



SMP IN STUDIO ART:
FALL 2014
ANNA GROMAN



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INTRODUCTION

I have always been interested in the way in which people experience the temporary as permanent. Many of us have the privilege to not have to treat life as temporary, viewing our separate realities as eternal. This choice to not focus on the reality of the situation and deny the fact that each of us will die and that things are constantly changing around us seems to define us. We live quickly and forget often, letting ourselves get caught up in the now until something uncomfortable or different makes us realize the true nature of things.

When I first began my SMP I struggled to express the importance of the temporary in a way that others understood. I realized that in order to succeed at this I would have to create a temporary situation in which people viewed something temporary so as to stress this point. Simply showing people books and magazines and expecting them to draw the same conclusion as me was not enough. I needed the viewer to experience something in order to better understand it.

This led to my exploration of spaces and their importance in viewing my artwork. I decided to build a geodesic dome and place living room furniture in it to create an atmosphere that would be obviously separate from peoples' daily lives. I also created a magazine that deals with pictures taken over the course of several years and the links between experiences and photographs. The photographs are linked to one another through content, color usage, and shapes to impact the speed with which each spread is viewed. The links between seemingly different situations are at times quite distant, playing on the idea of how we experience certain things based on things we have experienced before even if they are unrelated.

By using photography, a medium which is directly tied to documentation, I attempt to show the fast moving nature of life through moments that now only exist in frozen motions. Through these images I challenge viewers to experience something temporary and accept it as such, hopefully drawing on their own life experiences to better understand mine. By placing the magazines in the geodesic dome I have created an experience for the viewer that is temporary. The dome itself will be taken down and the magazines will be put away. The photographs the viewer sees are all experiences that have already happened to me, and so they are temporarily experiencing things that were temporary in my own life.

I do not wish to inspire fear through my artwork, but rather a higher consciousness about the effects of our everyday actions. Through understanding the temporary nature of life I hope people will begin to appreciate things more and understand how each situation is unique to their experience of it.

INITIAL THOUGHTS

When thinking about people I am most shocked by our ability to avoid the obvious on a daily basis. Unlike other animals that have the ability to treat their lives as the temporary things that they are, humans insist on collecting and hoarding not only things, but also emotions and memories. Our insistence that things can be permanent and that this all has meaning has been traced to many things, including religion, however I believe that it is simply human nature. Our minds have evolved to need a purpose, so much so that we cannot treat anything as it is but must give it some kind of higher meaning.

Looking into other cultures it is interesting to see that some have developed a different approach to life. A much slower way of living gives one time to appreciate the smaller things in life, while countries with higher mortality rates learn that nothing is permanent. However in a country where you are pushed to not only succeed but excel, our goals seem to get in the way of the bigger picture. Yes, these are all just my own personal thoughts and you may not believe in them – but I would argue that if everyone realized how fragile their life really is they would be a lot happier. The temporary doesn't have to be equivalent to the bad.

When is the last time you let something be temporary? You're temporary. The you that existed 20 seconds ago is dead. You're dying. We're all dying. When is the last time you treated your life that way?



THE START

MARATHON!

What is the Marathon, you might ask. It is possibly one of the harder art challenges I have personally completed, but it is also one of the best. Many people do challenges such as taking a photograph a day for a year and the Marathon is not unlike that in the sense that you are constantly creating art. The challenge was to create 20 pieces of artwork in approximately 20 days. There were two lists that included prompts in different forms: one was quotes from successful artists, and the other was in command format. We needed to create three pieces from each of these lists. It was a great experience using prompts, as many of us had never done that before, and we all ended up pushing our artistic abilities to the maximum.

THE WORK



Anna Groman, Marathon studio set up, September 2014



Anna Groman, *Australiana*, September 2014, Acrylic on canvas

Anna Groman, *Ceramic Bodies*, September 2014, acrylic on found ceramics



Anna Groman, *Self Portraits*, September 2014, Acrylic on transparency and watercolor



Anna Groman, *Something Beautiful*, September 2014, Acrylic on transfer



POST-MARATHON INTENTION STATEMENT

The Marathon (the Pecha Kucha in particular) helped me to better understand the links in my work and the kind of things I am interested in. I refound my love for layering and am excited to explore layout once again, this time hopefully incorporating painting as well as found imagery. My interest in the female body really came to light during this time and I am interested in further exploring the link between the body and the landscape and how both are constantly changing. In a way the Marathon reinforced my idea of the temporary as I further explored the concepts of youth and beauty in my work. Through painting various images of myself as a teenager I understood my interest in how people change throughout their lives and how they incorporate certain aspects of themselves into their current life.

As an artist I am interested in the way we interpret relationships as well as the fading nature of life from a female perspective. I would like to further explore what we consider “beauty” and where that concept came from as well as whether or not this concept has changed or died out (as everything eventually does/should). Furthermore I am interested in exploring various types of layout to find the most suitable way to present my ideas in an understandable fashion, ultimately resulting in a finished product (either a book or magazine).

WHAT FOLLOWED

After the Marathon I began working on how to show memory and experience using book formats. I wanted to explore the concepts of identity through book form and how best to represent the different aspects of life (in this case my life) in a way that allowed the viewer to understand that all things must pass.

I first tackled this using a found book. I removed the title pages and anything that made it specifically “Sirius” (the title of said book which you would have never known otherwise). I even removed the title from the spine of the book. I left it nameless. I cut out huge chunks of text pages from the book allowing it to form various sections. The size of each of these sections depended on the time spent in each location. The idea of the book was to cut out the pages to symbolize the various places I have lived using recognizable imagery and images that resonate with me. I began simply representing the places and then slowly began incorporating memories. I used cut outs to show the different locations I have lived and changed these cut out landscapes to reflect what happened in each as the story progressed.

One could argue that this piece was used simply as therapy, however it is just a straightforward chronological representation of my memories, nothing more. The viewer of this would not generally have the background on this piece and so it creates a kind of grouping of images that they can view at will to hopefully better understand how things are constantly changing and ending.

I decided to go a different route in terms of representation for my second piece and used different sections that are able to overlap as a way to show my message rather than showing my images chronologically. I made this decision as memories are not chronological in our own minds and we do not necessarily think about things in groupings. This piece is much more interactive than the last one in the sense that the viewer can move the images around to create all new images and can view them in whatever order they wish. These images were all photos taken during my childhood on disposable cameras or 35 mm film, which provides them with very saturated colors that makes them seem more like memories in my mind as they do not look completely realistic.



Anna Groman, *Blank*, October 2014, Altered book



Anna Groman, *Blank*, October 2014, Altered book



Anna Groman, *Blank*, October 2014, Altered book



Anna Groman, *Blank*, October 2014, Altered book



Anna Groman, *Ties*, October 2014, Altered book



Anna Groman, *Ties*, October 2014, Altered book

IN – PROGRESS CRITIQUE 1

After hearing the different takes on my work, I am interested in continuing using layout to show the same concept of time passing but wish to use my own photography for my next pieces. I would like to explore magazine format and the different reactions people have to print vs. online formats as I am ultimately interested in better understanding how to make print seem more appealing than the online alternative.

I see myself continuing to use autobiographical content, however I would also like to look into using layout as a means of storytelling for posed images. I am unsure which of these I prefer and as such I feel like it would be unfair to rule one out just yet.



I plan on making a more museum style, very bare booklet with a single item presented per spread before exploring the complete opposite of full page spreads saturated with color in a more collage style. I would like to break up images more and try cutting them up to reform completely new images.

I will continue to use layout to better show my concept and as such will be focusing on artists such as Sam Haskins and Robert Frank to better understand how they use layout in their own photobooks as a solution.

STUDIO VISIT: JOHN DEAMOND

When St. Mary's alum John Deamond came to give his talk to the entire SMP class, I realized that his interest in book presentation lined up perfectly with mine. Looking through "A Field Guide to the Extinct and Extirpated Birds of North America" I was fascinated with the different kinds of approaches Deamond had taken to presenting his work in this book format as well as outside of it. After his talk I was able to have a studio visit with him where he helped me better understand some of the concepts I was trying to show.

He suggested I not be confined to just the book format and to try other things such as he himself had. He suggested I use the book as a guide to an installation and try using more material based work (such as manipulating photographs in their original format rather than just digitally). Interestingly enough, this advice was very similar to the advice that I received at midterm critique, however I first had to explore the museum pamphlet formatting in order to want to take my work further into the physical world. I would like to try printing onto different surfaces and displaying my work in different ways as he suggested, as I feel like this is the best way to transmit my ideas.

INTERVIEW 1

M: What was your first memorable art experience and how is it relevant to what you are doing now?

A: I went to art therapy when I was about 5 or 6 and really fell in love with oil crayons and actually enjoyed looking into family relationships and how to use symbols to express what you mean.

M: Who is your favorite artist and why?

A: Julia Pott does amazing animations as well as illustrations exploring human relationships and I really like her catchphrases and the scripts of the videos and how she expresses what she means. Understandable, likeable, on point.

Sally Mann is an incredible photographer who took a lot of photographs of her daughters as they were growing up so it's interesting to see how she shows family relationships.

M: What inspires you? What are some of the sources, both within art and outside of art that you turn to?

A: I am inspired by the different places I have lived and the various traditions in each place (Zimbabwe, Paraguay, Ecuador, Wales) as well as artists that look into relationships and use art to find their identity in a way.

M: What draws you to the medium and materials you work in? / How does your choice of medium(s) affect your work and contribute to its meaning?

A: I like photography the most because I like how realistic it is and enjoy framing subjects and figuring out layouts. It is also the fastest way of achieving the goals I want and creates the kind of images I like. I also like painting on top because of the idea of layers and their metaphorical meaning.

M: How is your art a response to the world you live in?

A: It is a direct response because it explores not only the relationships with people close to me but also relationships in general. My cynicism about us dying and for some reason being incapable of accepting that



has definitely come from experiences of death and moving and having to let go and compartmentalize your life based on who is currently in your life vs. isn't. So it's a huge theme revolving around change really.

M: Is your work ultimately more about your process or about the final product? Why do you feel that way?

A: It's about both because the process is important and that's where the importance of each symbol appears and you can see the minute details but the final product is what is meant to be seen and has combined all my ideas for the piece together.

M: Do you have a mission? What do you consider to be your purpose for creating art?

A: My purpose for creating art is to better understand myself and how I interact with the world in comparison to how others do. An exploration of relationships and reactions.

M: What about making art intimidates you?

A: The thought of someone seeing more intimate pieces and having to explain to a stranger what it means. The potential for people actually seeing who I am without me knowing them.

THE MIDDLE

POST – REVIEW INTENTION STATEMENT: MIDTERM

Looking into the art of other artists working in different mediums (such as Spencer Finch), I hope to continue my work with layout but use different ways to communicate my ideas as my more recent work did not appear to do so. I will continue using both InDesign as well as more traditional book binding techniques but also wish to explore how to display my images in a more interactive way, such as in an installation gallery setting.

During the review it was interesting to hear that the shapes I had used in “Decadence” allowed the viewer to see the separation which I was aiming for, but also did not communicate the sense of deterioration. Professor Scheer mentioned that the book reminded her of dream home catalogs, which was excited to hear as that was the idea I was aiming for. She also said that the grid takes something natural and makes it rigid, which has inspired me to work more with the grid in a more subtle way, such as in the layout designs in InDesign. Olivia mentioned an exhibit at the Phillips Museum that involved photographs of someone's home items hung salon style along the walls, with one side including just the outlines of the images. This relates to my work as it also looks into how people acquire collections over their lifetime without necessarily meaning to, and how this in a way becomes their definition of time passing.

In my following work I will be trying to solve technical issues around how to present content that correctly shows my idea of deterioration. I plan on merging digital processes with traditional ones, as was suggested, and hope this allows me to manually add sections to already processed images to better transmit my message to the viewer. I also plan on looking into other ways of displaying my work, inspired by the Phillips Museum recommendation.

STUDIO VISIT: CASSANDRA KAPSOS

As the visiting photography professor, it was very important to me to hear what Cassandra Kapsos had to say about my work. I showed her the magazine I had been working on (“THIS”) and although I had already sent it off to be printed I was interested in hearing her take on the spreads. I explained the concept of time passing and wanting to give the viewer an experience, and that the magazine is meant to be an experience in itself that causes an emotional reaction in the viewer. She was interested in what I was trying to show, however she said that the conflicting content is hard to understand at times as the message is not clear.



From this conversation I had the idea of inserting sheets with text on them to help the viewer better understand my message. Cassandra had other helpful tips such as possibly using black and white images alongside the color ones in a different way - she recommended things such as using them on spreads where the image appears the same but the focal point changes, so as to have the viewer focus on the content of the image rather than just the color as that is what we are drawn to first.

She said that certain things worked particularly well (such as the use of positive and negative space as well as the transitions created by my choice of subject matter) and highlighted the things that didn't (images that I had wanted to be blurry came across as less important because they were of a lower quality). All of her comments were very helpful and I will use her recommendations to continue to work on this piece even though it has already been printed.

THE START 2

IN- PROGRESS CRITIQUE THOUGHTS

After most critiques I have left feeling as if the people in the room did not experience my books in the right way, as a small time slot is not what is necessary to understand a book and the formats of my books have not been conducive to quick viewing. Teachers and students alike have focused on things that were not my primary interest (such as how to use issue and their interest in the shine it gives pages), which led me to understand that my feeling of dissatisfaction came from the lack of experience I had presented them with.

POST – REVIEW INTENTION STATEMENT

I want to create an experience for the viewer - not just something for them to view, but something for them to feel. And although books themselves should create this, they do not always do so in gallery settings where they are meant to be viewed as high art. I plan on creating a room in which the viewer feels a certain way about the books I present, not only through the content of the books but also through the arrangement of the room itself.

By creating a space in which the viewer must place themselves, I as the artist have greater control over the way in which my books are viewed. My concept of "everything is temporary" may better be shown in a room that makes the viewer feel uncomfortable in a small way so as to have them leave quicker than they may have. This, as the experience, is temporary. The images in the book are all experience based and alternate between color and black and white to lead the viewer from happiness through to everyday events that help them see how everything passes. I have used the shapes found in images to lead them through to the next set of images, thus creating a kind of rhythm that must be kept up.

In this work I hope to engage the viewer in a way that I have previously been unable to by placing them in a room separate from their lives. I have chosen to make a geodesic dome for this so as to further illustrate the dreamlike quality of life. As humans I expect the viewers to not necessarily react in the way in which I am hoping, however it is the experience itself that I am focusing on. Regardless of how they feel inside the dome, they will have fully experienced something.

INSPIRATION

SOURCE – TO – SELF: ROBERT FRANK

As a student interested in photography, there is no photographer that stands out as much as Robert Frank when it comes to the realm of photobooks. As a Swiss-born expatriate living in New York City, Frank was interested in driving across the country to discover the "real" America. After being awarded the Guggenheim



Fellowship he did exactly that for two years starting in 1955. On his application he wrote “that he sought to portray Americans as they live at present” (Tully, 2). Frank’s commitment to depicting life as it really is is also a goal of mine.

The allure of Robert Frank’s photographs comes from the fact that they are deliberately ambiguous, muddy images. When looking at his contact sheets it becomes apparent that a lot of his photographs were underexposed - this was because he did not always look through the viewfinder in order to better experience the situation and take more candid photographs. This Beat Generation approach to photography served Frank well as it separated him from the documentary tradition that had been in place up until that moment. Photography had been seen as wholesome and transparent and Frank challenged this by presenting images that the public was not prepared to see. In order to accomplish his goal of portraying true American life, Frank used a spontaneous style of photography, thus moving away from the more formal approach to photography that was the norm at the time.

This new aesthetic was inspired by Alexey Brodovitch who is known for his dynamic spreads in magazines such as Harper’s Bazaar that paired images and text in new ways. Brodovitch taught Frank to seek images by looking emotionally and not just intellectually in order to capture the way the subject responds to their environment. Brodovitch encouraged his students to use blur so as to not simply scientifically capture a scene but rather its whole experience, including the movement. Frank’s spontaneity in photography fitted in Brodovitch’s teachings as well as those of the Beat Generation and he found himself looking for the humanity in each moment rather than simple tonal beauty. It is this spontaneous take on raw expression that paved the way for a new kind of photography.

The publication of “The Americans” in 1959 received much criticism at the time as it was relentlessly real in its portrayal of a segregated America. Frank’s direct approach shocked viewers who were used to the much more tame photographs of that time that skirted around issues rather than explicitly reporting on them. The content of the book was also premature in the sense that the Civil Rights Movement did not happen until a few years after the book was published, and so people were not prepared for the reality of the images they were presented with. The book was first published in France as an educational series in 1958. Frank did not like the layout of that copy and so he created another one, this time an art book that involved him being the editor as well as the photographer (Tully, 2). It is this linkage between photograph and presentation that is most relevant to my own current endeavor of creating a photobook that integrates content and layout as a cohesive thought.

Over the two years that he was traveling through America, Frank took over 27,000 exposures only to print 1,000 work prints which eventually got whittled down to 83 final images that he chose to use in his book (Perry, 2-5). It took between three and four months for Frank to do this editing, and he has said that it was the most difficult part of putting together “The Americans.” Before leaving on his road trip to shoot “The Americans,” Frank had a list of things he wanted to capture that included cowboys, flags, the rich, jukeboxes, and politicians. By the end of his trip he had a different list of things he actually photographed that included jukeboxes and the rich, as well as cars, lunch counters, the suburbs, parks, cemeteries, consumerism, and racism (Looking In: Robert Frank’s The Americans).

He separated sections of his contact sheets into these categories (as well as others) based on what Michael Wolgensinger had taught him about grouping contact sheets by subject onto index cards. This aided him with the editing process as he was able to understand the themes he was interested in as well as the importance of the images he had rejected. It was these rejected images that allowed him to better see what he thought made a “good” photograph and eventually led him to make many of the decisions he did about which images to use (Looking In: Robert Frank’s The Americans).

His contact sheets show how he originally approached the topic of racism with a much more literal eye, with an example being photographs of signs that said “black” and “white.” He soon realized this solution was too



obvious and changed the subjects of his photographs to match this. Looking at the images he had taken, Frank realized his idea of what he wanted to express had changed from simply wanting to create beautiful images to wanting to express the range of emotions he felt at what was happening in America. After deciding what content fit this idea he edited the images themselves. This included things such as cropping decisions. As seen in his photograph "Elevator Girl", Frank used cropping as a tool to emphasize expression and as such this was an important step in his editing procedure. Once arriving at the print he wanted, he then thumb tacked his chosen test prints to his wall so that he could rearrange them over the course of many weeks. This almost manic editing resulted in a much more personal account of America than he originally set out to show and as such there were parts of America that were ignored. Frank himself explained as a response to negativity from critics that he wanted to show the darker side of American life as it had not been shown before (Looking In: Robert Frank's The Americans).

Similar to Robert Frank I am exploring how to understand and group my photos into different themes. I take many photographs under a general theme (everything is impermanent) before looking into which ones belong in more specific subcategories. I decide on which images do not belong in these smaller categories before deciding which of these images not only do not suit their own category but also the other images I have chosen. The decision of what content to use is the most important one in deciding the message of the book and so I make sure I have a specific message in mind before continuing the editing process. I normally choose one image for a spread and then decide on what would look best next to it aesthetically, as I have already chosen the set images I want to use in the book. Each book or magazine I create has a set theme and so the links between the images are especially important. These links are not created solely through content, but also through layout.

In "The Americans" Robert Frank decided on a layout that was simple and foolproof. He placed his photographs on the right hand side, the side which you naturally see first, thus leaving the left hand side of each spread blank. This is a layout that makes you pay attention as the images are surrounded by white space that demands your eye to return to the image time and time again. This stark way of depicting things mimics the content of his images as he portrays reality as it was then. Form and content become interdependent as the blank pages keep the viewer engaged and they realize they must not only move forwards in the book but also think backwards to what they have already seen in order to make the links Frank wishes them to make.

The arrangement of images in such a brutal fashion that forces the reader to not just look at the images but really *see* them successfully conveys the thoughts of the photographer through what critic Jenny Chamarette calls the *ellipsis*; the white space of the page and how this interacts with the black lettering of text (Chamarette, 1-2). In "The Americans" we see this as where the text *should* be rather than where it actually is, as Frank chose not to use any text as he believed the images should speak for themselves. The lack of text allows the viewer space to think about what they have just seen - something that is particularly important in a book with such heavy content.

When considering Frank's use of white space it is important to consider the context of the images presented in the book. Robert Frank was heavily influenced by Walker Evans who advised Frank to immerse himself in the lives of his subjects in order to better understand them and thus take more powerful photographs. Frank took this advice to heart and flew to Wales to live with a miner by the name of Ben James for several days. During this time he spent all day following James around taking photographs, and although these photographs are very powerful, Frank decided to go a different route with "The Americans." By that point he had attempted to get his work published in LIFE magazine many times and had been rejected - this left him angry at photographing stories with a beginning, middle, and end. He wanted to show images that kept the viewer thinking past finishing the book, and so he decided he did not want to know the people he photographed so as to not be tempted to show their complete story. He rarely talked to the people he photographed during the two years he was on the road but still described his main aim as feeling rather than simply looking (Looking In: Robert Frank's The Americans). This was interesting as he did not know the



subjects, but in a way Frank was able to feel more from just looking than he was from knowing. This use of white space successfully implies the lack of relationship between Frank and his subjects as well as the lack of communication between the subjects themselves.

Ian Penman expresses the importance of layout and the white space Frank used when he talked about Robert Frank's 2004-2005 exhibition at the Tate Modern, saying: "Setting out to write about individual photos you soon realize it is impossible: you would also have to find some way of inscribing the really important element: THE SPACES IN-BETWEEN (Chamarette, 12)." Frank's images would not be as powerful if they were presented side by side as the viewer needs the white space in order to properly look at each image as an individual moment before understanding how the images fit as a whole.

In my own work layout does not necessarily dictate content, as content does not necessarily dictate layout. Depending on the spread I may have a set layout in mind that helps me decide on the content, or I may have set content that helps me decide on the layout. The most important thing in my own creation of photobooks is the visual flow of the images, and so I work on sets of images before working on spreads to link the sets together. The importance of this collective view of images was understood by Frank who decided he was less interested in creating a single powerful image but rather was interested in how these images tied together to create a whole (Looking In: Robert Frank's *The Americans*).

The use of white space in particular is something I explore in my own photobooks as I try to figure out which layout suits my message more: one in which images are cropped and overlaid over one another to create more dynamic images, or one in which the images are presented in a way similar to the images in "The Americans" with more white space around the photographs. This interest in white space has led me to create different versions of books under the same theme in order to better understand how layout affects the viewing of the content. In one such exploration I created a book that folds open into four separate squares with images attached to each. These images are printed on transparencies with white sheets of paper underneath them so as to allow the image to be visible. The viewer can move these photographs into the middle blank square so as to create an endless amount of possibilities for the viewer. Overlapping is possible, but so is viewing each image alone. I have since made other versions of the book with the same content but different layout so as to explore the impact of white space on the image.

In these books I not only explored white space, but also the connection between the content and layout. This relates back to Frank's work as I try to better represent life as an oversimplified thing that we, as humans, believe never ends (at least that is what our daily actions seem to say). Frank's style of photography is very interesting to me as it is so blunt in the way that it shows daily scenes. In a way his photography is a mix of documentary style photography and art photography and it is this mix of the objective and subjective that I seek in my photographs.

A perfect example of this is "My Father's Coat," a triptych of images found in part of his exhibition titled "Memory for the Children." These images show his father's coat as the photographs hone in on the Jewish star that at first was not obvious. The text below these photographs links them together and the coat itself works as a symbol for a person (Chamarette, 13-14). Frank himself bought the Star of David at a store and placed it on the coat – it did not belong to his father and as such does not belong to the memory of him. This fabricated memory is one that many viewers immediately assume is real, which is something that intrigues me as the use of symbols has an immediate reaction with the viewer without them thinking about it. This look at death, I would argue, is much more emotionally charged than the other photographs that made Robert Frank famous. I too am interested in the symbolic implications of different objects and how this affects the interpretation of the image. The fact that these are photographs themselves adds another dimension as these images of objects previously owned by a now-dead-person have survived far longer than any of the physical things mentioned.



I wish to focus on photography such as this that brings up emotions in the viewer without obviously making it the main focus. Frank is able to do this in his work as he seems to reject sentimentality in his photographs in the way that he shows situations how they really are rather than using them as a platform to help the subjects he photographed. This is similar to myself in the similarity in theme as well as the way in which I wish to portray my work. Frank "looked to capture the isolation, melancholy, and empty promises of a new consumer culture," and I seek to do the same (Perry, 2-5). Interestingly, the main difference between our work stems from this as well. I wish to show not only the bad, but also the good so as to highlight the fact that it too will end. This rather morbid topic will be tackled through a series of simple images and it will be the way in which they are presented that gives them their main meaning.

Through exploration of more personal subjects I am looking to see how to get my message across to other people that do not think like I do. In order to do this I must first explore my own identity so as to better depict subjects that others will relate to. As someone looking into autobiographical works I am most interested in learning how to make the otherwise mundane seem important. Robert Frank too tried to do this as he said he was interested in "the experience of human life and the mindless passing of time," which is a theme that appears to be a subcategory of what I am working on (Perry, 2-5).

Through a new way of depicting what we see, Frank was able to help Americans see the reality that was right before their eyes. Now through my own work I wish to show people exactly that and have them think about memory and how it lives in the present to create this idea of everlasting life. Through explorations of content as well as layout I hope to be able to better show this by the end of SMP.

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Robert Frank, Polaroid photographs, My Father's Coat 2000, 20.2 x 41 cm.
<http://www.electrictedge.com/greymatter/images5/rfrank.jpg>



ART EVENTS

DR. BEVIL CONWAY

Neuroscientist and artist Bevil Conway spoke about how color works in our brains and its importance in how we interpret things. He has worked as a professor at Wellesley College in Massachusetts for many years and has also gone to Nepal and Kenya to teach. His focus is how color affects our mood and he uses neuroscience to further explore this.

His talk focused on the science side of things rather than the artistic and was not easily accessible for people who had not taken science based classes. This being said, he did go into some topics that are interesting to the artistic mind.

Conway uses art to show his scientific findings and to further test how the human brain interprets color. Humans and makak monkeys are the only mammals that see such an extensive range of colors. As such, Conway has done much research on these monkeys to further understand how our brains work by focusing on one neuron and its travel path. Through much research, he has found that color is not in the retina but rather how the brain interprets it. The way we see color is not by noticing the color itself but rather by differentiating it from its surrounding colors.

Although we do not need color for face recognition, it does aid us. Conway found that when looking at a degraded image (say one that is very zoomed in from far away) color does help us understand what we are looking at by showing us where different facial features are (such as red where the lips are, etc. etc.). In this way color can be used as a tool to understand how the brain works and perceives things. As humans we use color to better understand many things including when someone is ill as well as what emotion is being conveyed. When we use color in this way it is called “color diagnostic.” Advertisers have used this to create a color emotion guide that is then used to send a particular message.

Conway discussed how we interpret color in two parts. The first part involves the three different cone types in our eyes and how we view color using contrast. The second part focuses on how this is then translated by the brain outside of the primary cortex to elicit a certain emotion/interpretation.

I think Bevil Conway’s work is interesting to learn about as it focuses on the basics of how we interpret color and thus art, however I wish he had spoken more about his artwork as well as the science behind color.

KATHERINE GAGNON

Katherine Gagnon is a painter who studied art at Colby College before going to the Maryland Institute College of Art. She came to discuss her work with us before her presentation and explained how her work has changed over the years. When Gagnon first began painting she was interested in the interaction of colors as she had rigorous color theory training. Her oil paintings of color blocks studied how the combination of colors and the edges of each cube worked together to create a certain emotion or image.

As she continued to work with this concept she realized she had a desire to name what was happening in each piece and began to use titles as another way to introduce the narrative. When asked about when she decides on her title, she responded that she will occasionally decide on the title and narrative before painting but will sometimes decide on the title after she has seen what she has produced. She was interested in titles as she wanted to understand how painting communicates. This led her to her interest in linguistics and the relationship between word and image, which she began to explore in her next set of paintings. She wanted to see how to make objects out of words and how this is impacted by the use of language and certain word choice. It was then that her materials began to be an important part in her message as she played with new mediums such as painting on steel. One of her paintings involved painting the word “dust” on steel before erasing part of the “d” to make it “lust” – thus creating a girly image on a more manly material.



Gagnon discovered she enjoyed this act of mark making as a form of art and continued to explore this in more naturalistic paintings such as “Sycamore.” She started painting from memory and exploring the idea that we have bodily memory even when visuals fail us. It was then that she had a residency at Art Farm in Nebraska and continue to work in gestures looking into the abstract vs. the referential. Due to her being far from home without all of her materials, Gagnon started to work on found wood before moving on to incorporating wood in her different paintings in the form of abstract trees.

Her work began to get larger as she continued exploring these different concepts and she moved from 16 x 16 inch canvases to 5 x 5 foot canvases as her ideas became more complex. When asked about the importance in the size of her canvas, she responded that 5 x 5 foot canvas is her favorite size canvas because it is not too big and so it is accessible and at the same time it is not too small so it is not too precious feeling.

It was interesting to hear about Katherine Gagnon’s evolution through her painting because it helped me better understand how one has to keep moving and building from one concept to the next. Her take on the size of the image is also interesting because I feel like that is one area that I have not thought about in great detail. I normally think about size in terms of the space available as well as how much I like the piece: do I want it to be extremely visible or not? Do I want people to have to come up close to look at it? I think this is an important thing to think about and so I am glad this got brought up.

LYNN TOMASZEWSKI

Lynn Tomaszewski is an artist that works in many different mediums including painting, drawing, and video. In her gallery show titled “Agglomophenomena” Tomaszewski discussed the ideas behind her works and about the process of creating each one. The earliest piece in the show came from 2012. This piece came about when Tomaszewski became interested in the swarming behavior of humans. The Tunisian uprising had begun and news showed images of hundreds of people coming together to fight a common cause. She realized how complicated the patterns were just like the topics of power, economics, race, etc. and began to mimic this in her artwork to show the complexity of humans as a whole. She gathered Egyptian images as well as images from other events such as the Occupy movement in order to better understand what she wanted to represent in her artwork. Although the topics that inspired her are very political and deal with many complex issues (such as the have and have nots as well as race and equality), Tomaszewski insists her work is not political but rather just an observation.

Tomaszewski’s uses shape and color in her artwork to better explore these different topics. Her color choices do not necessarily reflect the scene but rather come about based on good color combinations she chooses. At first her artwork mainly consisted of drawing, but soon she moved on to painting the circles she is known for. Her work was 2 dimensional and flat thanks to the minimalist reference of the grid she was aiming for. She does not paint over the edge as she likes to keep the edges of the canvas clean as a border, however she did become interested in other ways to push her painting to the next level. This eventually led her to incorporating enamel in some of the circles which creates an interesting effect due to the raised area the enamel creates.

Tomaszewski continued to explore the topics that interested her and decided to project video stills onto canvas she would then trace. This created a very specific kind of artwork where one can see the edges of the pixels where the image was projected. She decided to make this artwork on a much larger scale (10 x 10) in order to let this happen. She wanted to look into the way in which we lose information every time as the viewer of this piece – many layers are between us and the final resulting image. We did not witness the original event, but rather see the drawing of a video still we did not witness either.

Eventually Tomaszewski removed the idea of the swarm and rather made everything rather systematic. Rather than copying from an image she started to simply begin her painting from her own imagination. She



would start with larger circles and move out from there, deciding as she went along whether she wanted smaller circles or what was needed to complete the image.

What I found interesting about her work is that it looks very different when it is viewed from far away versus when it is viewed close up which give us an awareness of ourselves looking at her work. Although her artwork does not directly apply to my own, I was very interested in the concepts that inspired her. It seems like Tomaszewski is very attracted to scientific material and this intrigued me as it is a joining of two very different fields of study. I enjoy this because it allows people to better understand concepts they may not have previously and I'm excited to see any other work she produces.

CASSANDRA KAPSOS

Having grown up in the Ozarks before moving to New York City for her masters in art of teaching, Cassandra Kapsos is most interested in the interaction between people and the spaces surrounding them. As someone who enjoys walking she described the different ways of interacting with the space around oneself and the ways in which different people react to different spaces and places.

The importance of place became an important theme in her photography when she moved to Baltimore to get her MFA at MICA. She felt like she did not know the city and felt uncomfortable in her surroundings due to the "advice" (read: rules) people gave her. She felt like she could not connect to Baltimore because she couldn't walk around the city freely, and so she decided to go against what people had told her about being cautious and began going for long walks. Kapsos included many quotes that helped drive her work, including one by Lisa Lippard that explained that walking is the best way to understand the "spirit of a place." Kapsos explained this by saying that when we are in a place we make up part of the genetic makeup of that place - whether or not we are there changes the place.

Kapsos went on to describe the work she was doing in Baltimore, focusing on the vacant lot she had worked on. This green space was allotted to her through the Neighborhood Association in Baltimore and she has used it as a community art space. She created a community garden with the help of others in the neighborhood and uses the space as an area for people to meet. She left one triangle of the yard unchanged so as to see how people interacted with it in comparison to the rest of the area and called this "The Untouched Triangle." It was interesting to see that people would walk around the garden area calmly and leave no trace, however they had no problem throwing their trash into "The Untouched Triangle" simply because it wasn't pristine looking.

This interaction between people and their environment is very important to Kapsos' work and so she took this concept one step further by collecting the trash from the triangle and saving it to eventually make shrines. She described Baltimore and how there are many shrines all over the city to commemorate people who have died in shootings, car accidents, etc. These trash shrines (all part of her Shrines Project) were made and left in different places and Kapsos would go and photograph them over time to see what was happening to them. It was interesting to see that people would start out respecting them and leave them alone, but eventually they would all become one with the place around them.

This idea of things becoming part of the place surrounding them is particularly interesting to me as I begin to look into how people interact with the things around them to better understand the concept of the transitory. Did the people who saw these shrines see them as temporary and thus decided it was alright to take them apart, or did they for some time see them as permanent?

Kapsos discussed how when she visited her neighbor's house and saw how each room was made into a shrine she better understood that when we collect stuff it becomes a part of us. From this interaction she started "We Are Sowebos", a photography project that explores the place, history, and people of the area. She realized that there are many people with interesting stories, and just like her neighbor's house she may not know about them. This project gives people of the area an opportunity to share their story. This project



interests me as it is continuing to look into the interaction between people and place as well as the relationships of the area. I myself am interested in projects similar to this as they allow you to better understand people and the way they think.

JERRY TRUONG

Jerry Truong is a DC based artist from California mainly working in photography. His main interest is in memory and history and he focuses on these things by trying to be in the moment with his work. He is very interested in conceptual art and showing personal stories, and this was shown in the many works he talked about.

Truong discussed his family's past and the importance of growing up in a Vietnamese family in California. As such, the main works that Truong focused on were ones about his family's past. His parents separately came over to the United States when they were children by way of boat, and he explained how dangerous this journey was as it included the possibility of Thai pirates kidnapping women and children as well as killing men. This interested Truong who looked into what happened to the women and children who were taken and found out that nobody knows where they went or whether they survived. Based on this he created an installation piece with one painting at either end of a room facing one another and a mannequin cut in half divided by lines. This representation of people being in this weird space that belongs to no specific area was important to Truong as he called it "Bien Girl" meaning good girl as well as ocean and transform in Vietnamese, depending on the pronunciation.

He continued this interest in his parents' past by creating a piece to represent each of them. For the one representing his mother he imagined what she might have felt like when she saw the boat she was going to board to the United States. Even though it must have been dark in reality, he imagined her approaching the boat at sunrise, representing a new beginning. The boat itself looks like a kind of portal or coffin, which

Moving into his photography he discussed a series of photographs he took of his family in black and white in 2003. He then showed us a follow up series he took ten years later in 2013. It was great to hear him talk about each photograph individually as I feel like many artists breeze by series and focus solely on the overarching theme rather than discussing the importance of each piece and how it fits into the series. He organized the second series in three rows. The first row was a kind of introduction to the character, the second row was where the drama was (as he put it), and the third row was his view of how far they had come in the ten years since he took the first set of images.

His autobiographical representation through his work really drew me in as I am interested in doing the same with my artwork. I am interested in hearing about people's stories and where they came from so seeing how another artist did this is amazing. I was particularly interested in his series of photographs, not necessarily because of the photographs themselves but because of his attention to detail when it came to layout based on content. This has really inspired me in my own work to look into display options that better tell a narrative and to consider how the viewer will understand multiple tiers of work displayed in one area.

RESEARCH

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chamarette, Jenny. "Flesh, Folds And Textuality: Thinking Visual Ellipsis Via Merleau-Ponty, Hélène Cixous

And Robert Frank." *Paragraph 2* (2007): 34. *Project MUSE*. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.

Important discussion on the layout of Robert Frank's work, focusing on the white space the author refers to as the "ellipsis." In depth discussion on the relationship between image and text in regards to how this reads



as a message. The emphasis is on the layout Robert Frank uses, and this article does something very different from others in the way that it focuses on Robert Frank's photographs outside of "The Americans", choosing instead to focus on work from his exhibition "Memory for the Children" (an exhibition that is of particular interest to my topic). Talks about "My Father's Coat" and the layout of the triptych and the importance of symbolism.

Tully, Nola. "'Looking In: Robert Frank's The Americans'." *New Criterion* 4 (2009): 42. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.

This is a review of "The Americans" that includes some of the most important quotes in relation to my work: "he sought to portray Americans as they live at present" and "Their everyday and their Sunday, their realism and dream. The look of their cities, towns, and highways." Discusses some of his influences as well as those who supported him including Walker Evans and Edward Steichen.

Perry, Weena. "Robert Frank And Two Babies: "The Americans" At The Met." *Afterimage* 37.5 (2010): 2. *MasterFILE Premier*. Web. 9 Oct. 2014.

This is an article that was written after the author saw one of Robert Frank's exhibitions. She discusses important background information on Frank including the number of exposures he took (27,000+) vs. the number of final images he used (83). The author then goes on to describe the spontaneous style of Frank's work and how it rejects the sentimentality that defined social documentary photos of the 1930s and how this impacted his works. Perry includes descriptions of specific works by Frank and what they say.

Samara, Timothy. PDW, Publication Design Workbook : A Real-World Design Guide--Magazines, Newspapers, Catalogs, Annual Reports, Newsletters, Literature, Systems, And Everything In Between / Timothy Samara. n.p.: Gloucester, Mass. : Rockport Publishers, c2005., 2005. St. Mary's College of Maryland Catalog. Web. 23 Sept. 2014.

This book discusses various techniques other books and magazines use to express their ideas through better layout designs. The beginning has a great history on the worth of books and how they came to be mass produced with the introduction of papermaking and the printing process. Discusses the importance of branding in expressing concepts and content as well as different ways to break up content to be more reader friendly.

King-Gordon, Stacey. Magazine Design That Works : Secrets For Successful Magazine Design / Stacey King. n.p.: Gloucester, Mass. : Rockport, c2001., 2001. St. Mary's College of Maryland Catalog. Web. 23 Sept. 2014.

The most informative book I have read thus far on magazine design. Discusses things such as the 4 F's of design (format, formula, frame, function) before using specific magazines to show what they are talking about. This explains the concept of "the grid" well as an invisible frame and goes into detail with various ways of formatting pages with text and images to draw the reader in. The different magazines make it easy to see what in particular one is attracted to and how this is shown through small things such as color choice and font.

Bailey, R. H. (1975). *The photographic illusion*, Duane Michals / text by Ronald H. Bailey, with the editors of Alskog, Inc. [New York] : Crowell, [1975].



This book helps shed light on the different processes Michals' used, such as double exposures, through the specific explanation of some of his photographs as well as how Michals' personal history affects his work. Michals' use of photography as a means to show the viewer something that is not actually tangible is made obvious as Bailey explains how Michals began to see space as a stage that he could fill with his own actors. It is here that Michals' interest in Surrealist painters comes in as they too attempt to show how surface reality should not be trusted. There is an important quote from Michals explaining how death is central to his theme: "I think death is the central issue. Everything else is a distraction. When I was 20 I felt I was immortal. Now I'm in the middle of life. I can see the whole thing."

ROSENHECK, N. (1971). Duane Michals' transcendental camera. *Popular Photography*, 69. 126-129.

This article explains how Michals' uses various photographic techniques to challenge the idea of reality. His argument that emotions are as real as facts makes for an interesting read as it explains how he uses his personal handwriting to involve the viewer and make them believe it is his story he is telling rather than something that is made up – thus making them believe something is real that is not. Rosenheck explains how Michals grew old with the fashion world and the "decisive moment" and how this impacted his series.

Méaux, D. (1995). Duane Michals' Real Dreams The Treatment of Narrative and Time. *History Of Photography*, 19(4), 278-282.

In this article Meaux explains the important role of the reader in Michals' books as Michals wants them to actively interact with his books. It is here that we begin to learn about his goals as a photographer and his expectations regarding his books. The spatial view found in various sequences such as "Things Are Queer" is discussed as an important way to show the passing of time and how deceptive our own minds can be. Meaux discusses how Michals' photographs can be seen as scientific in the way in which he does not move the background but simply changes one thing at a time.

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Wesseling, E. (2011). 'Memory is the primary instrument, the inexhaustible nutrient source': remediations of literary Romanticism in Sally Mann's family photographs. *Arcadia - International Journal For Literary Studies*, (1), 3.

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