

PRESENCE, *PALIMPSEST*
LEAVING SPACE #2

Lewis George Feuer

Presence, *Palimpsest*

Leaving space #2

I wake up around nine
and my feet are
warm and dry,

Coffee and I am seated by sweeping arcs—
in the background I am listening to the radio—I go out and walk; I drift
in the direction that I am looking and then back to a straight stride.

[My sight line] leveling and correcting and judging, I walk to the wall
and then back away from it.

I hear a word and then another, no sign of a soul. Two halves, two blocks that are
more waves than fixed forms

Nothing is spontaneous. This line is dividing gradations. It is graphite.

Why draw squares?

Why put them where they are?

the white duct-tape line marks an approximation of my body on the floor.
when I am done, finished. I am left looking and knowing that tomorrow I will paint
over the drawing.

At night when I am not sleeping, and I am not dreaming,
my feet begin to sweat, like something must be done now, finished.

Designating a Process...I have in the past just worked and then after the work was completed came to terms or tried to explain the process through which I had just worked. This is honestly a little backwards, although not unreasonable, if the energy to work is there—why not? And, if such a process, or non-process seems to be successful why question it? A few reasons. I was noticing more manneristic qualities in the work (this being my drawings) than actual freshness of mark or idea. This pattern, though, was certainly not indicative of all studio sessions. Also I was repeating compositions and marks, which is not all together a bad thing—possibly a sign of strength. Nonetheless I desired a way to challenge myself, and the so-far success of the non-process.

Non-process: the work did not take place without forethought or grounding. I would very much work with intention. The intent being to see how far I could work non-representationally.

In one way I was searching for more structure in order to channel concepts that I was developing personally into my work, and to see if I could come to a fuller understanding of the “non-process” work that I had created.

My first attempt at this was the creation of a lexicon of marks—a single mark on a page drawn by prescribing not only the shape and weight of the mark, but also the parts of the body used to create the mark. For me this was to be the initial dissection of my drawings. I soon realized though that the process would be never ending, given that my designations could encompass all marks in every form of media—it was not for me. Although beginning that process brought out a new awareness of mark, and a lexicon of my own mark aesthetic is not beyond my pursuit.

The next project that I undertook I thought of as a performance resulting in an installation. It was though a drawing. My materials were vine charcoal and gum erasers. In the studio there are two walls joined in the center by a finished corner creating a large white “L” shaped expanse. I considered this piece a performance because there were strict guidelines for the drawing’s creation. It was also to be continuous from start to finish. I did not know how long the piece would take me only that once I began I could not stop until the drawing was complete. The process was to begin at one edge of the studio walls and lay in a broad band of charcoal, and then when I reached the far edge of the second wall I would begin erasing all that I had just drawn until I returned to the place of beginning. The piece was extremely physical, and probably more masochistic than I would have liked but that was not foreseen. I did not perform the drawing for an audience. I was glad about this decision because I feared that an audience would have to look both at the piece, and my body suffering through the process of erasing (the latter was in my mind unimportant to the resonance of the work). The form that was propelling this installation was the pile of erasure and charcoal dust left after drawing at the base of the wall or easel or just

scattered on the floor. It for me is a sign of an action “having already been completed” to cite Kozloff—a residue. I wanted to look at and use this form in an installation. I was intrigued by its physical presence—small half inch piles on the floor yet they suggest much more. The piece was also the first manifestation of my ideas about a leaving space. Work that acts as a point of departure. And so I titled the piece *leaving space #1*.

Drawing Series*

→ POEMS ON PAPER

hand written

Calligraphic ↓

While looking at Rauschenberg Posters

A bright White Bravado

Layered manicured windy oil landscaped canvas panes singing man skinny rocks a balance skinned rock wall America’s Tao skins distance bill skin toned spun out savior international glory white trim rusty circumstance neutral red compose flops walls blue collage greens pots yellow green collect rolls table articles grey assemble murmurs lips grisaille disassemble holds eyes bill assemblage disassemblage jiggles a nostril bye paralyze reflects shouts baseball paralysis drips butterfly sparkle upset spins spins tack trump flat round

Placed wrinkled lamp shade

Non-Ferrous: does not conduct
enough electricity
to be welded using traditional
arc welders/welding rods

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After *leaving space #1* I returned to more traditional work on paper. Everything I do I think of as a drawing. If I forced myself I would consider my sculpture as drawings just in the third dimension. But again I was aware of designating for myself a strict process. Materials and aesthetic were still freely chosen in the moment, but the when and how much I worked each drawing was determined from the onset. A note though about this project, much like the “leaving space” and the “lexicon” these ideas

are not finished or at a point of resolution. The process for these drawings was that I would allow myself to make only one mark or mark sequence a day on each drawing. (I began work on 4 sheets of paper the first day). Since my drawing technique is naturally more gestural than architectural, I designated the option for a mark sequence. I tend to view mark as a residue of elapsed momentum. Just as in dance a movement phrase may be a collage of different gestures taking the dancer's body in different directions, a mark sequence may change directions or be repetitive, but it shall only last in accordance with the natural cycle of movement and momentum in the drawer...in this case myself. The decision to bring my active drawing to near stagnation—came simply as a reaction to my natural tendency to work quickly. Also I was reading an article on the drawings of Trisha Brown, and I was intrigued by her work with isolating marks especially in examining mark in relation to different parts of the body. Also in addition to limiting myself to a mark-a-day I began each of the four drawings from a different edge of the paper. I pre-titled each drawing: “from the left,” “from the right,” “from the top,” and “from the bottom.” The decision to begin this way was intended to help to break away from compositional forms that I felt myself returning to over and over.

—This was an agonizing process. There were moments of pure frustration. On a couple of occasions I caught myself hurling erasers at the wall and slamming my way out of the studio swearing and cursing the marks I had just made. There were few moments of clear success. The marks themselves were never wholly successful or unsuccessful. They were in honesty just there. Rarely was I able to find much visual or aesthetic relationship in each drawing or between drawings or even between marks. And there I actually saw potential for continuing work in this process. → The creation of the non sequitur. It was possibly a reversal of the composed drawing made prior out of the non-process. These drawings were non-drawings made out of a strict process. And yet formally they were engaging. An attempt to break down my creative will still led to creation.

Parallax ≈ Drawings

“The magnetism which all original action exerts is explained when we inquire the reason of self-trust. Who is the trustee? What is the aboriginal self on which a universal reliance may be grounded? What is the nature and power of that science-baffling star, without parallax, without calculable elements, which shoots a ray of beauty even into trivial and impure actions, if the least mark of independence appear? The inquiry leads us to that source which we call spontaneity or instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force,

the last fact behind which analysis can go, all things find their common origin. For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceedeth. We first share the life by which things exist, and afterwards see them as appearances in nature, and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of thought. Here are the lungs of that inspiration which giveth man wisdom, of that inspiration of man which cannot be denied without impiety or atheism. We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us organs of its activity and receivers of its truth. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, —all metaphysics, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm. Everyman discerns between the voluntary acts of his mind, and his involuntary perceptions. And to his involuntary perceptions, he knows perfect respect is due. He may err in the expression of them but he knows that these things are so, like day and night, not to be disputed. All my willful actions and acquisitions are but roving; the most trivial reverie, the faintest native emotion are domestic and divine. Thoughtless people contradict as readily the statement of perceptions as of opinions, or rather much more readily; for they do not distinguish between perception and notion. They fancy that I choose to see this or that thing. But perception is not whimsical, but fatal. If I see it after me, and in course of time, all mankind, although it may chance that no one has seen it before me. For my perception of it is as much a fact as the sun” (*Self Reliance*, Ralph Waldo Emerson).

“Lateral Drift”

upon reading *Zen and the art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

“Losing sight of the Original” A friend of mine uses these words often in conversation about art, and art theory. Or in conversations about why we make art (not generally speaking as in humans, but more specifically like my friend and I). He has written about the words “the original” what it means and what it does not mean—

I believe for the most part we are onto the same thing...his “original” transient, temporal, ephemeral. My “leaving space” present, absent, perceived, empathized.

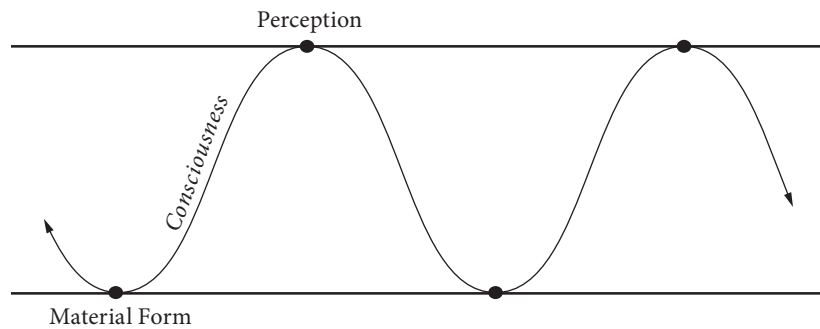
To be critical “losing sight of the original” just sounds like bad poetry. It is just romanticizing the idea of the original, the new, a discovery—implying that there is such a thing as the original, when in fact there is no such thing. The minute something is created → the second, the infinitely small amount of time in which something is created and labeled “done” or “finished” its originality is lost. → However, lost may not be right. It may be more appropriate to say that it changes so rapidly that more accurately one should view the creation as always existing in a continuum and at certain *intersections of time* between material and life a “science-baffling star” appears.

Points in Space.

Think about the word creation. Whatever the creation is makes no difference, being labeled as such *implies a process of making*. This thing is important because it came out of some process of crafting/designing (thinking) *nothing is spontaneous*. Without this process the thing is nothing it is without significance. A creation must be created. If one is creative one makes things out of a process. The goal of which may be never to generate a finished form, only to work creating. Artists do not live to make things (final) they live to work. → A manner and matter of thought, a way of existing. The original immediately changes because physical material is always changing. All things physical are in a state of change (losing or gaining energy) humans age, wood rots, steel rusts, fibers wear and decay, pigments fade, emulsifiers demulsify—plastics may last the longest but they too will deconstruct → are deconstructing. → The change need not always be negative or subtractive. Also, this change fits into time (bounded by it) it is also what informs our sense of time.

There is no such thing as the original because the original is not sustainable. It is in a constant state of change it is at its best an arbitrary point in space.

["without representation or manifestation something existing without form existing outside of time"]



The original idea was
The original idea is
Its an original → one of a
Kind

The master copy

My friend states that the original is idea without form or representation. In this state it is unaffected by process or perception.

Does the moment though in which the idea is conceived last? When one returns to an idea is it conceived of under the same mental circumstances? I believe this impossible—the mind is the present mind and views all things through this filter. All re-conceptions of a past idea are new. If the idea at one point was considered original → it must now be considered original again yet it has changed. → *Relatively* And if this new original is now the original what is there to say that there was not something that came before that first point of conception? Which was once called original. Inside the whale the degrees of change and newness are subtle. The lines which direct towards a coalescence are not always apparent or what we think them to be. Is this why Cage and Cunningham used chance? They knew that at some points in time and space things would coalesce or intersect and make art—the interest and emphasis residing on the process of getting to those points—and then once there and in recognition of those points fleeting nature trying to expand and prolong. Why draw something and then erase it? “Nothing collapses, everything piles, stacks, covers” → and then is seen in light of this accumulation.

Intention

Unintention

I had densities in mind. At one point I saw the deepest richest black just as dense as the pure cream of un-worked paper. Scientifically this was wrong. Visually both were dense especially by comparison—with a point of contrast. Without they have little weight. Densities came from Bollinger, particles and spray paint as well—I know this still though they (the drawings) follow my design...not copies. They are studies of looking visual densities, departures. The fact that they are studies implies contemplation and examination—time spent looking. This line that divides the tones maybe the only link to the self / the only representation of the self. It may divide two sides, two ways of looking, or it may be that which is informed by the existence of these two halves. There is no mark elsewhere only gradients, gradations. Tones, atmosphere, blocks that are more waves than fixed forms. This line is a symbol of thought → intuitive / And then the piece is finished it is simple. It is no more than what is seen. Why impose a concept? A moment of realization in a viewer is shallow. Each perception is unique and uncontrollable. Devote Time. Invent and seek a clean and simple representation.

Leaving Space #3 Marked with a white line on the floor. Also constrained to the traditional space of drawing / painting on the wall. Reasons: because the two wall

studio space is too limiting. It left *Leaving Space #1* in a state of incompleteness—not undesirable. Yet, for further pursuit of the idea more formal constraints had to be applied. For clarification purposes. Still this space speaks not only of a superficial presence like that of a drawing on paper or a painting on canvas. The space is more haptic drawn and left on the wall and connected to floor by the pile of erasure and dust and the white tape line. The line, the new addition to the series was an approximation of the length of my body at full extension. The square was filled according to this system of measurement—relative to my reach. Also during the performing of the piece I was conscious of keeping my physical body in contact with the approximation of my body (the white tape) for the duration. Never did I leave this mark while I was drawing or erasing. → Should a designation be made here? Erasing is drawing. After completion of the piece it was photographed—then during the re-looking at the installation I made another form with the white tape. Again the line, now running vertically from the floor to the wall or from the wall to the floor was made from an approximation of my body at full extension. The minimal nature of the piece I am familiar with it recalls earlier work of mine. It also simply states that it is just barely present. Being the same color as the wall to which it is affixed. The shape is only rendered visible by shadow and non-space and contrast with the floor.

[Squares]

There are no words. I am only looking.
That is the thing.

I am trying to understand without thinking.
I am trying to understand through sight.

There is no thought. And no, I am not being coy.

Call me a formalist, call me simple.
(I am still thinking. Still looking.)

I am judging and correcting. I am searching towards a perfection.
Towards a line that cannot be drawn.

One line can not be straight.

A line may be straighter than another line.
(this is how things are drawn “One line suggests...”)

I drew a square as large as my body could draw.
It was not perfect. It was not a square.

It was a shape suggesting what I knew to be a square. It was a collection of marks.

It was not true.
I worked to make it true.

How did I say that I am done? I decided only by looking. My judgments were made first by my eyes and then corrected by my hands. At the point when I felt further correction was no longer necessary that is when I decided to stop. There is nothing new here. For me I see mostly a process of construction—or deciding on a form. There is a composition. It was considered and not considered. Aesthetic judgement is rarely done away with completely. It hangs around in my mind and works intuitively. Things look good or they don't. It was not considered because the composition does not have a motive, like a Renaissance painting might have. Lines run parallel and perpendicular to each other. There is an underlying regularity. There is beauty in that. There is also beauty in the character of the line, hand-drawn, it is my line, and made from my eye. The closest I ever come to a craftsman. There is a sense though that this drawing is absolutely nothing. Why draw Squares? Why put them where they are? I don't really know/ Aside from the fact that I had the inclination and the time in which to follow it. Now I am left looking at it and know that probably tomorrow I will paint over the drawing.

((())) I am listening in a background way to the radio mumbling, scattering, stammering. I rarely hear sentences a word and then another.

“How wonderful and new and yet how fearful and ironic my new insight makes me feel...”(*Gay Science*).

How could I forget, how could I not remember? I had written things: An essay—something more like an artist statement. What was it that Berger wrote that turned me onto things? No, it was the other way around. I remember that conversation with my father. He gave me the Berger essay because I had written about the leaving space. What is the leaving space now? Now that I have worked it. Now that I have had successes and plenty of failures—or not enoughs...or not clears...just studies. Is it what I thought it was? It began with a reaction to large scale installation. No that is not quite it. The term that I used was “materially saturated.” Crafted, culled, made. I think all these things, objects, superficial, plastic, not to be false—just cumbersome and not as

true as they should be. (((the leaving space was about an absence of material))) But like I said not false just not true because those things which are “materially saturated” are not true to their place in time They do not exist in accordance with their art. They are constructions not creations. They are distanced from the pure moment of conception. They are posing. Place holders. Signifiers of an idea. They are not the thing itself. Not facts. They suggest the past. And ask the viewer to look where the artist came from, not to view the idea in the present state or as the existing real. How then does the leaving space avoid this? And how have successful pieces avoided this? Largely the problem I have pointed to was avoided through decisions about process. The pieces themselves are determined (by) and are the process. They are connected directly to the time spent in creating / performing They denote directly that time and the presence of the artist—The fact of what is left be it material or haptic space then is true because it is only what it is, and suggests only time spent creating

The idea the moment of knowing, stepping back to see the moment that is close enough to perfect, the thing that transcends other things. The object placed in the right place, the light revealing form the words of the idea the work and the fact of being made beautiful and clear.

Point of Departure:

After much writing and doing it may be best to start all over. All over being now a place arrived at and taking into consideration all the things that came before. This idea of the *leaving space* has lost a sense of urgency that I once felt when thinking of it. It is impossible to make work—art that is literally about a point of departure. The work becomes to narrative or too explicit

Is a risk that is always going to be seen manifest in pieces that represent such thoughts. I think what is best to consider are the underlying concepts—of the leaving space. It has at its core a relationship between action and observation—the act of making and interacting with a space and the moment of departure from the process of creation. The latter point being a passive and meditative place of looking at past action. (The act of looking, as is suggested by Berger, has the ability to place a person in a space and that moment is not just an act of observation but the accumulation of an immense and finite amount of engagements between a space and a viewer to produce the “existing real”—a space being looked at.

This relationship between action and observation suggests the existence of an intuitive rhythm. The space between knowing and creating or creating and knowing. If it is more sensible one might think of this rhythm like that which is created by silence

and sound. If one manipulates this rhythm, the interval between silence and sound the result is generally accepted as music. My sense is that physical art can be found in a similar investigation between action and observation

From Bollinger: “I do what is sufficient”

This may be a definition of minimalism that really seems true to me. What is sufficient. For a week now I have lived with forty dollars in my bank account and today is Sunday closer to Monday than Saturday and I know that my next pay check wont come till Friday of next week. It will be about five hundred and fifty dollars four hundred or so will go to rent more to utilities and then more to other causes of life. Sufficient I feel that I am not dead, not starving Although last night I bought milk, out of skim I took a bottle of 2% I believe the added fat will help my sufficiency. If I did more than what was needed in making art I would not be able to go on making art. It would cease to be honest or true. Sufficiency is subjective. Most likely, or there would not be designations such as excessive or lacking (rich or poor) fat or emaciated. Is sufficiency then an ideal? If so it is perfect, no, ideal Though formally work that is sufficient may appear traditionally minimal (spare use of materials, clean, angular, geometric, planar) the sufficient work exists in the ideal realm between excess and lacking. It is balance, but affected by both ends of that spectrum—informed by them. Like some division on the wall and the floor a form finds its place. It is a line that is real by existence but offers no answer to questions no conclusions about its presence its occupied space. There is a plane that is made never to exist and a line that just barely does. This will collapse. The adhesive will give way. The wall paint will peel. The angle will curve. Its presence is overcome by a near and predetermined end. The time spent looking is precious and will not exist again.

Taken from an email conversation with my father:

Line Form #11(after Bollinger)

“I like your thought about the stick refracting in water. My academic background would shy me away from such a comparison for fear of over contextualizing the piece. What I like about your connection [are] the properties of air and water—two surfaces (spaces) where lines exist only temporarily...the piece as I see it suggests a line or a plane, and at the same time neither of these things. The line exists on two planes creating an impossibility, or just a simple form. The plane is bounded by the line and extends out into the space, but it too does not fully exist because its corner (the joint between wall and floor) is illogically finished. Possibly what is most important though is the fact that it is a line that may never be seen again. It is impermanent, and therefore its presence is mostly about what it is and less about what I was thinking.”

These toes point &
the figure is forgetting: the moment moves forward, captive of being,

to invited stillness,
to stand before yet.

Is a body's presence ever remembered to the point of beginning again?

The first figure is shadows and dark space behind calves &
dense lines that compress where the breast line, ribs, and hip
meet.

invited silence

(I sit only a few minutes between direction, and
walk in circles)

the expression of exhaustion
thumbprints where a face should be.

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