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Some Kind of Time

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Some Kind of Time

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Fine Arts
Sculpture

by

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ABSTRACT

This critical analysis examines the progression and trajectory of my studio practices over the final two years of my graduate career. The pinnacle of my development became a meditation on time and its overall encompassing effects. The mundane and the fantastic are all bound by time. Many archetypes have ventured to escape the clutches of time.

Found objects are remnants of time, linking past to present, present to future. Scars and blemishes are also vestiges of time, marking us like scratches on a record. The detritus of our lives defines our time, as it defines us.

This thesis will elaborate on my exploration of time and its implications. It will describe works and identify the evolution of concepts from one work to the next. By defining what the work is and how it operates, the analysis will explore the larger implications of that work.

Keywords: Contemporary art, sculpture, time, found materials, mundane, repetition, sublime.

INTRODUCTION

My interest is in the possible re-manifestations of the found object. Found little bits contain a residue of existence that not only speaks specifically to issues of time, it points towards senses not easily measured. Profound thoughts may present themselves during mundane labor and everyday monotony. The cultural implications of this observation peaks my interest – in a fast paced consumer driven world, attention spans are too short to allow for enlightenment in the midst of tedium. I use repetition as a device to address these concerns. The work is engaged in the economy of material. Giving credence to non-art materials champions the banal and elevates the non-event. This is not with disregard for the traditions of sculpture, more the opposite – it is with respect and sincerity.

My move to New Orleans and subsequent immersion into an art scene that values challenging and provocative practices, led me to question my trajectory. This questioning caused the transition from a more traditional craft-based studio practice towards a more unconventional exploration of subject and style. Further exposure to contemporary art, most notably in the 2009 Venice Biennale and Prospect.1 New Orleans, coupled with peer interactions, facilitated my entering into a new league and discovering fresh forms of investigation.

MOTIVATIONS AND METHODS

My work champions the banal and the non-event. The use of found materials that have a residue of existence speaks directly to the banal. These little bits are not made of gold, their value is not easily measured, instead they have a history that brings with them authenticity. That authenticity speaks to the banality of the everyday. It is uniting and is equally elusive. The tedium of labor speaks directly to the banality of the everyday, to the non-event. Lives are filled with labor and time easily slips by without being acknowledged until it is already gone. Nontraditional subjects and approaches also work to heighten the banal. Time as a subject contains banality and repetitive laborious methods help to back up these sentiments.

I have an intrinsic need for an artistic practice. It is my personal imperative to create art, and I'm satisfied only when actively pursuing my studio practices. I believe that art making is vital to society, and it provides me a way to leave a positive mark on my time and the time that follows. Engaging in cultural production allows me to place myself in the context of culture. Without art making I am lost barking out my feelings. The production of art allows me to provide a voice to strengthen the visual dialogue that is occurring during my time. I challenge value systems that I feel are too easily relied upon. Through my artistic practices I search for the unforeseen and discover fresh ways of viewing the delights and dilemmas of life.

Conceptually driven subjects are at the heart of my artistic production. My work begins with a concept and is concerned with exploring that concept thoroughly. Meaning is stressed over aesthetics. The work focuses on the concept and its exploration. It is not engaged with creating beauty as an end unto itself. Beauty may come about through the results of the process, but it does not lead the exploration. The work presents a subject and allows it to be open for the viewer to interpret meaning. Too much in this world is spelled out, and I feel that art should not

tell any one what to think. Instead I believe that art can raise questions and curiosity in the viewers that can lead them to think deeply about the fundamental issues that dictate the time.

I work to evoke the sublime and the uncanny. Repetition is used as a tool for working towards that goal. Trauma is investigated as it pertains to the Freudian theory, which declares that trauma repeats itself. Freud believed that we relive our past through repeated actions.¹ Trauma creates a breakdown of language, rational thought and the ego. The sublime also has similar effects. Trauma puts us into unexpected territory, an uncanny place that is not of our everyday world. Trauma, the sublime and the uncanny all are similar experiences, except some are desired and some are not.

My work shares commonalities with Minimalism. Minimalism had goals of evoking the sublime and the uncanny. The use of the series, repetition and the grid are tools that were employed by Minimalist artists to reach these goals. Repetition as compared to meditation represents aspects of Minimalism. Repetition can evoke larger processes such as evolution and consumer activities. Minimalism was concerned with both of these issues through the development of materials of a certain purity and consumer value. True repetition is the source of unique creations over and over again. Since nothing can be reproduced to be exactly the same, it becomes the repetition of difference.

Repetition is not only a device used in visual art, it is also employed in music and poetry. In music the repetition of beats and choruses have been used in such diverse instances as tribal ceremonies and classical compositions. Today they can be found in electronic trances and dance music. Stanzas of poetry have often been repeated to convey the importance of certain thoughts

¹ Eléna-Maria Antonia Chandler, "Trauma as [a Narrative of] the Sublime: the Semiotics of Silence." (Diss. UT Austin, 2005), 24-30.

and sentiments. Like music and poetry, visual art often employs repetition to highlight aspects of importance and to establish rhythm.

A belief that the sublime may be found in everyday materials and mundane activities is linked to my artistic production. Laborious activities allow time for the sublime moment. A fast paced existence can negate that sublime moment. During mundane labor one can find an almost meditative trance that allows for the unexpected to slip in. Monotonous work can create magnificent results. The use of materials from everyday life, which are elevated to become not so ordinary, can be uncanny. To be struck by an object that is later revealed to be made of ordinary newspapers or records can catch the viewer off guard and allow them to be awestruck by the ordinary.

These sentiments translate into the work through slow and thorough constructions. Layers of newspapers methodically glued together communicate value to the viewer. To see worth in otherwise cast away materials takes trust on the part of the viewer. An observer must let down their biases in order to perceive magnificence in accumulation.

GLUING COLUMNS

Appropriating the identity of Modernist sculpture, *Column I, II, III* (figure 1) also defy Modernist sensibilities in the clash of images on their surfaces, and the fragile materials that make up their structures. They are made of simple paper, and still they challenge Modernist sculpture made of traditional materials, such as bronze, stone, and steel. This piece contains an internal conflict of modernity vs. post-modernity.

Consisting of three freestanding column-like structures, *Column I, II, III* is made of record album covers and glue. Each column is made up of eighteen album covers. Less than half of each is exposed, and they appear to be emerging out of one another and from the floor on which they stand. Each cover is compressed so that it is fatter at its middle and comes together at its edges. The identity of each album cover is discernible, though not obvious in all cases. The three structures stand in close proximity to one another and to the wall. A progression, from a straight up and down structure to an arch-like form, is created by a wavy structure in the middle.

The first column is made up of classical music albums. The imagery in this column ranges from photographs (a composer, a view of the sky, a close-up of an architectural detail) to drawings and paintings (religious paintings, a view of a forest, an abstract composition). All of the albums that make up this column feature male composers, from Bach to Liszt. The vertical structure alludes to the male form. Although this column's profile is wholly vertical it is not as tall as the others.

The second column in the piece is made up of albums from a variety of musical genres and eras, ranging from Bette Midler to Miss Thang. All of the albums presented here are by female performers, and their images are featured on the album covers. Some of them are presented more seductively than others, although none are fully visible. The structure of this

column is wavy. It stands vertically like its predecessor, but it shifts subtly back and forth to create an undulating form. Despite its form this column is the tallest of the three.



Figure 1: *Columns I, II, III*, 2009, record covers and glue.

The third column is made-up of album covers by both female and male performers. The images on the covers are all photographs and present bits and pieces of the artists featured on each album. One side of each cover emerges further than the other, thus creating a smooth arch form to the overall structure. Although it curves more than any of the other columns in the group, this one is the second tallest.

Each column contains repetition; the album covers are all the same size and shape. The repeated stacking generates the first column, as the shifting from one side to the other creates the curve in the second column. A repeated lean to one side creates the arch in the third column. The segments create a rhythm that seems to continue beyond their structures, the emergence from the floor furthers that illusion.

A stack of record covers is a collage of time. Because old record covers have been used they have a history of marks on them. Thus both the images on the covers and the scuffs on them are representative of the passage of time. Due to their worn surfaces, non-congruent record covers side-by-side are harmonious with each other.

Inspiration for *Column I, II, III* comes from a variety of influences and experiences. As a child my father listened to a lot of records, and they were a common sight in our living room. I would sit there and fiddle with the album covers as I watched the record turn round and round listening to its music. In my fiddling I often gently pushed the two edges of the album cover towards each other, so that the open end of the cover would spread wide and form a kind of an eye or football shape. I would repeat this over and over again, each time letting the cover relax and resume its standard closed shape. It was only many years later that I rediscovered this technique and employed it in creating three-dimensional structures.

Looking at all of my parents' albums was a hobby of mine. I studied their covers and thought about how each album was represented by a visual image. Some of these images made perfect sense to me, many didn't seem to be so obvious, and some just appeared to be random. I realized then, as I do now, that these images were representations of time. Each one of these albums was produced at a certain time and the cover art conveys that time.

The artwork of Richard Prince is one of many loose artistic inspirations for *Column I, II, III*. Prince's use of appropriated images has given me permission to use these record covers. His use of images from advertisements, books, and found objects provides me with insight. The use of whole books, autographs, checks, and photos has helped me to see record covers as objects that contain evidence of time. The histories of these objects bring with them richness.

Modernist sculpture, such as works by Constantine Brancusi, has given me standards against which to push. *Column I, II, III* shares an idealistic structure with Modernism, though it does not claim to solve the world's troubles. Instead of giving answers to the viewer *Column I, II, III* raises questions. It is displayed too close to the wall for Modernist sensibilities. It is a sculpture that is completely in the round, yet its proximity to the wall flattens it. In that case it could be in compliance with Greenberg's sensibilities except it is not painting.² The surfaces of the columns are completely out of compliance with Modernist sensibilities. They are a collision of images that obscure one another, yet they contain evidence of the time when Modern was king. On top of that they have little circular stickers with \$1 written on them. These stickers add a contemporary aspect to them. Can glued together paper columns knock over the bronze, steel and stone sculptures of Modernism? They can at least appropriate their identity.

² Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Art in Theory 1900 - 2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 773-9.

GLUING TEETH

A self-effacing work, *Toothface* (figure 2) is a three-part wall hanging sculpture. A smiling man in a suit and a tie with many sets of front teeth covering his face is featured in a framed photograph. It resembles an employee of the month photo, complete with tacky frame, except that it is matted with extra room. Next to the photograph are a set of wedge shaped shelves with one side closed and one side open, exposing their construction. The shelves have a hammered black paint that matches the frame, which features an aluminum trim around its face. There is space between each of the three elements. There is one of a pair of cups on each shelf. One cup has rows of teeth covering the inside, the other has rows of teeth that cover the outside. The body of the cups below the teeth has an organic surface, like the inside of a mouth, and is painted pink. Bright aluminum teeth emerge out of the pink mouth-like cups.

While *Columns I, II, III* explores aspects of time through found imagery, here I am looking at time again but as related to trauma and blemishes. For *Toothface* I turned the camera on myself. When I was a young child I had a traumatic incident that led to the death of my two front teeth and their subsequent darkening. Because of my grey teeth I have grown accustomed to feeling like a blemished person. Choosing not to further destroy my perfectly functional teeth in order to render them a perfect white, I have faced adversity in dealing with society. Through these experiences I have learned that society's claim to care about the health of one another is a farce. Society's view on health is really only concerned with the surface, if you look good, you must be good, and the opposite also applies.

Influences for this piece range from the staged portrait in works by artists Yasumasa Morimura and Cindy Sherman, both of whom stage themselves as someone else. I am not acting as someone else, rather I am acting as myself and presenting my blemishes. Hannah Wilke

attaching little bubble gum sculptures to her body is another direct influence for *Toothface*. The works of Rachel Harrison, where she displays photographs on her sculptures, such as *Huffy Howler*, *Nice Rack*, and *Sphinx* are an influence on the combination of sculpture and photography.



Figure 2: *Toothface*, 2009, photo, cast aluminum, wood and paint.

The photograph is a contradiction of itself. It's full of whimsy, a guy in a suit and tie with teeth on his face, and it draws attention to the off-colored teeth in the smile. The face looks as if it is covered in pimples, but of an unusual mushroom variety. The repetition of the pairs of teeth

creates an eerie pattern that masks and reveals. It is echoed in the pattern on the tie, further supporting the piece's uncanny qualities with the peculiar feeling that the patterns create.

The cups look like some ritualistic devices or some kind of crazy tool or trophy. They are made of cast metal, with its roots in the fine arts tradition of monuments. I approach the casting process with an appreciation for the material, however I've broken the purity of the casting process by painting them. I previously would not have painted cast metal, but I have become more result oriented rather than craft oriented. Painting the cups lead to a more surreal, playful type of object. The pink gums evoke a real mouth in an uncanny way.

The shelves that the cups sit on are a nontraditional way of displaying sculpture. They are distinctive, having one end exposed emphasizes that the shelf is unique and part of the sculpture. These features are all a homage to Hiam Stienbach who created sculpture with shelves of these proportions and features in the 1980s. Stienbach displayed carefully selected consumer goods on his shelves. The placement of my cups on these shelves is an act of turning the personal blemish into a consumer product, and the implications of just such a statement.

GLUING TIME

“Let’s take the globe [*(Ball of Newspapers) (Globe)*] it’s a sphere of newspapers and the newspaper is a symbol of consumption. It is the consumption of news. Immediately afterwards, the newspaper is used up. It is an absolute zero, a material that contains within it only this lack of present.”³

Michelangelo Pistoletto

This laminated series can be seen as the physical measurement of time. Time is usually measured in temporal or statistical ways. Here time is measured spatially. It is not a matter of abstract numbers, but rather of physical inches. This relates to geological time and the strata that lie below our feet. The sediment of our lives accumulates quickly.

I began production of *Untitled (One Year Times-Picayune)* (figure 3) as a result of continued experimentation with the daily newspaper. I first glued the paper closed so that it looked like a normal daily edition but was inaccessible, then I glued it into panels consisting of many layers. The piece consists of a year’s worth of newspapers laminated together in consecutive order starting with my birthday. I read all of the papers, which were delivered to my home. The piece consists of four panels, measuring eight by four feet. Each panel contains three months worth of newspapers, each representing a season. The front of the first panel is August 3rd, 2008 and the back of that panel is November 2nd, 2008. The front side of the second panel is November 3rd, 2008 and its back is February 2nd, 2009. The third panel in the piece has February 3rd, 2009 as its front and May 2nd, 2009 as its back, and the forth panel has May 3rd, 2009 and August 2nd, 2009 respectively. Each panel is made up of over one hundred and fifty layers of newspapers and the surfaces are sanded so that there is no specific information left regarding a

³ Lea Vergine, *When Trash Becomes Art* (Milan: Skira, 2007), 116.

single day's news. The sanded panels become palimpsests, something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of their earlier forms.

Material is a defining aspect of this work. The specificity of the materials used, only newspapers and glue with no armature, can be likened to Carl Andre and Minimalism in general. Although these materials may not fit into the Minimalist view of purity, they are of a pure nature. The newspaper is not disguised to be anything other than what it is. In the panels the materials remain raw, referencing building materials, specifically sheets of four by eight foot plywood. They contain the potential of building something with them, allowing the viewer to imagine a final product. There is no specific image, beyond the eight by four foot sheets, to limit the possibilities of what it could become.



Figure 3: *Untitled (One Year Times-Picayune)*, 2010, newspapers and glue.

The panels point out magnificence in places that it is normally not considered. In the words of Robert Irwin, “Value the potential for experiencing beauty in everything.”⁴ *Untitled (One Year Times-Picayune)* speaks to this statement. It takes an everyday material like newspaper, and creates an experience that transcends the normal perceptions of how newspapers are typically viewed. Irwin goes on to say the “question of object/ non-object has turned out to be a question of seeing and not seeing.”⁵ In this statement one can relate to the panels as inspiring a new way of perceiving. Seeing this unexpected use of materials may allow the audience to find splendor in other nontraditional locations.

The sculpture of Tara Donovan relates to the newspaper panels. Donovan’s work is interested in a “kind of remanufacturing of the manufactured material.”⁶ To redefine the meaning of materials is an act of challenging value systems. Detritus lovingly attended to may become precious. Everyday objects arranged in elaborate configurations become much more than the sum of their parts. Donovan’s use of nontraditional art materials drives her compositions of abstract, rendered material.

In the construction of the panels I overlapped and staggered of the seams where the newspapers butt up against each other. This staggering allows the panel to be structurally sound, and it also creates a grid pattern after they are sanded. The grid is related to Minimalism, it is a repetition of itself, and that repetition evokes large processes. Since none of the layers are the same, there is a repetition of difference.

The panels rest on the floor and are propped against the wall. The honest and humble act of setting them down and leaning them against the wall signals their quiet yet mesmerizing

⁴ Kristine Stiles and Peter Salz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 574.

⁵ Ibid., 574.

⁶ Tara Donovan et al., *Tara Donovan* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2008), 24.

presence. They are not treated to fancy stands nor do they hang so as fully to reveal both sides. The propping allows the backside to be discovered yet remain unknowable. This aspect resembles works of other sculptors such John McCracken and Richard Serra.

The panels are related to the lead flinging, belts and props of Richard Serra. In these instances of Serra's work, matter determines operations rather than artistic inspiration. Form documents a process, where matter and technique remain evident. As opposed to Serra's work, however, which can take on a very somber surface, the panels are filled with and radiate color. Their surfaces are busy and slow, where Serra's (although slow for steel) are much faster. As with Serra's work, *Untitled (One Year Times-Picayune)* is very much a matter-of-fact work in which the form does not claim to be anything other than what it is.

The repetition of everyday life serves as inspiration for the panels. The act of gluing and assembling sheets of newspaper, over and over again, becomes symbolic of finding inspiration in moments of redundant labor. They are evidence of the labor that created them. They reference the mundane chores that occupy a large part of our lives.

Other influences are Tom Friedman and Sol LeWitt. The energy, through the concentration of material, in Friedman's work is remarkable. His laborious acts require much time and attention. That time and attention allow his work to operate both on a microcosmic and macrocosmic level. Sol LeWitt engaged in systematic work. He was famously quoted as saying, "the idea becomes the machine that makes the art."⁷ LeWitt's work was not so much concerned with the labor of the process as it was with the idea creating it.

Repetition of layers glued one by one creates the form of *Untitled (One Year Times-Picayune)*. Each panel has over one hundred and fifty layers, with each layer containing thirty-

⁷ Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum*, June 1967, 81.

two numbered newspaper pages. The obsessive repetition brings to mind *Accession II* (1968) by Eva Hesse, a piece comprised of a four-sided steel box, measuring 30 3/4 inches square with an open top. Inside the box thousands of plastic tubes poke out of the walls, creating a mesmerizing surface. The sheer number of tubes is both impressive and absurd. Artist Dorris Salcedo says, “Only through absurdity do we realize the human presence.”⁸ This sentiment translates to my panels and their tedious nature. The absurd amount of layers speaks to human toiling and accumulation.

Untitled (One Year Times-Picayune) has a cyclical nature because it contains a yearlong edition of the newspaper. Tehching Hsieh also addresses time with a very disciplined attitude. Most of his pieces last an entire year. For *Cage Piece* (1978-79), Hsieh spent the entire year locked in a cage in his apartment. He did not read or write, watch television or listen to the radio, nor did he talk with anyone, for the entire year. His interactions with others were limited to an assistant who brought water and removed waste and an infrequent gathering to confirm the piece. Hsieh also did *Time Piece* (1980-81), in which he punched a card in a time clock every hour on the hour, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for three hundred and sixty-five days. He made a video to verify the activity, capturing a single frame with each punch of the clock. The final video shows the entire year compressed into six minutes.⁹

On Kawara’s *Today Series* began on January 4, 1966. He painted the date in white on a black background. Each painting is completed on the date that is the subject of the painting, one per day. The painting is then put into a cardboard box with a newspaper clipping from the same day. Almost like crossing days off the calendar, the *Today Series* marks the passing of the present.

⁸ Dorris Salcedo, *Art:21, Season 5, Compassion*, prod. Susan Sollins, Public Broadcast System, 2009.

⁹ Brandon Taylor, *Contemporary Art: Art Since 1970* (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 193-4.

The act of sanding the surface of my panels obscures the specifics of that day's news. Instead of seeing just one day, the sanding exposes several layers. The sanding brings the aspect of palimpsest, because it doesn't leave an unadulterated image of newspaper, however the source remains evident. The sanded panels speak to the whole of the news, not just specific news.

Although the meaning of *Untitled (One Year Times-Picayune)* is nonspecific, it allows the viewer to contemplate and formulate meaning - it is a meditation on time. One can see it as speaking about the discipline and structure of one's existence. Another reading could be the accumulation of one's life, how things can slip by without observance. Small tasks can become overwhelming with time.

Untitled (One Year New Yorker) (figure 4) is a laminated piece that contains one year's worth of the *The New Yorker*, issues June 9 & 16, 2008 – June 8 & 15, 2009. This time I've left the surface of the piece intact, allowing the reader to verify the source and the dates, which adds variation to the laminated series in that it is not sanded. The non-sanded surface of *Untitled (One Year New Yorker)* resembles a cutup collage. It is displayed hanging from the ceiling by a tape measure threaded through two c-clamps that grab the thick laminated piece. The display can be read as a literal measurement of time, since the *The New Yorker* is primarily a literary magazine and the tape measure is a device for measuring. The dates included refer to the last year of my father's life. My father had a subscription to *The New Yorker* from before I was born, and when I reached adulthood he gave me a subscription. The issues that start and end this piece are the summer fiction issues. My father was a literary connoisseur, and this was one of his favorite issues of the year. It also happened to be his last.



Figure 4: *Untitled (One Year New Yorker)*, 2010, magazines and glue.

Another piece in this series is *Untitled (One Year Sunday Funnies)* (figure 5). This, as its title implies, is a year's worth of Sunday comics out of the newspaper. It has an appealing presence and is roughly the same proportions as the large panels of *Untitled (One Year Time-Picayune)*. It is displayed on a shelf (the shelf is a substitution for the floor) and leans against the

wall at the same angle as the aforementioned panels. The height of the shelf allows the viewer to discover rich detail and deep colors of the piece up close without having to bend over and crouch to see them as one would if it was resting on the floor. The surface of this piece is also sanded like the panels. The sanding has left trace evidence of the original material (hints of dialogue bubbles and caption boxes) thus making it a palimpsest. Its smaller size gives it the stature of a child of less importance than the larger panels, however its seductive details and rich colors define it as an equal.



Figure 5: *Untitled (One Year Sunday Funnies)*, 2010, newspapers and glue.

Untitled (One Year Langiappe) (figure 6) is also made of glue and newspapers. This piece is free standing in the form of an A-frame. It is made of one year's worth of the arts and entertainment weekly section in the *Times-Picayune* newspaper. The same technique of gluing and pressing has been employed as the others, only in this case it has been glued into a right angle. It too has been sanded to obscure its surface, making it into a palimpsest. The form offers a variation to the flatness of the other laminated pieces, as *Untitled (One Year New Yorker)* offered a variation on the sanded surface. It does not rely on the wall to stand up, it stands on its own.

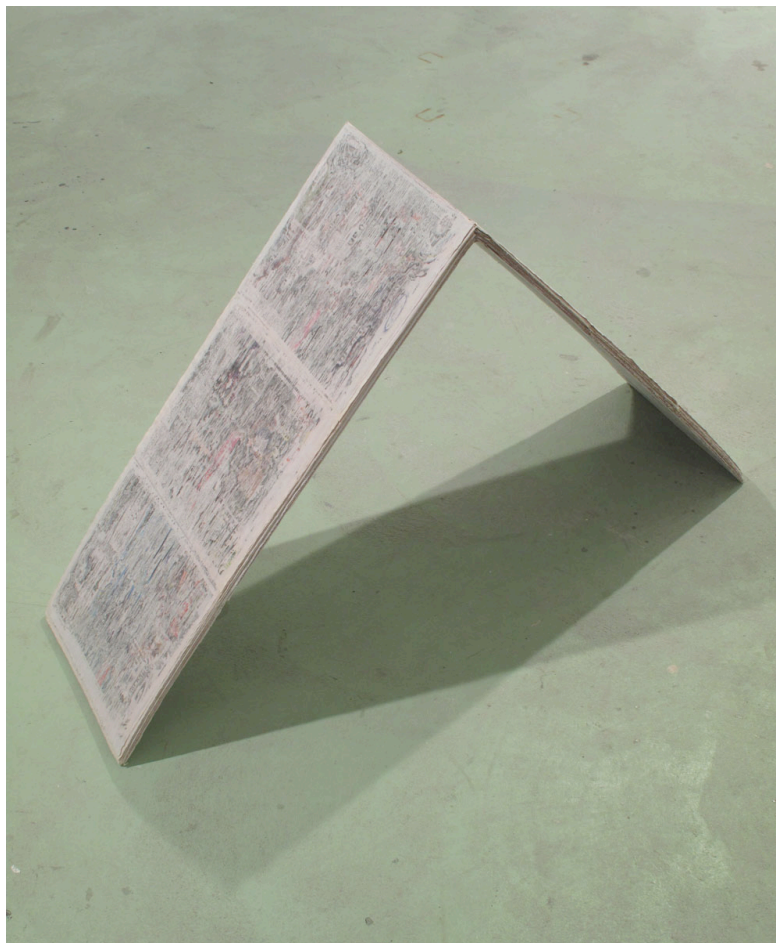


Figure 6: *Untitled (One Year Langiappe)*, 2010, newspapers and glue.

Make Art on the Way to the Place Where I Make Art

As a further exploration of time and as a twist on the mundane, I began work on *Commute* (figure 7) while I was working on *Untitled (One Year Times-Picayune)*. A fifteen-minute video of my drive from the house to the studio while reading the newspaper, *Commute* explores the repetition of the everyday. At once mundane it is juxtaposed with the dangerous act of driving while reading. It is a split-screen video, one side is the view behind the driver in the center of the car looking out the window and the other is looking down from the ceiling above the central console. The newspaper is the focus of both views as it is handled and turned, while shifting gears, changing radio stations and at times drinking coffee.



Figure 7: *Commute*, 2009, video, 15'01" duration.

The video came about while I was driving on my daily route from the house to the studio. I was thinking about the studio as a designated place to make art and about all the time when I'm not at the studio but thinking about making art. I decided to make art on the way to the place where I make art. The poor camera quality and the live action gives the video a bit of a YouTube quality, where you might expect something drastic to happen. Nothing drastic happens and all

that is left is the odd juxtaposition of the mundane drive and the risky act of reading the newspaper while driving.

This video heightens the nonevent. Documenting this everyday act is an act of championing the mundane. The video art of Bruce Nauman, featuring repetitive mundane movements such as *Bouncing In the Corner No. 1* or *Slow Motion Walk*, comes to mind. Nauman decided that since he was an artist and an artist makes art in the studio, then whatever he did in the studio was art.¹⁰ I've taken it a step further. Since I'm an artist and I'm constantly thinking about art then no matter where I am or what I'm doing, I am making art.

¹⁰ Neal Benezra, "Surveying Nauman," in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Robert C. Morgan (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 122.

Unfolding Time

For a few years I have been taking raw video footage while riding on various forms of transportation. I turn the camera to one side so that the viewer cannot see what is coming, rather they are seeing what is going by. The footage is a chronicle of time, that somehow escapes time, a sort of time travel. It gives me a feeling that resembled long road trips as a child staring out the side window. It was not until I mirrored some footage that I knew what I was looking for, a moving image that not only chronicles time, but transforms it and moves into it. The result is time unfolded.



Figure 8: *Mirrored (La Grande/ New Orleans)*, 2010, two-channel video, 13'33" duration.

Mirrored (La Grande/ New Orleans) (figure 8) is a two-channel video that plays side by side, resembling a split-screen. Both channels are of footage that I took on bicycle rides, one in Oregon and one in Louisiana. As I mentioned before, the footage in each case has been mirrored. The original footage moves across the screen from right to left, the mirrored footage moves from left to right. Butted up against each other, the footage is unfolding out of the middle in both directions. No longer is the view moving from right to left or from left to right, now it appears as if the viewer is moving into the frame. Everything occurring is emerging out of the center of the frame, yet it gives the feeling that the movement is into its center. It resembles going into hyper-speed (as in *Star Wars* where the stars turn into streaks of light moving by) only much slower.

The viewer is traveling into an area that does not even exist, a kind of moving through the world via funny mirror.

The La Grande and the New Orleans footage both start from the bank of a river, the Grande Ronde and the Mississippi. They proceed into town, through neighborhoods (with cars coming and going) and end abruptly, immediately looping. The two channels are unfolding simultaneously, producing a mesmerizing effect. Banal footage, from bicycle rides that I frequently enjoy, are transformed into a kind of psychedelic unfolding of time.

Folding Time

Burn (East) (figure 9) and *Burn (West)* (figure 10) are wall hanging sculptures made of vinyl records and plaster. The materials are listed as vinyl on plaster, although the records are more in the plaster than on it, a reference to the labor-intensive practice of fresco. These pieces, the compositions of which resemble flames, are a further study of the folding and layering of time. Record albums can be seen as documents of time. Not only are they a record of the time at which they were made, they are also measured by the amount of time it takes to play them. Bending and warping them and layering them side by side, and then embedding them in plaster, allows the pieces to transcend their original materials. A high level of contrast is present due to the glossy black records emerging out of the matte white of the painted plaster.



Figure 9: *Burn (East)*, 2010, vinyl on plaster.

The titles of the pieces refer to their motifs, and not to the direction the wall faces. *Burn (East)* could be displayed on the west wall, (or north, south or east for that matter) and *Burn (West)* could also displayed on any wall. Their titles are cultural references. As the world gets smaller and time moves faster (thanks to the internet and high-speed travel) cultures are being dispersed and intermixed. *Burn (East)* is an Eastern-style flame, one associated with Zoroastrianism. *Burn (West)* is more of a Western-style flame, one that is associated with logo design such as that of Spitfire Skateboard Wheels. Somewhere there is a Zoroastrian that is riding a skateboard with Spitfire wheels.



Figure 10: *Burn (West)*, 2010, vinyl on plaster.

Conclusion

The pieces that have been described here all deal with aspects of time. They entail a labor-intensive process in their creations and use the mundane to speak about more than that. Profound thoughts and realizations may present themselves in times of mundane labors and everyday monotony. This is interesting as it relates to culture, in a fast paced, consumer world, enlightenment during tedium is scarce. I use repetition to address these concerns. Repetition as related to trauma and meditation intrigues me. The economy of material in my work heightens the mundane and champions the banal. When an everyday material is elevated to new levels, a challenging of value systems occur, bringing about fresh ways of seeing.

I feel that I've come a long way through my graduate career, my work has developed and I've gained conceptual focus. Constant questioning of my trajectory has allowed me to progress further than if I stayed in one place and remained pleased with my development. With that said, I feel invigorated in my current work and feel that there is a lot left to uncover along this road. I plan on continuing my aggressive investigation into the use of the mundane and the everyday object, while championing the banal and heightening the nonevent.

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Vita

Aaron Geddes McNamee (b. 1977) was raised, without electricity or running water for the first six years of his life, in northeastern Oregon. He received a B.A. in visual arts from Eastern Oregon University in 2004. In 2007 the hunt for a M.F.A. brought him to New Orleans. Starting his graduate studies at Tulane University, he transferred to the University of New Orleans after a semester. McNamee looks forward to a creative future based in New Orleans.