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FLINTRIDGE LONG DRAFT

In my early practice I often found myself moving between a copy stand and a field camera, between photographs that hover in the space between figuration and abstraction and images that address the relationship between cinema, memory and landscape. Concurrent with my visual practice, I was an facilitator and activist for other artists, serving as a board member for the Foundation for Art Resources and the Coalition for Freedom of Expression as well as founding Matrix-L, an email discussion list on issues of visual culture. In my recent work, and with the founding of SASSAS (The Society for the Activation of Social Space through Art and Sound) in 2002, I've reconciled the instigation of social exchange with my visual practice resulting in a series of photographs which document interactions among audience members at events I've organized.

Fabrics, Security Envelopes

I have long been interested in how our perception of reality is coded by culture. Early works addressed gender issues through juxtaposing stereotypes perpetuated by advertising with family photographs ("She/Family Lessons") or in the case of "How To Beat the Housewife Blues" (1983) projected slides constructed of household products.

My early photographs of fabrics grew out of an oral history conducted with my grandmother that was the basis of "She/Family Lessons." As I searched for family photographs I came across of box of fabrics and old clothes set aside to be cut for quilting. I was struck by the similarity of the fabrics to modes of abstract painting and to this mechanized version of the artistic gesture. Photographing the fabrics in extreme close up yielded a confusion about the source of the image produced. The audience had difficulty discerning whether the black and white images were drawings or photographs. If they were photographs, what were they of?

In the mid to late 80's, I subsidized my practice by working as a bookkeeper for an art gallery. Looking for fabrics made me conscious of patterns everywhere and I soon became attuned to the printed decoration on the interior of bank envelopes. I unfolded the envelopes, enlarged the patterns through successive runs on a xerox machine, and photographed the xeroxes with magnifying filters on a copy stand. The resulting images resist any attempt to read beyond their surface - their documentary function resides outside of the frame, in the matrix of titles. Individually titled with the return address on each envelope, the "Security Envelope Series", was completed in 1993 with a 100 image grid mapping the matrix of transactions that I encountered as a bookkeeper over the 6 year period.

My interest in challenging assumptions about photographic content through depicting unexpected materials continued with photomicrographs of artificial foods in 1989 and later, in 1993-5, images derived from "picture stones."

Ask the Dust, Two Roads

In "The Frontier" I had addressed the concept of manifest destiny as applied to space exploration by juxtaposing images from westerns with photographs of space. Prompted by the déjà vu I felt when traveling in Joshua Tree National Park, a frequent location for commercials and films, I developed the theory that we sometimes read landscapes through the ideologies of the films which depict them. "Ask the Dust" consists of 21 photographs of landscapes that played a key role in films released between the landmark decision Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 and Nixon's resignation in 1974. I choose one film per year, returned to the location and rephotographed a shot, maintaining fidelity to the theatrical aspect ratio as well as to the black and white or color film stock of the original. Started in 1987 and completed in 1992, I found myself wavering on my original thesis as the project progressed, eventually including images from films such as "Vertigo," in which memory and the presence of a simulacra (in the form of Madeline) play important roles.

"Two Roads" is an elaboration of the theme of memory as well as an attempt to incorporate the physical presence of the viewer into the work. "Two Roads" documents nearly identical hair pin curves, one is the site of a kiss between Grace Kelly and Cary Grant in "To Catch a Thief", the other is the site of Grace Kelly's fatal car accident. In the iconic road shot, single point perspective invites the viewer into the image. In "Two Roads," the viewer, situated between two images and confronted by a curve, is blocked from the narrative.

Topographies, Location Proposals

Although I felt that the conversation I'd initiated between photograph, cinema, memory and landscape was successful, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the monocular perspective of static photographic representation. From 1993 -1995, I experimented with different methods of building and photographing 3-d computer models. The "Topography" series consists of models extrapolated from images seen in "picture stones" - rocks collected for the images embedded in their surface. I was fascinated by the perspectives enabled by the movement of a virtual "camera" within a 3-d computer model and realized that the multiple viewpoints were much closer to the fragmented way we perceive the world. In 1996, I started employing rear screen projection, digital models, color and sound to incorporate displacement and fragmentation into my work.

"Location Proposals #1-5" stem from my interest in the way memory is reconstructed and generated within the space of digital models. Whereas photographic representations reside in the specific, computer models have no direct indexical referent. The images are made by moving a "virtual" camera around the computer model and capturing views of the model. Yet, even with the absence of physical space, a type of punctum, of familiarity is at play in the digital images. Images based on digital models create a push-pull in the viewer between the specific reference (that's St. Vibiana's Cathedral) and the generic structure (a church).

Location Proposal #1 is an unfinished prototype. Working from maps, reference photographs and film stills, I built and animated a 3-d computer model of Monument Valley, a site that resides at the intersection of cinema and tourism. Once completed, it will consist of a 16mm film loop, rear screen and an arrangement of the main melodic theme of "Man With a Harmonica" by Ennio Morricone, digitally stretched to the length of the loop and arranged for performance on electric cello. The continuous film loop is a tracking shot follows the road driven by tourists when visiting the Valley which was originally built by John Ford to move location trucks for filming westerns. Confined to this looped road, one's experience of the Valley has been literally constructed through its use in film.

"Location Proposal #2" is a series of 18 rear screen projections based on a computer model of the woods sequence in Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo." There is one rear screen projection for each shot of the sequence. The myth is that Hitchcock's "Vertigo" was photographed in the Muir Woods but in fact it was not. The ranger will, however, indicate locations within the Woods "featured" in "Vertigo". The famous scene of Madeline pointing to the sequoia cross cut and referenced by Chris Marker in "Sans Soleil", although based on a cross cut located in the Muir Woods, was recreated on a sound stage. "Location Proposal #2" is about that state of displacement.

I soon became dissatisfied with the relationship of the projection to the traditional white box gallery space. In 1998 I began to install the projections in sites were resonant with powerful associations and which mirror the Scotties inability to release the memory of Madeline in "Vertigo."

"Location Proposal #4" was created for "Windows on Wilshire" in the May Co. building at the corner of Wilshire and Fairfax in Los Angeles and sponsored by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Seven 4 x 2-1/2 foot transparencies were produced from computer models of structures that reside in the historical memory of Los Angeles and that have been the site of preservation struggles.

"Location Proposal #5" is a series of models based on spaces of economic and physical transition.

"Location Proposal #6" has been performed as a collaboration with sound artists Joseph Hammer ("projections+sound") and Gabie Strong, David Patton and Ron Russell ("space, climate, light mood"). Working from a list of iconic landscapes derived from film, we use light, color and sound to conjure memories of place displaced from representation. With "Location Proposal #6", spatial associations (field, desert, the woods) are generated from a minimum of visual and aural information: slides of essential color values and sound abstracted from phenomenon, natural and not. Norman Klein, in "The History of Forgetting," writes that "Simulation is a blur between memory and signifier." In these works, we explore the blur.

Recent Photographs and SASSAS

In "Ask the Dust" and "Location Proposals" I emptied the "stage" of the events which prompted the taking of the image. Through my experience performing and organizing performances, I became interested in depicting the social interactions that occur during the course of an event.

My recent photographs of concerts that I've organized combine the diverse areas of my practice through depicting a heightened yet compressed version of the temporal experience of an event. Multiple shots are combined into a single photograph that more closely resembles my experience and expectations as producer than a photograph from a single trans/neg is capable of representing.

In 1999 I initiated an experimental music series called "sound." at a coffee house in San Pedro. I moved the series to the Schindler House in the summer of 2000, after organizing "space, climate, light, mood" as a part of my solo exhibition. I was particularly interested in the non-hierarchical experience of music enabled by the architecture of the Schindler House. Although I'd always documented the "sound." events, during the second summer of the series in 2001, I used greater caution framing the shots, making sure to give the planes of architecture, performance and audience even weight within the image. I also began to record audience interactions by firing off shots before and after the performances.

At the start of the third season in 2002, I was aware of the relationship between my role as producer and the photographs I had been making. I began altering the images to reflect my memory of the performance - combining 2-3 negs shot the evening of the performance to heighten and intensify the experience depicted, be it attentiveness during a performance or audience interaction before and after a performance. By the time of the in-store improvisation at Amoeba Music (which I organized to promote the release of a 2-cd compilation from "sound." series) I knew that I'd be editing several transparencies to construct an image. Working with a DP, we shot 18 transparencies that could be combined to heighten different experiences of the event. Slide number 30 combines 6 transparencies, eliminating anyone not paying attention to the musicians performing on the stage.

I feel that this most recent work is the closest I've come to reconciling my visual practice with my activity as a facilitator and art activist. I am continuing to research social interactions in concert environments. In early 2004 I will be a visiting artist at Northwestern University. I plan to use the opportunity to shoot images of several WPA era band shells located in the Midwest for use as backdrops in a still developing series of photographs.