An Art Practice of Everyday Life

by

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Abstract

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My project applies the theoretical notion of the tactic, as defined by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, as a model for art practice.

Beginning with images of cut and patched sidewalks, I propose art-making as a way to respond to the accidental and unconsidered aspects of the built world. I try a number of different approaches to a tactical art-making, evaluating each attempt against de Certeau's descriptions of tactical and strategic operations. With each approach, I encounter paradoxes and contradictions, and ultimately conclude that artwork can never be solely tactical.

In spite of these difficulties, de Certeau's ideas successfully facilitate the development of a broad artistic practice. My final series of work proposes site-specificity as a way to contain the strategic authority that artwork exerts, and begins to look to Gilles Deleuze's notion of the diagram as a way for my practice to move forward.

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Introduction

Personal Position

I entered into this MFA program with an interest in undesigned built spaces. My architectural training and work experience had brought me face to face with the reality that a huge amount of the manufactured world is the result of chance and accident more than it is of design intent. I was also struck by the notion that these accidental components of the built environment are no less significant than the parts of the world that are willfully programmed and composed. In fact, as Ann Cline explores in her book, *A Hut of One's Own*, undesigned spaces are often preferred to more obviously designed environments, which can seem contrived and inauthentic in comparison (Cline 1998, 118-119). For my own part, I was also interested in the aesthetic qualities of unplanned phenomena, which I often found to be intriguing. For example, I noticed that the cutting and patching of sidewalks by city workers often resulted in remarkable patterns (fig 1, Appendix of figures).

While these ideas were starting to influence my painting and photography, I did not yet have a theoretical framework or position from which to approach this work. I knew that I was interested in meaning, and how it might be located or generated in the absence of clear intent. I wondered how to read or respond to an image or an object when that image or object had no clear author, yet still had an appearance of being meaningful. Through making work related to these themes, I realized that I was not interested in a forensic reconstruction of how accidental phenomena came to be; this

was not the type of understanding I was interested in exploring. I was also hesitant to interpret or simply invent meanings in a superstitious way, reading significances where they did not exist.

I began to read a wide assortment of writing. These included philosophical texts on the aesthetics of order and chaos, writings on physiological processes of perception and cognition, urban and spatial theories around psychogeography, information theory, and some introductory writings on emergence. In addition, I was looking at examples of artwork which engaged these themes. Although I was anxious about how I might ever arrive at a coherent project from such diverse material, all of the readings seemed to relate very directly to my concerns. This interdisciplinary review of writings uncovered themes and ideas which, rather than building upon one another in a linear progressive fashion, seemed to form a web of interconnected nodes and concepts around my enquiry (fig 2).

Eventually, I came upon Michel de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life*. His notion of strategies and tactics provided me with a new way of thinking about the unintentional aspects of the built world. Additionally, his writing considers practices of walking through urban environments, and different conceptions of cities, providing another thematic link to my work in terms of content and context. I decided to place de Certeau's ideas at the centre of my weblike theoretical framework, and to test his notion of the tactic within the context of my creative practice.

Theoretical Framework

Before proceeding, it seems useful to briefly introduce the terms *tactics* and *strategies*, and the ways in which they relate to my project and practice.

In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau explores the everyday methods of subversion employed by individuals and groups operating within structures of imposed power. He refers to actions which generate institutional spaces of authority as strategies, and the opposing activities which allow weaker parties to exert their own agency within these spaces as tactics. Since our daily lives play out within spaces of economic, social, political, and institutional control, de Certeau sees tactical practices as an integral part of our everyday existence, and important operations of agency (de Certeau 1984, xiv-xv).

In Part III of his book, entitled *Spatial Practices*, de Certeau describes the space of the city as a strategic place of control (de Certeau 1984, 91-110). Political, social, and economic forces are made manifest in the built form of the urban environment. This form dictates and directs our movements and actions as we go about our daily urban lives. This conception of the city reframes the unintentional built phenomena I had been considering. These ambiguous elements are more than just meaningless artifacts and side effects. Because they have no intentional meaning and serve no effective purpose, they function as gaps in the strategic control of the city. As such they represent an opportunity for tactical response, and their ambiguity takes on a political meaning.

Since I had been using these ambiguous phenomena as the starting point for

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making artwork, it seemed appropriate to consider this meaning and how it might inform my creative processes. The fact that I was responding to holes in a strategic space of control seemed to suggest that my art-making was a type of tactical practice. I decided to further examine the characteristics of tactical practices, as described by de Certeau, and to test their ability to further inform my studio work.

Characteristics of Tactics and Strategies

One of the primary differences between strategies and tactics is their relationship to space. According to de Certeau, a "strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it" (de Certeau 1984, xix). A tactic, on the other hand, "insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety" (de Certeau 1984, xix). Tactical practices operate within the "space of the other" (de Certeau 1984, xix).

Since strategies are engaged in "a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place" (de Certeau 1984, 36), they enable an accumulation of resources and advantages beyond those afforded by circumstance. The tactic, without a place from which to operate, does not generally result in any accumulation or production of advantage. Rather it relies on taking advantage of opportunities from moment to moment in a more improvisational manner, without any "base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids" (de Certeau 1984, 37).

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As such, strategies are involved with production, and tactics with a creative consumption. The strategy produces the terrain for interaction, whether it be the space of an institution, text, or field of expertise. The tactic is involved in operating within this space, relying on cracks and loopholes for insinuating itself into the processes of consumption (de Certeau 1984, 36-37).

These three related characteristics of the tactic are the criteria which I am attempting to apply to my art-making processes. I am considering the possibility of making art which operates within the space of the other (rather than generating its own space), which does not accumulate advantage but functions more improvisationally, and which is situated in consumption rather than in production. In trying to translate these characteristics into art-making processes, I have run into many difficulties and paradoxes along the way, and have found myself returning to many of the interconnected theories mentioned earlier in order to inform my own thinking and decision-making.

Objectives

Stated most simply, my intention is to investigate the possibility of using Michel de Certeau's notion of the tactical as a model for my artistic practice.

Approaching this objective from one point of view, my creative practice serves as a tool for thinking about de Certeau's ideas, and testing them within the specific context of art-making. Art is a method for considering theory, and a means to generate further ideas which contribute to an ongoing academic discourse.

At the same time, when considered from a different direction, de Certeau's ideas about the tactical serve as a tool for thinking about art practice. Theory is a method for considering art, and a means to generate further creative output which contributes to an ongoing artistic practice.

In this way, my project also serves as a specific instance of a larger subject, which is the complicated relationship between art practice and theory. Pragmatically, it is easiest to speak about the work as operating in a single direction at any given moment (art-making producing theory, or theory producing art-making), but in reality this relationship is complicated and fluid. While this larger theme of the relationship between knowledge and creativity has definitely informed my investigation, it is ultimately too large of a subject to tackle directly within the context of this paper. That being said, I think that it does ultimately serve as the backdrop for my more specifically framed considerations[1].

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[1] This could be said about almost any art practice taking place within the context of a graduate-level institution, where knowledge production is prioritized as a primary goal (Sullivan 2005, 75-83).

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My more general reason for undertaking this project is to consider the ways in which art production can operate at the boundaries of understanding. Art practice can begin to respond to ambiguity and mystery ahead of clearly articulated objectives and research questions. This type of response can precede a more structured, rational understanding. Furthermore, even when creative output remains ambiguous and fails to facilitate clear conclusions, the work can be meaningful as a productive vehicle of possibility and personal agency.

Thesis Questions

How can Michel de Certeau's notion of tactics operate as a model for my own creative practice?

In what ways can art-making operate as a tactical activity? In what ways is art-making strategic? Is it possible to clearly separate the two components?

What approaches to making an artwork might allow it to operate more tactically? And conversely, what approaches might mitigate the strategic operation of a work of art?

Are there ways of working that could be considered tactical, so that my methods can align conceptually with my objectives?

Methodology

In undertaking this project, a central task has been developing ways of working that are both appropriate to my questions and in keeping with the spirit of de Certeau's notion of tactics. The primary form that this has taken has been for me to start with characteristics of tactical practices, as described by de Certeau, and to then try creating artwork which operates according to these criteria. In this way, I have been considering different approaches to art-making, and the ways in which each might succeed or fail in being tactical. At each stage, various theoretical readings and art practices related to each of these approaches have informed my process.

There are a few noteworthy ways in which this working method has been frustrated and challenged. These difficulties emerge from various contradictions I have encountered as my work has progressed. In the following section, I will outline some of these challenges, and the working methods I have developed in attempting to respond to them.

Firstly, there are arguably some serious incompatibilities between de Certeau's ideas of the tactic and the conventions of discipline-based academic research. Thomas Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, examines the ways in which disciplines emerge. He identifies the establishment of common ground, in the form of agreed upon methods and canonical theories, as a prerequisite stage in the creation of a discipline (Kuhn 1970, 11). This process of delineation is necessary to create a space in which to build theories and knowledge, and is also in line with de Certeau's definition of strategies. For this reason, rigorously defining a methodology appropriate to a

tactical practice seems problematic. As de Certeau explains, tactics are improvisational and opportunistic, and do not produce a delineated space within which to amass advantage (de Certeau 1984, xix).[2]

I cannot wholly dismiss methodology on the grounds that it is incompatible with a tactical approach. In fact, it is arguably impossible to operate without any sort of working method whatsoever. What I have done is to try and maintain an openness in the way that I work, without strictly confining myself to specific media or theoretical considerations. In this way, while my work exists within certain parameters, I have tried to treat these boundaries as fluid guides rather than as a strict delineation.

Secondly, de Certeau himself describes writing as a fundamentally strategic activity (de Certeau 1984, 133-139). Writing represents and facilitates the production and assertion of a structured rationalized framework, which is a strategic operation. By defining the ways in which a work operates, specific approaches are translated into general strategies, which can be refined and re-implemented. This allows work to build upon previous work, affording an accumulation of advantage which de Certeau characterizes as strategic (de Certeau 1984, xix).

In order to mitigate this strategic operation which is central to an academic endeavour, I have attempted to let my art-making lead my theoretical considerations. By beginning with the idea that a certain approach might offer some opportunity to operate tactically, I contemplate the merits and failures of that approach as a I try to apply it through art-making. Where possible, I have tried to avoid an iterative

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[2] I have a related suspicion that establishing clear methodologies for research claiming to be interdisciplinary is also contradictory. Establishing agreed upon methods is part of establishing a discipline, and at best reduces interdisciplinarity to the activity of repositioning disciplinary boundaries.

refinement of the same tactical technique. Rather, each work suggested new approaches to be tried in the next, as each iteration tested a new means to similar ends. Of course, this lateral way of working still generates insight and knowledge with each iteration, but the accumulated knowledge forms an interconnected network of conclusions rather than building towards an ever more refined and specialized expertise (figs 3 & 4).

In general, I began each new creative work with a vague notion of how it might approach the goal of functioning tactically. I put off writing about the work until I had finished making it, with the hope that by considering each piece, I might arrive at new conclusions and connections that were not intentionally built into the work. I do not want each piece to serve as an illustration for a fully considered idea that has simply been executed in material terms. I want the work to suggest new ideas, rather than simply serve as a way of refining existing thoughts. Of course, this method of working can only be taken so far, since I am still beginning each work with some idea of its tactical capacity. That being said, I have found that considering each work once it is made has proven to be a useful way to come up with new ideas about tactics and their relationship to art practice.

The last important point to make about my methods has to do with the role of my own aesthetic taste, formal preferences, and interpretive position in guiding my work. Since each piece of art begins with ambiguous phenomena from the built environment, this base material offers little clear direction or meaning to inform my creative use of it; I am selecting this source content because it represents a gap in the prescriptive power of the city. As such, this material offers little clear meaning or

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direction to follow (or to react against), and my creative choices have often been

informed by little more than my own playful intuition and aesthetic preferences. While

this somewhat arbitrary and personal component of my working method has often left

me feeling anxious about the rigour of my approach, it is in fact appropriate to the

ways in which tactical procedures operate. According to de Certeau, tactics exploit

gaps in strategic control, and involve precisely this assertion of personal agency, taste,

and preference[3] (de Certeau 1984, xiv).

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[3] Undirected possibility forces a crisis of arbitrary decision making, which is also an exercise of personal agency. This phenomenon is nothing new to art-making, and is perhaps best represented by the image of the blank canvas. Jan Verwoert, in his examination of Tomma Abts' artwork, positions this crisis as integral to painting (Verwoert 2005a, 45-46), but I would suggest that his argument could be extended to all art forms.

Context

Relevant Literature

As mentioned previously, the common practice in academic research of delineating the field in which you are working, and reviewing the relevant writing within that field, seems antithetical to the idea of tactics. That being said, it is necessary to provide some sort of context for my work. In the following section I will identify some major theoretical fields that are of primary relevance to my project. These writings represent a starting point and a centre, and may expand as needed as my work suggests other relevant theoretical avenues for consideration.

At the centre of this investigation is, of course, the writing of Michel de Certeau. As outlined previously, I am focusing on his idea of tactics, as explored in *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

De Certeau was writing within the context of French Marxist theory during the latter half of the 20th century. His writing borrows from the work of Henri Lefebvre (including its title, which adapts Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*), as well as the ideas of Guy Debord. The spatial conception of strategies and tactics and the exploration of spatial practices owes much to these authors. This connection to spatial theory is reinforced by my use of the urban environment as a thematic starting point for my art-making.

While my work definitely engages with the space of the city, I am primarily interested in a more abstract and conceptual notion of space, and how it relates to de

Certeau's idea of tactics, which he himself describes in spatial terms (de Certeau 1984, xviii-xx). The environment of the city itself is a convenient example of a physically manifest space of authority, but it is ultimately serving as a specific case study for my work, and could be replaced by any number of strategic spaces. As such, I am not as directly invested in exploring ideas of urban space through this project as I am in interrogating de Certeau's theories of everyday practices[4].

That being said, I have found some spatial theory to be quite relevant to my project. Lefebvre's delineation between Spaces of Representation and Representational Space (Lefebvre 1991, 38-39), has proven particularly interesting, since it seems to serve as a useful starting point for translating de Certeau's ideas into a more aesthetic language of representation. I will explore this idea in more detail later on, in relationship to my art-making processes.

A second major area of discourse that my project engages is the fairly recent developing discussion around art practice as a form of research. My approach to this aspect of my thesis work has been primarily informed by Graham Sullivan, and the theoretical ideas around art-making which he proposes in his book *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*. His framework for visual art research delineates the different features of art based research, and describes the different functions that art-making can have (Sullivan 2005, 94-109). The flexible nature of the structure that he proposes, and the fluid shifting between the different components of his model, effectively describes the ways in which my work can simultaneously

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[4] There are also many artists and activists, like the Situationist International, whose work is more directly and specifically engaged with urban space than my own. While my work is related to these sorts of spatially informed practices, my objectives are not as revolutionary or politically disruptive.

function according to empirical, interpretive and critical capacities. Sullivan's description of the ability for creative practice to constantly switch operations (Sullivan 2005, 103-107) has also helped me to recognize the capacity for art-practice to by simultaneously strategic and tactical. I will address this idea in more detail later on.

Sullivan's notion of reflexivity has also proven to be a useful concept which has informed my work. I have developed a working methodology in which I continually take a metaphorical step back to interrogate the approaches and techniques I have used at each stage of art-making. Furthermore, the reflexive practice of considering one's own position and role in research has proven useful, especially since personal creative agency is a central operation in tactical practices (Sullivan 2005, 100-101).

In addition to these theoretical works, I have found myself repeatedly turning to writing more specifically engaged with various art practices. As my work has shifted and evolved, each new approach has lead me to survey art topics ranging from the role of chance in art, the notion of the everyday, and site specificity. Some of these topics are examined in more depth in later sections of this paper, as they relate to my own artwork.

Finally, I conclude this paper by identifying possible directions for future creative work. This section turns towards Gilles Deleuze's notion of the diagram, and its specific relationship to the painting work of Francis Bacon (Deleuze 2003, 99-110), as a potential theoretical structure to inform subsequent projects. While the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari are related to those I am exploring in this project, my objective is not to undertake an extensive investigation of how their theories intersect with those of

de Certeau; that is too broad of an undertaking for this thesis. That being said, I have found myself returning to their writing occasionally throughout the course of the project. Although the relationship to de Certeau is indirect, their theoretical ideas have informed my work (and will continue to do so in the future) to an extent that seemed to merit mention.

Relevant Art Practice

Since my investigation is so broad in scope and considers a wide range of approaches to art-making, it has proven difficult to identify specific art practices most relevant to my work. With each new project and technique I have employed there seem to be a multitude of established artists working in similar ways.

Initially, I began by looking at work which engaged with built space. Especially interesting was work which blurred representation and abstraction, in which urban and architectural figures were recognizable but defamiliarized. The paintings of Julie Mehretu and Guillermo Kuitca seem to interrogate the patterns and language of space and spatial representation. But these works are more engaged with the psychogeographic characteristics of space and the emotional connections associated with places than my own.

I also considered the photography work of Bernd and Hilla Becher. Their interest in built form seems relevant to my own interests in the constructed world, and my growing collection of sidewalk photographs recalls their catalogs of built structures. While my own work is less directly engaged with archives and typologies, contemplating their practice did help me to understand some of my own experiments with repetition and difference. I began to see ways in which the notion of the general and the specific are abstractly connected to the strategic and the tactical[5]. Work which seemed unrelated and parallel to my explorations of de Certeau began to make more

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[5] This conceptual connection was also largely informed by Gilles Deleuze's examination of abstract thought and the genesis of forms in *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994, 129-167).

sense, and may prove to be an avenue which I explore further in the future.

The most useful thematic position in which to locate my current work is within the loosely defined field of art engaged with the everyday. Stephen Johnstone, in his essay *Recent Art and the Everyday*, considers a broad range of practices, including the work of Annette Messager, Stanley Brouwn, Sophie Calle, Yoko Ono, Fischli and Weiss, Francis Alÿs, and many more (Johnstone 2008, 12-23). Of the artists he examines, I have found myself most often returning to the intriguing work of Gabriel Orozco. Johnstone refers to Lefebvre's description of the everyday as that which "is 'left over' when specialized knowledge has been exhausted" (Johnstone 2008, 15). This definition, which sort of boils down to an absence of definition, seems to also describe the more confounding aspects of Orozco's practice. While calling attention to overlooked, everyday things inevitably drags them into the rarefied context of art, Orozco manages to maintain a sense of inconclusive ordinariness in some of his work, which I have found encouraging.

As my work has shifted towards a more site responsive approach, Orozco's art-making practices have continued to prove informative and relevant. His own rejection of a fixed studio as a site of production (Ruiz 2000, 29) relates to de Certeau's assertion that tactical practices play out within the space of the other (de Certeau 1984, xix). This shift has also lead me to a broad range of other artists engaged in site-specific work, from many of the conceptual artists of the 1960's and 70's, to more recent practitioners seeking to redefine site-specificity. James Meyer's distinction between the literal site and the functional site has helped me to make sense of this evolving field of work, as well as to situate my own recent explorations in

relation to these practices (Meyer 2000, 23-35). Additionally, Miwon Kwon explicitly makes the connection between site-specific art and spatial politics, which links this work directly back to the spatial language of de Certeau (Kwon 2002, 2).

Most recently, I have been looking at the work of BGL. While this trio engages with notions of site-specificity, they do so in a way which playfully reconfigures objects and spaces, often in unexpected or unusual ways. This technique of recontextualizing and defamiliarizing resonates with some of my own art-making approaches. BGL specifically aims to include the viewer as an active actor in the work (Ninacs 2008, 195), and plays with images and materials in an attempt to open up unexpected and inexplicable possibilities (de Broin 2012, 259). This engagement with playfulness, openness and ambiguity, within the broader context of site-specificity, relates to my own creative work, and continues to inform my own approach to art-making.

Material Practice

In describing the work I have been making for this project, I have chosen to present it according to a linear logical progression. It is worth noting that the work was not necessarily made according to such a clearly ordered logic, but that this structure serves as a useful strategy for discussing how it operates as research. Each creative exercise allowed me to consider different ways of approaching art-making as a tactical activity. As mentioned previously, my general intent was to begin making work before each of these approaches was fully developed through writing. In this way, my material practice could most effectively operate as a means of developing ideas, rather than as a way to illustrate or execute concepts that had been worked out through other methods.

Representation as Tactical Consumption

Starting with the image of the cut and patched sidewalk, and the idea that this phenomenon could be understood as a gap in the controlling space of the urban environment, I began making work that responded to this opportunity. Working with photographs that I had taken, I began making drawings in which I used these shapes and forms in different ways.

The ambiguity of the figures I was using as source material (fig 1) afforded a freedom in how I chose to interpret and repurpose them in my work. Initially, I simply combined them in different ways, rearranging and tracing the forms to produce

map-like diagrams (fig 5). In other work, I reinterpreted them as three-dimensional forms, translating the patterns into objects, and combining them in new creative ways (fig 6).

In considering this work, I realized that the process of representation, through drawing, was operating in a number of ways. Firstly, representation removes an image from its context, which allows it to be used in new ways. Secondly, drawing involves a process of abstraction and a reduction of information, which can defamiliarize an image and further remove it from its original context and meaning. This recontextualization allows images to be consumed and used with a freedom that can evade any original intent or meaning, and in this way is successful as a tactic.

This process of removing an image from its context and repurposing it through art-making is also evident in a number of sculptural works that I made (figs 7 & 8). By taking casts of various sidewalk surfaces and utilities, I was able to peel images away from their original contexts, and was then free to use them in any way I chose.

This notion of decontextualization, and the associated break with original meaning or intent, owes much to Jacques Derrida's theories of deconstruction. In his essay *Signature, Event, Context*, Derrida challenges the possibility of ever absolutely determining context as it applies to language. He argues that all language is susceptible to such decontextualization, and that meaning can therefore never be absolutely fixed (Derrida 1988, 2-3).

Applying this notion back to art-making, I decided to test the ability for representation to tactically employ less ambiguous source material. Rather than using the random patterns of sidewalks as a starting point, I tried making work using the

more prescriptive form of a stop sign. I began by filming every stop sign within a large city block, and then playfully editing the footage according to different structuring schemes (fig 10). As expected, it became quite clear that there were plenty of opportunities to use this extremely prescriptive, strategic symbol in my own creative ways, tactically applying its representation to my own ends. This strategic element was just as susceptible to tactical reinterpretation as the images I had identified as gaps in the controlling form of the city.

This posed a problem for my project; perhaps all representational art-making is tactical, and no strategic form is safe from being consumed as an image and repurposed through the simple act of drawing. Not only is a tactical art practice possible, but almost any form of representation can in fact operate tactically. While this seems like a positive conclusion on the one hand, it also meant that de Certeau's notion of tactics was in danger of becoming useless as a model; if any representational practice can be tactical, then the notion of tactics becomes too broad to offer any useful direction.

Avoiding the Strategic

In an attempt to move forward from this conclusion, I decided to approach the project from the opposite direction. Since art-making is a productive activity, it is, at least to some degree, strategic in nature (de Certeau 1984, 36-37). By considering the strategic operation of art, and exploring ways to minimize these characteristics in my own practice, I could hopefully arrive at a more tactical result. This way of working proved to be quite productive, and in the following section I will outline various approaches I tried in my efforts to avoid the strategic, as well as the theoretical problems I encountered and the conclusions I arrived at with each attempt.

Different Methods of Representation

I decided to begin with a single portion of sidewalk, which was located on a street near my studio. I started reproducing this subject in a variety of ways, beginning with photography, and then moving on to other forms of representation, including analytical diagrams, frottage rubbings, castings, drawings, and video. Where possible, I tried to make the images at a one-to-one scale, and produced a series of 36" x 36" representations of the same portion of pavement. My intent was to compare these images, and to consider whether any of the methods employed might be thought of as more or less strategic than the others. In making and thinking about this work, a number of different theoretical ideas began to intersect with my creative explorations.

Henri Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space*, distinguishes between

"representations of space" and "representational space" (Lefebvre 1991, 38-39). The first is a rationalized, conceived space, which he associates with scientists, planners and urbanists. The latter is space as it is lived, and as it relates to some artists and writers "who describe and aspire to do no more than describe" (Lefebvre 1991, 39). According to Lefebvre's framework, structured representations of space are dominant (Lefebvre 1991, 39), and exert a strategic influence over space as it is inhabited.

I began considering whether different modes of representation corresponded with Lefebvre's different conceptions of space, and whether this in turn had any relationship to de Certeau's notions of tactics and strategies. Perhaps a mode of representation that aspired to "do no more than describe" might be more free of my own conceptual interpretations than a more considered model. Could a purely descriptive method of representation be considered less strategic than a more diagrammatic drawing, which required more of my own interpretive input?

This idea is closely related to the notion of algorithmic representation, as examined by William Mitchell, in his book *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era.* In considering the reliability of photography as an objective medium, Mitchell describes a continuum between algorithmic and non-algorithmic forms of representation. Certain methods of capturing an image offer less opportunity for authorial manipulation and interpretation, and are capable of capturing an image with greater factual realism (Mitchell 1992, 28-31). Perhaps processes of representation that are more algorithmic might provide images that carry less of my own interpretative ideas. These methods might produce more neutral images, offering a method of artmaking that is descriptive rather than prescriptive.

Ironically, this argument can be reversed. In the discussion of photography, a more neutral image, made by a more algorithmic process, is characterized as being more reliable. By removing the number of subjective steps from the process of making an image, the resulting work has greater authority; it is a more realistic representation of the subject (Mitchell 1992, 28-31). When characterized in this way, methods of representation which do "no more than describe" exert a greater strategic authority than more subjective modes, which provide less accurate depictions.

I found myself facing yet another paradox. What seems tactical from one point of view appears strategic from a different perspective. Photography and realism operate strategically in their close optical approximation of the physical world. More abstracted drawings and diagrams function as conceptualized depictions, with their own rationalized, strategic logic.

A third type of reproduction seemed available in the form of tracing or rubbing. Some of the images I made were created by placing a sheet of paper over the subject portion of sidewalk, and rubbing across the entire drawing surface with chalk or crayon. This frottage method is algorithmic, in the sense that it offers little room for interpretation or expression, but relies on a systematic, prescribed set of actions. Furthermore, the image that is created is different each time, even if the same procedure is applied. In this way, the image lacks the authority that photography offers in the form of a close and consistent approximation of the subject. In one sense, rubbing gets even closer to the original, operating through a more direct contact than optical operations. But at the same time, frottage not only records the subject surface, but records the particular movements and pressures that make up the act of rubbing.

In this way, the image created captures not only the subject, but the particular actions of the author in its making. It is a record of a single, particular encounter.

Rubbing seems to offer an approach that escapes both the authority of realism and the conceptual logic of diagrams. But I suspect that these frottage images have a strategic operation of their own. Rubbing records the specific circumstances of a time, place, and process, and translates them into an image which persists through time. According to de Certeau, this preference for space over time is characteristic of the strategic (de Certeau 1984, xix). Furthermore, the image created through frottage is unique and irreproducible, and this seems to give it a type of authority that is difficult to articulate. Of the various representations that I made of the sidewalk, the rubbings seemed most successful as evocative and compelling images.

The technique of frottage also lead me to consider Deleuze and Guattari's notion of tracing, as outlined in their essay "Rhizome", which serves as the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guattari stand opposed to the process of tracing as an operation of the "representative model of the tree" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12). They prefer the multiple, open model of the rhizome, and the associated principle of the map (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12-14). As representations, my experiments with different techniques of depiction seem to conform to their description of tracing (this connection is most explicit in the literal tracing technique of frottage). However, once these images are removed from the context of the sidewalk, they begin to stand on their own. Unlike a tracing, a map is detachable, and "can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12). As works of art, representations take on a

multidirectional, rhizomatic connection with their source material, rather than a generative and unidirectional relationship. It is possible to "plug the tracing back into the map" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 14), even in the literal tracing produced through frottage.

While this correspondence between Deleuze and Guattari's ideas and visual representation is fascinating, it seems too ambitious, within the objectives of this project, to relate their contrasting cognitive models of tree and rhizome to de Certeau's binary of strategy and tactic. That being said, their preference for the rhizome over the tree as an "image of thought" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 16-17) does relate to my preference for tactical possibility over strategic prescription, and I will return to some of their ideas in my conclusion, as a possible framework to inform future work.

Immateriality

Since each mode of representation proved to operate according to its own strategic logic, I began exploring specific tactical approaches, beginning with the idea of immateriality.

In 1936, Walter Benjamin identified the unique authority that an art object exerts, naming this element the "aura" of the work of art (Benjamin 1968, 220-222). While Benjamin's essay examines the ways in which reproduction affects this aura, I am interested in the ways in which the aura of an art object relates to the strategic. In considering the natural world, Benjamin identifies a spatial characteristic of the aura, defining it as "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be"

(Benjamin 1968, 222). The unique nature of an original art object generates an auratic space of authority, which is in keeping with the characteristics of a strategy to delineate space (de Certeau 1984, xix). In this way, any work of art which takes a material form that might be deemed to be "original" operates in a strategic manner in opposition to my aim of developing a tactical practice. This seemed to be related to the strategic authority generated by the rubbings and castings I had made. For this reason, one of the approaches I considered was for my work to remain immaterial or ephemeral.

This approach led to work in which my intervention within the space of the city was fairly minimal. In principle, I tried to limit my role as the artist to one of simply pointing things out. Initially, this took the form of photography; I would select and photograph sections of sidewalk. In this way, I was using the photographic frame as a delineation tool (fig 11), although the resulting photographs themselves assumed the role of art objects. In order to designate these images as documentation (copies rather than originals), I tried presenting them in the format of a catalog rather than as images on the wall (fig 12). Although this lessened the ability of each image to act as an original work of art, the catalog itself seemed to take on this role.

In other work, I physically marked sections of sidewalk using chalk. This technique allowed me to frame a piece of sidewalk without generating the physical artifact of the photograph itself [6]. In this way the work was centred in the performance of selecting and marking rather than in a photographic result. During this

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[6] In spite of this technique, I would almost always take photographs or video of the marked section of sidewalk in order to record the work and discuss it with others. As with all ephemeral artwork which is recorded in some way, this documentation process effectively translates an immaterial work back into a material artifact. This undermines the intent of avoiding materiality.

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time, I was also generating a collection of maps and written records of walks documenting my own everyday movements through the city. This walking practice was another attempt at working in a manner that left no material trace.

In considering this approach of avoiding materiality, I found the writing of Jan Verwoert to be quite interesting. In his essay, *Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again?*, Verwoert considers, among other things, the pitfalls of a purely conceptual artistic approach with no foundation in materiality. He follows this understanding of art practice to a logical conclusion, in which any successful artwork is reduced to a conceptual gesture which must redefine contemporary understandings of art. This approach to art reduces it to a "logic of strategic conceptualism" which is not in keeping with the idea of the tactic (Verwoert 2005b).

Verwoert explains how this sort of art-making resulted in the "so-called 'one-liner' art of the 1990s", and how the "successful conceptual gesture turns out to be nothing more than a well-told wisecrack" (Verwoert 2005b). This description seemed to ring true for some of the work I had been making, especially the collected catalog of sidewalk images which I had described as "found-drawings" (fig 12). While breaking with materiality seemed to offer a means to lessening the "aura" of a work, this more conceptual approach to art-making has its own strategic logic which seems incompatible with my tactical intentions.

Multiplicity

The central thesis of Benjamin's essay involves the ability for reproduction to diminish the aura of a work of art. I decided to test this approach as a way to diminish the strategic nature of my work. Rather than avoiding materiality altogether, I began to experiment with reproduction and multiples as a way to avoid the strategic aura of a unique artwork.

I started with a photograph I had taken of a section of street pavement which had been cut up by utility workers. By cutting copies of this image into pieces, I began to rearrange the parts into collages of different configurations (fig 13). I hoped that as the series of images grew in number, the aura of each individual work might diminish in value and uniqueness.

In order to facilitate this process, I moved away from the process of cutting up photographs, and made a set of stamps that corresponded to each shape. With these stamps, I was able to more easily make multiple images (fig 14). I presented about eighty of these stamped drawings in a class critique, and explained my aim of diminishing the preciousness of each image. In spite of my intentions, and the purposefully cheap paper I had used for the exercise, I watched as people handled and considered my work with care. Later somebody else offered to buy one of my collages, after I had casually posted a snapshot of it online.

It seemed that their designation as art objects was enough to give these images some amount of authority. Even the stamps I had made to serve as art-making tools seemed to generate a similar auratic space, when I presented them alongside the

images. I began to consider the relationship of the artwork to the viewer, and the idea that this relationship might be one of inherent strategic authority.

Formal Openness

As well as presenting the stamps I had made along with this stack of images, I included in the work an inkpad and a pile of blank paper. In inviting the viewing audience to participate in making their own versions of the stamped drawings, I tried the approach of including the viewer as a participant in making the work. I hoped that by allowing the work to remain open-ended and interactive, I might lessen my own authority as the art-maker, sharing the role with the viewer.

In his book, *The Open Work*, Umberto Eco considers the notion of openness as it relates to various aesthetic forms. He distinguishes between different types of openness. He describes one of these as "works in movement" (Eco 1989, 12), which is where my own stamped drawings would be situated. Eco gives as examples aleatoric music composition, the moving sculptures of Alexander Calder, and the reconfigurable writing of Mallarmé (Eco 1989, 12). These works have no definitive form, but are constantly changing with each performance, encounter, or reading.

In considering this type of openness, I became skeptical that it offered a way to elude the strategic. While it does avoid a single definitive and authoritative form, it functions by carefully setting up the parameters within which this variability takes place. In my own work, for example, the format of stamps, ink-pad, and paper effectively set the stage for viewers to make work within a space that I had devised,

defined and orchestrated. In trying to avoid the authority that a finished, definitive work might exert on the viewer, I had gone one step further, and was now prescribing their actions too.

This same problem seems to extend through all relationally positioned art practices. Simply allowing for interaction or dialogue does not negate the authority that the work of art exerts. In her essay, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, Claire Bishop considers the writing of Nicolas Bourriaud, and the questions he proposes in approaching relational work: "Bourriaud suggests that we ask the following questions: 'does this work permit me to enter into dialogue? Could I exist, and how, in the *space it defines*?' " (italics mine, Bishop 2004, 64). This definition of space is strategic in nature, and undermines the ability for relational practices to effectively operate as tactical art-making.

Ambiguity

Another type of openness examined by Eco is that of ambiguity. Artwork which is static, but subject to multiple interpretations, can also be considered open. Eco notes that any work of art can be received in various ways (Eco 1989, 3-4), but points to a broad category of "informal" art as being particularly open (Eco 1989, 86). In this type of openness, "signs combine like constellations whose structural relationships are not determined univocally" (Eco 1989, 86). Subject matter and meaning become ambiguous. In considering this type of artwork, Eco quotes an essay on *tachisme*, by Herbert Read. Read writes that "there is a fundamental distinction between objects

that are imaginative and objects that merely evoke images. In the second instance, the artist is the person who views the image, not the person who creates it" (Eco 1989, 99). In this scenario, the creative role is shifted from the maker of an artwork to the viewer, and meaning is generated through consumption rather than in production.

This characterization of openness seems most closely related to both the source material I have been drawn to and the type of art practice I have been trying to develop. While it has become clear that no approach to art-making can be entirely tactical, this simultaneous operation of ambiguity and the suggestion of meaning seems central to my evolving practice. I will return to this idea in my conclusion, but first there is one more idea I need to consider in relation to de Certeau's concept of tactics.

Spatial Relationships in Art-Making

Since I am presenting my work in a gallery, it is important that I consider the implications of such an exhibition, and how it relates to the objective of modelling my practice after de Certeau's tactics. Confronted with the conceptual significance of the space of the gallery, I was lead to consider the various physical spaces of art-production, and how they relate back to the abstract spatial relationships of my theoretical framework. By considering the different ways in which my creative practice operates in different contexts, I hope to more clearly isolate the tactical and strategic components of my work.

The World

The world is the space of everyday experience. This environment is made up of a multitude of spaces of authority in which we operate as subjects. In the case of this project, I have begun by focusing on the particular space of the urban environment. Within this space, we are subject to the strategic authority of the city, and are effectively operating in a space that is not our own. The primary relationship of power that is at work in this space is the authority of the city over the subject of the individual.

The Studio

The studio is the traditional location of artistic production, and represents a space in which various vectors of power are at work. In one sense, the studio is a delineated

space within which the artist is in a position of authority. But in another sense, the artist is subject to a multitude of forces, which are explored and navigated within this space. These might include physical factors like the ways in which materials behave, or more abstract forces which make up a conceptual framework or set of parameters to direct creative work. The popular image of the artist struggling with his or her work is illustrative of the complex relationships of power operating within this space.

The Gallery

This is the space of artistic presentation. It is within this space that the artist is most clearly the strategic producer, and the work is the vehicle of this authority as it is consumed by the viewing audience. The artwork operates as the active expression of the artist, and the viewer is the more passive recipient within this context. The gallery as an institution relies on the authority generated by the artwork within it. At the same time, it produces this authority by presenting the work within the rarefied, neutral space of the "white cube". In this space, the primary relationship of power is the authority of the artwork over the subject of the viewer.

Of course, in each of these instances, there are countless opportunities for dynamic and shifting power relationships to be operating at the same time. But it is within the gallery that art-practice operates with the most strategic authority. Once it is inserted into the space of the gallery, any work begins to function strategically[7].

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[7] It was suggested that perhaps my work should be presented in some other format, but the same translation into strategy takes place no matter what form this presentation might take. Publication is strategic, and so is public presentation. The only possible way out of this dilemma is to make artwork in private, and to not show the work.

Site Specificity

James Meyer, in his essay The Functional Site, considers recent art practices engaged in site-specific investigations, and examines their relationships to the early conceptual and minimal art of the 60's and 70's. Meyer makes the distinction between art which responds to a literal site, exemplified by Richard Serra's monumental Tilted Arc, and work which explores a more transient, mobile, relational conception of space that he calls the functional site (Meyer 2000, 23-35). Initially, these two types of site-specificity seem to offer strategic and tactical approaches to the issue of site.

Many artists have tried to avoid the gallery structure, producing site-specific, conceptual, and performance work that takes place outside of the gallery space. Ironically, this work is inevitably recorded, and the documentation serves as a stand-in for the artwork, operating strategically when it shows up in galleries and books. Meyer cites the example of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, noting that it sank soon after its construction. He describes the work as operating within a functional site of interconnected relationships and documentation, rather than responding to a literal, physical site (Meyer 2000, 29-30). Even though this functional site-specificity is less formal and monumental that the literal site-specificity of Serra's sculpture (Meyer 2000, 24-25) or the phenomenological explorations of Minimal artists (Meyer 2000, 26-27), it still operates with an equal strategic authority. This is true even though the work exists only on film, in photos, and in written accounts.

While I do not see a clear way around this problem, I do think that site-specificity offers some opportunity to lessen this strategic effect. In the final series

of work made for this project, I have tried to collapse the spaces of art practice by conflating the source material for the work with the space of exhibition. Rather than using imagery from the strategic space of the urban environment, I am beginning with images of the specific gallery in which my work will be shown (figs 15 & 16).

The strategic space of the gallery is manifest in its physical approximation of the conceptual space of a neutral white cube. In this sense, the idiosyncrasies that differentiate specific galleries can represent gaps in the strategic space of the gallery. By taking advantage of these opportunities as material for artwork, I am able to operate tactically within this space. Furthermore, I hope that this approach will begin to affix the final series of tactical work to the specific conditions of this project. The work can only fully operate within the strategic space prescribed by this gallery. Once removed from this context, it is incomplete, and cannot successfully produce its own space of authority. It cannot be removed from the specific circumstances of *this* gallery, and in that sense cannot continue to act strategically after the duration of my show.

In this way, the exhibition operates somewhere between Meyer's versions of literal and functional site-specificity. It conflates the physical space of the gallery with the conceptual notion of a "white cube" exhibition environment. Like Serra's *Tilted Arc*, the work is intended to function only within a specific space, and responds to the physical characteristics of the literal site (Meyer 2000, 25). But unlike that sculpture, this work is intentionally temporary (my exhibition is scheduled for three days). Rather than presenting a definitive answer to a particular site, this work is intended to suggest a single, momentary response (of many possible responses).

Of course, the work can be documented within the context of the gallery, and this documentation would subvert the attempts at affixing the work to a specific time and place. While this strategic operation is inescapable, I have chosen to produce drawing, painting, and object-based sculpture in an attempt to work against this process. These specific formats are not generally those chosen for site-specific artwork, and are usually documented as stand-alone works, independent of any physical context[8].

This final series of work continues my exploration of approaches to tactical art-making, employing site-specificity as a way to respond to the specific conditions of my thesis exhibition. In this new context, I have also made use of many of the tactical approaches I had applied in previous work, reconfiguring ideas of openness, ambiguity, interactivity, and recontextualization.

Figures and forms from the gallery have been isolated and reconstituted in drawings and paintings that revisit the approaches used in my imaginative sidewalk drawings (figs 5 & 6). Sculptural works recall the previously employed casting and frottage methods (figs 7 & 8), and the open, participatory process of stamped drawings has also been repurposed for the gallery context. In this way, this last series of work represents both the new approach of site-specificity, and many of the previous tactical techniques I have explored over the course of this project.

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[8] There are, of course, painters engaged in a more expanded practice, in which painting is informed by installation and site-specific techniques. That being said, the objects of painting and sculpture still seem historically associated with the idea of the stand-alone work of art.

Conclusion

My initial objective was to investigate the possibility of using Michel de Certeau's notion of the tactical as a model for my artistic practice.

The irony of trying to arrive at the best strategy for avoiding strategies is not lost on me, and my work has faced countless conceptual paradoxes and difficulties along the way. That being said, I have come to some general conclusions, which I will outline here.

As a practical model, Michel de Certeau's notion of tactics is problematic, for a number of reasons. Since tactics and strategies are functions of power relationships, they are complex, layered and fluid. Vectors of authority are also operating in different directions simultaneously. In this way, a work of art can be functioning tactically in resistance to a strategic authority, and can at the same time be exerting its own authority in a different relational context. And these relationships can and do shift continuously.

This makes it very difficult to evaluate whether a particular approach is successfully tactical. The answer is inevitably both 'yes' and 'no', and this makes experimentation difficult to evaluate. As such, the notion of tactics seems too open and fluid to successfully and practically direct art practice.

At the same time, de Certeau's theory has facilitated a broad and interesting range of creative work. In this sense, it has proven to be a very productive model for art practice, and has served as a useful framework for considering my work and its

relationships to art theory. I have been able to continue to make work, in spite of the difficulties of a very broad and open-ended model. Art practice is a resilient form of inquiry, which I have found can function usefully in the face of these contradictions and ambiguities.

In this way, my conclusions seem to echo many of the contradictions I have encountered through the course of this project. De Certeau's notion of the tactic can be seen as an ineffective model for art-practice, or as a productive theoretical framework from which to produce work. As a strategic model that I have employed to direct my art-making, it has proven to be an open-ended enough structure to allow room for my own tactical expression and agency.

Potential Direction for Future Work

This work has largely been about identifying and expanding possibility. The ambiguities identified in the built world suggest possibility, and through attempting to find a tactical way to make art, I have been looking for ways to extend and expand that possibility. Through the course of this project, I have begun to realize that possibility is not attainable by avoiding strategic operation; this is impossible! I suspect that it might be more successfully achieved by using strategic approaches against one another. After all, the initial sidewalk patterns which inspired this project are not wholly without their own logic. These images are evocative not only because they represent gaps in the systems of urban infrastructure, but because they also operate through a simultaneous and separate aesthetic logic. These concurrently operating strategies combine to

suggest something else, or the possibility of something else, and this suggestion of possibility is what inspired this project.

Gilles Deleuze, in *The Logic of Sensation*, describes Francis Bacon's ability to suggest "possibilities of fact" through his combined use of representation and abstraction within the same painting (Deleuze 2003, 101). He explains that neither approach, on its own, would be able to achieve this sort of possibility. Instead, these paintings surpass the strategic structures of optical representation and the physical logics of abstraction by finding a balance between the two which begins to suggest something new. Deleuze refers to this non-figurative possibility as diagram, and associates the diagrammatic with a painter's own personal voice (Deleuze 2003, 102). This idea relates back to de Certeau's identification of the tactical as the location of a personal expression and agency, even as it moves beyond de Certeau's framework. Personal expression is achieved by using contrasting strategies, rather than by aiming to operate tactically.

In the last series of work I have made, which responds to the space of the gallery itself, I have begun to recognize some of these latest ideas in my practice. While I have borrowed from and reconfigured some of my previous tactical efforts for the strategic space of the gallery, I am also beginning to respond to the strategic logics embedded in the work itself. For example, architectural drawing is used as a method of abstraction rather than spatial representation. Photographs are used to create flat textures and shapes instead of images. And architectural modelling is used to produce objects rather than to simulate space.

This departure from de Certeau offers a new, but related, theoretical direction

to explore through further work. By engaging with methods of art-making in opposition

to their conventional modes of use, I hope that my work might begin to suggest

something new. Or at least the possibility of something new.

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Appendix A : Figures
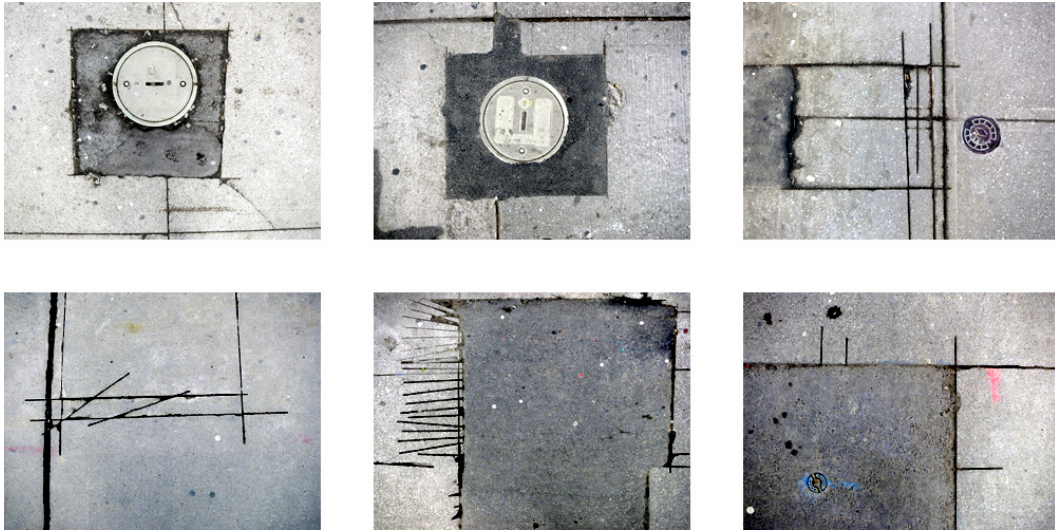
fig 1 : Cut and patched sidewalks
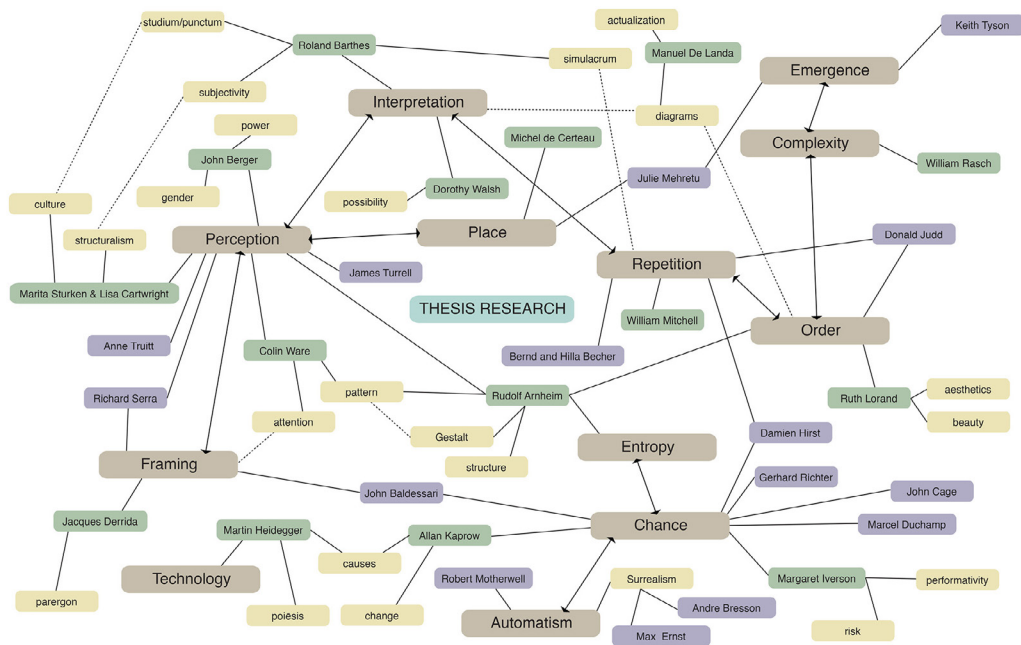
fig 2 : Mindmap of interrelated reading topics
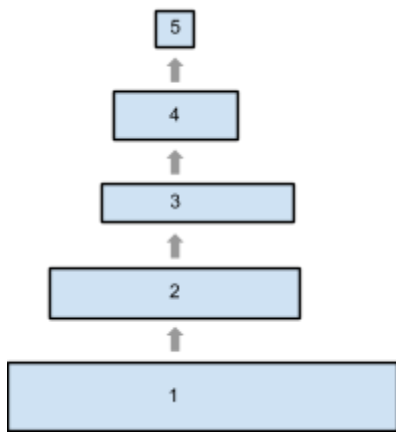
fig 3 : Strategic progression
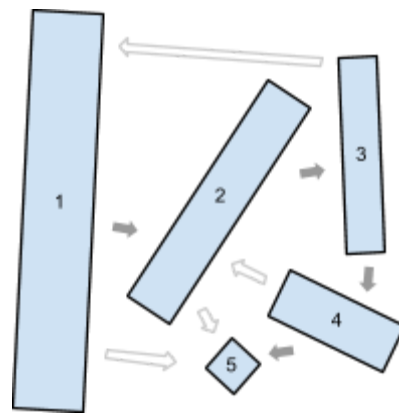
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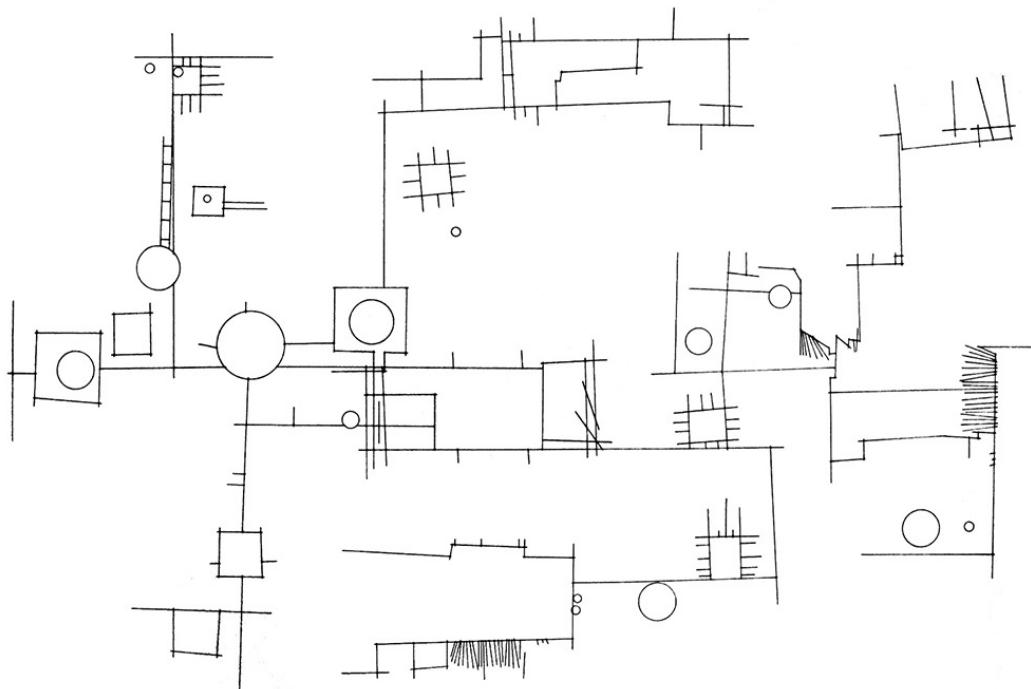
fig 5 :   *Untitled (sidewalk map drawing)*
         ink on paper
         24" x 18"
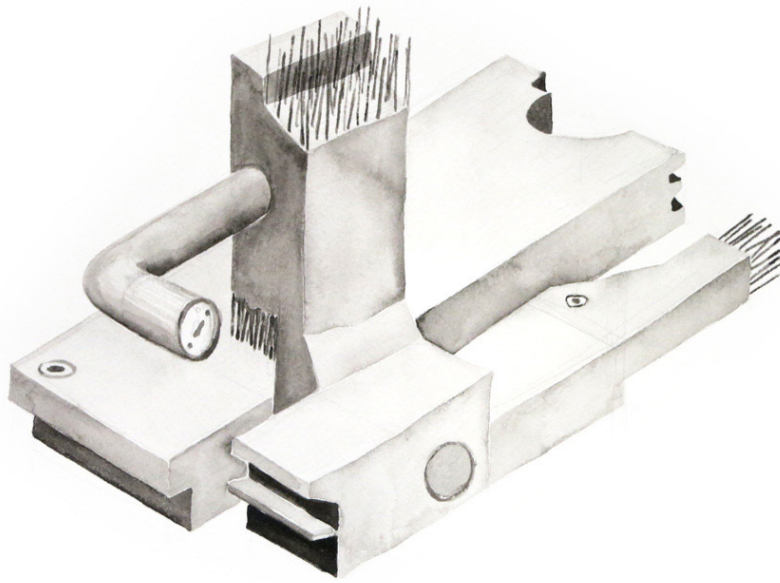
fig 6 :   *Untitled (sidewalk object)*
pencil & watercolour paint on paper
15" x 10"

fig 7 :   *Untitled (sidewalk dodecahedron)*
painted plaster
approx 18" x 18" x 18"
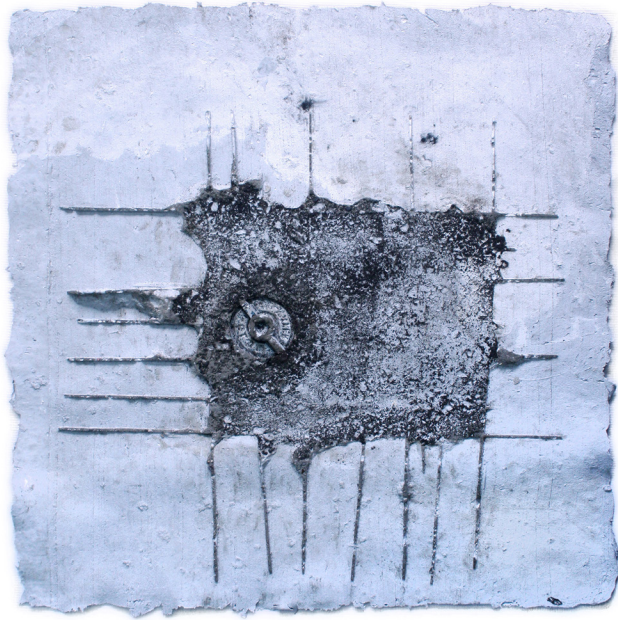
fig 8 :   *Untitled (sidewalk casting)*
          silicon casting compound & debris
          36" x 36"
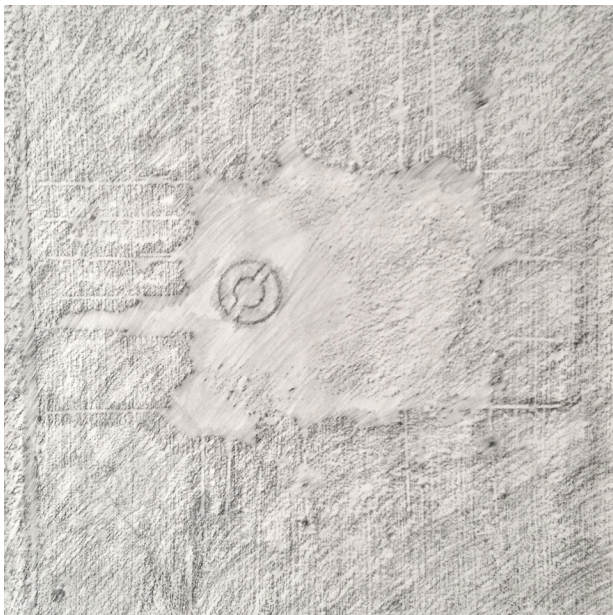
fig 9 :   *Untitled (sidewalk rubbing)*
          wax crayon on paper
          36" x 36"

fig 10 : still from *Stop*
          interactive video
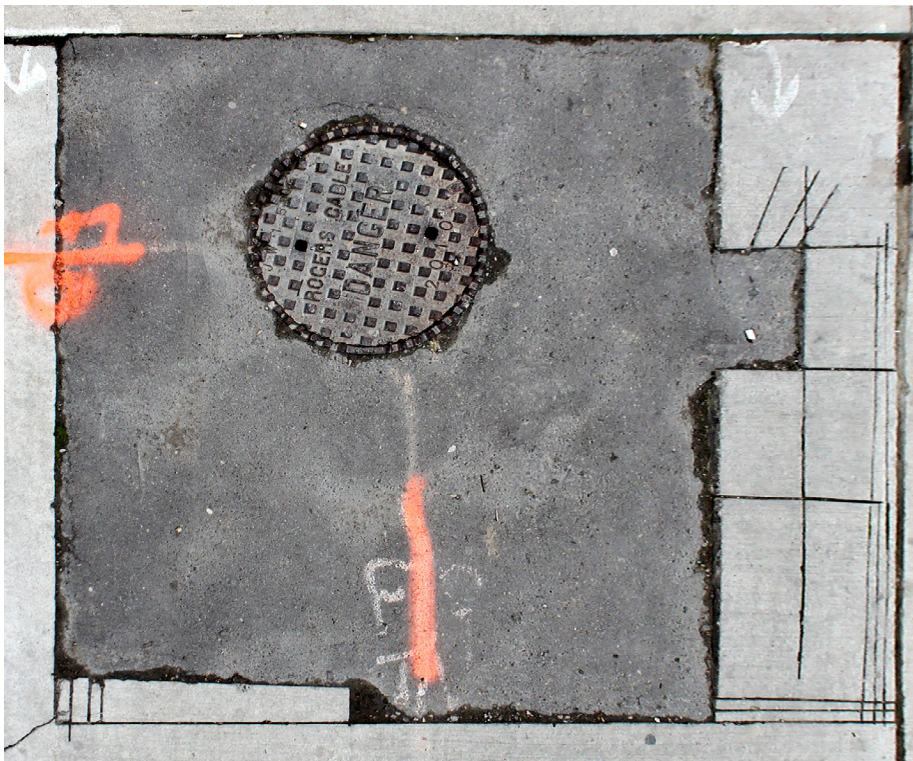
fig 11 : *Untitled (sidewalk)*
          digital photograph

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TEN FOUND DRAWINGS
Toronto, Ontario

September 13, 2013
Curated by Trent Hunter

This exhibition of found drawings highlights recent and ongoing work within the context of a single city block. The notion of the ready-made is extended to include drawing and painting. While these works are allowed to remain in their original context, they are nevertheless recontextualized and reinterpreted by their identifaction and designation as art.

Trent Hunter is an artist and designer living and working in Toronto, Canada.
Ten Found Drawings is the first exhibition he has curated.

A   Untitled (Paint Spill), 36" x 48"
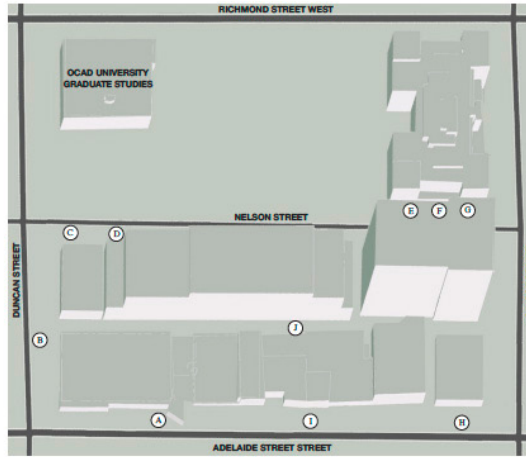
B   Untitled (Diagonal), 72" x 36"

C   Untitled (Square), 36" x 36"
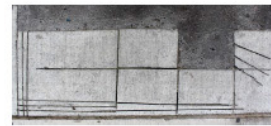
D   Untitled (Grid), 66" x 30"
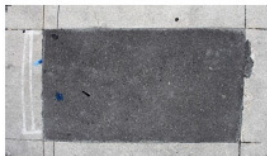
E   Untitled Triptych (1), 84" x 48"

F   Untitled Triptych (2), 72" x 48"

G   Untitled Triptych (3), 84" x 48"

H   Untitled (Circle), 72" x 48"

I   Untitled (Cracks), 72" x 48"

J   Untitled (Rectangle), 72" x 36"

fig 12 : Exhibition Catalog (front and back) - *Ten Found Drawings*

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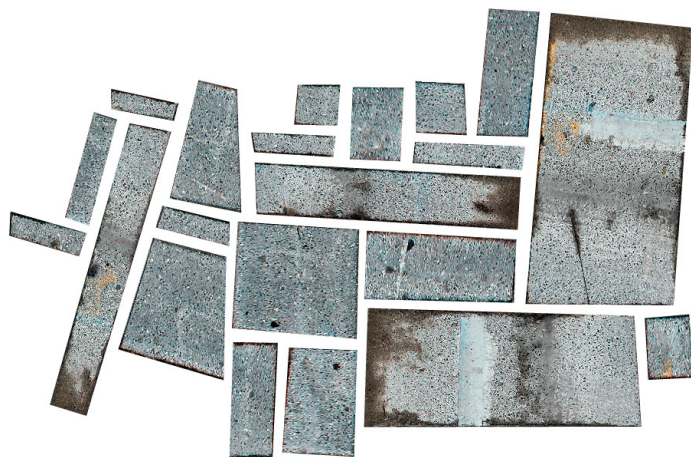
fig 13 : *Untitled (street collage)*
       digital image
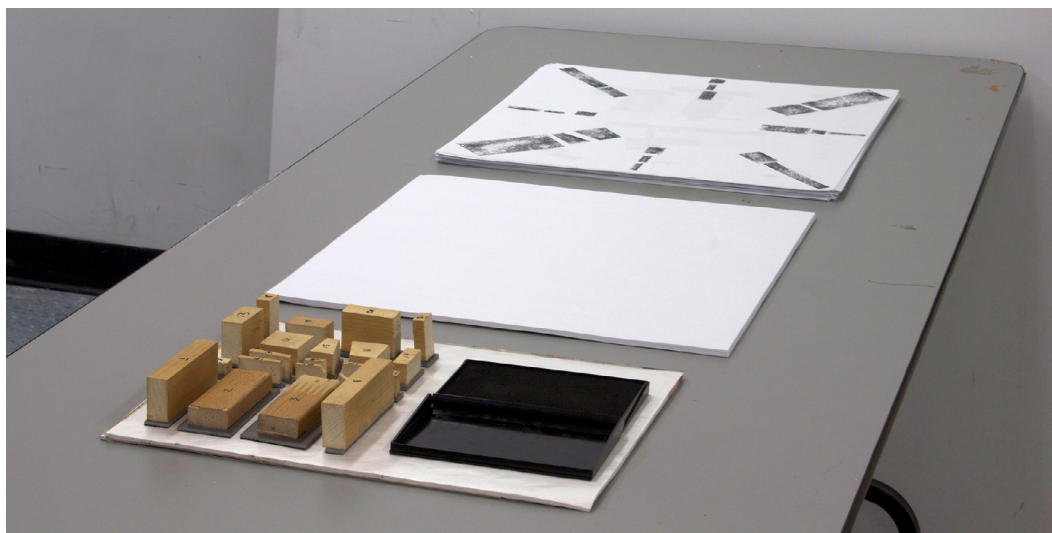
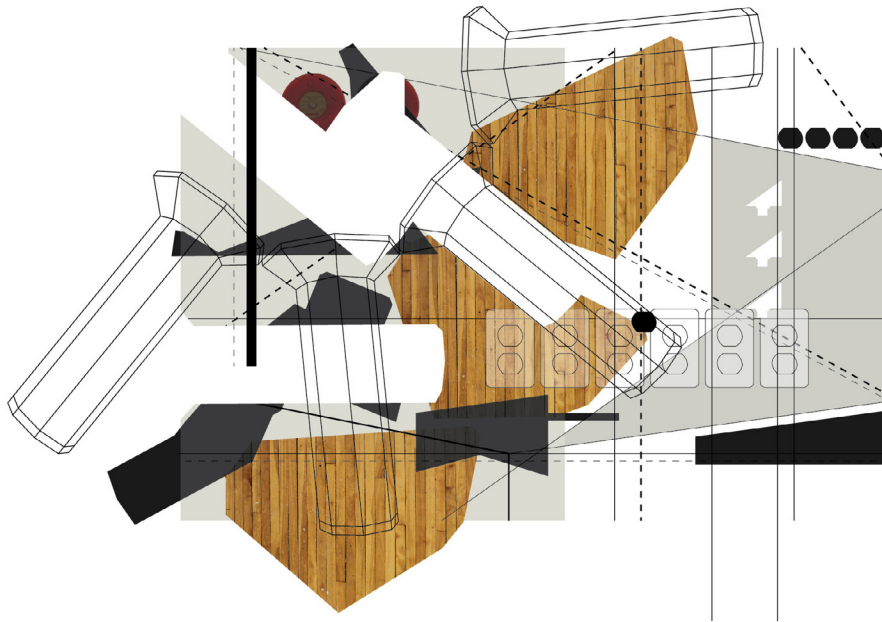fig 14 : Installation view showing stamps and drawings
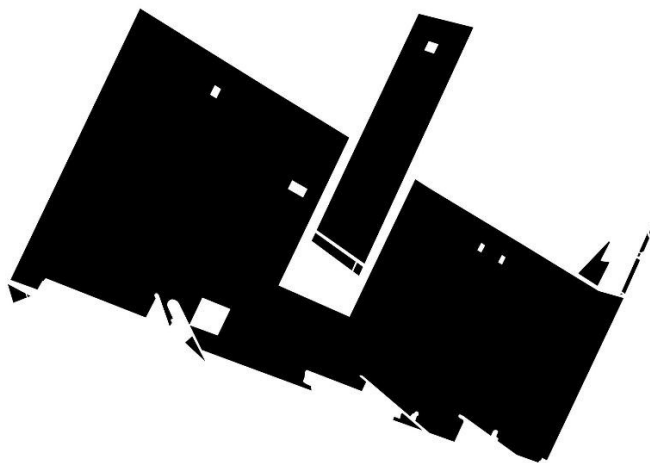
fig 15 : *Untitled (gallery collage)*
digital image
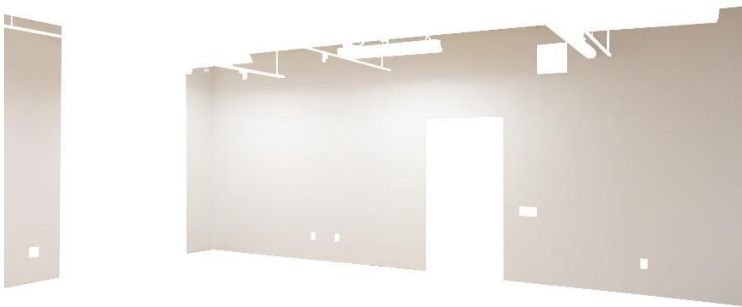
fig 16 : *Untitled (gallery collage series)*
digital image

Appendix B : Thesis Exhibition Images

fig 1 :   Installation view looking into the gallery

fig 2 :   Installation view looking east

fig 3:   Installation view looking west

fig 4 :   Installation view looking west

fig 5:   Installation panorama

fig 6 :   *Untitled (found form)*
          Foamcore
          23" x 16.5" x 45.5"

fig 7 :   *Inside out and upside down*
          Printed paper and foamcore
          17.5" x 12.5" x 6"

fig 8 : *Untitled (stamped drawings and stamps)*
Mixed media

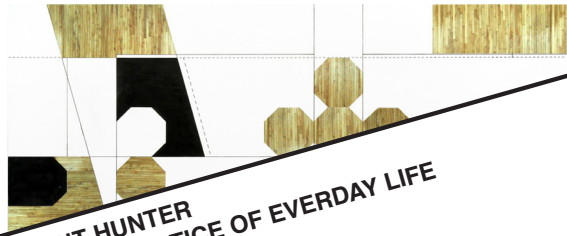fig 9 : *Power Up!*
Plaster
Multiple edition, 3" x 4.5" x .25"
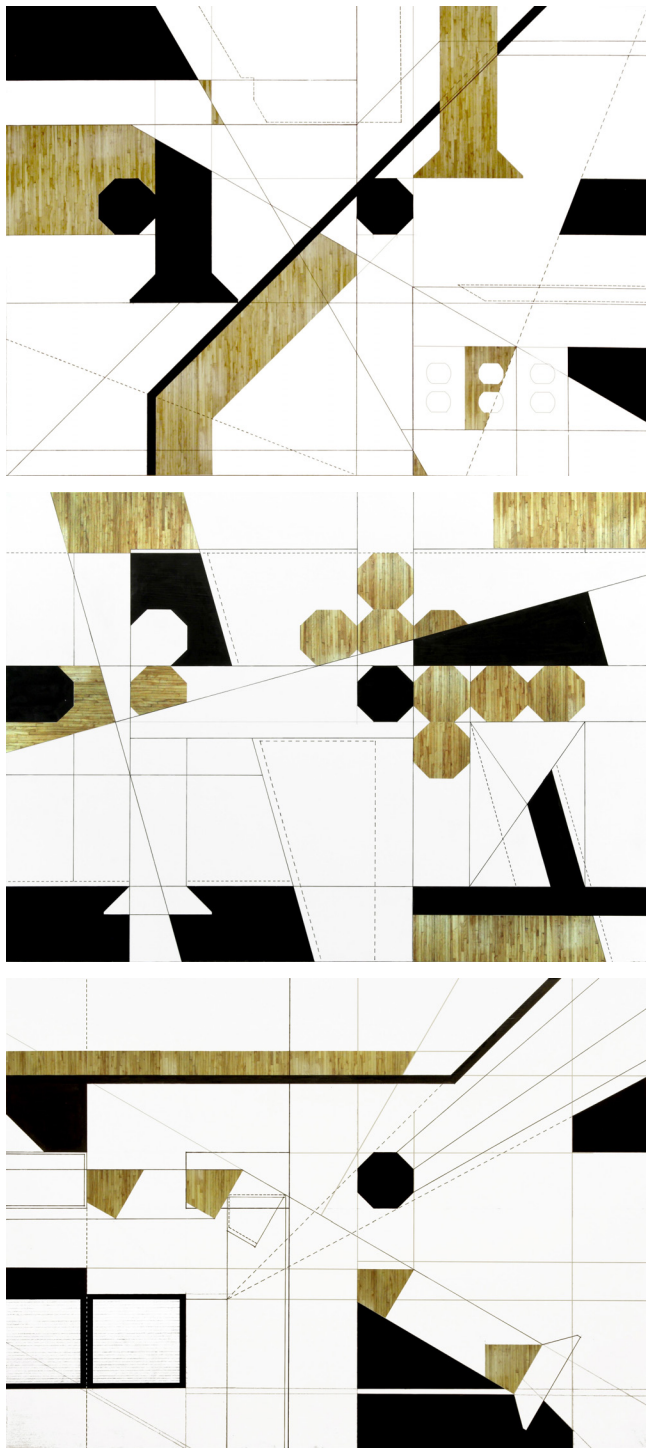
fig 10 : *Untitled (painting series)*
Mixed media
34" x 25" (each)

TRENT HUNTER
AN ART PRACTICE OF EVERDAY LIFE

OCAD University Graduate Gallery
205 Richmond Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
March 24 - 26, 2014

Trompe LOL
Tape on walls and plastic tubing
34' x 25' x 11'

Inside out and upside down
Printed paper and foamcore
17.5 "' x 12.5 " x 6"

This thesis exhibition represents the latest iteration in an ongoing endeavour to apply the theoretical writing of Michel de Certeau as a model for art practice.

In his book, The Practice of Everyday Life, de Certeau examines the ways in which individuals are able to exert their own agency within the spaces of authority that make up our world. He calls these practices tactics, and the operations that exert institutional control strategies.

Through the course of the project, I have proposed a number of different approaches to a tactical art-making, evaluating each attempt against de Certeau's theoretical framework. Through this process, I have realized that no work of art can be solely tactical, without simultaneously exerting its own strategic authority.

The work here employs a number of techniques and approaches developed during this time, adjusting them to respond to the site of the gallery itself. This connection to the space of the exhibition is an attempt to limit the strategic authority of the work to a specific context.

Representation, through the process of drawing, operates in a tactical manner. It is a form of consumption, in which an image can be removed from its context and repurposed according to the whims of the artist. Abstraction, reduction, and transformation can defamiliarize an image, and detach it from any original meaning.

In this tape and tube installation, the space of the gallery itself is detached from its position, transformed, and then represented as a one-to-one drawing.

In the untitled series of paintings (referenced on the title page), this process of abstraction is taken further. Drawings of the gallery are taken apart, along with the conventions of architectural drawing, and reconfigured according to my own tactical ends.
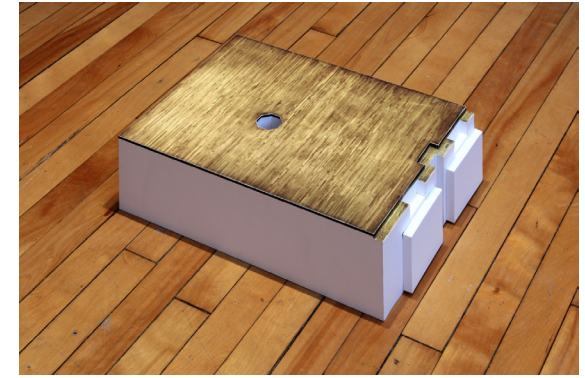
The tactical capacity of representation extends beyond drawing and painting. In this sculptural model of the gallery, the volume of the room itself is playfully inverted and converted into an object. Imposed spatial parameters are translated into form, and idiosyncrasies become defining characteristics.

But the consumption of forms and images, and their creative re-use, is also a form of production. While this sculpture might subvert the characteristics of the space, it also begins to generate its own space of authority as a work of art. In this way, representation also operates according to de Certeau's definition of strategies.

The following descriptions of artwork are intended to provide some insight into my process, for those who might be interested.
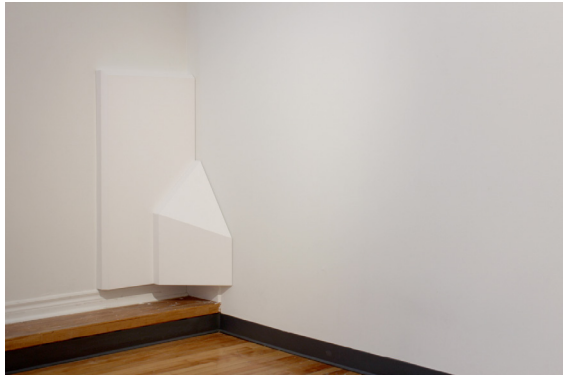The tactical reading of the work itself is up to you!

Untitled (found form)
Foamcore
23 "' x 16.5 " x 45.5"

Over the course of this project, I tested various methods of representation, in the hopes that some might prove to be more tactical (and less strategic) than others.

In this sculptural work, I take the found form of a portion of the building structure, and reflect it with as little distortion or manipulation as possible. This algorithmic attention to detail is an attempt to remove some of my own subjective voice from the process of production, and with it some of my strategic authority.
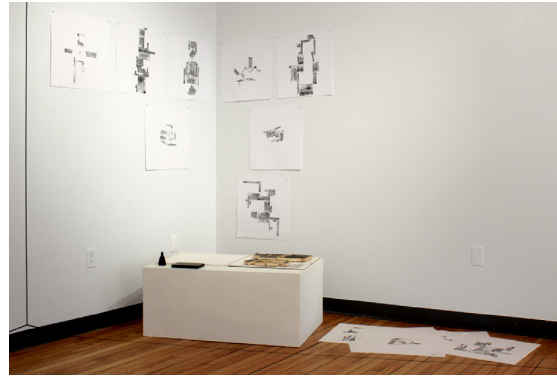
Untitled (stamped drawings and stamps)
Mixed media

In this series of drawings, my aim was to use multiplication as a method to reduce the authority of a finished work of art. By taking images of the gallery, breaking them apart, and using them to create a series of stamps, I was able to produce a lot of stamped drawings. With each image created, the individual works lose some of their preciousness, and the act of creating them becomes central.

By making the stamps available to the viewer, and inviting people to make their own images, I am able to further reduce my own authority as the artist. Please feel free to make your own drawings!
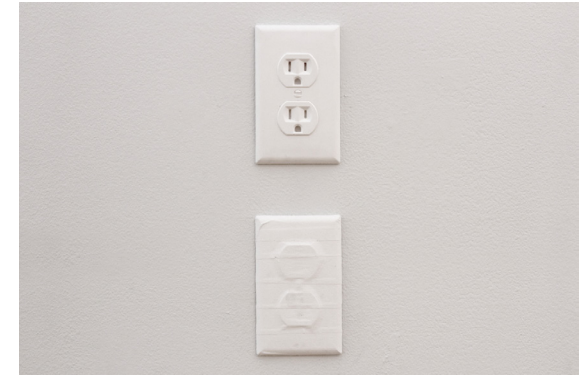
Power Up!
Plaster
Multiple edition, 3" x 4.5" x .25"

In considering how to present my ongoing research in an exhibition format, I thought about the strategic space of the gallery itself. It is within this context that works of art exert the most authority, and the "white-cube" institution both reflects and amplifies this strategic operation.

I began to focus on the parts of the gallery that fail to live up to the pristine ideal of a neutral space. These phenomena became opportunities for response, and I decided to multiply some of them within the gallery.

Site-specificity also offered a way to connect the work to a specific context. Once the work is removed from the site of this gallery, this show, and this thesis project, it is no longer able to operate as it was originally intended to. In this way, the work cannot generate its own strategic space of authority beyond the present context.