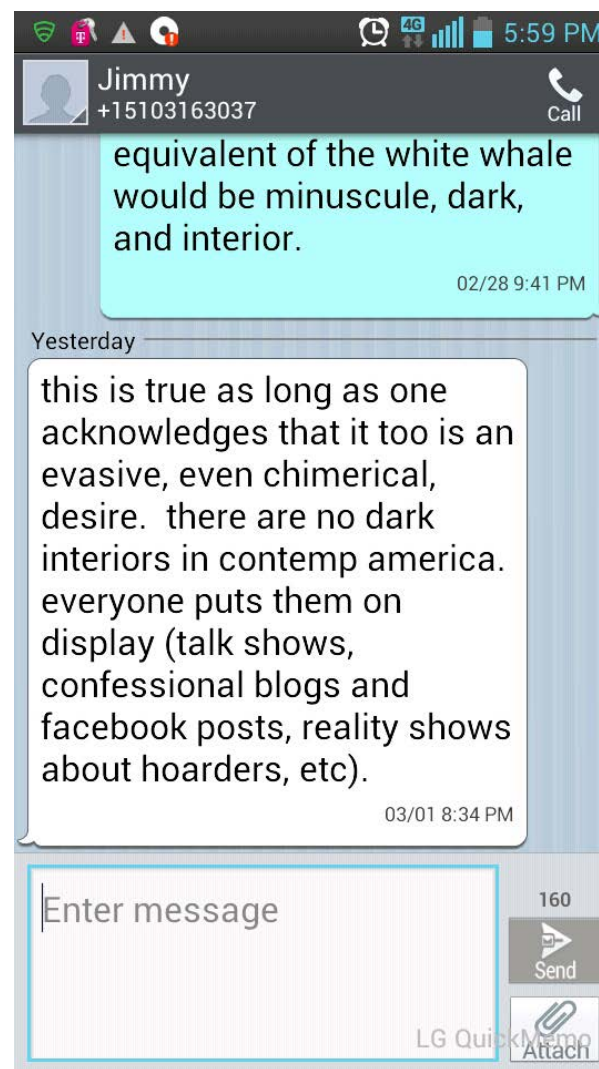
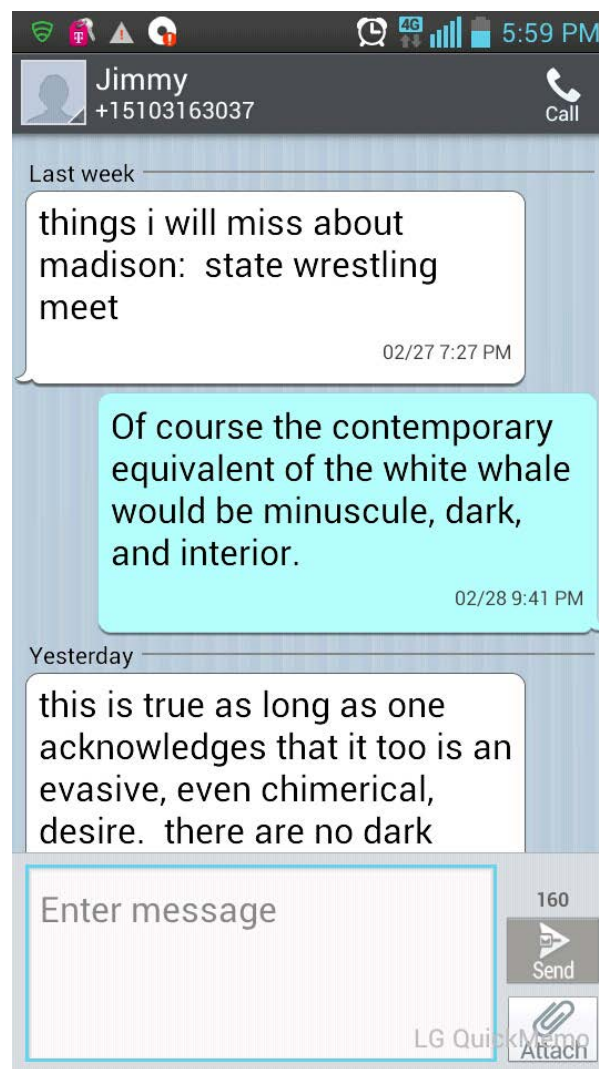


# COLLECTED RELEASES

John Neff  
1999 - 2009





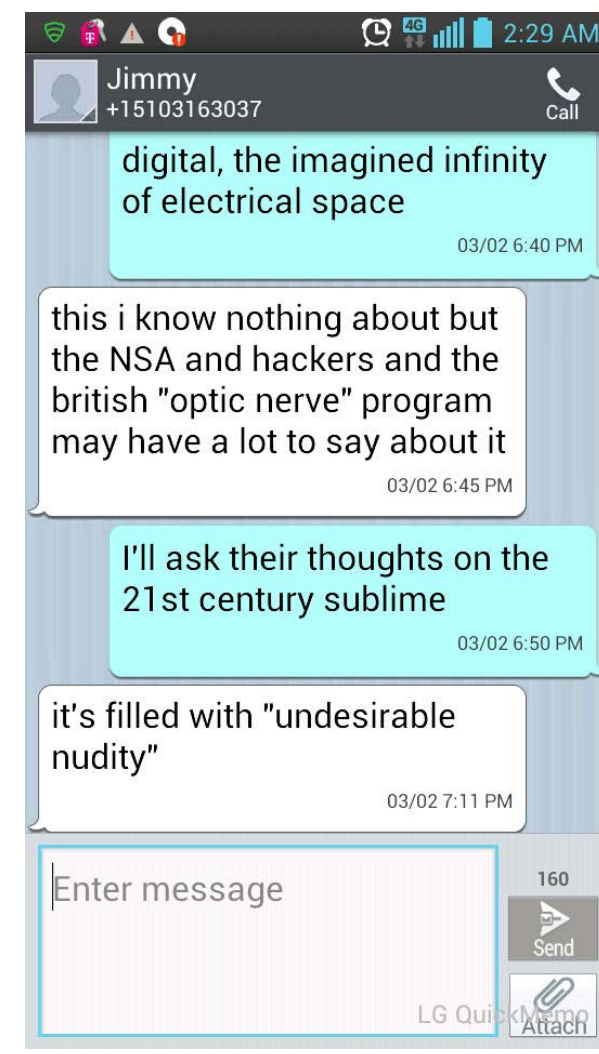
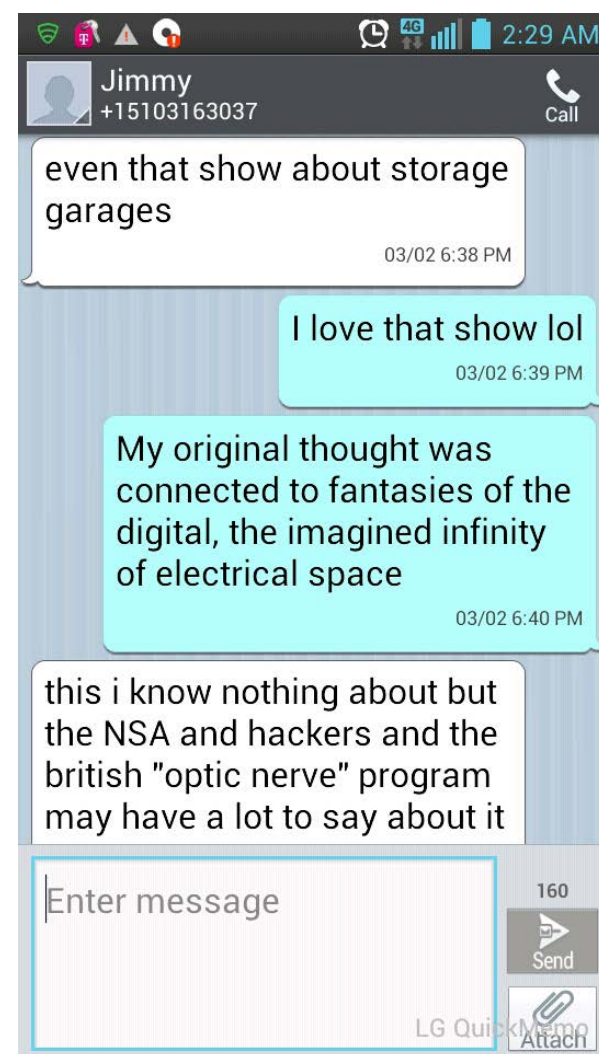
I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?

- Walt Whitman





**What does it mean?**  
John Neff of Pulaski discusses his art work with his sister, Laurel Neff. This brightly colored work titled, *Face of Confusion* started out as a bowl of fruit and ended up as a self-portrait. His work is part of the exhibit *Tomorrow's Artists* at the Neville Public Museum.



Press-Gazette photo by Sandee Gerbers

# Coming to light

■ Juried exhibit allows student artists to show off their talents

By Kendra Meinert  
Press-Gazette

There's something about John Neff's self-portrait, titled *Face of Confusion*, that even the most scrutinizing viewer will never see.

"It started out being a bowl of fruit," said Neff, an 18-year-old senior from Pulaski High School who has two of the 53 works on display in *Tomorrow's Artists*. The juried exhibit of art from Brown County high school students is on display at the Neville Public Museum through March 28.

Neff likes a splash of spontaneity in his paintings. When he first sat down with his acrylic paints, he found himself painting bananas and oranges. Layers and layers of paint later, he ended up with a boldly colored face in glasses that he considers to be something of a self-portrait.

Neff's other entry in the exhibit, *Profile*, was equally impulsive. The head and shoulders of a shadow were cut from an old box and wildly stapled on a piece of discarded plywood. Both are covered with white latex paint. The entire piece was

## Winning entries

The following artists received awards of commendation for their work in *Tomorrow's Artists*: Shawn Cherry, Robb Mommaerts, Troy Foley, Erin Grassel, Melinda Seidler, Jennifer Eagle, Jason Schultz, William Zoelle, Michael Bath, Scott Pfeil and John Neff.

done in a single night, Neff said.

"I have a tendency to use things laying around my workspace," he said. "People might think it's pretty rough or crude, but I think the process is just as important as the final work. It has just as much meaning."

Neff would like to one day pass that philosophy on to students of his own. He plans to study art history and eventually teach it at the college level.

Brown County art instructors entered 166 pieces of student work for display in *Tomorrow's Artists*. Fifty-three pieces were selected and then juried on the basis of technical expertise and original concepts by Chris Davitt, a University of Wisconsin-Green Bay faculty member.

Eleven students, including Neff, received awards of commendation. Works included in the show range from sterling silver jewelry to photographs to paintings. Visi-

tors to the exhibit will find a black and white acrylic of Simon and Garfunkel, a woodcut print of Sigmund Freud and a pencil drawing of a giant eagle swooping over Mount Rushmore.

For the students behind the works, the exhibit is a rare chance to show their talents off in a public setting.

Laura Haas, a sophomore at De Pere High School who is taking her first art class this school year, couldn't believe her pencil drawing made it into the exhibit.

"My reaction when I found out was, 'You're kidding.' I never thought I'd get in," Haas said.

She began working on *A Few of My Favorite Things* when she forgot her other assignment at home. She began sketching piano keys and the sheet music to the Bryan Adams ballad (*Everything I Do*) *I Do It For You*.

"I just couldn't stop. I was doing it during class when I was supposed to be doing homework," Haas said.

Melinda Seidler, a senior at Green Bay East High School, has displayed her work at the Port Plaza Mall and through a UWGB art camp, but she said it doesn't compare to seeing her work hanging in the Neville Public Museum.

"It's overwhelming," said Seidler, whose acrylic painting titled *The Field Wonderful* earned an award of commendation. "It's pretty neat."

Seidler has been artistic ever since she was toting Crayolas around as a child, she said. She plans to study art in college.

"I have a tendency to use things laying around my workspace. People might think it's ... rough or crude, but I think the process is just as important as the final work. It has just as much meaning."

— John Neff, artist  
Pulaski High School

## See for yourself

**What:** *Tomorrow's Artists*, a juried exhibit of 53 pieces of artwork from Brown County high school students

**When:** On display through March 28

**Where:** East Gallery of the Neville Public Museum, 210 Museum Place. Free



Untitled, 1992, Cardboard, plywood, latex paint, staples, 24" x 20"



1996 - 1997: 214 West Gilman St. #2

**November 9 - 17:**  
Scott Speh, *New Abstractions*, Gallery Bruno Bischofberger

**December 7 -14:**  
Marshall Weber and Art Paul Schlosser, *Taught / Self-Taught*, American Primitive Gallery

**February 1 - 9:**  
John Neff and Cassie Riger, *Funny Curious or Funny Ha Ha*, Barbara Gladstone Gallery

**February 15 - 23:**  
*Real Live Girls: Art and Artifacts From the Sex Industry* (Organized by Kirsten Simonsen), Torch Gallery

**March 15 - 22:**  
*Documents & Documentation*, John Weber Gallery

**April 20 - 27:**  
Dutes Miller, *Fruits*, Fanny Garver Gallery

**May 4 - 11:**  
Priyanka Basu and Elizabeth Payne, *Disenchanted*, 303

**June 15 - 28:**  
Mark Wagner, *Would I / Wood Eye*, Sidney Janis Gallery

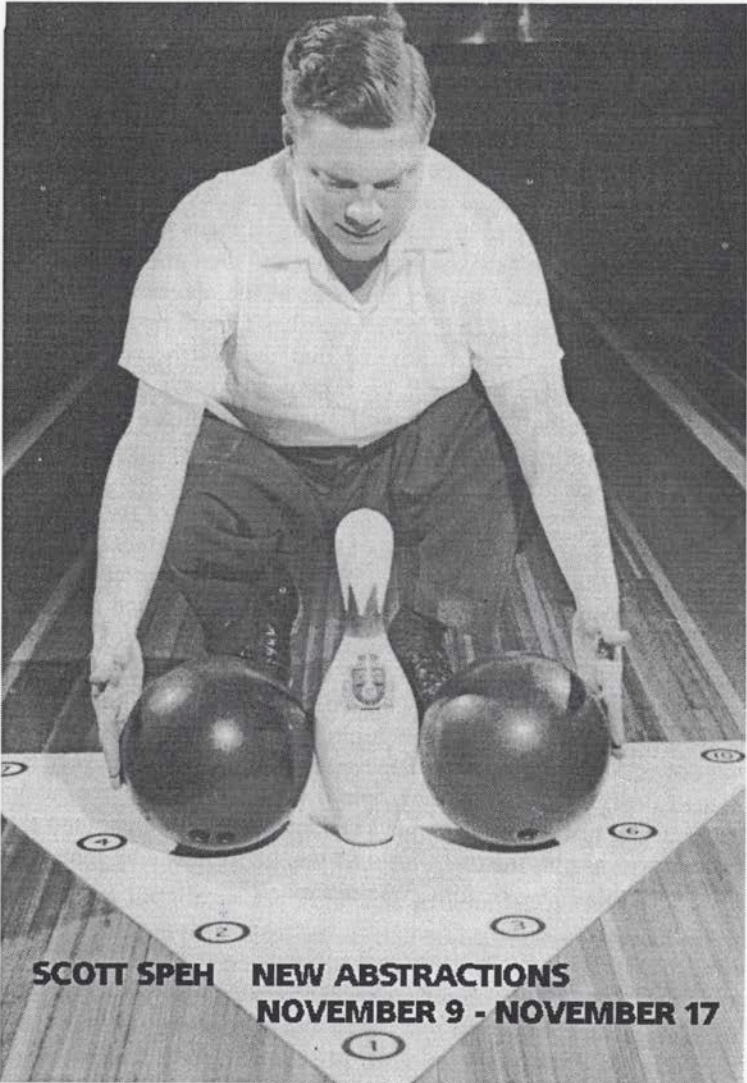
**July 20 - August 2:**  
Aaron Van Dyke, *Photographs*, Portikus

**August 17 - 31:**  
Lavel Tyler, *Word*, Ubu Gallery

**November 16 - 22:**  
Stan Shellabarger, *Collages / Untitled Performance*, Exit Art Gallery

**Gallery**  
**BRUNO BISCHOFBERGER**  
**214 WEST GILMAN #2**  
**MADISON, WI 53703**  
**(608) 255-4179**

**representing:**  
**MIQUEL BARCELO**  
**JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT**  
**MIKE BIDLO**  
**FRANCESCO CLEMENTE**  
**GEORGE CONDO**  
**ENZO CUCCHI**  
**PETER HALLEY**  
**McDERMOT & McGOUGH**  
**DAVID SALLE**  
**JULIAN SCHNABEL**  
**SCOTT SPEH**  
**ETTORE SOTTASS**  
**JEAN TINGUELY**  
**ANDY WARHOL**  
**TOD WIZON**



**SCOTT SPEH    NEW ABSTRACTIONS**  
**NOVEMBER 9 - NOVEMBER 17**

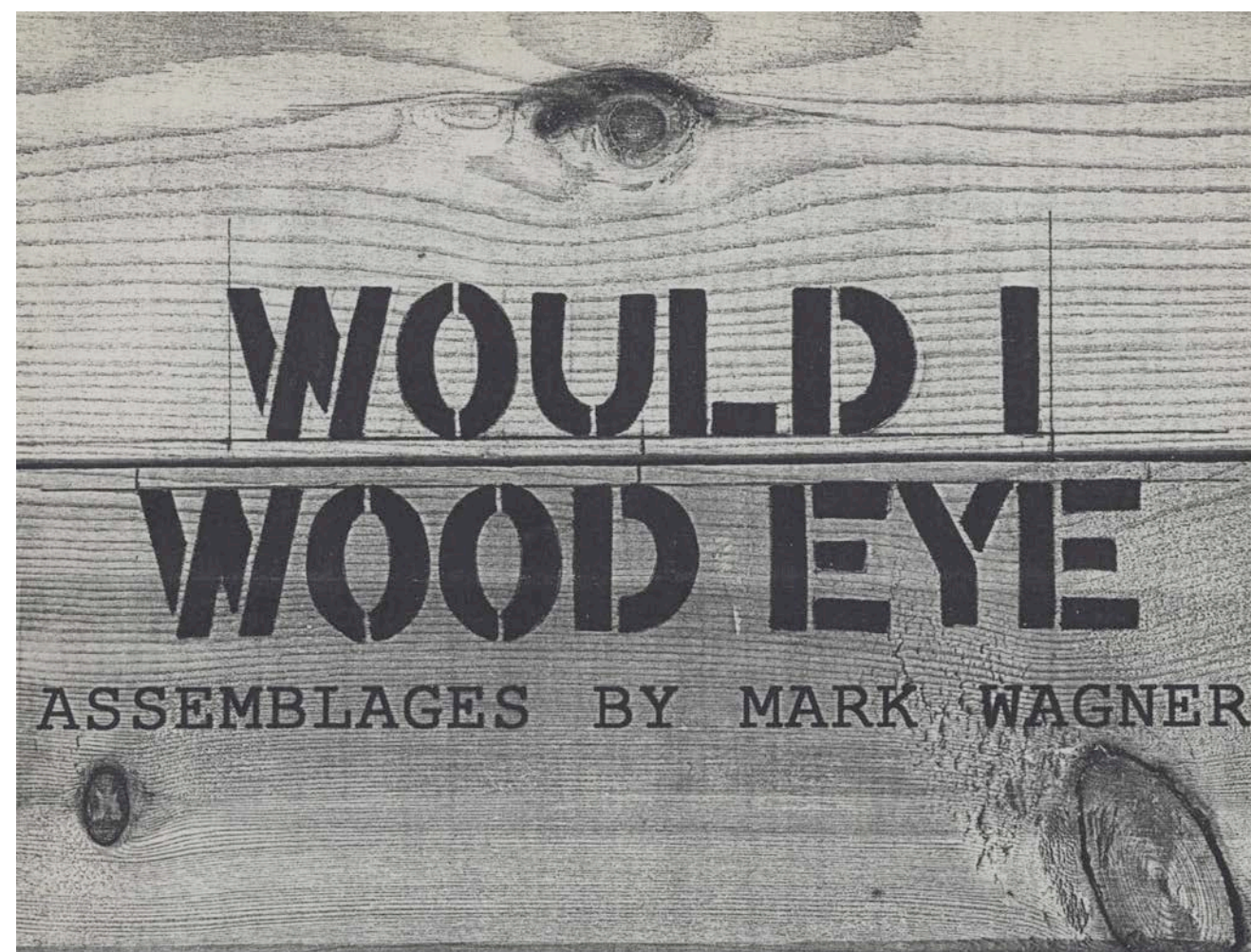
**CLOSING RECEPTION: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 4:30-6PM**  
**GALLERY HOURS:**  
**MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY: 4:30-7PM**  
**SATURDAY & SUNDAY: 1-5PM**

**MADISON**

**ZURICH**

**NEW YORK**





**WOULD I  
WOOD EYE**

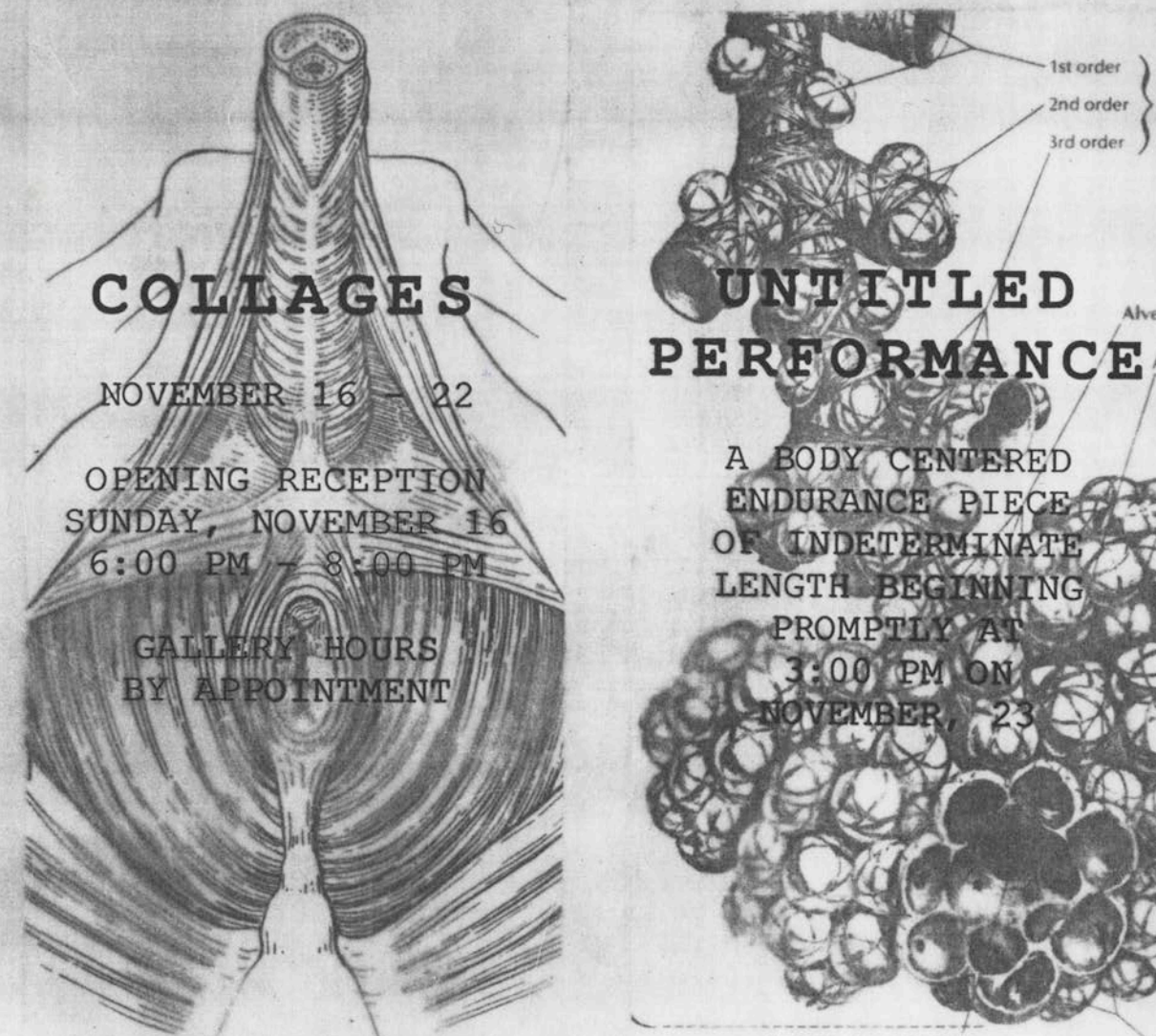
ASSEMBLAGES BY MARK WAGNER

THE  
SIDNEY JANIS GALLERY

214 WEST GILMAN #2  
MADISON, WI 53703  
(608) 255-4179  
ONE BLOCK FROM STATE ST.

JUNE 15 - JUNE 28  
MONDAY & WEDNESDAY 1 - 6  
THURSDAY & FRIDAY 1 - 5  
OPENING RECEPTION SUNDAY,  
JUNE 15, 6:30 - 8

**STAN SHELLABARGER**



**COLLAGES**

NOVEMBER 16 - 22

OPENING RECEPTION  
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

GALLERY HOURS  
BY APPOINTMENT

**UNTITLED  
PERFORMANCE**

A BODY CENTERED  
ENDURANCE PIECE  
OF INDETERMINATE  
LENGTH BEGINNING  
PROMPTLY AT  
3:00 PM ON  
NOVEMBER, 23

1st order  
2nd order  
3rd order

Alveol

Opening of alveolar duct

**EXIT ART GALLERY**

214 WEST GILMAN #2  
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53703  
608 • 255 • 4179



PRESS RELEASE

JOHN NEFF | SCOTT SPEH

VEXATIONS | PAINTINGS

NOVEMBER 15 - 22  
OPENING RECEPTION - NOVEMBER 15: 7-9PM  
THE MADISON CANDY CO.  
744 WILLIAMSON STREET  
MADISON, WISCONSIN  
GALLERY HOURS 4-8PM WEEKDAYS  
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 1-5PM  
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Madison artists John Neff and Scott Speh will be presenting new work at the Madison Candy Company from November 15 to November 22. There will be an opening reception, free and open to the public, on Saturday November 15, from 7 to 9pm.

John Neff is a founder of Homewrecker, organizer of the *Documentuh Performance Festival*, and curator, whose shows have featured such Madison artists as Aaron Van Dyke, Mark Wagner and Stan Shellenbarger in his apartment gallery, which has been featured in *The Madison Times* and *Isthmus*.

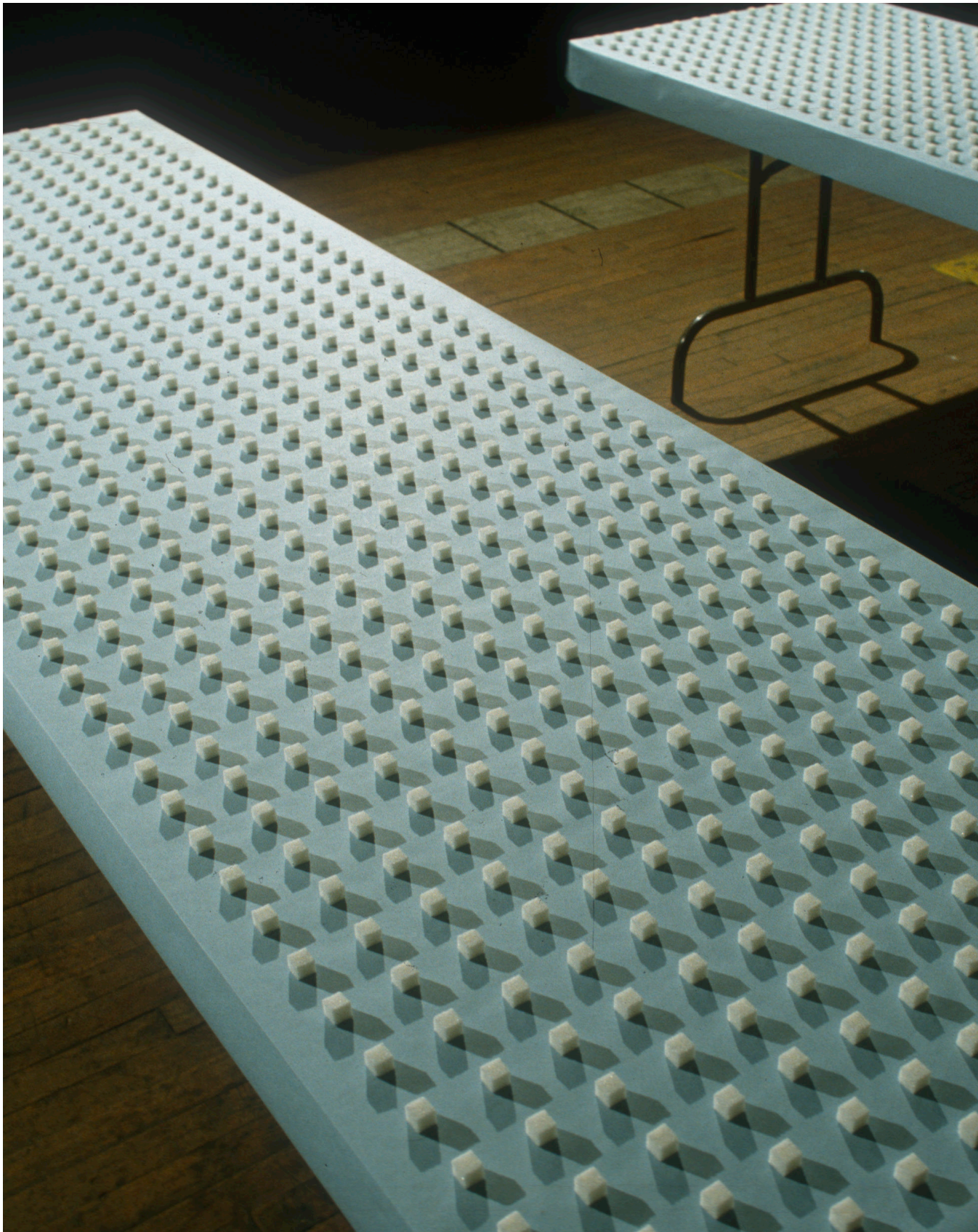
Mr. Neff will exhibit *Vexations* on the Third Floor of the former candy manufacturing plant. *Vexations*, a multi-media installation consisting of video and audio elements and thousands of sugar cubes, will investigate the uses of repetition in the arts and common culture of the modernist era.

Scott Speh, whose work has recently been seen in May at the Commonwealth Gallery, is a founding member of SLOP Brand A@t and a recent MFA recipient from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Speh is currently teaching etching at the UW. His exploits with SLOP have been written about in *Isthmus*, *the Capital Times*, *Madison Magazine* and *New Art Examiner*.

Mr. Speh will exhibit new paintings on the Second Floor. These formalist abstractions on styrofoam using enamel, screenprinting, cement, joint compound and acrylic paint, distill the influence of the pop imagery and logo-driven formalism of his previous investigations of mass media. The paintings use construction materials and construction imagery alongside sly (and not so sly) references to contemporary and modernist abstract painting.

The Madison Candy Company is a former candy manufacturing plant that will soon be renovated to house a variety of businesses. Colin Strohm showed at the Candy Co. in August, and owner John Martens had kindly donated the space for one more show before commerce comes rushing in.

For more information regarding this exhibit, feel free to contact Mr. Speh or Mr. Neff  
Scott Speh: (608) 284-1190 or speh@vms2.macc.wisc.edu  
John Neff: (608) 255-4179





1.

Erik Satie, *Vexations*, 1893

Sheet music found by Peg Brown at Mills Music Library. Performed, sequenced, and recorded by Rich Path on a Korg 01/WFD. Recording assistance provided by Robert Verberkmos. Audio tape played on my mother and stepfather’s stereo.

At the top of his score for Vexations, Satie suggests that anyone wishing to play the piece 840 times in succession should prepare in advance in the “greatest silence and grave immobility.”

2.

Photograph by Alison Brshaw; negatives scanned by Hyperion Studios; scans formatted to resemble a contact sheet by Aaron Van Dyke and Scott Speh; inkjet print made in the Art Department computer lab at the University of Wisconsin with assistance from Michael Connors; print laminated, trimmed and grommited by Hyperion Studios.

In early September of 1997, I called Alison Brshaw in Los Angeles and asked her to take some pictures of the ocean for me; these are the photographs she sent.

3.

8640 Domino Dots sugar cubes, purchased in bulk through Elegant Edibles Catering with the help of Tracy Swing. The cubes are presented on tables rented from A-Z RentAll that have been covered with light blue poster paper bought at the University Bookstore’s State Street Mall location. Joseph Connelly, Dutes Miller, Stan Shellabarger, and Mark Wagner helped me lay out the grid of sugar cubes. The tables are lit with fixtures provided by Jason Lee.

This, I imagine, is what tea time is like in Marfa, Texas.

4.

White decorative plastic chain by Peerless Chain, purchased at Blain’s Fleet Farm.

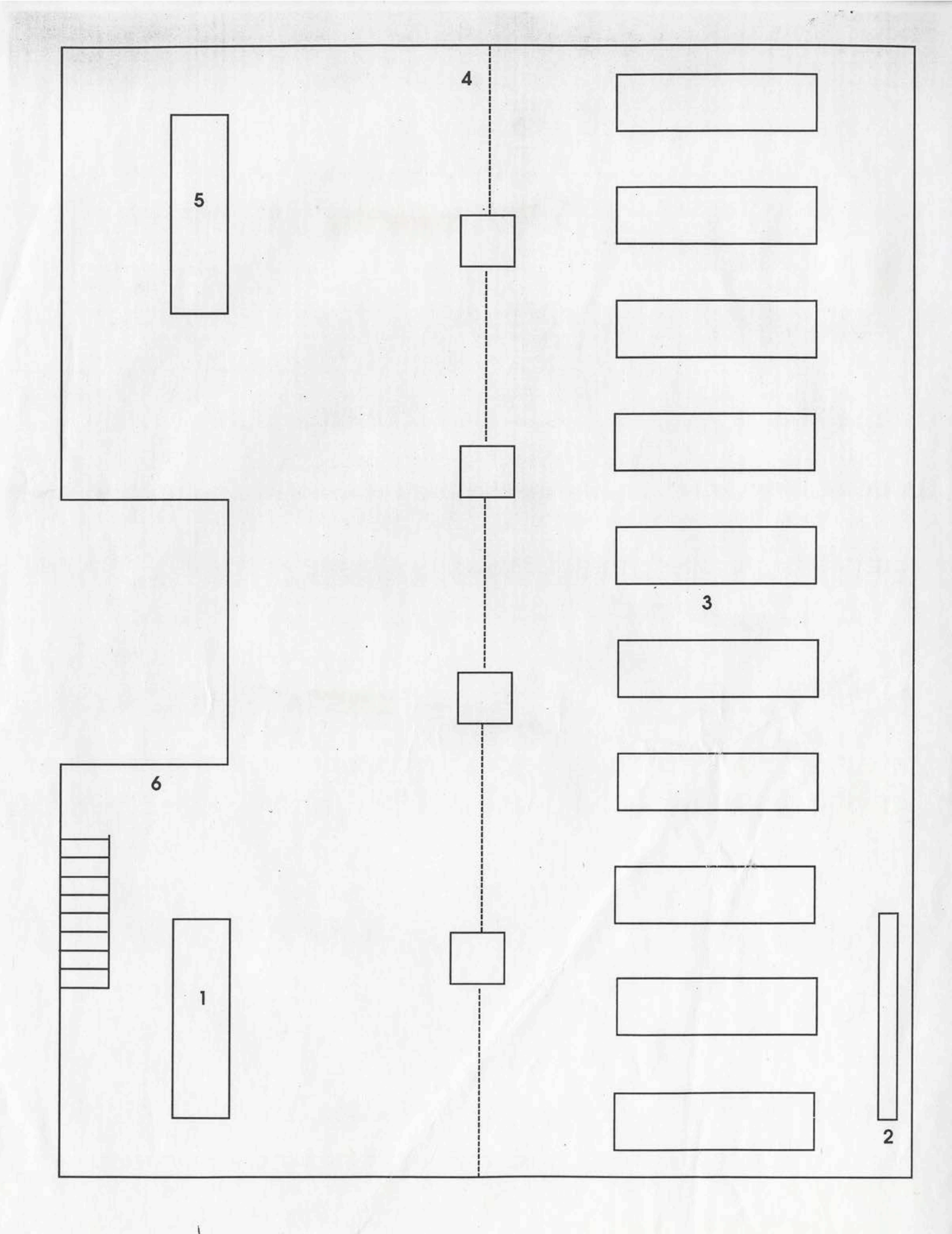
Elizabeth Payne drove me to Fleet Farm and helped select the chain. I was glad that she knew exactly what I meant when I said that it had to create a “field trip” situation.

5.

Half-inch color videotape, endless loop, shot by Cassie Riger and edited by me at the Instructional Materials Center at the University of Wisconsin. I stood in front of the camera and asked Cassie to crop tight and make the shot as pedestrian as possible – no drama. She did just that.

6.

This text is a simple footnote, an attempt to sketch the outlines of a more consuming, expansive project. It is also a symptom of my own circularity; clumsy skipping on my mental LP. How much of my own and others’ time have I spent applying the logic of the assembly line to a dream of freedom? I imagine Satie, or Mondrian, sitting at the sea, watching waves hit the shore while factories rumble behind them.









Western Exhibitions Presents:

# Prints From FRESH HOT PRESS

February 20 - March 28, 2009

On February 20, 2009 Western Exhibitions will open a group show of new prints from Madison, Wisconsin print-making shop Fresh Hot Press. A public reception will take place from 5 to 8 p.m. The exhibition will run until March 28, 2009.

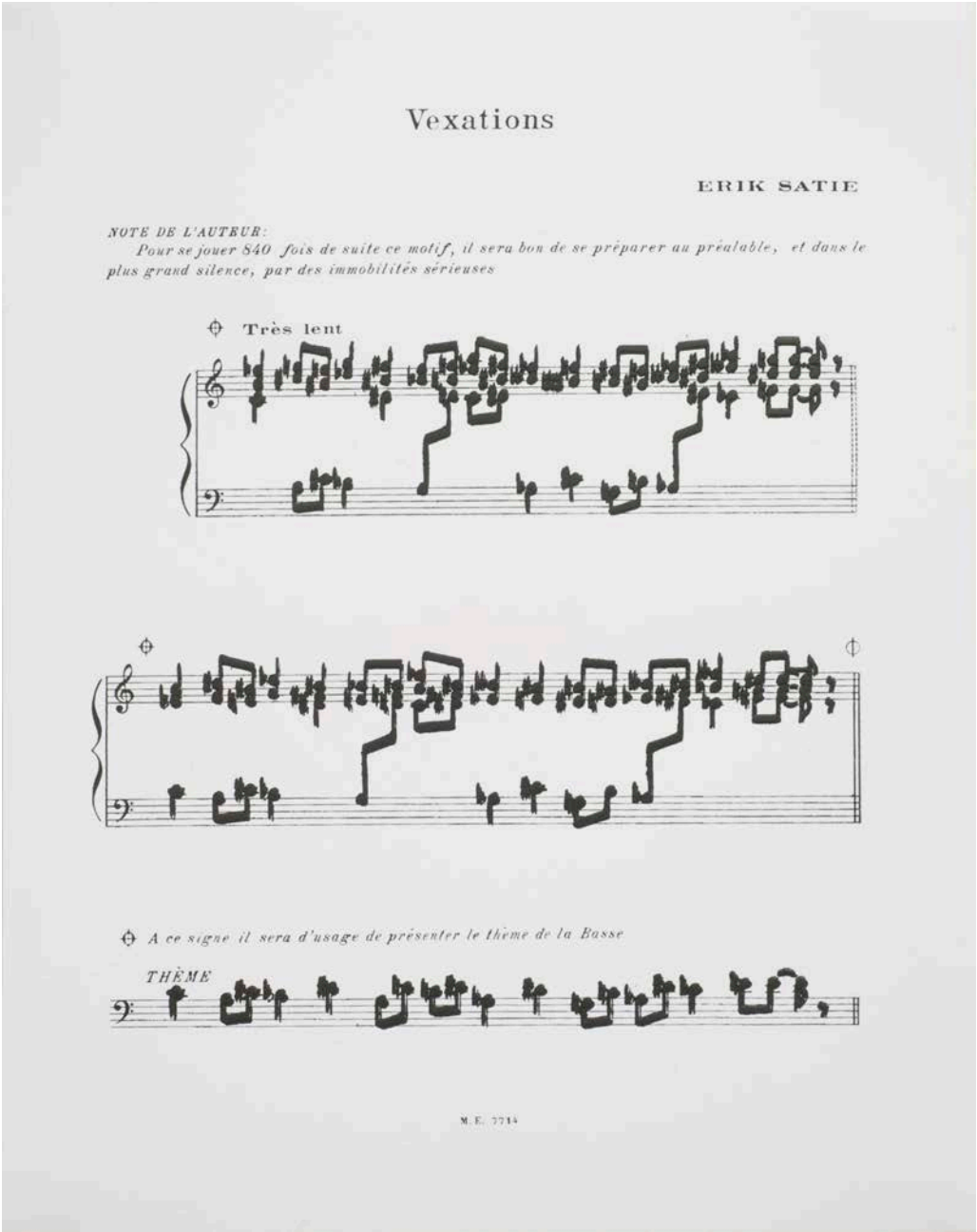
Western Exhibitions presents new prints produced by gallery artists Adriane Herman, Miller & Shellabarger, and John Neff at printmaking studio Fresh Hot Press in Madison, Wisconsin. Fresh Hot Press publishes small editions and unique prints in collaboration with visiting artists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Art Department. During the fall semester of 2008, Fresh Hot Press invited these three alumni of the UW Art Department to print editions in conjunction with Western Exhibition’s show at The Project Lodge in Madison. Herman, Miller & Shellabarger, and Neff each brought unique conceptual approaches to printmaking, but interestingly, all three produced work with a distinct concern for subtleties in the print’s surface. Each piece encourages an intimate experience of its topography and an appreciation of the inimitable qualities of a hand-pulled print.

**Adriane Herman**’s print, *Necco Census No. 1: Scratch-Off, Scratch ‘N Sniff Alignment*, a silkscreen with hand cutting and perforation, is literally a scratch ‘n sniff piece printed from a solution that matched the fragrances of Necco wafer’s eight flavors mixed in same proportion as they appeared in the pack. This print was featured in the exhibition “New Prints 2008/Autumn” at the International Print Center New York. She also made the prints “Checklist” and “Checklist Deluxe” at Fresh Hot Press, re-producing a list she found at the Maine College of Art made by a beginning art student, a list of all the things one needs to include in order to make good art. Herman figured if she made a print from it, it would automatically be good art since it inherently contains all the items on the list.

**Miller & Shellabarger** have embossed a silhouette of themselves with their beards tied together to make their striking, black-on-black untitled print. This piece is a continuation of their Conjoined Silhouette series, which typically take the form of black cut paper silhouettes mounted on white paper. This body of work was mostly recently seen in a solo presentation by Western Exhibitions at the NADA Art Fair in Miami this December.

**John Neff**’s screenprint *Vexations*, based on the score of Erik Satie’s infamous 20-plus hour piano composition of the same name, holds 841 layers of ink on the paper’s surface. As conceived by Satie, *Vexations* is a short chordal passage and a bass line which is repeated twice, itself meant to be repeated 840 times - thus Neff’s hundreds of ink layers. Western Exhibitions will also show this print as part of its solo presentation of Neff’s work at The Armory Show in New York City in March.

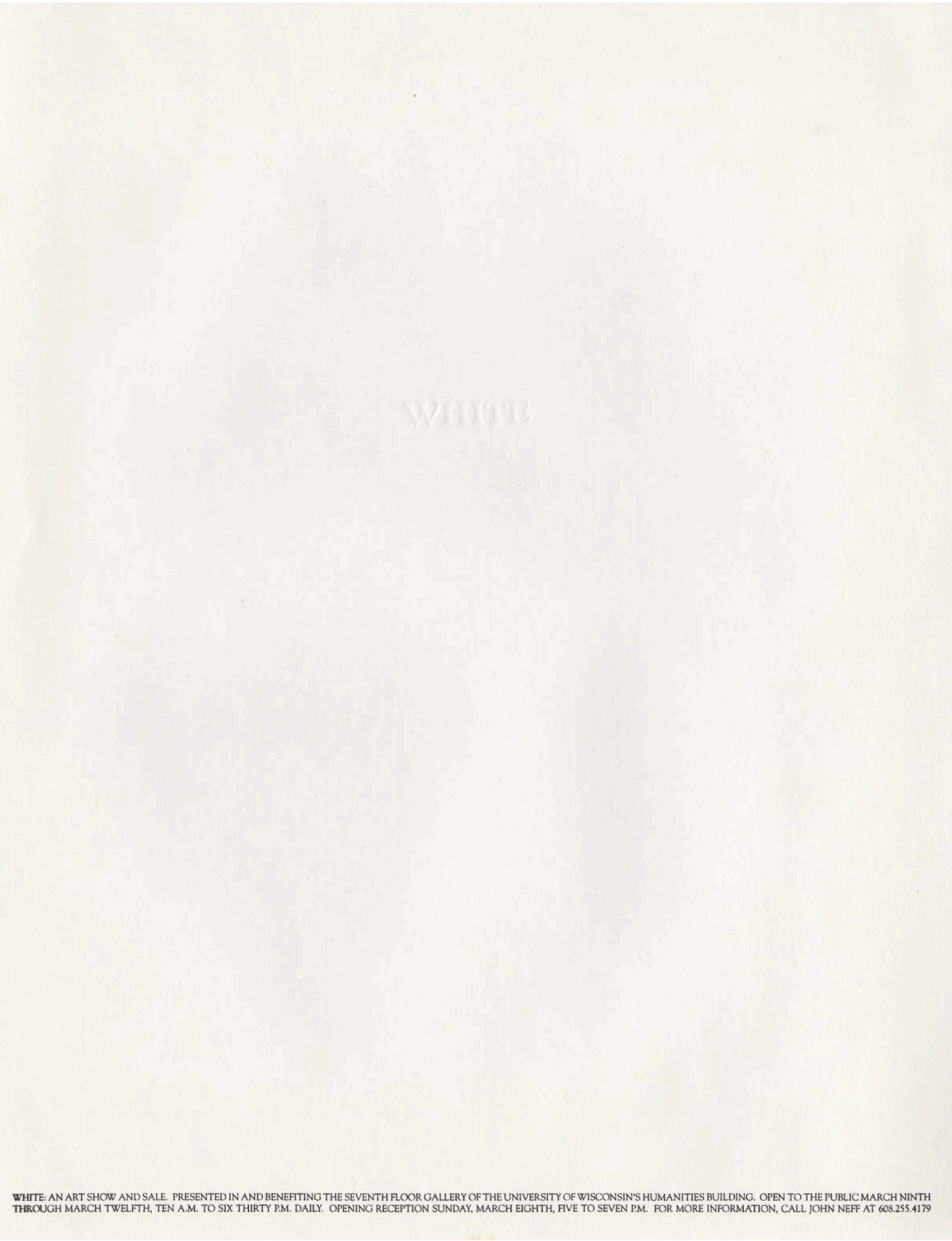
Fresh Hot Press is the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s student-run print club dedicated to promoting student, faculty, and community involvement in all forms of print media. In addition to organizing exhibitions of student work, they regularly host and print editions with regional and national artists. They not only aim to maintain UW’s involvement in the national printmaking community, but to share resources and generate interest in print media at a local level.



*Vexations*, 1997/2008, 840 layers of screenprint ink on screenprinted score  
13” by 17”, edition of 14



1998: White



Slide 8:

*White*, 1998

*White* was presented at the University of Wisconsin - Madison’s Art Department Gallery. The gallery and the rest of the department’s facilities have long been plagued by problems with ventilation and air quality. The Humanities Building, which houses the department, is seen by many on campus as representative of the flaws of UW’s institutional architecture.

For *White*, I solicited contributions of white artwork from art students and faculty. The work in the show was offered for sale, and proceeds from sales were donated to the department. The donated monies were to be put towards a planned reconditioning of the gallery.

One half of the space was painted a dark gray. A white shelf, holding a bid book and three pairs of binoculars, hung on the gray wall. Above the shelf hung three framed documents: a quotation from Peter Watson’s history of art sales *From Manet to Manhattan* and two pages with a numbered list of the works in the show and their prices. The other half of the gallery was painted bright white. It held the works offered for sale, and was rendered inaccessible by a cord pulled across the space. On the wall beside each piece was a small black number. The floor was dusted with powdered plaster.

Watson’s quotation, which dealt with art sales in 19th century France, read, in part: “Certain dealers objected to the public’s being allowed into auctions and spilled powder on the salesroom floors, which inflamed throats so much that people coughed up blood.”



# 1998: Two Comparisons

## 2 PRODUCT COMPARISONS FOR LARC:

- 1) INTERIOR LATEX FLAT FINISH WALL PAINTS (WHITE)
- 2). GLASS CLEANERS (AEROSOL AND NON-AEROSOL)

The 30 3'10" x 10' burlap covered plywood panels comprising the gallery's north and west walls have been divided into ten groupings of three panels. A different brand of white interior latex flat finish wall paint has been applied to each grouping of three panels. Beginning in the northwest corner of the space and continuing left towards its southwest corner, the brands applied are:

- Distinctions, Pittsburgh Paints, \$22.98 gal.
- Dutch Boy Dirt Fighter, Dutch Boy Paints, \$9.65 gal.
- Easy Living, Sears & Roebuck Co., \$10.54 gal.
- Ed Dwigans Private Stock, United Coatings, \$9.98 gal.
- F & F Home Style, manufactured for Farm & Fleet, \$8.99 gal.
- Glidden Spread Satin, Glidden Paints, \$9.38 gal.
- Lucite, PPG Architectural Finishes, \$10.89 gal.
- Magicolor, Magicolor Paint, Inc., \$4.96 gal.
- Tru-Test EZ Kare, Tru-Test Manufacturing Co., \$14.99 gal.
- Tru-Test Value Interior, Tru-Test Manufacturing Co., \$8.99 gal.

The 22 3'9" x 7'5" x 1/2" glass panels comprising the gallery's south and west walls have been divided into two groupings of three panels (one consisting of the glass wall's first three panels, the other of its last three panels) and eight groupings of two panels. Beginning in the southeast corner of the space and continuing left towards its northwest corner, the brands applied are:

- Bon Ami, Faultless Starch, 20 fl. oz., \$2.09
- Cinch, Proctor & Gamble, 32 fl. oz., \$2.57
- Formula 409 Glass and Surface, Clorox, 32 fl. oz., \$2.39
- Glass Plus, Dow, 32 fl. oz., \$1.99
- Roundys Glass Cleaner with Ammonia, 22 fl. oz., \$1.29
- Spring Fresh, Sunshine Co., 17 fl. oz., \$.99
- Sparkle, A.J. Funk & Co., 32 fl. oz., \$1.19
- The Works Glass and Multi-Surface Cleanser, Lime-o-Sol Co., 32 fl. oz., \$1.79
- Windex Original, S.C. Johnson & Son, 22 fl. oz., \$2.69
- Windex No Drip, S.C. Johnson & Son, 22 fl. oz., \$1.74



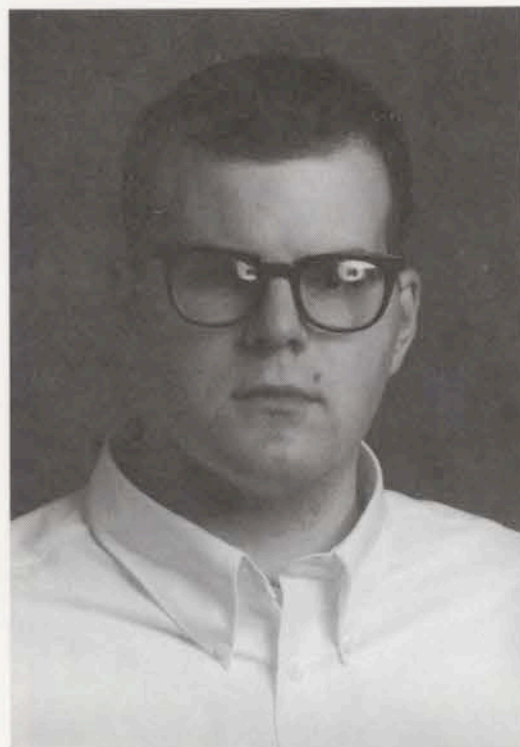


## 1998 - 1999: Sears Pictures





## JOHN NEFF



JOHN  
NEFF

"Edwards's journals frequently explored and tested a meditation he seldom allowed to reach print; if all the world were annihilated, he wrote...and a new world were freshly created, though it were to exist in every particular in the same manner as this world, it would not be the same. Therefore, because there is continuity, which is time, 'it is certain with me that the world exists anew every moment; that the existence of things every moment ceases and is every moment renewed.' The abiding assurance is that 'we every moment see the same proof of a God as we should have seen if we had seen Him create the world at first.'"

— Perry Miller, "Jonathan Edwards"  
from *Art and Objecthood*  
by Michael Fried

## CURATORIAL PROJECTS

*Cold Conceptualism* (with Derek Fansler)  
Suitable Gallery  
Chicago, Illinois  
2000

*White*  
Humanities Gallery  
Madison, Wisconsin  
1998

## RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

*Stray Show*  
SoGo  
Chicago, Illinois  
2001

*Sarah Conaway, Cindy Loehr,  
John Neff, Anne Olsen*  
Gallery 400  
Chicago, Illinois  
2001

*Life, After The Squirrel*  
Location One  
New York, New York  
2000

## EDUCATION

Bachelor of Fine Arts  
University of Wisconsin, Madison  
1998

*Sears Pictures*  
Dimensions variable  
Framed color photographs  
1998-2000

For two years, Neff went to a Sears department store on the first Sunday of every month. There, he purchased and put on a new white shirt in the Men's Department. He then went to the Sears Portrait Studio and had his portrait made.

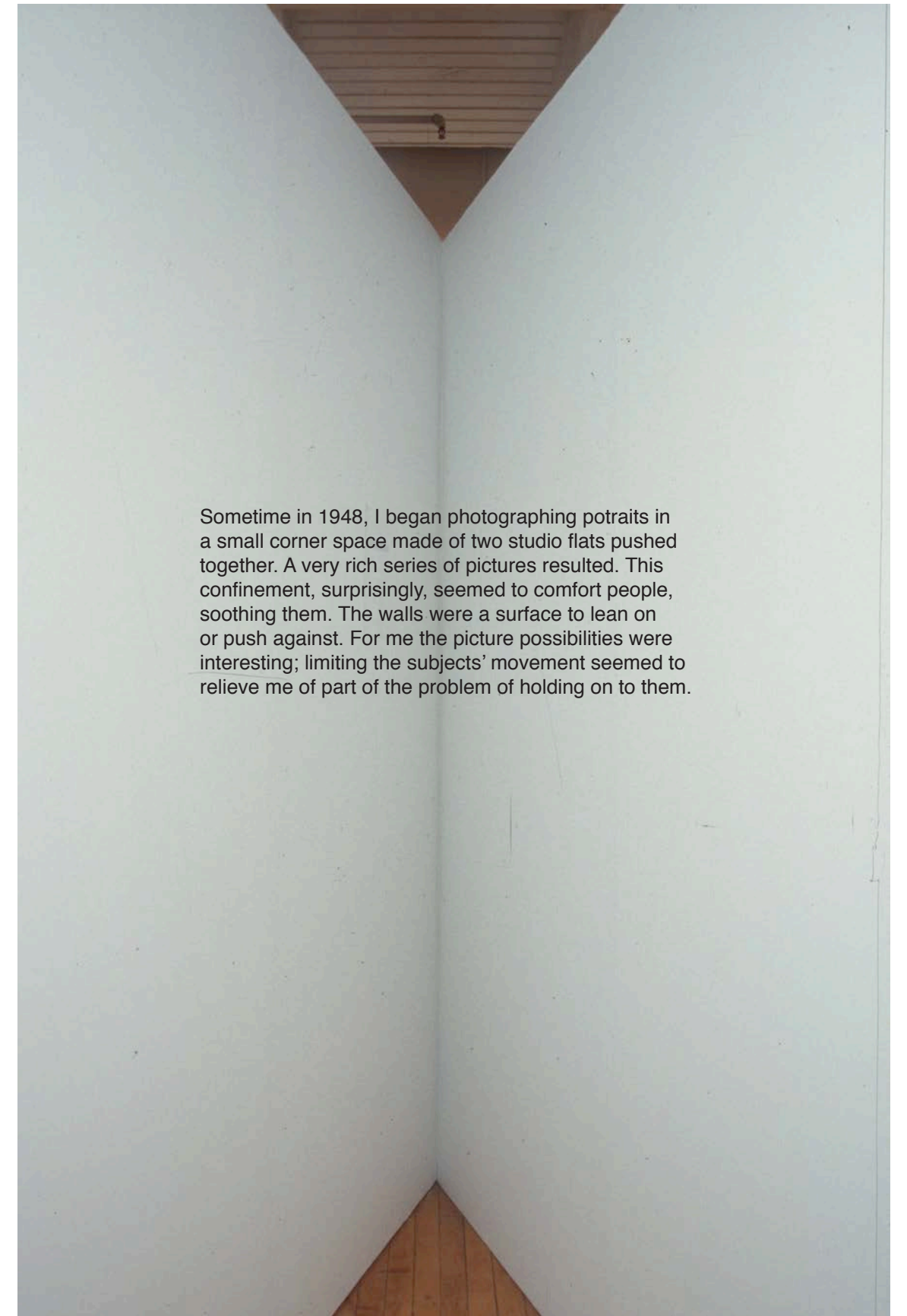




## 1999: Empty Space



*Irving Penn*, Drywall, wood, laser print on 8 1/2" by 11" bond paper (text printed in ten-point Helvetica type, positioned near interior corner)



Sometime in 1948, I began photographing portraits in a small corner space made of two studio flats pushed together. A very rich series of pictures resulted. This confinement, surprisingly, seemed to comfort people, soothing them. The walls were a surface to lean on or push against. For me the picture possibilities were interesting; limiting the subjects' movement seemed to relieve me of part of the problem of holding on to them.

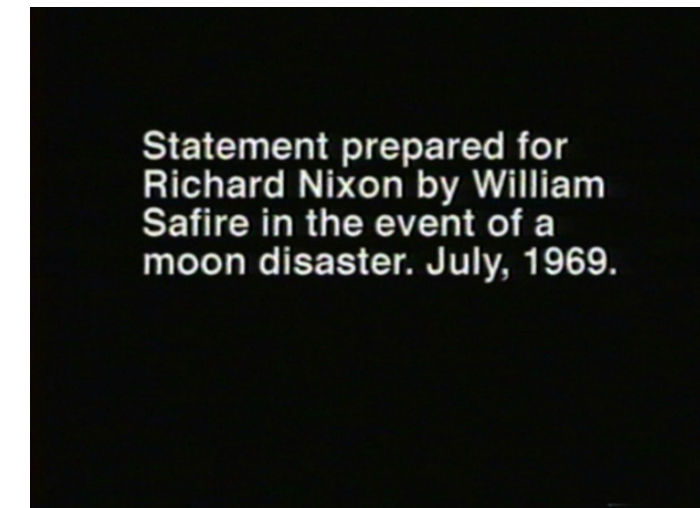




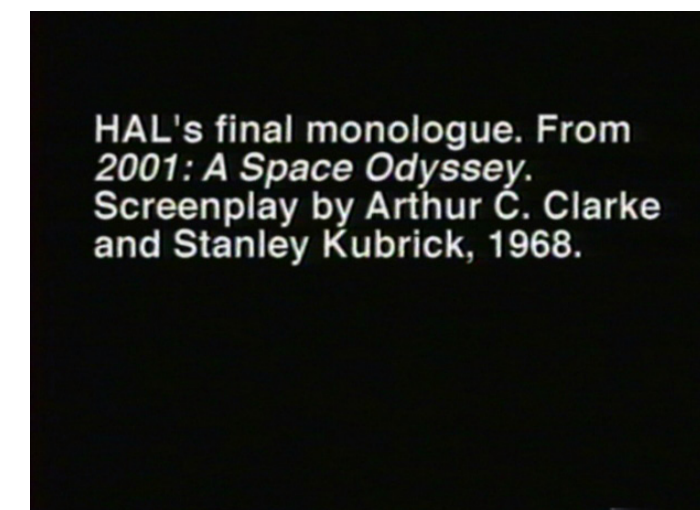
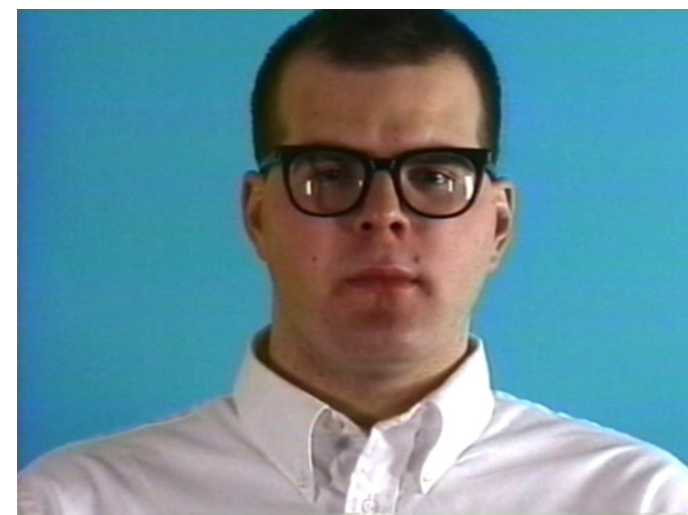




*Performing 4'33"* by John Cage, Framed silver gelatin print,  
available light, wall



Statement prepared for  
Richard Nixon by William  
Safire in the event of a  
moon disaster. July, 1969.



HAL's final monologue. From  
*2001: A Space Odyssey*.  
Screenplay by Arthur C. Clarke  
and Stanley Kubrick, 1968.

*Untitled (Nixon / HAL)*, Single channel video, TRT 5'45"



6/28/06 - 7/6/06

Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:

Scott Speh of Western Exhibitions in Chicago forwarded to me your recent email about a 1999 work of mine. I’m curious about your project, wonder which piece you have questions about. I’m happy to help out in any way possible.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,  
John Neff

Dear Mr. John Neff,

thank you very much for your email. I guess my request was a little bit misunderstanding. I am sorry. I write my thesis about Irving Penn’s cornerportraits and my last capter is about corners in contemporary art. I found your work “Irving Penn” from the set of Empty Space from 1999 at the Illinois Arts Council homepage, but couldn’t find any further information about it.

Maybe you could be so kind and tell me a bit more about it? I would love to know more about the central formal concept of empty spaces. It is right that the quote from Penn is on the left inside of the corner? If yes, why? Why did you pick this motiv of Penn? How did spectators react to it? Did you posed yourself inside the corner? Would you call it a corner? Does your work have the exact same angle as Penn’s corner? Did you want people to enter? but then they have to turn, right? What is the difference between sculpture and set for you, if there is one? Do you have more pictures of the work?

I think it is a wonderful artwork and would love to write about it in this capter. I would be really thankful for any information.

Kindest regards,  
Anna \_\_\_\_\_

Anna:

Regarding the piece *Irving Penn* -- and the “sets” generally -- I think that the following text is a good initial description of my work in the early 2000s:

*After completing the work now titled Empty Space, I began to use the term “set” rather than “installation” to describe large-scale environmental artworks composed from multiple and discrete elements. While installation may accurately describe my earlier works, I feel that it implies a relationship to site that Empty Space, Figure / Ground and Repetitions do not have. The later works were not specifically tailored to one site, and can be shown in any location as long as the prescribed placement of the objects is maintained.*

*In part, I developed the set concept in response to the practical demands of a graduate art program that demanded delivery of a least two new, large-scale works per semester. Working at that pace, I was unable to negotiate all of the logistical complexities involved in the large-scale, site-specific installations that occupied me during the later 1990s.*

*Ultimately, however, it was my growing dissatisfaction with what I had come to see as the easy, predictable effects offered by site-specific installation that was the most important factor in my decision to adopt the vocabulary and approach of the set. The sets were the first steps in an ongoing project: attempting to make artworks that retain the referential complexity and keen awareness of conditions of production / distribution which characterize the best post-modern art while also aspiring to a formal autonomy, however contingent. I approached my project with tongue partly in cheek, concentrating the first sets on the “formal properties” of artworks as they are taught in contemporary art schools (Empty Space = negative space, etcetera).*

This concentration on “first principles” allowed me to gather and associate diverse references within each set. These references, in concert with each piece’s formal arrangement, articulated secondary and tertiary themes. In *Empty Space*, for example, each component of the piece was a portrait in uncertain time. Irving Penn is a representation (not an exact copy, and made after intense examination of Penn’s corner portraits but without any detailed research into the construction of his backdrop – e.g. size, angle of corner, etcetera) of a Penn portrait setting, which is made to stand in for the photographer and his literal and figurative embrace of his subjects. The corner also alludes to the corridors and corners of Post-Minimalism, which unlike Penn’s photographs insist on an experiential “now” rather than a photographic past. *Performing 4’33” by John Cage* enacts a nearly opposite movement,

freezing the aleatory space-time of Cage’s piece in a photograph which captures not only a split-second of a specific performance but also the look of a whole era in art documentation. *Untitled (Nixon / HAL)*, a historical document and a fragment of film script recited by a deadpan actor, created a triple confusion between historical eras, speakers and authors.

Below are the specifications for each component of *Empty Space* and attached to this email you’ll find a series of images of the set. If the images don’t come through, or if you have any other questions, please let me know. I have a comprehensive documentary website coming online at the end of the summer, but would be happy to email you further information as needed.

Sincerely,  
John Neff

It is right that the quote from Penn is on the left inside of the corner? If yes, why? Yes. The quotation is an “interior caption” for the piece and “bait” inviting observers to enter the construction. Why did you pick this motif of Penns? I’ve always been interested in Penn’s corner portraits and my interest in the images was particularly strong during 1999. I’m not sure how – or even if – artists pick the images that they work with. How did spectators react to it? Most peeked tentatively into the corner and then entered, turned, looked briefly out and then exited as they entered. Did you posed yourself inside the corner? No. Would you call it a corner? Sure. Does your work have the exact same angle as Penn’s corner? I don’t know – I never did any research into the construction of Penn’s flats. Did you want people to enter? Yes, but I think that the piece works with or without the presence of an observer. Indifference to the observer is an important part of the work.

Dear John Neff,

thank you very much for your email, answering my questions and the information and pictures about your works. By now I see your work much clearer than before. I think the aspect of the indifference to the observer is really intessting in it. It makes it even more complex and abstract to me. It is the perfect ending for my thesis, like all what I wrote all the pages before to be transformed into a form, a piece of art. I also love that your work is that white. It reminds me of the

white cube itself, for human bodies, because Penns corner isn’t that clean at all.

I also like the play with time-moments in relation to Penn and Cage works, even if it is not what my thesis is about.

Maybe you could explain to me what exactly do you mean by “gather and associate diverse references” in the case of the Penn piece? Probable some examples which you found during working on that piece? And one more question: What do you think is that interesting in Penn’s corner-prortaits and why have you been particularly interested that strong in these images in 1999? If there is a reason or you know why. Of course, there are so many things we don’t know and never will, which is also good, I think.

Thank you very much again. I am looking forward to take a look at your homepage, when its up and maybe to see you in an exhibtion when I am in Chicago again one day. It’s a great city.

Best wishes and kindest regrads,  
Anna \_\_\_\_\_

Anna –

I’m glad that you like the piece. I suppose I wasn’t clear on the “gather[ing] and associat[ing] diverse references” point. i meant that each set groups together subjects and references not usually addressed together under a single heading ( e.g Cage, Nixon, and Penn are seldom represented together).

As for my interest in Penn’s work, my answer to your first question was a bit of a cop-out. I can offer three further motives behind my interest in the Penn photos around ‘99. 1. I have had a copy of Penn’s book *Passages* since I was a young boy. My beloved grandmother bought the book for me. 2. Around 1999, I was becoming interested in and studying “art” photography (as opposed to photos by artists -- the Conceptualists, etc). 3. Thinking about sets led me to consider spaces that also acted as images, as pictures. Hope that helps.

Again, thanks for your interest. Please let me know how your thesis turns out.

Sincerely,  
John







WPWR-TV  
2151 N. ELSTON AVENUE  
CHICAGO, IL 60614-3999

FED ID: 36-2728759

\*JOHN NEFF  
1314 N CMAREMONT # 2  
CHICAGO, IL 60622



REPRESENTATIVE	SALESPERSON
	SANDSTROM, MARK
ADVERTISER	PRODUCT
*JOHN NEFF	JOHN NEFF

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2000: Figure / Ground



*Figure / Ground* is composed of six elements installed on opposing walls.  
Above: *Figure / Ground (White)* Right: view of *Figure / Ground (Blue)* from gallery entrance





**FIGURE / GROUND (WHITE)**

*Avedon with Stand – In*

Black and white enlargement with photogram mounted on gator-foam

A photograph was taken in the manner of Richard Avedon (a human torso against a seamless white backdrop). The negative was enlarged to life-size. As the photographic paper was exposed, a human figure blocked out the photographed figure, returning the figure to ground.

*Ground Segal*

Plaster and cotton gauze

Richard Avedon, American, 1923 –

George Segal, American, 1925 – 2000

The de-differentiation of figure from ground is a death act. The color of the de-differentiation of figure from ground is white. This process is specific.

**FIGURE / GROUND (BLUE)**

*Brady Grid*

Digital video, continuous loop

*Sears Portrait Studio Light Blue Background*

Paint on canvas over wood (manufactured by Owens Originals Studio Backdrops, Kansas City, MO)

The Brady Bunch

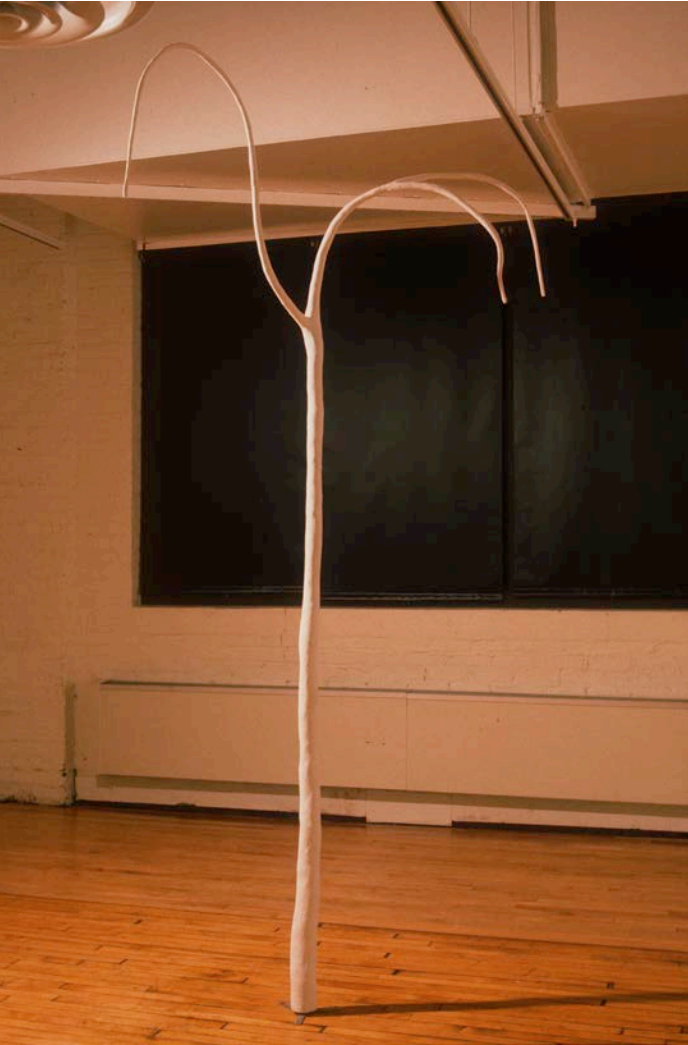
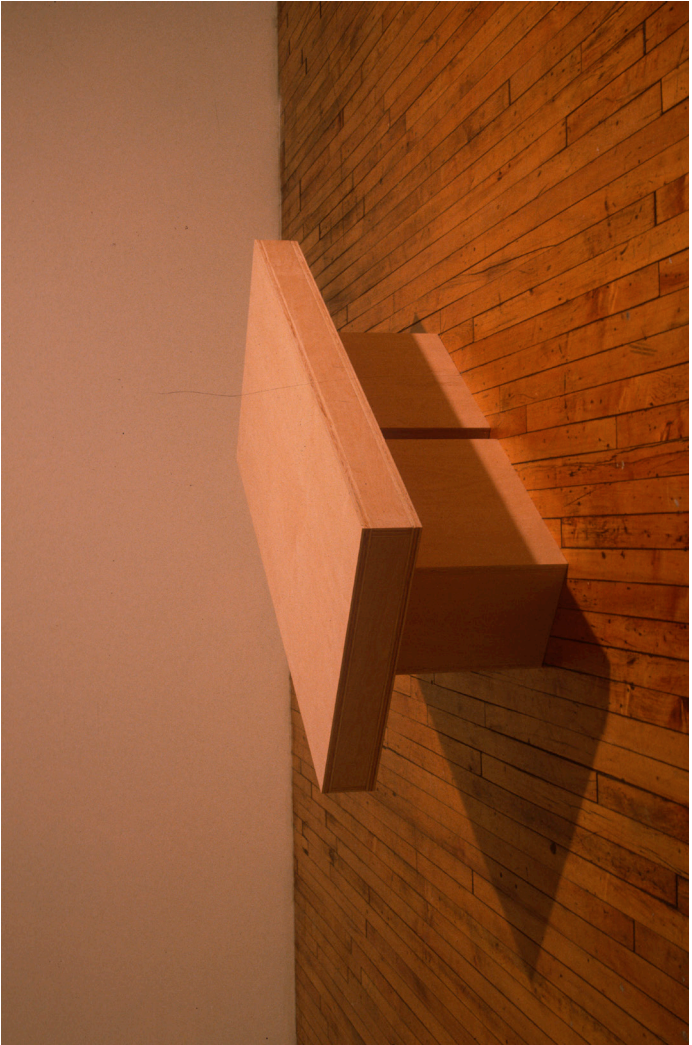
116 episodes plus pilot, aired on ABC Television 1969 – 1974

The Sears Portrait Studio is a subsidiary of Sears, Roebuck and Company

The differentiation of figure from ground is a birth act. The color of the differentiation of figure from ground is blue, the color of the universal background. This process is general, not specific. For this reason, the *Sears Portrait Studio Light Blue Background* is best viewed with a back to the canvas.



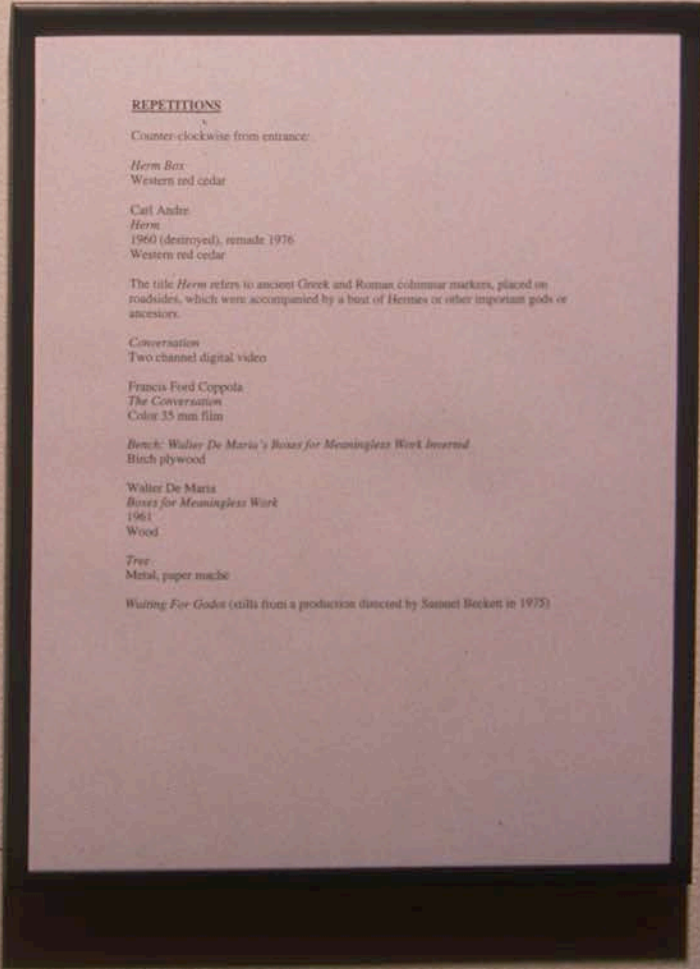
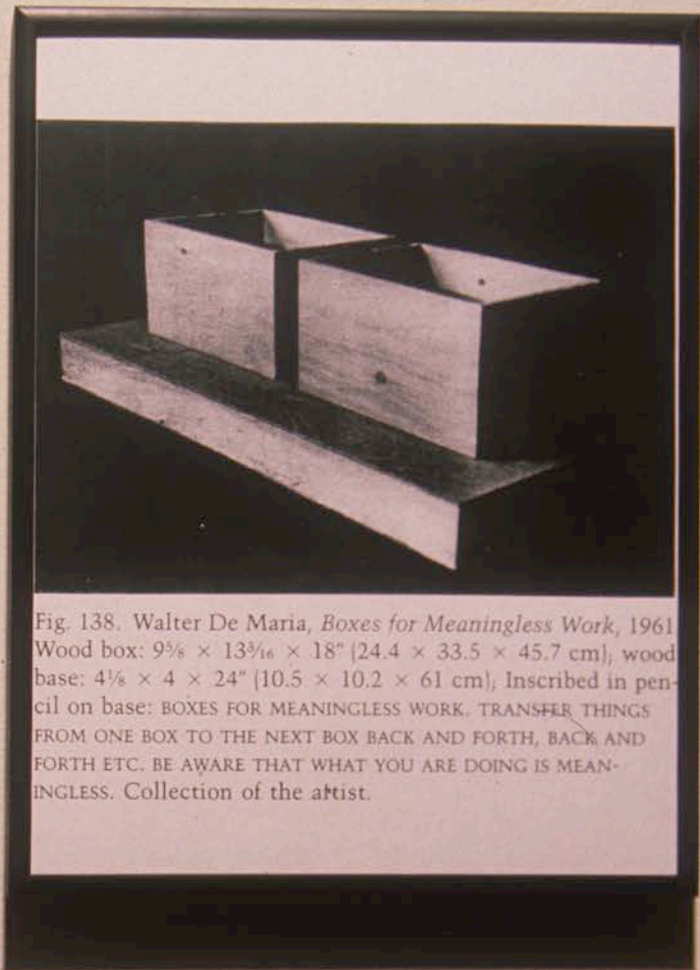
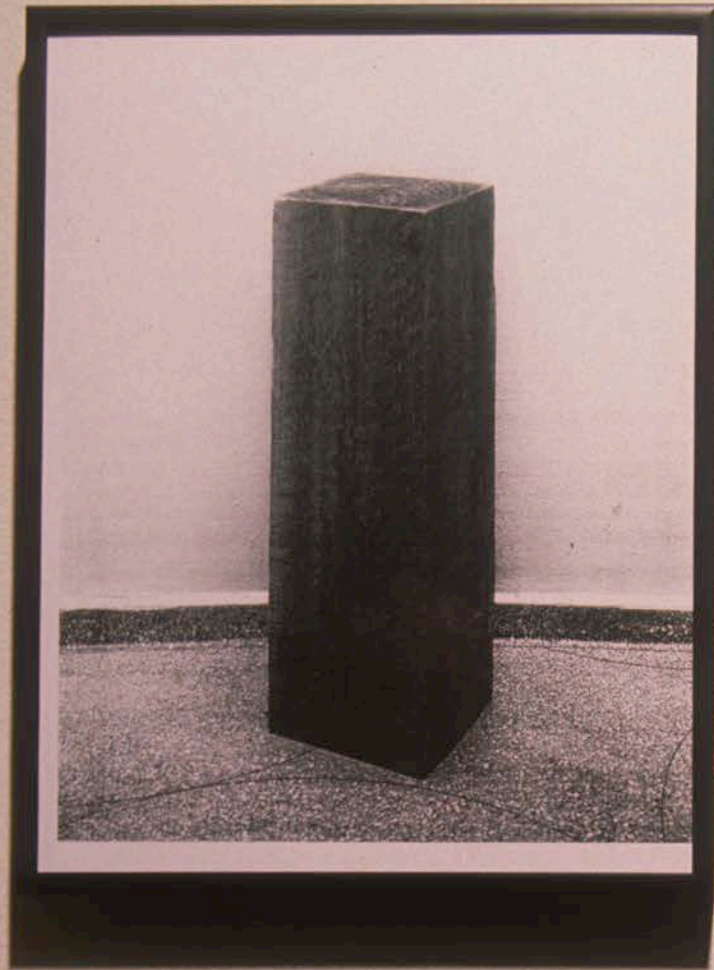
2000: Repetitions











## REPETITIONS

Clockwise from entrance:

### ***Herm Box***

Western red cedar, glue

Carl Andre

### ***Herm***

1960 (destroyed), remade 1976

Western red cedar

HERM: Ancient Greek and Roman columnar markers, placed at roadside and often accompanied by busts of Hermes or another important gods or ancestors.

### ***Conversation***

Two channel digital video, pedestal, suspended screen

Francis Ford Coppola

### ***The Conversation***

Color 35 mm film

### ***Bench: Walter De Maria's Boxes for Meaningless Work Inverted***

Birch plywood

Walter De Maria

### ***Boxes for Meaningless Work***

1961

Wood

### ***Godot Tree***

Steel, Paper mache

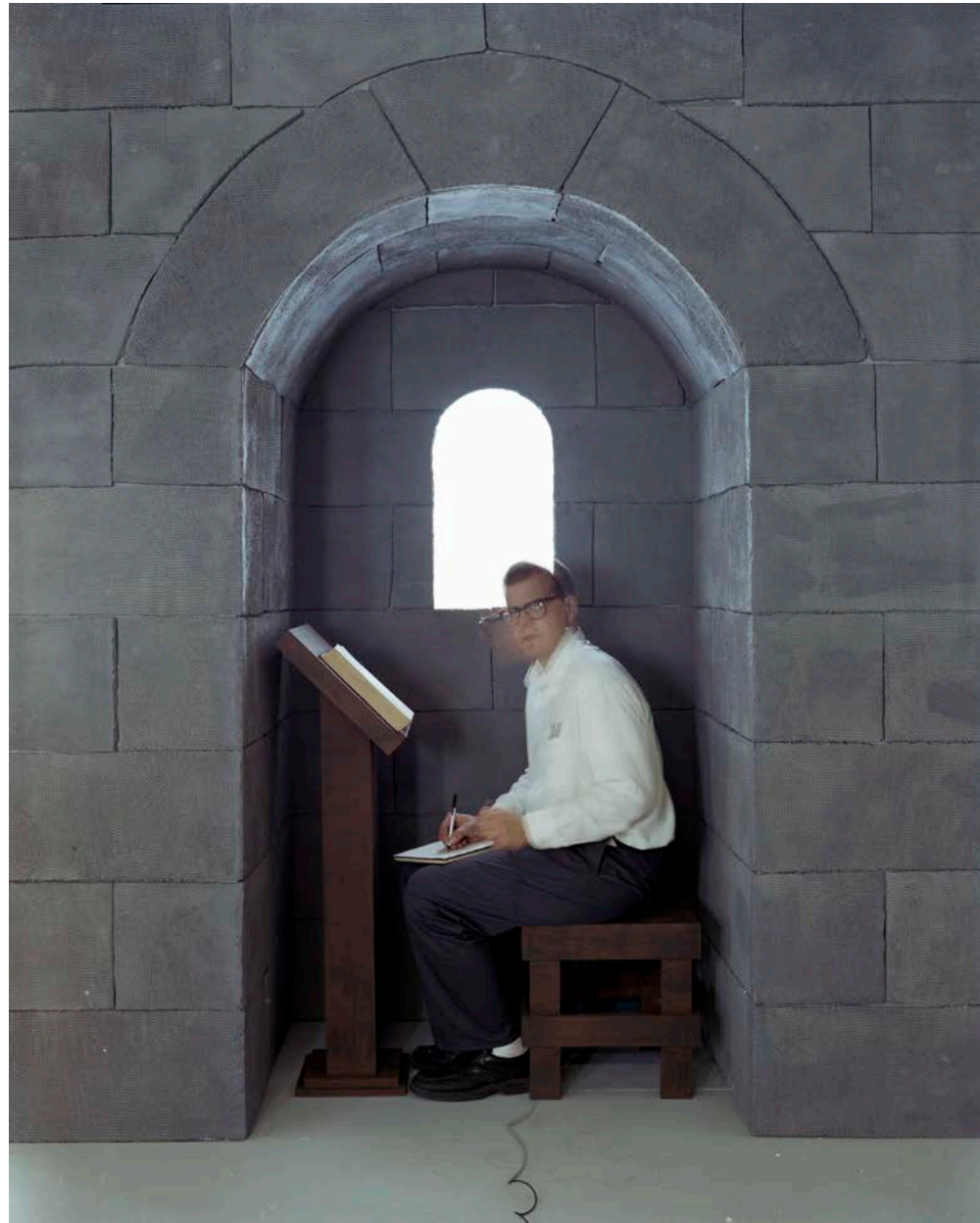
***Waiting for Godot*** (stills from a 1975 production by Samuel Beckett)



2001: Triptych (Untitled, Untitled, Copyist)









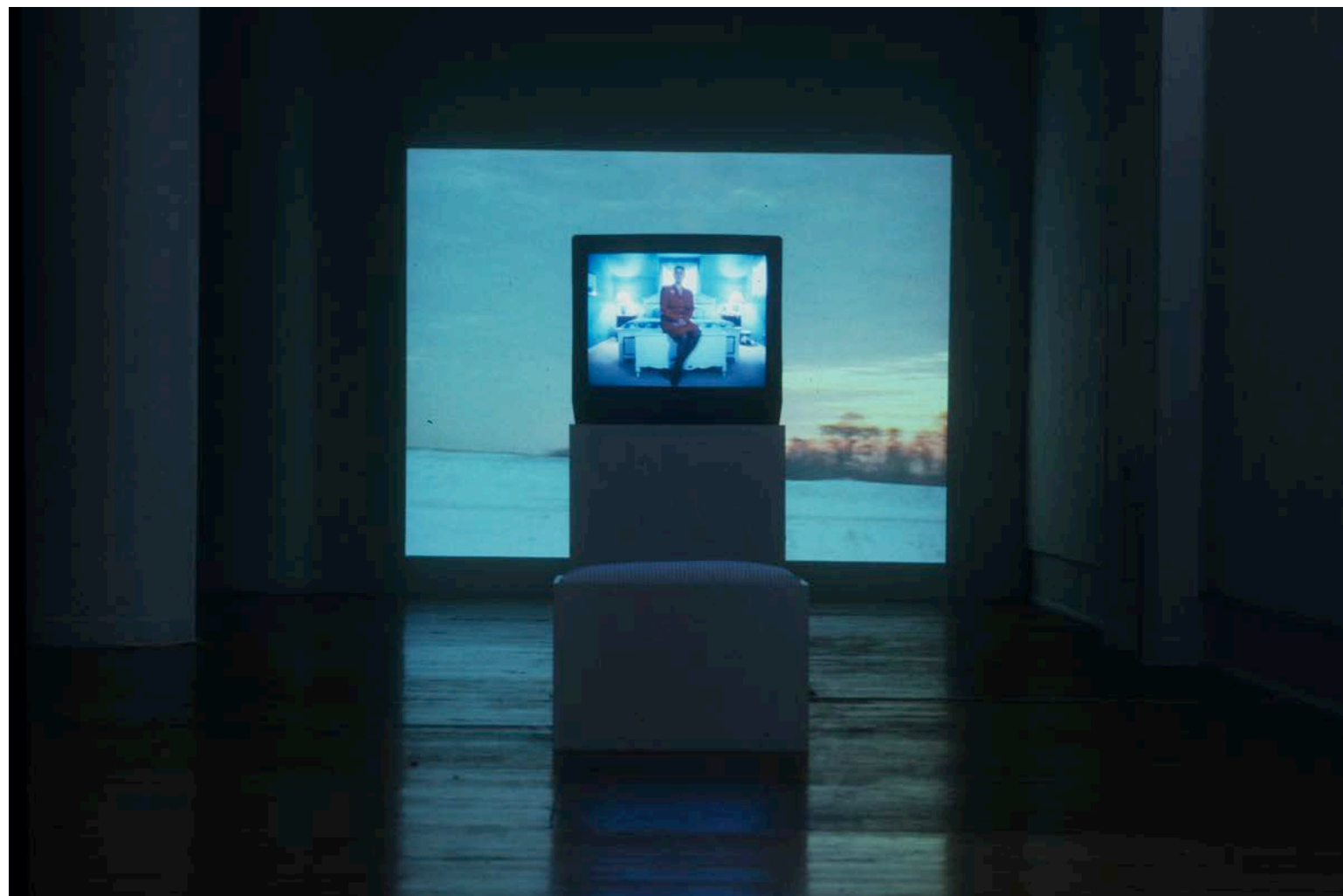
2001: Untitled (To My Mother)











Slides 8 & 9:

*Untitled (To My Mother)*  
2001

The piece has three components: a projected image of the sun in a field behind my mother's home in winter, a monitor-bound shot of her bedroom, and a white bench upholstered in blue-and-white Laura Ashley fabric. When a viewer sits on the bench, the exterior, projected image is blocked by the interior, monitor-bound image. Footage of my mother appears on screen briefly at random intervals.



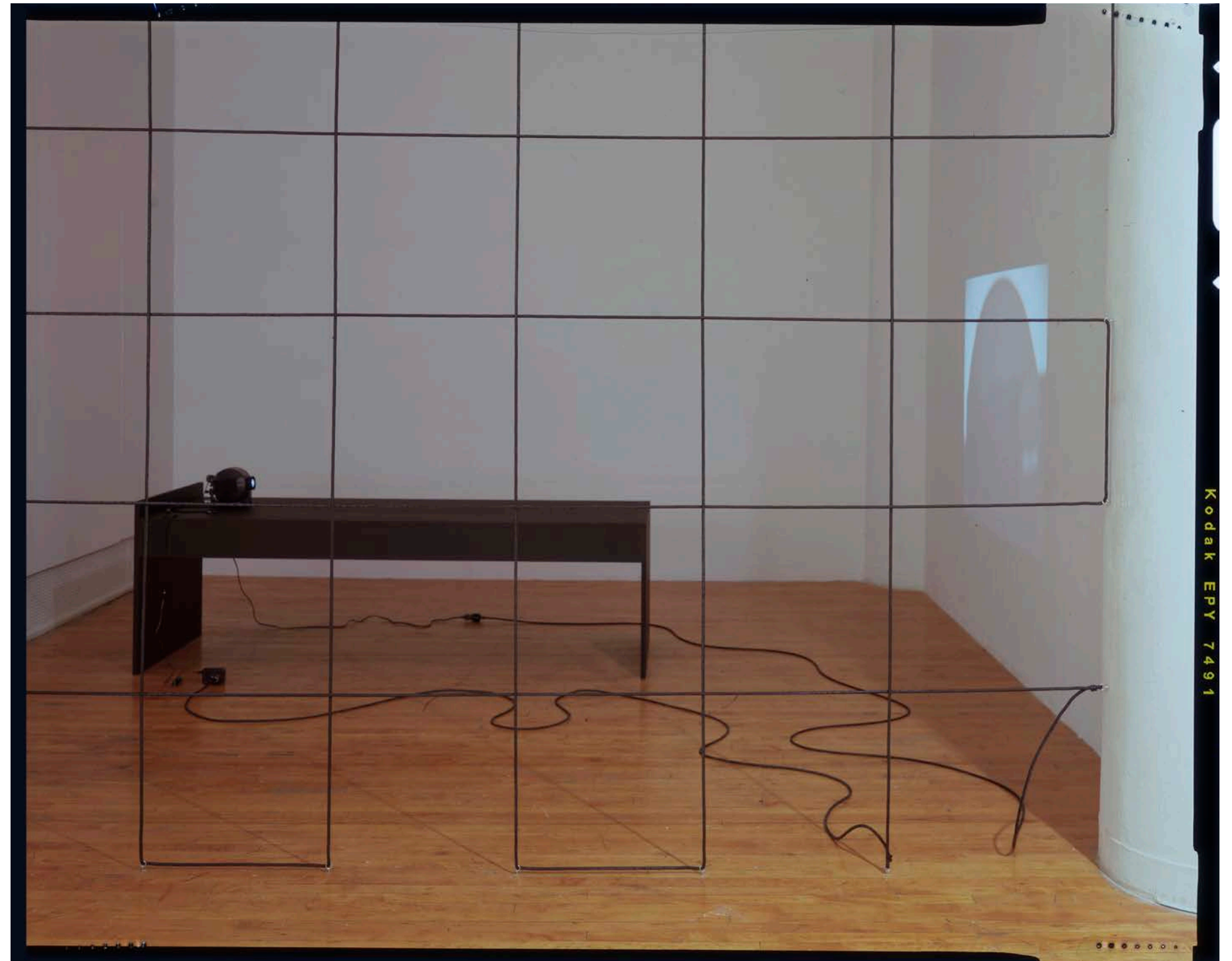
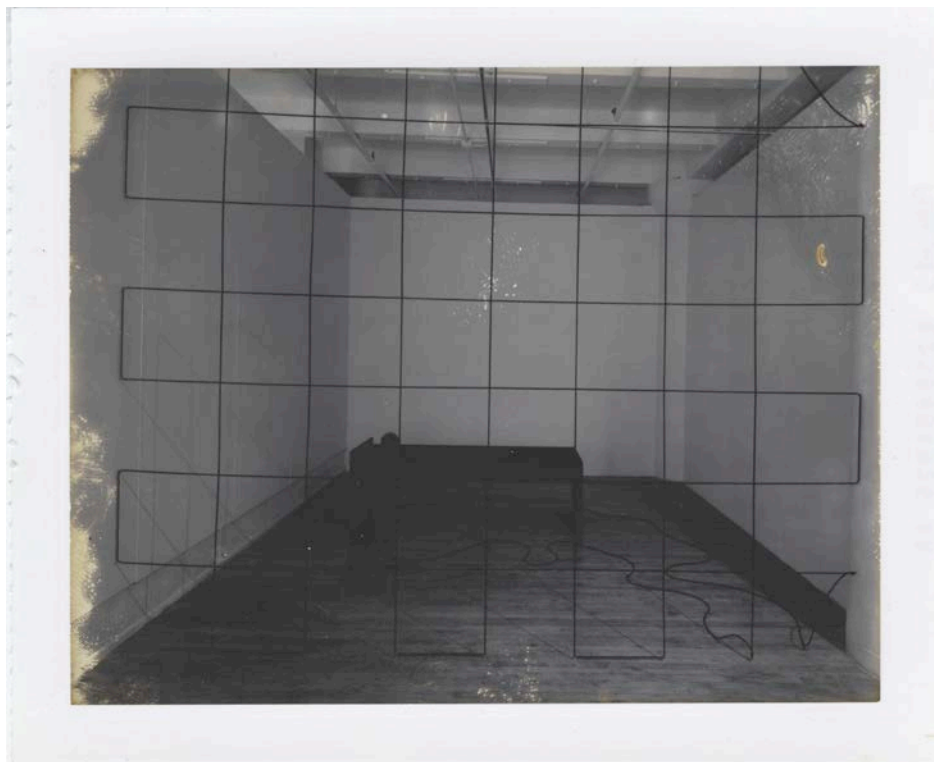
## 2002: Black Sun Study

Slide 10:

*Black Sun Study*  
2002

Video camera, video projector, live electrical cables, MDF  
Dimensions variable

The projected video is a live-feed image of the side of the circular video projector. The video projector and the video camera are connected to 250' extension cords that weave together to form a barrier, enclosing the piece.





## 2002: A Black and White Photograph



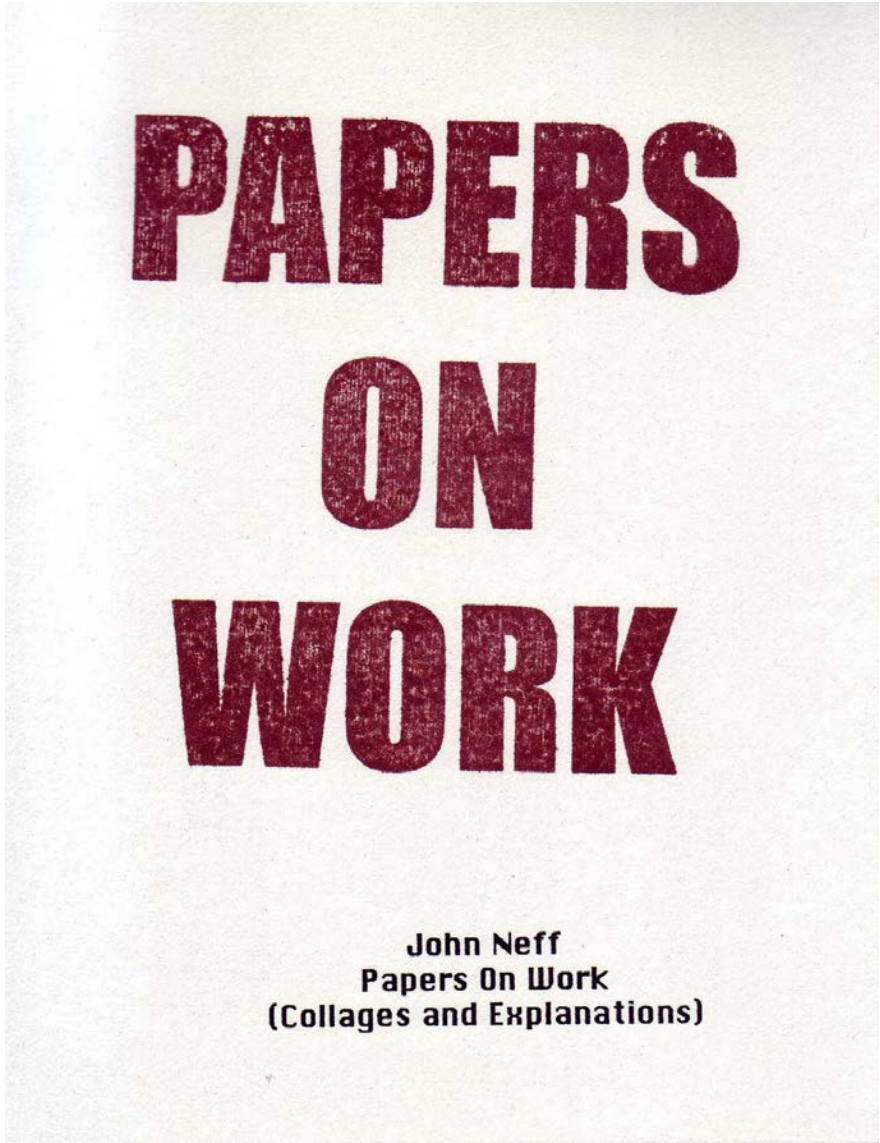
Slide 13:

*A Black and White Photograph: Dutes Miller Portraying John Bunyan, Imprisoned at Bedford Gaol, Penning the Defense of Allegory that Precedes The Pilgrim's Progress*  
2002

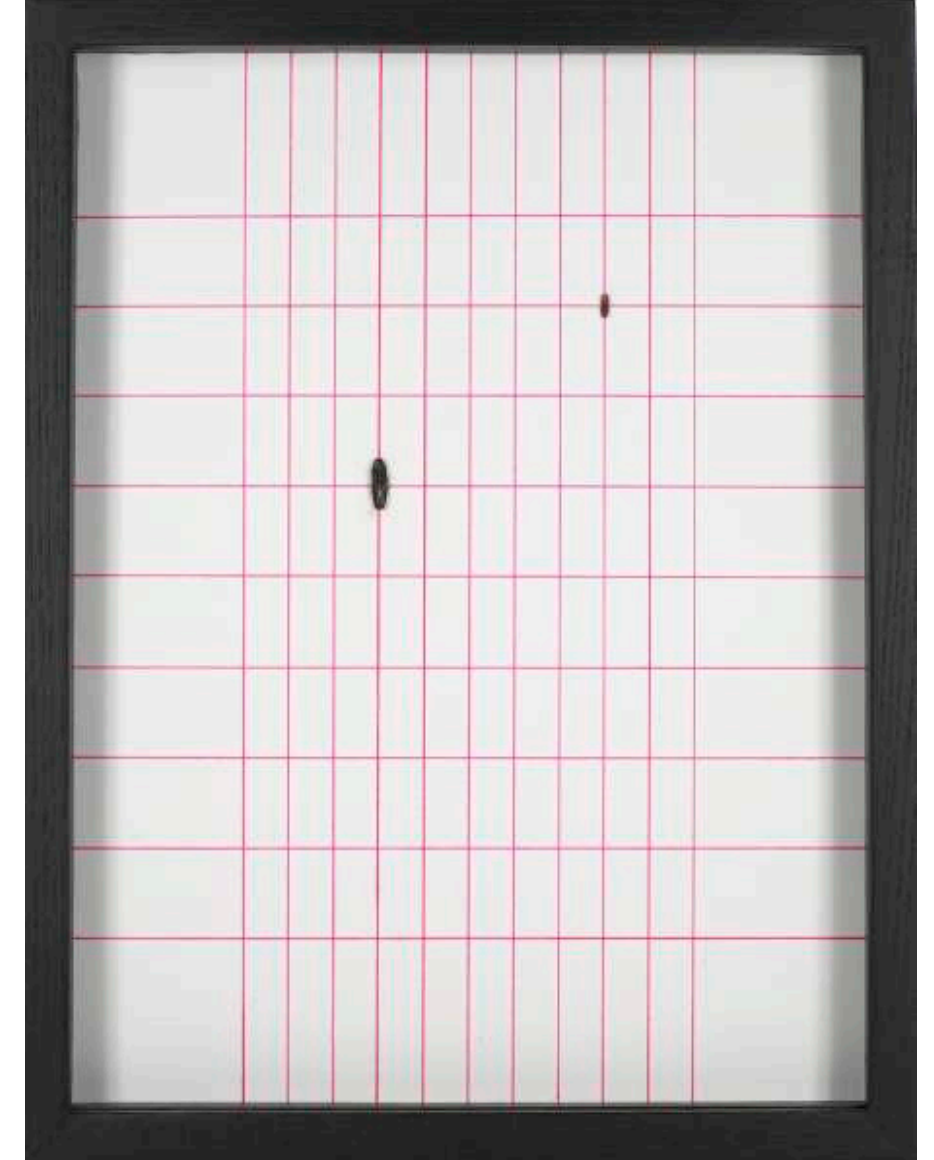
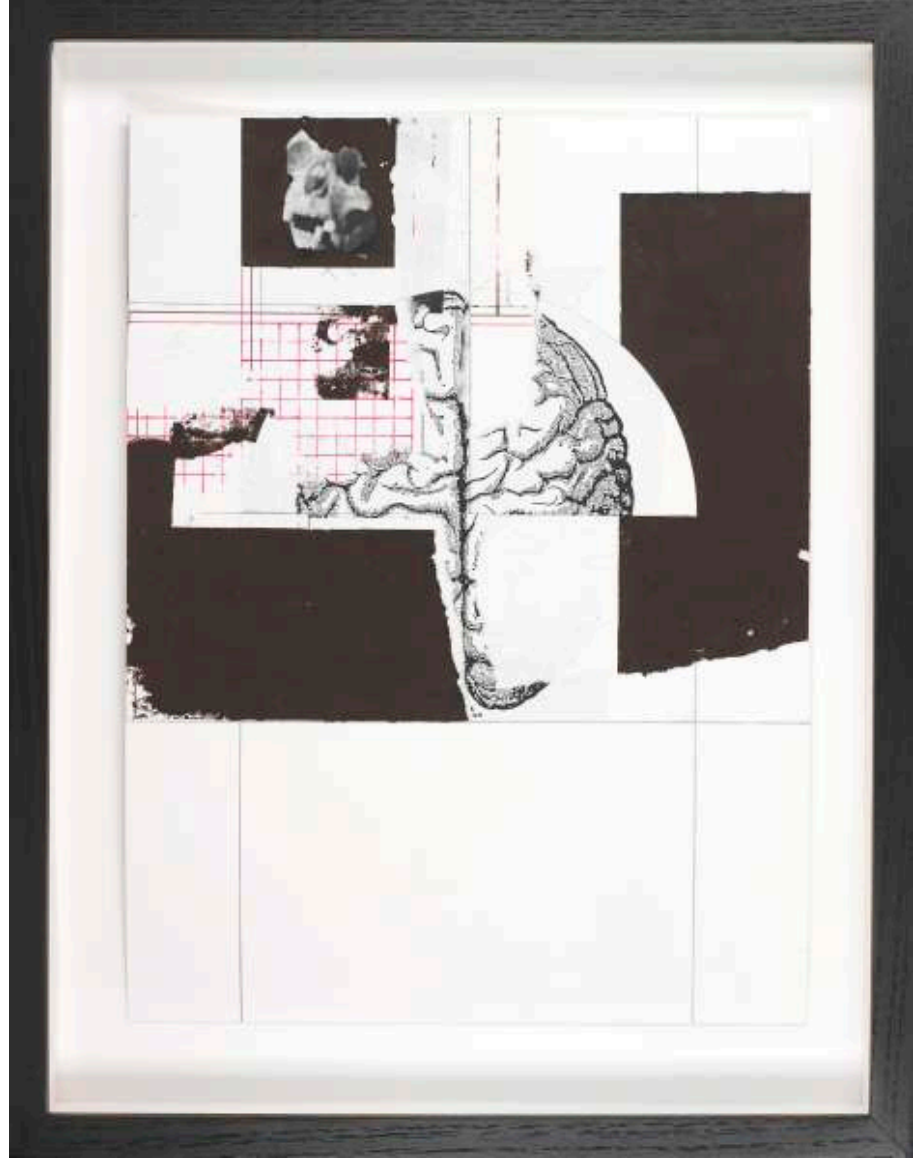
Framed 8" by 10" color contact print, engraved title plaque



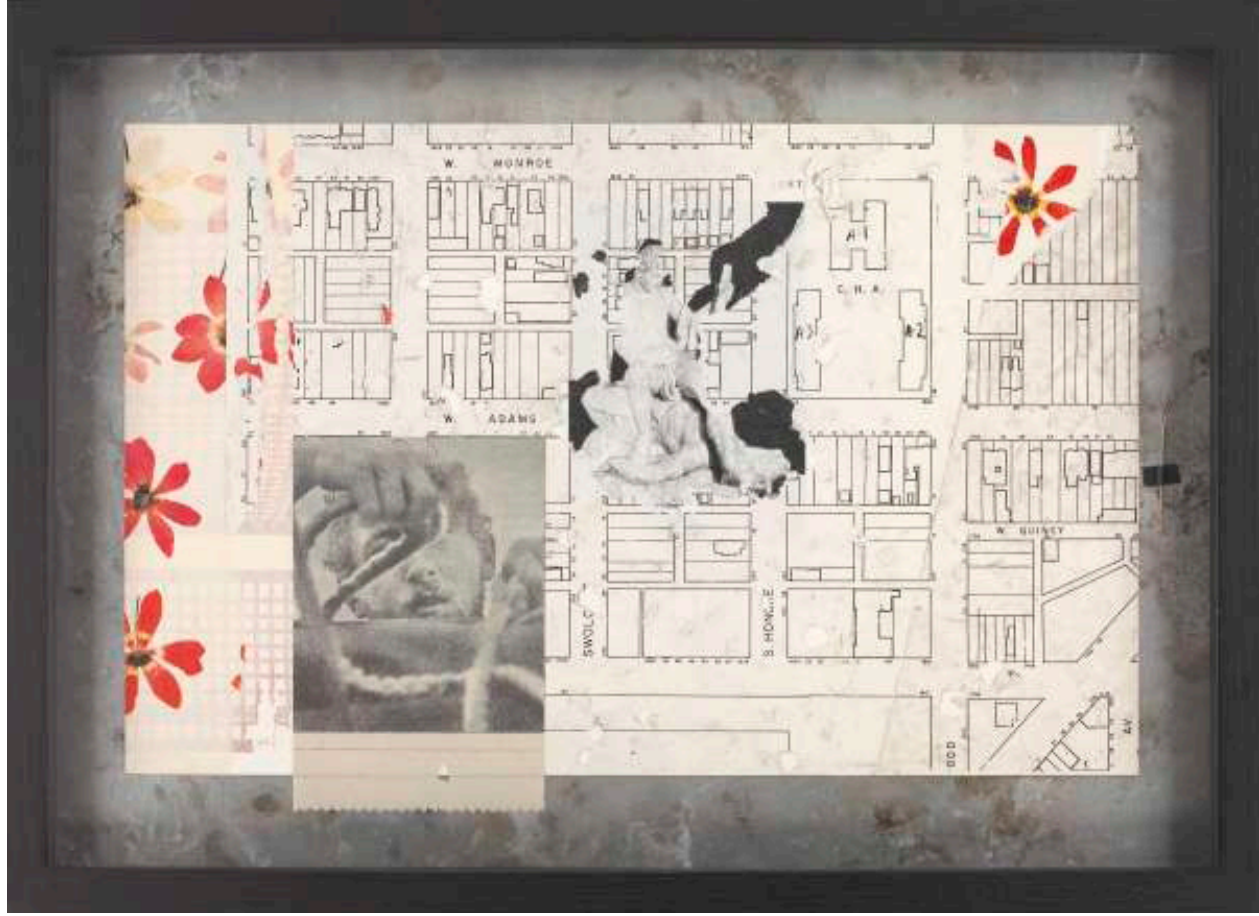














**JOHN NEFF**

**PAPERS ON WORK:**

**COLLAGES AND EXPLANATIONS**

Untitled Collages, 2001 – 2002

Mixed media on vellum (mounted on aluminum foil, rag board, newsprint)

**PINK:**

- MIND / MENTAL ENERGY
- GENERAL
- GEOMETRY

**BROWN:**

- BODY
- PARTICULAR
- INDEX, WRITING, SHIT

BASE METAL

**WHITE:**

- DEATH (DE-DIFFERENTIATION OF FIGURE FROM GROUND)
- PREPARED SURFACE (RECEPTIVE TO BROWN [PINK FLOATS])

**BLACK:**

- CONTAINMENT
- BLINDNESS
- FRAME

BLACK SUN (TRANSFORMATION)

THE INCURSION OF BLACK INTO A PINK OR BROWN AREA IS A MENTAL OR PHYSICAL IMBALANCE.

**GOLD:**

- FIRE
- BLUE (ONCE REMOVED)

**RED:**

- RED

**ANTHOR:**

- CARREL, CLOISTER, NICHE, STUDY (ARCHED)
- SKULL
- GATHERING AND JOINING

**LABYRINTH**



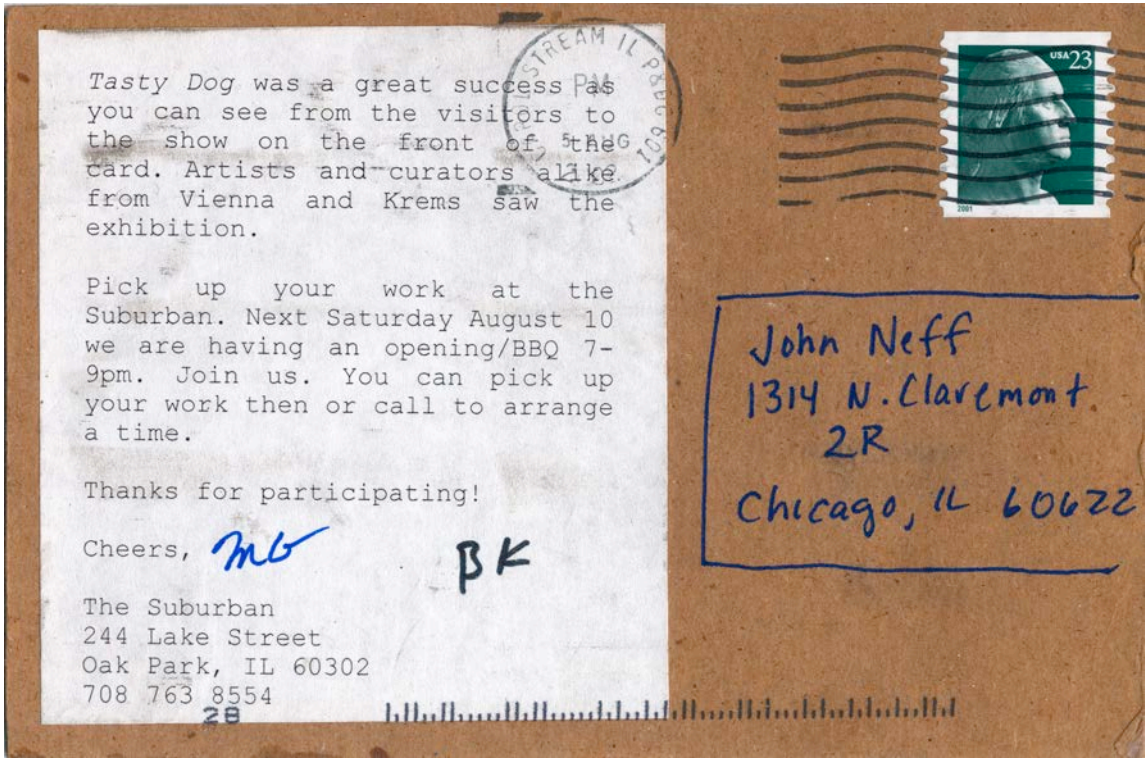




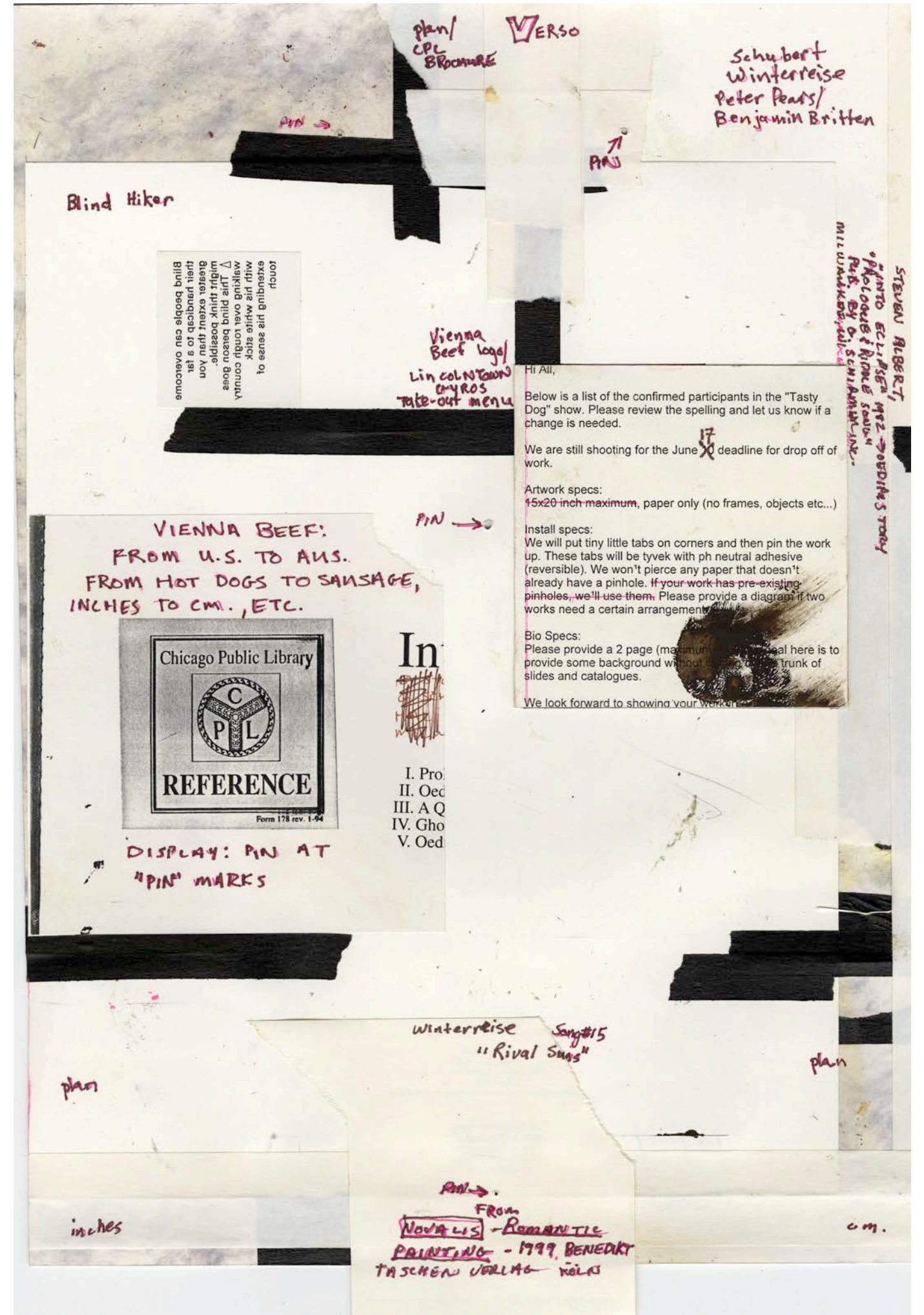




2002: Tasty Dog Collage









\*\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\*\*

HYSTERICAL PASTORAL

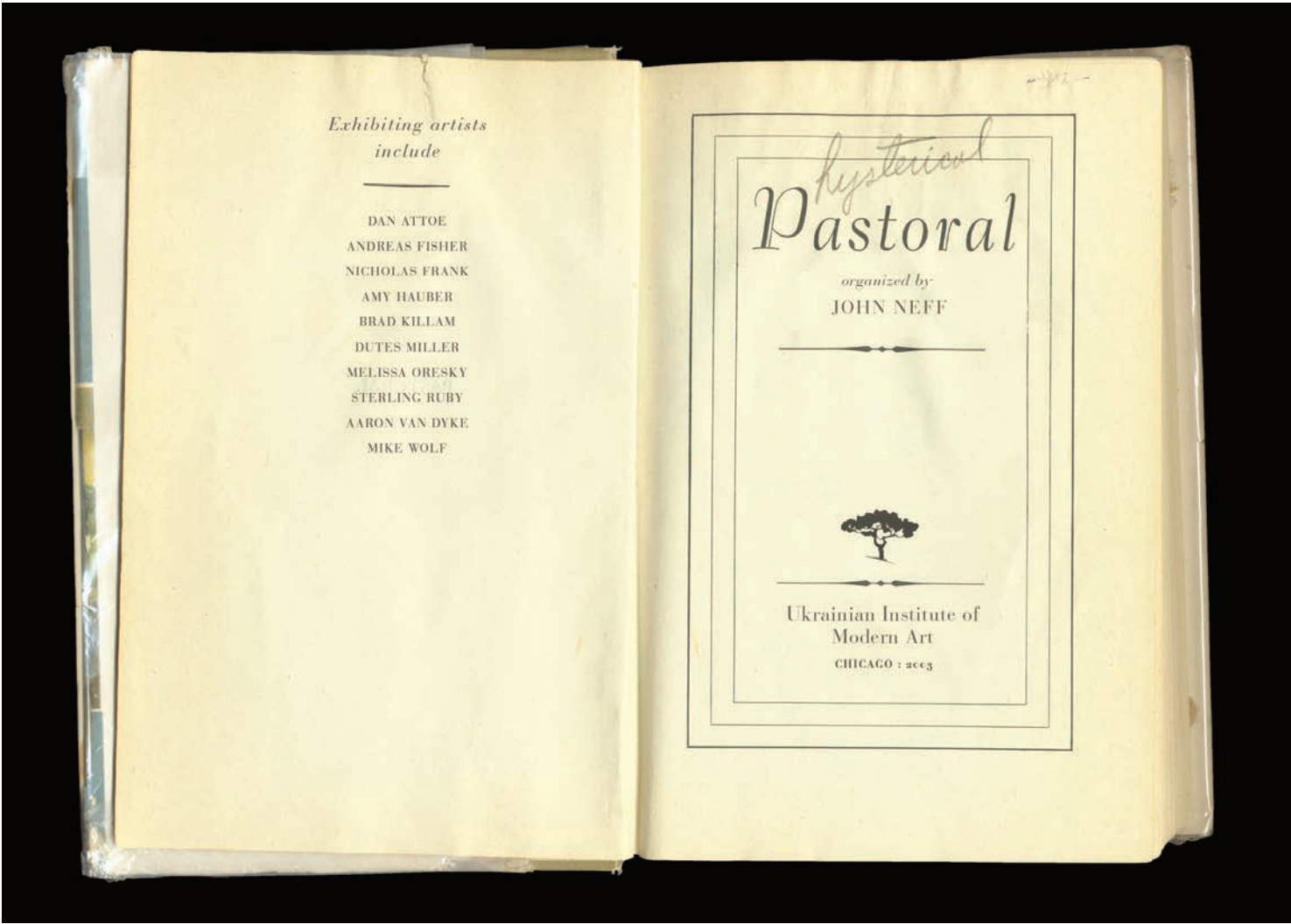
THE UKRAINIAN INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART

JULY 11 – AUGUST 17

- WHAT:** **Hysterical Pastoral**, an exhibition of contemporary landscape images.
- WHO:** Organized by John Neff and including work by Dan Attoe, Andreas Fischer, Nicholas Frank, Amy Hauber, Brad Killam, Dutes Miller, Melissa Oresky, Sterling Ruby, Aaron Van Dyke, and Mike Wolf.
- WHERE:** **The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art**, 2320 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622
- WHEN:** **The show runs July 11th through August 17th.** An opening reception will be held on Friday, July 11th between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. The Institute is open Wednesday through Sunday, 12 to 4.

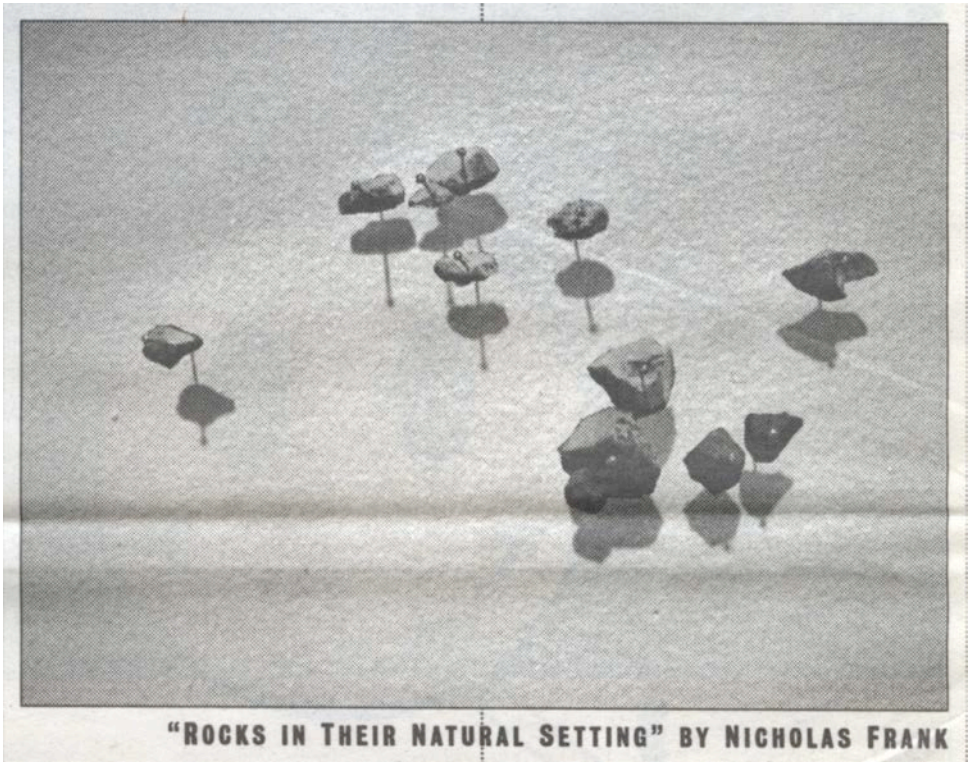
**Hysterical Pastoral**, a show of contemporary landscape images, opens at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art on July 11 and runs through August 17. Organized by John Neff, the exhibition presents landscape images created through writing (illustrating texts, making specific literary references, or following language-based production processes). Many of the works in the exhibition approach their status as pictures from the plane of writing. That is, they are pictures in which there is a physical or conceptual transition from the flat, horizontal plane of writing and the printed image to the upright, vertical plane of Western pictorial space (cf. Michael Fried’s *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration*).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT JOHN NEFF, 510-433-0334 / jdn1@earthlink.net



*Hysterical Pastoral* invitation card, Offset print, 4” by 6”

In the “Hysterical Pastoral” show at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, nature and references to it are characterized by a strange, often humorous displacement. Dan Attoe sets up tents in the gallery for three works he calls *Tent*; their curved forms evoke the curves of a landscape, making them seem weirdly out of place but reminding us how removed our urban world is from nature. Amy Hauber includes real plants in *Ovaries and Advanced Degrees*, which she says concerns, among other things, “beauty, femininity, desire”; an accompanying book on the therapeutic uses of “artificial sunlight” and a sign that repeats the phrase “grow or die” also suggest an interest in human self-improvement.



Fred Camper, *Ah, Wilderness*, Chicago Reader, August 8, 2003



John Neff: Travels Between the First and Third Dimensions

September 25 to October 30th, 2004

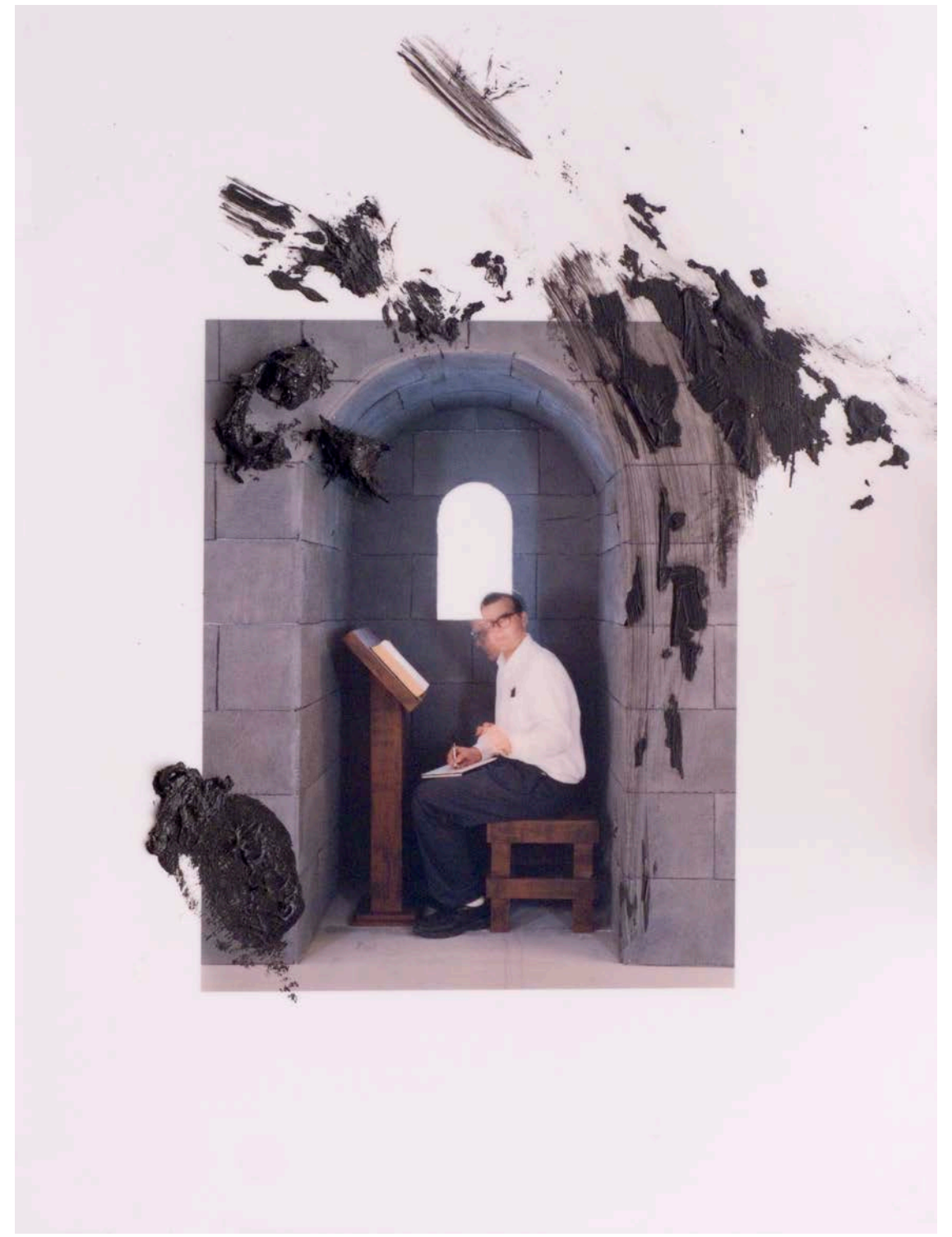
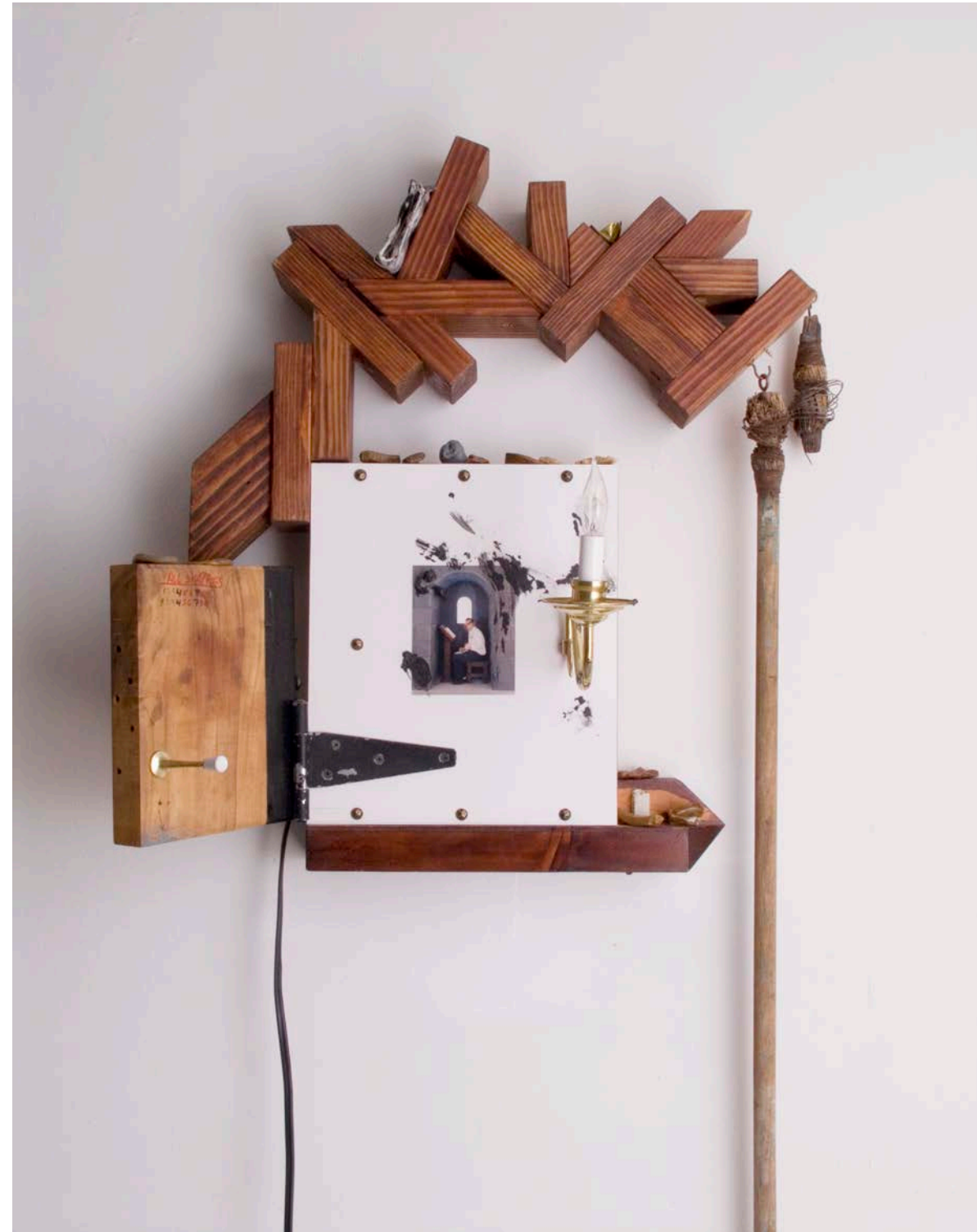
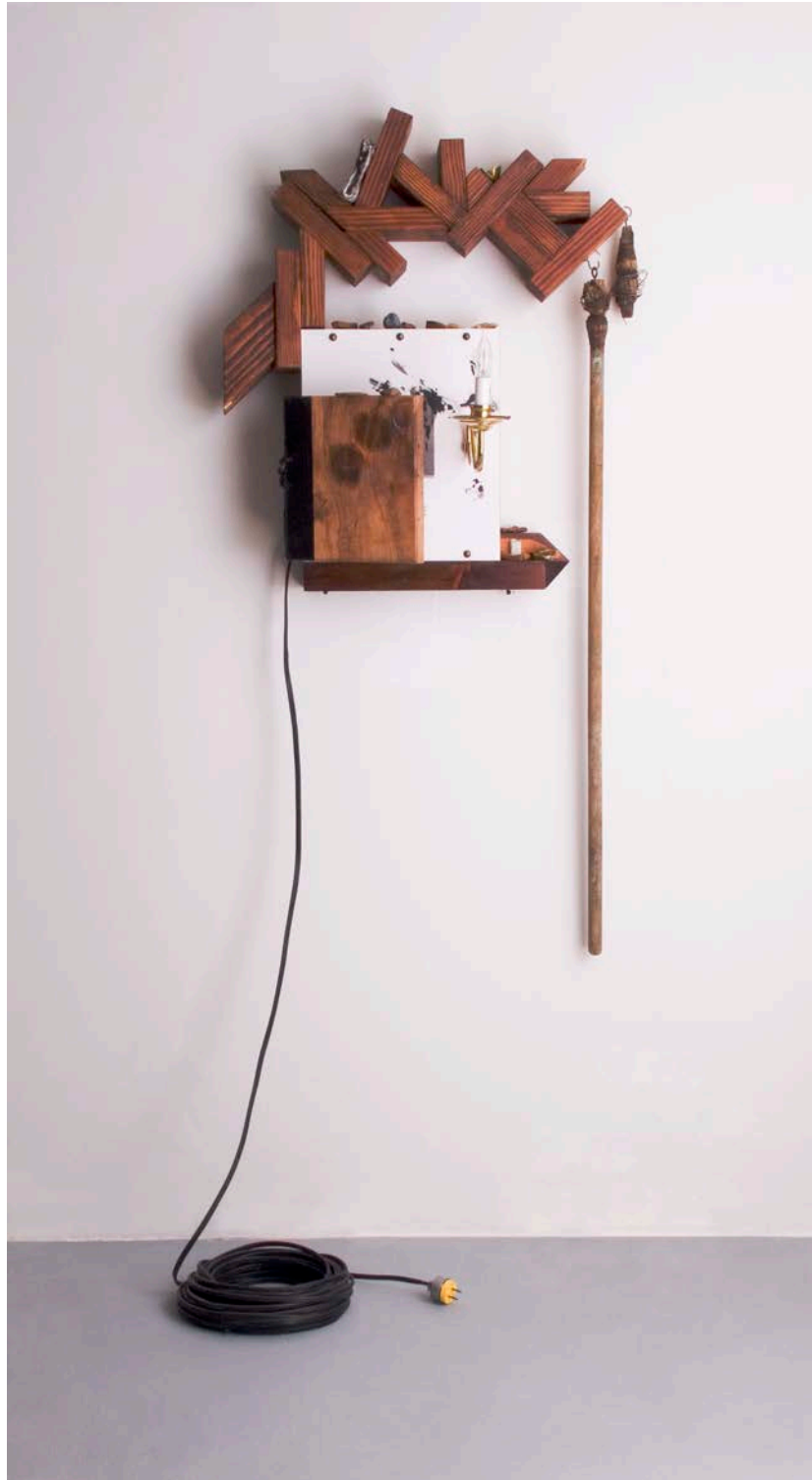
**Travels between the First and Third Dimensions** at **Western Exhibitions** is **John Neff**'s first Chicago solo show since relocating to the Bay Area in 2003, and his first solo show with Western Exhibitions. Neff will be showing reliefs, flat panels on the horizontal or the vertical axis, that twist into three-dimensions. The panels are ceramic tile mosaics and/or metalworks in brass, lead, and steel. Most incorporate pre-made decorative objects like tiles, vases, and small representational sculptures. Many of the panels have a nominal function: table, fan, heater, doorbell, ashtray, decoration. These panels reflect a subtle shift from the concerns of the works on paper presented in Neff's last solo show at Chicago's Suitable Gallery in 2002. Small-scale paper collages, those pieces dealt with private, cloistered worlds. The relief panels are more outward-looking, and refer - sometimes blatantly and sometimes obliquely - to current events and to Neff's day-to-day life with his co-workers and sister (a mosaicist).

John Neff (b.1975) lives and works in Oakland, California. In Fall 2003, Neff's "We Are All Sinners" poster was distributed by Post-Chicago and his "We Are All Sinners" billboard was subsequently displayed by the Roof, an alternative space in Chicago. That summer Neff curated "Hysterical Pastoral" at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art in Chicago. Five of his collages and one photograph from a 2002 show at Chicago's Suitable gallery were acquired by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Recent exhibitions include "Here and Now" at the Chicago Cultural Center, "Accidental Sublime" at The Bower, San Antonio, Texas, "Tasty Dog", Atelier Top 25, Krems, Austria, and at the Stray Show in Chicago in 2004 with Western Exhibitions. Neff received a MFA from the University of Illinois-Chicago in 2001.



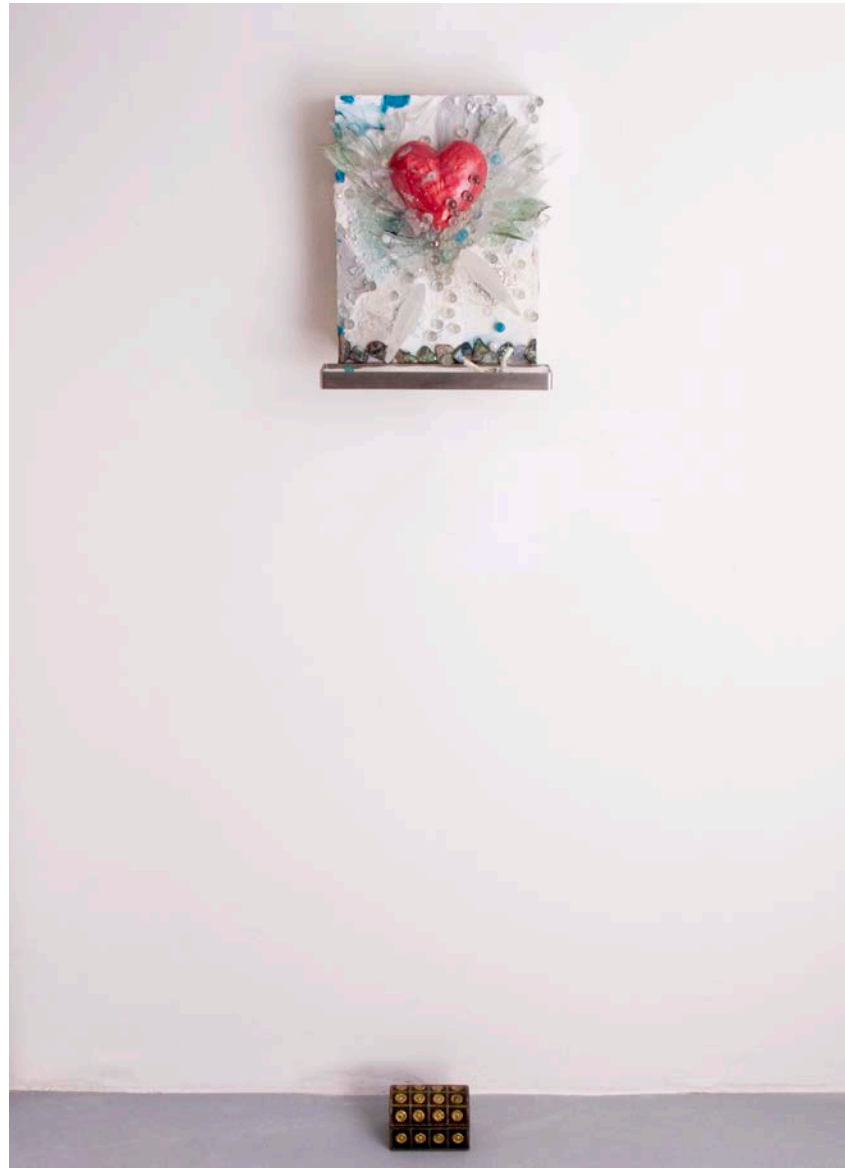
*Anthon Tile (surrounded by Lucinda Walker)*  
High fire ceramic tile, fabric, buttons, fabric batting, feathers, baby shoes  
16” x 13” (baby shoes variable)





*Decorative Panel #5: Old Books: Wall Sconce*  
Wood furniture fragments, broom parts, photograph, brass  
fixture, electrical wire, fabric, paint, hardened epoxies and  
fillers, electrical cord  
49" x 26" x 5" (cord variable)

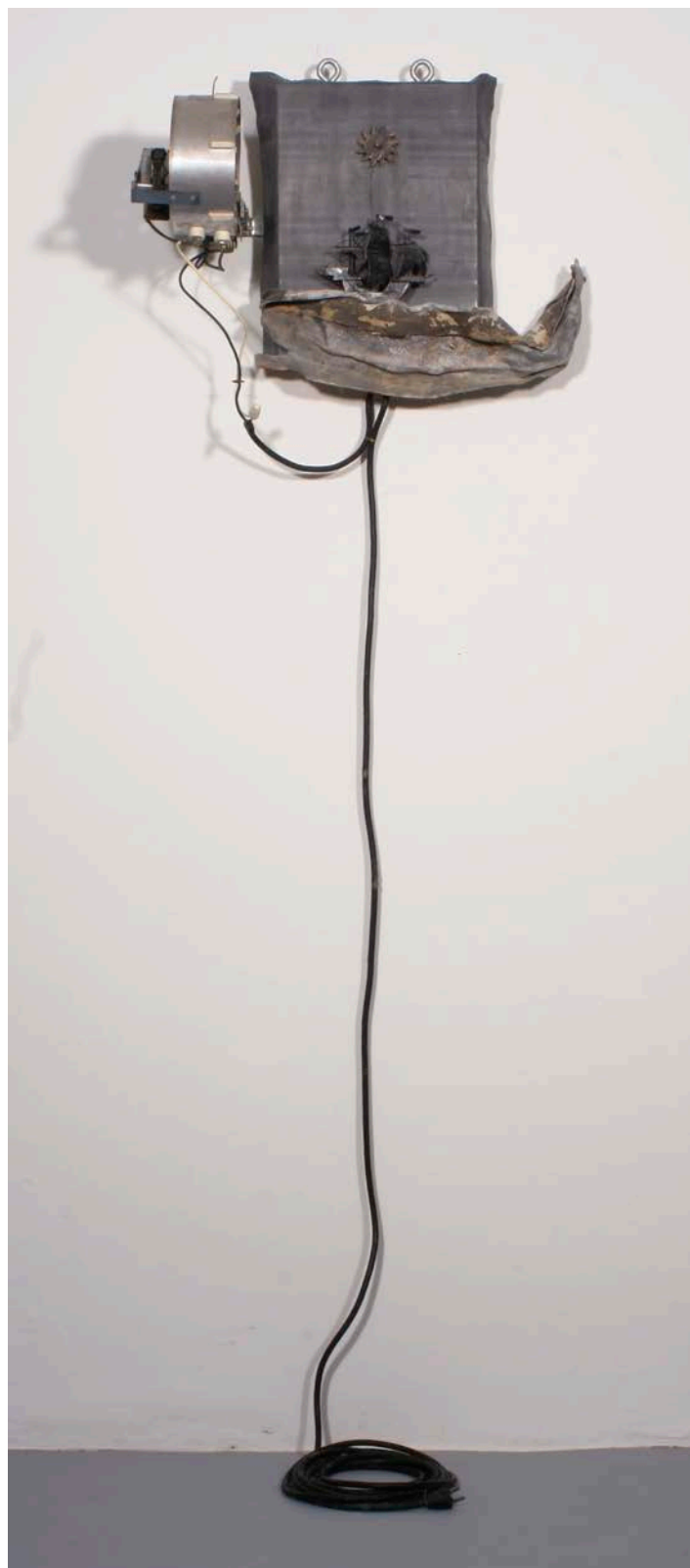




*Decorative Panel #2: The Deep: Ashtray*  
Wood, metal, paint, glass, ceramic heart (artist unknown),  
lead crystal fish (artist unknown [made in Sweden]), paint, sand  
16" x 13" x 6"

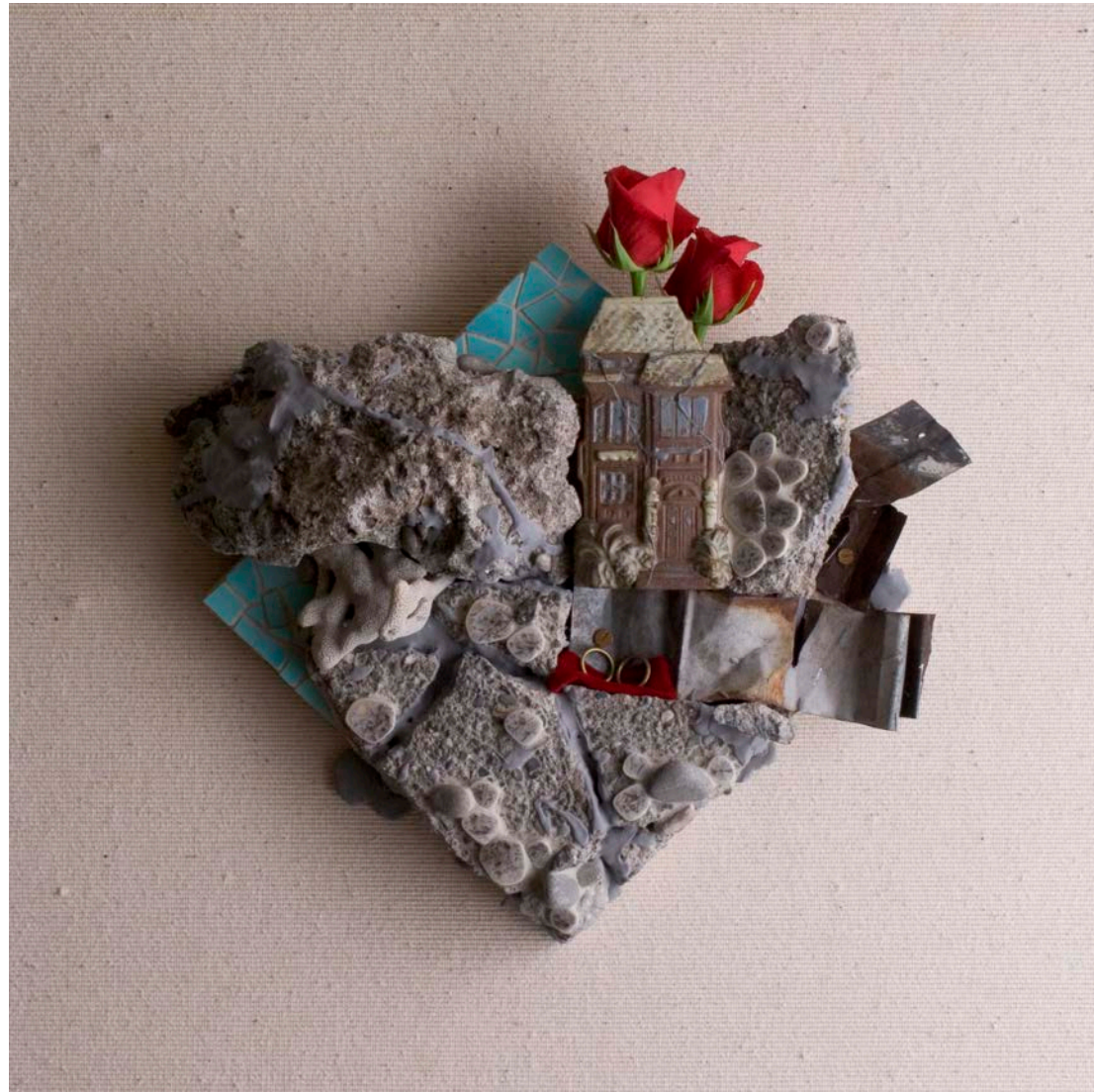




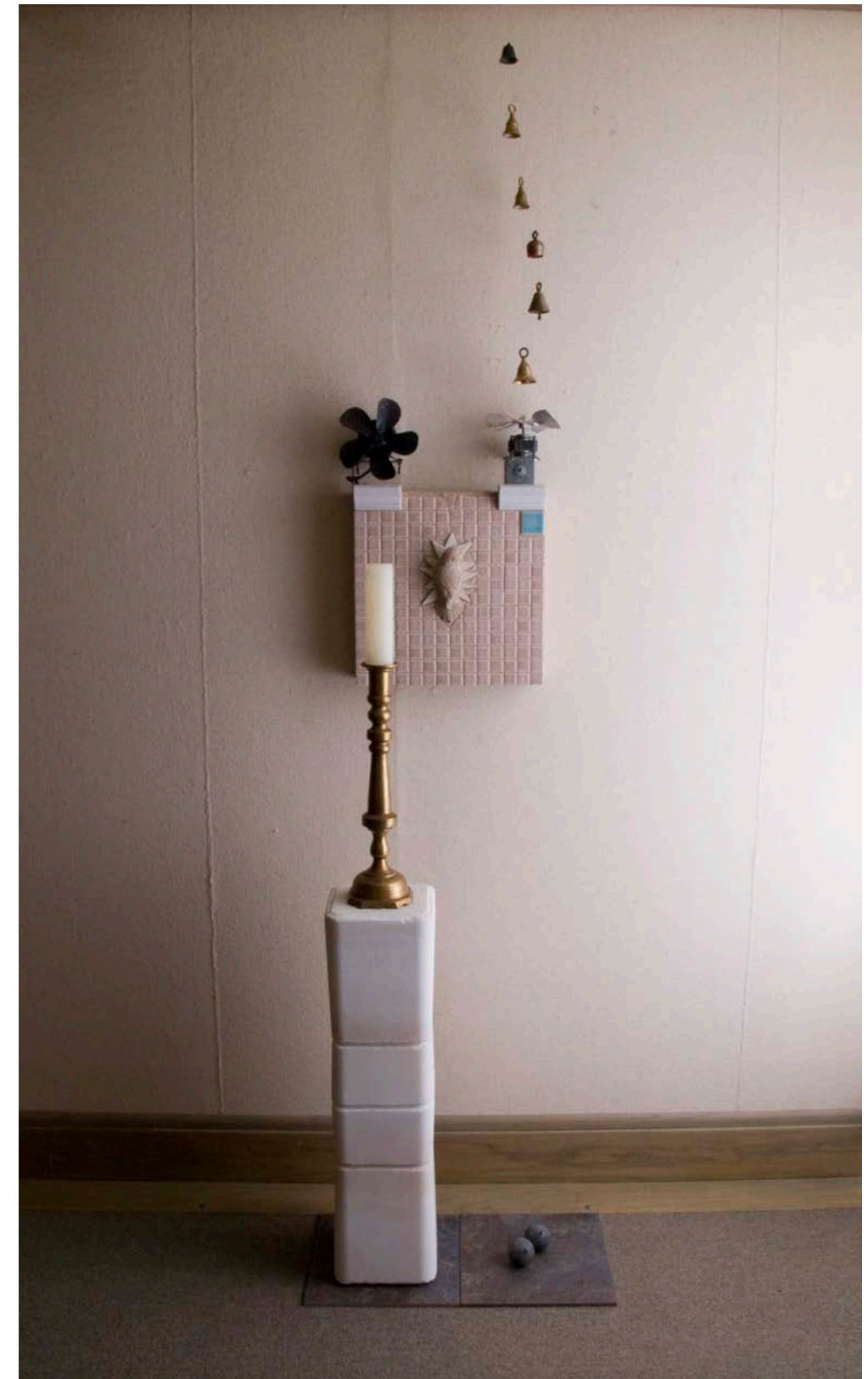


*Decorative Panel #1: Turbulence: Fan and Heating Coil*  
 Wood, lead, brass, steel ship (artist unknown [made in Taiwan]),  
 brass sun (artist unknown), fan and heating coil, electrical cord  
 38" x 34" (cord variable)





*Decorative Panel #18: Faultline, San Francisco, California: Flower Vase*  
 Wood, concrete, ceramic tile mosaic, small vase (artist unknown), brass,  
 steel, velvet, crack sealer  
 17" x 19" x 6"



*Decorative Panel #8: To Gwen Araujo: Two Fans, Candlestick and Chimes*  
 Wood, ceramic tile mosaic, cement bird (artist unknown), electric fans, salt,  
 brass candlestick, lead balls, bells, brass wire  
 Dimensions variable





*Decorative Panel # 7: Angel: Fountain*  
 Single basin stainless steel sink, steel faucet,  
 ceramic lily (artist unknown [made in Italy]), pump, tubing  
 Dimensions variable





## John Neff

### Travels between the First and Third Dimensions

September 25 to October 30, 2004 at  
Western Exhibitions

Scott interviews John via email.... copyright 2004

**Scott: Since you're on the West Coast, and I'm in Chicago, and since you've been stingy with digital images, tell me about the work you plan on showing at WX? I understand they are reliefs? Using materials collected from your current job at a salvage yard?**

John: You could describe these things as reliefs. Each thing begins with a flat panel (most are around 14" x 16") on the horizontal or the vertical axis. They all twist into three-dimensions. A few of the horizontal panels are in the round: one is a table. Many of the panels have a nominal function: table, fan, heater, doorbell, ashtray... decoration. Most incorporate pre-made decorative objects like tiles, vases, and small representational sculptures. Some of the panels are primarily ceramic mosaic: some of them are mainly metal, especially brass and lead.

I did get most of my materials at work, but I also collect stuff at flea markets and on the street. Usually, a panel is inspired by the collision of an interesting object, a story or image that's on my mind, the way that materials are arranged in my workshop at specific moments, and the idea of making panels.

**How do they relate to the collages shown at Suitable two years ago?**

Well, they're smallish, at least in terms of three dimensional art things these days. Most of my collages began as sheets of 9" x 12" Bristol brand vellum paper. The collages were composed of flat paper objects (Xerox copies, product wrappers, chunks of paint and foil, baubles) torn violently from their "natural" state and compressed -- forced -- into the space of the page. Without exception, the guiding subject of the collages was the anthor -- the furnace where ordinary things are fused, through concentrated mental and physical effort, with their ghosts and become works of art. In the case of the collages, the anthor took the form of niches, cloisters, and carrels -- small spaces where one deals with pages and other little pieces of paper. My first panel was a tile representing a screen-printed image of the anthor that served as the title page for the Suitable show. I had intended to make a traditional bronze relief, but lack of cash led me to metallic-glazed ceramic, which got me thinking about tiles generally...And then, there's a lot of ceramic work in the Bay Area. In fact, my sister Laurel -- with whom I live -- is a mosaicist. Ceramic is a more oriented to everyday space: lining bathrooms and kitchens, forming cups and plates...Doing ceramics right usually requires the efforts of more than one person...These are all differences between the collages and the panels, by the way...

Whereas the Suitable pieces had a neat black seal (frame) that kept out the world, the tile is surrounded by the busyness of other people...My sister, my room-mate, my co-workers.

**Tell me about the shift from the installation slash video work you're known for in Chicago to this more hands-on studio approach. In your mind, is there even a shift? Or do your works, be they video, installation, etc., deal with the same concerns? If so, delineate these concerns. If not, what are the concerns "pre- shift" and now?**

There are marked stylistic differences between of all my bodies of work. But, it would be just as easy to construct continuities between the projects as it is to locate shifts. You might say that my concerns have remained pretty consistent over time. Ruptures are subject matter, and sometimes events, in the new works. But, I continue to be preoccupied with the variability of similar forms, repetition as a formal and a social activity, the shift between language and images and vice-versa, materials as simultaneous matter and metaphor, the differences between art and other aspects of culture, and on. Each body of work addresses its medium and refers to a different set of subjects, but these concerns are always in the background.

**From a cursory look at your work, say prior to the Suitable show, one might surmise that your work is "about" art history, or at least deals with the social implications of art in it's historical context; and space and it's representations through the rise (and fall?) of Modernism. How accurate are the above statements?**

All art with integrity deals with art and its social context. My work has been "about" art history only because that has been my primary field of reference at many times in my life. I don't think of my work as being "about" Modernism, or as being art-about-art, though. It's important to me that my work always addresses its nominal subjects and the organizing principals that underlie each piece or body of pieces.

**Is the current work more personal? Is this why it's more hands-on? I see more overt nods to sexuality, familial relationships, politics, to your physicality. How accurate is this assumption?**

Personal references are more blatant in these pieces, but that's not why the work is more hands-on. The pieces are "hand made" because the material demands direct handling. I think that the equation of "hand made" with "personal" is spurious at best. At worst, it's a marketing device that sets up a constant, false rotation between "hot" and "cold" styles -- a trick that's been around since the '60s.

As for this work's overt acknowledgements of my homosexuality, my relationships with family, my progressive politics, and my physicality (subjects that have always been present in some form or another in my production), I would say that now is a time for forthrightness. When fear, hate, and excess rule our culture, it's important that art advance the value beauty, difficulty, and inclusion.

# G

## Special Events

**Day of Political Satire** The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton, hosts part one of this Sat 10/23 program, a 10 AM panel on "Politics, Censorship, and Satire." "Cirque du Politique and the Presidential Rogues Gallery," an exhibit of posters tweaking commanders in chief past and present, takes place 7-10:30 that evening at the office of *In These Times* magazine, 2040 N. Milwaukee, with appearances by members of Billionaires for Bush (www.billionairesforbush.com) and an 8 PM performance by Schadenfreude (\$5 suggested admission). 773-772-0100, ext. 243

**I Want a President Who \_\_\_\_\_** The open-ended slogan on AntiGravity Surprise's DIY political buttons exemplifies the critical, participatory emphasis of "Selection: Take Us to Your Leader," a string of weekly programs leading up to the election. This week's session, Sat 10/23, 1-4 PM, at Buddy, 1542 N. Milwaukee, features politically themed art, a "memory game illustrating the choices available to voters," and a 3 PM talk by political art historian Peter Zelchenko, followed by a discussion (www.anti-gravity.info, 773-645-1853).

**Quickies.** "Pastoral," photos of guys and trucks, sculpture, and dioramas by Chris Grant, at New Jersey, 1801 W. Byron #2R, Sat 10/23, noon-5 and 7-11 PM, and Sun 10/24, noon-5 PM (773-368-0557). . . . Nature photos by John Keagy at the Cornelia Arts Building, 1800 W. Cornelia, Fri 10/23, 6-9 PM (773-935-1854). . . . "Making Dada Masks," workshop led by Jeff Semmerling, at Inside Out Art Studio, 2005 W. Montrose, Sat-Sun 10/23-10/24, 1-4 PM (\$75, 773-697-5012).

**Chicago Artists' Month.** In 1996 the Chicago Artists' Coalition put a frame on November, calling attention to the variety of art making and display that goes on here year-round; the city's Department of Cultural Affairs took over in 2000 and the next year moved Chicago Artists' Month to October. This year the focus is on artists' social, intellectual, and economic networks, summed up by the tagline "Art Connects." The "Chicago Art Open," an unjuried show with work by some 300 artists, runs through Sun 10/31 at the National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum, 1801 S. Indiana (see Museums). Models, drawings, and photos documenting the city's public art collection are on view through Sun 12/19 at the Chicago Tourism Center, 72 E. Randolph (312-742-1445). Members of Group 312 Films screen their work Mon 10/25, 8-10 PM, at Darkroom Bar, 2210 W. Chicago (312-733-5609). Many other exhibits noted in the CAM brochure are listed under Galleries, and some of the following Special Events entries are also part of the festivities. 312-744-6630

**Open studios** are scheduled at River Front Art Center Fri 10/22, 5-10 PM (500 W. Cermak, 312-498-6298); Fulton Street Collective Fri 10/22, 6 PM-midnight (2000 W. Fulton, 2nd and 3rd floors, 847-686-4629); Lunarburn Studio Fri 10/22, 6-10 PM (2215 S. Union, 773-551-2859); and Sedgwick Studio, with work by 30 sculptors, Fri 10/22, 7-10 PM (1544 N. Sedgwick, 312-440-9467).

**South Loop gallery walk** Most venues on this itinerary are on or near Michigan between Madison and 11th, with the Fine Arts Bldg., 410 S. Michigan, serving as home base and free trolleys running to the National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum, farther south and the site of this year's "Chicago Art Open." Participants listed below include the Museum of Contem-

Now Showing

## Cool Confusion

To see **James Turrell's** installation *Rayna*, I headed from the outdoors down a dark corridor. Inside the room, at first I could see nothing but the faint glow of incandescent bulbs and the silhouettes of two other visitors. Unable to determine the contours of the space, I was uncertain where the "art" was. And as curator Daniel Birnbaum has written in a piece on Turrell, "When your eyes get lost, your body falls."

After about ten minutes your eyes adjust and you see a huge dark rectangle on one of the walls. This "painting" appears almost monochromatic, though gradually it reveals some light within it that seems bluer and even more immaterial than the light in the room. I drew closer, even tried to touch the work with my finger--and "fell" into space: the rectangle is an opening into another room. The experience was profoundly destabilizing: what appeared to be a picture turned into what seemed almost limitless space; step back and it's a picture again, but a picture of nothingness.

Turrell is an internationally known artist who's been making light installations since 1966; *Rayna* is owned by the Art Institute, which exhibited it once in 1982, then put it in storage for more than two decades. Gallery 400 has installed it--as well as ten stunning, supple

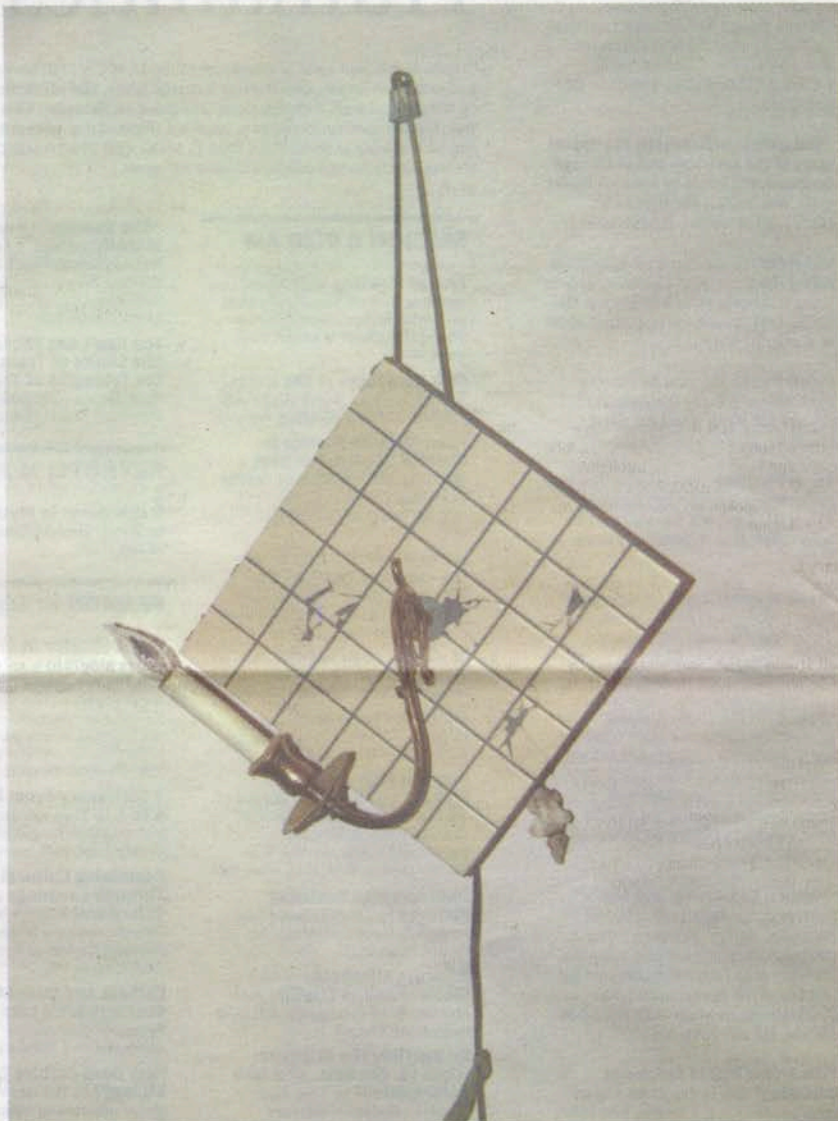
**James Turrell**  
Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois  
1240 W. Harrison  
through October 30  
312-996-6114

**John Neff**  
Western Exhibitions  
1648 W. Kinzie,  
second floor  
through October 30  
312-307-4685

saw the original have complained that this version is inferior. I didn't see the first installation, but I had a problem only on visits when I waited a few minutes before entering: the piece is best when you come in directly from daylight, because the initial disorientation is mirrored by the dematerialization of the "painting" into a mass of light.

In one of the best shows I've seen this year, Turrell carries to an extreme a tendency in the last century to make the viewer the subject. There is no object here; instead one is alone with one's shifting perceptions. You "see yourself see," Turrell has said. But for this you have to turn inward, and I suspected the two other viewers on my first visit weren't getting it: one stopped chatting with the other to call a friend on her cell phone to ask what it was they were supposed to be seeing.

**John Neff** denies the rational roles of solid objects in his sculpture show at Western Exhibitions by combining and presenting them in a disorienting, almost demented way. Eighteen of the 26 pieces here are called "decorative panels"--suggesting an ironic comment on the bourgeois complacency of interior decorating. *Decorative Panel #19: Cracked Skull: Wall Sconce* is a grid of white tiles, some cracked, hung in a diamond shape not quite flush against the wall. A sconce holding a candle-shaped lightbulb sticks out from its center, while on the back of it is a big stone (Neff calls it the "brain") with part of a spine beneath it. The rock-brain is juxtaposed with three gears also



"Decorative Panel #19: Cracked Skull: Wall Sconce" by John Neff

attached to the back of the panel--and as animate mixes with inanimate, Neff's world becomes less and less rational.

*Decorative Panel #14: The Tumor* seems more sedate but is also a bit unbinged. A ceramic soccer ball articulated in black and white tiles--a found object--juts out from a panel mostly covered with similar hexagonal black and white tiles, which Neff purchased. By repeating the ball's tiles in the panel, Neff confuses representational and abstract functions. And a chain between the ball and the tiled surface seems to have "squeezed" the ball from the panel; Neff says the effect is like "tying a string around a bedsheet to make a ghost."

Neff, who has a 2001 MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago, counts Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and John Cage as

important early influences. He says his art has always had a social dimension; he often uses found materials, for instance, from the salvage yard in Oakland, California, where he works. Some pieces comment on our culture even more explicitly. Two brass "wedding" rings are mounted below a ceramic vase shaped like a brownstone in *Decorative Panel #18: Fault Line, San Francisco, California: Flower Vase*, which Neff intends as "a souvenir of a time just passed in San Francisco when the mayor allowed gay marriage." Chunks of concrete surrounding the vase reflect "the materiality of the city," he says, while two cut roses in it are "symbols of love and life." What's startling, however, is the effect of mixing fresh flowers with ruins: the fragile roses etherealize, even spiritualize, the metal and stone. --Fred Camper

porary Photography, Fine Arts Bldg. Gallery, Finestra, Roosevelt Univ. Gage Gallery, and School of the Art Institute Betty Rymer Gallery. 312-913-0537

**Benefits.** Art auction to raise funds for the Chicago Canine Rescue Foundation, Fri 10/22, 6-9 PM, at Kass Meridian, 325 W. Huron, 3rd fl. (\$35, 312-266-5999). . . . Art sale and auction to support programs at Euclid Avenue United Methodist, Sat 10/23, 5-9 PM (with kids' art workshops 5-8); at the church, 405 S. Euclid, Oak Park (free, 708-848-7360). . . . Art auction and dinner benefiting the Museum of Contemporary

Art, Sat 10/23, 6 PM, at the museum's warehouse, 1747 W. Hubbard (\$300, 312-799-3509).

**The great outdoors.** Friends of the Chicago River has placed nine sculptures along the stream's main and south branches between Columbus and Wacker and Madison and Canal (the only location not on the Loop side of the river), through Sun 10/31 (312-939-0490, ext. 10). . . . Two dozen artists designed gardens mixing plants and sculpture for "The Art of the Garden," a Park District project that runs through Sun 10/31; 13 are in Grant Park, 5 in Lincoln Park, 1 in Wash-

ington Square Park (across from the Newberry Library), 2 in south-side Washington Park, and 3 in west-side Douglas Park (312-742-7529). . . . Pier Walk, on the south edge and landward end of Navy Pier, 600 W. Grand, continues, with work by 15 sculptors, through Fri 11/5 (312-595-5019).

## Galleries

**Robert Henry Adams** 715 N. Franklin. Errol Ortiz, Hairy Who-era paintings and drawings of machines and

machinelike creatures, through Sat 10/30. Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat noon-5. 312-642-8700

**Aesthetic Eye** 1520 W. Chicago. "Spirits," group show, through Sat 11/20. **Reception** Fri 10/22, 6-10 PM. Thu 6-9, Fri noon-9, Sat 11-6, Sun noon-5. 312-243-1520

**Jean Albano** 215 W. Superior. Mindy Weisel, abstract paintings, through Sat 11/27. Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat 11-5. 312-440-0770

**Anchor Graphics** 119 W. Hubbard #5W. Edward Bernstein, manipulated photos of Italian chandeliers and views from inside



**Western Exhibitions**, one of the invited galleries from Chicago, exhibited **John Neffs** *The Hobbyist* (2005), a photograph that suggests that Art Chicago may be tamer than in the past but hasn't gone soft. We see an intensely serious hobbyist in his workshop carving a huge erect phallus. There are chips around his piece-in-progress and tools behind him. This is a man in love with his work, who makes us wonder what he does with the rest of his time.

Victor Cassidy, *Art Chicago 2005*, Artnet.com, 4/29/05





# 2005: Dear Anthony

John Neff  
821 8th AVENUE  
GRINNELL, IA 50112

September 15, 2005

Dear Anthony,

It was a pleasure to see you at Art Chicago recently; I enjoyed our few brief conversations. As I mentioned, I’ve just returned to the Midwest and am living in Grinnell, Iowa. Over the next year, I’ll be completing a large-scale sculptural / photographic project here.

In addition to working on my sculpto-graphic work, I hope to complete some other projects that have been on my back burners. When we spoke at Art Chicago, you mentioned that Whitewalls might be interested in a proposal for a book. In addition to a description of my planned large-scale project, I’ve included two book proposals in this envelope.

The large-scale project, *Pornographic Pantograph with Allusion to Joan Sanchez Cotan (Patent Pending)*, is my most important work right now. (At this point, for clarity’s sake you might want to look at the enclosed project description, then keep reading this letter.) The *Pantograph* synthesizes different strands of my thinking over the past nine years. It brings together the “coldly” conceptual approach that characterized the video and installation works I made before and during my years in Chicago with the improvisational mode of my collages and assemblages of 2001 - 2004.

In order to make this work – and the synthesis it represents – more comprehensible to interested viewers, I envision a series of printed materials reproducing my work alongside relevant commentaries, source materials, and details of the psycho-geography of my studios and homes. Some of these publications will be conventional books; some will be other kinds of image-text objects.

The series will begin with a record of works made between 1975 and 1989, but its core will be a trilogy of text objects documenting works made after 2000: an illuminated manuscript detailing the production and presentation of collages shown in *Papers on Work: Collages and Explanations* at Suitable gallery in 2002, a scrapbook documenting the relief works shown in *Travels Between the First and Third Dimensions* at Western Exhibitions in 2004, and a

website presenting texts, plans, and images from the *Pantograph* (tentatively scheduled for a Fall 2006 premier at Western Exhibitions). (The sequence is historical: codex, printed volume, electronic document.) I’d be most interested in working on the first of the three projects with Whitewalls.

The book documenting the Suitable collages will be modeled on Medieval illuminated manuscripts. Like those manuscripts – like the installation of the Suitable show – the images and texts in this book will provide glosses on one another. Images of completed collages, collages in progress, unmanipulated materials, and tools will coexist in the book. Texts will describe completed collages, quote other documents, provide citations for source materials, and encode production formulae. In this way, the structure of the collage volume will be a foreshadowing of the website accompanying the *Pantograph*: both illuminated manuscripts and websites mix visual and verbal signs promiscuously and without priority. Both forms work within tight, small-scale formats that embrace, simultaneously, the grandest and the most banal themes. Additionally, both media harness light. I imagine the collage book in a deep-toned, heavily tooled cover (or one produced to resemble a hand-tooled surface) referring to the bejeweled bindings of many illuminated manuscripts and to the relief panels that followed the collages in the development of my work.

These volumes will have dual roles: aesthetic and documentary. I believe that these pieces provide some uncommon approaches to problems of contemporary art – concerns about art’s distinctness as a cultural discipline, about the effects of digital technologies on traditional genres.

I’d be glad to produce some mock-ups of my ideas for the illuminated manuscript. Please feel free to contact me at the above address or via email at [jdnl1@earthlink.net](mailto:jdnl1@earthlink.net) with any questions about my proposal.

As always, thank you for your time and careful attention.

Sincerely,

John Neff





# WARNING!

This gallery contains explicit gay adult pictures. You should not enter this gallery if such pictures are against the laws of the country or state where you live of if you are under the age of eighteen or easily offended by cock sucking, jock-strap fucking, anal blasting, and cum eating action!

young gay teen porn, amateur gay porn teen, free gay male porn, old and young gays, old men gay pics, free gay twink, gay personals, free gay twink boy pics, free mature gay movies, nude gay men, gay cock, young gay video, free bisexual porn, story gay, hunk men porn, hunk gay movies, gay teen picture, sexy gay men, naked gay, gay male fucking, gay fucking, older men sex, gay gallery, free gay teen twinks, gay boy movie clips, gays in underwear, gay anal, nude gay men gallery, gay fuck movies, gay cum, gay man sex story, free gay teen sex, free gay porn site, gay and more.



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Themes range from mild to wild – everyone will be satisfied!

Asian gay barely legal teen boy twink pictures  
young guys hard nude hard-core action

Cowboys / Gay Jocks / Interracial Men / Latin Men / Men In Leather / Thugs / Men Outdoors / European Men / Men Indoors / Jockstraps / Smooth Men / Erotic Bodies / Black Butts / Sports Men / Black Men / Men In (and out of) Briefs / Men In (and out of) Swimwear / Hard Men / Muscle Men / Nude Beaches / Butts / Cocks / Young Men / Ebony Dick / Men Showering / Men At Work / Naked Men / Groups Of Men / Men In Public /



Oral anal group masturbations huge gay boy orgies with deep penetrations! Cum eating and rim games and many more! Virgin boys first time opening the score!

NUDITY AND ADULT LANGUAGE. THE MATERIAL IS OF AN ADULT NATURE. IT IS NOT INTENDED FOR MINOR AND UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 VIEW THIS MATERIAL. BY CLICKING ON ANY OTHER BUTTONS OR LINKS ON THIS SITE YOU ARE REPRESENTING THAT YOU ARE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE. IF YOU ARE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE, IF GAY ADULT MATERIAL OFFENDS YOU OR IF YOU ARE ACCESSING THIS SITE FROM ANY COUNTRY OR CITY WHERE ADULT MATERIAL IS SPECIFICALLY PROHIBITED BY LAW PLEASE LEAVE THIS SITE.

### QUESTION:

DO YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENTS ABOVE?

If you understand AND accept these terms you may enter.

“YES, I AGREE.” ENTER.

“NO, I DON’T AGREE.” EXIT.

Long hard cocks entering tight asses. Do you like watching a young horny boy’s face as a long hard cock enters his butt? If the answer is yes, ENTER.

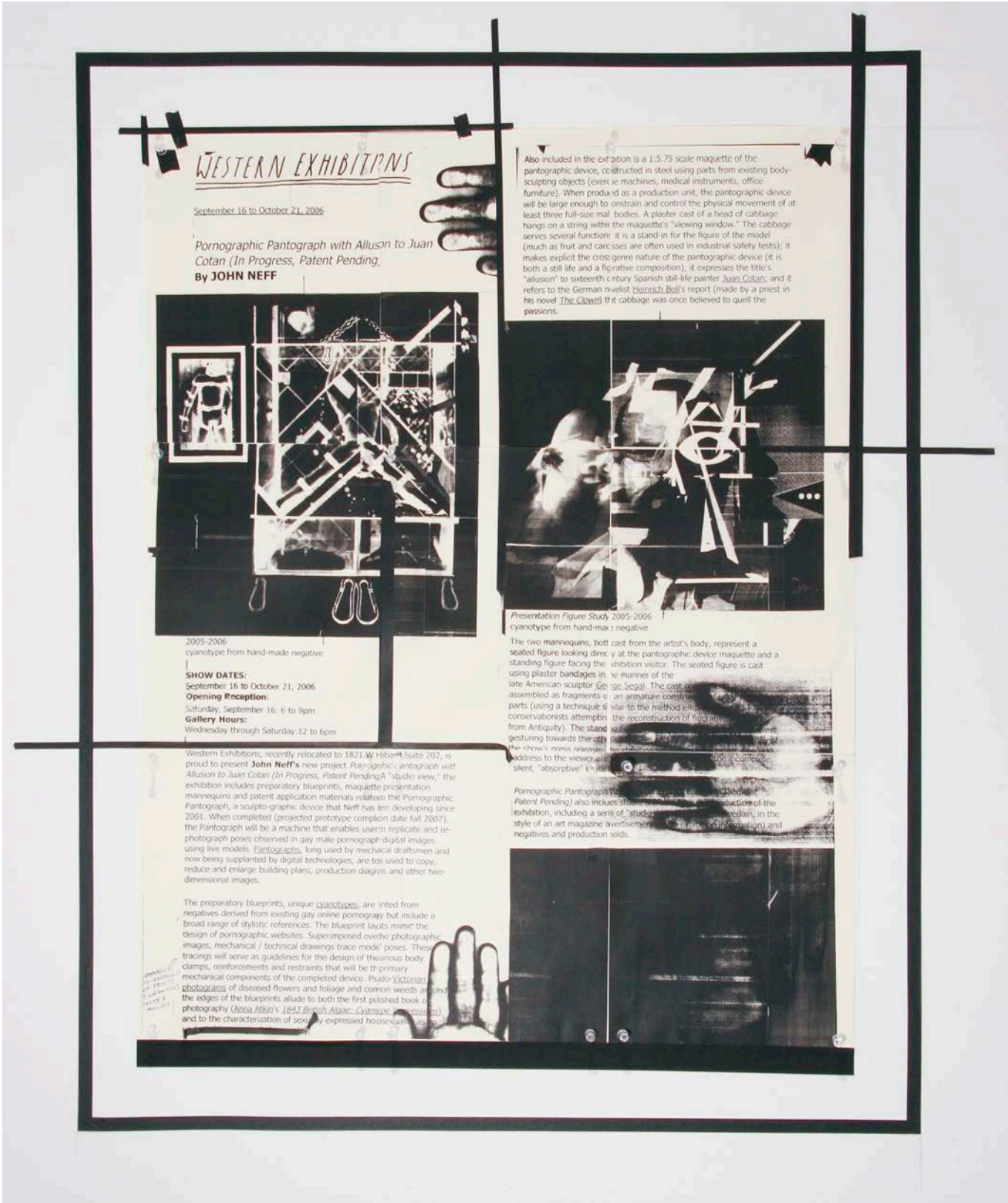
You will gasp in either ecstasy or horror, or some of both.

*Unscrew the locks from the doors!  
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!*





## 2005 - 2006: Pornographic Pantograph





# WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

## ***Pornographic Pantograph with Allusion to Juan Sanchez Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending)***

By JOHN NEFF

### **Show Dates:**

September 16 October 21, 2006

### **Opening Reception:**

Saturday, September 16: 6 to 9pm

### **Gallery Hours:**

Wednesday thru Saturday: 12 to 6pm

## **EXTENDED PRESS RELEASE**

Western Exhibitions, recently relocated to 1821 W. Hubbard Suite 202, is proud to present **John Neff's** new project *Pornographic Pantograph with Allusion to Juan Sanchez Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending)*. A "studio view," the exhibition includes preparatory blueprints, maquettes, presentation mannequins and patent application materials related to the *Pornographic Pantograph*, a sculpto-graphic device that Neff has been developing since 2001. When completed (projected prototype completion date fall 2007), the *Pantograph* will be a machine that enables users to replicate and re-photograph poses observed in gay male pornographic digital images using live models. Pantographs, long used by mechanical draftsmen and now being supplanted by digital technologies, are tools used to copy, reduce and enlarge building plans, production diagrams, and other two-dimensional images.

The preparatory blueprints, unique cyanotypes, are printed from negatives derived from existing gay online pornography but will include a broad range of stylistic references. The blueprint layouts mimic the design of pornographic websites. Superimposed over the photographic images, mechanical / technical drawings trace models' poses. These tracings will serve as guidelines for the design of the various body clamps, reinforcements and restraints that will be the primary mechanical components of the completed device. Pseudo-Victorian photographs of diseased flowers and foliage and common weeds around the edges of the blueprints allude to both the first published book

of photography (Anna Atkin's 1843 *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*) and to the characterization of sexually expressed homosexuality as an undesirable, marginal abnormality.

Also included in the exhibition is a 1:5.75 scale maquette of the pantographic device, constructed in steel using parts from existing body-sculpting objects (exercise machines, medical instruments, office furniture). When produced as a production unit, the pantographic device will be large enough to constrain and control the physical movement of at least three full-size male bodies. Plaster casts of heads of cabbage hang within the maquette's "viewing window." The cabbage serves several functions: it is a stand-in for the figure of the model (much as fruit and carcasses are often used in industrial safety tests); it makes explicit the cross-genre nature of the pantographic device (it is both a still life and a figurative composition); it expresses the title's "allusion" to sixteenth century Spanish still-life painter Juan Cotan; and it refers to the German novelist Heinrich Böll's report (made by a priest in his novel *The Clown*) that cabbage was once believed to quell the passions.

The two mannequins, both cast from the artist's body, represent a seated figure looking directly at the pantographic device maquette and a standing figure facing the exhibition visitor. The seated figure is cast using plaster bandages in the manner of the late American sculptor George Segal. The cast components are assembled as fragments on an armature constructed of used wheelchair parts (using a technique similar to the method employed by conservationists attempting the reconstruction of figurative sculptures from Antiquity). The standing figure "presents" the exhibition to viewers, gesturing towards the other sculptures and towards an enlarged copy of the show's press release. The standing figure's vertical orientation and address to the viewer are in every way the opposite of the incomplete, silent, "absorptive" white figure.

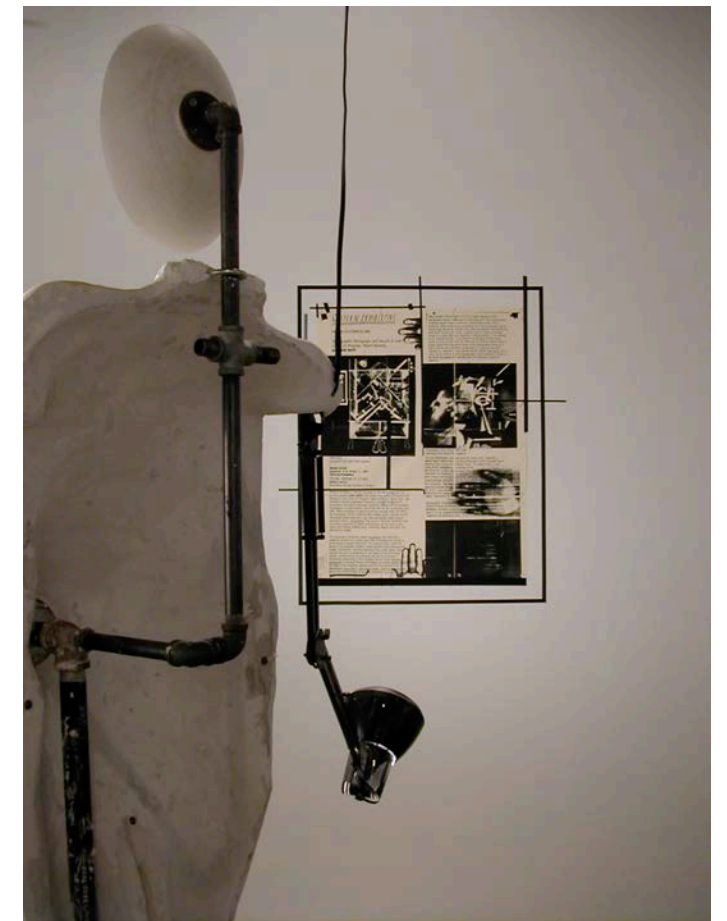
*Pornographic Pantograph With Allusion to Juan Sanchez Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending)* also includes studio artifacts from the production of the exhibition, including a series of "studio snapshots" (some overlain, in the style of an art magazine advertisement, with exhibition information), negatives and production molds. Contrary, however, to many "process oriented" sculptural and installation works now being exhibited, the *Pantograph* as a device will arrive at a point of definitive completion. The current presentation is a "studio view" of the

in-progress work, but the idea of the device itself exhibits a will to formal autonomy at odds with the self-consciously theatrical (to borrow a term from art critic and historian Michael Fried), open-ended nature of much contemporary "sculpture-in-process." (Work in the tradition of Robert Morris' *Continuous Project Altered Daily* and Robert Smithson's *Non-Sites*). The theatrical work, by definition, is always incomplete in itself, acknowledging and depending, as it does, on the presence of an observer.

Art is in the midst of a crisis of appearances, one that arises – simultaneously and relatedly – out of the neo-avant-garde's rejection of the formal autonomy of the work of art (however contingent) and the rise the spectacle as a primary means of socio-political control in the West. Precipitated by the knowledge that today all things appear first as their exchange value, this crisis is all the more deeply felt in an artistic context of radical questioning of the stability of individual "acts of culture," a context that undermines - or preempts - emphatic self-definitions. Much serious contemporary art uncritically adopts a theatrical relationship to its viewers in an effort to respond to, resolve or intensify (hoping to exacerbate the collapse of Art as a disciple and, by extension, existing social orders) the crisis of appearances. The will to formal autonomy, on the other hand, necessarily entails an indifferent, conflicted or troubled relationship between the artwork / situation / device and an observer. In the context of a commercial contemporary art gallery, these statements are insane but necessary.

Historically, the *Pantograph* stands (humbly) in a long line of systematically sensual artworks stretching from Pontormo to the present. This tradition marries methodical - sometimes quasi-scientific - formal experimentation with a keen appreciation of the "excesses" of vision and body, those experiences that evade and respond inconclusively to analytical interpretation. The seventeenth century Spanish monk Juan Sanchez Cotan, for example, painted a series of still lives in which pieces of ripe fruit and vegetables hang from strings in dark window frames. These lush images were composed according to strict algorithmic formulae. On a page titled "Vegetables as Threat" posted in February 2003 on the website Vanitysite.com (since replaced, interestingly, by a pornographic hosting site) this mysterious claim was made: "Juan Sanchez Cotan's fatal obsession with vegetables led him to a hellish impasse, which he escaped only by the total renunciation of this world for a rigidly cloistered life."

In relation Neff's own oeuvre, the project will extend the interests of his installation pieces and works on paper. Like the *Pantograph*, the installations *Vexations* (1997) and *White* (1998), and the sets *Empty Space* (1999), *Figure / Ground* and *Repetitions* (both 2001), dealt with the relationship of flat images to three-dimensional space, the seduction of identical things, and the problem of the beholder's role (or lack thereof) in the creation of an artwork's "meaning." The artist's works on paper, notably those included in *Papers on Work: Collages and Explanations* (2002) have a two-fold action: they are simultaneously clear, concise expressions of a given set of rules and completely irrational objects.



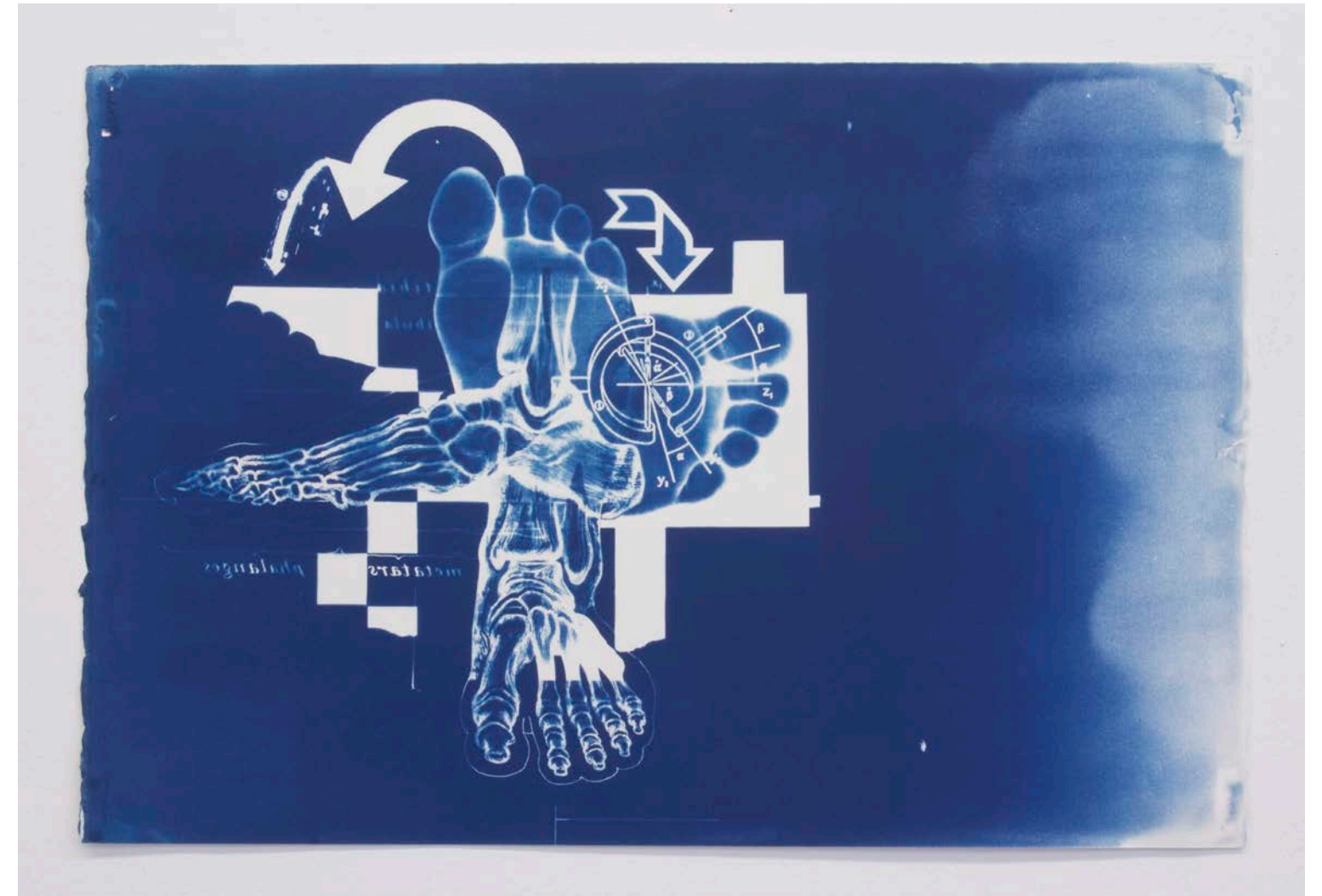








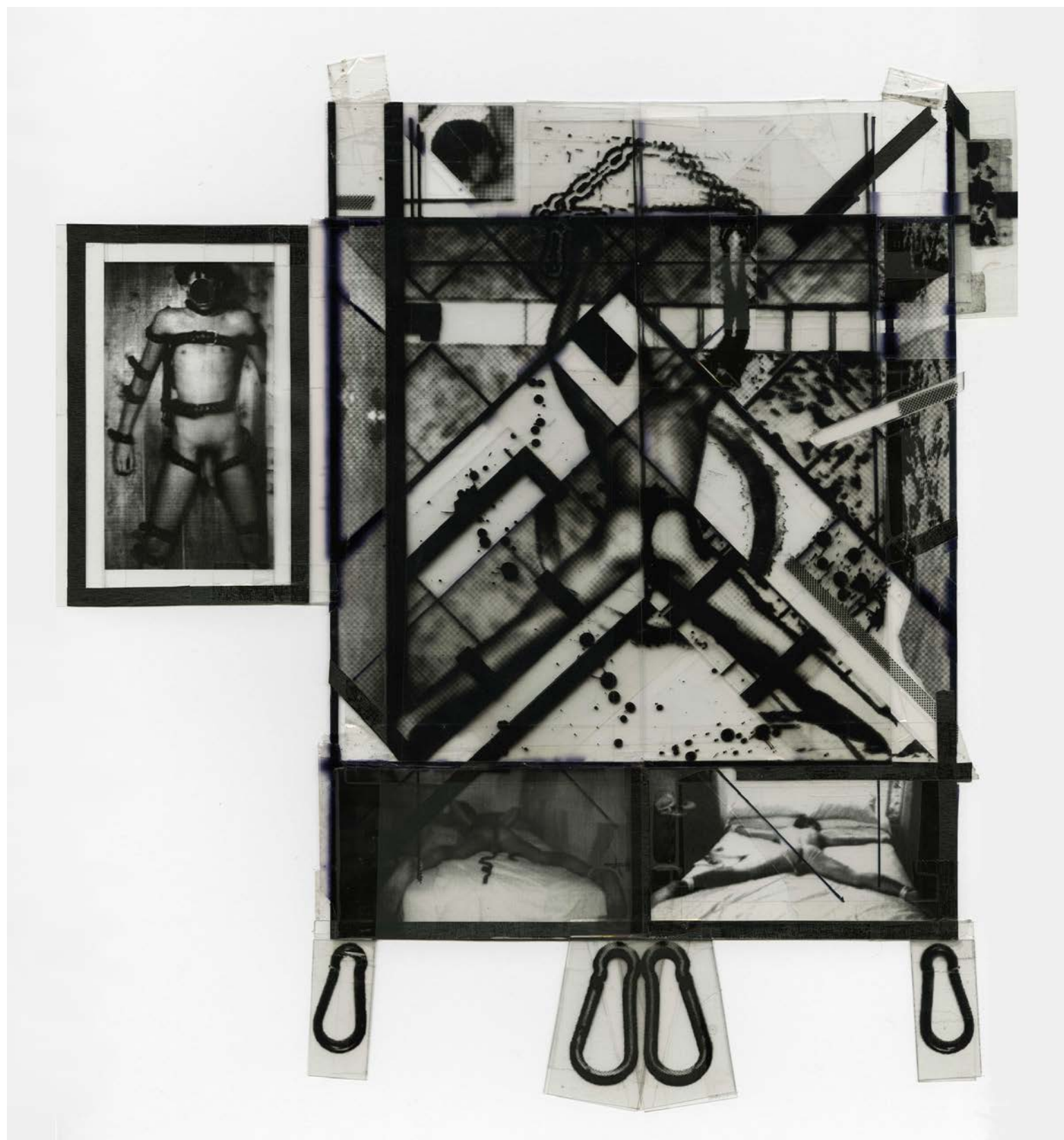




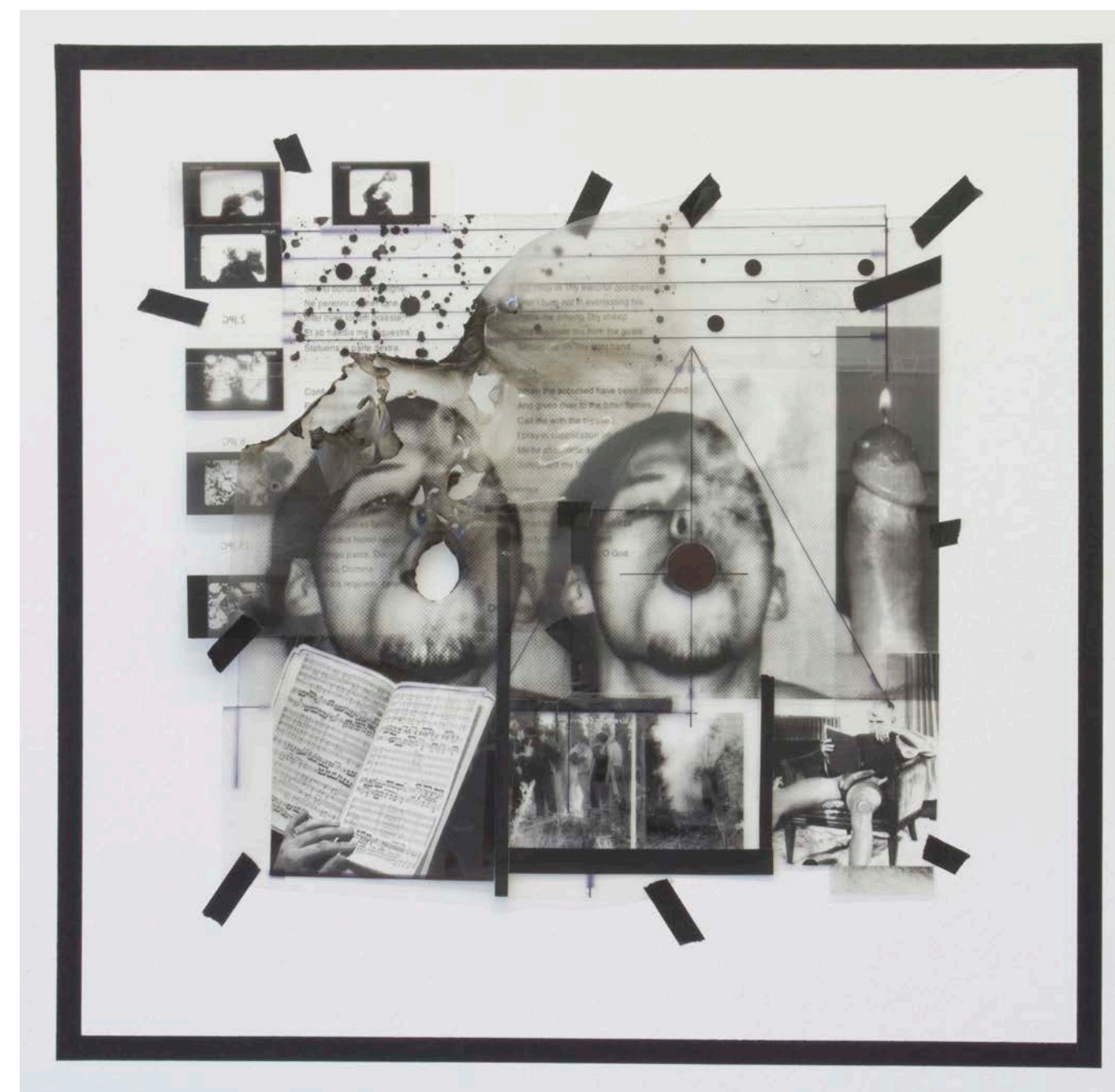






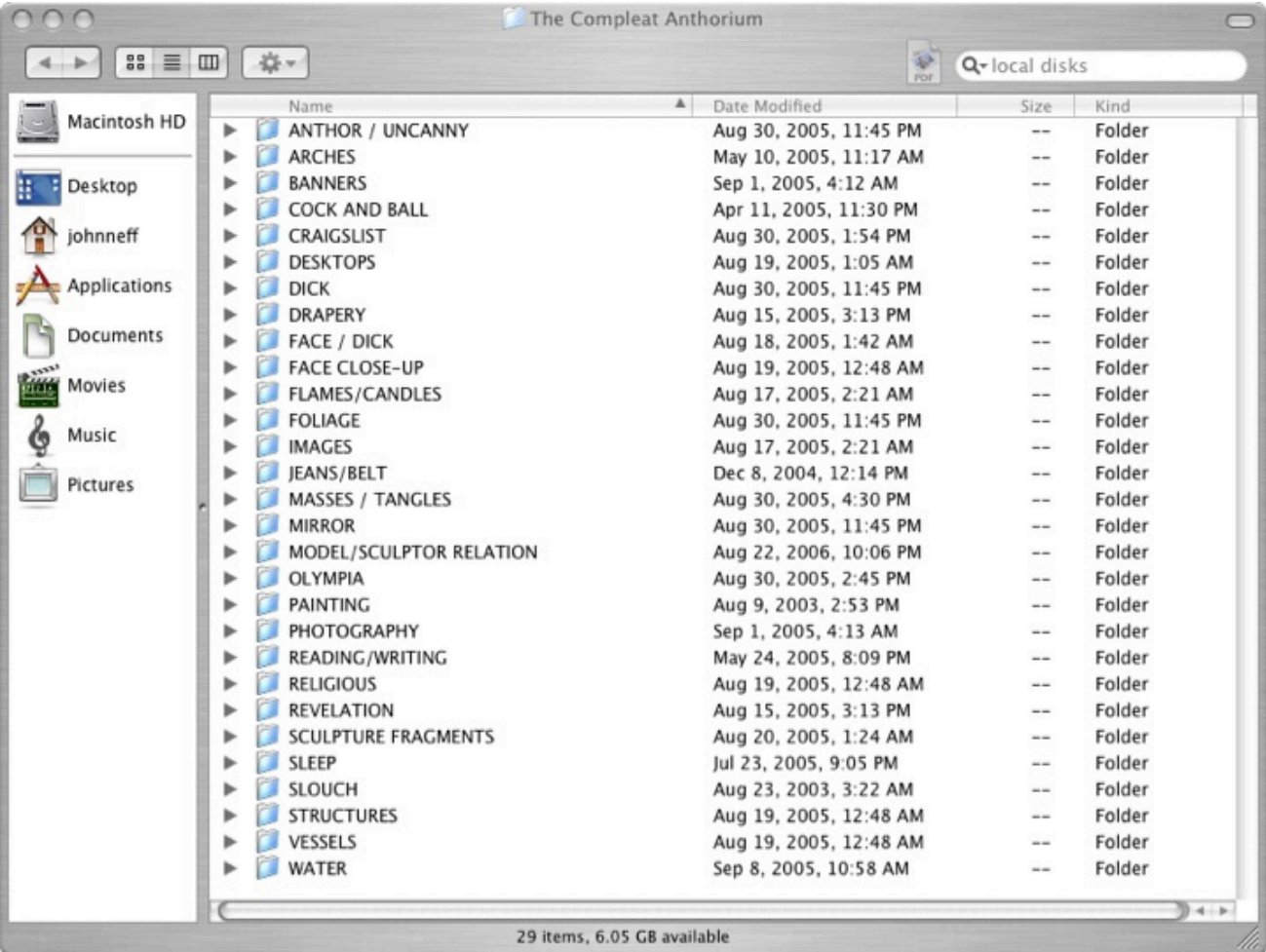
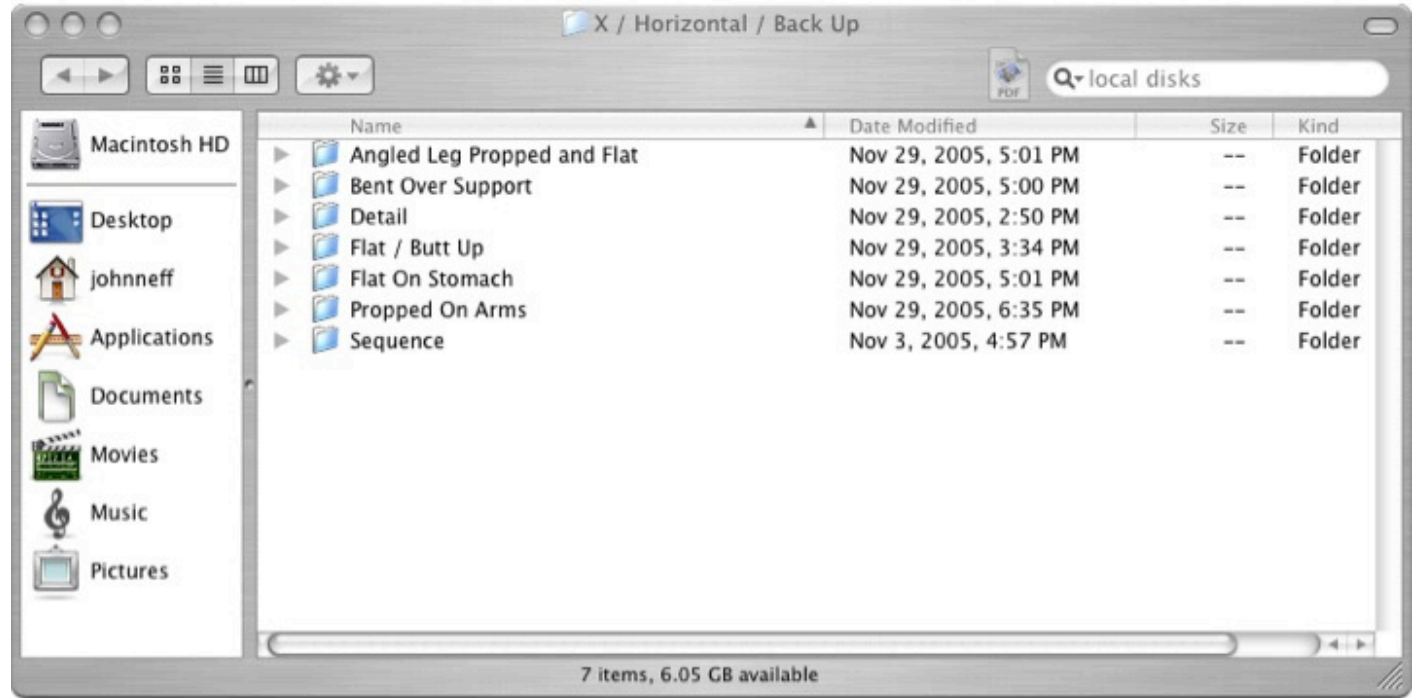
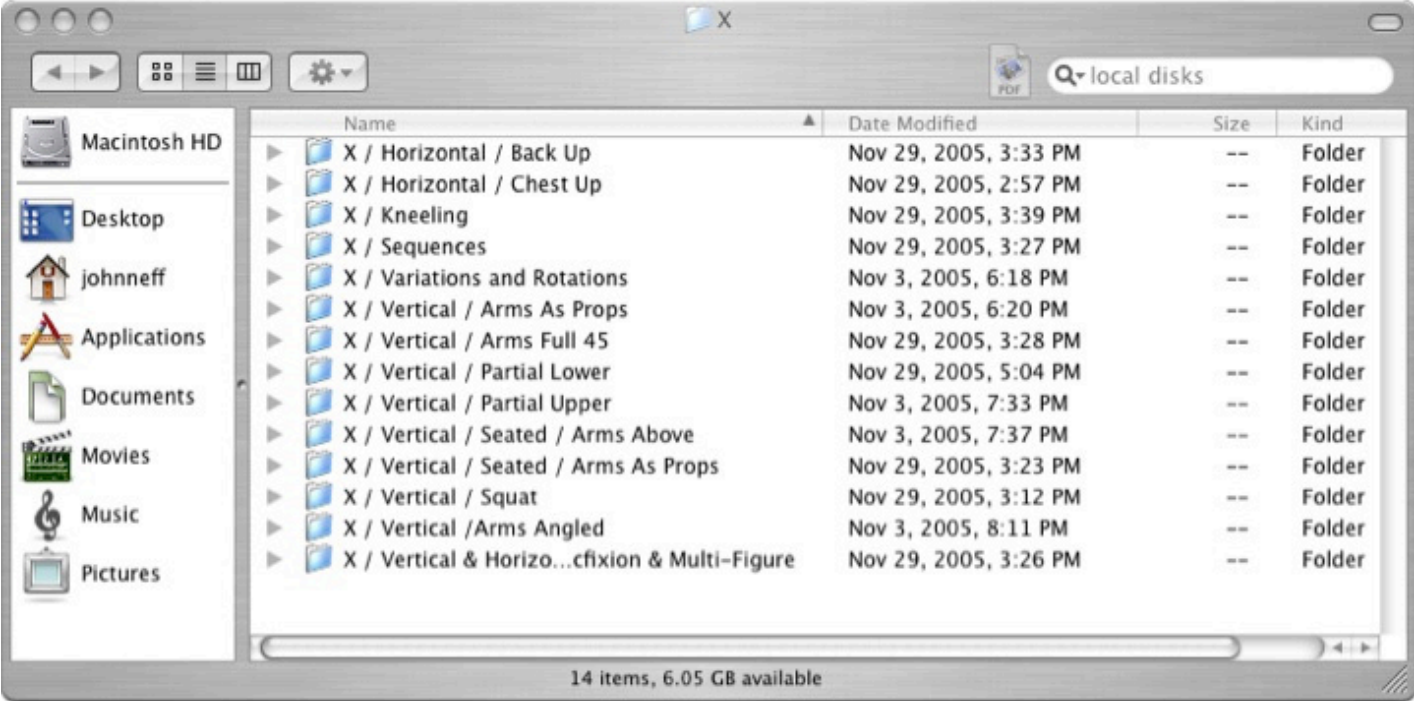


X, Acetate, marker, sealers, tapes, toner

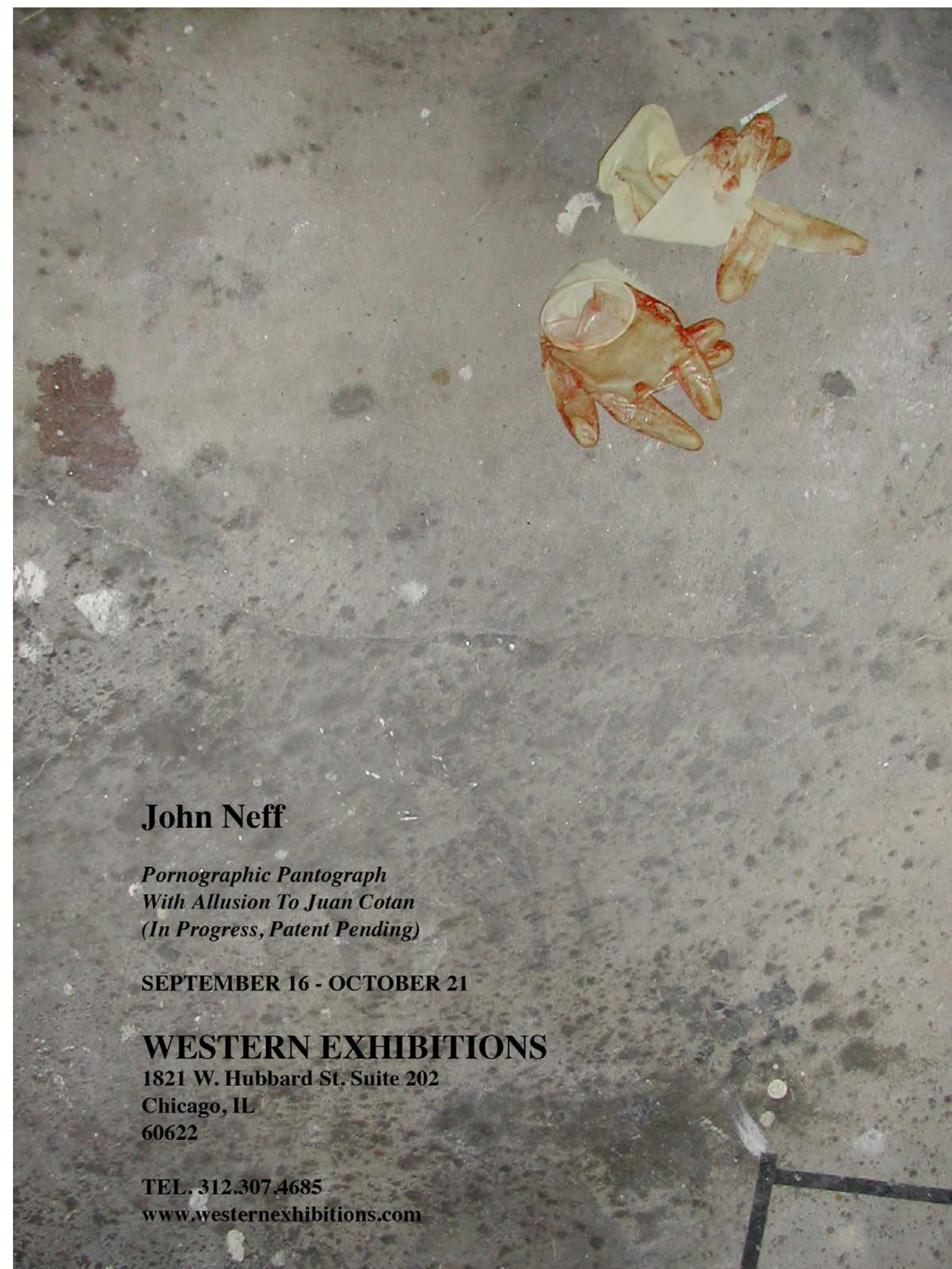
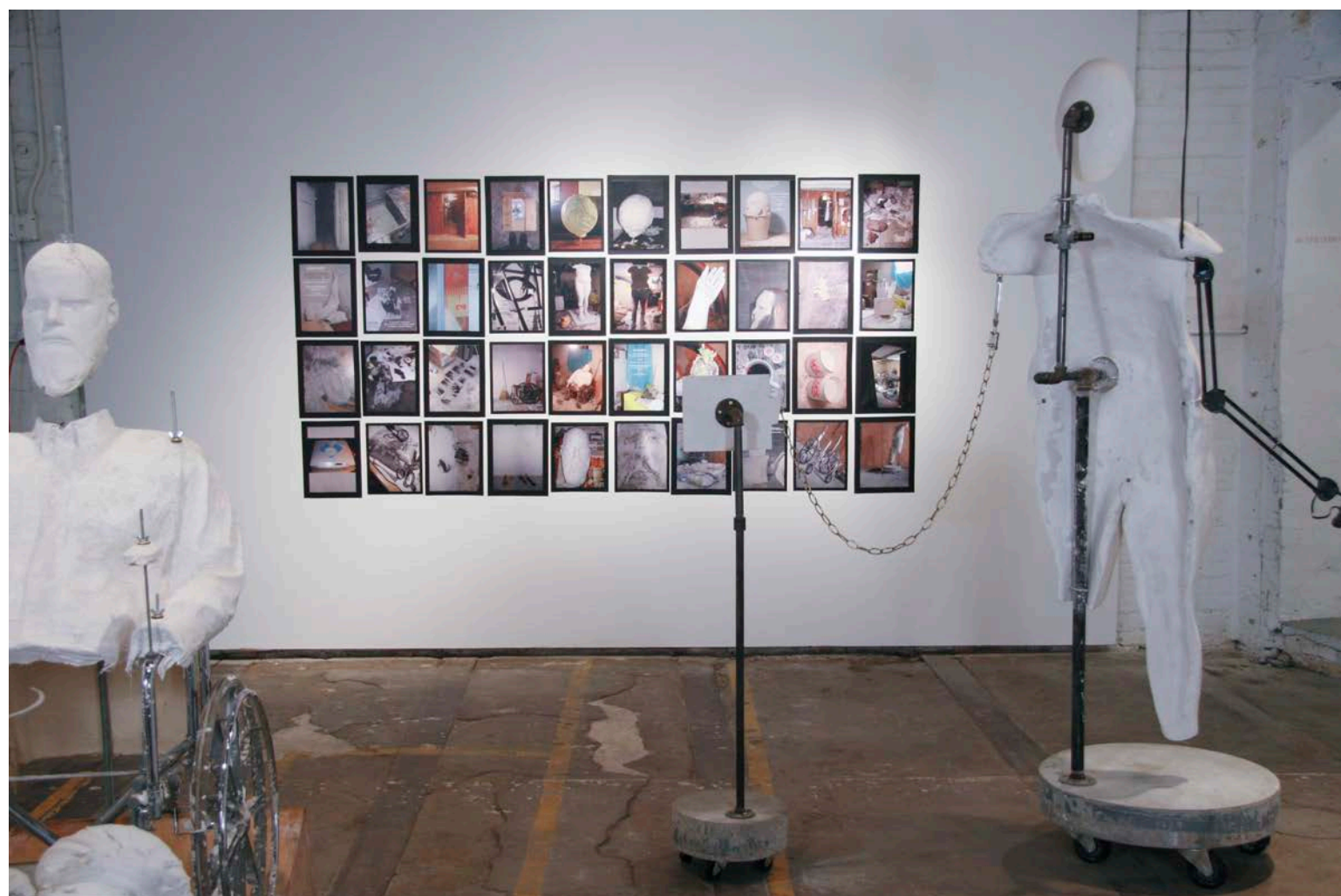


Negative (Brûlage), Acetate, ink, marker, sealers, tapes, toner / tape on wall









**John Neff**

*Pornographic Pantograph  
With Allusion To Juan Cotan  
(In Progress, Patent Pending)*

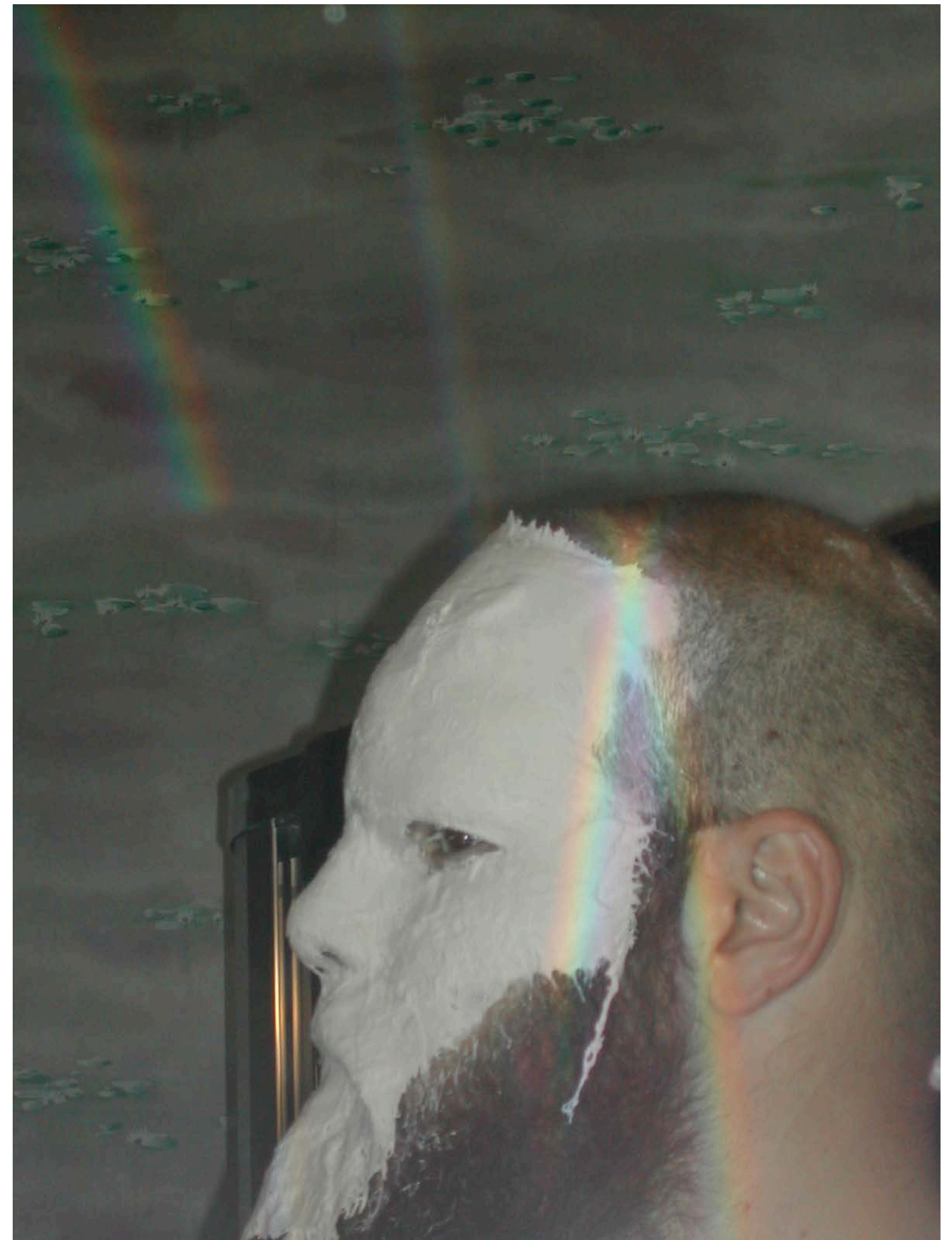
SEPTEMBER 16 - OCTOBER 21

**WESTERN EXHIBITIONS**

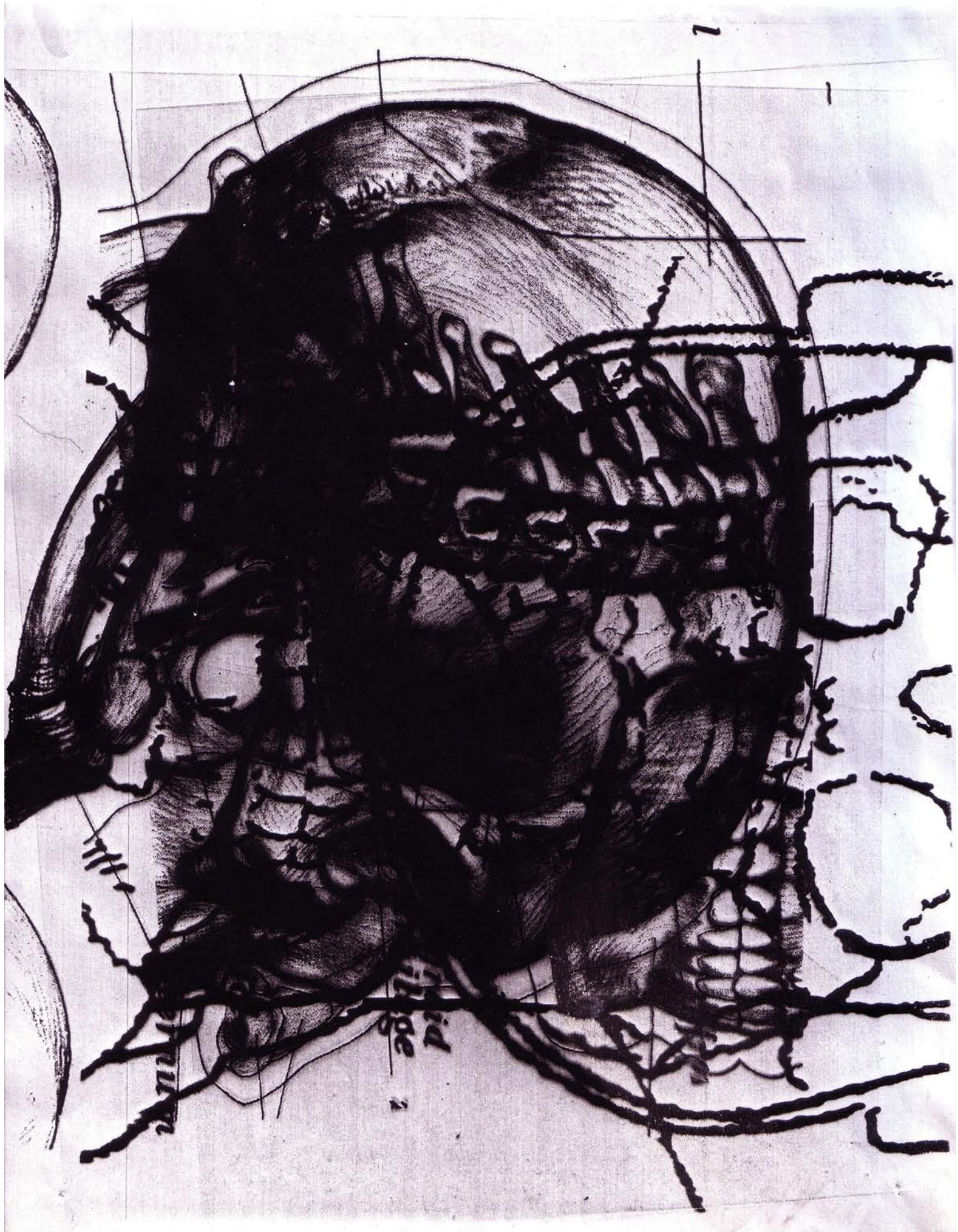
1821 W. Hubbard St. Suite 202  
Chicago, IL  
60622

TEL. 312.307.4685  
[www.westernexhibitions.com](http://www.westernexhibitions.com)

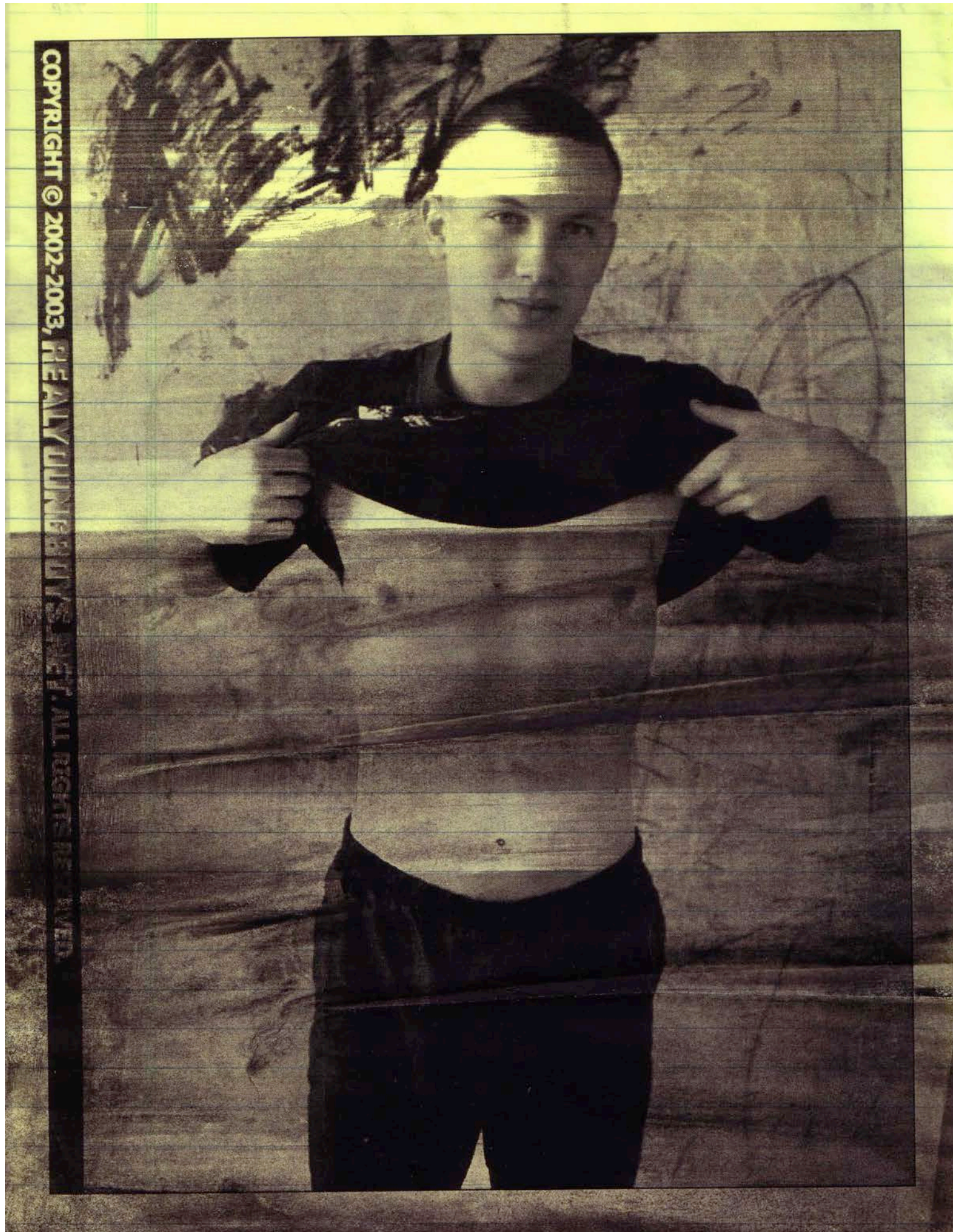












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a butt is just the top of a leg

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## a butt is just the top of a leg - 24

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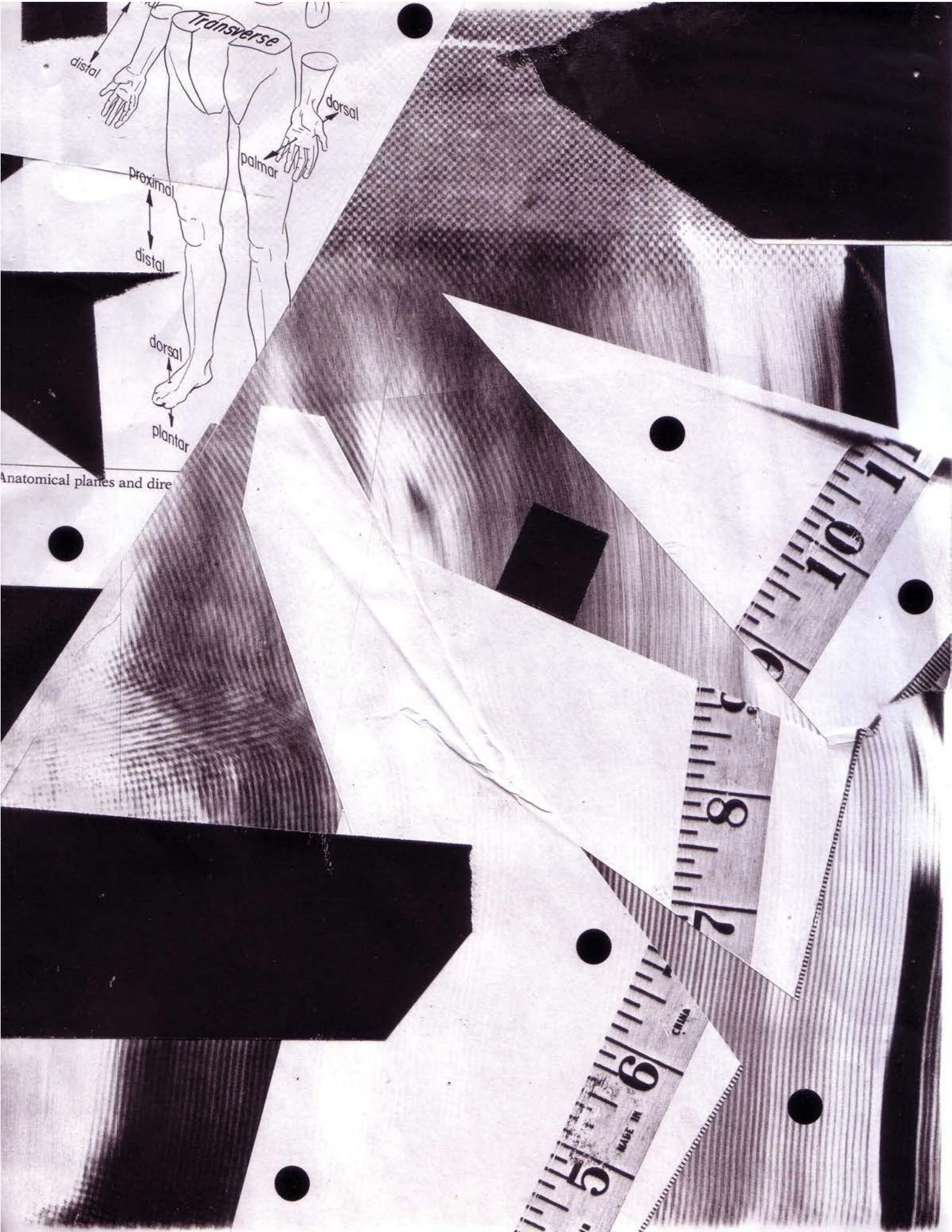
a shoulder is just the garage of your arm, a pec is the spreading hairy masculinity, an ab is just the place to where it all comes together, a toe is just an antennae, a thigh is just a landing strip, a hole is just a nervous invitation, a neck is just an extension of possibility, an armpit is the tropical zone, a bicep is a way to say you love yourself, a hand is a thing to cup, claw, pull and interlace with, a mouth is just the softest thing you can imagine, an eye is a high end, small plasma screen, hair is the frosting on the cake and a dick and balls are the ornament of beauty and power, 24 y/o windsurfer iso something 2nite

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# 2005 - 2006: Visiting Artist Lecture

**Delivered at University of Wisconsin - Madison and the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, fall-winter 2005-06.**

The first doll was the first man. Genesis 2:7 reads “And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” Adam’s name is derived from *aw-dawm*, the Hebrew word for man, but it is also closely related to *aw-dawm-ah*, which means red earth or red clay. And so art preceded life, and it is we who come from dolls and sculptures rather than being, as we like to believe, their masters. Art as a striving for mastery, for a control like that of the first maker.

From earth, to earth. In the words of the English burial service “dust to dust,” from Genesis 3:19’s “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” Paul Dickinson’s 2004 audio sculpture *Music For Worms and Compost* consists of a large, carefully crafted, sealed plywood box filled with rich humus and earthworms. (Humus, like human, comes from the Greek word for earth.) Powerful microphones buried deep within the box broadcast the sound of the burrowing creatures through large speakers at the gallery’s perimeter. All boxes of a certain size recall coffins (we think of all enclosed boxes as coffins; the coffin — with, perhaps, the safe — is the Ur box). The association is very present in *Music For Worms and Compost*: its floor-bound placement, the wet fragrance of the earth, and the low, chanting hum of the worms intensify the funereal atmosphere. The hermaphroditic earthworm, creature of the dirt, has the power to reproduce itself. Also, when cleanly cut in two, the mighty worm can regenerate its severed segments. It is fragment that is not a fragment. What do these remarkable creatures sing?

For William S. Burroughs, language was a virus that originated in deep pre-history as a “singing sickness” among a now-extinct species of apes. Those apes that survived the disease evolved into humans and began what Burroughs termed “a million year talk marathon.” Song, art, promises fullness and delivers bulimia. In his book *Elizabeth Costello*, a fiction woven around a series public lectures given by the titular character, J.M. Coetzee has his speaker caution against seeing human meanings in the animal world. She reflects: “The seas full of things that seem like us but are not. Sea-flowers that gape and devour. Eels, each a barbed maw with a gut hanging from it. Teeth are for tearing, the tongue is for churning swill around: that is the truth of the oral...Only by an ingenious economy, an accident of evolution, does the organ of ingestion sometimes get to be used for song.” Other beings may vocalize, but only human vocalization functions as speech. We cannot self-replicate (at least not yet), but we can self-represent.

And so art (here, song) can be inspired (awakened by God’s breath) or accidental: a triumph of divine ideation or a phenomenon incidental to the entropic unwinding of

terrestrial time. The human body is the ground over which these contesting approaches play. We have “The Figure” and we have “The Body.” How is each realized, how does each mean and when do these categories fail? What might lie between the Figure and the Body? How are these questions important now?

A note.

A note here on the popular concept of art schools as places where students learn “critical thinking” by “asking questions.” Over the course of the 1980’s, critical thinking — rather than, say, life drawing — became one of the primary skills taught in art schools. This was in large part due to changes in the mainstream art world (source of or aspirational destination for most art school instructors), a mainstream art world which during the later twentieth century shifted focus from a model of the artist as master creator to a conception of the artist as Duchampian arranger or impresario. The impresario’s role is to organize and articulate information for effect. The skills attendant to that goal are more abstract, and differently tied to the mechanics of public presentation, than the artisianal crafts of the painter or traditional sculptor. (This is especially true of neo-avant gardist works whose charge is to question the assumptions inherent in institutions of presentation themselves.) A dominant mode is almost always a degraded and banalized mode, drawn down by crude imitation. It is still important to continually challenge all institutions. Also crucial is an understanding that all questions, when it comes to culture, invite multiple, contradictory answers. Perhaps a change in the direction of my inquiry is necessary... Perhaps I should begin with a question that is both more general and more specific... A question like...

What happened?

Those are the opening words of Todd Hayne’s 1987 film *Karen Carpenter Superstar*, an account of the decline and death from anorexia nervosa of 1970’s soft-rock singer Karen Carpenter. The film is dramatized in part by customized Barbie Dolls. Feminist scholar Susie Orbach links anorexia with an objectification and distancing of women from their own bodies rooted in “the recognition of their bodies as commodities. A consumer society in which women’s bodies perform the crucial function of humanizing other products while being presented as the ultimate commodity creates all sorts of body image problems for women...[it creates] a disjuncture from their own bodies.” It is important to keep in mind that this theory is grounded in a vision of the body as -- at least theoretically -- whole, rather than as an amalgam of constantly mutating fragments. In Orbach’s schema, the celebrity and advertising cultures of which Carpenter was a part are deeply implicated in the fissuring of the female person into an appraising individual and a judged object. Unrealizable images of female beauty generated by the mass culture industry -- images like the Barbie doll -- provide models of womanhood to the appraiser and, unaware of or unwilling to accept their physical impossibility, she judges the object that is herself to be flawed and takes drastic corrective

measures. Anorexia is one extreme manifestation of this corrective impulse, although other examples are equally illuminating and appalling. Former flight attendant Cindy Jackson, for example, has become famous as the “Living Doll,” having had a sequence of plastic surgeries over several years in order to make herself resemble a Barbie Doll.

The Barbie / girl relationship seems the perfect illustration of what we might call the body dissatisfaction / destruction process. Engaged in imaginative play with Barbie, the young girl identifies with her, animates her, and begins to see her as a friend and a model for her own immanent womanhood. When this ideal is ultimately proven unattainable, however, the girl (now woman) begins a program of violent (fascistic, according to Haynes) self-control that can only lead to the grave.

Recent research, however, seems to contradict this widespread model. A 2005 study by the University of Bath in England found that, rather than identifying with Barbie, young girls questioned about the doll expressed deep dislike, even hatred of her. According to Dr. Agnes Nairn of the University’s School of Management “the meaning of Barbie went beyond an expressed antipathy...[to] actual physical violence and torture towards the doll... The types of mutilation are varied and creative, and range from removing the hair to decapitation, burning, breaking and even microwaving.”

What might cause such an intense reaction to Barbie? Dr. Nairn reports: “The girls almost always talked about having a box full of Barbies. (These were all British, middle class children.) So, to them, Barbie has come to symbolize excess. Barbies are not special, they are disposable, and are thrown away and rejected.” The study found that Barbie’s “multiple personalities” were a problem for the children interviewed. The doll’s legion identities (Surfing Barbie, Dr. Barbie, Flight Attendant Barbie, etc.) were widely seen not as expressions of possibility but as manifestations of a base inauthenticity. Barbie has “multiple selves.” According to Dr. Nairn: “from the children’s point of view they are simply being imaginative in disposing of an excessive commodity in the same way as one might crush cans for recycling.”

I myself was recently involved in the dispersal of a horde of Barbies. This collection, rather than being the result of sloppily excessive consumption, was carefully and lovingly gathered over the course of decades by one woman. I work as a researcher, copy writer and photographer for a man who consigns antiques and “collectibles” on eBay. The Barbie collector was nearing the end of a long struggle with terminal brain cancer and wanted to sell her dolls to offset outstanding medical expenses and to insure that they ended up “in good hands.” She approached the store owner and he took possession of over three thousand Barbie dolls.

Most of the dolls had never been played with, never even removed from their original boxes. Preserved in the bright pink cardboard and transparent plastic of their coffins,

they seemed to invite not empathy but idolatry. That is, they became pictures, symbols in three dimensions. The now “collectible” dolls represented not the possibilities of a single body, but rather association with a class of consumers (connoisseurs and collectors) and proximity to a set of memories (personal and cultural memories expressed as nostalgia).

The task of selling the dolls involved learning the material culture, history and lexicon of a highly specific group of collectors. Hair color, foot shape, box construction — all played a part in determining the value of individual dolls. Two seemingly identical Barbie dolls may have wildly disparate values based on as little as a slight discoloration of one of their earlobes. Not all of the dolls that I helped to sell were all that old, either: it would be easy to imagine some of them as melting lumps in some English microwave oven.

So, what happened?

In his 1932 book *Dolls And Puppets* (printed, by the way, at the Pitman Press in Bath), Max Von Boehn says of dolls that they have “about as much in common with art as has the ape with homo sapiens.” His creation myth begins with the doll, in his words “The first, still tentative, attempt at formative plastic modeling.” When “this plastic modeling develops into Art the doll does not disappear; one might say that while the doll was not permitted to enter into Art’s holy of holies it was allowed to remain in the courtyard of the temple... Art has striven to present a reflection of the soul; the doll has renounced this psychological motive in order to accentuate and intensify the shallow and the external.” Putting aside for a moment the high Modernist religiosity and cultural chauvinism of Von Boehn’s remarks, we might agree that the doll, the Barbie, tells us much more about us than about the molded convolutions of her own interior.

The Barbie doll, for over forty years a 12” long piece of plastic and rubber pressed and molded into a little-changed representation of the female human body, has undergone radical alterations in use and meaning. The intended consumers of the doll — young girls — seem to have rebelled against it (or now demonstrate a negative dedication to Barbie). What might might be called an “empathetic” reaction to Barbie has been replaced by a shocked realization of “her” status as an object. At the same time, a secondary market has been created around the doll as a cultural icon, a representation that is in effect pure brand, depending not on affective responses but on an audience’s awareness of and immersion in a detailed history of Barbie’s production, distribution, and evolution.

And a similar movement has occurred in sculpture...



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FIG. 6. CAKE-FORMED IMAGES IN TERRA-COTTA  
Cyprus

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Slide 1 of 92 100%





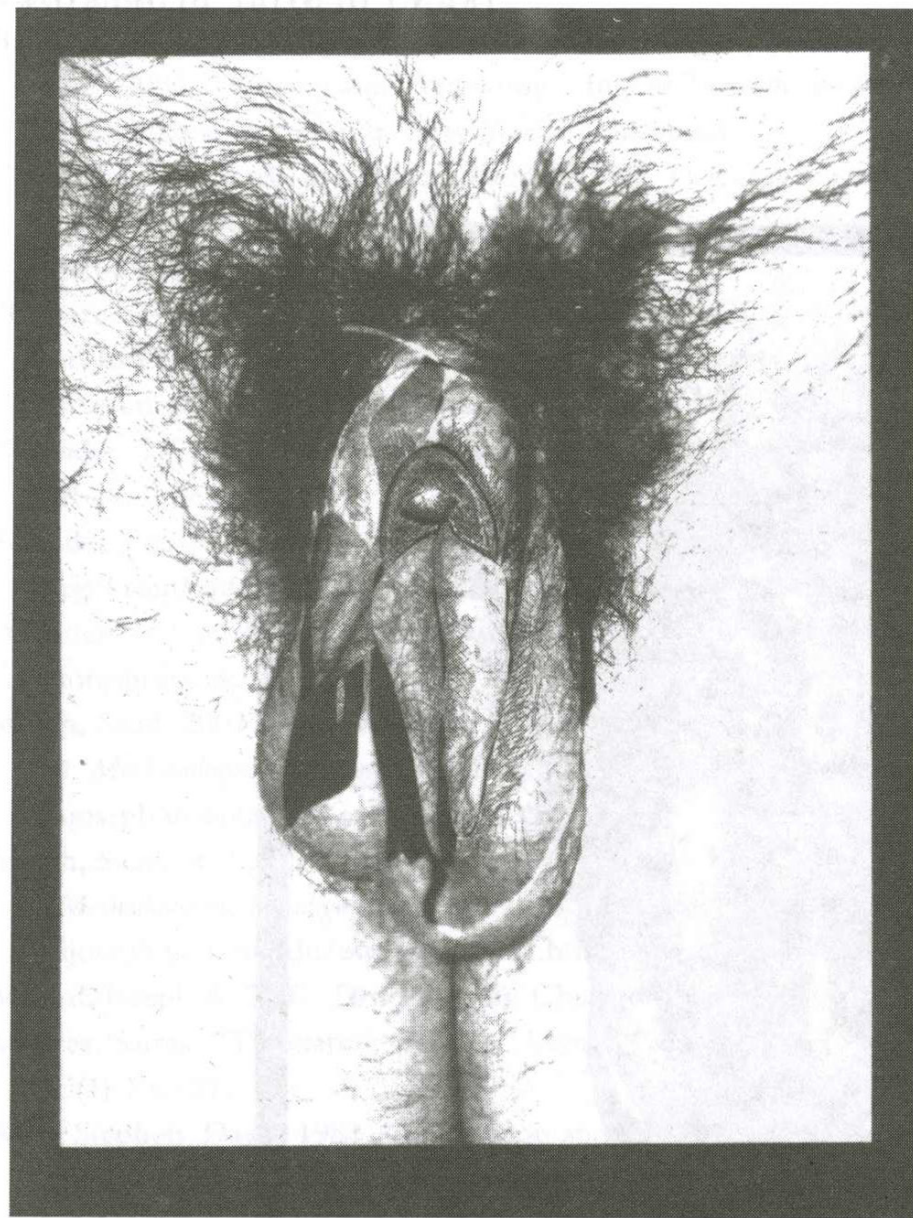
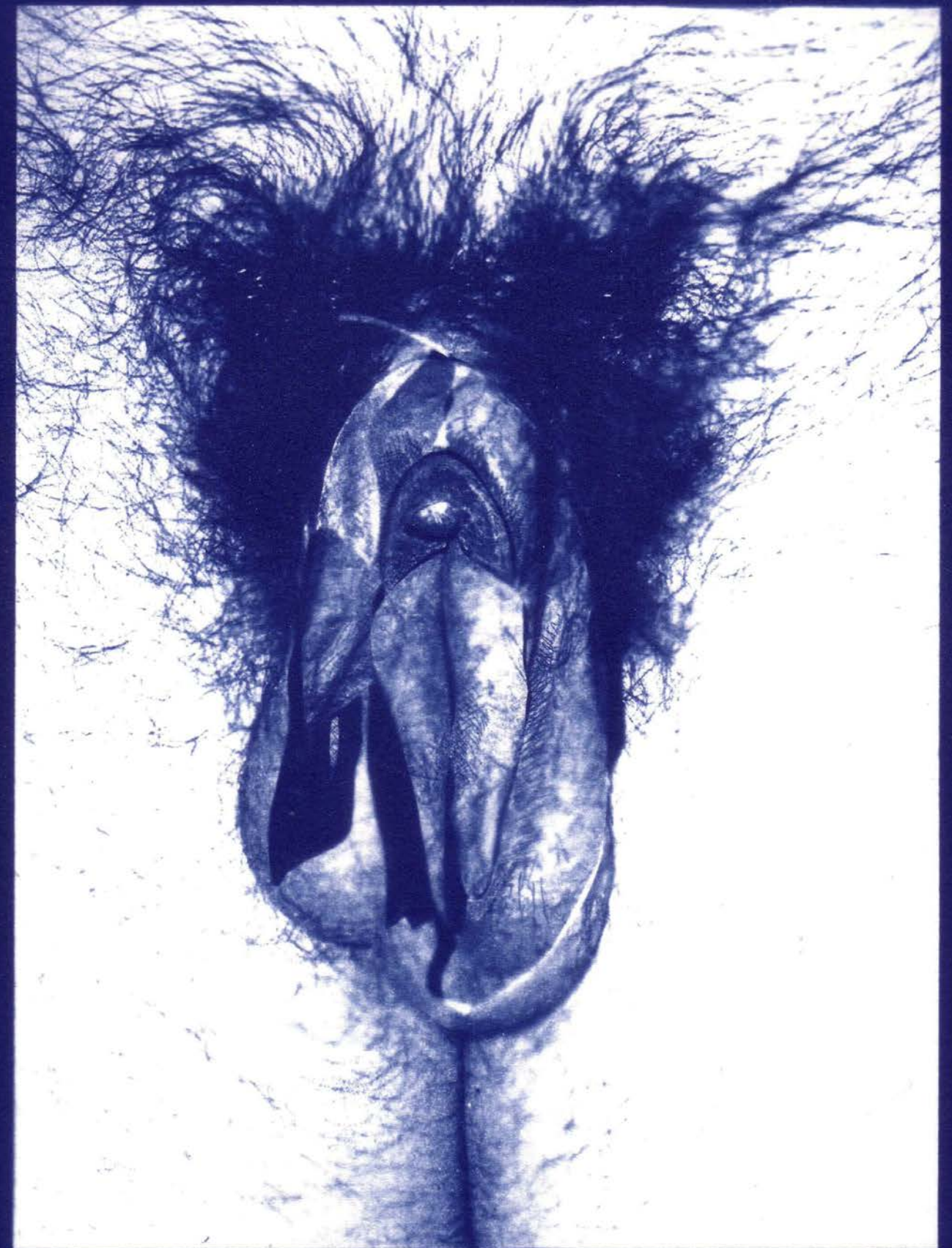


Fig. 2. *Trans Genital Blueprint* (Etching). Cyanotype on paper.  
8 1/2 x 11 inches. Image courtesy of Western Exhibitions

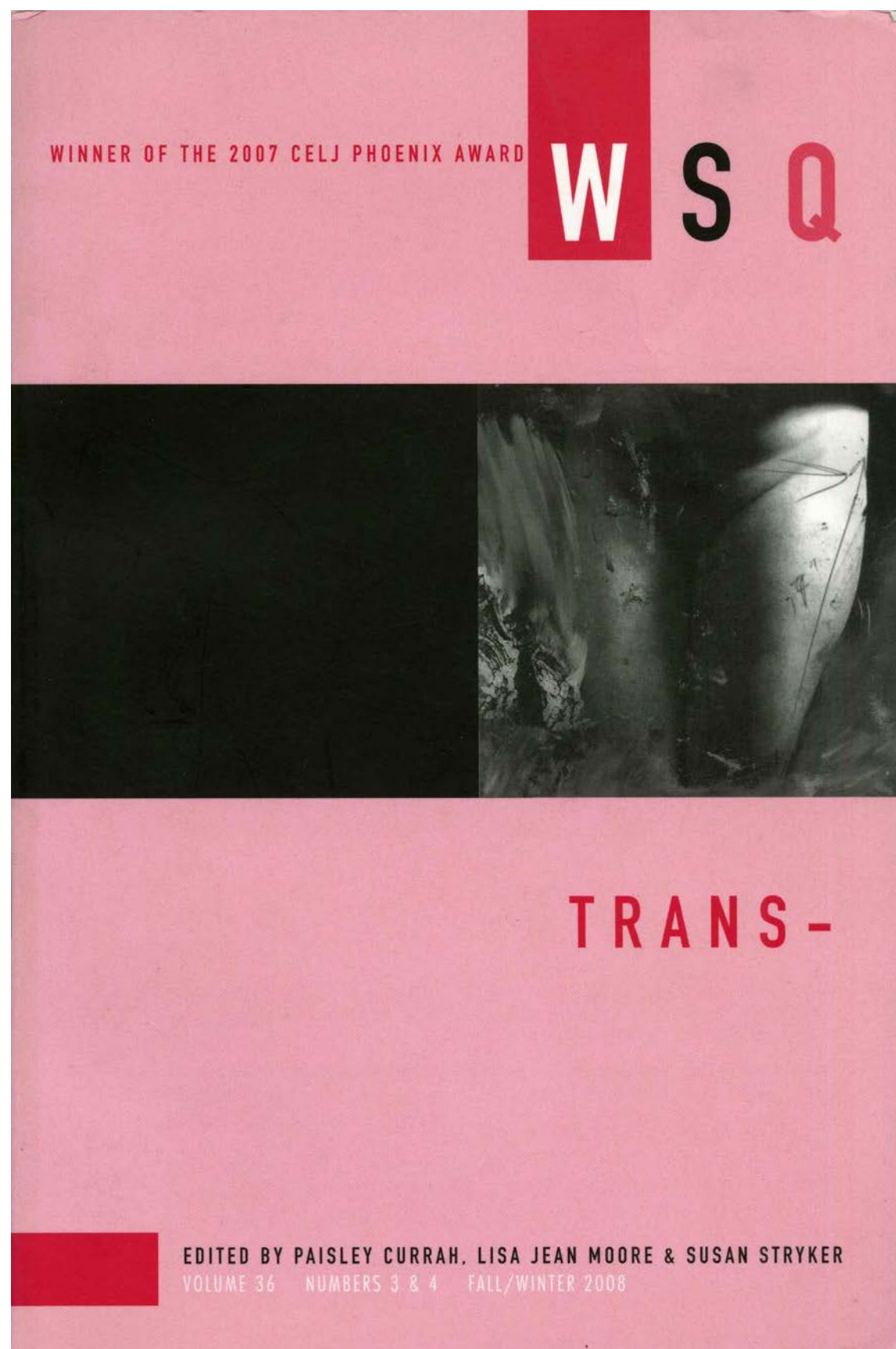
This work is from Neff's *Trans Genital Blueprints* series, a collection of unique cyanotypes (literally blueprints). All of the prints were exposed using the same negative, a photographic transparency of Neff's male genitals that was cut and reassembled to depict a schematic vagina.

JOHN NEFF produces works of art, organizes gallery exhibitions and practices short-form critical writing. He lives and works in Chicago.




M → F NEGATIVE REVERSAL J. Neff 2006







GRINNELL COMMUNITY



ART • GALLERY

Jordan Acker Anderson - Painting

September 8 - 28, 2006

Sponsored by Wells Fargo

John Neff & John Celuch

Architecture Decorated & Documented

October 6 - 26, 2006

Sponsored by the Pennysaver

Warren Grant - Travel Photography

November 3 - 22, 2006

Sponsored by Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance

Mollie Osgood - Painting

January 5 - 25, 2007

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College Students - Sculpture

February 2 - 22, 2007

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Elementary & Middle School Art Exhibition

March 16 - April 12, 2007

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High School Art Exhibition

April 20 - May 17, 2007

Sponsored by Ramsey-Weeks, Inc.





2007: Snowfall



2007: Dan Ferro Testing a Scanner



July 14 to August 18, 2007

## PRINTED SPACE

**Or, Why So Many Contemporary Artists Are Preoccupied By The Collection And Display Of Many Small, Printed Pages**

**A Survey Of A Tendency In Contemporary Art With Works By:**

**Walter Andersons  
Tyler Britt  
Angee Lennard  
John Neff  
Melissa Oresky  
Amanda Ross-Ho  
Scott Short  
Aaron Van Dyke  
Pedro Velez**

“Over the course of the past thirty years, mainstream contemporary art’s attention has shifted between the picture and the page. That is, the aesthetic discourse of artists, art writers, and other market actors has privileged images and structures in turn (e.g. the 1980s passage from Neo-Expressionism to Neo-Geo or, recently, a shift of emphasis from Gothic figuration to forms of conceptual montage).

Now, some artists are attempting syntheses of these terms, talking about artworks in ways that fuse investments in pictorial effects with deep attention to the structures of art objects and the systems through which those objects are distributed. Small printed pages (photocopies, laser prints, cheap color photos, and altered advertisements) are a primary medium of this new work.

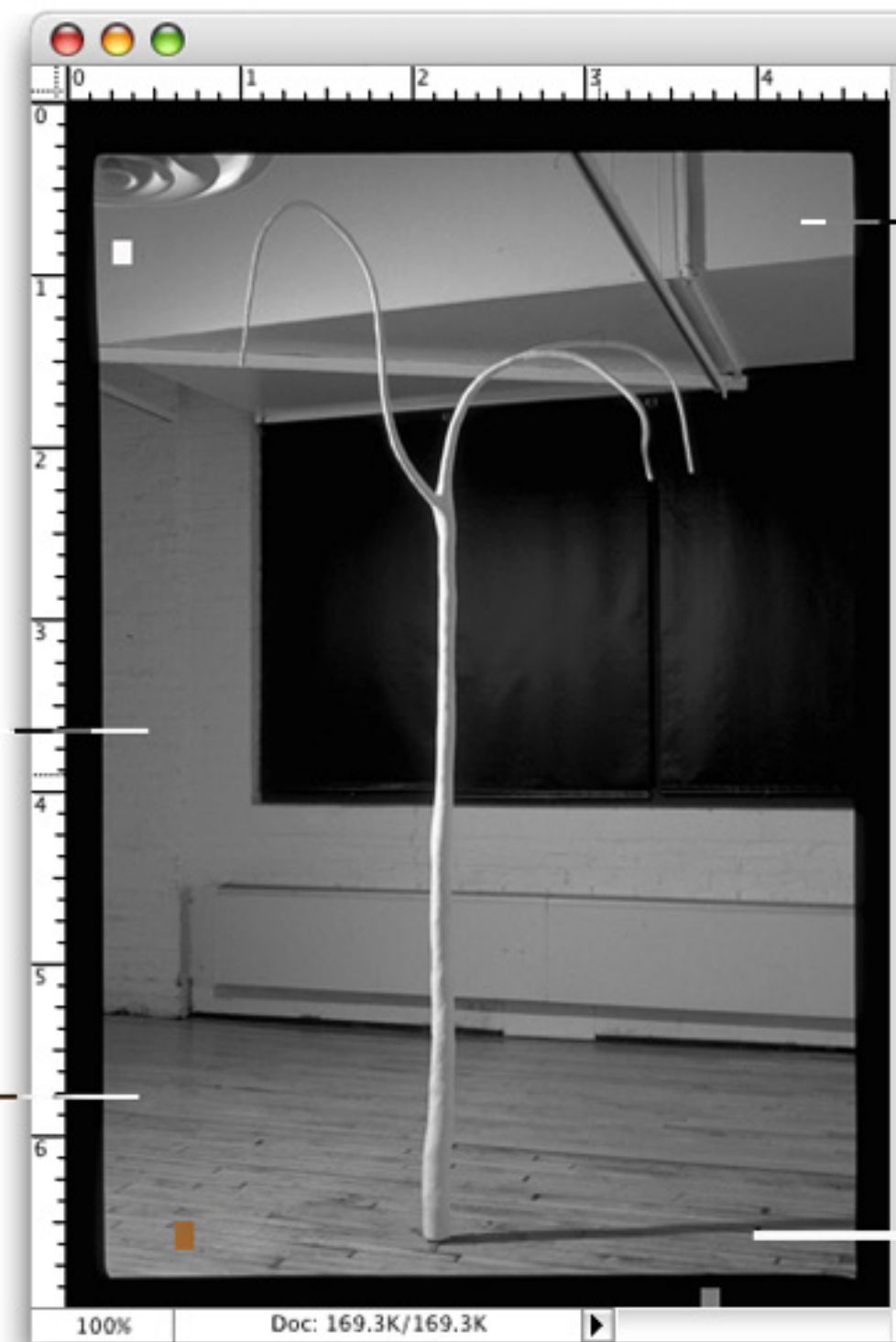
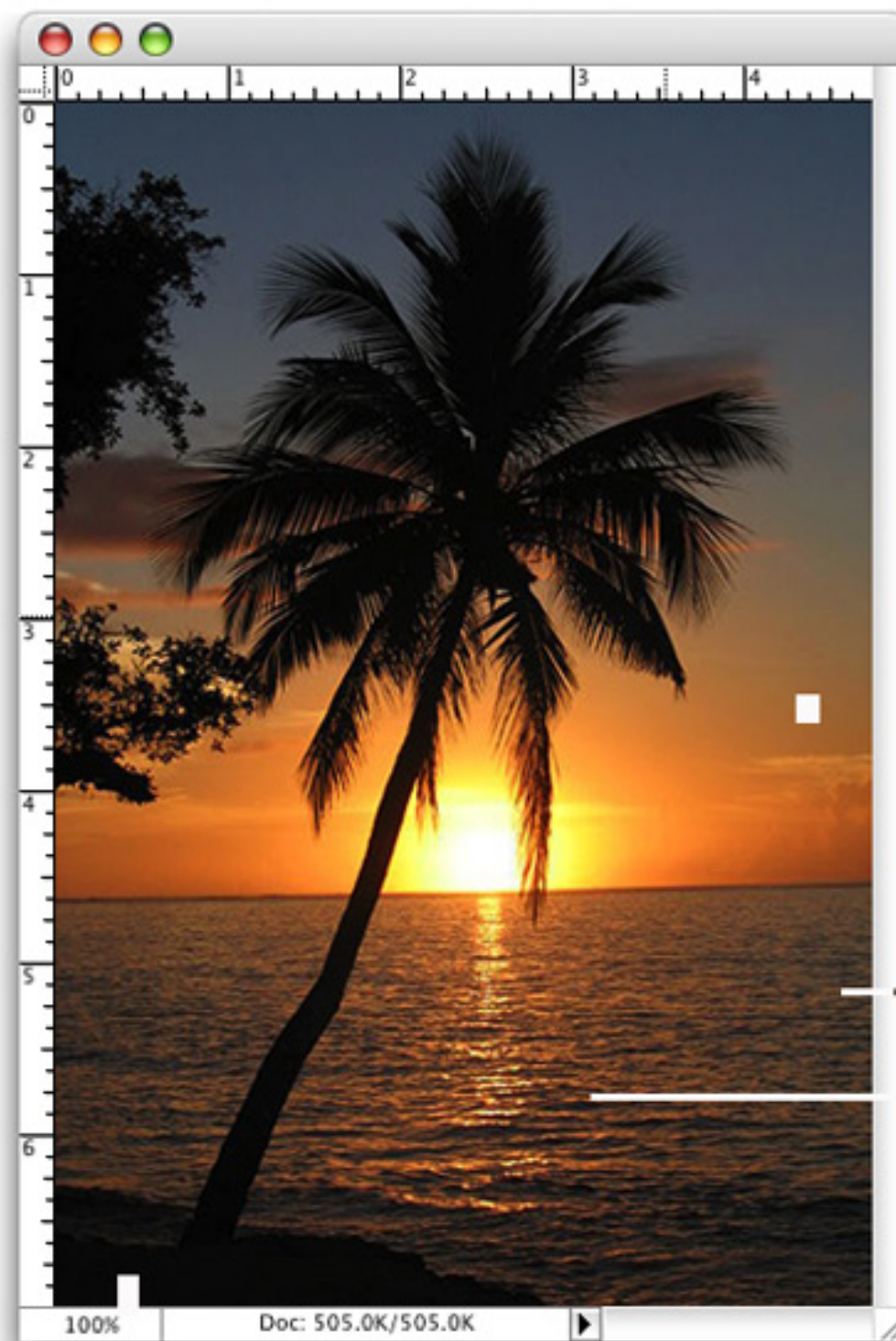
This art discourse arises from, and documents, the effects of increasing virtualization on daily life in the industrialized world. As the Cubists and Futurists imbricated the stuff of industrial society into representations of their changing worlds (with Dada, the aims of collage were different), so young artists today incorporate the materials and techniques of the internet age. Their work expresses a wish and striving to represent, through images being and touching bodies, a culture in thrall to sinister myths of immateriality.”

*Printed Space*, collated by Scott Speh and featuring an essay by John Neff (draft excerpted above), will be on view in Western Exhibitions’ Plus Gallery from July 14 through August 18. At the close of the show the gallery will publish a small Xerox catalog containing reproductions of exhibited works and a version of Neff’s essay.



*Dan Ferro Testing a Scanner (Negative and Exposure Glass), Acetate, toner, and tape on glass with rolls of tape*







## Marginal Notes:

Dan Devine  
Eugenio Dittborn

### "Dead Center/Marginal Notes: Dan Devine/Eugenio Dittborn"

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

1821 W Hubbard Street, Suite 202

January 12–March 29

"Dead Center/Marginal Notes" is a yearlong series of two-artist exhibitions organized by artist John Neff for Western Exhibitions. The stated focus of the program is to "deal—directly or indirectly—with the relationships of centers to margins (culturally, geographically, politically and within works themselves as a formal concern)." The project hits the ground running with this first installment, which brings together two works: one by Eugenio Dittborn, the other by Dan Devine. Dittborn's *The 22nd History of the Human Face (Trueque): Airmail Painting No. 123*, 1998—a blank bipartite canvas surrounded by a border of printed or painted faces (mug shots, caricatures, police sketches, and the like) displayed near mail pouches with thematic quotes and the work's exhibition history written on them—exemplifies the artist's interests in indexing the circulation of artwork and in investigating the international traffic of information. Devine's work, *Untitled*, 1987, is a small concrete block encasing an automotive part, the hollow openings of which are visible in the sculpture's center. In both works, the edge formed by a fold of containment, be it an envelope or the lip formed at the edge of concrete and engine part, offers the point of contact between a here and a there.

The subtext of this exhibition is distance in time and taste. Neither work is new, and neither artist is as discussed as he was in years gone by. Neff suggests the folly of current systems of judgment by turning his back on the implacable search for the next thing and concentrating instead on what is necessary, whether or not it is considered as being at the center. Neff in effect reminds that we forget far more than we know, an opening statement that bodes well for the rest of the series.

—Anthony Elms



**View of "Dead Center/Marginal Notes: Dan Devine/Eugenio Dittborn," 2008.** Foreground: Dan Devine, *Untitled*, 1987, concrete and automotive engine parts, 13 1/4 x 8 1/2 x 8". On wall: Eugenio Dittborn, *The 22nd History of the Human Face (Trueque) Airmail Painting No. 123*, 1998, paint, stitching, and photo silk screen on cotton duck fabric in two parts, 82 1/2 x 110 1/4".

**WESTERN EXHIBITIONS** 1821 W Hubbard St, Suite 202, Chicago, IL 60622  
312.307.4685 | scott@westernexhibitions.com  
www.westernexhibitions.com

In the Plus Gallery

**Dead Center / Marginal Notes**  
Dan Devine and Eugenio Dittborn

Dead Center / Marginal Notes: Dan Devine / Eugenio Dittborn is the first in a yearlong series of exhibitions for Western Exhibitions' Plus Gallery curated by John Neff. Each show in the program will present one work each by two artists or a lone work by a single maker. All of the works exhibited will deal—directly or indirectly—with the relationships of centers to margins (culturally, geographically, politically and within works themselves as a formal concern).

**Show dates:** January 12 to March 29, 2008  
**Opening reception:** January 12, 5 to 8pm  
**Gallery Hours:** Wednesday Saturday, 12-6pm

Don't forget to change the artist names here and in the text.

Maybe "curated by John Neff" should be in bold type?

Change to "the second"

Don't forget to add a "through" (not thru) or " - "





...The second show in the series partners an untitled sculpture by Peter Downsbrough with the 1998 work *Wires with Computer* by Jeanne Silverthorne.

Jeanne Silverthorne’s twisted network of cast-rubber electrical wiring plays on oppositions between energy / dissipation, image / object, and sculpture / environment. Peter Downsbrough’s exactly installed, perceptually challenging arrangement of two black pipes is likewise activated by tensions between the graphic and the volumetric and also works to disturb the distinction between the object and its

setting. *Dead Center / Marginal Notes: Peter Downsbrough / Jeanne Silverthorne* juxtaposes these two works – which initially appear quite different – to investigate how artisanal and de-skilled, studio-based and post-studio, representational and abstract practices address similar concerns.

Since the 1960s, Peter Downsbrough’s work in installation, print, sculpture and video – among other media – has been exhibited throughout Europe and the United States. Downsbrough’s wide-ranging practice was the subject of a 2003 traveling

retrospective organized by the Palais des Beaux-Arts in the artist’s adoptive hometown of Brussels, Belgium.

Jeanne Silverthorne has been exhibiting her work in installation, photography and sculpture nationally and internationally for over twenty years. Her recent projects have included solo presentations at the Butler Gallery in Kilkenny, Ireland and at Seoul’s Gallery Seomi. Additionally, the artist is a widely published critical writer and a noted educator. Silverthorne is represented by McKee Gallery in New York, where she lives and works...

### DCMN 3:

...*Dead Center / Marginal Notes: John Boskovich* focuses on works from the artist’s 1993 Rosamund Felsen Gallery solo exhibition *Rude Awakening*. It also includes three related Polaroid and text pieces from the 1990s “It Series.” Western Exhibitions’ display centers on extant components of Boskovich’s project-cum-installation *The Honey Machine: It Works Without Thinking*, which was first shown in *Rude Awakening*. In a 1994 Artforum review, critic David Rimanelli described the installation:

*Embers smolder in “The Honey Machine: It Works Without Thinking”, an installation in which Boskovich has assembled 250 Honey Bears and miniature Buddhas and encased them in three Plexi vitrines. In the role of artist-as-researcher (cf. Hans Haacke), Boskovich counted for six months the number of ads placed by “models” (read: hustlers) in Frontiers, a California gay magazine. The number was always close to, and sometimes exactly, 250. The comforting little surrogates for the 250 advertised pleasure-workers all face a framed text of an ad Boskovich took out in Frontiers bearing this inviting text: “SHAVED HEAD MUSCLE DADDY 36 yo, 5’10” 190 lbs. Big Dick TOTAL TOP Looking for smooth muscle pussy boys--verbal abuse a must PAGER: (310) 582-6112.” The pager was hooked up to a sound system installed in the gallery, and the voices of respondents would often interrupt a pre-recorded tape featuring, among other things, Patti Smith performing “Piss Factory,” Allen Ginsberg reading his depressing poem, “Aunt Rose,” and T. S. Eliot intoning passages from “Four Quartets.”*

In the fifteen years since *Rude Awakening*, several of the elements described by Rimanelli have been lost. Rather than attempting to recreate *The Honey Machine* as it was initially presented, Neff has

chosen to include only surviving original elements of the installation in *Dead Center / Marginal Notes*. Those elements include the framed text piece *Daddy* and *Frontiers*, a framed magazine containing Boskovich’s actual advertisement. The perishable Honey Bears and fragile Buddha figurines have disappeared: if a tape of the respondents to Boskovich’s advertisement exists, its location is unknown.

Two live audio cables protruding from the wall and terminating, unconnected to any machine, on the gallery floor mark the absence of the installation’s audio track, and of Boskovich’s carefully selected playback devices. The visual contrast between Western Exhibitions’ austere gallery display and 1993 documentary photographs of *The Honey Machine* also indicates the fragmentation of Boskovich’s installation over time. The curator hopes that these specific differences in presentation suggest the difficulties of preserving and exhibiting conceptual artworks outside of collecting institutions, while simultaneously pointing to the ways in which Boskovich’s art generally could be said to allegorize the gaps and ruptures – baffling or productive – that inhere in relationships between humans and images, or relationships between humans through images....

### DCMN 4:

...The fourth show in the series, opening September 5th, presents artist Holt Quentel’s large-scale painting *Black 3 Gesture (B/W) Rope* of 1989.

After receiving her education in Chicago and Princeton, the artist Holt Quentel (American, born 1961) rose to sudden prominence in New York’s art scene of the late 1980s. Typically, Quentel’s works were large-scale unstretched paintings resembling battered awnings, signs and tarpaulins. In creating these works, the artist first hand-crafted, and then carefully distressed, her canvases’ surfaces. When first exhibited, the paintings’ denial of a transparent relationship between process and appearance – a defining characteristic of painting after Minimalism – was often read through then-current theories of “simulation,” notably Jean Baudrillard’s notion that Postmodern culture values impressions over actualities. Likewise, contemporary critics related the artist’s frequent allusions to the history of abstract painting to the appropriationist tactics of 1980s photo-conceptualists and Neo-Geo artists.

However, as these paradigms of art criticism faded in the early 1990s, critical attention soured on Quentel’s







art. Her rapid career success was characterized as a symptom of 80s art-world excesses, and her work was dismissed as faddish decoration. Quentel’s last solo exhibition was held at Stux Gallery in New York in 1992; shortly thereafter she left the art world. Although she may or may not continue to practice painting, there is no available record of Quentel exhibitions during the past sixteen years.

Despite her initial reputation as an avatar of modish “Simulationist” painting, Quentel’s work evades easy categorization and is not hidebound by period concerns. Her pieces are replete with unexpected formal devices, moments of striking painterly expression and virtuosic trompe l’oeil surface treatments. Still, the paintings resist reification, and often appear to be waste products rather than calculated visual expressions. (In this last respect it is, perhaps, interesting to see Quentel as a precursor of Abject Art rather than an endgame appropriationist). The artist’s paintings are not necessarily dreary Postmodern souvenirs of the lofty aspirations of twentieth century abstraction; they can also be read as meditations on the practices of attention that cause artifacts to shift into and out of legibility, and thereby of fashion. Rags to riches, and vice versa.

The alteration between the exemplary and the rejected embodied in Quentel’s paintings was bitterly recapitulated in her career as an artist. Viewing Quentel’s art from outside the frame provided by theoretical debates of the 1980s may surprise contemporary audiences with uncommon aesthetic encounters. Likewise, attention to the story of her career provides instructive insights into how meaning and status in art are the two forked extensions of a single movement; discourse constantly advances both effects towards – and retracts them from – specific art and artists with the quick, relentless flicks of critical tongues...

**DCMN 5:**

...Chicago’s Robbin Lockett gallery opened in January of 1986 and remained in business until late 1992. From its inception, the small commercial gallery’s program pointedly mixed local art with work from more widely recognized centers of production. Like much mainstream art of the 1980s and 90s, the work shown at Lockett relied heavily on precedents set by Minimalism and Conceptualism, with a few notable exceptions. In this regard, Lockett’s stable of artists participated in what is often seen as a generational shift in Chicago art: from the self-consciously quirky figuration of the Imagists to

the more apparently polished production of a group of younger artists variously described as participating in trans-regional Neo-Conceptual, Neo-Minimal or generically “Postmodernist” movements. (Given the distance of time, all of these labels seem imprecise. Applied to post-1945 American art in general, the former terms assume a model of rupture and return where a continuity is clearly visible, while from the perspective of Chicago art specifically the latter formulation ignores the proto-postmodernity of Paschke, Ramberg et al. while also eliding their – admittedly sometimes oblique – influence on the development of Chicago artists emerging in the mid-1980s.)

In keeping with the methods of their acknowledged art-historical forbearers, the artists exhibiting at the Robbin Lockett gallery occasionally referred to or incorporated the gallery’s architecture and practice into their shows, often while simultaneously maintaining a self-consciously blank aesthetic orientation. The gallery’s program was thus marked by a paradoxically cosmopolitan style of site-specificity that strove to validate Chicago production not, as earlier Midwestern artists had, by emphasizing the peculiarity of a regional vision, but rather by highlighting some Chicago-based artists’ adept deployment of a loose set of aesthetic and professional conventions that was at that time formalizing as the operational code of an emergent global art culture. As gallery owner Robbin Lockett said in a 1987 New York Times article on Chicago’s then-thriving art market, “It helps to have New York connections... But we’re getting more press and critical support and gradually collectors are becoming supportive of young artists working here. What I’m trying to get them used to is that good work can come from anywhere. It doesn’t have to have the New York stamp of approval.”

It is productive to reflect on the ways in which the evaluative standards for “good work” of the sort Lockett described were themselves the product of a provincial center’s aspirations to cosmopolitan good taste. That is to say, to consider how the “New York stamp of approval” came to be thought of as a general imprimatur of high quality only after that city overcame – with, as is always the case, a lift from changing economic and political winds – certain struggles with the elitisms of European Modernism to become the curiously universal location of all significant achievement in visual art.

Shortly after the closure of the Robbin Lockett gallery, the artist, critic and curator Nicholas Frank

opened his Hermetic gallery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Like Chicago’s contemporaneous Uncomfortable Spaces, Hermetic mixed a DIY model of funding and publicity learned from older artist-run alternative spaces with a standardized visual style and interest in building extra-local business relationships borrowed from financially self-sustaining commercial art galleries. However, unlike some of his Chicago contemporaries, Frank did not view this arrangement as an intermediate step in a process of achieving professional legitimacy. Instead, he concentrated on developing the small gallery as a form in itself. Perhaps this change in focus resulted from Frank’s apprehension of the inevitably absurd situation of any gallerist attempting to profit from the display and sale of abstract and conceptual art in a mid-sized Midwestern city (especially in an era prior to the ubiquity of the internet and international art fairs).

Frank’s interest in and development of the formal properties of the small art gallery may also have stemmed from his tendency to playfully intertwine his roles in the various disciplines of contemporary visual art. From the beginning, the Hermetic functioned both as a forum for traditional art exhibits and as a platform for a wide variety of other types of public presentation, from broadsheets to lectures to radio shows. Most of these manifestations involved unique textual and visual settings designed by Frank. Further, deploying the concept of “platformism” – a term coined by artist and writer David Robbins to describe art practices using social space as their medium – Frank explicitly positioned some of the gallery’s later activities as his own artwork. Effectively, the gallery was anything but hermetic, opening outward as it did against the multiple fields of Milwaukee, the Midwest and trans-regional contemporary art.

In this way, Hermetic as a project might be seen as extending the formal logic of some artists exhibited at the Robbin Lockett gallery. For example, like the painter Gaylen Gerber, Frank’s practice in or through gallery space as such tended to conceptually unify the art object with its display context while simultaneously maintaining a clear physical distinction between the two. However, Frank did this in reverse, constituting his platform through the objects it supported rather than, like Gerber (or, to use another example, Tony Tasset in his bench and “shipping” sculptures), stressing the art object’s dependence on contextual contingencies. This meant that, for Frank and Hermetic, questions of audience were not confined to relatively insular debates about the status and theatricality of the art object, but rather expanded outward in two directions to ask first, what the

artwork demands from the exhibition space and, second, what various publics expect from galleries.

One of Frank’s final exhibits through Hermetic presented *The Hermetic Archive*, a collection of artworks, ephemera, essays and photographs arranged within the gallery space to form a chronological account of its career. The show was another mischievous tweaking of mainstream contemporary art’s conventions of display and reception, as it is unusual for a small art gallery to explicitly formulate its own historical record (although the practice does occur in older, wealthier businesses with an economic and social stake in establishing an image of historical importance). It is even rarer for an art space to chart its history as a meta-commentary on the facts and feints of the art world: viewers of the *Archive* - especially those who see the project in conjunction with Frank’s ongoing *Nicholas Frank Biography* - are left in doubt as to what in the record is actual and what is a flight of fancy. The *Archive* thus charts a mysterious terrain between ideas, places and concrete objects.

*Dead Center / Marginal Notes: Lockett & Hermetic* will present several components of *The Hermetic Archive* on loan from the personal collection of Nicholas Frank, whose artwork is now represented by Western Exhibitions. The show will also include a collection of announcements, invitations, images and reviews relating to the Robbin Lockett gallery gathered by the curator from publicly accessible archives. Additionally, a public panel held at Western Exhibitions during the show, organized by the curator and critic Kathryn Hixson, will bring together some participants in the Chicago art world circa 1990 to discuss that era. Considering the trajectories – stories that may not yet be histories – of the Robbin Lockett gallery and the Hermetic gallery, we are compelled to ask certain difficult and possibly troubling questions about the development of contemporary art in culture. For example, how do works of contemporary art, especially those made away from acknowledged centers of production, deny or reflect their origins? Who are the intended audiences for galleries of “advanced” art located in provincial cities, and do those audiences actually see the artworks and galleries addressing their vision? Do those audiences actually exist? And why, despite their integral roles in the creation and display of much contemporary visual art, are art galleries themselves so seldom discussed in complex aesthetic or theoretical terms: why are discussions of their art-historical roles so often limited to the anecdotal?...



2008: Nocturnes for Boston

JOHN NEFF NOCTURNE FOR BOSTON

PROOF GALLERY, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 25 – NOVEMBER 29, 2008

THE SOLO EXHIBITION NOCTURNES FOR BOSTON, THE FIRST BOSTON PRESENTATION OF WORK BY CHICAGO-BASED JOHN NEFF, IS COMPRISED OF LARGE-FORMAT TONED CYANOTYPE PRINTS AND PROJECTED TRANSPARENCIES. THE FIGURATIVE IMAGES DEPICT HISTORICAL AND RECENT BOSTON EVENTS INVOLVING TRANSVESTISM (COLONISTS’ WEARING OF INDIAN GARB DURING THE BOSTON TEA PARTY) OR MASKING (A STUDY FOR A MEMORIAL TO THE 2006 DEATH OF BRITISH CITIZEN ADRIAN EXLEY DURING A BREATH CONTROL / BDSM SESSION IN SUBURBAN BOSTON).

SINCE 2005, NEFF HAS BEEN DEVELOPING A DISTINCTIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC METHOD THAT INVOLVES: COLLECTING AND GENERATING DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES; PRINTING THE IMAGES AS NEGATIVE ACETATE TRANSPARENCIES; COLLAGING TOGETHER THOSE TRANSPARENCIES ON GLASS TO PRODUCE FIGURATIVE IMAGES; AND, FINALLY, PRINTING HIS COLLAGED NEGATIVES AS CYANOTYPE PHOTOGRAPHS. OFTEN, NEFF PRESENTS HIS HAND-WORKED NEGATIVES IN CONJUNCTION WITH HIS PRINTS.

FOR NOCTURNES FOR BOSTON, NEFF HAS DARKENED THE PROOF GALLERY SPACE AND PRESENTS A LARGE SELECTION OF HIS GLASS TRANSPARENCIES AS PROJECTIONS FROM AN ALTERED VINTAGE OVERHEAD PROJECTOR. AS GALLERY VISITORS PASS THROUGH THE PROJECTORS’ BEAM, THEIR SHADOWS MINGLE WITH THE ARTIST’S HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTIONS.

NEFF HAS DARKENED AND TINTED HIS CYANOTYPE PRINTS OF NOCTURNAL BOSTON SCENES WITH TEA TONING AND MULTIPLE EXPOSURES. ALTHOUGH MORE CONVENTIONALLY PRESENTED, THESE WORKS ALSO INVITE INTIMATE ENGAGEMENT FROM BEHOLDERS: EACH IS ACCOMPANIED BY A SMALL CHAPBOOK OUTLINING DETAILING THE PICTURES’ HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CITING THE IMAGES’ SOURCES. COMPOSITIONALLY, ALL OF THE WORKS IN THE SHOW ARE MODELED ON 18TH CENTURY BRITISH “CONVERSATION PICTURES” AND GRAND PORTRAITURE.

PROOF IS LOCATED AT:

THE DISTILLERY  
516 E. 2ND STREET  
SOUTH BOSTON, MA 02127

THE MAIN ENTRANCE IS THE DISTILLERY’S SIDE ENTRANCE ON EAST 2ND STREET.

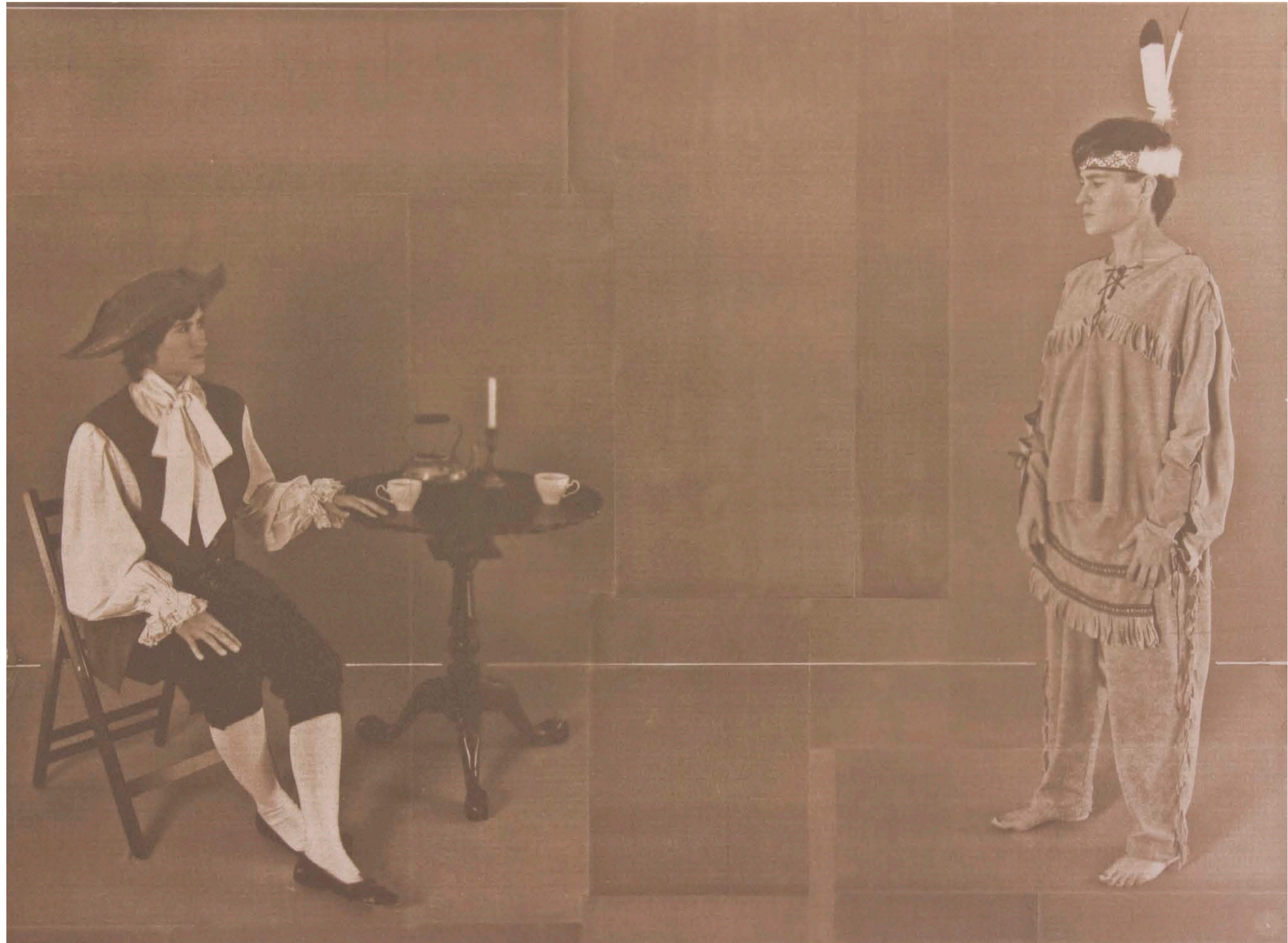
508-963-9102  
[PROOF.GALLERY@GMAIL.COM](mailto:PROOF.GALLERY@GMAIL.COM)

PROOF’S HOURS ARE:

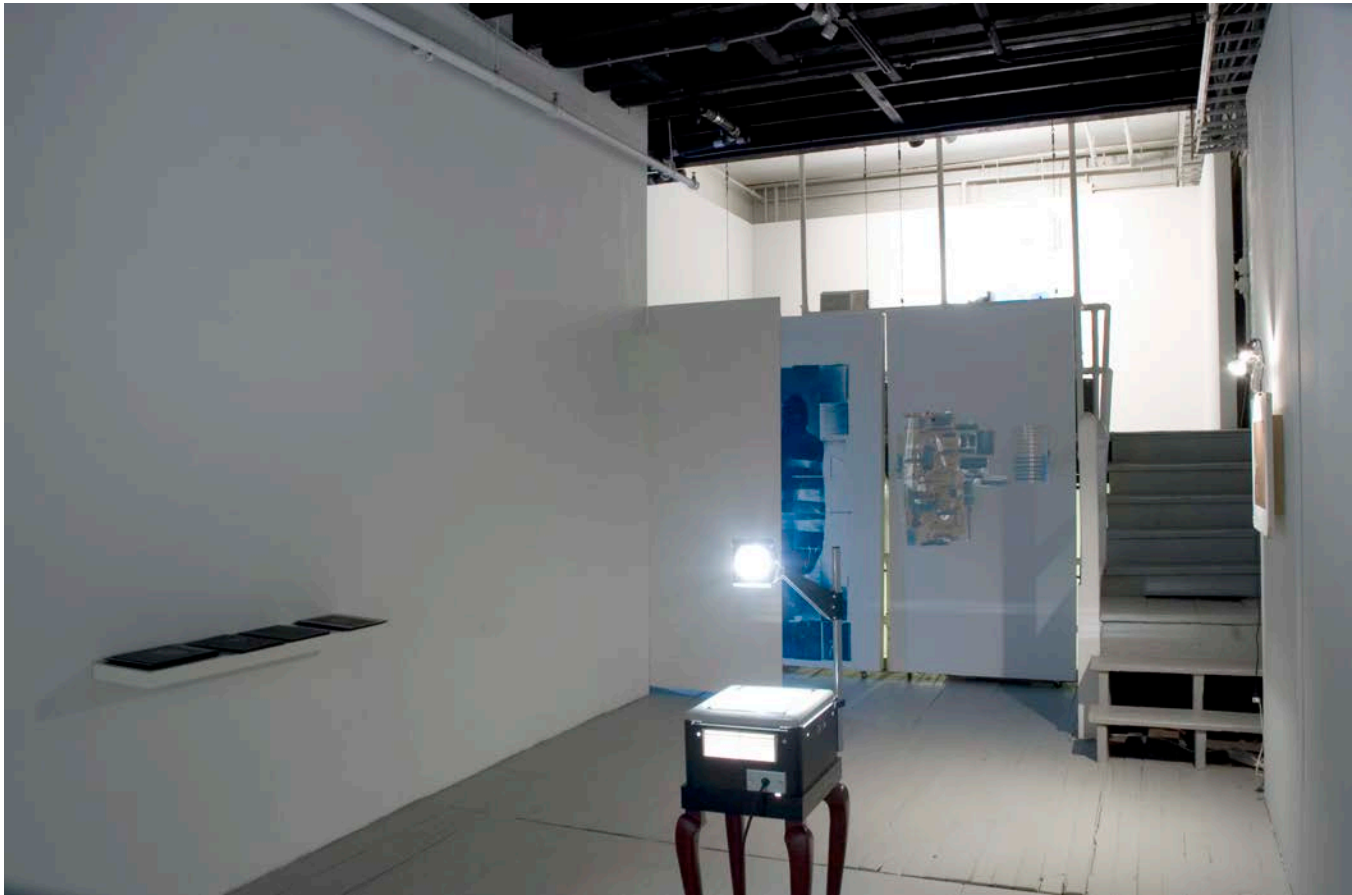
THURSDAYS, FRIDAYS, AND SATURDAYS 12-5PM OR BY APPOINTMENT



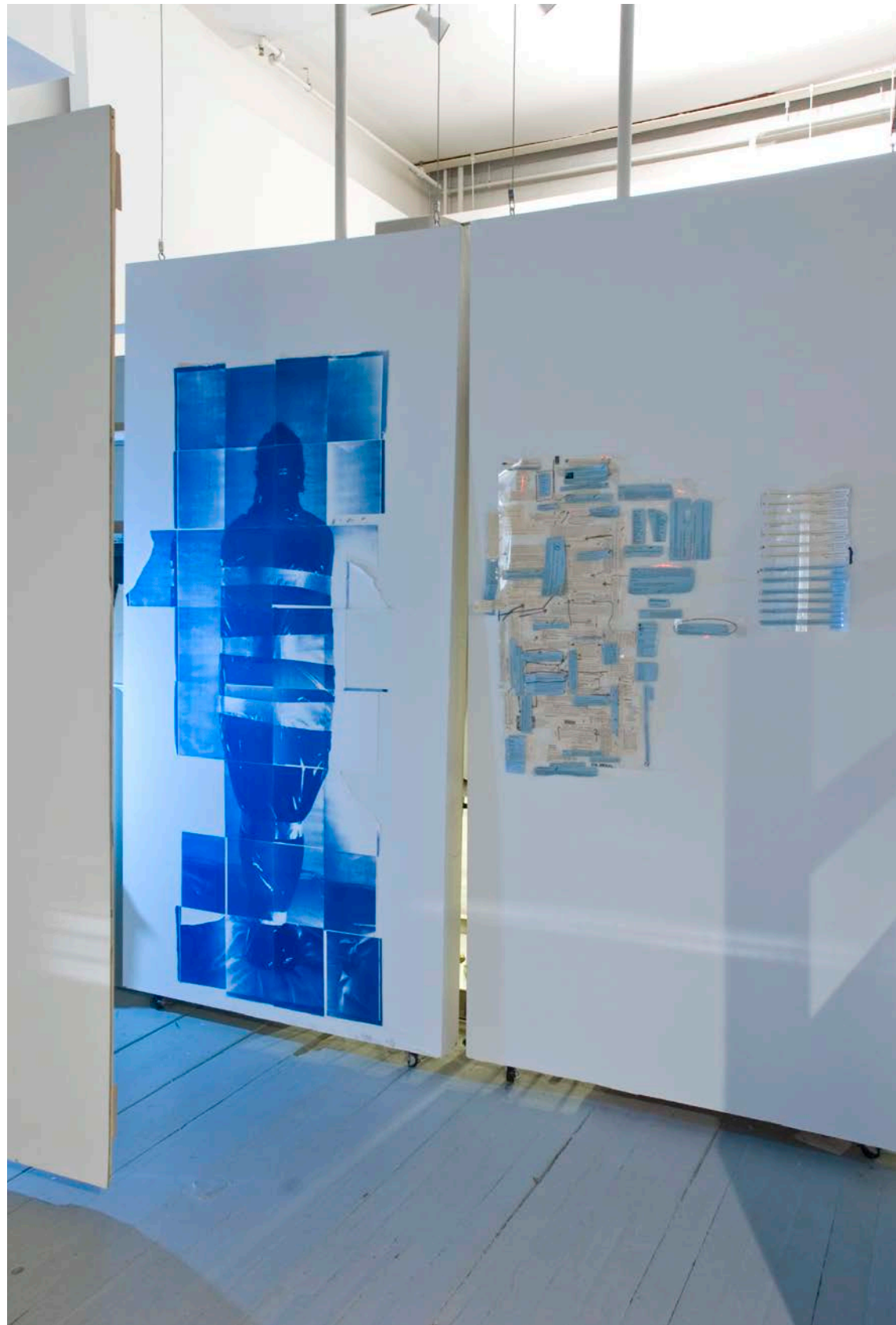




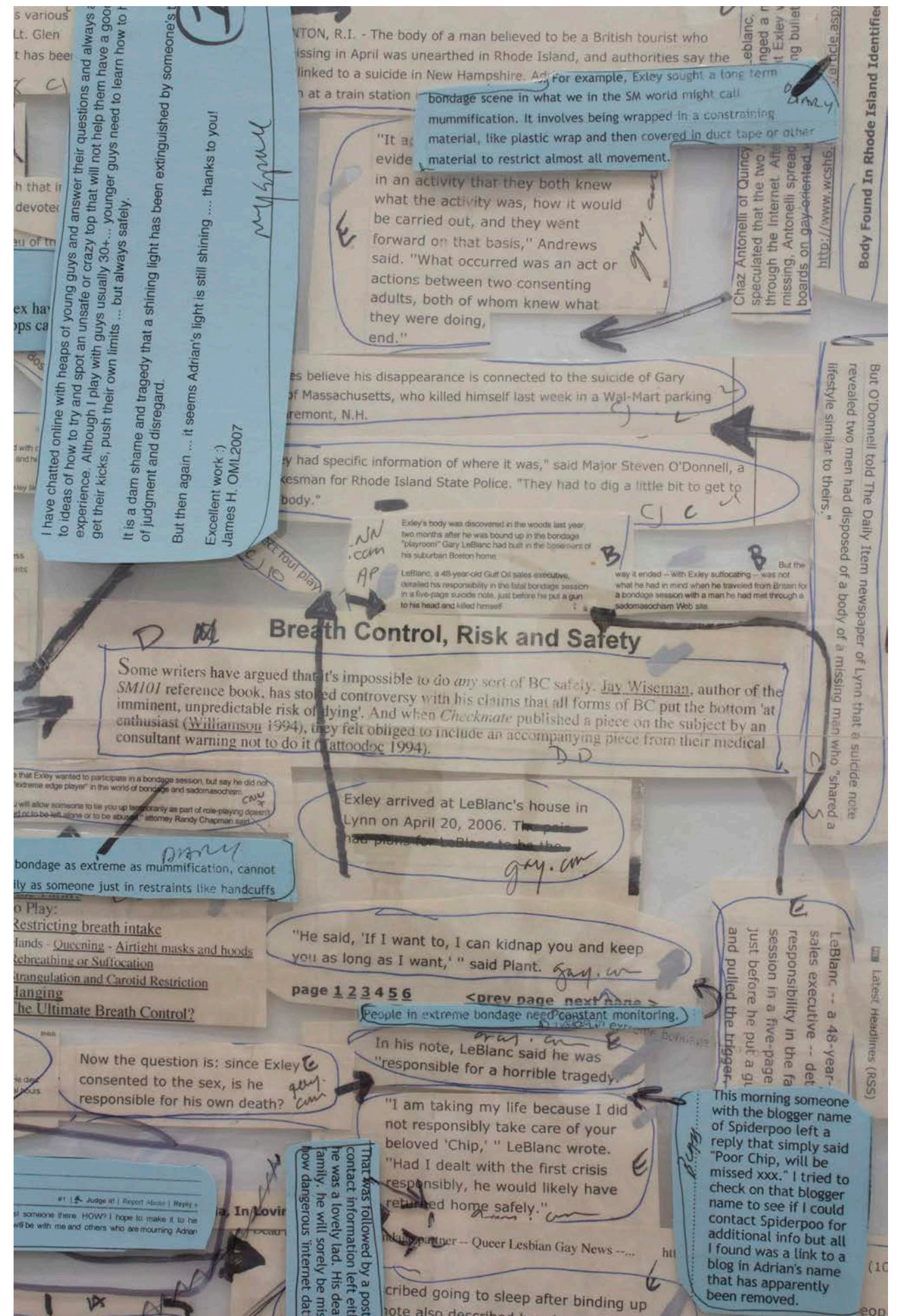








Study for a Memorial to Adrian Exley (Details above and opposite), Cyanotypes on paper on wall, acetate negatives and tape on door, and paper collage on acetate





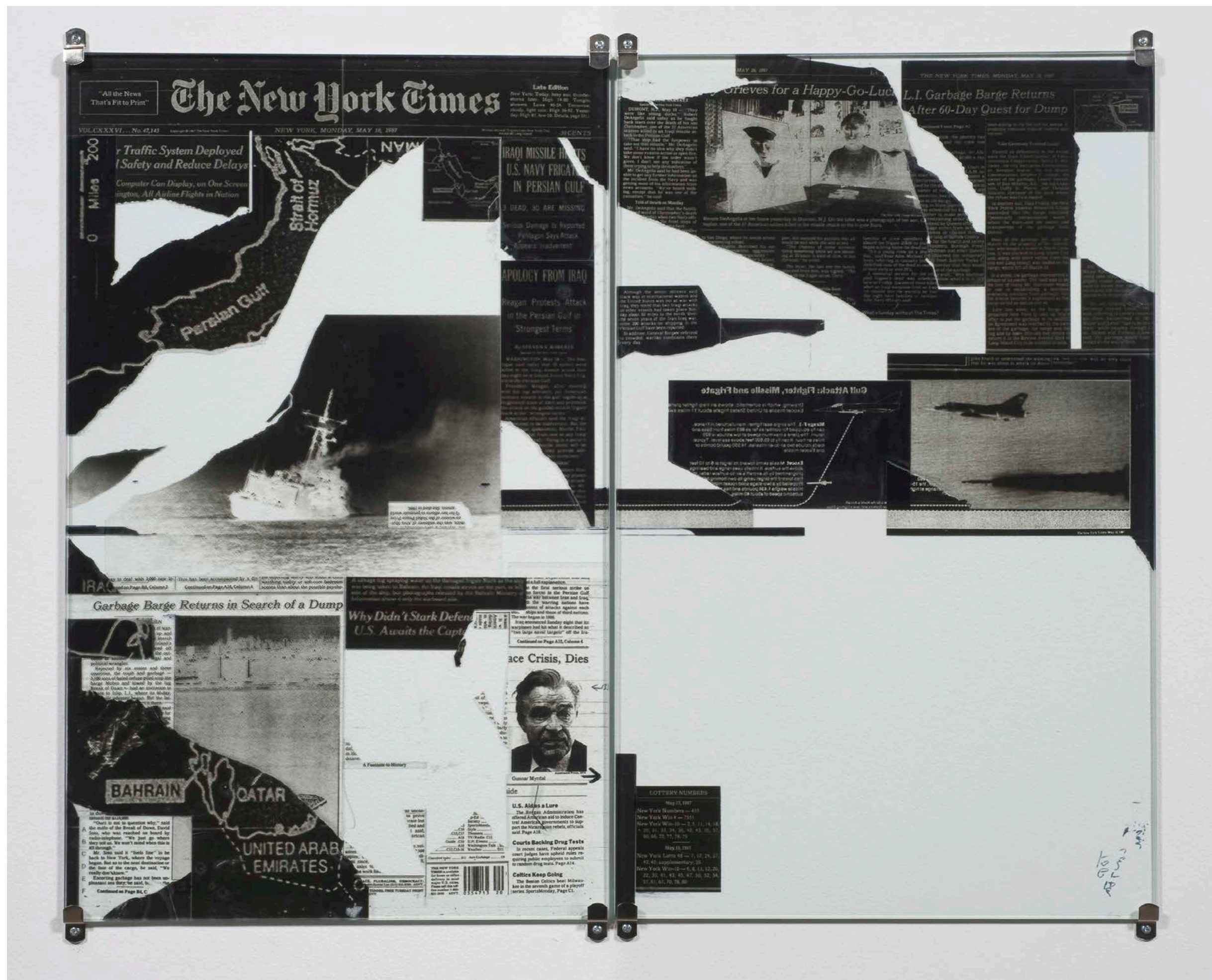
2008: Bathers and Other Liquid Pictures





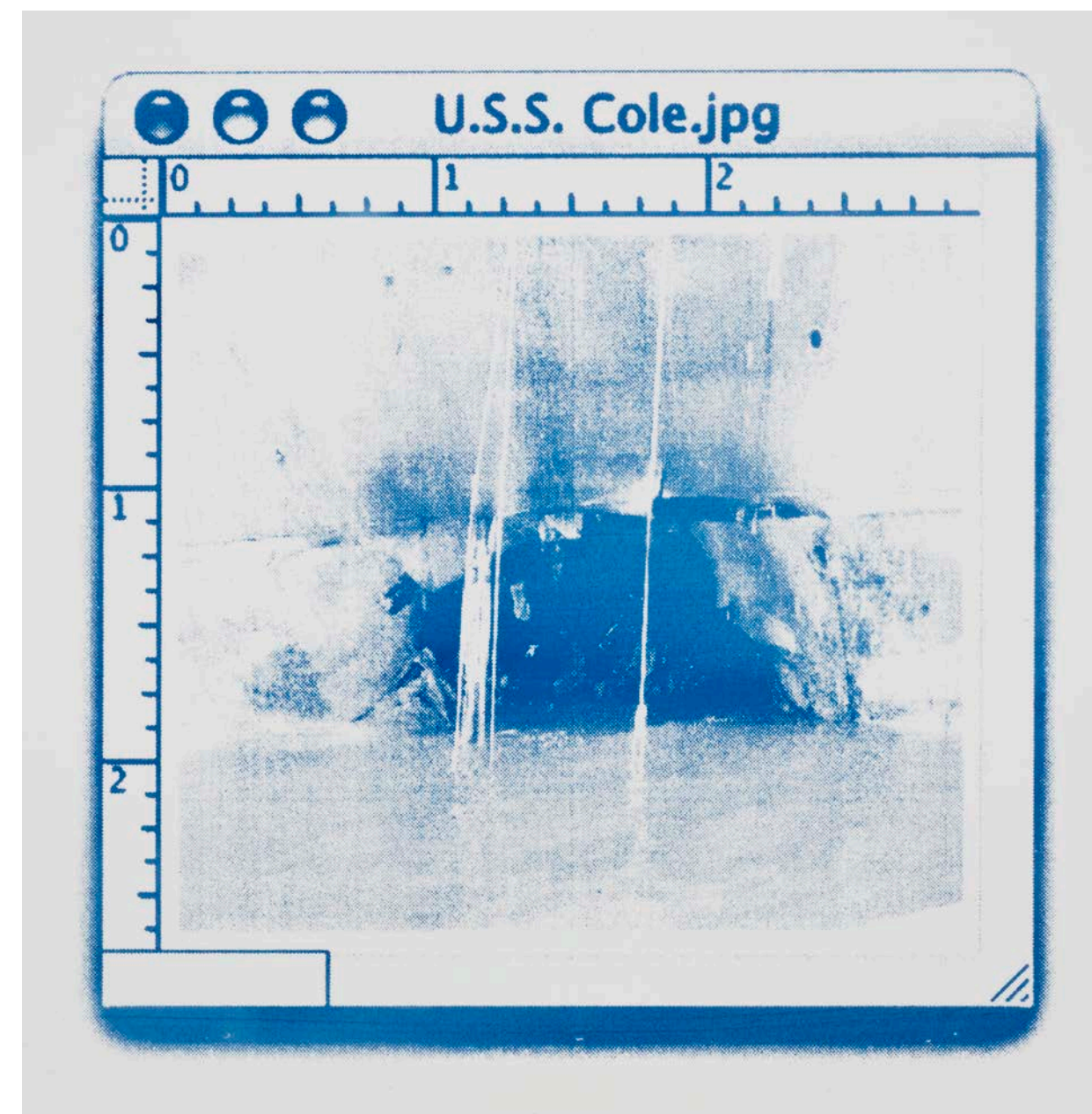
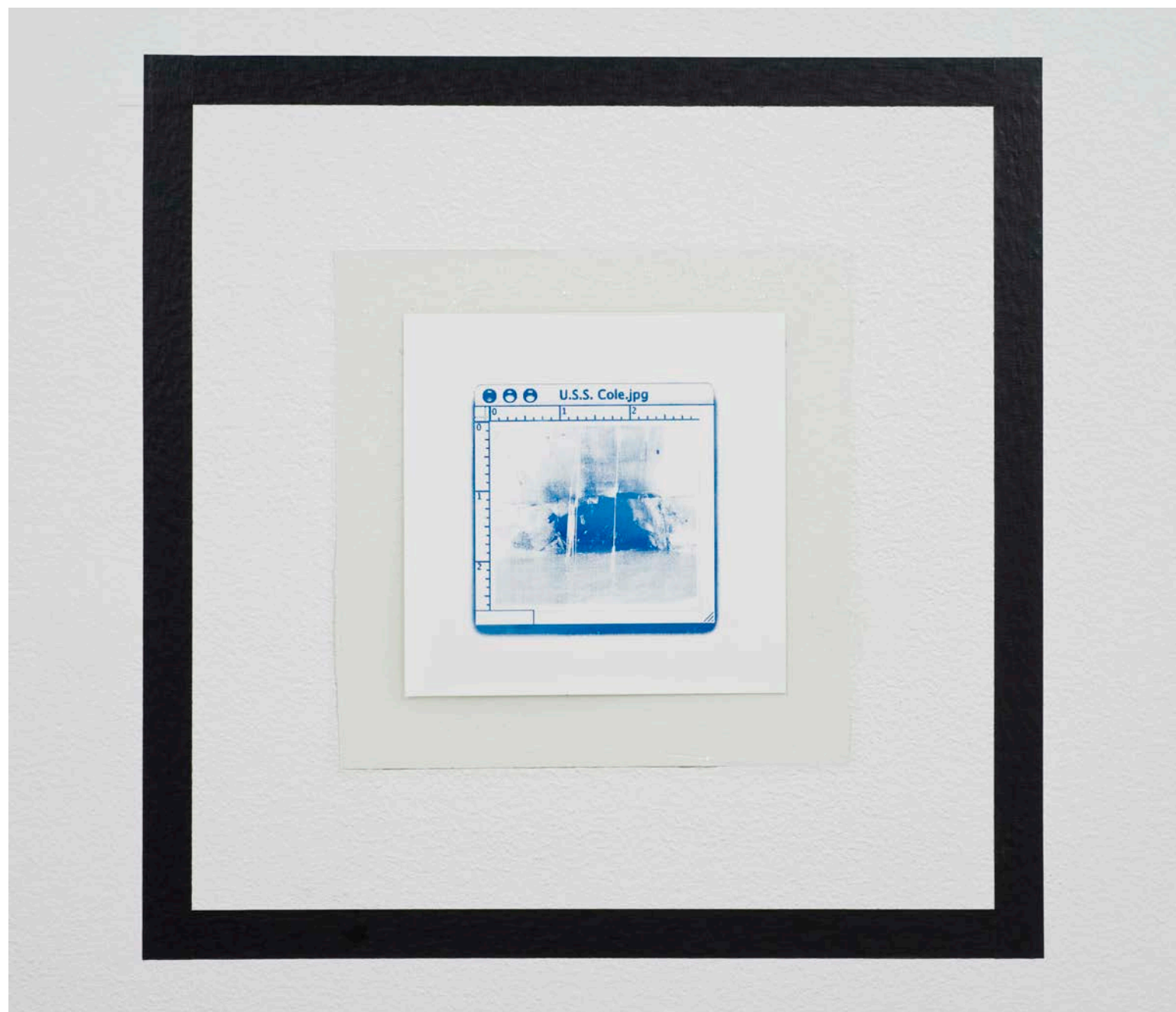






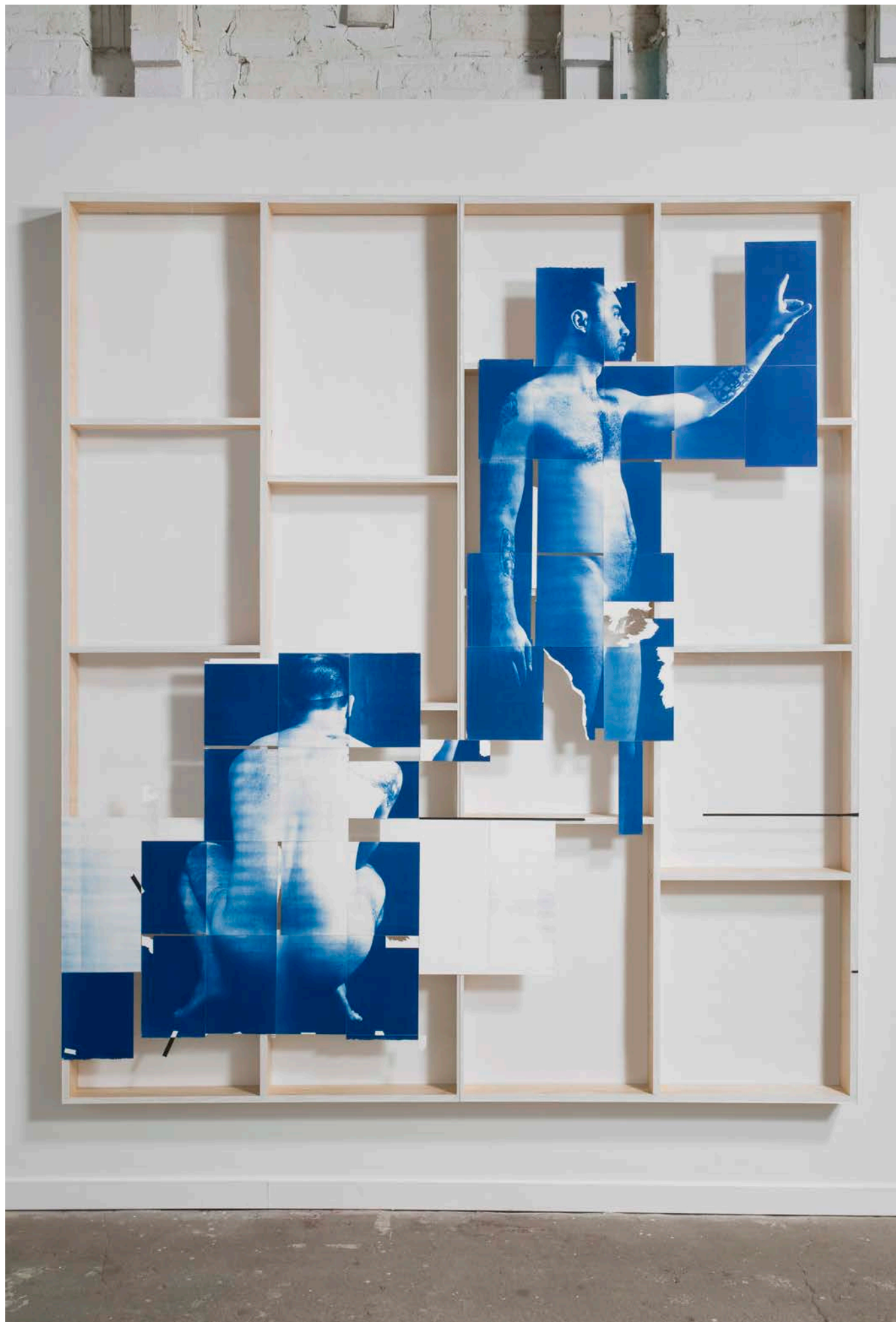
New York Times / May 18, 1987 / U.S.S. Stark / Long Island Garbage Barge (Negative), 2008, Acetate, toner, adhesives on glass with metal hardware, 23" by 27.5"



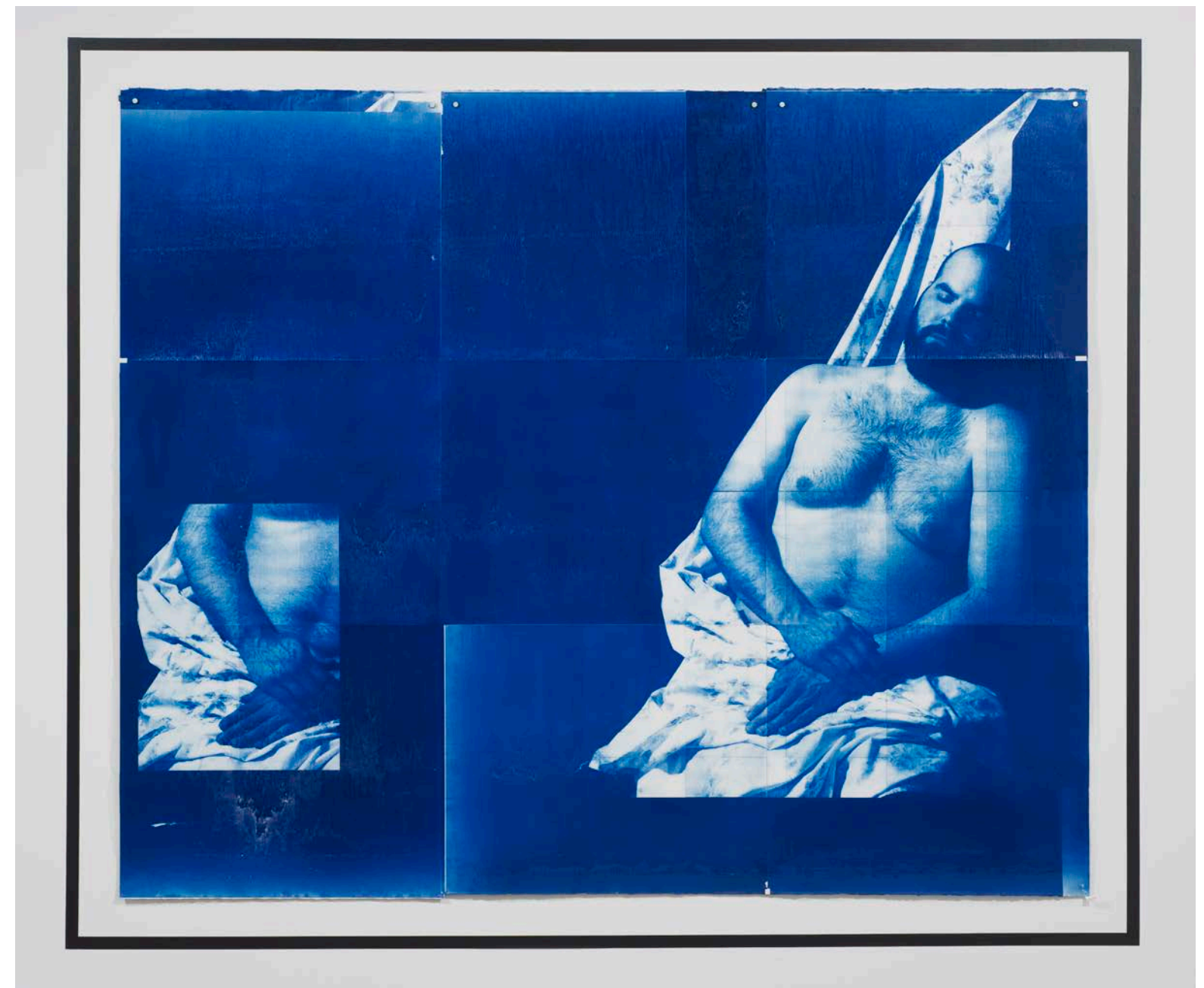


*U.S.S. Cole Hole*, 2008, Cyanotype on plastic adhered to wall with petroleum jelly, tape on wall, 14.5" by 13.5"





*Bathers*, Cyanotype on paper, clear acrylic sheeting, wood, 84" by 72"



*Drowned Man*, 2008, Cyanotype on siliconized paper, tape on wall, 60" by 72"





Western Exhibitions is pleased to announce the May 24th opening of John Neff's solo show *Bathers and Other Liquid Pictures* in the gallery's main space. Male nudes and nautical pictures, the artist's new works include two large-format assembled cyanotype prints, several hand-made glass plate negatives and a figurative sculpture.

In contrast to Neff's three-room 2006 solo show with Western Exhibitions, *Pornographic Pantograph With Allusion To Juan Sanchez Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending)*, this spare display will present a small number of relatively discrete works.

In his large-scale cyanotype prints, Neff uses a hybrid photographic technique he developed while working on the *Pornographic Pantograph* project. The artist first collects or generates digital photographic images; then, he prints these images as acetate negatives; the acetate negatives are then collaged together to create figurative images; finally, the negatives are printed using the Victorian photographic technology of cyanotype printing (literally, blueprinting).

Previously, Neff's use of this technique emphasized his graphic materials' disparate sources and the physical tearing and re-orientation of the collaged negatives. His newer works strive to create more unified representational fields and more complete figures, a shift reflected in the use of traditional subjects such as the bather. Neff notes this relationship between his current subjects and his preferred photographic technology: blueprints are developed in a water bath.

The "other liquid pictures" of the exhibition's title are two small works - a glass plate negative and a photographic print - from an ongoing project to create 100 pieces depicting a maritime history of the 1990s. *U.S.S. Stark*, documenting a 1987 Iraqi missile strike on a U.S. Navy frigate in the Persian Gulf, is the series' prologue. *U.S.S. Cole Hole* - a rendering of that U.S. Navy ship's hull after a suicide boat bombing in 2000 - functions as the series' epilogue avant-le-lettre.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a printed interview between Neff and critic Jeff Ward, which will be distributed in the gallery and online at [www.westernexhibitions.com](http://www.westernexhibitions.com).



Most of my recent pictures are the size of either a page or a person. This is partly a result of the work's sources (digital or printed documents and photographs) and subjects (human figures). It is also - perhaps more importantly - a consequence of my technique, and by extension of certain ideas about figures and figuration that I am slowly working through.

To make my pictures, I first collect or generate a variety of photographic images. Then, I print the images as acetate negatives. The acetate negatives are then collaged together to create figurative images, usually either at the size of a single acetate sheet (8.5" by 11") or at the actual size of the body represented. Finally, the negatives are contact printed using the antique photographic technology of cyanotype printing (literally, blueprinting). In individual pictures, the effect of this process is a photographic surface that materially and visually integrates disparate sources, while opening into a non-perspectival pictorial space that is unified but, stylistically, neither fantastic nor realist. My hope is that these pictures are able to generate - even if only for a moment - an empathetic relationship with their beholders, a relationship transacted over the surface of the pictures, but also within them.

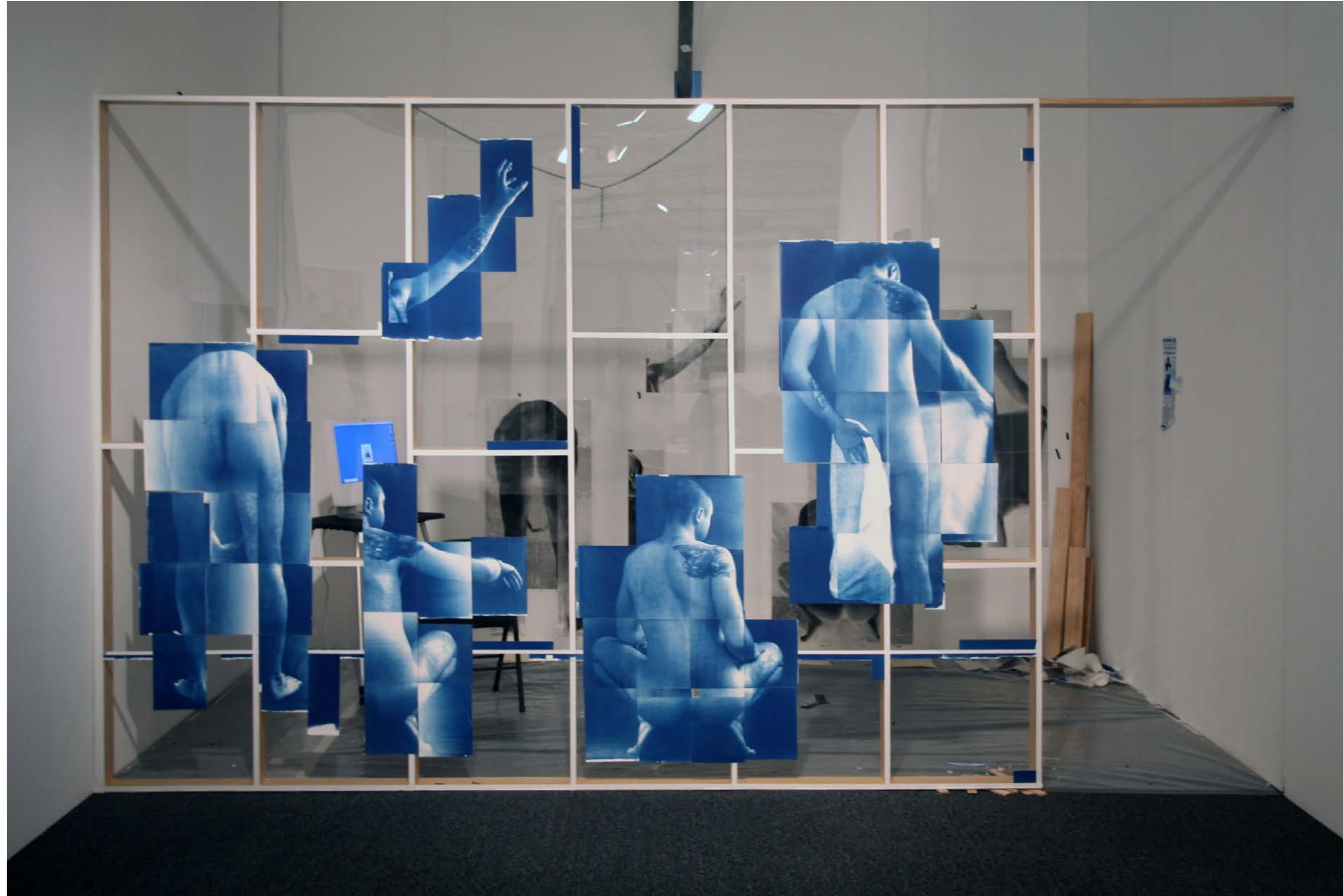
The photographic negative has traditionally been seen as a locus of photographic truth - as original in every sense. With their evident processing - digital and printing artifacts, visible seams - my negatives work to sidestep such claims. Similarly, the rich and unpredictable materiality of the cyanotype printing process gives substance to digital images, typically imagined to be disembodied and perfectly replicable.

In addition to my work in photography, I am pursuing a practice of making three-dimensional representations of the human body. Like my cyanotype prints, these sculptures involve the gathering and joining of indexical traces, in this case plaster life casts. Taken from the same body or from multiple bodies over long periods of time, the casts - often intermixed with used and unused molds - are assembled into single sculptural figures.

This and other syntheses of fragment and whole in my work relate to my ongoing efforts to arrive at a figuration - an idea of the human - through which I might imagine the existence of integrated, singular subjects whose identities are not contingent on toxic and untenable conceptions of authenticity.



2009: Father, can't you see I'm burning?



**John Neff** (Chicago) is one of three artists commissioned by **photo MIAMI 2008** to create a solo installation at the fair. Neff's new multi-media project mixes pictures of male bathers with images based in his ongoing series of photo works depicting a naval history of the United States in the late twentieth century.

The bathers, large-format cyanotype prints, are presented on the specially constructed transparent exterior wall of Neff's exhibition booth. A jpeg of the blast-scarred hull of the U.S.S. Cole floats on a computer screen inside the dim booth, a space furnished to resemble a makeshift workshop. Cyanotype renderings of news clippings about the Cole bombing provide further nautical imagery.

Two audio files play simultaneously on the computer that presents the Cole image. *Father, can't you see I'm burning?*, the project's title, refers to a Freudian dream recounted in a lecture excerpt from philosopher Slavoj Žižek discussing relationships between wartime violence and personal traumas. The other audio element is drawn from a video chat originally webcast on the military-themed gay porn site Active Duty; the porn performer makes frequent references to water, swimming, and drowning.

The work's audio-visual juxtapositions suggest that private and public, personal and political, events and identities are not just interpenetrated but actually constitutive of one another in contemporary American society.





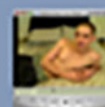
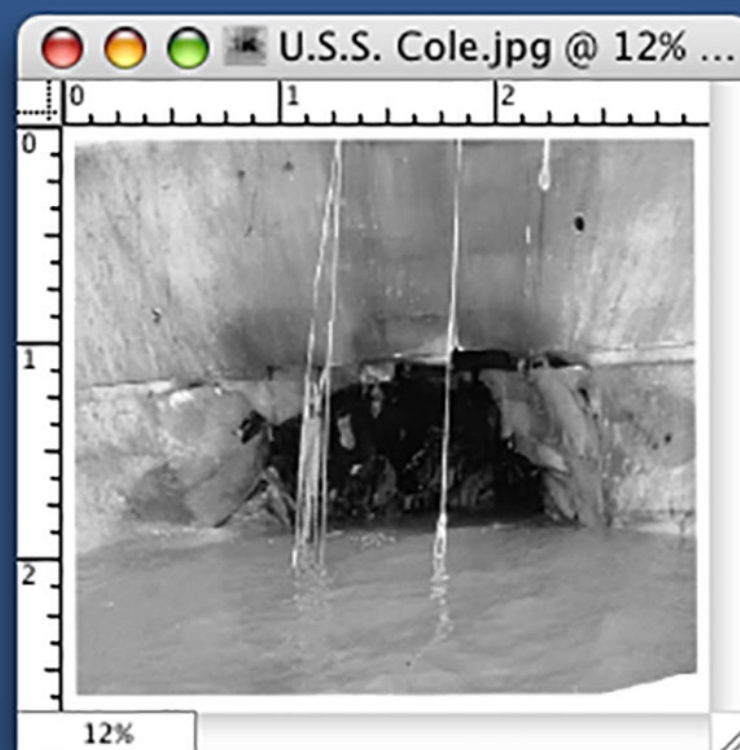
Macintosh HD



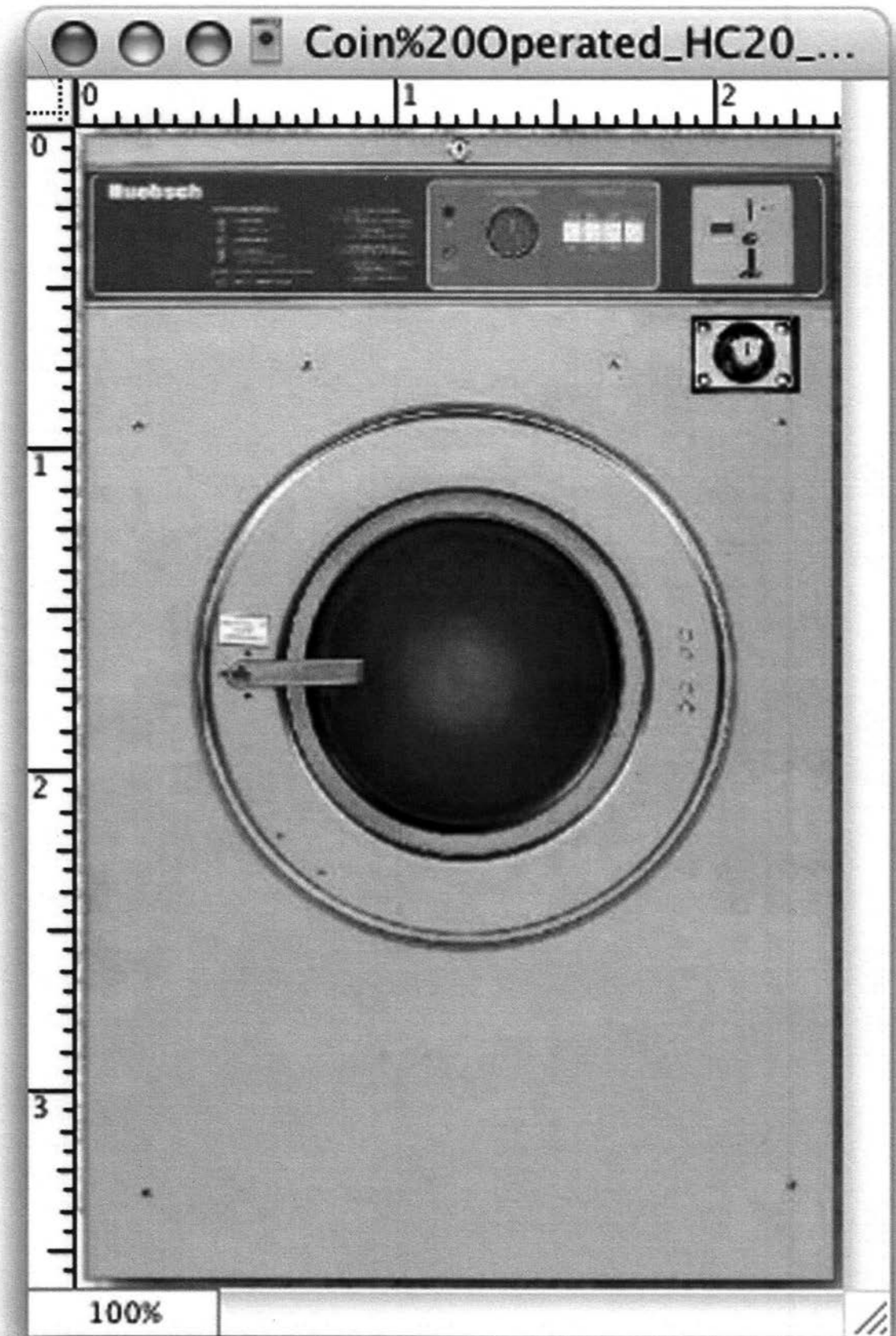
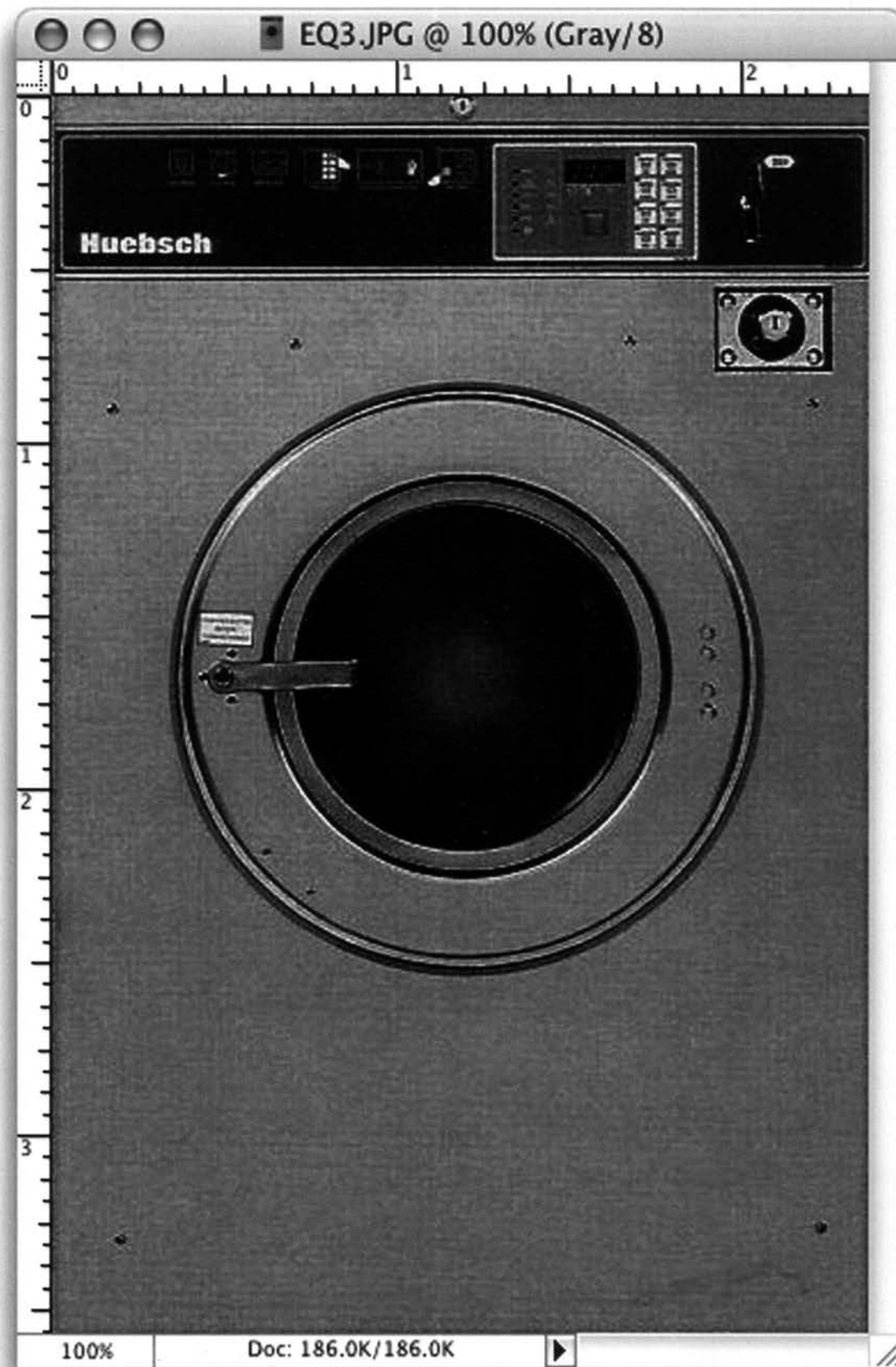
Active Duty Live  
Show - Damien.mp4



father can't you see  
i'm burning.mp4









**The Analog Hole (Or “Abundance”)**  
**By John Neff**

Window display on view May 9 – March 31, 2009

Gallery hours with the artist: Sunday, May 10, 1 – 5 pm and by appointment

RIGHT WINDOW Gallery  
972 Valencia Street, San Francisco  
Curated by Cassie Riger

*The Analog Hole (or “Abundance”)* is a new installation for RIGHT WINDOW Gallery by Chicago-based artist John Neff. The term “analog hole” refers to the difficulty of controlling rights to non-interactive digital media during playback. Coined by the Motion Picture Association of America, “analog hole” was quickly corrupted by the vernacular into “a-hole”. Neff’s recent digital-to-analog photographic process involves shooting digital images, creating hand-collaged acetate internegatives from those images, and printing his negatives as cyanotype photographs (or blueprints). At RIGHT WINDOW gallery, the artist’s elaborate printmaking process embodies the rich possibility offered by the analog hole.

Neff was one of three artists commissioned to create special projects for Photo Miami this year. His project, *Father, can’t you see I’m burning* mixed images of nude male bathers with pieces based on his ongoing series depicting a nautical history of the United States. Exploring transparency and opacity, the bather images, large-format cyanotype prints, were presented on the specially constructed transparent exterior wall of his exhibition booth. The nautical subject – a monitor-bound digital image based on U.S. military photos of the 2000 bombing of the U.S.S. Cole and a collection of cyanotype reproductions of news clippings about that incident – were shown in the booth’s dim interior, a space that was furnished to resemble a makeshift workspace. The project’s title, *Father, can’t you see I’m burning?*, was drawn from a Slavoj Žižek text that discusses the relationship between external violence and internal traumas in psychoanalysis, by way of a Freudian dream.

At RIGHT WINDOW Gallery, Neff will apply acetate negatives to the space’s front windows, transforming their panes into interpenetrated representations of an enlarged computer desktop and a small business storefront. Inside the gallery, prints made onto a variety of found fabrics will hang from lines stretched across the space. (Cyanotype prints are, in fact, developed in a water wash). Sorting, washing, folding, and hanging images out to dry, Neff will transform RIGHT WINDOW Gallery into a laundromat of sorts. As with his recent series, *Bathers and Other Liquid Pictures* (2007 - 2008), Neff’s new project foregrounds watery studies of nude figures to suggest a return to the primacy of subjectivity in the visual arts.

RIGHT WINDOW Gallery: RIGHT WINDOW Gallery is a collaboration of twelve San Francisco artists and curators who pool resources to create street level venue for visual art. Because the exhibition space is small—it’s literally the right display window of a Valencia Street store front—the Gallery aims for creative uses of the space. Neff’s exhibition during May 2009 is curated by Cassie Riger. Riger’s last project for RIGHT WINDOW Gallery was *Looking But Not Touching*, a four-part performance series featuring over 30 artists, writers, and musicians, all free and available to pedestrians on Valencia Street in May 2008.













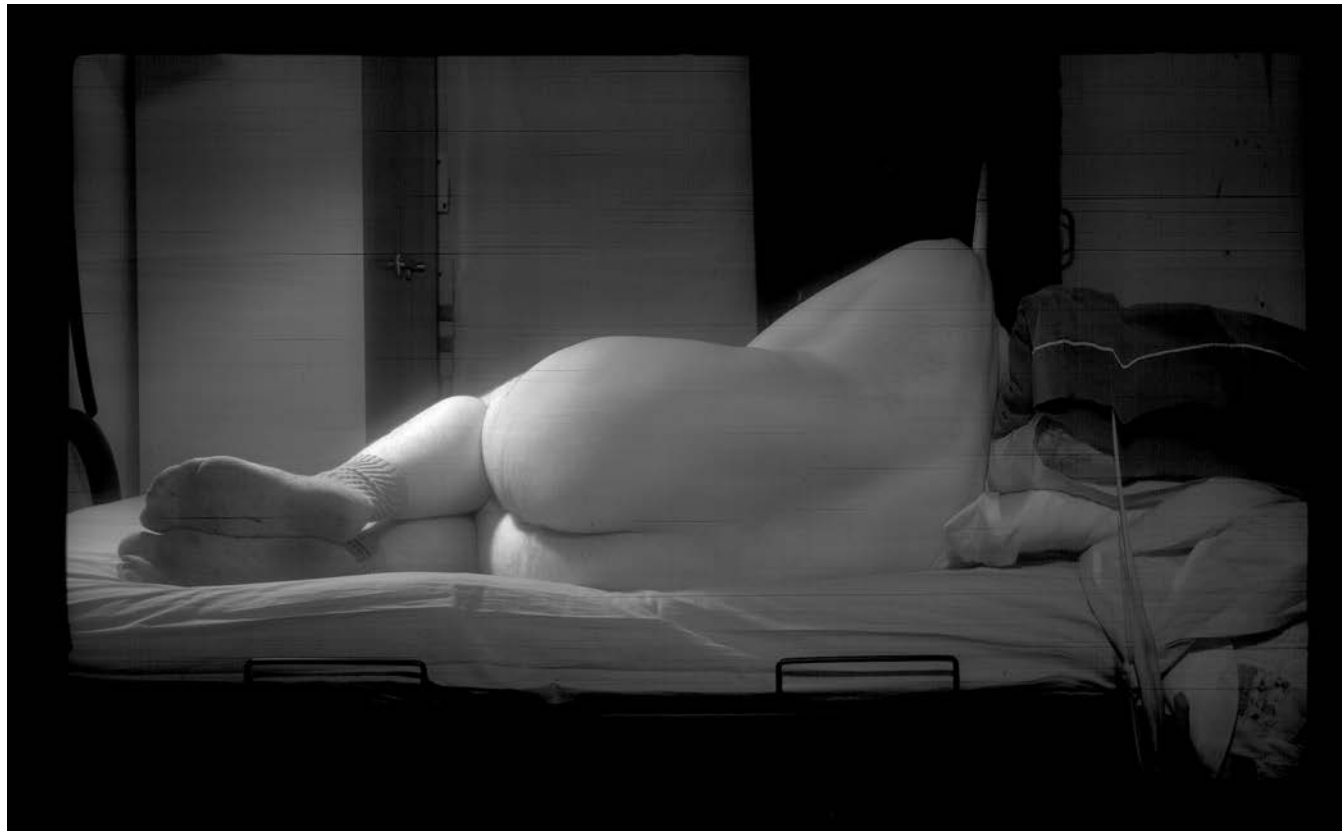


*Napkin Picture*, Cyanotype on fabric, nails, tape on wall



*Dry Bathers*, Cyanotype on fabric, nails, tape on wall





*Back and Back II*, Digital silver prints, 4" by 6"



<http://www.marjoriewoodgallery.com/exhibitions/neff/basicpics/>



JOHN NEFF  
***BASIC OR BORING PICTURES***  
The Armory Show  
March 5 - 9, 2009

*How were these pieces made?*

Most of the pictures were made using a print process I’ve been developing over the past few years. I shoot digital photos, convert the files into life-sized digital negatives, segment those negs and print them on 8.5” by 11” transparencies, collage the transparencies back into full figures and then contact print the collaged negatives using the cyanotype process. I also make cyanotype pictures at the size of single acetate sheets - mostly variants of my larger pieces and photos that ride a line between amateur snapshots and classic straight photography. Everything is done using common materials and tools: overhead transparencies, point-and-shoot cameras, laser printers and sunlight. I like cyanotype because it’s cheap, it’s easy, and it has a dubious modern pedigree.

A couple of the newest pictures here deviate from the method I’ve described. They’re digital silver prints, and the source images are unmanipulated files made with a digital camera I constructed. The figurative distortions in these pictures aren’t Photoshop effects: they’re the result of movements - performances - made during the camera’s slow exposures.

*What’s the significance of the title of this body of work:* Basic or Boring Pictures?

Lately, the words “the violent return of the subject” run through my mind. Eactly that pseudo-academic phrasing. I take this to mean that bare subject matter has forced itself to the surface of my art. I no longer prioritize the crafting of subtle reflections between materials and depicted subjects, or try to foreground resonances between my work and a specific historical past. (I don’t, but I do. Now, this stuff lives and dies alongside plainer things.) Maybe this is because I’ve arrived at a studio method I can take as a given. Or maybe it’s because I feel a strong pressure to make pictures of my fantasies, my world, whatever. Maybe I now see the everyday as stripped to its epic dimensions. That’s the violent return of the subject.

*But what about the title?*

The pictures show moments where the bestial and the human overlap or separate, mundane events that make civilization. Those moments are basic, and they’re boring.

JOHN NEFF  
Basic or Boring Pictures\*

The Armory Show  
March 5 - 8, 2009  
Pier 94  
New York City



119 N Peoria St, Suite 2A  
Chicago, IL 60607 USA  
(312) 480-8390  
scott@westernexhibitions.com  
www.westernexhibitions.com

Western Exhibitions works with:

Dan Attoe	Paul Nudd
Jimmy Baker	Melissa Oresky
Carl Baratta	John Parot
Nicholas Frank	Amanda Ross-Ho
Joe Hardesty	Stan Shellabarger
Adriane Herman	Geoffrey Todd Smith
Eric Lebofsky	Ben Stone
Dutes Miller	Aaron Van Dyke
Miller & Shellabarger	Pedro Velez
John Neff	Mark Wagner

\* It is to the effect that, with the assumption of an erect posture by man and with the depreciation of his sense of smell, it was not only his anal eroticism with threatened to fall a victim to organic repression, but the whole of his sexuality; so that since this, the sexual function has been accompanied by a repugnance which cannot further be accounted for, and which prevents its complete satisfaction and forces it away from the sexual aim into sublimations and libidinal displacements. I know that Bleuler (1913) once pointed to the existence of a primary repelling attitude like this towards sexual life. All neurotics, and many others besides, take exception to the fact that 'inter urinas et faeces nascimur [we are born between urine and faeces].' – Sigmund Freud







Occasional Gallery St. Paul Presents:

## *Snowfall*

By John Neff

February 17 – April 14, 2007

Alternate Titles:

***Snowfall: An Explanation of and an End to Certain Themes and Motifs in the Art of John Neff***

***Snowfall: A Scene of Quiet Beauty***

Occasional Gallery is pleased to present *Snowfall* by John Neff, a work possessed, simultaneously, by interminable logorrhea and mute solipsism. A re-presentation, examination and explanation of selected themes and motifs in Neff’s work of 1998 to 2001, *Snowfall* is also a covering-over of autobiography within his oeuvre in that self-reference is buried under its own accumulation. Further, the work is a winter for the figure of “The Artist,” Neff’s final refusal to depend on that doddering construction’s authority.

Neither photography nor sculpture, and not necessarily an installation, *Snowfall* could more accurately be called a criticism, claim or complaint in sculpto-graphic form. The work represents a wintry Minnesota landscape and is constructed of re-deployed documentary and production artifacts from a series of multi-media arrangements (or “sets”) and photographic pieces that Neff created in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Visitors to Occasional are greeted by a snowy curtain pieced together from fragments of white dress shirts, remnants from the production of Neff’s *Sears Pictures* of 1998-1999. A sculptural bust shaped from this curtain presents this press release, as well as information documenting the sources of *Snowfall*’s iconographic and material references. At two-week intervals throughout the duration of *Snowfall*, further installments of this press release will be posted in the gallery and online at [www.occasionalart.com](http://www.occasionalart.com).

Passing through the curtain and into Occasional’s main gallery space, visitors see a large photomural in cool blue tones. Composed from cyanotype prints (literal blueprints) on Tyvek, this mural depicts a bare tree (*Godot Tree*, a copy of a piece of scenery from a 1975 production of *Waiting For Godot* presented in Neff’s *Repetitions*, 2000) and a pair of disembodied legs (*Ground Segal* from 2000s *Figure / Ground*) as well as gallery floor plans and reproductions of works by other artists. Tyvek, the mural’s substrate, was the primary material of Scott Speh’s 2003 Occasional exhibition *The Farewell Tour*. White monochrome paintings on home-wrap supports, the pieces in that show were Speh’s last works of art: he now operates Western Exhibitions, a Chicago art gallery exhibiting, among others, Neff and Aaron Van Dyke, co-director of Occasional.

Within the curtained enclosure of the gallery, the floor is covered with the oiled paper negatives used in the photo-mural’s printing. Massed in corners, they resemble snowdrifts, or perhaps studio detritus from the production of Van Dyke’s *Swirl* photographs, which depicted eddies of white packing peanuts blown against uninflected black backdrops. The *Swirl* pictures were first exhibited in 1996 in Madison, Wisconsin, at a gallery run by Neff out of his home. They were later included in Cold Conceptualism, an exhibition that Neff co-curated at Chicago’s Suitable gallery. The white floor as a compositional device was also present in Neff’s 1998 curatorial project *White*, which included works by both Speh and Van Dyke.

Rising in the middle of the room is the plaster form used in the production of the fabric presentational bust. A cast taken from Neff’s head and shoulders in the pose of the *Sears Pictures*, this plaster body fragment is a mute counterpoint to its cloth double.



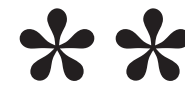
The multi-media arrangements from which the majority of *Snowfall*’s motifs are drawn were termed “sets” by Neff. Of the sets, he has written:

*After completing the work now titled Empty Space, I began to use the term "set" rather than "installation" to describe large-scale environmental artworks composed from multiple and discrete elements. While installation may accurately describe my earlier works, I feel that it implies a relationship to site that Empty Space, Figure / Ground and Repetitions do not have. The later works were not specifically tailored to one site, and can be shown in any location as long as the prescribed placement of the objects is maintained.*

*This shift in approach and language was precipitated in large part by my growing dissatisfaction with what I had come to see as the easy, predictable effects offered by site-specific installation. The sets were the first steps in an ongoing project: attempting to make artworks that retain the referential complexity and keen awareness of conditions of production / distribution which characterize the best post-modern art while also aspiring to a formal autonomy, however contingent.*

*I approached my project with tongue partly in cheek, concentrating the first sets on the "formal properties" of artworks as they are taught in contemporary art schools (Empty Space = negative space, etcetera). This concentration on "first principles" allowed me to gather and associate diverse references within each set. These references, in concert with each piece's formal arrangement, articulated secondary and tertiary themes.*

A field dusted with disorganized allusions, *Snowfall* is not a logical grouping but a disused stage littered with the props of long-closed productions. In this house, presenter and audience are one and the soliloquy is a whispered chaos of personal histories, pointed questions, claims of priority, vague recriminations and disordered observations. Old man’s mutterings. Not the death of “The Artist,” “The Personal,” but the beginning of his and its decline into irrelevance.



Press Release <[pdf \(64k\)](#)>

Press Release 2 (includes press release part 1 & 2)  
<[pdf \(180k\)](#)>

Press Release 3 (part 3 only) <[pdf \(240k\)](#)>

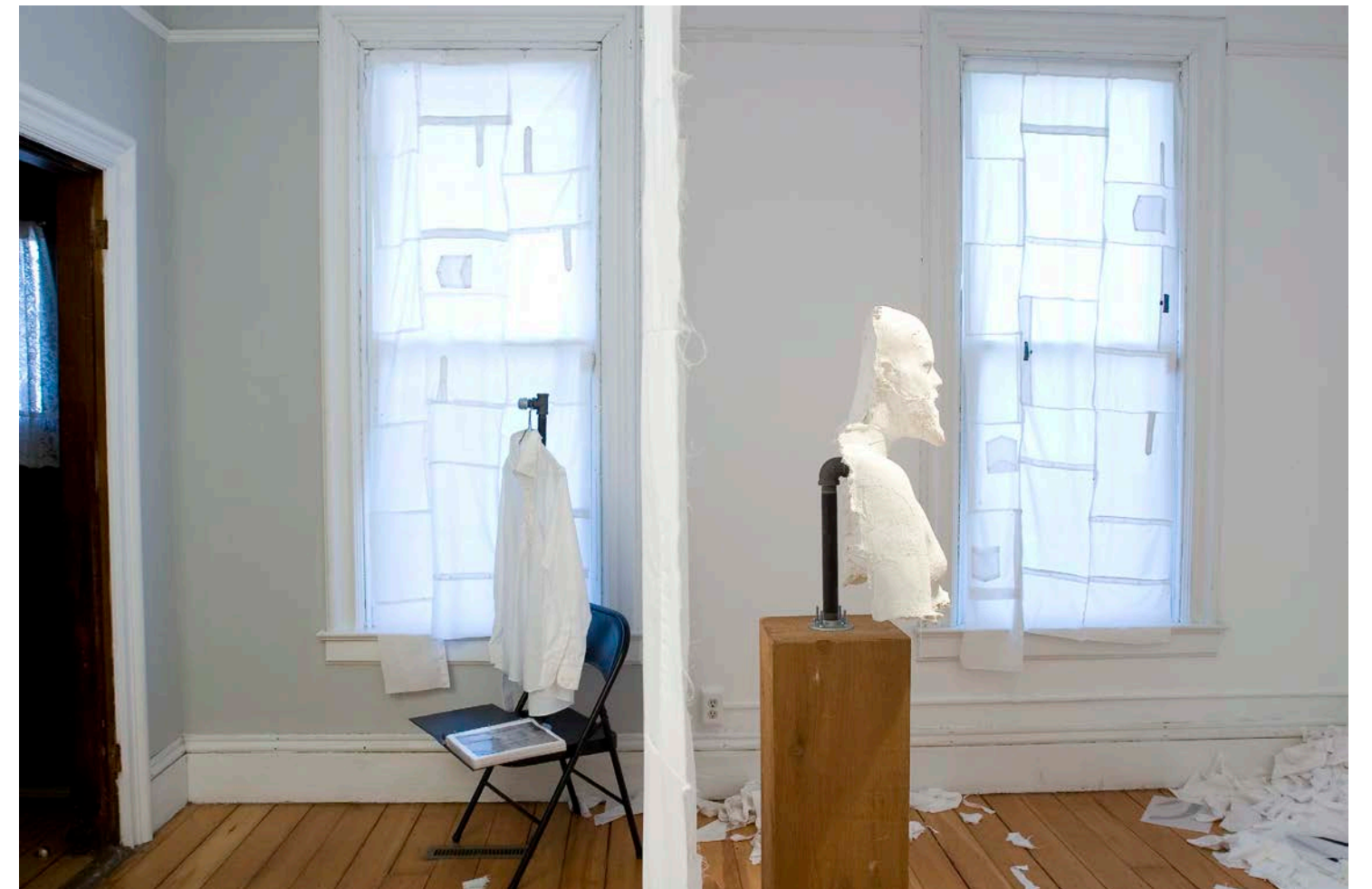
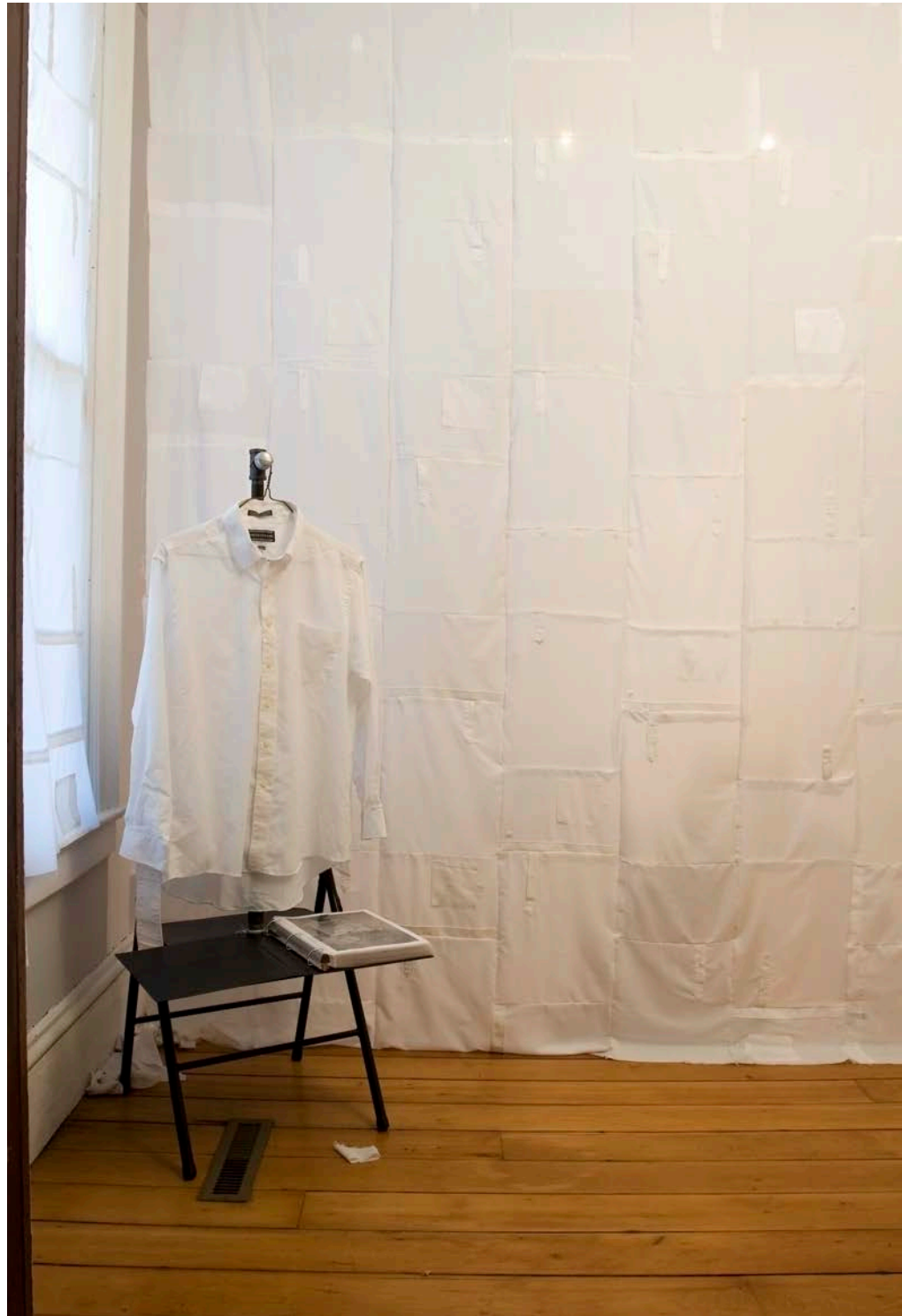
Press Release 4 (part 4 only) <[pdf \(400k\)](#)>

Press Release 5 (delayed, part 5 only) <[pdf \(392k\)](#)>

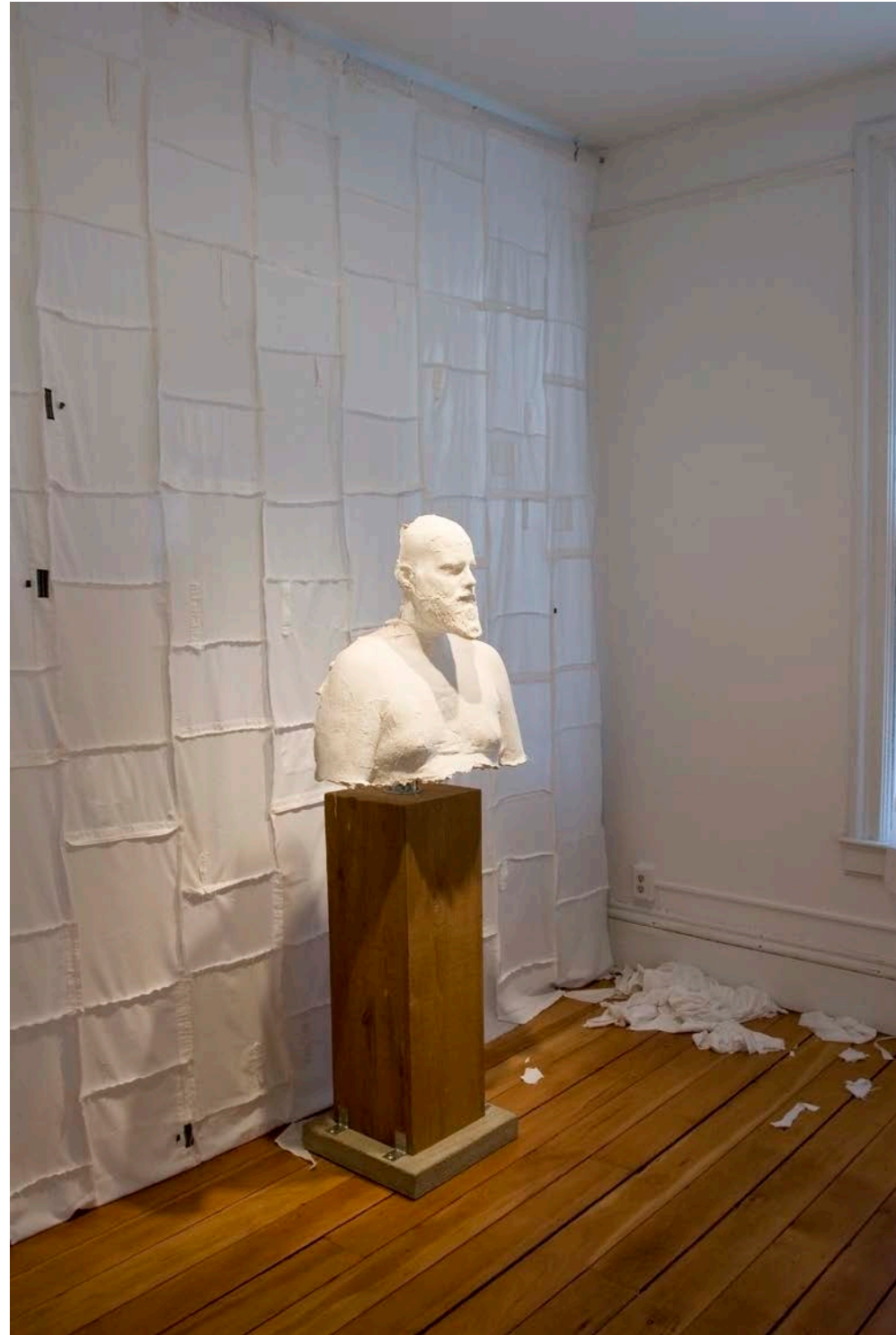
















MySpace.com - Snowfall - 32 - Male - St. Paul...


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### Snowfall



"It is as if the reified, hardened plaster cast of events takes the place of events themselves"

Male  
32 years old  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
United States

Online Now!


Last Login: 8/28/2007

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Send Message	Forward to Friend
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Redactions & Alterations (view more)

On "Sets" (view more)

"Snowfall" at Occasional Art (view more)

[View All Blog Entries]

#### Snowfall's Blurbs

About me:

Occasional Presents:

Snowfall  
By John Neff

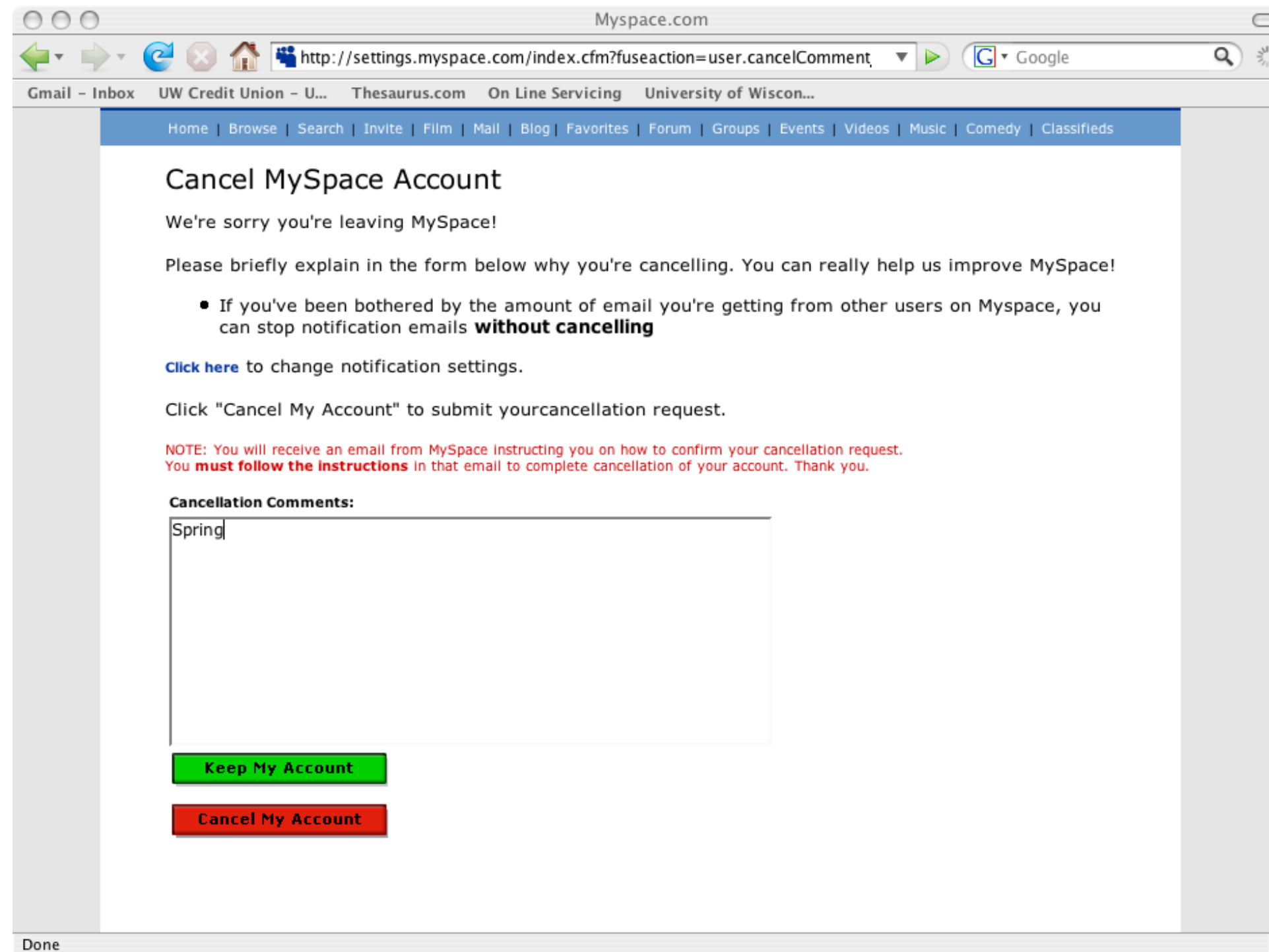
February 17 - April 14, 2007  
Opening: Saturday, February 17, 4 - 7 pm

Alternative Titles:

Snowfall: An Explanation of and an End to Certain Themes and Motifs in the

Link: http://viewmorepics.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewAlbums&friendID=165807480









Cover: *Pink Area Roughly Bisected By Organic Staining* (detail), 1996