inhabit to build an ever-growing image of a parallel universe. The fragments and artifacts I produce accumulate to form something greater than either did alone.

III. Monuments:

Trash and landfills can be viewed as another form of cultural and historical artifact. Trash becomes a portrait of the society that produced it. It reveals the habits, interests, values, and trends of a group of people over a given time. If we could view a bisection of a landfill we could view history, using accumulations of various objects to see years and decades pass by. In Don DeLillo's novel *Underworld* he writes, "He looked at all that soaring garbage and knew for the first time what his job was all about… He dealt in human behavior, people's habits and impulses, their uncontrollable needs and innocent wishes, maybe their passions, certainly their excesses and indulgences but their kindness too, their generosity, and the question was how to keep this mass metabolism from overwhelming us" (pg. 184). By reducing the scale of focus from a landfill and society to an individual and their trash can, one can view the habits, preferences, and interests of the person or people producing the trash.

For my first monument project I decided to collect all of my trash, anything that would go into the waste bin or recycling, and pack it into a tube with clear resin. This process would continue until the tube reached my height, at which point the process would be completed and the tube of trash and resin would be placed on a trophy-like base. This project is about visualizing consumption, creating a self-portrait, and the absurdity of treating a tube of waste as a monument or trophy.

Figure 8. *Monument I (A portrait over time)*, 2013. 15 x 9.5 x 72"
Figure 9. *Monument I (A portrait over time)*, 2013. (detail)

The form of the sculpture is in reference to ice-cores drilled from the artic. Scientists reading ice-cores are able to read the rings as environmental and global history, much like reading decades' worth of trash can provide a cultural history. Using the ice-core form and my personal trash accumulated over several days I am creating a self-portrait, and allowing others' a moment to consider consumer habits, and the revealing qualities of accumulated trash.

IV. Receipt Drawing:

Working in a similar vein as with my *Monument* sculptures, I produced *Receipt Drawing*. This drawing was intended to be created over a year's time, and would be produced by following a simple set of rules. The rules are: 1) save every receipt received for an entire year, 2) organize the drawing onto twelve large sheets of white paper, one for each month, 3) use carbon copy paper to transcribe each receipt into the appearance of language, placing all receipts for one month onto one piece of paper, and 4) continue until complete.

This piece came about after reading the New York Time's article, "Mapping, and Sharing, the Consumer Genome", by Natasha Singer. Singer's article focuses on Acxiom, a company based out of Little Rock, Arkansas that is devoted to collecting, organizing, and selling consumer data. Acxiom boasts to have a file on the majority of American adults, and are able to provide a rough physical description of an individual based solely on their purchase histories.

After reading these articles I was amazed. I thought it was exciting that mundane, everyday-purchases would be the most revealing and valuable when it comes to collecting data. As a result I started collecting my receipts as a form of personal data collection, and producing a drawing based on this information. However, in the drawing, the information is disrupted to create the appearance of text without the ability to be read like text. In short, it is illegible. The once valuable and revealing information is rendered useless. The information is confused, consumed and destroyed.

Figure 10. *Receipt Drawing*, 2013 – 2014, 88 x 180" (detail)

V. Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now:

Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now, deals with consumption, destruction, mediation, technology, and representation – and how all these themes interrelate and affect each other. This piece also starts to cycle back onto my work in the *Copy & Scan* drawings, in that I returned to a more traditional form of pictorial representation, rather than the abstractions I produced in *Artifacts* or *Receipt Drawing*. Consumption and destruction relate, in that to destroy something is to consume it. This means to use all the potential an object contains, leaving nothing behind, or only leaving behind a useless container or carcass. When something is consumed it is used and purged of potential for future use. Technology is a mediator, especially communication technologies that contain

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the dual function of bringing-forth and separating.   Technology as a mediator inserts itself

between people, or person and object, not as an unnecessary middleman but as a necessary

tool and means to an end. We might also consider technological mediation as a form of

representation; it is the face we talk to via Skype on a computer screen or the voice we hear

on the phone. Now, dealing with technology, using it to mediate spatial distances we

encounter visual or audible artifacts in the representations they produce, i.e. frozen or

jerky, pixelated and disrupted images, visual and aural noise. Artifacts are signs of

mediation, and whether or not the artifacts are additive or subtractive to the

representation they begin to disrupt – and at times, even if just for a moment, destroy and

consume with a new kind of representation. This is the second layer of representation

disrupting the first layer; it is the representative assertion of the technological function and

process. I must also not forget to mention that technology is popularly used to aid and fuel

consumer habits in the marketplace, as well as, is something in itself to use and consume.

Figure 11. *Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now*, 2013. (detail)

This piece also serves more simply as a collection of my interests at the time of making it. It is the tipping point in the accumulation of all my prior work. A central component – if not the central component – to this piece are the repeated portraits of Dr. Oppenheimer. The portraits come from a video of Dr. Oppenheimer recalling the Trinity Test in which he quotes the Bhagavad Gita, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of Worlds". The portraits were made using screenshots, one taken for every second of the video, to create a series with subtle variation. Oppenheimer functions as a symbol for the atomic bomb, and the bomb a symbol for ultimate destruction and total consumption.

These portraits are paired with the phrase, and title, "Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now", a variation of a quote attributed to Dr. Bainbridge. The story goes that Dr. Bainbridge remarked to Dr. Oppenheimer, "Now we're all sons-a-bitches" after witnessing

the Trinity Test. In addition, scans of plastic shopping bags, images of a girl wearing a

strange helmet - that is technological in appearance - the words "now", "here", and

"nowhere", and various abstract and formal elements, such as repeated squares and lines,

grids, and dots are used. *Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now*, pairs the acts of destruction

(symbolized by Dr. Oppenheimer and Dr. Bainbridge) and consumption (symbolized by

plastic shopping bags). Also, created within the piece, is a fragmented sense of time. Dr.

Oppenheimer and Dr. Bainbridge represent the past, and the present is represented by the

words "now", "here", and dots. All of the drawings composing this piece are placed in a

grid, and function as fragments. The piece deals with nearly 70 years of history, flattened

onto a two-dimensional grid. As viewers navigate the grid they are jumping between

various moments in time – between Now and 70 years ago.

  Now We're All Sons-A-Bitches… Now, marks the point in my practice, where

fragments move to the foreground both visually and conceptually; visually, through my use

of multiples, quantity, and varied techniques and appearances within a single work, and

conceptually by balancing a handful of ideas within a single work.

VI. Untitled, 2013 – 2014:

  While looking at *Untitled,* 2013 – 2014, a colleague of mine made the comment, "It's

like you're stalking yourself"[3]. This comment accurately describes the process by which I

created this piece, the imagery used, and the way in which the imagery is presented.

Untitled, 2013 – 2014 is composed of fragments, each fragment is a single panel. The

panels vary between three sizes, and are arranged to form a meandering, irregular grid.

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[3] Katharine Moriarty

The imagery used consists of primarily grids, dots, images of my apartment and neighborhood, my fingerprints, and the security patterns from the backs of my paystubs. These five elements are repeated, layered, and blended with various mediums to create a survey of imagery.

Figure 12. *Untitled*, 2013 – 2014. (detail)

This work is about the role of information in the development of a sense of time, place, and identity. A sense of time, reliant on art historical benchmarks, is created through the varied aesthetics employed in the images. I have images that appear to be impressionistic, while others minimal, some pop, and a few abstract expressionist. The photographic imagery in this piece is taken from Google Street View, and as I have already stated, this imagery is of my apartment and of my neighborhood. The paystubs reference employment, or maybe the lack of employment, economic status, and paper trails. A

fingerprint is a sign of an individual's identity. Grids function as maps; they reference both aerial views of urban and suburban landscapes, and dots function as sites on these maps, marking locations. When all of these elements are mixed, layered, and placed in a grid, they come to create a sense of scattered and disrupted information. It represents where I live, what I do, and who I am; however, I do not expect viewers to deduce that this is the case. I am a stand-in for anyone – any viewer – and I hope viewers are able to gather a sense of information through my images and their presentation. Based on what I have presented viewers with, I hope they can use *Untitled*, 2013 – 2014 as a starting point to think about the information they generate and the information that is available about them.

Conclusion:

In the catalog to accompany my final thesis exhibit I provided the following as a statement: *Repetition, inquiry, and a touch of skepticism are the foundation of my artistic practice. I am interested in what can be seen, what can be known, and what are the differences between the two. Whether I am working on a series or a single piece, I utilize repetitive marks and tasks, and the repetitive use of images, to explore the topics of, and topics relating to, consumption, mediation, and representation.* This statement is how I choose to summarize my work.

My work is based on inquiry because each project I pursue is research of a given topic or theme, it is the exploration of a territory – consumption, mediation, representation, etc. Rarely are my projects conceived to make a clear statement, rather my projects begin as simple questions, usually relating to a process; I wonder what will happen if I repeat *this* over and over again? What will I find in doing so? My results are not conclusive, I do not

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usually find clear statements; instead, the resulting work becomes a map of the explored

territory, a document recording the exploration, or maybe just a trail marking my path.

Through the process and the searching, what I do find are visual and conceptual results

that sustain my interest, which often lead to more "what ifs" and then to more work.

I include skepticism at the foundation of my practice for reasons regarding

representation. I am interested in the gap between what an image or object represents,

what is seen, and what can be known or deduced from this image or object. I ask; what can

one know by looking at this piece or at this series? What do the images and the symbols

represent? What thoughts do they evoke? What happens when I disrupt and obscure the

clarity of information? As nearly all of my work deals with the organization and reception

of information to some capacity, I deal with, and question, the notion that seeing is equated

with knowing.

Lev Manovich writes, "Instead of presenting a packaged political message, it gives us

data and the tools to analyze it… we get convinced not by listening / watching a prepared

message but by actively working with the data: reorganizing it, uncovering the

connections, becoming aware of correlations" (Generation Flash). Manovich is describing

the piece *theyrule.net* by Futurefarmers. This piece is an interactive website containing

lists of top corporations, the people running them, and maps displaying the connections

between the corporations and people. Even though my work is not web based, Manovich's

description of the Futurefarmers project is akin to how I develop my work. I provide the

data – the images, symbols, objects, fragments – and invite viewers to analyze it, engage it,

and discover connections for themselves, rather than me-the-artist telling you-the-

viewer/reader how to see, what to see, and what to think.

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