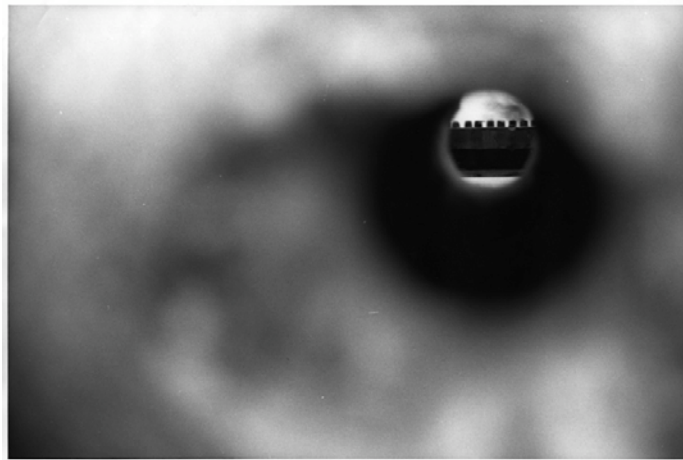


# Transfiguration of the Everyday: The Mundane Into the Monumental



Courtney Teed

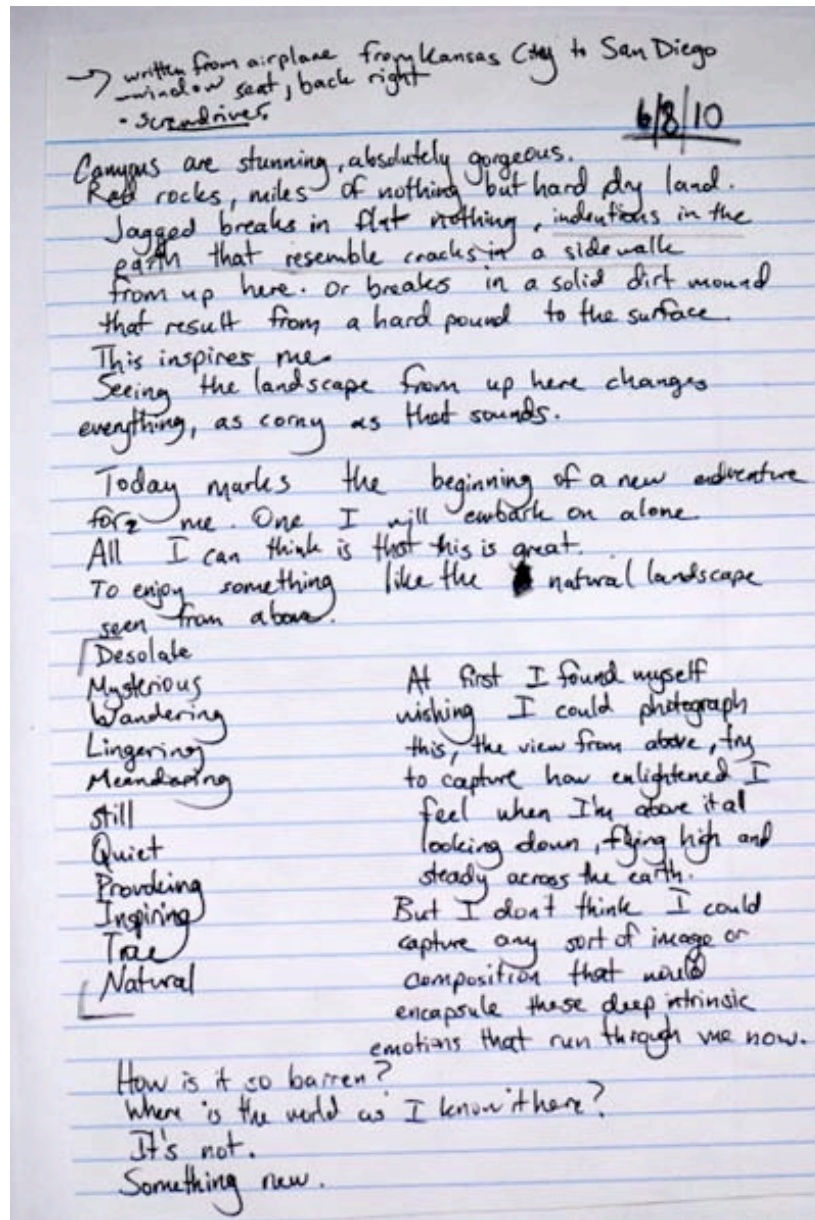
St. Mary's Project  
Fall 2010

# *Table of Contents*

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| 3.....  | Summer 2010   |
| 7.....  | Introduction: Current Thoughts/Ideas                    |
| 8.....  | Interview One   |
| 11..... | Definitions   |
| 12..... | Journal Excerpt   |
| 13..... | The Beginning   |
| 14..... | Jumping Off: Initial Intentions/Goals                   |
| 15..... | Critique Reflections: Part 1                            |
| 16..... | Moving Forward  |
| 18..... | Reflecting on Artist Lectures                           |
| 21..... | Critique Reflections: Part 2<br>Post Midterm            |
| 25..... | Part II: From Midterm On                                |
| 26..... | Interview Two   |
| 29..... | Source Artist: William Eggleston                        |
| 30..... | Progressing From Midterm: Revise Intentions/Goals       |
| 32..... | Action Plan   |
| 33..... | Reflecting on Artist Lectures Part 2                    |
| 35..... | Critique Reflections: Part 3                            |
| 37..... | Studio Visit with Heather Harvey                        |
| 39..... | What Was Successful?<br>Reflecting Back on the Semester |
| 40..... | Annotated Bibliography and Future Readings/Research     |

**SUMMER**  
**2010**

As an introduction to this documentation of my SMP experience thus far, I've included here an image of a journal entry that I wrote at the beginning of the summer on June 8, 2010. I wrote this while in flight across the country to San Diego, where I would be spending the summer in my new home.



Summer Journal Entry 1, Scanned Image

This journal entry is significant because my writings here show some beginnings to thoughts and loose ideas that I am currently investigating - things resembling simple, everyday object appearances such as land from above looking like cracks in a sidewalk, or anything desolate, mysterious, and still - and how things can be visually transformed. This marks some of the very beginnings of my progression of ideas into my current work.

I spent the summer prior to SMP trying to read, travel to museums and local art shows, and photograph as much as I could. However, by the end of the summer, I had not achieved my goal of feeling properly prepared to jump right into the semester. Although I entered my senior year with no concrete direction for my SMP, summer was by no means a waste of time. In a number of ways I accomplished many important things, some even life changing. Others seemed quite appropriate for the transition into my final year of undergraduate education at SMCM: the place that has facilitated immeasurable amount of personal growth, self-realization, and multi-disciplinary achievement. I spent a month living in San Diego, where my mother has recently relocated from across the country in quaint little Ellicott City. Virtually everyone I've ever known exists here, on the east coast. So I tried to find a job at first, and of course went out a bit in search of new friends and acquaintances. But I came to realize that my stay in So-Cal would quickly become more of a period of self-reflection rather than an immediate effort to fill that month of time with a job and a social life. It was an exercise of my capabilities of being physically and emotionally independent. Whether or not I realized it then, these kinds of newly updated skills would aid me tremendously in dealing with the day-to-day stress of what would turn out to be an intensely rigorous semester.



(i. .<sup>1</sup> *Untitled Images 1-3*, 8x10" Prints, Summer 2010

Much of the work I produced was sporadic, and all seemed very nostalgic and soft. Perhaps this was in response to my personal fluctuations and a great longing to preserve a good memory of this time. Yet some images, although rather minimal and ambiguous, became oddly intriguing and slightly perplexing. The photograph above on the far right was taken while looking through a row of thin glass panes that sat on a street sidewalk. A blurry silhouette of a man walking past is seen through the glass. Upon first glance, it is difficult to tell exactly what is going on, or even where the picture was taken. While the form of the figure is easily recognizable, the distance between the figure and the blurry foreground creates a disorienting sense of space. The closeness of the camera to the glass creates the appearance that the space on the left between the two panes is substantially larger than it is in reality. It is also the only area that is in focus within the frame, forcing the eye of the viewer directly into that space.

GO TO GLEN ECHO TO DEVELOP FILM/  
MAKE CONTACT SHEETS  
is this why I'm not happy?

8/6 I looked at my work for the first time today,  
and I felt it once again. The memories, the passion,  
the intensity. I need to push myself to work even  
when I feel uninspired.

*Summer Journal Entry 8, Scanned Image, Fall 2010*

## *Introduction: Current Thoughts/Ideas*

After first learning about photography in high school, I became obsessed with medium and the process of making photographs. It is now an integral part of my life and studies. The bulk of my interest in photography has turned towards thinking conceptually about the medium and how I can utilize its capabilities. I shoot with a standard, small and lightweight 35 mm Canon film camera. This is my go-to camera. I am comfortable using it and it allows me to work with confidence, as I can carry it with me through spaces with great ease.

The photographs I presented in the midyear exhibition are the result of my ongoing study of mundane things. I am intrigued by odd, overlooked places, such as backdoor loading docks, storage areas, or crumbling former businesses hidden somewhere behind newly flourishing stores. I'm often drawn to specific textures, such as industrial metals, rust, splintering wood, concrete, and gravel. But beyond the physical appeal, I am also captivated by a sense of loss and mystery that emanates from these forgotten places. My experience of photographing in these spaces is quiet and still, as if the space itself is vulnerable and open to my exploration. I often focus my camera on things that are dilapidated and discarded. For me they have an inescapable presence, a history I can't penetrate. I often wonder about their story, how they came to appear as they do.

This body of work is also about treating the photograph as an object that can instill certain reactions in the viewer. I'm especially interested in dealing with disorientation or distorted perception. I enjoy making someone wonder where and how a picture was taken, and allowing someone to feel changes in their spatial orientation while interacting with an image. By photographing monotonous things and transforming them into dynamic images that deal with moving through space, I hope to reconfigure them as monumental objects.

As a photographer, I hope to create distinctive images, ones that express a sense of my personal vision. This work has led me to begin consciously developing my ability to see photographically, or see by means of the camera and begin to understand how what you see in front of you will translate into a photographic image.

*Upon beginning SMP semester 1, each seminar member was given a critique partner. This was to be someone with whom you could meet and converse about ideas, in-progress work, and finished work. The idea behind this partnership is to facilitate this kind of on-going discussion, as well to create a time during which participants could give and receive honest and constructive feedback. This first interview consists of 9 communal questions, each one a result of group brainstorming, careful consideration, and voting. Each pair of partners conducted the interview and transcribed its contents as can be seen below.*

## *Interview One*

September 20, 2010

Questions by Kathleen Overman

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

**CT:** Only recently have I been turning to other artists' work for inspiration or motivation. Such artists, most of whom are other working, well-known photographers, are Edward Weston, Harry Callahan, Lee Friedlander, Aaron Siskind, and Stephen Shore, for all of their explorations of ideas of place, as well as abstraction within space and place.

The inspiration for me to get out my camera and take a photograph can really occur at any time. I draw inspiration from my immediate surroundings. In my daily life, I place great emphasis on things like routine, distinction of patterns, recognition of balance and imbalance, and finding beauty and appreciating little things that might otherwise go unnoticed. In this sense, I draw inspiration from almost anything. I try to translate this awareness and interest in found objects and places into the way I photograph.

**KO: How important is self-expression in your art making? In what way does 'self' enter your artwork?**

**CT:** I think it is hard to escape the idea of self-expression as a central focus in any kind of art making. It's how you make your mark and why you choose to do so that matters. Regarding my work, my answer to the previous question also applies here. A large part of what 'self' means to me is how I find myself operating and making decisions on a daily basis. Doing things because of the way they make me feel, and having that purely emotional drive in most things I do is an example of how the 'self' enters my artwork. I think it's human nature to categorize and recognize notice patterns in things that surround them. I also think that I tend to highlight the essence of things as most meaningful and important, especially while I'm photographing. In an interview, David LaChapelle said to photograph your obsessions, your fascinations. I think this is how I approach incorporating the 'self' into my work.



**KO: How does your choice of medium(s) affect your work and contribute to its meaning?**

**CT:** I think I photograph because of photography's close association with reality. I could go out and paint an image of a building or draw an arrangement of mailboxes, and perhaps get a similar effect of conveying a sense of structural organization and repetition in the world. But, I think that it would create an entirely different dialogue between me and my process, and also between the viewer and the work. I try to translate my own recognition and interest in something's essence, something that cannot necessarily be described in words (beauty of structure, organization, repetition, pattern, etc.) in my photographs. I do this both as an expression of my 'obsession' with these aspects of my own perspective and way of seeing, and also as a way to try and allow the viewer to have the ability to think about their own personal experiences with certain spaces and relationships of things within those spaces.

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

**CT:** Well, without process, there can be no product. I think that's probably the most obvious answer. But I do place a great deal of emphasis on process as well as the final product - they're pretty close to being equally important to me while working. Being out shooting and working in the darkroom are two very different experiences, but I think what matters is how I tie them together and incorporate aspects of both in thinking about making decisions while working that helps me to try and create cohesive, meaningful photographs.

**KO: Does the context in which your artwork is displayed affect your artistic choices? How might you address this in the upcoming fall exhibition?**

**CT:** The only format in which I've previously displayed my work has been mounted, up against a white wall, so it is hard for me to stray away from that type of presentational setting. I actually think that it might be my preference in showing photographs, simply because it creates a clean, finished look, and adds to the idea of cohesiveness and routine within the series I am displaying. These are the main things I think about when deciding on presentation, and how much the viewer will hopefully take away from the photographs. I do know that I like to present works in series, and often try to incorporate some sort of loose narrative as a way of moving the viewer around the works and allowing them to create a dialogue between them.

**KO: What is your first memory connecting you to art? Do you think it is important to what you are doing today, and how?**

**CT:** Honestly, I'd have to say old family photographs. I can't really remember any encounter with art that stands out to me as being a significant experience from when I was little. Aside from finger painting and cutting and pasting construction paper, I can't remember anything else as significant to my current art-making as family Polaroids and store processed rolls of film. There is a certain novelty to old family photos, and I think that this is something to which almost everyone can relate. Whether or not you are a working photographer, you do have a deep and personal connection to photographs from the past, and these photographs almost always have a heavy influence over how you picture your past. This idea is

interesting to me, and is probably part of why I continue to photograph, even though portraiture and images of people are not of particular interest to me at the moment.

**KO: How do you measure the success of your artwork?**

**CT:** I think I can gauge the success of my photographs, or a series of photographs, by how cohesive and complete I think it feels when I view them in finalized form. However, I do think that in a way, a work is never really complete and can always be revisited and reworked. So in this sense, I think I feel successful about a work when I feel a certain passion about being able to go back and change things or make something better, or try and go in a slightly different direction and perhaps create another project from an already “finished” one. So, success for me has a lot to do with an ongoing process of exploration, and being able to focus on one thing that will spark an idea that will lead me to begin focusing on another. I also think that success has a lot to do with what others take away from a work. For example, if someone sees some of my work in a show and is able to take something away from it, even if it doesn’t necessarily match exactly with my original intentions in showing the work, I think that is the most important thing.

**KO: What about making art intimidates you?**

**CT:** I think one of my biggest worries is not being able to convey a sense of purpose or meaning in my photographs. In the back of mind lies a fear that someone will not be able to understand or care about why I might have taken a certain picture, or presented photographs together in a body of work. Aside from that, I think I worry about not feeling inspired, despite the fact that I do draw inspiration from almost anywhere. That “stuck” feeling intimidates me a lot sometimes. It is when I’m stuck asking myself, “How in the world am I going to begin making work again”? that I really become wary.

**KO: If you could have your portrait done by anyone, who would it be and why?**

**CT:** Jackson Pollock. I’d like to see how he might translate my personality and appearance and create an abstract image, something without any recognizable facial features or any “normal” portrait elements. Then I’d like to see if anyone could see a sense of me in the work.

# Definitions

**time** *noun* \ˈtīm\

- 1a** : the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues : duration
- b** : a nonspatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past through present to future
- 2** : the point or period when something occurs : occasion

I feel an amazing and unavoidable sense of time in the objects and areas that I photograph – the present moment of discovery, time spent looking and photographing, the span of time that runs between when the object first began to exist in the space and the point in time in which I have found it...and the time that has facilitated changes in an object's appearance or physical nature.

**Space** *noun* \ˈspās\

- 1** : a period of time; *also* : its duration
- 2a** : a limited extent in one, two, or three dimensions : distance, area, volume
- b** : an extent set apart or available <parking *space*> <floor *space*>
- 10a** : the opportunity to assert or experience one's identity or needs freely
- b** : an opportunity for privacy or time to oneself

A lot of my photographs tend to be about moving through physical space or the capacity of an image to alter your sense of being grounded by pushing you around spatially.

**Age** *verb* \ˈāj\

- 1** : to become old : show the effects or the characteristics of increasing age
- 2** : to acquire a desirable quality (as mellowness or ripeness) by standing undisturbed for some time

I'm often drawn to objects that show visible signs of aging – rust, decay, etc. I consider them important signifiers of a story and a history.

## *Journal Excerpt*

November 22, 2010

As I was driving across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge this afternoon, I marveled at the design and structural magnitude of the bridge, its supports, and everything that made it work. It stretches for over a mile, remaining sturdy and fixed in its position. This bridge is able to sustain a safe path for thousand of cars to drive over on a daily basis. Its appearance is incredibly visually appealing. It always strikes me as a stunning structure to see standing strongly above the bay. Its monumentality only grows exponentially as you move closer towards it, and certainly while you travel underneath its magnificent arches. It curves subtly as it stretches across the bay, withstanding wind patterns and weathering. The way that the arches move across the sky as you move under them, and how the lines and shapes created by the structural design of the metal, together become an intrinsically satisfying organization of visual elements which, against a bright blue sky, make you feel so moved their physical presence in front of you.

With that said, I could certainly create some dynamic photographic images of such a structure. However, this kind of work does not seem to fit into my current project. First, I wouldn't feel any sense of time in the images. Yes, the bridge has existed for some time, and probably has a lovely history behind it. The organization of lines, textures, and spaces could be translated photographically in an infinite number of ways; however, these images would exist to me as documentations of how this bridge was made, how it sits high and mighty in physical space, and how it looks in a purely visual or aesthetic sense to someone - a person who could stand in front of the bridge while looking at the photograph today and see exactly where and how I took the picture.

I am not interested in this way of photographing, or any kind of direct visual documentation or illustration of something that is meant to look accurate - for example, the bridge, which is displayed to resemble a well-preserved and routinely maintained piece of architecture, one that is structurally sound in order to provide a safe route of travel across a substantially large body of water. It is a structure that is kept "up and running," and for this reason, it is not a main focus of my interest right now.



*Cornfield Remains*, 11x14" Print, Fall 2009

# The Beginning

*The summer was over. As we geared up for the semester, the pressure was on for us to launch off at full speed ahead. Our priorities and responsibilities were becoming inescapably clear – but first things were first: we couldn't begin making work without having some sort of initial direction and motivation....*

## *Jumping Off: Initial Intentions and Goals*

September 6, 2010

For me, photography is about the nature of taking a picture. I photograph because I am interested in how a photograph happens – the interaction of time and light within the camera in the darkroom. Whether it is a snapshot or a highly manipulated image, everyone has a personal relationship with a photograph. I'm most interested in how we begin to understand and relate to photographs in the most basic sense: What do we feel when we look at an image?

I've spent the majority of my college career investigating myself ("self") through the lens of my camera and through the process of developing and creating prints in the darkroom. I use the action of focusing on the world through a frame and taking a photograph as a metaphor for an expression of my emotion and mood. In a way, I investigate my "self" and the space of my surroundings through formalistic quality choices and experimentation with recognizable symbols vs. ambiguity. I shoot with a standard 35 mm Single Lens Reflex film camera, and I process and print all of my photographs by hand in the darkroom. The process involved with traditional wet-darkroom printing is currently one of the most important things to me as an artist; however, I am beginning to discover that I am also incredibly invested in how/why/when I photograph. I try to convey this sense of passion in my work by carefully analyzing each choice I make about how an image will be printed, and more importantly, how the viewer will see, think about, and feel the image. The process of looking at a photograph and getting to its real essence is as important to me as the process of creating a photograph. This analogy/metaphor is a central theme of my work. I'm interested in the organic nature of memory – sensations of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste that come to us when we look at a photograph. We study the composition, notice the subject matter and think about associations we make.

My purpose in photographing is to provoke the viewer to look beyond what they initially see, and then meditate more on the qualities that actually make up a photograph: simple lines, curves, shadows, textures, movements from light to dark, focus, etc. I plan to continue experimenting with the ideas explained above. However, I would like to narrow my focus on some specific avenue or exploration. I also plan on revisiting the idea of the self-portrait. Along with this, I will be researching various source artists and non-art sources in order to expand my knowledge of other working contemporary artists. I will take many rolls of film, journal, and make photographs.

# *Critique Reflections: Part 1*

Post First In-Progress Critique

September 24, 2010

After presenting ten medium-sized prints at the in-progress critique, I received a number of helpful comments on how my work has progressed thus far, as well as suggestions for possible directions in which I could continue to move in preparation for the mid-term critique. However, before receiving feedback from the other seminar members, I discussed briefly my thoughts and ideas surrounding the images I decided to present. I also touched on a few concerns or questions that I had about the work, such as how some images might be read or understood by someone with an outside perspective. I know that I am drawn to certain places, and that this attraction has been the underlying basis for how I take photographs.

This aspect of a “journey” plays a huge role in how I work. However, one of my main questions has been whether or not my images come across as being recognizably cohesive, considering that I have such a broad area of focus in terms of where I point my camera. I am also experimenting with ways to display my photographs, and how the content of the work can change depending on how each photograph is viewed (in series, individually, small clusters, etc.). A couple of people mentioned the idea that the works displayed conveyed a definite sense of monumentality within a simple image, while others didn’t seem to have that quality of overbearing importance or structural status. The print of the stack of crates taken from a low vantage point is an example of such monumentality.

Along with this, the group agreed that several of the images seemed to share a dislocation of perspective, which became clear when viewing the photographs and beginning to think about how I was positioned while photographing, as well as in which direction I pointed the camera. This comment helped me to step outside of myself and reconsider my vision. It allowed me to think about what an anonymous person might feel when viewing my images. According to the feedback I got, one central element that seems to run through the work is an odd sense of space in many of the images.

Combined with the array of shapes, textures, angles, and compositional lines, the space within the frame creates a unique interaction between the viewer and the image. Many of the images seem to demonstrate a strong ability to guide the viewer through the space and make them feel as if they are with the photographer in the photographic space. This is something that I would like to try and keep focusing on, in terms of trying to use this way of photographing in order to express my experience on the “journey.” So experimenting with my ability to push the viewer around spatially will definitely be an important aspect in my approach to how I will choose images and how I will print them. Paying attention to things like texture, size, and printing quality will be crucial to producing my desired effect. I threw out the idea of printing a substantial amount larger than I have been (11 x 14”), which could tremendously enhance the experience the viewer will have with the images. I think that if I print larger and more life size, then the viewer can really be brought into the space, and really focus on what I found there, such as the different objects, symmetry and repetition of found items, etc.

# *Moving Forward*

## Revised Intentions and Goals

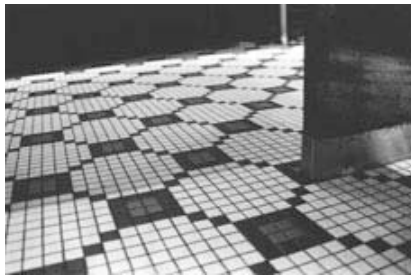
Although very obviously stated, I would really like to use this way of working as a way of bringing the viewer into my vision, and helping them to see like I see. I think that when I photograph, I see a bit differently than others might (i.e. I pay attention to things that go unnoticed). So in this way, these rather abstract and highly textural, spatial images are an expression of my experience not only as a photographer, but as a person in the world.

The other focus of discussion was the presentation of the images, or how they were placed together for the critique, and how they will be arranged for future display. Originally, I wanted to have a series of works, through which the progression from image to image would be based on transition of tonal values and trying to pair compositions together, since the objects in the photographs most likely won't be similar or related in other terms. I think that this is something I need to really think about in the upcoming weeks. Someone suggested the idea of grouping the photographs together in small groups of 2 or 3, and having several different sections of these groupings through which the viewer could move through the entire series without feeling overwhelmed with trying to figure out each progression from image to image down the entire line of works. I think this is a good idea, and that this is something I will investigate soon.

It seems that my idea of what kind of work I'm doing has shifted from just abstract and ambiguous images to ones that really deal with the idea of space and spatial perception. I think that deciding which photographs to print and how to print them will be essential to how I get my message across and how the viewers will ultimately feel the images. According to Lisa, the prints have to be gorgeous, since the focus of the work is on emphasizing exactly what the spaces look like. I think this will be my biggest challenge, aside from choosing which images to print after I shoot more film. So, from here I hope to continue working with some of the prints that I presented at the critique. However, I am aiming to shoot at least 2 or 3 more rolls of film in order to have a wide variety to choose from. The other main thing I need to focus on is the best size for the images, and how to make this happen in terms of cost, ordering paper, or even making a smaller print exactly how I want it to look and then scanning it into the computer, blowing it up, and printing large that way.

For the next couple of weeks, I will be shooting a couple more rolls, but mostly working with what I've shot so far, along with really delving into the materials I have gathered regarding source artists and seeing how some ideas from there could inspire me or play into my work. Based on the feedback from the critique, I feel better about the work that I've done so far, but I know that I will need to keep pushing myself to make some really great prints that will speak my intentions.





*Ruby Tuesday, 8 11x14" Prints, Fall 2009*

I created this series of 8 photographs both as my final project to ART312 - Advanced Photography Studio and as a creative response to my passion for working as a restaurant cook. This job is based highly on fast paced, routine, and organized work. I photographed my work environment here because I wanted to convey a sense of routine and structure while also finding a way to convey the space in a new way. It is my belief that this project marked the beginning of my deep interest for photographing a space and transforming it for the viewer. I would honestly say that, although artist research and attending artist lectures provided more formally organized bits of information for sourcing, I think that I have drawn more inspiration from personal and intimate experiences in my life such as this.

# *Reflecting on Artist Lectures*

**Karly Klopfenstein**

Attending Karly's lecture was a unique experience for me. I was initially drawn to her work because of its interesting visual appearance. However, she spent a large portion of her lecture trying to convey a realistic sense of the practical side to being a young working artist. Until now, I had only heard small bits and pieces of the practicalities of trying to make it as an artist in today's society. Because she is alum of the college, I found myself easily relating to her, which probed me to begin thinking more realistically about my own life after graduation.

I enjoyed the way that she organized the lecture by first giving a brief overview of her previous works, or things that she has done since graduating from SMCM, and then focusing more on a detailed synopsis of her efforts towards finishing her most recent project: creating a huge, half-scale size tank made of cardboard and other lightweight items, covered in her own hand-woven rugs on which different patterns and symbols of traditional middle-Eastern culture are displayed. The rug tank acts as an ironic political commentary about wars in the middle East. She also creates a deliberate dialogue between the viewer and the work about tanks as symbols of war, and what it means to create a tank and take it completely out of any war context and cover it with something beautiful and handmade.

Both Karly and her work embodied a slight sense of humor, which is something that I really enjoy in an artist. Although her sculptural works are quite different from my own work as a photographer, I think that it is always interesting and necessary to get some insight into how other artists work. As she discussed details about the work she is currently doing towards finishing the rug tank even as she is in residency here at the college, I really appreciated how she was able to give the audience an honest sense of exactly how much time it takes to finish a work, as well as how much money, effort, and dedication it takes to do studio work on your own. She mentioned that she has been constructing the tank and weaving the rugs for almost 2 years now, and that she is still pushing herself pretty hard in hopes of finishing it by the time she leaves at the end of this semester. To me, this really puts things in perspective. As someone who has no idea what it is like to live and make art, and figure out how to keep making art, this was tremendously helpful in making me start to think about what my life will be like in the future.

During her visit with me in my studio, she told me that she lives to be an artist, and that she'll do whatever she needs to do to keep making art. She also said that each of her projects leads to the next, and that this is how she progresses in her work. These comments really resonated with me and inspired me to keep at it, and really focus on photographing and doing whatever it takes to keep doing it.

## Studio Visit with Karly Klopfenstein

It was quite nice to have Karly come to my studio and talk with me about my work so far this semester. She was able to look at what I've done with fresh eyes and give me some honest feedback. I'm excited that she enjoyed my images; however, we both agreed that many of the images would have a stronger impact at a much larger scale, giving them a kind of life size presence to viewers. I expressed that my main issue right now is choosing the best method for enlarging, and she suggested that I talk with Colby about what to do. I decided that in order for me to find the best way to enlarge my images (large darkroom prints, scanning negatives and making digital prints, etc.), I would need to have a couple of different examples of large prints at the mid-term critique. I think that I will choose one strong image, and then create one 20x24" darkroom print, one large digital print made from a negative scan, and one large digital print made from a scanned smaller darkroom print. I think that this will help me to begin thinking about the differences in each way of printing, and then work on deciding which method I will use for enlarging the rest of my images. Since I don't really have much experience with scanning negatives and images in and then printing them digitally, I think that this will be an essential exercise in figuring out whether or not I will want to print strictly in the darkroom, or begin to branch out into the digital realm. However, I do know that I love the feel of a darkroom print - the textures and grains, the feel and weight of the paper, and the presence of the 'hand of the photographer' appearing physically in each print.

We also discussed the importance of my editing process for the next two weeks before the mid-term critique. Karly emphasized the fact that picking the right images will be essential to begin creating a cohesive body of work. This is something that I often struggle with in the beginning stages of working because I tend to get excited about enlarging way more images than I have the time or effort for working on. So, I think that I'll need to spend a lot of time looking at my options and think carefully about why I want to enlarge on image versus another. This also means shooting a lot of film up front, so that I'll have a wide variety of options from which to choose. I'd like to start setting up times to meet with my partner in order to get a second opinion on editing

**Heather Harvey**

"...Into this honeyed presence strewn"

Before this lecture, I had very little knowledge of visiting professor Heather Harvey's work. I had heard a few (mostly very positive) comments from peers and professors, but came into the lecture eager to hear her talk about her work. I am pleased to say that I left the lecture feeling like I had an understanding of her work. In fact, this lecture was one of the most enjoyable and most informatively interesting that I have attended in my four years here at St. Mary's.

I was quite impressed with the way that she introduced her ideas about the work, specifically her extensive overview of her sources for working, which included several topics outside of the art realm. She said that her work should be approached as one would approach poetry, in the sense that she is interested in the transition of things, or rather the process of slipping from one subject into another, much like transitions in writing. She also talked about more scientific and philosophical ideas, such as the natural world versus

mysteriousness, and the idea of experiencing something before knowing what it is, or before being able to name or categorize something. She even went as far as to mention Newtonian universes and Einstein, stating that “gravitation cannot be responsible for people falling in love.” The way that she talked about her ideas, sources of inspiration, and interests provided us with a unique kind of understanding, whereas without such explanation, we might have been lost in trying to think about her work.

Her work is primarily sculptural and involving things moving off of walls into the physical space of the room. However, the works are not any kind of typical sculptures; they are all made from the wall material itself, and crafted to appear as parts of the wall that morph and transition from the flat surface into ambiguous, oddly shaped forms that jut out into the room. I really enjoy the weirdness of these sculptures. I also think it is interesting how she uses them as a way of investigating how art plays into previously mentioned ideas about moving through zones of known versus unknown.

Her pieces are incredibly visually appealing to me because they are so unusual. They literally transform an architectural space, creating a kind of fluid activity in a room that would otherwise be a normal room. There seems to be a loose connection with the human body that she is trying to deal with, which I find intriguing. However, there is a strong sense of subtlety in the way that she executes her ideas. The sculptures are so quiet, and almost hidden by the way that they blend into the walls themselves; however, there is a definite power to them.

Seeking to transform an architectural space is always a bold move, but the way that Heather transforms the wall space is unique. I’m interested in how, like poetry, it deals with fluidity and change, while also confronting viewers to move about and react to them by evoking certain emotions or levels of uncertainty or mystery between defined emotions. In her lecture she spoke of her process in a way that resonated with me; that she is not afraid to admit that she is especially interested in being fascinated by something and then seeing where you can go with it. This intuitive, spontaneous way of working resonates well with me.

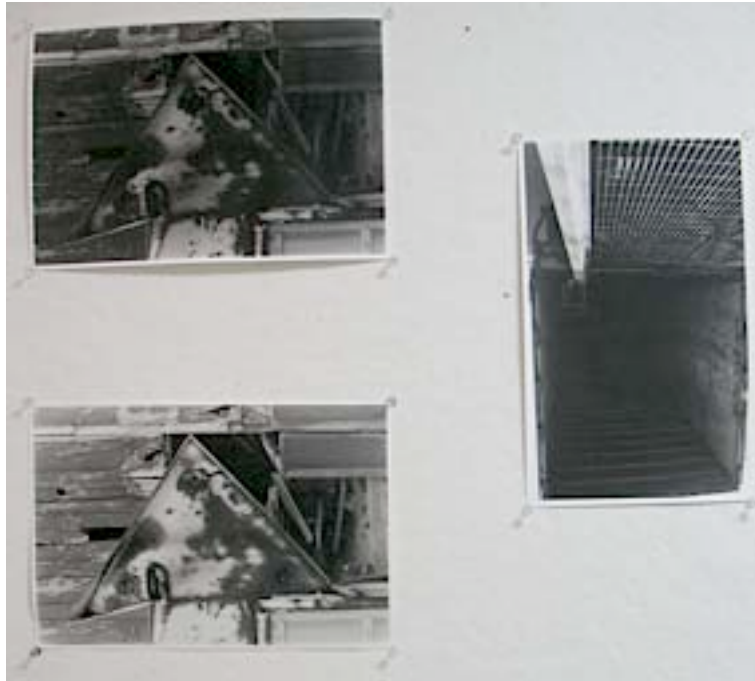
# *Critique Reflections: Part 2*

Post Midterm Critique  
October 22, 2010

Critique Summary: Comments, Suggestions, and Questions

## **Subject Matter**

Are the images just about formalism, or is there something more? It was mentioned very clearly that I choose to shoot in certain types of spaces: many of them are abandoned, decayed, and appear to be on the outskirts of things (on the “peripheral”). In other words, I am choosing to shoot at locations that are not on the mainstream. A unifying theme in such places within the images seems to be void spaces, where absence becomes a kind of presence.



Midterm Crit. Shot #5 of Installation

## **Process of Shooting**

Why do I choose to shoot on the outskirts of things? It is clear that I am drawn to a sense of absence in these particular locations where objects have been forgotten or left behind. Is it because I think that these things deserve the same amount of attention as things that are more noticed? There is an effort to find “beauty” in these kinds of spaces, although beauty is such an overused, culturally relative term. The audience can see that there is a certain precision that I am trying to pull out of such spaces.

## **Uniqueness of Images**

No one else would take these kinds of pictures, and this is a definite strength. I am dealing with images that collapse space in an intellectual way, and that also become powerful in the

sense that they have very little sense of being grounded. On the other hand, an image like the “home base” photograph collapses the sky and the ground in a more pictorial way, which makes it stand out as being more out of place in this series of images. Perhaps it could be part of a different series, as it is a wonderful image by itself, apart from the rest of the photographs presented.



Midterm Crit. Shot #2 of Installation



Midterm Crit. Shot #11 of Installation

### **Demonstration of Photographic Seeing**

The way that I am very carefully composing each shot on site creates a powerful language that deals with ideas of portals, looking through, being closed in, etc. This is photographic seeing, which is a big strength. There is a definite unique way of framing the shots that suggests that these images are about more than formalism; they become as much about the uniqueness of the subject matter and where I am taking pictures (absence of things in locations outside of the mainstream) as they are about the way that I am framing and seeing photographically. This makes them compelling.

### **Effect on Viewers**

All of the images seem very fragile, claustrophobic and suffocating, and monumental. There is a real illusionistic quality about the “hole in the wall” image that makes it seem entirely three-dimensional, especially when brought off of the wall. The fact that you don’t know exactly what you are looking at makes them especially interesting, and also makes the viewer want to get closer to the photographs as objects. I am also dealing with a dialogue between positive and negative space within the frame. This creates a sense of perceptual disorientation in the viewer. Along with this, there doesn’t appear to be any sense of the ground or being grounded in tightly cropped and fragmented shots. So, a lot of the power comes from the conceptual distance that exists between what the photograph is (i.e. a mop, wooden crate, etc.) and what I’ve made.



Midterm Crit. Shot #16 of Installation

### Printing Issues

Increasing the scale of the photograph adds tremendously to its monumental quality. All of a sudden, the “non-thing” in the photograph becomes so much more by making it life size. So, taking the effort to make an image that big is critical, because not many others would take the time to do so. Changing the scale creates an entirely different conversation with the viewer. Feelings like claustrophobia, etc. become enhanced. The issue of the wet print versus the digital print becomes not as apparent to the audience as it is for me. With some minor tweaking in Photoshop, larger digital prints can appear to have the same quality as a darkroom print. So, reasons for choosing one versus the other become more important. If I want to make it about the scale of the print, then printing digitally might be better. However, if the process of printing in the darkroom is more important to me, it might be better to make that more apparent in the presentation of the images. But, it seems that the experience of taking the pictures is the most important.

As far as mounting, bringing a photograph off of the wall really adds to the effect it has on the viewer. Taking the mundane and making it a clean object that comes physically out in space and confronting the viewer enhances the viewing experience. The issues of spatial perception that are being dealt with inside the frame of the photograph can then coincide with having the image jut out, becoming much more powerful. More experimentation should happen with mounting.



Midterm Crit Shot #20 of Installation

## **Talking About the Work**

The brief introduction about the work seemed rather boring. Most of the discussion was about formal issues, but there is definitely more happening in the images than just line, shape, etc. Many viewers get a strong sense of sadness and melancholia, especially with the “hole in the wall” image. However, it becomes confusing as to whether or not this is an effect that I am directly trying to elicit because I do not talk about the work in this way. Also, if photographic seeing and the process of shooting is the most important experience in working for me, I should tell the viewers more about this. It is clear that I need to spend time sitting down and investigating the way I think about my images so I will be able to discuss them more appropriately. There is a lot of intensity going on that is extremely compelling and interesting, so talking about any unifying themes beyond formalism is necessary. Why am I drawn to these void spaces? Think about the idea of absence becoming a presence. I should journal when out shooting, and when looking at the images after they are printed.

## **References to Artists Mentioned**

### **Andreas Gursky**

He photographs in color, dealing with large, anonymous, man-made spaces. Although the work looks very different from mine on the surface, the similarity lies in the idea of photographing formalistically. Whereas Gursky deals with more consumer formalism, I am dealing with less mainstream types of locations.

### **William Eggleston**

He also works in color, but nonetheless deals with spaces and objects that might seem uninteresting in a regular sense. For example, he photographed an oven. His work was rather controversial when it came out, and many people thought that it was some of the ugliest work around.

### **John Szarkowski**

He discusses “photographic seeing” in his theoretical writings, which is something I am dealing with in my work.

### **Edward Weston**

Joe Lucchesi related my “rusty arrow sign” image with the work of Edward Weston because of its visual qualities and similar interest in “found” objects on the land.



# **Part II:**

## From Midterm On

*A second interview was conducted halfway through the semester. It acted both as a follow-up inquiry to issues addressed at the midterm critique, and as a more specific bit of insight into each artist's thoughts about their own work and the feedback they've received thus far, feelings about their individual progress, and then some additional thoughts about preparations for the final show and critique in December....*

## *Interview Two*

November 5, 2010

**KO:** After hearing the advice given by professors and students at the critique, what is the one piece of information that has stuck with you the most? How are you incorporating this advice, etc. into the work on which you are now working?

**CT:** The most important thing that I took away from the critique was the realization that every decision I make (where I go to shoot, how I compose each image, etc.), directly affects how someone interacts with the photograph.

I began this semester working with a very formalistic approach because I did not yet have any conscious realization of any kind of deeper content that I wanted to investigate. So, I began to shoot with formal issues primarily in mind. However, there seemed to be more to it than that, but I couldn't put my finger on what was driving me to shoot in the places I chose to go.

During the critique, I received several comments on the intensity of some of my images. Many people responded to viewing them by expressing that they felt claustrophobic, disoriented, or suffocated. In other words, the photographs elicited a certain response from the viewers, a response that was definitely uncomfortable but also intriguing. It became clear that I was shooting in places that were not mainstream, places that were hidden or on the periphery of things, places where no one inhabits or cares to trek through without glancing twice at what can be found in such places. The images I made from photographing these kinds of areas became images that deal with void spaces, where the absence of "normal" things becomes a kind of interesting presence. And the way that I photographed these places created the intense effect on the viewer. Until now, thinking carefully about composing each shot and taking my time at a site has seemed to be somewhat of an intuitive way of working, and I had not put much thought of effort into investigating why I work in this way.

So, this is what I took away from the critique: it is necessary to now spend a lot of time thinking about what it means to take the pictures that I find myself taking. What is it about these spaces that I am drawn to, and what is the significance in the way that I photograph them? Since the critique, I have kept this in the forefront of my mind. I think that a lot of the images I have made since the critique show a sense of my conscious realization that I am looking for something more than just formal issues. Honestly, I think that the photographs are getting weirder. However, I am thinking about these issues when I go out and shoot; whereas before I embarked on my photographic journeys with a kind of meditative approach, and

not really thinking too much about the importance of the shooting process, and thinking the most about how the “perfect” final image would appear. I guess you could say that I’ve also kept the issue of process vs. product in mind since the critique as well. I am beginning to see that I am dealing more with the process of taking pictures in relation my ability to physically bring the viewer into the space of the photograph.

**KO: What importance does the journey and act of finding objects to shoot have on the image and its relevance to your art?**

**CT:** The journey is possibly the most important part of my photographic process. I think that I see all of my images in conjunction with one another - not necessarily in any kind of narrative function with one another, but more so as individual “narratives” in themselves (moving the viewer through the space as I have moved through it, and making them feel present in the space, whether they feel comfortable in it or not).

I look for objects to shoot primarily by intuition. I drive around in an area until a specific location catches my eye. In this area (St. Mary’s), I have been particularly drawn to locations that stand out as I pass them by, such as places that have gone out of business and have been left, or spots in between or behind large commercial department stores where discarded odds and ends can be found. In this way, I see myself as a “behind the scenes” photographer, in the sense that I begin my journey of photographing objects and spaces in places that are separated from mainstream locations. I can only hope that this comes across in my images.

**KO: You mentioned that you enjoy taking journeys through new spaces to find new images. What do you want the viewers relationship to this journey to be, as a result of seeing your photos?**

**CT:** I usually do not include any kind of contextually specific information in my photographs, such as street signs designating where the photograph is taken or store billboards stating behind which grocery store I am located behind. I’m not interested in this information, and I am definitely not interested in placing the viewer in relation to the specificity of these places because I think that this would change the viewing experience entirely. What is important to me is finding ways to bring someone into a space via the photograph without giving any obvious clues as to where I photograph. I go “behind the scenes” to find odd objects, enclosed spaces, and new perspectives of looking at something that could be viewed ordinarily. So, in a way, I want to bring this relationship that I have with the space to translate into a relationship that the viewer can make with the photograph and how it affects their perception of the space.

**KO: Are there specific visual qualities you look for from an object or space before deciding to shoot it?**

**CT:** This is an interesting question, mostly because it seems like the most obvious question to ask; however, I think I have yet to actually answer it consciously for myself. I feel like there are certain visual qualities that I inherently seek out when I photograph. A lot of my images are taken in areas where there is a lot of variation in texture, such as metal (or rusty metal), wood grain, gravel pavement, shreds of

plastic or shards of glass. I'd say that I am especially interested in these kinds of "rough" textures, and that because of this, I am drawn to locations where there are a lot of industrial types of objects, materials, and spaces. I think that this interest informs where I go to shoot, and is therefore one of the main reasons why I don't take my camera out when I'm grocery shopping or taking a walk through campus. I'm not necessarily interested in trying to bring the viewer into these kinds of spaces because it might seem uninteresting to them, or something mundane that they have already experienced in their own way before.

By photographing spots where there is a lot of rigid material and unknown cargo to investigate, I feel that I am more able to bring the viewer into the space in **my** way, the way that I explore an object or an area, via my own way of seeing photographically.

I am definitely interested in spaces that travel through or under something, such as small holes or pathways underneath larger objects that create compositions that physically move the eye through that bit of space. I think a lot about how to manipulate depth of field and focus in order to get the visual appearance of moving through a space when I photograph.

**KO:** You have mentioned several formalistic photographers that have become inspirations in your SMP process (Weston, etc). Beyond the formalistic visual qualities you adapt from these artists, what influence do they take over the message or experience you wish to portray in your images?

**CT:** I'd say that most of the research that I've done so far has been purely theoretical essays from these formalistic photographers. At the beginning of my research, I was mostly looking for pictures that looked like mine, or images taken by photographers who photographed in places that I liked to photograph. However, this did not get me very far. So when I say that I am sourcing Edward Weston, William Eggleston, etc. when I think about my work, I am more trying to understand their own approaches to their work in relation to how I approach my ideas. For example, John Szarkowski's essay on "seeing photographically" has stuck in the forefront of my mind ever since I discovered it because it is a way of seeing that I have adapted.

I have been focusing on William Eggleston's work lately, especially after his name was mentioned a couple of times at the mid-term critique. I feel inspired by his work because of the way that he chose to photograph, and how he gave importance to objects that were considered to be ugly or uninteresting by many (i.e. photographing an oven). While he is still a formalist in some ways, his work, along with Weston's work, goes slightly beyond just formal issues. Weston was considered one of the great photographer's of the American west; however, he was still a formalist. Nonetheless, his work has unique qualities about it that makes you think, "Oh, that's an Edward Weston photograph", even if you don't have his name written on it. In this way, I am trying to create a body of work that can be recognized as my vision, but still be looked at and appreciated for my attention to detail and formalistic approach.

## *Source Artist:*

William Eggleston



William Eggleston  
Untitled Image from *14 Pictures*  
Dye Transfer Print, 1974



William Eggleston  
Untitled Image from *14 Pictures*  
Dye Transfer Print, 1974

I began looking into Eggleston's work after Colby Caldwell mentioned his name at the midterm critique as a definite source artist for me to consider. While earlier in the semester my focus was on photographers such as Harry Callahan and Edward Weston, I became more focused on Eggleston's work. Although he works in color, his work is conceptually similar to my black and white photographs because he deals with everyday monotonous objects.



*Rug*  
Digital Print  
Fall 2010



*Manhole*  
Silver Gelatin print on Fiber paper  
Fall 2010

Top images from  
<http://www.egglestontrust.com/>

# *Progressing From Midterm*

Revised Intentions/Goals

October 22, 2010

The mid-term critique brought several issues to my attention. Before now, I knew that I was tied to formalism in my work; however, I felt that the subject matter that I chose to photograph contained certain qualities that suggested something deeper. In retrospect, many of the comments made during the critique have reinforced this notion. While I am conscious of formal issues while photographing, I think that it would be beneficial to begin digging deeper into my motivations for what draws me to certain locations.

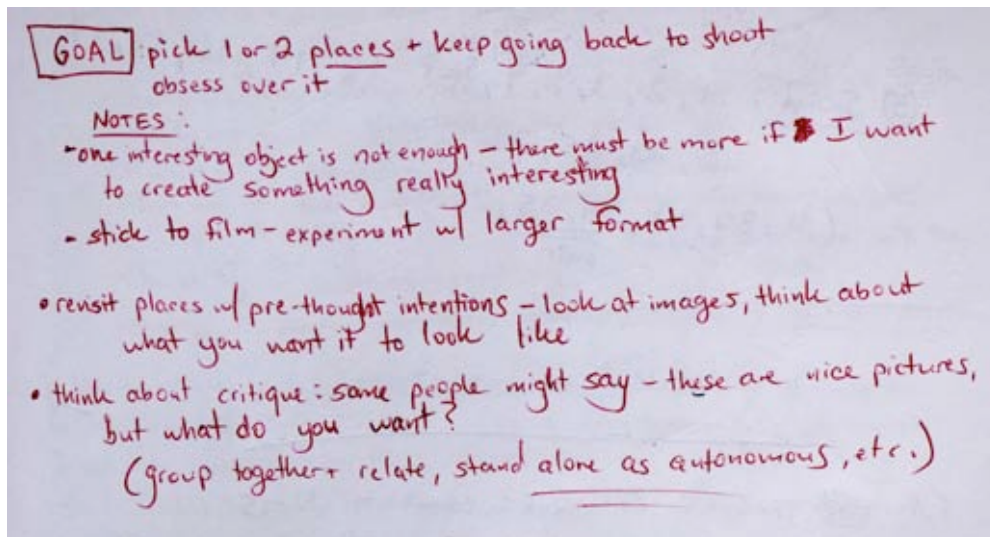
I realize now that the experience of taking the pictures has become more important to me than printing in the darkroom. How I go about photographing an area is essential to the quality of work I will produce. It is important for me to begin recognizing everything involved with shooting; the anticipation of what I might find when I reach the first site, wondering how many ways I can visually reproduce what I find, the feeling of freedom and solitude that runs through me as I quietly search for something new to discover. In this way, I am obsessed with the photographic possibilities with my camera on these journeys. I want to show something in ways that not many people have seen before.

For example, I think that my choice of vantage point and level of focus are two of the more important things to consider in this process. By spending time at a specific site, and shooting many frames even in one particular space, I am able to capture a wide variety of image types, shots that produce different reactions for the viewer. I can try to bring the viewer into a space, flatten and distort a space to make the viewer question what they are looking at, disorient the viewer, make the viewer feel claustrophobic, or make them wonder how I was even able to put myself in a position where I could take such a picture. So, one of my goals is to experiment more with producing a certain reaction or response in the viewer.

There is also a large amount of significance in where I photograph. I mentioned that I usually see photographically, or see primarily by means of the camera. In more basic terms, I use the camera as a tool through which I can navigate through spaces that I find intriguing: dilapidated structures, abandoned former businesses, or grassy lots on which sit old vehicles that have clearly been left behind to rust. I think that hold a great deal of importance on how I go about taking pictures - the time it takes to reach the first sight, the anticipation of what I might find, the vast array of images in my mind that I could produce as photographs, and especially the feelings and thoughts that run freely through me as I travel with my camera and seek out new discoveries. In this way, I am obsessed with the photographic possibilities of me with my camera. I am obsessed with walking through and photographing a space that not many people have seen before. And, I am most definitely obsessed with showing a space or an object in a completely new way through a single photograph. I want to express my way of seeing photographically in these spaces.

## Goals

I would like to proceed into the second half of the semester with some immediate goals in mind. First, and most importantly, I need to shoot a lot. Taking a lot of pictures is the only way to have a lot of different types of images to edit down. Another big issue is the way that I talk about my work. I need to sit down and think deeply about why I am drawn to such void spaces. The idea of absence becoming a presence, as mentioned several times at the critique, is something that I want to investigate further. While the work is still very much about formal issues, I would like to pinpoint what it is about “peripheral” locations that call for me to photograph. In doing so, I hope to develop more of an ability to talk about the work in a way that can put some of these issues into words and give viewers a better sense of why I take these photographs.



Journal Entry # 14, Scanned Image

I would also like to start thinking seriously about the scale of my images, and how the size can alter the conversation with the viewer. I began to worry about wet printing versus digital printing, but it has now become apparent that this will not be an issue as long as I am not completely tied to printing only in the darkroom. In terms of presentation of final prints, whether printed digitally or not, mounting can add a tremendous amount to the effect of the image when viewed on or raised off of the wall. I found that mounting an image with a wooden cleat so that it pops out from the wall adds a tremendous amount to the effect of viewing the photograph, almost making it float in space as an object in the room. I'd like to experiment more with different types of presentation and how they will change the viewing experience.

# Action Plan

Example of a 2 Week Plan

## Sunday, October 24

- Shoot at least 2 new rolls of film at one location (w/ new intentions in mind), journal thoughts while out shooting, develop + contact print
- Take notes on critique postings for discussion in class tomorrow

## Monday, October 25

- Review summary of critique, revision of intention statement and goals, and new images with Lisa, discuss critique notes as a class

## Tuesday, October 26

- Find sources to add to bibliography from artists mentioned at critique (Andreas Gursky, William Eggleston, more for Szarkowski)
- Write artist lecture reflection, shoot at least 2 rolls of film at one location and journal
- Write 4-8 new interview questions

## Wed., October 27

- Develop film + contact print from new rolls, print hard copy of new interview questions

## Thur., October 28

- Decide on faculty member and e-mail about studio meeting,
- Decide on 4 images from new rolls to enlarge, read/review a source about Andreas Gursky + add to bibliography

## Fri., October 29:

- Shoot 2 rolls of film at a new location + journal, develop film, order more fiber paper

## Sat., October 30:

- Review all new images from after mid-term crit (shoot more if necessary), journal thoughts

## Sun., October 31:

- Read/review a source about William Eggleston + add to bibliography, make final enlargements of 2 images

## Mon., Nov. 1:

- Scan 2 final prints into Photoshop + edit, discuss printing on watercolor vs. luster paper w/ Erica/Colby, proof print a test on both types of paper

## Tues., Nov. 2:

- Shoot 2 rolls of film at another location + journal, develop film + contact print
- Schedule a studio visit with a friend to discuss work

## Wed., Nov. 3:

- Order gator foam/figure out how to get it, research different surfaces for mounting
- Decide on at least 2 new images for progress critique (Nov. 17)

## Thur., Nov. 4:

- Re-edit "hole in wall" image from mid-term crit. + re-print at same scale
- Conduct interview w/ partner + transcribe + post to BB

## Fri., Nov. 5:

- Shoot 2 rolls of film at another location + journal, develop film + contact print, comment on interview posts

## Sat., Nov. 6:

- Put all new images up + journal/discuss with partner, choose images for progress critique, research final 3 sources for bibliography

## Sun., Nov. 7:

- Make 2-3 11x14" final prints of chosen images, decide on plans for progress critique to discuss with Lisa tomorrow



9/11/10 - Darkroom contact sheet edits - 5 total

① Self Portrait 1 : 1, 8, 9, 11, 17, 19, 23, 24, 25,  
28, 29, 33, 35, 36?

② Self Portrait / Landscape : 2, 3, 7,  
12, 14, 21, 22, 24

③ The Rondevous : 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 ~~10~~ → (other place)  
(rondevous) → 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24,  
26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35

④ Brass Rail / misc. : 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13,  
15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 32, 33,  
34

⑤ Swing : 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10?, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19,  
22, 23, 25, 26, 27  
(31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)  
pair

Example of my editing process  
Scanned Image

## *Reflecting on Artist Lectures Part 2*

Boyden Gallery Opening:  
Karly Klopfenstein and Anja Marais

After attending Karly Klopfenstein's lecture that she gave earlier this semester, it was certainly interesting to compare the difference experiences of hearing her talk about her work and then viewing her work fully installed in a gallery setting. Honestly, I was more intrigued by the way that she discussed her work in the lecture than I was during her brief introduction of the work at the gallery. However, this could be due to the fact that the lecture was heavily reliant on photographs of the work projected onto the screen, and then of course, her discussion and presentation of her ideas to the audience. With the work installed in the gallery, I was obviously much more interested in moving through the space and experiencing her work on a more personal and interactive basis.

The size and physicality of a couple of her pieces definitely struck me the most during the opening. The tank was the largest piece in the exhibition. I think she mentioned that she constructed it at half-scale to the size of a present-day tank. However, its presence in the gallery was unavoidable. Placed in the center of the show amidst all of her other works, as well as the works of Anja, it forced everyone in the room to interact with it in some way. There was no doubt that you had to navigate the room based on the placement of almost all of the pieces displayed. This seemed to create an interesting dynamic in the room. It was almost as if people were unsure of how to act at such a gallery opening, where a giant, carpet-covered tank, took up virtually the entire center of the room; in addition, other pieces such as the carpet bomb also took on a unique kind of presence and confrontation that provoked a reaction out of the audience. Karly's pieces were not quiet pieces, and everyone could definitely feel the political commentary with which she was trying to deal.

I am still unsure of how I feel about Karly's work. I admire her ability to be incredibly bold and deal with such graphic and universally recognizable symbols of war and conflict (tank, bombs, guns, etc.). I'm interested in how she has chosen to deal with the intensity of war, and the aspects of mass-production of war technology, by adding a certain degree of "playfulness" to her commentary on these kinds of realities. There is no doubt that a half-scale, hand-constructed tank covered in brightly colored, hand-made rugs naturally embodies its own sense of humor and political satire. I like the juxtaposition of war technology with beautifully handmade, one-of-a-kind rugs that take months to create (while tanks are mass-produced and assembled in factories). Her ideas were interesting and slightly provocative. But I'm unsure of how I feel about the aesthetic qualities of her work. I think it has something to do with how the rugs look (color, pattern, etc.), or maybe it has to do with the sense that I got from her discussion that she was relatively unclear on specific meanings of the symbolism she chose to include on the rugs. All in all, I enjoyed the opening.

Mirta Kupferminc  
“The Skin: Space for Repression and Expression”

Mirta’s lecture was a brief presentation on how she uses art as a way of trying to make connections with her parents as Holocaust survivors. She stated that one of her motives for being an artist is to try to understand and interpret their experiences by exploring ideas of loss and pain. She incorporates photographs, videos, sculptures, etchings, and embroidery into her work. The woman who introduced Mirta described her work as “juxtapositions of naturalistic details with dream-like scenes.”

The work she discussed dealt mainly with the skin, specifically the act of tattooing or permanently marking the skin. I found it interesting how she discussed the differences in how the skin is marked by tattooing (i.e. deciding to get a tattoo as an ornamental decoration/expression vs. being tattooed against your will with a number that becomes equivalent to your entire identity). Both of these ways of tattooing affect a person’s identity, in how they perceive themselves as well as how others perceive them. However, she seemed to be most struck by how much of her parents’ identities were lost during the Holocaust, how they were forced to have a number tattooed on their arms, and how they became completely associated with just those five digits. Since her parents were both survivors, she felt that these numbers became very powerful symbols of their experience and their struggle, as representations of the “skin of memory.”

The bulk of the work she presented and discussed included embroidery. In the same way that the needle is used to puncture the skin in the process of tattooing, Mirta uses the needle in the process of embroidering as a symbol of this pain (the literal pain of being tattooed and the larger concept of the pain of the Holocaust on those involved). One detail of the lecture really stuck with me as I left. She mentioned that she often asked her parents about the significance of the numbers when she was younger, and that their answer would always be, “not to forget.” While this is interesting in itself, I was particularly drawn to how she has become somewhat obsessed with the numbers in a way, perhaps as a way of holding onto her parents’ identities in relation to this horrifying experience that has had tremendous impact on their lives. Because she was not alive to experience this, she uses the numbers and the memories of her experiences with her parents after the Holocaust as a way to understand their struggle. She only uses her mother’s number because she cannot remember her father’s number (her father died before she became interested in using these numbers in her work), and that she would never use a fake number because that would be like taking away his identity. This is a powerful statement, one that puts their experience into perspective and lets us feel the real impact and weight of the subject matter.

Much of her discussion was purely conceptual. While this was helpful for me to understand her work, I found myself wanting to know more about technical information, such as how she made some of her collage pieces, or why she chose to work in certain mediums. For example, a chair with wings appeared in many of her pieces. She mentioned something about the chair acting as a stable place, while often the figures she depicts in the works appear separated from the chair as a symbol of their instability and fragility. I enjoy this concept, but I think that the connection to her other ideas was a little bit unclear. However, I was very interested in the visual qualities of her work, specifically its graphic appearance and boldness, as well as how it seemed to deal with layering and altered spatial perception.

## *Critique Reflections: Part 3*

Post In-Progress Critique 2

November 19, 2010

The final in-progress critique was perhaps the most productive critique so far this semester. It seems that everyone has reached a point where they are well into developing a body of work. We are individually engaging in rich ideas and concepts, are beginning to practice how to reflect on feedback and move away from critique sessions productively and in a timely manner. In addition, many are starting to feel relatively confident in their work and their ability to display work, as well as understand how to convey their intentions to an audience.

For me, this critique was all about printing. At this point, I have temporarily stopped taking pictures for the sole reason that I have a surplus of images to edit down. However, I am now able to see a change in the images I've shot since midterm. I am now scanning all of my negatives using a high-resolution negative scanner into Photoshop, and printing them digitally on luster paper (paper that resemble photographic paper). Printing digitally has become a way for me to accomplish a couple of things:

- Print at a large scale without going through hell in the darkroom
- Save paper
- Save money
- Develop Photoshop skills
- Build an electronic portfolio



*10.27*  
Original Image  
Fall 2010



*10.27*  
Edit 2  
Fall 2010

One of the biggest criticisms that I received during the midterm critique was that I did not seem to talk about the images in a way that coincided with how they were being read by the viewers. So, I have since begun journaling a lot, each time trying to pull something out of the images I've taken and put my thoughts and reactions into a tangible description. I hope to draw main ideas and words from these journal entries and put them into some sort of artist statement, or perhaps be able to come up with image titles.

10/24 The excitement of taking new pictures is running through me. Went back to "Behind McKay's" ... this means nothing to anyone but me. I love having this outlet. To just get in my car w/ my camera and drive off... no set destination in mind, just seeing what I see and going for it.

\*while out shooting

Solitude - me and the camera - everything I shoot is so quiet. and still. remains - what remains? I will find it. Age - a sense of history - how did these things get here? Why are they left? The absence of their purpose becomes the only presence. I'm drawn to this. This void - evidence of what used to be something used for a purpose, something enjoyed, made for a reason, but now discarded - the melancholy of this - left behind, discarded behind buildings, in fields, where only the wandering eye can find, and appreciate, use for another purpose - reclaiming something and making an interesting object to be studied, and perhaps felt - the photograph.

(cross btw Weston + Eggleston)

Journal Entry #24  
Scanned Image



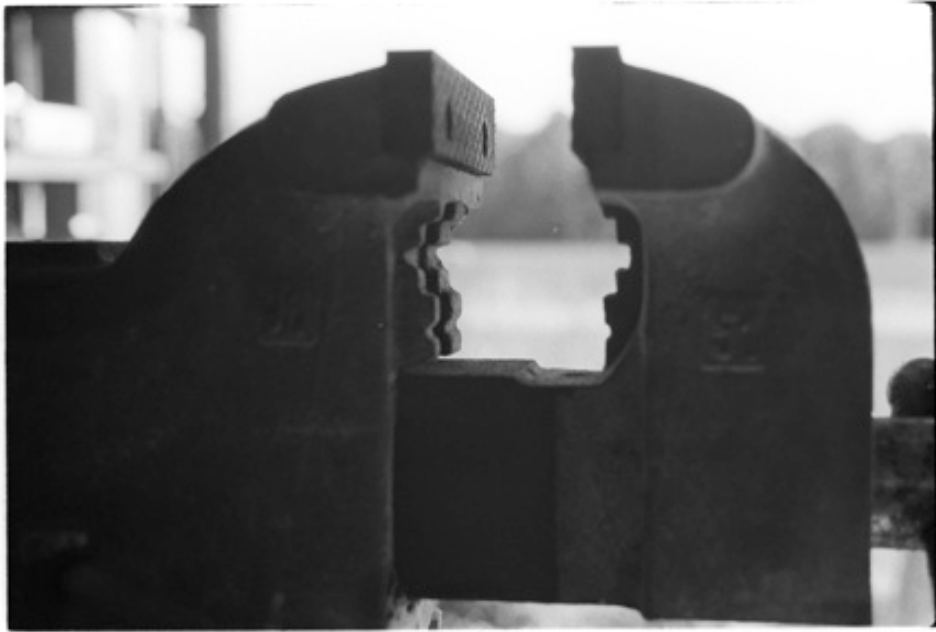
## *Studio Visit with Heather Harvey*

November 20, 2010

During the final couple of weeks of the semester, visiting Professor Heather Harvey agreed to come meet with me in my studio and discuss my most recent work and my plans for the exhibition. This marked the last time that I would receive any kind of formal feedback before scrambling around to make as much good work as possible before installing the show. Although brief, this studio visit may have been the most beneficial period of discussion that I have had with a faculty member during my entire SMP experience. Upon learning that each seminar student was required to schedule a studio visit with a faculty member of their choice, I knew that I wanted to hear some feedback from someone who did not work with photography as their primary medium. I attended Professor Harvey's lecture earlier in the semester. By the end, I found myself realizing that, although our work appears very different on the surface (sculpture vs. photography), we were actually dealing with some of the same issues and thinking about similar concepts.

As I discussed much earlier in my reflection of the lecture, many of her sculptural works are about the transitions of things, for example the space that exists relatively intangibly between things known and unknown. She uses the architectural space of a room and the confines of enclosing walls as her working space, and molds unusually shaped sculptures made from wall materials that appear to emerge out from the surface of the walls. Her work is mysterious, intriguing, and intense. While Heather's work deals with transitions of things on a more metaphorical level, I am trying to deal with transitions of spaces literally within the frame of the photograph. She mentioned that my work is highly architectural, and that because I photograph rather minimally, that many of the images become almost entirely about space - moving through space, fitting or being forced into a space, having objects seem like they invade my space, etc.

After the studio visit, I felt that for the first time all semester, I would be able to sit down and describe my current work in a matter of just a few descriptive words. Until now, I have had loads of trouble putting words to my work, much less trying to think of things like titles for images or an overarching title for the project. I think that this studio visit has allowed me to open up my mind and think a little more about how my work might have conceptual connections with the work of non-photographers. We discussed the idea of transfiguring everyday, mundane things, and that this transfiguration embodies a great deal of mystery and intensity. Holes and voids are a main symbol for me, which often conveys a progression of time or sense of loss. My work also tends to deal more and more with the idea of the anonymous object, or something that can't really be recognized fully or placed in a specific context or place. As I photograph more, I am realizing that I am creating images with less and less "information," meaning that the shapes and forms of interest are becoming simpler and more ambiguous, but still incredibly powerful and intriguing. Negative space around an object becomes an important presence.



*Vice #2, 8x10" Print, Fall 2010*

## *What Was Successful?*

### Reflecting Back on the Semester

- **Realization of Content** - Investing time in looking and thinking about my work as well as writing about it as a way of figuring out how to describe its content
- **Consideration of Subject Matter** - Learning to question what draws me to the objects and areas I photograph
- **Persistence** - It often helps to return to places where I've taken pictures to spend more time shooting and discovering my interest in a certain space
- **Technical Skills Developed** - Learned how to utilize both the darkroom and the digital lab to create images, experimented with issues of scale and how scale can create different interactions with the viewer, began to experiment with different styles of mounting and thinking about how mounting an image can enhance the viewing experience
- **Developed ideas that will continue to grow next semester**



## *Annotated Bibliography*

**Jaeger, Anne-Celine. *Image Makers/Image Takers*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007. Print.**

This book is a collection of interviews with contemporary curators, editors, and photographers. It addresses several areas of the art world, such as documentary work, fashion, portraiture, and next generation art. The content of the interviews explore questions about photography's role in today's media driven society, what defines a great photograph, and looking through the lens of a camera versus looking through our eyes. The book addresses the act of 'seeing' and how the eye of the photographer and the viewer can and should be trained to look beyond the photograph as just a reproduction of the subject. A few interviews in this book stood out to me as being particularly relevant to what I'm doing now. In particular, the interview with Thomas Demand discusses his work with creating his own life size architectural spaces and then photographing them. There are also interviews with William Eggleston, Stephen Shore, David LaChapelle, and Rineke Dijkstra. While many of the artists being interviewed produce work that is entirely different than what I'm doing, I have found that their approach to the medium of photographing your obsessions and fascinations resonates well with me.

**Shore, Stephen. *Nature of Photographs*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. Print.**

In his book, Stephen Shore compiles a collection of photographs and text in which he explicitly discusses how photographs function, both on the physical level and on more conceptual levels dealing with cognitive issues of perception. He uses photographs done by various well-known photographers, such as Robert Frank, Walker Evans, and William Eggleston, and discusses them in a way that connects language to vision and allows the reader to learn how to see photographs as unique visual objects. By breaking down a photograph into physical, depictive, and mental levels, Shore penetrates the process of seeing and gives insight into the construction of photographs. As a result, he deals with defining such qualities in a way that forces interpretation of a photograph's content. He also suggests the possibility of images to form and reform our learned assumptions, as well as the possibility for visual language to do the same. Shore's book is a basic text that, in my opinion, should be read by any photographer as a way of thinking conceptually about photographs. However, this way of looking at and talking about photographs is something that directly corresponds to my approach to photography. Since I am creating more abstract and ambiguous images that deal with formal ideas of space and perception as the main subject matter, I think that Shore's discussion of the nature of photographs is essential for me to keep in mind while continuing to photograph.

**Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. London: Picador, 1977. Print.**

Sontag's writings in this collection of essays critically exam and perhaps scrutinize how photography has changed the way we look at the world. She argues that photography makes the meaning of all events immediately level and equal, suggesting that by photographing something, you are giving it a certain amount of importance that can be mistaken for being equally as important as something else in a different photograph. She also discusses how photography makes people like chronic voyeurs, while at the same time encourages anti-intervention ("the individual who seeks to record cannot intervene, and

that the person who intervenes cannot then faithfully record, for the two aims contradict each other”). Sontag’s essay is useful in providing an extensive amount of essential theoretical reading and many of her ideas tie into ideas in my work.

**Sontag, Susan. “Photography Within the Humanities.” *The Photography Reader*. Ed. Liz Wells. New York: Routledge, 2003. 59-66. Print.**

In this theoretical essay taken from her 1977 publication entitled *On Photography*, Susan Sontag discusses photography in terms of its history and present-day role in society. More importantly in this particular essay, she talks about producing images that reflect “seeing by means of the camera;” in other words, producing visual qualities in a photograph that you don’t ordinarily get by seeing through the eye, and how this can change your own way of seeing. She mentions an “obsessive power” that comes from being able to transform the world by showing it through the light of a certain special status or icon that a photograph carries as being a kind of magical object. This text resonates well with me because I share that sense of obsession with the power that comes with being able to photograph absolutely anything. She also discusses what she calls rather “straight on stuff,” referring to people such as Weston who photograph everyday, often neglected, homely objects as a basis for such transformative possibilities. Therefore, I am using Sontag’s texts as strictly theoretical bases for thinking about why I photograph, and how her discussion of photography as “art that devours other art” relates to the work I am doing.

**Szarkowski, John. “Introduction to The Photographer’s Eye.” *The Photography Reader*. Ed. Liz Wells. New York: Routledge, 2003. 97-103. Print.**

This essay written by John Szarkowski is taken from the introduction of his famous 1966 publication entitled *The Photographer’s Eye*. Szarkowski was a photographer, curator, and critic. Here, he discusses the photograph in terms of its factuality, its ability to record things as they are found, its ability to choose and eliminate based on the frame, its ability to immobilize thin slices of time, and its ability to show things obscurely. Throughout the text, he emphasizes that the subject and picture are not the same thing. By also looking at examples of Szarkowski’s work from various sources, reading his text here has allowed me to better understand his approach to his and other photographers’ work through focusing entirely on the formal aspects of a photograph.

**Szarkowski, John. *Photography Until Now*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1989. Print.**

This is an entire publication written by John Szarkowski, who at the time was the Director of the Museum of Modern Art. It is a mixture of prose with images that makes up a series of his reflections on different stages in the history of photography. It deals with photography in the larger context of culture. Szarkowski’s writings have become a large part of my theoretical research. I’m using this book as a more general read.

**Szarkowski, John. *William Eggleston’s Guide*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002. Print.**

William Eggleston was the first to have a one-man show of all color photographs at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. While his work was beautifully done, it attracted negative attention because color photography was not taken seriously at the time, especially since he was photographing the everyday object as his main subject matter. This collection

of images consists of photographs of little bits and pieces of life in his hometown of Memphis, Tennessee. I used this book as an introduction to some of Eggleston's work.

**Weston, Edward. "Seeing Photographically." *The Photography Reader*. Ed. Liz Wells. New York:Routledge, 2003. 104-108. Print.**

Edward Weston was an incredibly influential twentieth century American photographer who is most known for creating highly detailed images by photographing people and places of the American West. This essay is another example of a discussion of conceptual elements dealt with by a working photographer. Although there are no images incorporated into this text, I am using this essay as a lens through which I can approach Weston's ideas and images. He puts an immense amount of emphasis on seeing photographically, or being able to see the subject matter in terms of the photographer's known capacities of their specific tools and processes in order to be able to translate the elements and values of a certain scene into the exact image he/she wants to make. This is something he deems as the photographer's most difficult task, and thus breaks this ability down into being able to understand the nature of the recording process, the nature of the image, physically recording the image, and being able to deal subject matter and composition. Weston explains that the purpose of photographing is to convey to the viewer the photographer's response to the subject. I can relate deeply with this approach, and I think that I share this idea with Weston that the photographic sight differs from ordinary eyesight by its ability to discover and reveal the nature of the world in ways that cannot be seen otherwise.

**Weintraub, Linda. *In The Making: Creative Options for Contemporary Art*. New York: Distributed Art Publishers, Inc. Print.**

*In The Making* is a compilation of articles on a variety of contemporary artists. Information on each artist is categorized into six sections that each deal with a specific aspect of working as an artist, such as "scoping an audience" or "choosing a mission." I read this book as a prerequisite for SMP during the summer, but have also found it useful during the semester in preparing for this first exhibition.

#### **Future Readings:**

Bunnell, Peter. *Minor White: The Eye That Shapes*. Madison: Belfinch Press, 1989. Print.

Callahan, Harry M. *Harry Callahan: Color, 1941-1980*. Providence: Matrix Publications, 1980.

Gilles, Mora. *Edward Weston: Forms of Passion*. New York: Aperture, 1995. Print.

*Minor White: Rites & Passages*. New York: Aperture, 1978. Print.

#### **Artists to Research:**

Rachel Whiteread

Gordon Matta Clark

Thomas Demand

Eva Hesse

Karlis Rekevics

Andreas Gursky

Marcel Duchamp

