Continuing a study of place

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an essay about an MFA thesis
Continuing a Study of Place
by
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Preface

I came to graduate school to work as an artist. Throughout the past two and a half years I was not interested in pursuing an intellectual or traditionally academic journey so much as learning how to work ideas into medium. I paid for time to explore the making of ideas. School was about working, about making things. Thought through making. The kind of thought which can't be spoken because words dilute the possibilities of what I wanted the picture to be. It’s not that I didn't want to think, or that it wasn't about the thought process. On the contrary, I've come to be more self critical about my thoughts and constructions than ever before. However, writing this paper has been difficult because the nuances of my ideas are expressed more articulately in my work than the written word.

I came from architecture school where (by choice, I think) I worked with a more rational approach than in graduate school, where picturemaking became my Dyonisic half. I acted on the guttural urge and believed in creating the impossible. I knew that rational comprehension comes through a continual working out once the drunkenness has passed. I've come to desire the act of creating pieces that I cannot rationalize or justify in words. I find fulfillment when the exact experience of making or looking at these pieces cannot be verbalized. Nevertheless, I will write about the process and thinking that went into my work and the shoulders I stood on to see further in my study. While in graduate school I've pursued questions about working as an artist: how to create a body of focused work, how to put together a show (beyond just showing work), and how to "work-out" thoughts and ideas into material.

The thesis was to continue a study about an idea of place set forth in my architectural education¹ As an architect, place was a site of potential for the building I was to draw. I drew out so much from it that I could inhabit the new place while sitting at my desk. We are often seemingly in so many places at once, or perhaps the idea of place is so dense that we can inhabit many facets of
Sun and Medusa, The Dialectical Nature of Opposites
Rendition of a sketch by Le Corbusier
it simultaneously. We dream while we are sleeping, or sitting in front of a computer, or walking down the street, and we think about one place while we're in another. Place is our location and our dwelling. It is both corporeal and ethereal.

As a thesis for an art degree however, the drawing-out became the most important aspect. What were previously marginal explorations and flirtations with alternative representations of ideas became the long focus. Looking at places was no longer a prelude to injecting a better solution, but about seeing what space is and creating new ways to look. Throughout the time of my graduate experience the study became an amalgamation of the two: how to study an area by creating a slightly fictional place to redesign the experience of a location without installing something new into the site; and how to build something that makes me look again at a place, familiarly, but under new examination.

I studied urban places by making pictures and objects. I wandered like the flaneur and took with me what I could. I thought about my wanderings and tried to create something to help me find order in my memories. I made pictures and models, and I made boxes to find a way to recreate the experience of wandering. I wanted to create little architectures.
"Him I consider architect, who by sure and wonderful reason and method, knows how to devise through his own mind and energy, and to realize by construction, whatever can most beautifully be fitted out for the noble deeds of men."

-Leon Battista Alberti²
"Panoramas in Place"
Polaroids and Polaroid film holders
2000
Before studying photography I was educated as an architect. It was an interesting, broad education. We studied the buildings of the greats and ancients, structures and strengths of materials, philosophy and science, language, and the arts. I carried with me a strong curiosity in photography, but I had no idea why art was important; therefore, I became fascinated with artmaking. Architecture and art are similar in that they both materialize thought and idea, but there is a difference between the two in product and process. The artist takes control (or lack of it) over their media to express an idea or vision to the viewer. The architect creates a vision to control the construction of a place to be inhabited. Traditionally, the architect is once removed from the final product. The line between the two can be nearly indistinguishable as some artists don't craft their work and some architects build their designs. The architectural drawing though, has difficulty living autonomously because it is subservient to the function of construction.

Unlike the architect's drawing, art is its own end goal. Academia, however, nourished a more imaginative look at the tools of architectural design. The drawing became the place where the play of an imagined world occurs. The building as an end result isn't as important as the possibilities of representation to create a place. It was from this background that I learned about photography. The camera, like the pencil, was a way to render the conditions of a place beautifully. While using the camera I had the advantage of representing objects in space more recognizably than with my drafting skills. Drawing however, allowed me to dissect the place/event analytically in ways I wasn't able to do with the camera.

I produced three bodies of work during this period using the photographic image to explore site (place) and inhabitation. "Reflections of an Enigma" was a document of place. In the summer of 1998, the Georgetown Canal was emptied for a major canal revitalization project. All that was left was a puddle-strewn,
From "Reflections of an Enigma"
C-print
1999

From "Mapping the Gaze"
Silver Gelatin print
1999

From "Mapping the Gaze"
Silver Gelatin print
1999
muddy gash through the village. The puddles reflected the backsides of buildings and the neglected space of a once thriving merchant center. Exposed foundations of buildings appeared to crumble into the empty canal. Streetlights punctured the darkness of puddles to create inverted constellations in the void of the old causeway. Various bits of litter testified to the lingering existence of inhabitation. Although this was a real place, all of this dramatic, poetic license took place within the frame of the camera. Being in the space, I could see the infinite potential of the extraordinary site even though it didn't feel beautiful or comfortable. By looking through the camera and framing selective views, I realized the manipulative nature and possibilities of photography. I created a picture-place that was elegant and interesting enough to explore, although the location was depressing, smelly and dangerous.

"Mapping the Gaze" was a project about the body in space. It began as a set of ultra-mundane street photographs, like Winnogrand's work without the tension, sex or anger. They were just images of people in urban environments who weren't doing anything significant; they were merely "spacing out." I couldn't figure out why I was so interested in such boring pictures, yet there was something fascinating about the mental places of these people. They seemed unaware of their surroundings. It was like they walked to a familiar place without remembering the journey. The subjects moved automatically, navigating by an ingrained map of the place while their minds wandered freely. One got the feeling they knew their surroundings well. I was curious about what was going on behind the mask of the gaze. What were they thinking so deeply about? I created stories and mapped words onto the images to project possible narratives into the character's space. "Anger, Hatred, Jealousy, Fear," for example, was an image of a man who had to go home to a wife whom he knew was unfaithful, but was too scared to confront his emotions. He looked as blank-faced as all the others. Stylistically, I explored using organic forms for the images (by dripping the developer onto the picture) to play off of the cliched view of mental space, dream sequence, and imagination.
"Polaroid Shadow Boxes" photocopies, mat board and Polaroid holders 2000
The third project was about encapsulating place into a souvenir. I continued the exploration of framing with Polaroid images, which have an inherent contiguity to the subject itself. Polaroids are unique in that the final product is in the place at the time of the picture. This metonymic closeness is similar to the idea of a souvenir, which is itself an embodiment of a visited (or not) place. Souvenirs carry a magical feeling, as though you can hold them or look into them to see memories that might have existed in that place. A souvenir is much like a theatre. For the "Souvenirs" project I layered color Xeroxes on top of one another to mix events into possible sites. These layers were spaced apart and placed inside empty Polaroid film cartridges that were covered by an inset piece of acetate. They created a t.v. effect, a deep space to look into without the ability to touch the interior objects. I wanted to study sites and the idea of site by creating an object that was its own place and event. I wanted to make an inhabitable picture.

This is the infrastructure that supported my understanding of photography. I had never made a piece of art or thought seriously about how to make an object solely for viewing and contemplation. I thought of photography as a device for modeling places more than as an art form, so I had to make a model good enough to look like art. This rhetoric, however, is mostly a retrospective analysis. The truth is that when I arrived in Rochester, I had no comprehension of how to be a photographer or an artist. I felt completely lost.
"For the perfect flaneur, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow. To be away from home, yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, yet to remain hidden from the world--such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define."

-Baudelaire³
Introduction to Photography

In graduate school, the first project began with an ambition to continue the exploration of layering from the Polaroid collages and a curiosity about the visual landscape of the urban environment. I experienced a paradigmatic shift in my search for site that changed the important questions. What is it that's interesting about the city? What can photography reveal about a place if it isn't to show conditions of a site for a possible event or construction?

As a child living in a country setting, I used to have a recurring dream about urbanity. I grew up surrounded by trees, not buildings. We rarely saw more than a few travelers a day on our dirt road and I understood the idea of social gathering only as something visited, or outside of my vicinity. I longed for urban activity to surround me, like seeing people strolling around the streets instead of cows wandering the fields. In my dream there was a bar down the road from my home, a small old wooden building like the rest except for a bright neon sign in the window. Unlike any other place it was always open with people present. This dream place was somewhere I would walk to just to be around other people. I didn't know, recognize or even interact with these people, but I could observe, think about and associate with them.

Urbanity (although the word didn't exist until the sixteenth century and referred directly to city life) is not about the city but is more about an intrinsic human need to gather around commonality and ritual. Tribal cultures, for example, would build a fire pit near the center of an encampment as a public utility for warmth, food preparation and communal occasions. The pit then was no longer an arbitrary point in space, but an urban place in the community around which people gathered and which they recognized as important. Likewise in old New England towns, the Town Hall was a forum that housed most of the public affairs of the community, making it the most populated area of the town and, therefore, the urban center. Urbanity is about the density of people within a given space, and a city is built around this urban necessity. The city is a
(relatively) static place within which the dynamics of urban life occur. This disjunction between the stillness of the city and the movement against its backdrop became my study.

The focus was to look at how many people move through an urban place on a regular basis and what they do in these spaces. The real question, however, was about my own activity as the picture maker. It amazed me to look at my photographs and think about how few people I recognized in them. A few facial and bodily features or an odd gesture that caught me off guard stuck in my mind. My memory of the city, however, was a blurring of many images of people, material surfaces and shifting views of spaces. In an urban place there is an enormous discrepancy between the amount of visual stimuli that pass by and what actually impacts upon our memories of the place. Do the static landmarks around which we move imprint themselves into our psyche, or is it the fleeting images of people and things that create our view of the city?

The project consisted of five in-camera, multiple-exposure images in New York City. The pictures were printed in organic shapes and encased in homemade frames with a deep reverse bevel. The images were constructed such that the view was fixed and anywhere from three to ten exposures were layered within the frame. This resulted in pictures where ghostly figures move about in front of a background of stilled architecture. The use of multiple exposure was successful in showing the relationship of the inanimate versus the pro-active, but the trace didn't show enough specifics about the places or the people. In other words, I didn't question the particular people or views that I documented.

The organic form of the images comes from a technique of painting chemicals onto exposed paper, similar to the "Mapping the Gaze" project. I call this tendency the "trilling harp" form, because it acts similarly to the trilling harp scales in pop film that denotes a transition to a dream state. This technique was an overly literal way of trying to create these objects as nostalgic memory holders, or souvenirs of place.
Untitled, 2000

Untitled, 2000
The study of framing and picture space was the most successful and didactic exploration of the project. The frames are three inches wide and one and one half inches thick with a forty degree reverse bevel rabbet. I stretched the photographic paper onto masonite in order to paint on the chemicals without excessive bubbling and curl. I then put them together such that one could look down into the beveled rabbet and see the staples and ragged edges of the paper to expose the margins of the art. The reverse bevel presents a sharp edge against which to view the photograph, so as the viewer moves about the room the space inside the frame is exaggerated by the friction of the two planes sliding past each other. I am fascinated by the illusion that there is a physical plane at the face of the frame when there is actually empty space. It is as important for a frame to establish a viewing plane for the eye to perceive a distance upon which to focus as it is for a frame to define the edge of a picture. I am curious about the paradigm of a photograph as a sheet of paper that captures a moment in time. I would like to create an object as a core-sample of a possible time that requires space in which to live. This project revealed to me the relationship between this "picture space" in which I was interested and the space of the theatre.
History

A selection of works that are fundamental to my understanding of time-space and multiple-vantage-point representation in photography and theatre.

Etienne-Jules Marey
from *La Machine Animale*
1873
History

Eugene Atget:
Rue des Nonnains-d'Hyères, 1899

Eugene Atget:
"Au Tambor,"
63 quai de la Tournelle, 1908
History

Ray Metzker: Chicago, 1959

Metzker: Double Frame, Philly, 1965

Metzker: Double Frame, Philly, 1965
History

Harry Callahan: Chicago, ca. 1948

Harry Callahan: Chicago Alley, 1948
History

Harry Callahan,
Chicago, 1950

Kenneth Josephson:
Children Jumping,
Chicago, April 1960
Kenneth Josephson: Window, Chicago, April 1960

Kenneth Josephson: Crosswalk under “L”, Chicago, July 1959

History
History

Kenneth Josephson: Anissa, 1969

Kenneth Josephson: Sally's Skirt, 1973
History

Joyce Niemanas
Untitled,
1967

David Hockney
My Father in his Workroom,
1969
History

David Hockney:
Place Furstenberg, Paris,
1985

Jay Cross:
Imitation on Hockney Joiner,
ca. 2002
History

Doug Prince: Magnolia Chamber, 1973

Doug Prince: Floating Doll, 1979
History

J.M. Daguerre's Diorama
Paris, France
1830
plan and section drawings

Andrea Palladio (Architect)
Teatro Olimpico
Vincenza, Italy
1584
Space

The second project of the year was driven by a desire to create a place to interact in the way one wanders around urban places. Fascinated by Callahan's multiple exposures that moved around a place, I felt my images had to express more about the experience of being in the place. The previous pictures revealed aspects of stillness and movement in urban settings; yet the point of view was too still where the viewer was not carried by the movements of the city. The photographer, camera and viewer needed to be more mobile in order to capture the city goer's point of view.

In the "Timeaus," Plato writes about the chora, which is essentially the space within which creation is possible. Edward Casey explains, "chora.... connotes occupied place, for example, a field full of crops or a room replete with things. Region contains both the container and the contained....A choric region is substantive without being a substance; rather than a thing, it is a locatory matrix for things." Chora is a fluid space in which objects can be placed or located relative to things or locations. This is the dynamic understanding of place I was capturing in the second round of multiple exposures. In a passage from a sketchbook in which I was writing at the time of this project, I explained these intentions and frustrations:

Although a photograph is not a memory, the two share a tendency towards nostalgia for the past/passed. In these pictures I want to use the image to demonstrate an idea of the memory of place. I want to create the same feeling as the souvenir. I want to make a walk in souvenir that makes you feel like you're wandering around mysteriously in a place that maybe you thought you knew. My memories of places usually consist of many views, moments, events, people, interesting things, aberrations, normalities.... they overlap each other into a sort of lumpy moving image.

I'm in NY....i'm trying to watch myself watch. Where does my glance move...what catches my eye... what are the pieces of stimuli that might etch themselves into memories....what do I remember about this place even as I'm in it?
To look at it in a more rational sense, the multi-view image is a way of condensing a survey of aspects from a place into one image. By drawing out many views and creating multiple perspectives, a larger stage was built in order to represent a place. The images were an exploration of the density of stimulus that one inevitably encounters in a public place.

The second component of this "place of place" I wanted to create was the theatre, or the chora in which to move around in relation to images. The space between frame and picture was something I wanted to explore on an installation scale. I am fascinated by the virtual theatres called C.A.V.E.s, which are five-sided cubes built of projection screens which can create a computer driven three-dimensional virtual space. My low-tech version fell somewhere between a black box theatre and an architectural hallway with pictures on the walls. I built three velum walls which created an eight-foot long by four foot wide by seven-foot tall hallway of two sided screens. One wall had three windows cut out of the screens that were framed identically to the first set of multiple exposures. On the three screens were projected four changing images of the newer image study. The box was sited within the studio such that one entered parallel to the window wall and could move along that wall to the opening of the theatre. One could then walk between the two walls to be inside the place fabrication. One could then move back out of the hall to look at the theatre from the far side.

The windows were created to look like framed pictures hanging on the wall. They were, however, voids. The image could pass through them and project itself onto the far wall. Thus, the far wall had three rectangular multiple exposure images overlaid on top of one wall size multi-view picture. The space between the plane of the frame and the picture plane was now a physically inhabitable place; the four-foot gap exaggerated even more the movement between the edge of the frame and the image beyond. When viewers looked through the windows, silhouettes were projected onto the far wall. This created the illusion that the voids were mirrors, reflecting the projected image and the looker. This was a great, happy accident in that I wanted to make a non-existent picture plane appear, but I wasn't expecting it to be seen as reflective/reflexive.
As a reaction to the idea of the *chora*, I asked viewers to wear white lab coats so that as they walked through the projected images, they became the viewing surface. White bodies moved around the room carrying pictures to reveal my thoughts about fluid space that surrounded the objects within. When one moves through space, one is not inside an empty container but is part of the inhabited space. The person is constantly moving through a matrix that locates the viewer in relation to other points. The images represented the onlooker's relationship to these points as one moves through a place. The theatre was a receptacle for these images such that others could move around the points in a similar manner.

The low-tech nature of this project was a major pitfall that prevented me from achieving the outcome I desired. The space was too rigid for the freedom of movement in an urban place. The flattened images appeared as a singular distorted perspective, like looking down a hallway, instead of the vastness of shifting views of reality. Further, the images were presented as timed slides, changing every thirty seconds or so. The stiffness of this way of looking favored the disjunction between views rather than continuity of vision. Darkness during the switching of slides was sometimes more noticeable than the pictures themselves. In retrospect, the creation of a dimensioned viewing box to represent infinite space became too formulated, contained and controlled. Perhaps it is better to allude to such ideas rather than trying to tame them.
Harry Callahan:
Cutouts, ca. 1948

Kenneth Josephson:
Chicago, 1964
Place

The next stage of the study dealt with the movement through a place without having to make a space in which to move around. It is easy to compel a viewer to move by creating a void to inhabit. It is natural to explore when given an open space. However, it was more difficult to craft a picture that presented a place through which a viewer would move in a manner similar to my own journey as the photographer. The goal was to lead a viewer along a path I created visually.

I picked up this exploration from Josephson's later work with Polaroids in which he created narratives by layering pictures within pictures. Chicago, of 1964, for example, is about looking at a tree. The photograph shows the trunk of a tree with a Polaroid wedged into the wrinkly bark. The Polaroid portrays a view looking up towards the leafy top of the tree. In the image another Polaroid hangs off of the tree leaning towards the camera. This final Polaroid shows the very top of the tree, appearing to be shot from a greater distance than the other two. This construct is not an Escher-like play on infinity, but is a complex, visual voyage with a well-defined beginning and end. The photograph displays a "self contained...sequential statement," a method of multiple exposure based more on the individuality of moments than the amalgamation of images over time. This created a means with which he could describe his photographic narratives. The image animates the photographer's observations: noticing the canopy of leaves from a distance, moving closer to investigate the structural branches that spring from the trunk to hold the green tent, and finally resting on the organic patternation of the bark which now frames the entire event. It is a chronological document of the journey into which Josephson gives meaning to the specific layering in the picture.

Similarly, the multiple image Polaroids of Joyce Niemanas, and David Hockney's "joiners" explore the multiple-point perspective. These two artists created similar bodies of work by making pictures out of many frames of the
same place to create a photographic cubism about the many views of human vision. The at once fascinating and limiting component of all of these images is the matrix created by the edges of the collaged pictures. In a sense these pieces express more about the disjunction of individual photographic moments than the fluidity of vision. Technology’s new tools, however, have brought different possibilities for revealing representations of vision.

I began making pictures by travelling as a city goer. Walking down the street, I would shoot parallel to the architecture to create a moving elevation of the buildings. As I moved I would take many shots all from the same distance to the street’s façade and consistent in height and angle. I also watched the reflections in the windows as I walked, and I noticed that each window along a building reflected a slightly different angle of the same view across the street. For example, a tree on the other side of the street would move across the window frame as I moved down the building. To study this scene, I shot each of the windows of the façade individually. My task was to get a sharp image of the interior of the building overlaid with the reflection of the surroundings.

An architect draws an elevation to show buildings without perspective so that every piece of the façade is viewed equally. One point perspective, on the other hand, implies perfect stillness and a view through one iris. Perspective compels a viewer to contemplate one position in space. I wanted to create a picture of simultaneously homogenous perspectives, or a perspectivelessness that could only be understood by moving along it. By making an image this way one is always directly in front of what one is seeing. I used digital tools to stitch the individual images into one seamless picture that appeared to be a single frame containing signs of many perspectives. The windows were much sharper than the building and showed the movement of the reflected view, appearing like film stills hanging on the side of the buildings. I wanted to use the dead-pan perspective typically found in German Objective style photography but create it from the many possible perspectives of moving around a place.

Shifting perspectives in art is an old idea. Although the exact roots of the use of optics in painting is debatable, there is evidence in paintings by the likes of
Raphael: School of Athens, 1509-1510 with overdrawn perspective lines.

Detail of antithetical perspective of sphere and figures.
Van Eyck, Caravaggio and Velazquez of adjusted perspectives which could have resulted from the use of optical devices in the aid of constructing perspectival scenes. Early lenses with shallow focal lengths would have had to be moved multiple times to keep a template image in focus. This created a rendering more "real" than previously known, but was deviant from mathematical structures of linear perspective. Another, more prevalent practice in Renaissance painting, which also shifted perspectives within frames, was the overpainting of figures into a pre-constructed scene. Time consuming, elaborate compositions with many characters would necessitate a painter to construct an environment, compose the figures spatially, and then place the figures individually from a contextual model settings. Thus, the perspective of painter to model was different from the viewpoint of the overall space. The characters and objects come into perspective only as they align with the viewer's movements along the painting. In the text Optics, Painting and Photography, author M. Pirenne discusses Raphael's perspective:

In his `School of Athens' Raphael depicted two spheres at the right side of his painting. But he drew their outlines as circles. The architecture which extends over most of the painting is drawn in perspective as one whole, from one main center of projection. But the spheres (and the numerous human figures) are not drawn as projections from this centre. They are drawn from a number of subsidiary centers of projection, each in front of the position which the respective sphere or figure would occupy in the painting.9

In contrast to Raphael's depiction of Athens, my resulting images were less densely populated views of places like downtown Rochester, Wilkes-Barre PA, and Toronto. My focus was purely on perspective and vantage point and not on the inhabitation of place. I printed relatively large (Cortez, NM was approximately 40 x 80 inches) so that a viewer could move along the picture as though it were a scaled down model of the actual façade. The beauty of a model is that like a dollhouse, it allows us to associate so closely with the objects and spaces that we can image-in ourselves at that scale and create a reality out of tinyness. It is easier to imagine one's self in activities inside of a dollhouse than in life-size spaces. Furthermore, when in front of a model, one envisions the
Moving Composite View of Toronto, 2001

Pre-Composited Frames
view of the architect who can see all views of a place simultaneously. By seeing a place all at once, as an object, one can project oneself into the place, knowing well that one is not actually within. By putting imagination to work, the viewer is inherently disconnected from reality, and acts with free agency in the virtual place. This applies to re-contextualized places as well, such as movie sets and theme parks, where the door to imagination is unlocked immediately by the fact that it is not a "real" place. If one is not in a real place, one must not be in reality, right? However, being in a real, or life-sized place is overwhelmingly real. Being in a city, one is trapped by the reality of being within. The burdens of physics and the problems of everyday life make it difficult to imagine the possibilities of being in the city.

As case in point, one of the first attractions at Coney Island was a scaled down version of a young Manhattan "city" that visitors could walk around in or fly over in a hot air balloon. Idealism is the key to escapism in these places; they never change and are never responsible to any outside conditions, politics or problems. The interesting idea here is that Coney island was an escape for Manhattanites, yet they created a model of the city that they were retreating from. By giving city-dwellers an idealized model, the park's creators were showing people a view of their lives, inhabitation and culture that they couldn't realize from the inside. Similarly, at the 1939 World's fair in Queens NY, scale models and rides of Manhattan, the United States and earth were displayed even though the visitor was already in NYC, USA and the world. This premise then supports the creation and popularity of Disney World and the scaled down world of Epcot, followed by much of the design of Las Vegas. This is the idea of theatre.
- Rochester Combo Picture
  - 1st attempt as many pics as possible
  - birds out of plum perspective

- Main St, Amherst MA
  - extended frame blurry people
  - bright windows constructed town

- Main St, Amherst MA
  - blurry people still people inside
  - outside mannequins dancing in window
Placescapes

A placescape is a view of a place. Placescapes focus on the conditions of areas that make them places, that locate them and bring them to life. They are views of urban environments that reveal the choreography of the urban fabric. Placescapes compare the subject and objects of a space. Along a street, there is a walker, a window and a looker, a shop for a shopper and the storekeeper with his store. Within a place, everything has its place. The placescapes are views of things in their places.

After studying the stage of place in the previous work, I wanted to focus again on the characters and events of the urban place. The methodology was basically the same: I walked down the street photographing an elevation view and several details that caught my attention, especially in the windows. But then I hung around in the area to observe and shoot various people who happened by the architectural background. What I brought with me was the information to create a stage and many characters to play upon it. I then digitally re-created the stage and re-placed the characters into the location where I photographed them. The result is a layering of time. The image, like a multiple exposure, is composed of stilled pictures, all from the same place at different times. Narrative is created between characters that occupy similar space at different times. Interactions appear in the picture that may never have happened, but are created over time by the natural choreography of the street. They are collages of collision and avoidance, stillness and movement, stage and performer.

The placescapes take on a more exaggerated form than the previous work did, with a focus on the true panorama and extended frame. A filmic panning motion of walking down the street creates the panoramic format. The placescapes are like a pan shot that records the residual information, creating a potentially infinitely long frame. Although I didn't make an infinite picture, I was amused by possibilities of recording entire blocks, streets, neighborhoods, cities...I wonder how far I could go.
Rao's Coffee
-mingling-sitting-standing-gathering
-coffee house-art on walls & patio

Antonio's Pizza
-eating-waving-looking
-walking-receding lights-interior
Another passage from a sketchbook describes the goal of the placescapes:

I want to make scenes fusing together many decisive moments. The images should be made of hundreds of little street photographs put back together into the scene they were captured away from. The picture should be so long it takes time to walk past it, and see all that's in it. It should take the energy of looking through a book to get through one of these pics. The viewer has to be able to see through the windows deep into the insides of the buildings. Blurry walkers can pass the stilled lookers...transportation through a place. That's what a viewer gets.

Sometimes the streets are crowded and sometimes not. Mannequins in windows remind me of the people looking at their dresses. They look kinda the same. Crowded streets look like a sea of body parts. I catch a glimpse of an arm just before eye contact, then someone's leg, a butt, sometimes in sandals I see toes, maybe a bare hip for a second. It all collides even though we miss.
-Rochester Housing
  -housing-desolation-dwelling
  -blurry-still-depth of playing field

-Rochester Corner
  -colliding feet-shifting floor-jewelry store
  -twisted perspective-corner-wigs
- Rochester Cathedral
- model in window-blurry people
- reflections-interior place-objects

- 2 Souvenirs
- sale-sell-sale-sell
- stage-actor-audience-theatre
-Coming Soon
  -ballerinas-orchestra-silence
  -everyone carries something

-Placescape #1
  -columns-post-people
  -interior backdrop side walking
Night Salon

- big heads - deep interior
- haircuts - phone talk - walk

Uncle Sam's

- body parts inside
- body parts outside
- Fairport, NY
- bridge-one-other
- festival of crowds

- New Museum
- art in windows-on street
- scaffold tunnel-structure-space

- Prada
- ebb-flow-in-out-across
- spectacle-shoes-Rem
- Allegory
  - sex sells - free walking - paid parking
  - collision - glance - apple

- Queens Scaffold
  - scaffold frame - fence - boundary
  - repetition - from the shadows
  - renew - reuse - recycle
JC: "It is as though you simply continue doing what you were, as you would when you are in the street, you just continue it. It's just two things happening; not necessarily connected, just two things happening at once."

MC: "Which is characteristic of life."

JC: "Yes, it happens every day in your life."10

-Dialogue between John Cage and Merce Cunningham about their collaboration of music and dance
Five points in space:
The Placescape Theatres

The theatres for the placescapes were constructed as boxes. There had to be an intimacy between the viewer and the pieces to allow for a wandering inhabitation. That intimacy would be determined by the presentation. I pushed aside an initial urge to "go big" when I realized that I could create a unique experience by making the images small but housed in such a way that the viewer would enter the space of the picture. I made rooms for the pictures so that the images were wall-sized murals but at a smaller than human scale. These dollhouse-like theatres were made to mimic the traditional gallery space with white walls and ceilings and wooden floors. Galleries, however, are not open faced the way that a dollhouse or theatre is, so the viewing boxes take on the form of a section through a gallery (framed by a crown moulding and flanked walls that alluded to the effect of the theatre's proscenium arch). The constructions were self-lit with spot lighting on to the face of the print while the back of the image was washed with glowing light. Taking cues from Daguerre's dioramas, this double lighting created a mysterious effect where highlights seemed to shine off of the page, shadows receded into silhouette, and light sources weren't obvious.

The theatres were built as wooden crates, fit to be closed off and shipped to their next location. Art and theatre can be travelling experiences, moving around the world to different galleries/theatres to display cultural artifacts/artifice. It was a gathering place without a set venue. The crate construction played off this. I didn't want these to be a one-time experience, installed and then dismantled with the potential of being rebuilt somewhere else. Since I didn't want them to be installed I built sawhorses for them to sit atop. To move the theatre venue, one simply sets up the horses and places the boxes on top. I wanted them to be an easily movable and travelling experience, like the puppeteer's theatre in a briefcase. By being movable objects in the round, they become
places around which to gather. They are points within a greater space, like a couch or table, rather than a picture on the wall that one goes up and looks at. I built little galleries to be placed into art galleries.

In summary, the outcome of the project is a traceable composite of my work from the previous two or three years. The Placescapes grew out of an exploration of pictures built from multiple frames of time and space. The crate-like theatres present my findings on the inhabitability of a picture's space and the urban experience of gathering around an artwork. Looking back at the Polaroid project discussed in the beginning of this essay, my interests have changed little, but my sights are coming into focus.
"People mistakenly think they can step out of society and into museums as if there is a threshold which they can step over and be in some kind of dream world... But in a way, it's no different from being in any other thought-producing place, even a shopping mall."¹¹

-Olafur Eliason
"Yeshiva University Mural"
Installation view
12 x 60.2 inches
Inkjet print in wooden lighting unit
2003

Details
When I originally saw this place I was fascinated. It is the Yeshiva University building in lower Manhattan while the interior was being renovated. To disguise the appearance of construction (or, perhaps, advertise it) the face of the building was wrapped in vinyl with a mural of a possible view of the future or past facade. The mural was already like my pictures; a running elevation view expressing the relationships between inside and outside urban life, mostly through the rendering of the windows. This simulacra acted as a backdrop for the constant motion through this place. Real people acting like the painted figures. By photographing this, the real people become stilled representations just like the figures in the backdrop. What is more real? The painted figures are now just representations of themselves, which are already representations. The people, however, are transformed by the camera into a mere representation of what/who they really are. I am curious about the relationship between the appearance of reality in representation and the actual degree of separation from reality in representation. As an aside, many viewers needed assistance in realizing that the backdrop was a painted mural. Somehow we place so much trust in the photographic image that we assume a picture is of a “real” scene. The camera actually made the painted mural appear more real.
"N.Y.C. at Night"
Installation view
12 x 74.5 inches
Image printed on wooden lighting unit
Flower shops are typically the most interestingly decorated store fronts I see. If there aren’t enormous windows displaying the interior jungles, then some painted mural or colorful sign projects the visual aroma of the living merchandise. At night, the windows become glowing signage of the gardens for sale, colorful pictures projecting out into the street. I began this picture (“NYC at Night”) by shooting the flower shop, but as I moved past, the other windows became just as interesting. The depth of space moving down the block accentuated the elevation view. The person sewing in the doorway of the tailor’s, the picture of pictures in a picture window, the glass and entrances all along inviting the viewer to move into the picture. The image also served as the most lonely or poignant of the group. It was cold and dark in an early evening late in December when I shot this. The people are on their way from a long day, cold and busy, in a hurry but maybe tired. There weren’t many people out that night, so there weren’t many characters in the photographs. The flower shop on the left is a softly lit surface full of lush colors balanced by the shadowed surface on the right which gives way through windows to deep penetrations into the space. The picture turns from warm to cold as the viewer moves across the page, and an overall darkness alludes to the mysteriousness of night time. I didn’t try to mimic this feeling in the picture, but I do think they came out of the conditions of the place.
“Venice Beach”
Installation view

12 x 98 inches
Inkjet print in wooden lighting unit

2003
Venice Beach is in many ways about display. At the place where tamed land meets the wilderness of water, nature is itself a display. Bodies in the sand expose themselves to the sun while boaters, skiers and surfers give shows on the water. Storefronts along the boardwalk attract visitors who pass the fenced in stages for outdoor weight-lifting. Bikinis and tank-tops display muscular bodies and inked skin, advertising the fitness centers and tattoo parlors along the way. Souvenir shops sell souvenirs about the souvenir shops. A poster shop poses as a museum of art, raising the stakes of looking at the displayed pictures. Venice Beach is one long open air market and everything is for sale. So is this picture, by the way.
“West 8th Street, NYC”
Installation view

14 x 42.5 inches
Inkjet print in wooden lighting unit

2003
In this commercial district in NYC I concentrated on the space between the camera and background. With a two tiered storefront, this place required more height to be included in the picture. In the others, the people are in the foreground, the facade is the middle ground and the architectural interior (or appearance of) creates a deep background. This picture moves the point of view such that the street, with it's figures and vehicles become the middle ground. In this case, there are characters throughout the space, the first level of which is an extreme foreground formed by heads and shoulders. The closest figures are like architectural details, showing close-ups of pieces too small to see in an overall view. They also mark a reference point for the viewer. We are on the sidewalk in front of these walkers, so one can understand the view of the people they are looking at across the street. In other words, the position of the camera is similar to the location of the people being watched across the way. This is about looking through a place.
"Gazebo, Fairport, NY"
Installation view

12 x 66.5 inches
Inkjet print in wooden lighting unit

2013
The Gazebo picture is an analysis of the 360 degree panoramic format. In line with the rest of my thinking about moving the point of view through camera movement, I was curious about the stilled central point of full circle panoramas. What if the point moved around an object instead of the place moving around the camera? I found an eight sided gazebo in Fairport, NY during it's largest festival of the year and photographed around the space, to later be stitched together and unfolded into a linear panorama. Inside, musicians are preparing for a concert by tuning instruments, setting amplifier levels, warming up and focusing. It is the build up to the concert; they are constructing the scaffolding for the event. The picture looks more like a loggia, or agora in form than a gazebo, and within this outstretched, inverted space, the characters duplicate themselves and move throughout the frame. Figures in the foreground in one bay can be seen in the background of its opposite bay. The conductor moves busily from frame to frame in the center of the image while others watch us watching.

I also experimented with the frame by creating an elaborate crop around the characters. Some figures bleed into the blackness around the space while others are cut by its edge. In one grouping a closer person is on the inside while a more distant figure is outside the crop. By looking at these pictures the viewer becomes a character in a different placescape, moving similar to the figures in the picture and maybe even doing some of the same things. I, as the photographer, am in the same position relative to the event as the viewer is to the end picture. By making this fancy crop I wanted to point out that you are one of the characters and that the picture people could just as easily be looking at a picture than doing whatever it is they appear to be doing. Looking is an event too.
Down the Street and into the Park is a show about the urban condition. It is an investigation into the relationships between man's place in the public realm and cultural views of the land. In this place, theatrical street tableaux are juxtaposed against virtual views of natural elements and landscapes. Together, it becomes a model of how we relate to our surroundings.

In reaction to the proliferation of images from television and cinema, we have become accustomed to learning about places and events from their representations, rather than from real experience. Due to the internet, we now understand the world in the guise of hypertext, multitasking and virtual space. This phenomenon has produced a culture which suffers from a spiritual de-centeredness, a lack of gravity and a proclivity for nostalgia. Older modes of representation which rely on the privileged view, or the "all seeing eye of God" have given way to the shifting perspectives of the wandering man. In the work, devices such as the panorama, the multi point perspective and time space compression serve to evoke the contemporary experience of the outdoor realm.

In Lederer’s landscape imagery, the notion of nature as decoration is central. The show includes a seemingly genetically engineered tree presented as a wallpapered mural, an inspirational poster of an impossible rainbow, a baroque “oil painting” of oil on pavement and other fantastical décor. As a lifelong urbanite, he, like many of us, has only experienced nature through parks, be it the theme park, the national park or the parking lot. Redecorating and recomposing are the techniques used to show how nature has become an interior event. The contemporary wild kingdom resides in our infinite potential for altering our environments.

Emery’s street photography explores man’s place as an actor amidst the backdrop of the city. By photographing these scenes as a streetgoer (like a cinematic dolly shot paralleling the building façade) A parallel between subject, cameraman and viewer is created to synthesize the urban experience. Constructed as movable crates, these back and front lit images recall the tradition of theatre as a form of analyzing our place in society. The viewer of the “placescape theatres” becomes an active participant in the questioning of who we are, what we are doing and how we appear.

The combined result of these two bodies of work simulates the conditions for introspection. The viewer is confronted with technology’s effect on the environment, how one sees their surroundings, and how we act within it.

-Excerpt from exhibition catalogue
1 My undergraduate thesis, "Rebuilding the Place," was an exploration in creating narrative within an urban site via architectural design.


3 flaneur.com


5 Casey, p34

6 see www.cave.vt.edu/ for further reading on the virtual CAVE

7 Wolf, p179.

8 This is the subject of David Hockney's *Secret Knowledge*, Rediscovering the lost techniques of the old masters.

9 Pirenne, p63

10 "I have nothing to say and I am saying it". A film by Alan Miller.

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