CAUGHT IN ACTION: A STUDY OF CHRISTIANE BAUMGARTNER'S TREATMENT OF TECHNIQUE, MOVEMENT, AND SELF-REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

In my master's thesis, I examine Baumgartner's work in regards to her treatment of technique, movement, and self-reflection. This research demonstrates how she has mastered early, traditional German woodcuts and introduced them into a new, contemporary context by combining them with video and photography. I begin with a discussion of Baumgartner's use of materials and techniques. I focus especially on her emulation of Albrecht Dürer and adherence to many early fifteenth-century rules and standards for creating prints, while also exploring the print history of Leipzig where Baumgartner received her foundational training. Through a study of works such as Dürer's large-scale woodcut titled *Triumphal Arch of Maximilian I* (1515) and Baumgartner's *Transall* (2002-04), I examine how her methods also differ from traditional approaches and the ways in which she places particular value on how the labor of producing the print fits into its creation. I then focus on how Baumgartner unites the slow process of woodcut with the fast paced mediums of video and photography in order to produce distinctive physical and visual encapsulations of movement. This includes an exploration of French author Paul Virilio's influence and the ways in which she captures motion through images of transportation, cutting techniques, and optical illusions. I also consider the role that her personal history plays in her works, as well as her Russian influences such as the writings of the Russian-American poet and essayist Joseph Brodsky. This is displayed by an examination of how Baumgartner's prints illustrate the significance of introspection by demonstrating its relation to one's background, physical surroundings, and connection to the past and memory, as well as the significance of reassessing one's perspective of the modern experience.

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INTRODUCTION

Capturing international attention, German artist Christiane Baumgartner has produced impressive artworks that blend two rather divergent forms of media: the woodcut and video. In my master's thesis, I examine Baumgartner's work in regards to her treatment of technique, movement, and self-reflection. This research demonstrates how she has mastered early, traditional German woodcuts and introduced them into a new, contemporary context.

This project grew from my introduction to Baumgartner's work at Philagrafika's *The Graphic Unconscious* exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in early 2010. I soon became interested in the Philadelphia-wide project and its influence on the Temple University gallery, which led me into a deeper study of Philagrafika's objectives and artists. Throughout my research, Baumgartner continually caught my attention, and I soon began speaking with Philagrafika about her work in particular. I then realized the lack of in-depth research on this important artist and recognized this topic's potential as a Master's thesis.

This thesis is structured into three chapters. Chapter One discusses Baumgartner's use of materials and techniques. I focus especially on her emulation of Albrecht Dürer and adherence to many early fifteenth-century rules and standards for creating prints, while also exploring the print history of Leipzig where Baumgartner received her foundational training. This includes the study of Dürer's educational background in relation to Baumgartner's traditional training, as well as the development of her printmaking process. I investigate how Dürer produced his works and the ways in which Baumgartner has incorporated these influences into her output. Beyond these technical

influences, I also discuss Dürer's large-scale woodcut titled *Triumphal Arch of Maximilian I* (1515) (fig. 1.7) in regards to Baumgartner's *Transall* (2002-04) (fig. 1.8), demonstrating that her use of monumentally sized prints is not that far removed from Dürer's practice. However, Dürer's work was a large collaborative project, and Baumgartner has the advantage of new technologies and processes that allow her to have a different approach to producing these grand-scale compositions. This opens the door to a conversation of how her methods also differ from traditional approaches and the ways in which she places particular value on how the labor of producing the print fits into its creation. Especially important is Baumgartner's exclusive role as designer, cutter, and printer of her works, which—as Dürer shows—differs greatly from the tradition of making woodcuts. This leads me into Chapter Two, in which I investigate how she blends aspects of an old style with that of the new in order to depict images filled with speed and movement.

Chapter Two focuses on how Baumgartner unites the slow process of woodcut with the fast paced mediums of video and photography in order to produce distinctive physical and visual encapsulations of movement. French author Paul Virilio's writings on the concept of motion played a significant part in amplifying her interest in this subject, helping to shape her view of speed in relation to communication and technology. Through an exploration of Virilio's influence and an examination of Baumgartner's works, I will analyze the ways in which she captures motion through images of transportation, cutting techniques, and optical illusions.

I begin with a study of her *Schkeuditz* series (2005) (figs. 2.1-4), examining her implementation of process and technique in each print in the series in order to convey

movement and the rush of modern communication and ideas. This series also assists in demonstrating her use of familiar imagery, making them not only personal to Baumgartner, but lending themselves to multiple reactions and interpretations, allowing a wide range of viewers to both share the artist's vision of the world as well as contemplate their own perspectives. This conversation leads to how Baumgartner not only suggests movement through subject matter, but also generates optical illusions, such as in *Luftbild* (2009) (fig. 2.10), that both cause the print to appear in motion and force viewers to participate, prompting them to move around the space, in turn shifting their perspective of the woodcut. These two aspects of her prints are then united in a discussion that establishes how her universally relatable images seek to produce visually stimulating experiences that prompt a viewer to take a moment for self-reflection, the main message hidden within her prints.

Chapter Three is a deeper exploration of how her prints encourage introspection. In a rushed world of instantaneous communication and oversaturation with media imagery, the time for one's personal thoughts can often be interrupted or neglected. Baumgartner aims to give viewers a chance to reclaim this action of self-reflection and be reminded of its importance. By considering the role that her personal history plays in her works, as well as her Russian influences such as the writings of the Russian-American poet and essayist Joseph Brodsky, I will examine how Baumgartner's prints illustrate the significance of personal meditative thought by demonstrating its relation to one's background, physical surroundings, and connection to the past and memory, as well as the significance of reassessing one's perspective of the modern experience.

This chapter begins with an introduction to the link between Baumgartner and Brodsky's artistic processes, followed by an examination of how their artistic output is affected by their background—his childhood in World War II Russia and her youth under the German Democratic Republic. This notion is established by a discussion of his 1986 collection of essays titled *Less Than One*, of which Baumgartner made a woodcut illustrated reprint of his essay "Less Than One" in 2004 (see figs. 3.3-4). These essays, like Baumgartner's prints, capture moments of self-reflection and history in a poetic manner that allows the reader/viewer to participate in the meditative action, which Baumgartner herself exemplifies. This discourse moves into the ways in which one's background influences perspective (both spatially and in regards to point of view), especially in relation to how one view's his or her surroundings. Baumgartner displays this concept in her print series *Solaris* (2008) (figs. 3.5-8), which originated from her reaction to the placement of tunnels in Birmingham, England, and having read Brodsky's recollections of Leningrad's city layout. This acts as a lead into her interpretations of past events, and how by revisiting images of the past and personal memories, she is able to reassess her relationship and interaction with modern society and how she is affected by its changes and technological advancements. This is displayed by her inspiration for and engineering of both *Luftbild* and *Transall*, as well as her perspective altering works *1 Sekunde* (2004) (fig. 3.11) and *Detour* (2004).

Baumgartner has an experimental and inquisitive approach to printmaking, most especially in the medium of woodcut. She uses it as both a personal outlet for meditation and as a way of reaching out to fellow individuals. Throughout my thesis, I investigate the manner in which Baumgartner seeks to unite her traditional and contemporary

training into a unique style that highlights the speed of modern society, while attempting to remind viewers of the importance of introspection. I aim to determine the various ways in which Baumgartner has succeeded in reaching these objectives, analyzing her innovative techniques and breakthroughs that make these works possible.

CHAPTER 1
DECIPHERING THE MATRIX: THE PRINT HISTORY OF A RENAISSANCE REVIVALIST

The art of printmaking has long, rich origins in German history. For centuries, German artists such as Martin Schongauer (c.1450-1491), Albrecht Altdorfer (c.1480-1538), and Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) have been acclaimed as true innovators of this medium. Many young contemporary artists look back to these masters for inspiration, and the prints of Leipzig artist Christiane Baumgartner (b. 1967) unite the techniques of these past greats with the modern through her emulation of Dürer, diversely structured education, and use of the oldest method of reproduction to depict modern images.[1] Dürer's influence is reflected in her adherence to many early sixteenth-century rules and standards for creating prints, while her training introduced her to the advantages of certain modern processes. The extensive print history of Leipzig is also important to investigate in relation to technique, since Baumgartner received her foundational training at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig from 1988 to 1996, which was founded in the mid-eighteenth century. This chapter will explore Baumgartner's training and formative history and the ways it has shaped her artistic expression through woodcut. I will begin with a discussion of the print legacy from which she descended, followed by a demonstration of how she has mastered early, traditional German woodcuts and introduced them into a new, contemporary context by combining this medium with photography and video.

Beginning with the history that comprises Baumgartner's foundation, fifteenth-century artists that wanted to master printmaking learned by apprenticing in a workshop.

Dürer began his professional studies in the Nuremburg workshop of Michael Wolgemut (1434–1519) in 1486.[2] While working under Wolgemut for at least four years, Dürer would have practiced by copying the drawings and prints of the Italians, the engravings of Schongauer, and the drawings of Wolgemut and Hans Pleydenwurff (c.1420-1472), presumably Wolgemut's former employer. His studies would not have been limited solely to woodcuts, but he would have also been trained in book illustration and book production, drawing, painting, and engraving. Since he was employed in a workshop, commissions and other business projects also would have determined many of his tasks. Dürer's ability to produce an impressive image was nurtured through the model of Wolgemut, who first introduced Dürer to the medium of woodcut, especially as book illustration, such as in his profusely illustrated *Nuremberg Chronicle* of 1493.[3] Wolgemut was a highly contemporary and experimental artist in the field of woodcutting, and both he and the groundwork laid by Pleydenwurff "widened the scope and raised the ambitions of what had been a secondary medium, and thereby paved the way for Dürer."[4] Their influences appeared in Dürer's uses of bold foreshortenings, strong contrasts in size, suggestions of aerial perspective, dramatic use of *repoussoirs*, and "depictions of metal, glass and velvet … rendered by making the lines merge into frayed masses of black" (see fig. 1.1).[5] These are all techniques that can be found in Baumgartner's works: I will explore these in greater detail in the following chapters through an examination of movement and perspective, both major themes in her art.

Baumgartner's training, although quite different from Dürer's, still retained many similarities. Trained at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig (HGB) from 1988 to 1996, she received extensive and exceedingly traditional teachings in various

print mediums, with a focus on woodcut.[6] As a student of the Book Art and Graphic department, her studies began with "a two year foundation course (four semester) and an additional three year (six semester) special class [with] one teacher."[7] The foundation semesters consisted of printmaking courses: "the first year once a week woodcut, for four hours, and the second year once a week litho[graphy] and after half a year once a week etching. … Also we had classes in silkscreen and repro-photography."[8] In addition, drawing and handwriting were also major foci, including an assignment to "design two alphabets just with black and white ink."[9] These exercises, just like the copies and tasks Dürer would have performed, aided in the development of eye-hand coordination and an understanding of composition.

Once the foundational semesters were completed, one chose a specialized course; Baumgartner selected one that permitted her to work more freely in graphic and print, rather than in typography. When she attended the HGB, the courses were set up in an even more traditional sense than they are today. One professor—a master printmaker—was in charge of each specialized workshop, much like Wolgemut's role. Only the professor gave assignments and taught the proper techniques. As Baumgartner recalled, "those courses were quite stiff and every year of students had to do the same lessons. For instance, in woodcut we started with a tube/triangle light and shadow composition, later had to work with structures and a very thin spiral, and the last piece (after a landscape and a self-portrait) was a copy of a medieval wood engraving."[10] The last two exercises mentioned are clearly related to Dürer's training. Perhaps his earliest known work is a self-portrait (fig. 1.2), made while apprenticing under his father, a goldsmith. It is a silverpoint drawing dated to 1484 and is a fine example of his early experimental nature

and bold ambitions as an artist.[11] As Panofsky points out, self-portraiture was not an accepted genre at this time, and for a thirteen year old to choose this is rather distinctive.[12] Secondly, HGB students' assignment to copy the techniques of medieval masters, directly from their prints, provided the best way to understand the mechanics of traditional woodcut design. It was through this same act that Dürer learned from his contemporary masters, as well as later joined and even surpassed their ranks. He proved his expertise and innovative nature in the medium of woodcut with his *Apocalypse* cycle of 1498.[13] In this series, he has translated lines from the Book of Revelation into detailed and skillful woodcuts. This act of translating textual imagery—and rather dark subject matter at that—into a print is a process that Baumgartner will later share with Dürer, and it will be examined in greater detail in the last chapter. Also important is Dürer's departure from the typical priority of text over illustration in printed books.[14] It is clear that the focus of this publication was on his images, the text (heavily abridged) more likely added to add depth to his woodcuts. One of Dürer's most well-known illustrations for this cycle is *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (fig. 1.3), which shows four horsemen sweeping across the print, each representing one element of the catastrophic event: pestilence, war, famine, and death. Each figure displays his strong command of line and innovative use of technique to suggest depth, movement, and raw, agonizing emotion in the faces and contortions of the figures, revealing his ability to build upon his foundational lessons and push the limits of the medium. Dürer's oeuvre provides a model of study based on the importance and benefits of an intimate understanding of materials and printing techniques, which enables the artist to then increase their compositional potential and explore new and unexpected artistic terrain. The HGB cultivates this

position with its pedagogical mission to pass on these unique teaching methods to its students.

The level of traditional instruction that the Leipzig academy successfully encourages is unique among schools of its kind.[15] After World War II, those working in East Germany were not easily influenced by current western European trends. As Arthur Lubow described, "the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall were effective windscreens, blocking artistic change from ruffling the German Democratic Republic [GDR]."[16] Arno Rink, a retired professor of painting and former director of the HGB, concurred: "If you want to talk of an advantage, you can say it allowed us to continue in the tradition of [Lucas] Cranach and [Max] Beckmann. It protected the art against the influence of Joseph Beuys."[17] These conservative conditions provided students with the opportunity to work and study in an almost lost structure of discipline. Upon the removal of these government blockades, there was a merging of this rather unique artistic vocabulary and training with contemporary movements, leading to innovative approaches that characterized what was termed the New Leipzig School.[18]

The destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the eradication of the Iron Curtain provided this previously monitored region with the freedom to travel and to participate in world conversations. Until then, Baumgartner, born in 1967, only knew life under the restrictions of the GDR. A glimpse into this period of her formative years was shared in a silkscreen work titled *Klassenkameraden* (Classmates) (1999) (fig. 1.4), which she made while studying at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London from 1997 to 1999. It also demonstrated her interest in new mediums and experimental approaches that would later lead her to a major breakthrough in her work as a printmaker.[19] As she stated in an

interview, “I wanted to be in London and I had heard that Printmaking at the RCA was similar to my school in Leipzig, the Hochschule. I had already studied printmaking and book art for eight years in Leipzig, and when I came to the RCA I realized I had done all the technical courses. That’s why I suddenly became interested in video and photography.”[20] This new interest in digital medias would help to expand her artistic vocabulary and challenge her creativity in exploring new methods of printing.

Klassenkameraden is composed of a manipulated childhood photograph displaying fellow classmates from her Class 7.[21] In addition to herself, she chose several classmates from the original photograph and then digitally overlaid the figures, creating a blurred and distorted compilation with three prominent figures in the foreground that are each flanked by and transparently layered with three other spectral schoolmates. The image was then divided into three sections—a prominent figure at the center of each—and was silkscreen printed onto paper at an almost life-sized scale. Baumgartner noted: “I was interested in individuality and loss of individuality in masses … I felt like I had to give a statement of my East German background compared to the circumstances in London.”[22] The notion of blurring the subject is a theme that appears throughout her oeuvre, as she seeks to disrupt the viewer’s quick recognition of the focus in her prints. This particular work also demonstrates her unification of her traditional Leipzig and modernized London training, as well as the fusing of established techniques with groundbreaking technology.

This print brings to mind the painting *Matrosen* (Sailors) (1966) (fig. 1.5) by Gerhard Richter, a fellow German artist, born in 1932 in Dresden, who Baumgartner appreciates for his ability to “deal with both the abstract and the figurative.”[23] This work

is based on a photograph and, also like Baumgartner's altered class picture, is "not a one-to-one copy of the source image … as Richter altered the composition somewhat and two of the men in the photograph do not appear in the final work."[24] This painting invites comparison to Baumgartner's *Classmates* since it also uses a blurring technique to revoke individual identities and fuse the figures into an abstractly unified collective. Richter's sailors, devoid of distinct features, were refashioned to represent any naval officer serving during World War II, and convey his memory of "how strange and mysterious these men and their world seemed to me back then."[25] I will explore more fully Baumgartner's relationship to the paintings of Richter in the next chapter.

The process used in designing *Classmates* was a crucial turning point for several reasons. Firstly, it was the initial use of photography in her work. While studying at the RCA, Baumgartner probed different photography techniques and application methods. For instance, she "experimented with how to print a photograph with printmaking techniques using cold surfaces … [such as] plate litho onto aluminum, or silkscreen onto glass."[26] She also developed an interest in video, which gradually achieved "the status of sketchbook, making paper and pencil unnecessary."[27] Secondly, this first use of a photograph was on a large scale. This choice began her continued exploration of monumentality and its powerful emotional and physical impact on both the subject and the viewer. How size forces involvement on the viewer will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Thirdly, although this work's subject is rather distinctive in her oeuvre, in that most are strictly non-figurative, the objective to depict loss of individuality is a concept that endured. Her future works use landscapes to make similar critiques, employing distortion and manipulation to demonstrate "the relation between

materiality and immateriality."[28] Scenes are often so far removed from their original contexts that they take on a sense of universality, enabling a wide and varied audience to connect with her images. Finally, the most important change was how she manipulated the photograph. Up until this point, Baumgartner altered her patterns and images by hand. *Klassenkameraden* was the first time she utilized digital editing software to achieve her final composition. The use of a computer was the first step towards her innovative new process, and today it plays an integral role in her unique line compositions.[29]

Shortly after graduating from the RCA in 1999, Baumgartner moved back to Leipzig, which presented both challenges and advantages. One such advantage was that upon her return to the city, the New Leipzig School had been recently established. Although she is not a direct member of the movement, Baumgartner admitted "it made things easier … as my studio is at the Spinnerei in a big complex with other artists [such as Neo Rauch] and we had a lot of international attention."[30] However, the first year back also included cultural transitions, leading her to make unexpected shifts in her artistic approach. During her time in London, she worked almost exclusively in digital media. As she remarked, "The first year I was back here it was difficult. I didn't have video editing facilities. Studying in Leipzig in East German times, we weren't even allowed to use photographs. It was a totally different way of thinking."[31] The distance that Baumgartner's studies at the RCA had put between her and the German tradition quickly became apparent, prompting her "to find a way to reconcile these two traditions."[32] To her it seemed only logical to combine the two mediums, noting "digital information provides the means by which to order and to simplify and enables the production of endless identical images in different mediums. Woodcut is the earliest technique to

reproduce an image. … By creating woodcuts of digital video stills I simulate this standardized information by cutting a line grain by hand on a plate of wood."[33] In 2001, the series *Lisbon I-IV* (fig. 1.6), consisting of four woodcuts on Japanese paper, would be her first demonstration of a groundbreaking development in the art of woodcut design.

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The concept began with video footage Baumgartner had taken a few years earlier while studying in Lisbon. As she recounted, "Every morning I crossed a bridge over a highway to reach the city centre. I was attracted by the endless flow of cars in both directions. It was nearly the same amount of cars on each lane, and for a curious reason I thought why can't those cars just make an exchange with each other? I saw them as single objects and not as transport containers for people. One day I decided to make a video of the scene."[34] At the time of filming, Baumgartner did not have her end result in mind, but rather performed the act unconsciously. It was not until she had the video back in her studio that the work began to fall into place.[35] This shelved material from Lisbon was ideal subject matter for her first coalescent composition. It contained vehicles lacking individuality, ripe for manipulation into a vision of anonymity, speed, and standstill.

Baumgartner stated that she likes "using woodcut as it used to be in Dürer's time, [meaning a] really traditional German woodcut, with handmade paper, and in a proper wooden frame, but the images are from new media."[36] This causes her process to act as a time machine, starting in the present and returning to the Renaissance. Her method begins by slowly reviewing her footage, breaking it down into thousands of stills.[37] She spends much time with these images, waiting to answer the question: "which single video

attracts me so much that I want to give it so much time and attention"?[38] Many of her woodcuts are at such a large scale that they can take more than ten months to cut; that this image will be reproduced more than once factors into her selection. The next step is to load the chosen image into Photoshop, where she strips it of its color, converting it to grayscale. At this point, the size of the image and frequency of the lines have not yet been determined; "In a way the image is not there yet. It is still unreal, but already is digitally calculable."[39] The image is then translated into a grid of rippling horizontal lines, all of which Baumgartner designs and manipulates individually.[40] She came to this design decision after searching for a way to "print a grayscale photograph just in two components, in black and white."[41] The line grid was the perfect solution due to its "on/off" arrangement, much like binary code. She likes to view her process as a way of "building an analogue image out of digital information."[42] It will become ever more apparent how incorporating the idea of duality is a theme in her work.

Baumgartner plays with the image on her computer for some time, allowing it to slowly take form. A number of images remain on the computer for several years before moving on to the next phase. In her eyes, an image is not meant to be read as a narrative, but instead she looks "at it just as an image, at the colours and texture and if it works in and for itself and for me."[43] For example, at the RCA she did a few video projects that involved filming the windows of a building opposite from the college at night. Sections of this footage would be used to make woodcuts. She was sure to erase all evidence of any incidents that may have occurred within the stills, returning these once imposing images back into impersonal observations of time.[44] She recognizes that for some artists the journey to create an image involves "bringing an image to life on the canvas."[45]

However, for her the work is all accomplished prior to the block, noting, “the cutting of the plate is simply the realization of something I have already completed in my mind.”[46]

Once settled on a final composition, Baumgartner determines the scale at which the image should be produced. Often, the scale is chosen based on its relationship to one’s body; usually the more forceful the image the larger the matrix.[47] For the *Lisbon* series, she chose to make each image roughly 35.4 x 47 inches. The next step is to print out the image at full size. This is when her process begins to travel back towards her traditional roots. The image is laid face down on her chosen sheet of plywood. Thinner is then rubbed along the back of the image, transferring the printer ink to the wood, making a perfect outline from which she will engrave her matrix. The image lines are meticulously cut out with a specially sharpened old kitchen knife, made to resemble a modeling knife.[48] At this point in the process, Baumgartner has accomplished what she sees as the more calculated elements. The act of cutting out the image is a much more meditative action for the artist. It is the first time she can reflect on her work as a whole and enjoy the slow, handmade movements of the carving. This is a time when she retreats to her landline and Internet free studio, granting herself freedom from all outside concerns; “Some people go to church, others do yoga, I’ve got my cutting.”[49]

Baumgartner already differs from Renaissance printmakers because she works alone and is involved in every step of her process. Traditionally, a separate master would step in to cut the design, and then yet another to perform the printing. In Baumgartner’s work, there are advantages to being the sole artist. There is a strong connection to the design that can be readily distinguished by the way the matrix is carved. This intimate understanding of the movement and strategy necessary to produce such a seamless

transfer of the image appears only possible if done by the creator's own hand. Although a model of tradition, it is often debated whether Dürer himself cut most of his designs or if another artist in the workshop would have been given this task, for changes in cutting quality have been observed across his oeuvre.[50] Panofsky suggests an example of this notion in respect to Marquart von Steyn's *Ritter vom Turn von den Exempeln der Gottsforcht und Erberkeit*, printed by Michael Furter in 1493 and of which Dürer is accredited about four-fifths of the collective forty-five woodcuts:

> In the "Ritter vom Turn" the woodcuts attributable to Dürer show a slight disparity in style which is accounted for by the individualities of the cutters. One of these is obviously the same skillful but somewhat mechanical craftsman who cut [Dürer's] *Saint Jerome*. Other woodcuts are rather mediocre from a technical point of view. A few, however, are cut with so much understanding for the intentions of the designer and with so intense a feeling for plastic values that Dürer himself has been credited with the cutting—which is, at least, a plausible conjecture. The publication proceeding according to schedule, Dürer would have wished to set a standard for the cutting as well as for the design.[51]

Baumgartner has the same drive to take control over the final realization of the work, but perhaps places even more value on the labor aspects of the production than Dürer, since she would never delegate tasks to another craftsperson. The handmade aspect of her woodcuts is particularly important to the artist. She has expressed her disinterest in having a workshop mentality operate in her studio, claiming, "I am not like Jeff Koons, I am not running a factory, I *need* the cutting time for reflection. … I also like the handmade aspect of cutting with all its inaccuracies and mistakes—this is an important aspect of the final print."[52] This drive to perform every step of the creation process sets Baumgartner apart, and her constant involvement lends uniqueness to her woodcuts and separates her from a strictly traditional genealogy of printmakers.

When printing a woodcut, the surface upon which it will be transferred is the next crucial element in planning its design. Baumgartner always chooses handmade papers, often rice or mulberry or cotton. Interestingly she frequently uses paper-shops that to this day function much like a traditional German paper mill, one of which, in Zerkall, has roots dating back to the sixteenth century.[53] Having access to modernized yet traditional mills immediately puts her in a different position in regards to production than Dürer could ever have imagined. During the early fifteenth century, paper availability was not what it is today. Between 1470 and 1550, paper production was a trade that was steadily expanding across the European continent.[54] This made obtaining paper an easier task in many areas, if not through a local mill then at least through shipment. However, as David Landau and Peter Parshall pointed out in their survey of the Renaissance print, "Printers continued to complain about unevenness of quality, short supply, high costs, and transit taxes. Therefore it must be assumed that in most towns the ready availability of good paper for printing could not be taken absolutely for granted at any time during the Renaissance."[55] Baumgartner benefits from the modern ease of readily acquiring paper from anywhere in the world, both in large quantities and at a high level of quality. In Dürer's time, the uniformity in paper size was not necessarily a well-regulated attribute. It is known that "in 1398 the measurements for individual sheets of paper were set for the Bologna mills officially regulating paper sizes and their corresponding weights by statute. In descending order of scale, these dimensions in centimeters were: *carta imperiale* (50.0 x 74.0); *carta reale* (44.5 x 61.5); *carta mezzana* (34.5 x 51.5); and *carta reçute* (31.5 x 45.0)."[56] Prints were often "referred to by conventional paper sizes as a means of assessing their value. … In German the two largest tended to be grouped under

Großformat (large), then *Median* (medium) and *Kanzlei* (official or chancellery) format."[57] During his journey to the Netherlands in 1520, Dürer even made a note that when he distributed, traded, or sold his prints that "he identified them not only by subject matter but as quarter, half, or full sheets."[58] That these regulations would be followed in every locale was in no way certain, and instead, each area most likely held to its own set of standards.

Because of the often-oversized dimensions of Baumgartner's prints, working under these limited regulations would have dramatically hindered the advancement of her process. In Dürer's time, the production of prints at Baumgartner's scale was possible and did occur, though it was not all that common. There is, however, one prominent example in the history of Renaissance printmaking that references the use of paper that widely exceeded the maximum size known to have been regularly available at the time. The famous woodcut titled *View of Venice* (1500), by Jacopo de' Barbari (1440-1516), was originally printed on six sheets of paper measuring on average 70 x 100 cm, roughly double the width of an imperial folio. In order to wield the large tray and mold necessary to create these oversized sheets, at least two vatmen and two couchers working together would have been required.[59] Multiple sheets were still a necessity in order to print such a large image. As the demand for larger sheets of paper increased, mills over time began offering this commodity, but "in its earlier stages the paper market served only average needs and required others to improvise by sticking sheets together."[60]

This leads to a discussion of one of the largest prints ever created in which Dürer is a main author: the *Triumphal Arch of Maximilian I* (1515) (fig. 1.7). It provides an interesting juxtaposition to Baumgartner's *Transall* (2002-04) (fig. 1.8), based not only

on sheer size, but also on printing. The *Triumphal Arch* was a large project commissioned by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519). Many were involved in its creation including: Johannes Stabius (1450–1522), the program's organizer and the Emperor's astronomer, poet and historiographer; Architect Jörg Kölderer (c.1470-1540); Hieronymus Andreae's (d. 1556) workshop, hired to cut the blocks; and Dürer, supported by the members of his workshop and assisted by [Willibald] Pirckheimer (1470-1530) in iconographical matters, acted as designer-in-chief.[61] That its design was such a group endeavor is different from Baumgartner, who invariably works alone. This is not to say that Dürer operated exclusively in ambitious collaboration, but there was always someone else involved in the final production of his works, either in cutting and printing the work, or at least just printing. Once completed, the imperial woodcut comprised of 192 separate woodblocks, measuring approximately 11.5 by 9.75 feet when united. Printing this intricate work using Renaissance materials, most likely a press, was a substantial challenge. It was also necessary to print the individual works on separate sheets of paper, which required reassembly like a puzzle.

Transall was also a hugely complex undertaking. However, Baumgartner implemented certain modern advancements to more efficiently construct this traditional work of art. Already of benefit was the ability to use just two solid blocks of wood.[62] She chose the largest sheets of plywood that she could find, measuring collectively at roughly 3 by 13 feet. An impressively sized work surface for any medium, it is especially so for a woodcut because of printing challenges. In order to print such a large matrix, the artist needed an even larger piece of handmade paper, commissioning one of Kozo paper from the German paper mill Gangolf Ulbricht Papierwerkstatt in Berlin.[63] In order to have a

proper border, the sheet was custom made at an impressive 5 by 14 feet. Of course her test prints were done on multiple sheets of lower quality paper, most likely something in the family of newsprint. Not until she built up the right amount of oil based black ink on the surface of the block, after copious runs with a large brayer and multiple test prints, did she advance to the final print. The printing was done entirely by hand, which involved the act of burnishing the back of the paper with a smooth object, such as the back of a spoon. This is the oldest technique ever used to make a woodcut, and it must be approached systematically since different amounts of pressure can produce dissimilar ink tonalities in the final piece. This challenging yet rudimentary system of printing acts as a metaphor for Baumgartner's entire process, and the juxtaposition of the *Triumphal Arch* and *Transall* operates as a stark depiction of Baumgartner's shared characteristics with Dürer and Renaissance printmaking and the ways in which she applied contemporary developments to take this tradition to a new level.

As Hans Belting proposed in his study into the inner-psyche of the German artist in relation to his or her art, historical themes have always been present, which may explain why the "search for identity has not only been a search for personal identity within contemporary culture, but also a search for national identity anchored in the past."[64] Baumgartner's art is undeniably affected by the pre- and post-reunification of Germany, as seen in early works like *Classmates*, the more recent *Transall*, and through to the present day. Her choices in subject, dismantled of their identities and individuality, echo the repression of her youth, yet her contemporary works have an air of personal growth and convey the importance and advantages of self-reflection on one's past. Her rigorous traditional academy training paired with her introduction to digital media further

influenced her ability to develop a breakthrough process that seamlessly ties the Renaissance style of Albrecht Dürer to the innovative developments in contemporary printmaking. These ideas inform a deeper exploration of her prints and how she utilizes her personal history to construct works that exude dizzying movement and engage concepts of time, materiality, memory, and technology in relation to today's society. The next two chapters will examine more deeply how the techniques in Baumgartner's prints convey a sense of movement and introspection and strive to share her experiences and impressions with her viewers.

Notes

[1] For the most comprehensive monographic publication on Baumgartner thus far see *Christiane Baumgartner*, Nigel Prince, ed. (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 2005). For the most recent collection of her works see *Reel Time* (London: Alan Cristea Gallery, 2011).

[2] For early development of Dürer, see Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955). See also a renewed and revised look at the young Dürer in *Der frühe Dürer*, Daniel Hess ed. (Nürnberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2012).

[3] See Adrian Wilson, *The Making of the Nuremberg Chronicle* (Amsterdam: Nico Israel, 1976).

[4] Ibid., 20.

[5] Ibid., 19.

[6] This chapter focuses on her first degree from the HGB, but she would also receive a three-year master's degree from this academy, continuing her focus in printmaking.

[7] Christiane Baumgartner, email correspondence with the author, March 26, 2012.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] See Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 34-51.

[12] Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 15; and Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 35-37.

[13] For a discussion of this cycle see David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); and Cynthia Hall, "Before the Apocalypse: German Prints and Illustrated Books, 1450-1500," *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* 4/2 (Spring, 1996): 8-29.

[14] Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 42.

[15] See Sophie Gerlach, "From Shamed to Famed – The Transition of a Former Eastern German Arts Academy to the Talent Hotbed of a Contemporary Painters' School. The Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig," in *Art and Theory After Socialism*, Mel Jordan and Malcolm Miles, eds. (Chicago: Intellect Books, The University of Chicago Press, 2008) 9-20.

[16] Arthur Lubow, "The New Leipzig School," *New York Times*, January 8, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/magazine/08leipzig.html.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Although the New Leipzig School is a term related to painters, Baumgartner is connected to this movement. She has stated, “Not that I am a figurative painter of course—I was always viewed as a counterpart to that movement—but it gave me opportunities.” Jeannette Stoschek, “Visualizing Time,” in *Reel Time* (London: Alan Cristea Gallery, 2011), 11. Painters such as Neo Rauch, David Schnell, Tim Eitel, and Tilo Baumgärtel are seen as the pioneers of this movement, and “although the work of these painters … varies in content, style and quality, they share a technical skill, a devotion to figurative art and a predilection for dry-eyed, melancholy subject matter.” Lubow, “The New Leipzig School.” Shared by both Baumgartner and the New Leipzig School is a sense of detachment in their work.

[19] When talking about *Klassenkameraden* she also noted, “I would have never done this work if I had not been abroad.” Nicholas James, *Interviews-Artists* (London: Cv Publications, 2010), 21. This is an interesting factor in relation to Dürer, due to the fact that he too made the decision to travel abroad in search of furthering his education. His time in Italy would greatly influence his technique and approach by developing his understanding of the classical statuesque figure, geometrical methods of proportion, and movement. For more on this topic, see Panofsky, “Apprenticeship and Early Years of Travel, 1484-1495,” in *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*.

[20] Baumgartner quoted in Hannah Murgatroyd, “‘You Need to Show Work in the Right Place’: Christiane Baumgartner,” *FuelRCA*, November 15, 2010, http://fuel.rca.ac.uk/articles/you-need-to-show-work-in-the-right-place-christiane-baumgartner.

[21] For process information for *Klassenkameraden*, see Stoschek, “Visualizing Time,” 23.

[22] Baumgartner quoted in James, *Interviews-Artists*, 21.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Composed by the editorial team for *gerhard-richter.com*, located at http://www.gerhard-richter.com/art/search/detail.php?5764.

[25] Richter, translated by the editorial team for *gerhard-richter.com*. For the original quote see Cornelius Tittel, “Gerhard Richter – Die Hälfte im Museum ist Müll,” *Welt Online*, September 24, 2010, http://www.welt.de/kultur/article9843144/Gerhard-Richter-Die-Haelfte-im-Museum-ist-Muell.html.

[26] Baumgartner quoted in Murgatroyd, “‘You Need to Show Work in the Right Place’: Christiane Baumgartner.”

[27] Stoschek, “Visualizing Time,” 22.

[28] Baumgartner quoted in José Roca, “Interview: Christiane Baumgartner,” *Philagrafika Blog*, May 12, 2009, http://philagrafika.blogspot.com/2009/05/interview-christiane-baumgartner.html.

[29] In October of 2002, an "Audiovisuelle Labor" (audio-video lab) was established at the HGB. The university’s website states “the AV-Labor marks the progress towards education with a transparent and interdisciplinary orientation in a working environment which becomes overall more and more digital.”

[30] Baumgartner quoted in Stoschek, “Visualizing Time,” 11.

[31] Baumgartner quoted in Murgatroyd, “‘You Need to Show Work in the Right Place’: Christiane Baumgartner.”

[32] Baumgartner quoted in Roca, “Interview: Christiane Baumgartner.”

[33] Ibid.

[34] Baumgartner quoted in James, *Interviews-Artists*, 21-22.

[35] It should be noted that when filming, Baumgartner never has a certain project in mind. It is always done “unconsciously.” It is not until she returns to her studio that plans for a work will begin.

[36] Baumgartner quoted from video, “Christiane Baumgartner: Screen Shot,” Alan Cristea Gallery, http://www.alancristea.com/artist-Christiane-Baumgartner.

[37] Process information from Jeremy Lewison, “At the Still Point of the Turning World. The Prints of Christiane Baumgartner,” in *Christiane Baumgartner* (Heemstede: Johan Deumens Gallery, 2007), 40.

[38] Baumgartner quoted in James, *Interviews-Artists*, 22.

[39] Ibid., 22.

[40] It has often been thought that these lines were a byproduct of preexisting monitor lines. However, this is not the case. Baumgartner creates her own raster.

[41] Baumgartner quoted in Roca, “Interview: Christiane Baumgartner.”

[42] Baumgartner quoted in James, *Interviews-Artists*, 23.

[43] Baumgartner quoted in Stoschek, “Visualizing Time,” 11.

[44] For the discussion of these videos, see Lewison, “At the Still Point of the Turning World. The Prints of Christiane Baumgartner,” 34-35.

[45] Baumgartner quoted in Stoschek, “Visualizing Time,” 11.

[46] Ibid., 11.

[47] Ibid., 10.

[48] Roca, “Interview: Christiane Baumgartner.”

[49] Baumgartner quoted in Stoschek, “Visualizing Time,” 9.

[50] For the debate on whether Dürer cut his own blocks see the foundational essay by William Ivins, Jr., "Notes on Three Dürer Woodblocks," *Metropolitan Museum Studies* 2/1 (Nov. 1929): 102-11; and Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 170-176.

[51] For discussion and quote, see Panofsky, *The life and art of Albrecht Dürer*, 28-29.

[52] Baumgartner quoted in Stoschek, "Visualizing Time," 9.

[53] Paper information from "Catalogue of works," in Nigel Prince, ed., *Christiane Baumgartner* (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 2005), 74.

[54] For discussion of paper, see David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 15-21.

[55] Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 15.

[56] Ibid., 16.

[57] Ibid., 16; For information about German paper terminology, see Gerhard Piccard, "Carta bombycina, carta papyri, pergamena graeca," in *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 61 (1965), 58.

[58] Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 16.

[59] Ibid., 16.

[60] Ibid., 17.

[61] Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 175. On the unique phenomenon of sixteenth-century oversize prints see *Grand Scale: Monumental Prints in the Age of Dürer and Titian*, Larry Silver and Elizabeth Wyckoff, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[62] "Christiane Baumgartner: Transall," Museum of Modern Art, http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/32/771.

[63] See endnote 53.

[64] Hans Belting, *The Germans and their Art: A Troublesome Relationship* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 5.

CHAPTER 2
AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT: MOVEMENT IN PRINT

The convergence of speed and standstill[1] is a key motif in Baumgartner's woodcuts. Rather than appearing forcefully in the active lines and rush of apocalyptic horsemen cantering across a sheet, as in Dürer's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1498) (fig. 1.3), motion is conveyed by Baumgartner in multiple modern and technologically driven ways, including images of transportation, cutting techniques, optical illusions, and the combination of the oldest, slowest form of print—the woodcut—and the quickest, most modern forms, video and photography. Her inspiration to explore this theme, as displayed in the last chapter, emerged from her studies at the Royal College of Art in London, where film became a main tool. However, French author Paul Virilio's writings on the concept of motion intensified her interest in this subject, helped shape her view of speed in relation to communication and technology, and affected her image choices and compositions. Through a discussion of Virilio's influence and a deeper examination of Baumgartner's works, this chapter will demonstrate the artist's unique physical and visual encapsulation of movement.

Paul Virilio, born in Paris in 1932, is a world-renowned philosopher, urbanist, and cultural theorist. Growing up in France during World War II, he was "profoundly impacted by the *blitzkrieg* and total war; however, these early experiences shaped his understanding of the movement and speed which structures modern society."[2] His work focuses on "urban spaces and the development of technology in relation to power and speed."[3] These studies led him to question the relationship held between humans and technology and how it affects our communication and perception of the world. He stated,

"Two attitudes are possible with respect to these new technologies: one declares them a miracle; the other—mine—recognizes that they are interesting while maintaining a critical attitude."[4] Baumgartner shares this second attitude, and her personal experiences as a citizen of the German Democratic Republic lends her to have a similar viewpoint to Virilio about movement. Living in a wartime climate, she was restricted from traveling, making her trips down the freeway as an adult—while filming from the passenger seat—symbolize her liberation. While she embraces technological advancements—especially their aid in her international reputation and the development of digital programs—she finds it important to limit their dominance over her lifestyle. This need to separate from the speed of society derives from her reading of Virilio, whose influence she repeatedly acknowledges:

> [Virilio] said once that, in the third millennium, we will have the ability to stay here and be in the same moment somewhere else. He was talking about the Internet and the fact that a bomb can be dropped anywhere in the world, for example, and we will know immediately who and what has been hit. It used to take weeks to hear about this kind of event and now everything has been speeded up—not just our bodies, but our brains and the information we process as well. … Our forms of communication have speeded up and it is important to me to try and slow things down again.[5]

This notion proposed by Virilio continues to be an element of Baumgartner's artistic thought process, to the extent that she makes a conscious effort to slow down by isolating herself in a communication "free" studio when working. It is an underlying theme that quietly runs in the background of all her prints, embodied in the laborious years it takes to convert a digital image to a woodcut. Not only are Virilio's words apparent in how she constructs an image, but also they are visible in her chosen subject matter. Virilio wrote, "The speed of light does not merely transform the world. It becomes the world. Globalisation is the speed of light."[6] This quote introduces three major ways Baumgartner

approaches movement visually in her work: transportation, participation, and the universality of fast-paced globalization.

The woodcut series *Schkeuditz I-IV* (2005) (figs. 2.1-4), title of which refers to a town in Germany, depicts four seemingly consecutive video stills, no more than seconds apart, of vehicles on a freeway moving towards and under an overpass. Each print follows a lane of traffic acting out the literal and metaphorical travel of communication, spreading from exit to exit. Within four images, the viewer (placed in the passenger's seat) is drawn deep into the space and pushed through what at the beginning was simply a slit of light across the horizon. Depth perception is one of Baumgartner's strongest tools in suggesting movement. *Schkeuditz I* immediately halts the eye across the top, forcing the viewer to pass underneath this flattened space and follow the solid white traffic line into the open road. The large vehicle emerging from the lower left corner contrasted against the smaller, middle car exaggerates their distance, pulling the viewer towards the next checkpoint. *Schkeuditz II* inverts this forced perspective, drawing the viewer to a centralized rectangle of light that is emphasized by the dark, angled edges of the pavement, channeling the eye to the vanishing point. Obstructive rectangles, like storm clouds on a bright sky, demonstrate a dramatic use of *repoussoirs*, sinking the glowing passageway deeper into the composition.

Schkeuditz III uses cutting techniques to accent the receding columns that line the bridge's underbelly. On the right, diamond shaped cuts in the wood (see detail in fig. 2.5) simulate the three-dimensional arc of the stone pillars. As the columns near the viewer, they are stretched thinner, making the deeper columns appear to radiate more light and thereby claim focus. As vehicles reach the opposite end of the passageway, the horizontal

lines are cut extra thin, forming a block of blinding light with just enough information left to indicate hazy, upcoming road signs. The last print of the series illustrates a car changing lanes. This shift is suggested by marking out the bulk of the car with thick horizontal lines, fraying into a mass of black containing notches of white to represent light glistening off the windshields. The right side of the car contains deep gouges that highlight its angled position as it merges before the viewer's vehicle. While the car is suspended in four moments of transit, its velocity through darkness into sunlight is methodically relayed. As Anne Hamlyn stated, "We are able to watch ourselves watching our own perpetual motion—our speed."[7] While this series appears to follow the trajectory of a single vehicle, or specific collection of vehicles, it also represents everyday traffic patterns and the ubiquitous nature of such an image. However, I will explore this concept of universality and its relation to movement in her prints in a later section.

The layout of this print series echoes the studies of chronophotography. In 1882, French scientist Étienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904) invented a chronophotographic gun that was capable of taking twelve consecutive frames per second, recorded on the same picture.[8] It was used to study figures in motion, such as the gallop of horses, the flight of birds, and the gait of running humans. In his 1886 study of pelicans in flight (fig. 2.6), the descent of a bird is captured, yet key moments of transition are missing, most notably in the center of the image when the pelican brings its wings downward. Much like in *Schkeuditz,* a disjointed series of steps captures a moment of motion. However, Baumgartner is in control of which moments are recorded into woodcut and which are dismissed, unlike chronophotography where the timing of the camera is responsible for

the images documented by the photographer. This notion of abridged progression will reappear in the discussion of her print series *1 Sekunde* (fig. 3.11) in the next chapter.

Another element of movement is introduced through the presence of the wood grain in Baumgartner's final prints. Ink soaked knots and imperfections in the wood imprint themselves on the paper, creating grayscale waves that swell across the dark expansions of tightly cut lines. The collision of the grain with Baumgartner's grid accentuates the shifting black tones that simulate cooler spots of "gray," reminding the viewer that this work is handmade. These subtle shifts in tone also enhance the dizzying movement already activated by the vibrating black and white horizontals. This technique of printing the grain and raw imperfections of the material is also seen in German Expressionism woodcuts.[9] For example, German painter and printmaker Emil Nolde (1867-1956) used this added texture in his print *Fischdampfer* (Fishing Steamer) (1910) (fig. 2.7) in order to capture the swelling movement of the water in his composition. Similar to Baumgartner, Nolde recognized and used the inherent movement of the wood block in order to magnify the visual effects of the final piece.

Captured in Baumgartner's binary coded grooves, her images remain just out of focus. Hovering above one another like heat rising off sun-baked pavement, the horizontal lines take the form of mirages, conjured up from the artist's mind. This optical illusion is an important aspect of her work, and is the main technique used to encourage the viewer's participation. Her illusions are reached in three ways: the first is through untouched images that are only abstracted by her grid, such as in the *Schkeuditz* series. The remaining two include images with innate illusionary structures and those pre-distorted by digital disturbance. I will discuss the second method in an analysis of

Manhattan Transfer (2010) (fig. 2.8), which depicts a helicopter in midair obstructed by a chain-link fence in the foreground. The third method will be demonstrated through the works *Deutscher Wald* (German Forest) (2007) (fig. 2.9) and *Luftbild* (aerial image) (2009) (fig. 2.10), followed by an explanation of how the works force viewers into motion.

In *Manhattan Transfer*, Baumgartner allowed for the natural disturbances in the original image to confuse the eye. While porous, the fence hinders the viewer's ability to enter the action of the image. Its large holes on the left side of the print flatten the surface and subtly shrink as your eye moves across the image, allowing for the suggestion of depth and a receding barrier. However, the solid poles on the right once again establish the viewer's boundaries. The fence serves as protection from the whirling helicopter in flight. The angled landing gear is in a state of either deployment or retraction, and the blurred propellers suggest speed that even Baumgartner's prints cannot suspend. Clashing with the distortion of her grid, the fence brings the body of the helicopter to life, as the expanding and shrinking coils manipulate her line density. The viewer is forced to constantly re-adjust his or her position in order to focus on each element of the scene.

This print brings to light her connection to the history of optical art, such as Carlos Cruz-Diez's (b. 1923) *Induction Chromatique 63* (1974) (fig. 2.11).[10] Another significant comparison is with claimed father of Op-Art Victor Vasarely's (1906-1997) *Zèbre* (1944) (fig. 2.12), a painting that shares the binary technique of using parallel black and white lines to form an illusionary, recognizable image. Vasarely's stripes run slanted across the canvas, remaining unbroken and only varying in width. Similar to Baumgartner's grid, these fluctuations in girth are what allow for the suggestion of depth,

volume, and shape. The zebra appears trapped just below the surface, its body shifting beneath a net of paint, much like the helicopter hovering behind an ink fence.

Beginning the discussion of the third method of creating illusion is *Deutscher Wald* (fig. 2.9), a series of nine woodcuts based on digital images "taken at an incredibly low resolution—only 3 dpi"[11] and presents multiple views of a dense line of thin, leafless tree trunks. The movement in this work is generated by the extra layer of abstraction introduced by the poor quality of the original image. The horizontal distortion of the original image further accents the horizontal grid, forcing the trees to appear as a series of stacked rectangles of varying lengths and opacity. This jagged disruption of the surface creates fluctuating movement that undulates up and down the print like sound waves. Only distance, a viewing component explained below, permits access to the familiar scene that lies hidden before viewers.

In *Luftbild* (fig. 2.10), which depicts World War II footage of bomber airplanes, many patterns are colliding at once. This work not only utilizes the natural movement of her grid, but also incorporates the image distortion that occurs when a video camera records straight from a television screen. This media union generates a moiré effect in the form of a checkerboard rippling upward like a paper fan. The optical illusions in *Luftbild* are well representative of her process, where scenes begin as crisp and audible video images, but then as they are translated into a woodcut, they become abstracted and one's eye begins to wander over the work and "you almost have to squint to make sense of it."[12]

Video and sound artists explore similar issues, such as composer Alvin Lucier (b. 1931) in his audio piece *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1970). Lucier recorded himself narrating

a text, which was repeatedly played back and re-recorded, reinforcing the resonant frequencies of the room. This process caused the sentences to overlap until distinct words became muddled and eventually transformed into pure sound. While Baumgartner's process does not involve the overlapping of information, Lucier's work similarly uses an original source, which is re-formatted until it takes on a new configuration. In both methods, the initial work is still present in the final composition, but its identity is no longer readily recognizable. This reductive quality of the audio work is shared by Baumgartner's woodcuts in that, as she removes wood from the block, she is breaking down the material in order to alter the wood's surface, allowing the block to take on a new appearance. Reduction also happens to her source image, as the cutting of the wavy, horizontal grid breaks down the clarity of the composition, making it as distorted a mess up close as Lucier's final recording.

As demonstrated by these three methods, various optical illusions and the large scale of her prints essentially force the viewer to think about various kinds of movement, as well as initiating actual bodily movement. Her works promote the desire to shift viewing positions, to step close to the surface in order to see the individual lines, and then to step back to decipher the overall image. Baumgartner explained, "The scale draws you backwards and forwards. If you want to see how it is made, you need to get very close but in order to create an image, you have to get some distance. So you have to move your body to read the work and that's why I make certain images so monumental."[13]

Luftbild was a step forward in bringing this concept to fruition. When asked to participate in *Philagrafika 2010*, Baumgartner decided to submit this work, which had never before been exhibited. *Luftbild* was displayed in the Samuel M. V. Hamilton

Building of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA). This structure was originally an automobile showroom, and therefore, the first floor has a large gallery with exceptionally high ceilings and a wide width.[14] This somewhat unusually generous space was an ideal locale for Baumgartner's monumental print because it allowed viewers to drastically vary their perspective and proximity to the work. It was also a unique experience for Baumgartner, who had yet to view one of her works in such a large space. She noted that even in her studio her ability to step back from her works is limited. It was not until *Luftbild* was on the wall at PAFA that she was able to view the work from a much farther distance, and she enjoyed the added detail and clarity that emerged.[15]

Baumgartner's prints encourage spectator movement, which creates different readings and experiences based on the viewer's constant changes in perspective. As viewers move around the space, the composition's appearance is noticeably altered since the frozen image shifts into focus from afar but fragments with each nearer step. Baumgartner states, "I brought speed into the static medium and at the beginning I was not sure how far the human eye and brain would be able to follow. I like it when the eye loses its fixed point and when an image becomes general."[16] Paul Virilio stated, "locomotive illusion allows the voyeur-voyager to project beyond the screen of the windshield his own fantasies."[17] Baumgartner constructs her own fantasies by composing visions that are universally recognizable, which allows for the viewer to join her in projecting beyond the car window in *Schkeuditz* and *Deutscher Wald*, the fence in *Manhattan Transfer*, and the television screen in *Luftbild*. How these works both enforce contemplation about the speed of society in which they capture and channel self-

reflection will be addressed in the next chapter. First, I will examine how Baumgartner uses familiar imagery to convey movement.

The speed of modern communication is so powerful that images and ideas can become internationally recognized within seconds. Depictions of this concept appear repeatedly in Baumgartner's work, especially through demonstrations of how the swift spread of these images lends them a universal context. Similar to *Schkeuditz*, the print series titled *Allee*[18] (2008) (figs. 2.13-14) puts the viewer in the driver's seat for another road trip through common scenery. It could be anyone driving on any road in the world. She has stripped the scene of any identifiers that may provide clues about its true location. Baumgartner remarked, "Everybody who sees [*Allee*] thinks it's around his own corner. People told me 'Ah, this is in Leipzig near the airport,' and someone else said 'I went again to the place, I'm sure it's this place,' but it's not, it could be all over the place. So it's just so exchangeable."[19] These associations are examples of how the velocity of modern communication is captured in her prints. While this occurrence is undetectable to the naked eye, this extreme transfer of information is revealed in a simple, literal image of speeding along a tree-lined, ambiguous curve. She has taken a large, invisible concept of motion and re-contextualized it in a metaphorical composition that makes it accessible to a wide audience.

As introduced in the first chapter, Baumgartner has an affinity for the works of Gerhard Richter. She is especially drawn to how he "finds" an image. His landscape works, which also depict movement and recognizable imagery, are particularly relevant to Baumgartner's art. Richter's source images, however, are from photographs instead of videos.[20] Still, both artists choose specific stills to transfer into their chosen medium: oil

paint and woodcut, respectively. They each begin with a clear image of a natural landscape or manmade structure and then filter it through their manipulated matrix, blurring what was once instantly discernable.[21] Whereas Baumgartner uses her horizontal grid, Richter covers his canvas with a patchwork of paint. In his work *Seestück* (Seascape) (1975) (fig. 2.15), movement from the viewer is once again important because up close, Richter's painting appears as an abstract surface of blues and grays and browns swirling in a unified dance. Once distance has been placed between the work and viewer, the image reconstructs into a misty ocean vista. Both of these artists determined how to harness the potential that comes from obscuring the familiar, forcing a viewer to work and take time to comprehend the image instead of getting it via a quick glance.

Richter's *Great Sphinx of Gizeh* (1964) (fig. 2.16) shares the whizzing movement used in Baumgartner's *Gelände* (Field) (2010) (fig. 2.17), where she displays a field as seen from the side window of a speeding car. Rushed past the monument, the viewer is denied access to details and absorption of the full landscape. The blurring effect of the rock structure creates striated lines akin to Baumgartner's grid, disrupting a smooth reading of the image. Playing with perspective, parts of the image stay in focus, while others are barely recognizable. Richter has taken a familiar object and shrouded it in mystery (in this instance an object that also personifies mystery in and of itself). The face of the famous Sphinx is in slight profile and shadow, masking its features and forcing it to appear more akin to its surrounding rock formations. Its main signifier is the pyramid in the background, which has also been flattened and therefore pulled closer to the foreground, making it appear connected to the Sphinx. Like Baumgartner, Richter is consciously choosing to "blur things to make everything equally important and equally

unimportant."[22] Their methodologies focus on the visual experience and sense of a space that can be conveyed through an artwork, not the capturing of a specific moment in time.

Both Baumgartner and Richter work with images of tangible objects in known locales and filter them through a slow and methodical process that allows the images to exist unencumbered by circumstantial restraints. Dietmar Elger wrote of Richter's landscape paintings, "[they] work precisely because they transfer the fixed moment in the photograph into the timelessness of painting. The situation documented in the photographic original and bound to a topographical situation thus transcends the painting to become a placeless experience of Nature."[23] This same idea is true in Baumgartner's prints, perhaps even more so due to the repetitious nature of the woodcut. For example, most blocks are printed in editions, unlike a painting, which is an individual work. While Baumgartner's printed editions are meant to last, they do come from a long history of ephemera, where a constant redistribution of prints was common, and therefore, they often spread across a wide range, making them familiar and available to a large group of people.[24] This notion of wide dissemination allows the prints to exist in more than one place, which also positions them in multiple contexts. Baumgartner's prints, although permanent works, continue to demonstrate this concept because they reside simultaneously in multiple collections around the world, permitting a global audience an opportunity to spend time with her contemplative works.

Richter said, "I would like to try to understand what *is*. We know very little, and I am trying to do it by creating analogies. Almost every work of art is an analogy. When I make a representation of something, this too is an analogy to what exists; I make an effort to get a grip on the thing by depicting it."[25] Baumgartner shares this objective in her

printed excerpts of reality. She, like Virilio, has opinions about speed, technology, and human interaction, and she takes on these issues through the medium of woodcut. While these concerns run through each of her works, her prime objective is constructing an experience. Baumgartner, when depicting speed, keeps the image literal so that the viewer can focus on the physicality of being in front of her prints. Hamlyn noted, "There is none of the heroism of the futurist inheritance: the romance of man and machine merged in hectic motion."[26] Through tunnels, planes, and freeways, she indicates the presence of people without depicting them in the scene. Her prime intention is to fabricate a composition that is visually stimulating, using time based media that has been diced and distorted yet preserved of its energy and instilled with an air of placelessness. Her societal commentary is a secondary component. Her focus is on the act of looking. She wants you to observe and sense these concepts of motion and interact with her work, but she is not forcefully propagating a single viewpoint.

It is up to the viewer to decide what to take from Baumgartner's works. While this discussion of movement has demonstrated her drive to display high speeds, she is actually commenting on the need to slow down. She is using motion to establish a jumping off point for the next main theme to be discussed, introspection. Her dizzying prints open a portal into timeless visions of the world around us, allowing for self-reflection on issues concerning technology, history, and memory. In the next chapter, her history and connections to the writings of Russian-American poet and essayist Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996) will be used to introduce a guideline for possible readings of her works in relation to these ideas.

Notes

[1] *Standstill* is a term repeatedly used by Baumgartner both when titling and speaking of her work. It is a translation of the German word *Stillstand*, which means to "stop" or "halt."

[2] "Paul Virilio," *The European Graduate School*, 2012, http://www.egs.edu/faculty/paul-virilio/biography/.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Paul Virilio, Interview by Jérôme Sans, "the game of love and chance: a discussion with Paul Virilio," *Watson Institute for International Studies*, November 1999, http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/sans.cfm.

[5] Christiane Baumgartner quoted in Jeannette Stoschek, "Visualizing Time," in *Reel Time* (London: Alan Cristea Gallery, 2011), 8.

[6] Virilio, Interview by John Armitage, Translated by Patrice Riemens, "The Kosovo War Took Place In Orbital Space," *Ctheory*, October 18, 2000, http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=132.

[7] Baumgartner quoted in Anne Hamlyn, "Figuring Speed," in *Speed/Standstill* (Leipzig: Christiane Baumgartner/Carivari, 2003), 26.

[8] For more information see Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[9] For more information see *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse*, Libby Hruska, ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011).

[10] See *Op Art*, Martina Weinhardt and Max Hollein, eds. (Köln: König, 2007).

[11] Baumgartner quoted in Stoschek, "Visualizing Time," 7.

[12] Ibid., 10.

[13] Ibid., 10.

[14] For more information on the Hamilton Building's history as an automobile showroom, see http://www.pafa.org/Museum/Research-Archives/The-Buildings/Hamilton-Building/64/.

[15] Baumgartner, In conversation with the author, November 5, 2011.

[16] Baumgartner quoted in Nicholas James, *Interviews-Artists* (London: Cv Publications, 2010), 23.

[17] Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, translation by Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 66.

[18] *Allee* is similar to the words "alley" or "boulevard."

[19] Baumgartner quoted from video, "Christiane Baumgartner: Screen Shot," Alan Cristea Gallery, http://www.alancristea.com/artist-Christiane-Baumgartner.

[20] For discussions of Richter's *Archive* (source images) see Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, Robert Storr, ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002).

[21] For discussions of Richter's use of the blur see *Gerhard Richter: Early Work, 1951-1972*, Christine Mehring, Jeanne Anne Nugent, and Jon L. Seydl, eds. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010); and *Gerhard Richter*, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, ed. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009).

[22] Gerhard Richter quoted in *Gerhard Richter: Text. Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961-2007*, Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist, eds. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 33.

[23] Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter: Landscapes* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 27.

[24] See Rebecca Zorach and Elizabeth Rodini, "On Imitation and Invention: An Introduction to the Reproductive Print," in *Paper Museums: The Reproductive Print in Europe: 1500-1800* (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, 2005), 1-29.

[25] Richter quoted in *Gerhard Richter: Text. Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961-2007*, 55.

[26] Baumgartner quoted in Hamlyn, "Figuring Speed," 26.

CHAPTER 3
"TWISTS OF LANGUAGE": SELF-REFLECTION FILTERED THROUGH THE MATRIX OF A PRINTMAKER

As demonstrated in the last chapter, Baumgartner wants her prints to be approached as physical and emotional experiences, based on the viewer's reaction to their visual aspects. As displayed by her and Richter's use of the blur (see figs. 2.16 and 2.17), this technique not only creates and suggests movement, but it demonstrates how familiar images can be restructured in order to allow viewers to find their own point of reference within the work and apply it to their personal circumstances. Discovering their inherent commentaries on contemporary lifestyles is not a viewing requirement. However, her works lend themselves to multiple inferences, overwhelmingly driven by Baumgartner's interest in giving viewers an opportunity for self-reflection and meditation. By capturing her own visually poetic moments of reflection through the use of widely relatable images, she inspires viewers to use her prints as templates for considering issues surrounding history, memories, and how one interacts with the world. Many of her works focus on these subjects due to her experiences in a divided post-war Germany. Additionally, she finds influence in Russian history, demonstrated by her Soviet Union inspired guidebook titled *Detour* and, most prominently, her interest in the writings of Joseph Brodsky (the Russian-American poet and essayist).[1] In 2002, she produced original woodcuts to illustrate a reprint of Brodsky's essay "Less Than One" (1986), which chronicles his upbringing in World War II Leningrad, Russia. This publication demonstrates how Baumgartner relates to and shares Brodsky's interest in artistically capturing self-reflection and recognizing one's view of the world. Building on this relationship, this

chapter will examine how Baumgartner's prints illustrate the importance of personal meditative thought by commenting on its relation to one's background, physical surroundings, and connection to the past and notion of time (especially in regards to memory), as well as the significance of reevaluating one's perspective of the modern experience.

Beginning with an introduction of the similarities in their artistic processes, I will establish the relationship between Brodsky and Baumgartner. Brodsky often wrote about the connection between the poet and society, emphasizing the ability of literature to have a positive impact on society and help develop its language and culture. In many ways, Baumgartner comments on this same issue, substituting the visual artist for the poet. As with poetry, her prints embody messages, but like the lyrical rhythm of the words, the beauty is in her matrix. The experience of reading a poem is thought to be provocative and emotional, an outcome she aims for with her prints. As the reader must do with lines of poetry, the viewer must look beyond the beauty of the woodcut and the rhythm of the horizontal lines to decipher the messages within and recognize the print's meditative and thematic properties.

In Brodsky's poem "Lullaby of Cape Cod" (1975), he describes the experience of leaving one empire (Russia) for another (United States). The verses are heavy with sullen imagery of the physical world around him, as captured in this excerpt pertaining to his flight to the U.S.:

> ... Below me curled
> serpentine rivers, roads bloomed with dust, ricks yellowed,
> and everywhere in that diminished world,
> in formal opposition, near and far,
> lined up like print in a book about to close,

> armies rehearsed their games in balanced rows
> and cities all went dark as caviar.
>
> And then the darkness thickened. All lights fled,
> a turbine droned, a head ached rhythmically,
> and space backed up like a crab, time surged ahead
> into first place, and streaming westwardly,
> seemed to be heading home, void of all light,
> soiling its garments with the tar of night.[2]

Brodsky captures a straightforward scene of life in this verse, yet his words have elevated the experience to a metaphysical state. The cadence of the lines brings beauty and familiarity to an otherwise troubling scene of sadness and solitude, as well as provides a gateway to the author, so that the reader may participate in processing this memory. This interplay between creator and recipient is how one is meant to relate to Baumgartner's prints. Take, for example, her diptych *Trails* (2008) (figs. 3.1-2), which displays a team of planes flying overhead, leaving contrails across the sky, evidence of the passage of time. The trails radiate from the planes like a light-beam from a flashlight. They widen at the top of the print, suggesting rapid acceleration of the planes into the depths of the composition. These vapors are visual representations of the movements of the planes through time. They show the exact path taken by the pilots, detailing each turn and adjustment throughout this section of their journey. The blurred planes continue the suggestion of motion by appearing to vibrate within the print, fighting to break free from their suspension in mid-air. Their hazy identities also make them timeless, for they could be commercial or military, dating from the early-twentieth century to the present. In actuality, the prints depict World War II Allied bombers taken from a German propaganda film. Baumgartner's process fragments the framework of the event and molds it into an abstract depiction of time, motion, and place. While examining the poem and

the woodcuts, the beholder must float between the multiple layers of interpretation, considering the groundings of the works in reality, as well as the metaphysical perspectives they illuminate.

The physical and metaphysical aspects of Baumgartner's prints are fundamental in considering the notion of self-reflection and her connection to the works of Brodsky. When composing a woodcut, Baumgartner prefers images that are exceptionally prevalent. As explored in the last chapter, this approach allows the work to be readily accessible to a wide range of viewers. By taking these stills of our physical reality and drastically enlarging them, she uses the matrix to transform what were once rather ordinary concepts into monumental imagery, and brings "experience and weight to an otherwise unexperienced moment."[3] These new metaphysical visions are now open to interpretation and contemplation, and as Julia Blume puts it, Baumgartner captures these images "voyeuristically and in so doing toys with dramatic tension without there ever being any drama—events remain part of the indifference of everyday life."[4] Baumgartner possesses her own associations and thought processes when constructing her works, which will be examined in this chapter. Yet ultimately, once viewers stand before one of her works, it is up to them to decide what to take from their encounter with her prints.

A person's background and his or her response to those collective experiences play a significant part in shaping their worldview. Baumgartner and Brodsky's perspectives are linked as a result of both maturing under a repressive regime. These experiences played a pivotal role in developing how they would later express themselves through their chosen mediums and perceive/present the world. As a result of living in East Germany since infancy, Baumgartner, for example, took a strong interest in urban

development and the effects an altered environment has on its inhabitants.[5] This idea is also reflected in Brodsky's life. Growing up during World War II, he likewise witnessed many hardships and urban transformations as a youth in 1940s Leningrad. In an essay titled "A Guide to a Renamed City" (1986), Brodsky commented on the significance of his surroundings, writing: "The depiction of both the actual and mental interior of the city, of its impact on the people and their inner world, became the main subject of Russian literature almost from the very day of this city's founding."[6] He provided an allegory characterizing the dominant influence of Lenin over the city, originally known as Saint Petersburg, writing:

> The monument before the Finland Station is unique … for Comrade Lenin delivers his oration standing on the top of an armored car. It's done in the style of early Constructivism, so popular nowadays in the West, and in general the very idea of carving an armored car out of stone smacks of a certain psychological acceleration, of the sculptor being a bit ahead of his time. As far as I know, this is the only monument to a man on an armored car that exists in the world. In this respect alone, it is a symbol of a new society. The old society used to be represented by men on horseback.[7]

He later added, "On the whole, this Russian execution of the Prussian military ideal of society, together with the cumbersome apartment style buildings squeezed between the classical ensembles, produces rather a disheartening effect."[8] He further lamented his experiences living in this environment in his 1986 essay "Less Than One," in which Brodsky recounts his upbringing in Leningrad and describes his tribulations in school, encounters with discrimination, and disgust for the repetitive and centralized nature of his home city.

In 2002, Baumgartner made original woodcuts for a re-print of this essay, a publication done in collaboration with book designer Sabine Golde (b. 1964). Notably, her act of making book illustrations reflects her Dürer roots, especially in relation to his

literary inspired *Apocalypse* cycle as mentioned in chapter one (fig. 1.3). Just as Dürer's Book of Revelation illustrations overshadowed the text in prominence, Baumgartner's illustrations consume two-page spreads each, while also book-ending and directing the flow of the essay by interrupting each section of writing. This reprint also relates to Dürer's time, since dating back to the 1490s publishers recognized a market for illustrated books. For book illustrations, woodcuts were commercially the obvious method, since they could be printed in the same press and simultaneously with type. An engraving, on the other hand, would have to be printed separately in a different press, making it a more expensive endeavor.[9]

Baumgartner's first illustration for the re-print (fig. 3.3) depicts a rather uninhabited looking street, lined with towering, receding streetlights. The looming poles form a narrow lane that appears to have no terminus, its farthest point of depth consisting of little more than a hazy, engulfing shadow in the distance. Its suggestions of uniformity and barrenness evoke the eerie stillness of a tyrannized Leningrad or the darkened streets of a regulated Leipzig. In *Less Than One III* (fig. 3.4), three buildings peek above what resembles a wall of bushes or open fencing, permitting ghostly outlines of the buildings to bleed through this visual blockade. Each has the same cookie-cutter silhouette, monotonously bland and industrial. The structures are also tightly spaced, alluding to the urban, "military" specifications that Brodsky observed in his city's new layout. In this series, the printmaker is representing her reactions to Brodsky's thoughts and memories, while also making the illustrations relate to her own associations with these themes of repression and bleakness. This printed reaction parallels the suggested role of

Baumgartner's viewers, which is to reflect on the imagery depicted in her prints and apply their personal impressions to their own lives and surroundings.

In "A Guide to a Renamed City," Brodsky also noted, "Sometimes [Leningrad] gives the impression of an utter egoist preoccupied solely with its own appearance. It is true that in such places you pay more attention to façades than to faces."[10] After a visit to Birmingham, England circa 2006, Baumgartner was struck by an example of paying "more attention to façades than to faces," which caused her to reflect on the impact of her surroundings. She recalled this memory in an interview:

> I was particularly drawn to the long tunnel called Queensway and Spaghetti Junction and to the way the town had been developed in the years following the Second World War and the bombings. … For example, if you walk from the station to the Ikon [Gallery] along Fletchers Walk, by the University library, you have to pass under a bridge and walk through a tunnel under the road. It seems that pedestrians were the last people to be considered when Birmingham was rebuilt in the 1960s—the philosophy was all about the car as a means of getting around.[11]

Compared to Brodsky's Leningrad, this is a drastically less invasive example of how a city's layout can affect its citizens. Yet, it highlights this idea of ushering in the future, along with its accelerating technologies, often at the expense of the individual and culture. It harks back to Brodsky's statue allegory, with the armored car of the future overshadowing its equestrian predecessors.

Growing up in a restrictive environment herself, Baumgartner is sensitive to this type of control, demonstrating the powerful influence of experiences on one's perspective. Representing this observation, she composed the print series *Solaris I-IV* (2008) (figs. 3.5-8), which portrays "the best tunnels I could find and are taken from a [Andrei] Tarkovsky film of the same name."[12] Again, she is using a Russian point of reference in order to capture her intended composition. Still, her process renders these

"movie" tunnels ordinary in appearance. These prints are completely devoid of the natural landscape. The depicted space is confined and austere, with a rigid design and artificial illumination. The structures are completely manmade, yet stripped of even basic essentials for inhabitance. While these tunnels are purposefully designed for the sake of vehicular travel and convenience, Baumgartner focuses on this opposition of nature versus artificiality to encourage awareness of technology's potential dominance over our lives. The series epitomizes the concerns shared by Baumgartner, Brodsky, and also Paul Virilio on the need for a society that contemplates its actions and questions how the design of the world affects both one's physical and metaphysical experiences of reality.

Baumgartner also comments on the importance of introspection and its effect on one's life based on observations of the past. This is represented through numerous depictions of history and memory, and these two powerful elements are tightly interwoven in her prints. In an interview, Baumgartner recalled watching television and coming across a World War II documentary:

> I was really affected by this. I don't watch TV very often and I was zapping through the channels thinking how strange it was that you are exposed to so many different ideas and subjects—a soap opera, the news on the hijacking of the school in Beslan, and then this documentary. The most disturbing thing about this programme, which included live film footage, was the voices of the pilots celebrating as they dropped bombs onto targets below. But somehow, because it was being shown on the TV, many years later, in the comfort of my private home, I was distanced from the actual event and lost a sense of conscience and consciousness about what was real and what was not.[13]

She quickly realized how removed she was from that time and how the television screen acted as a shield from the reality of the past, protecting her from the harshness and violence of those events. She was able to cast a removed eye safe in her house, and be less affected emotionally and completely removed physically. This realization inspired

her to start videotaping the footage right from the screen, and it would later become the source of her still for *Luftbild* (fig. 2.10). She noted, "It was so strange for [this footage] to enter my world this way, I wasn't searching for it, it found me."[14] However, Baumgartner is not attempting to make a comment on World War II specifically. Instead, she sees this mental detachment, brought on by the desensitization of constant visual media, as her interesting and somewhat alarming focus. By keeping the date and identities of the planes just out of reach of the viewer, she makes it a general image of modern war. It remains a timeless warning as to how technology alters society's grasp on the realities of the present and our past.

Other artists, such as the American Martha Rosler (b. 1943), have also used their works to highlight how the media can anesthetize experience. Her series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1967-1972) combines news photos of the Vietnam War with images from contemporary home and design magazines. In *Beauty Rest* (fig. 3.9), a contented American family lays across their clean luxury bed that is situated in a bombed-out corner of a room. Oblivious to the destruction surrounding them, the mother continues reading and the father and son play with a toy. Rosler revisited this series in 2004, creating works that unite images of the war in Iraq with the modern living room. In *Photo-Op* (fig. 3.10), a young woman, distracted by her cell phone, poses dramatically in the middle of the room, while an injured young girl and seemingly burned woman lay on her designer furniture. Explosions and soldiers dominate the view outside her oversized windows, yet the model pays no attention. Rosler, like Baumgartner, recognizes the separation that technology has caused between the average person and violent realities. Her two series force the viewer to contemplate how media influences his or her

psychological associations to these unsettling images by confronting the viewer with extremely exaggerated and constructed situations. Rosler's heightened works are focused on specific events, making them much more direct. This concept runs counter to Baumgartner's works, where a more allusive approach is employed.

Baumgartner's works often relate back to issues surrounding war, but since her prints are meant to remain flexible in focus and perspective, the role of her process is crucial. News on her radio about catastrophes happening around the world made it hard for Baumgartner to separate these events from her work. She comments, "I was working on subjects such as speed and standstill, cars and planes and it was obvious, in a sense, that I would come to military conflicts. But I don't want to work on this theme in a specific way. I want it to be more generalized."[15] This issue came up when first designing *Transall* (2002-04) (fig. 1.8), which she started in 2001, shortly after making the *Lisbon* series (fig. 1.6). Unlike most of her works that begin with home videos, *Transall* came from "a tiny newsprint photograph saved from several years ago when [she] had a residency in Ireland."[16] The image remained unused for two years, allowing it to have "no particular topicality,"[17] her ideal situation. Once her residency was completed, she "sent the block back to Leipzig but, unfortunately, it was damaged in transit."[18] Not long after her return home, the attack on the World Trade Center occurred, filling this aviation image with numerous negative connotations and compelling her to walk away from the project.

Months later, she revisited the woodcut, deciding to try her best at preventing this tragic event from infiltrating her thoughts while cutting the block. She also chose to produce it at a much larger scale, stating: "This image is so full of menace, power and

force that I felt it had to be big, as big as I could get the wood and the paper. I like the idea of rebuilding such powerful objects of our present time in such an ancient method as woodcut."[19] In actuality, to completely remove these influences from the context of the print is impossible. Yet at the same time, it's important to recognize that although this woodcut emerged from a photograph taken circa 1999, her matrix gave this image the ability to take on new associations and be used as a symbol of conflict in general, as this snapshot acquires meaning linked to what plagues our world today.

Baumgartner is a manipulator of reality, redefining our perspective of the ordinary, as is discernable from her body of work. Her alterations are what make her prints unique, like glimpses into personal memories. The series *1 Sekunde* (1 Second) (2004) (fig. 3.11) documents one second of film, taken by Baumgartner while in a moving vehicle, segmented into twenty-five separate woodcuts.[20] To develop this series, she sifted through thousands of stills, selecting only the frames that best suited her overall vision. The outcome was a distorted representation of a second's time rushing past a tree-lined freeway, summarized by twenty-five selected fragments. Much like a memory, certain details of the moment have faded, while others remain strong. As Brodsky described, "attempting to recall the past is like trying to grasp the meaning of existence. Both make one feel like a baby clutching at a basketball: one's palms keep sliding off."[21] By restricting this series to black and white, Baumgartner is further linking *1 Sekunde* to memory, since often when one tries to recall a distant memory, color details are hazy or missing. This can also occur in dreams, where the mind occasionally replays disrupted versions of personal experiences, often in grayscale. In this series, the viewer is introduced to Baumgartner's chosen re-telling of this small portion of her drive down a

freeway. Multiple frames are left in a complete haze with monotone foliage entangled in an indecipherable collage, while others contain prominent branches and tree trunks that give a sense of focus and depth amidst a speeding landscape. Without these solid beacons that move from frame to frame, the conveyance of time would be weakened. These powerfully repetitive shapes are what allow the eye to see subtle changes in orientation. For each millisecond that passes, the viewer's perspective of the same location evolves, forcing the alignment of the branches in relation to each other and the viewer to constantly transform and appear closer, taller, and/or wider with each print.

Baumgartner's interest in altered perspective is not exclusive to her prints. In 2004, she published a book titled *Detour* with Lucy Harrison, an artist based in London, that chronicles their excursions through Tallinn, Estonia, (which they had both visited previously) as they searched for the city's monuments using "two Soviet-era guide books, one from 1971 (in Russian), one from 1980 (in English)."[22] The book recounts their individual observations of the trip, accompanied by text snippets from the Soviet guidebooks that introduce the tour locations sought out by the duo. *Detour* is filled with their contemporary images of the monuments, taken as close as possible to the ones in the guidebooks. Where monuments were no longer standing or could not be found, Baumgartner and Harrison would photograph "their most suitable positions in the vicinity."[23] Just as these photographs represent the existence or memory of these monuments, Baumgartner's prints serve as monuments on paper to our evolution and history as a society. She captures moments that relate to her personal history, yet they are in many ways more closely wedded to documenting the "memory" of society, representing and reminding viewers of past events and how, through technological

advancements, people risk losing their connection with reality. Her prints bring these issues to the surface and act as memorials to society's development and growth, while directing viewers to not lose sight of their own perspective and enrichment through meditative thought.

Following her own suggestion of revisiting the past, Baumgartner, who lived in Tallinn years prior as an exchange student, returned to the city with the intention of revisiting memories, testing her grasp of the older city layout. Baumgartner recalls, "When Estonia was still part of the Soviet Union and I lived in East Germany, I stayed in a flat which faced the Viru Hotel. Now, 15 years later, I tried to find the flat again, or at least its position in relation to the hotel. In my memory the Viru Hotel was rotated 90 degrees from the position I find it in now."[24] Not only was her orientation in the city thrown, but also its appearance had drastically changed.

When Baumgartner lived in Estonia, the republic was facing a pivotal milestone in its campaign to regain independence. It was not until August 20, 1991 that Estonia was reestablished to its pre-1940's status.[25] Therefore, Baumgartner lived in what remained an oppressively occupied state. Returning years after the republic had regained authority gave her the opportunity to become reacquainted with a *new* Estonia. Baumgartner, influenced by her German and Soviet experiences of a restrictive government dynamic, was provided a chance to start fresh with a new perspective and explore her fascination with history and the notion of temporality. As in *1 Sekunde*, time and reflection allowed her to look at the city from a fresh vantage point, to see new facets of a landscape once hidden from view. Similar to this trip, Baumgartner's prints offer viewers an opportunity

to become reacquainted with familiar concepts, ideas, and events and perhaps reflect on these subjects with a new perspective.

As this discussion establishes and as explored in the previous chapters, viewer participation, both mentally and physically, is the culminating factor in Baumgartner's art. Her experiences offer a unique viewpoint on the functioning of our world today. Influenced by others with similar critical perspectives on life, she succeeds in visually conveying a reality often overlooked. Self-reflection and contemplation are her main messages, and by displaying universally relatable images, she presents her observations without sacrificing the viewer's personal experience and opportunity to gain insight into our society. Baumgartner wants to liberate the mind from the bombardments of rushed, technology-driven interaction and the velocity of our lifestyles. Her time-consuming and methodical process acts as a metaphor for her prescription to slow down and remain open-minded. She wants to share the sensation of her symbolic travels down the freeway, trees racing past the car window and long stretches of freedom conveyed in linear form, representing the benefits and importance of time.

Notes

[1] Joseph Brodsky was born in 1940, in Leningrad, Russia, and he died in 1996 in Brooklyn, New York. He left school at the age of fifteen, and during this time Brodsky taught himself English and Polish and began writing poetry. In March 1964 until November 1965, Brodsky lived in exile in the Arkhangelsk region of northern Russia, serving eighteen months of a five-year sentence in a labor camp for "social parasitism." In 1972, Joseph Brodsky became an involuntary exile from his native country and settled in the United States. In 1987, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

[2] Joseph Brodsky, "Lullaby of Cape Cod," *A Part of Speech*, Translated by Anthony Hecht (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980), 108.

[3] Baumgartner, "Text," *Christiane-Baumgartner*, http://www.christiane-baumgartner.com/text.html.

[4] Julia Blume, "Pausing," in *Speed/Standstill* (Leipzig: Christiane Baumgartner/Carivari, 2003), 8.

[5] Baumgartner in conversation with Jeannette Stoschek, "Visualizing Time," in *Reel Time* (London: Alan Cristea Gallery, 2011), 9.

[6] Brodsky, "A Guide to a Renamed City," *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986), 78.

[7] Ibid., 69.

[8] Ibid., 81.

[9] For more information on the early use of woodcuts see Antony Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking: An introduction to the history and techniques* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 16-22.

[10] Brodsky, "A Guide to a Renamed City," 77.

[11] Baumgartner quoted in Stoschek, "Visualizing Time," 9.

[12] Ibid., 9.

[13] Ibid., 8.

[14] Ibid., 8.

[15] Ibid., 8.

[16] Baumgartner quoted in Nicholas James, *Interviews-Artists* (London: Cv Publications, 2010), 24.

[17] Jeremy Lewison, "At the Still Point of the Turning World. The Prints of Christiane Baumgartner," in *Christiane Baumgartner* (Heemstede: Johan Deumens Gallery, 2007), 39.

[18] Ibid., 39.

[19] Baumgartner quoted in James, *Interviews-Artists*, 24.

[20] See chapter two for a discussion of her works in relation to chronophotography, a technique that shares similarities with this series.

[21] Brodsky, "Less Than One," *Less Than One: Selected Essays*, 3.

[22] Christiane Baumgartner and Lucy Harrison, *Detour*, Artist book, (Leipzig: PögeDruck and Mönch OHG, 2004), 3.

[23] Ibid., 3.

[24] Ibid., 4.

[25] For more information about Estonia's independence, see http://www.estonica.org/en/The_August_coup_and_Estonian_independence_1991/.

CONCLUSION

The work of Christiane Baumgartner warrants art historical study because of its groundbreaking uses and intermingling of the reproductive mediums of woodcut, video, and photography. As I've explored, her works comment on art and society today and the relationship of new technology to our past. Displayed by the juxtaposition of *Transall* (2002-04) (fig. 1.8) and Dürer's *Triumphal Arch of Maximilian I* (1515) (fig. 1.7), Baumgartner reveals a keen knowledge of the history of printmaking and seamlessly presents an interchange between contemporary and established techniques and the artistic treatment of historical events. Baumgartner's perspective on traditional printmaking pushes prints into a fresh territory, asserting its role in contemporary art.

By contextualizing the technical and thematic elements of Baumgartner's prints, my thesis offers insight into the process, mindset, and objectives of this contemporary, innovative printmaker. Resulting from her introduction to digital media, she unlocked the pivotal factor necessary to further examine and convey awareness about societal interaction and concerns. Baumgartner's choices of recognizable and relatable imagery allow her to include viewers in her conversation about the importance of introspection, as well as provide them with works that engage and challenge through stimulating optical experiences. In an interview, Baumgartner said: "It is important for an art work to leave space for the audience."[1] Through my analysis of how Baumgartner herself relates to her prints in response to her childhood in the German Democratic Republic era of Leipzig, relationships with similar-minded individuals, and guidance of traditional training, I have demonstrated the ways in which her prints are successful at conveying her unique perspective on our world today, while at the same time sustaining her sentiment regarding

the need for audience engaging art. Above all, she repeatedly achieves her objectives of uniting mediums separated by centuries and capturing the rapid speed of both physical and metaphysical concepts of motion, communication, and time.

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[1] Baumgartner quoted in Nicholas James, *Interviews-Artists* (London: Cv Publications, 2010), 21.

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FIGURES

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1 Attrib. Albrecht Dürer, *The Creation of Eve* from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, Woodcut, 1493.

Figure 1.2 Dürer, *Self portrait*, Silver point, 1484. Vienna, Albertina.

Figure 1.3 Dürer, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* from the series *Apocalypse*, Woodcut, 1498.

Figure 1.4 Christiane Baumgartner, *Klassenkameraden* (Classmates), Three silkscreens on paper, 1999.

Figure 1.5 Gerhard Richter, *Matrosen* (Sailors), Oil on canvas, 1966.

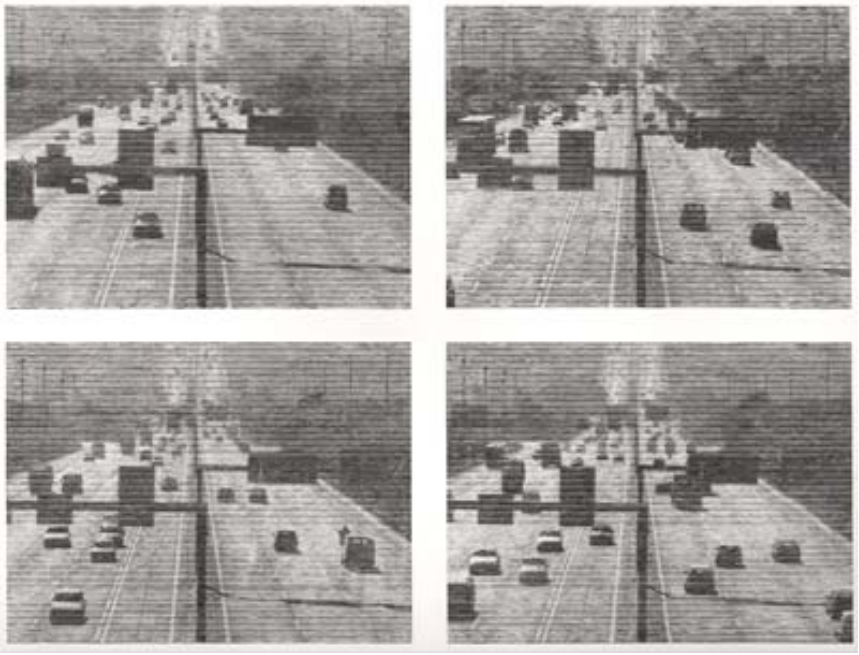


Figure 1.6 Christiane Baumgartner, *Lisbon I-IV*, Four woodcuts on Japanese paper, 2001.

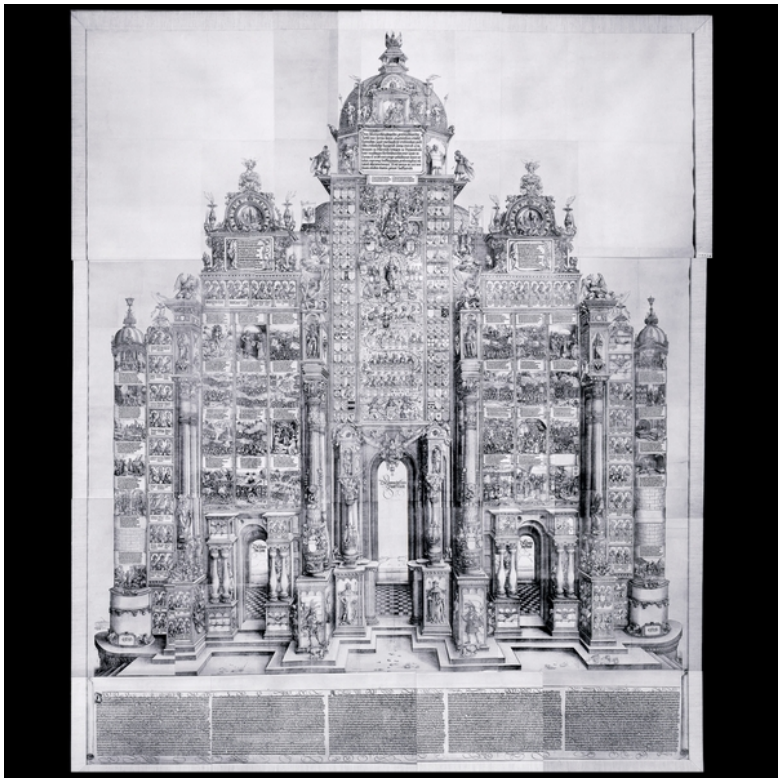


Figure 1.7 Albrecht Dürer et al., *Triumphal Arch of Maximilian I*, Woodcut, 1515. British Museum, London.

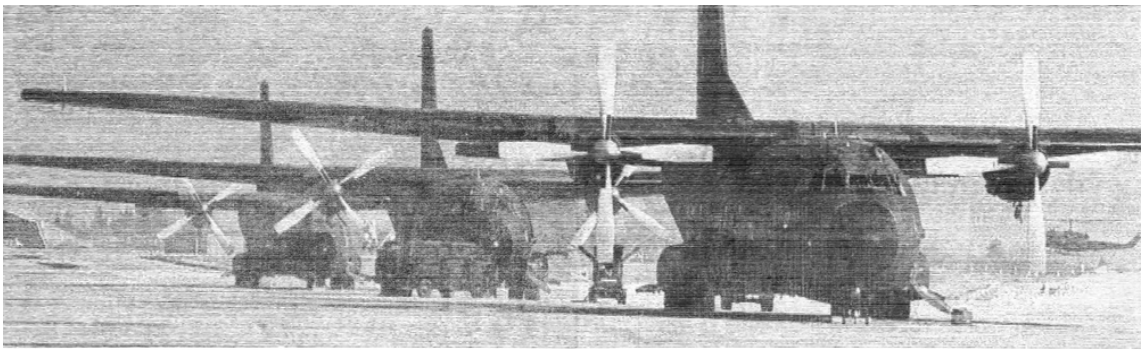
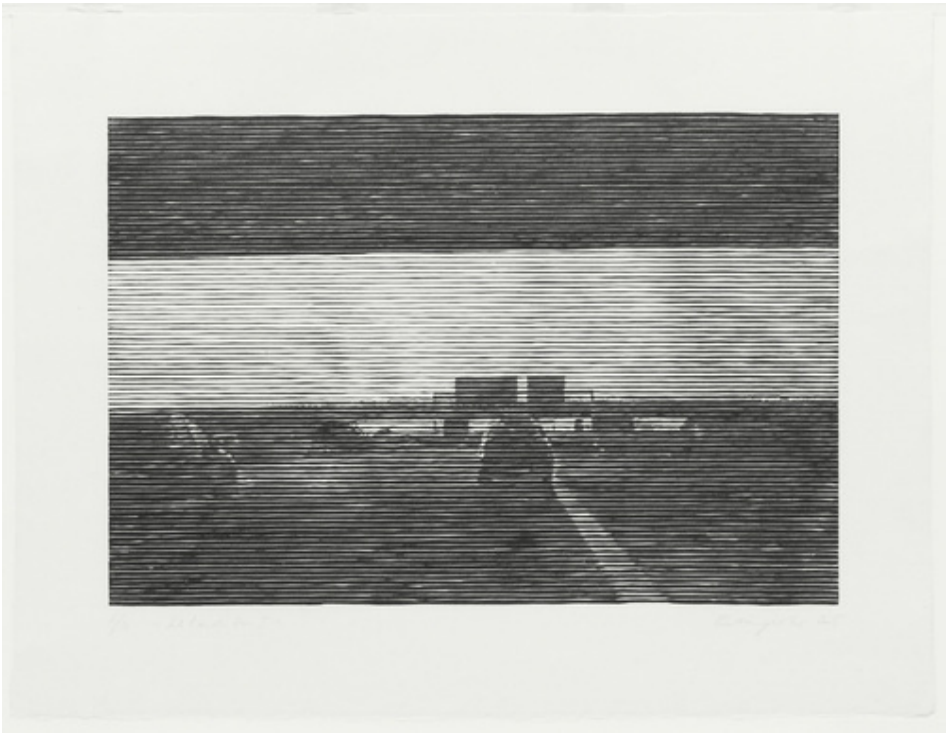
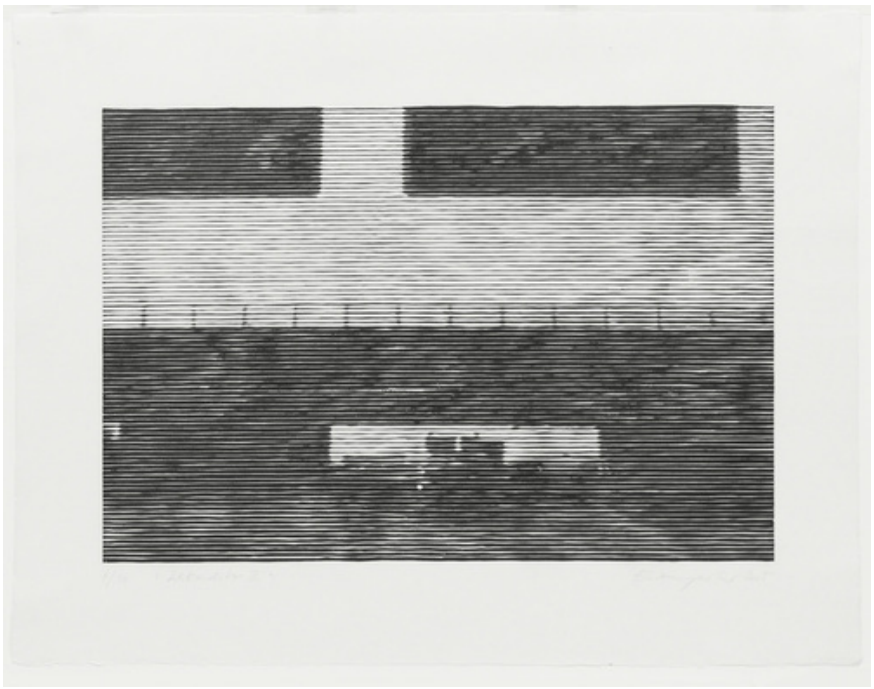


Figure 1.8 Christiane Baumgartner, *Transall*, Woodcut on Kozo paper, 2002. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

Chapter 2





Figures 2.1-4 Christiane Baumgartner, *Schkeuditz I-IV*, Series of four woodcuts, 2005. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

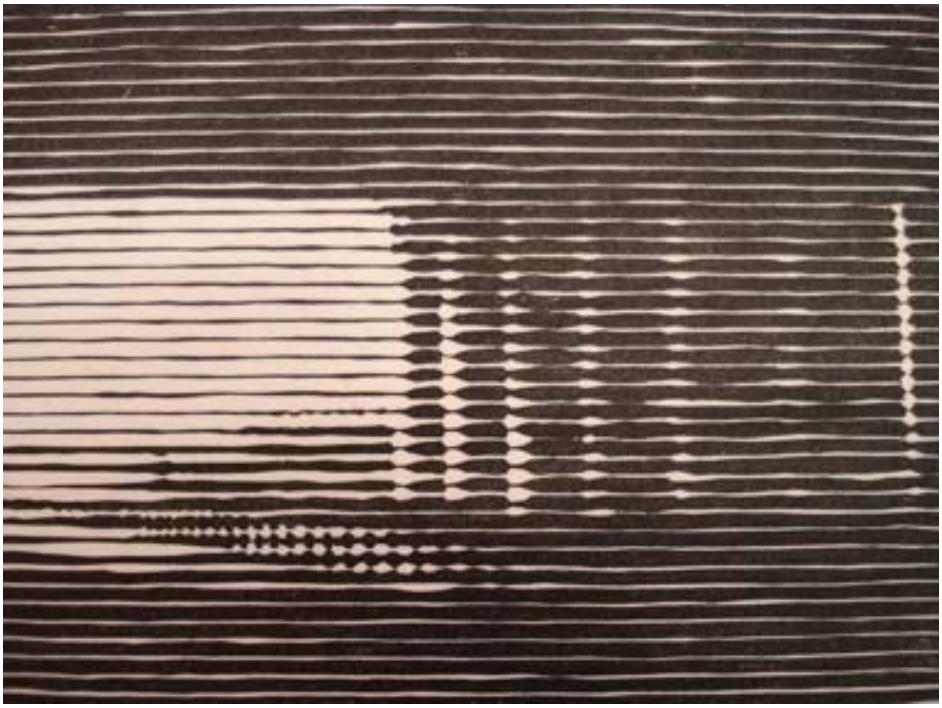


Figure 2.5 *Schkeuditz III* (detail)

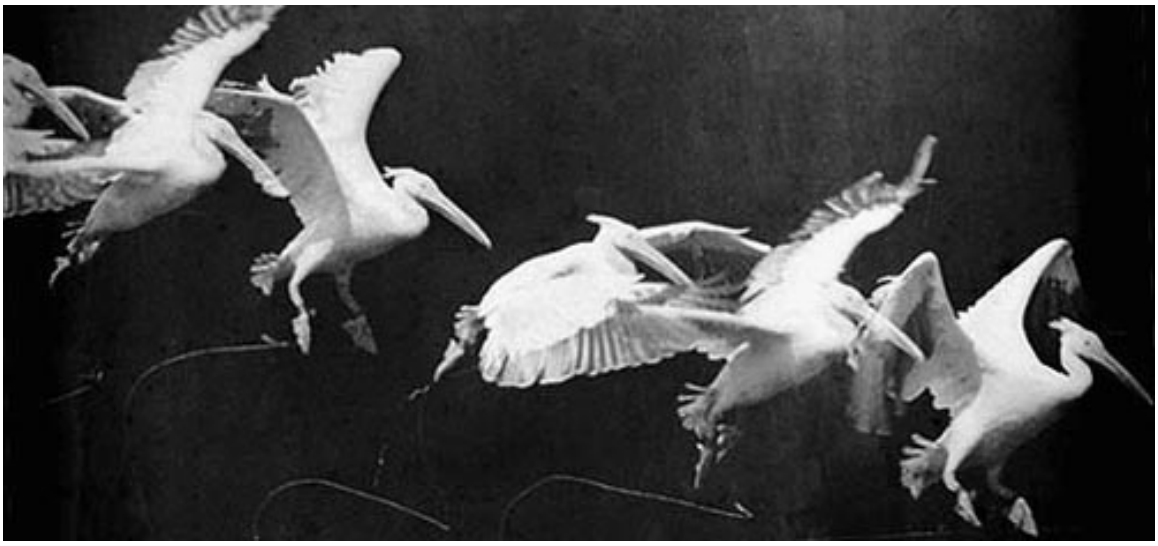


Figure 2.6 Étienne-Jules Marey, “Bird Flight, Pelican,” Chronophotograph, 1886.

Figure 2.7 Emil Nolde, *Fischdampfer* (Fishing Steamer), Woodcut, 1910. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

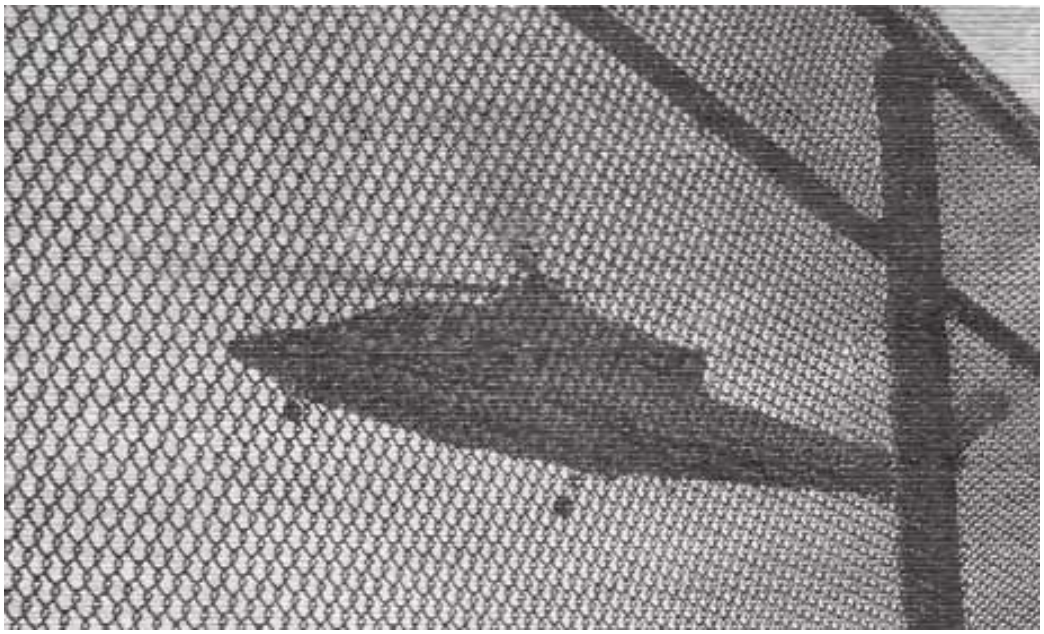


Figure 2.8 Baumgartner, *Manhattan Transfer*, Woodcut on Kozo paper, 2010.

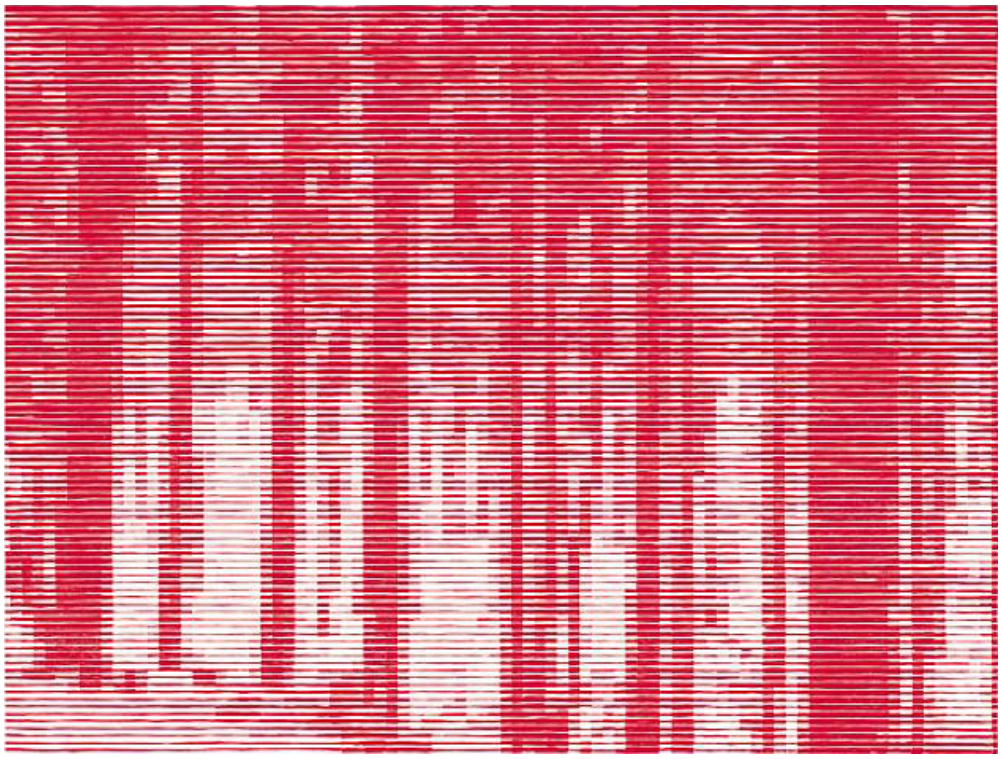


Figure 2.9 Baumgartner, *Deutscher Wald*, From a series of nine woodcuts, 2007.

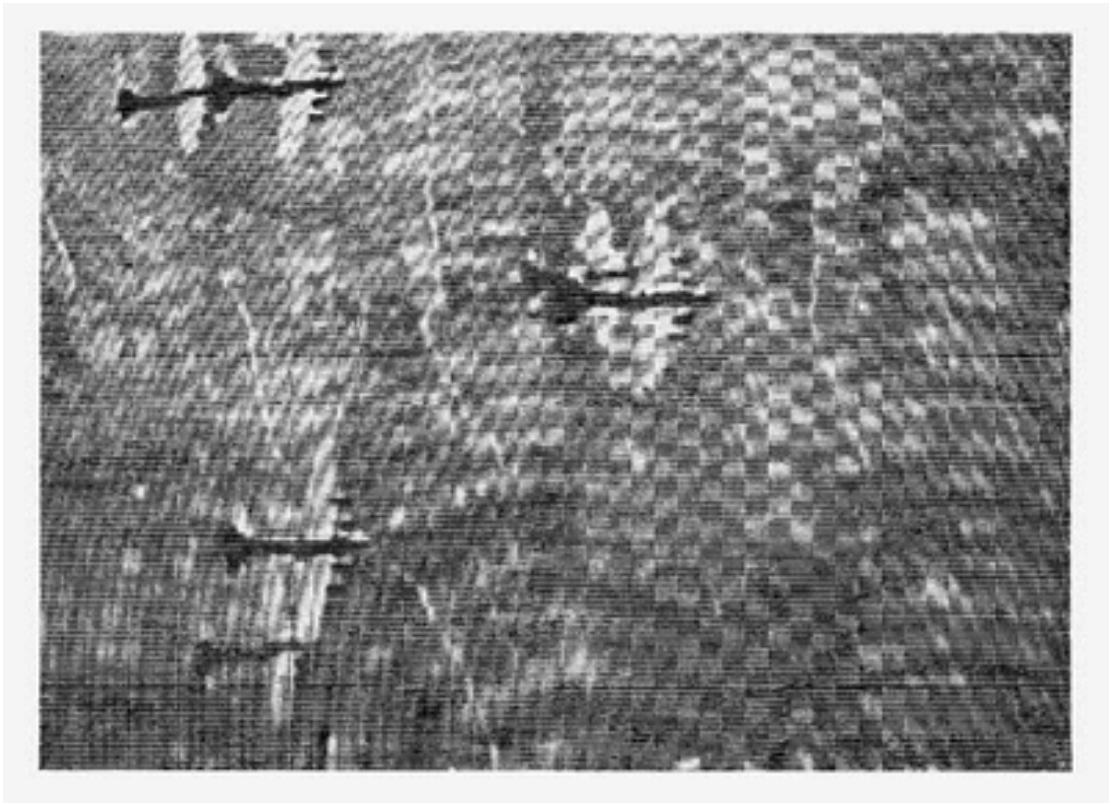


Figure 2.10 Baumgartner, *Luftbild*, Woodcut on Kozo paper, 2008-09.

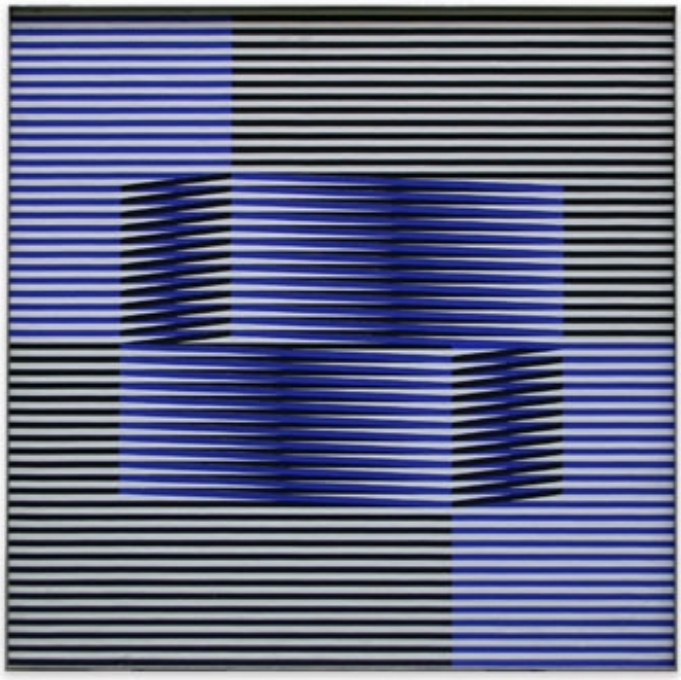


Figure 2.11 Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Induction Chromatique 63*, Silkscreen, 1974.

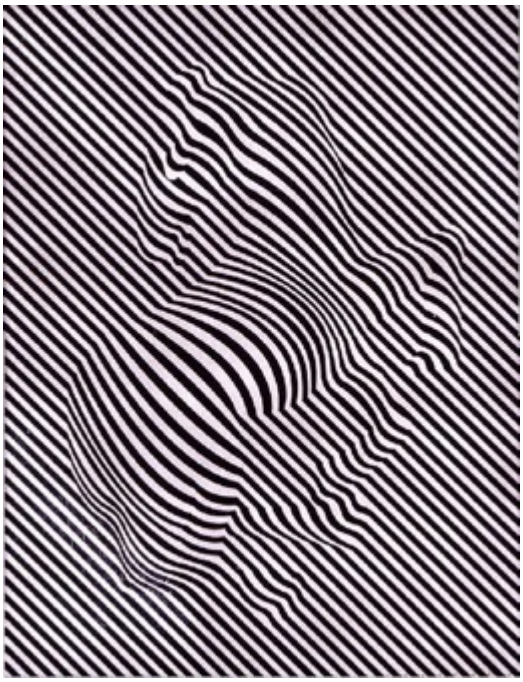
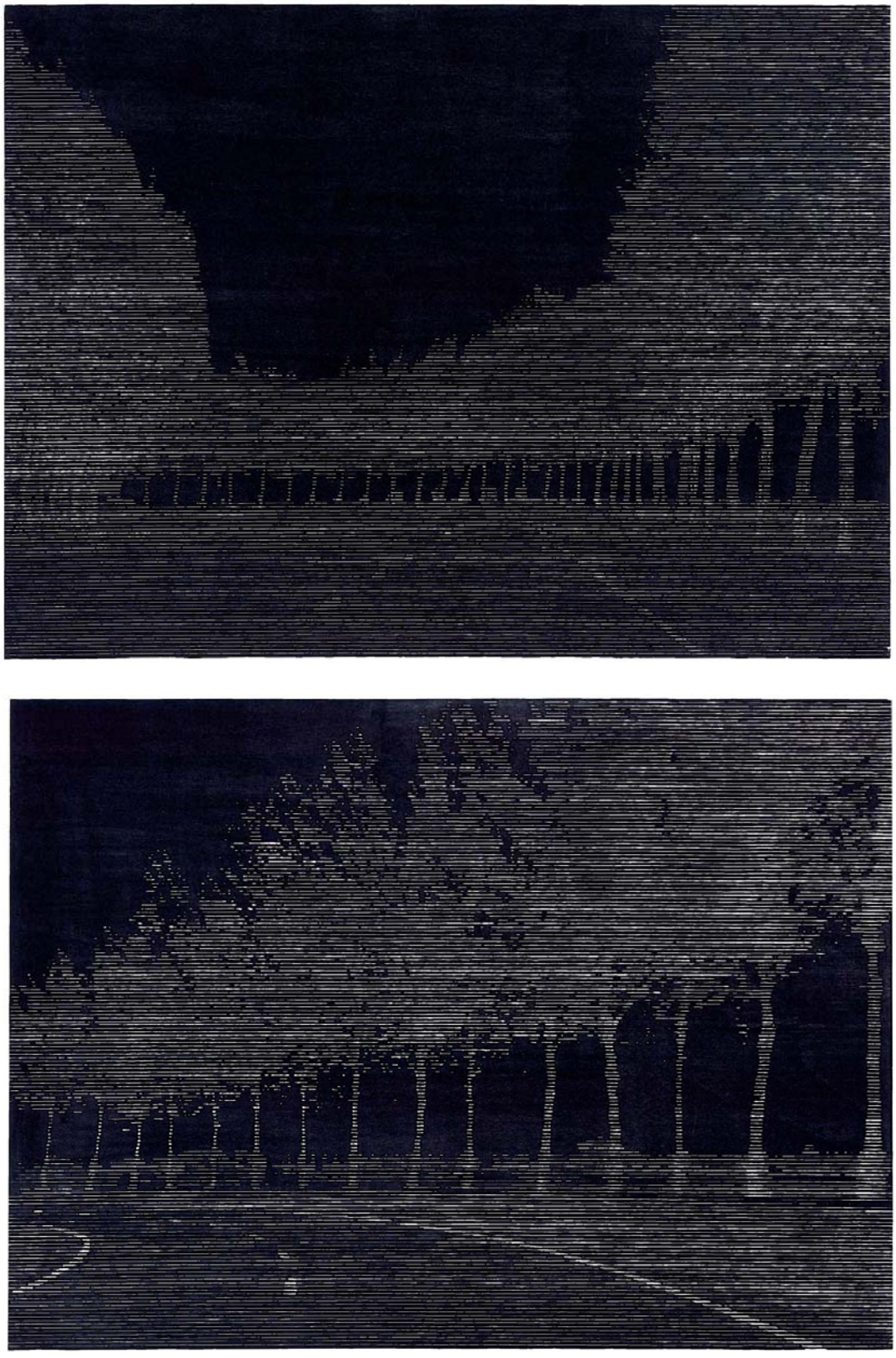


Figure 2.12 Victor Vasarely, *Zèbre*, Oil on canvas, 1944.



Figures 2.13-14 Baumgartner, *Allee I + II*, Woodcut diptych on Kozo paper, 2008.

Figure 2.15 Gerhard Richter, *Seestück* (Seascape), Oil on canvas, 1975.

Figure 2.16 Richter, *Great Sphinx of Gizeh*, Oil on canvas, 1964.

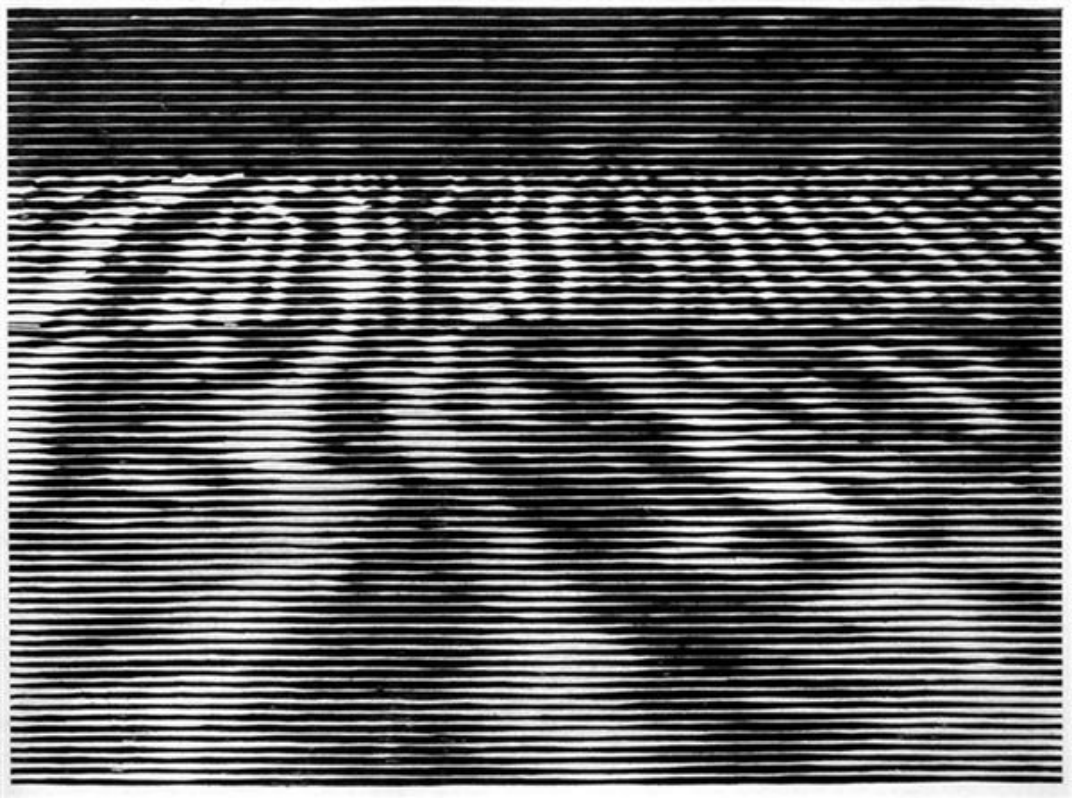
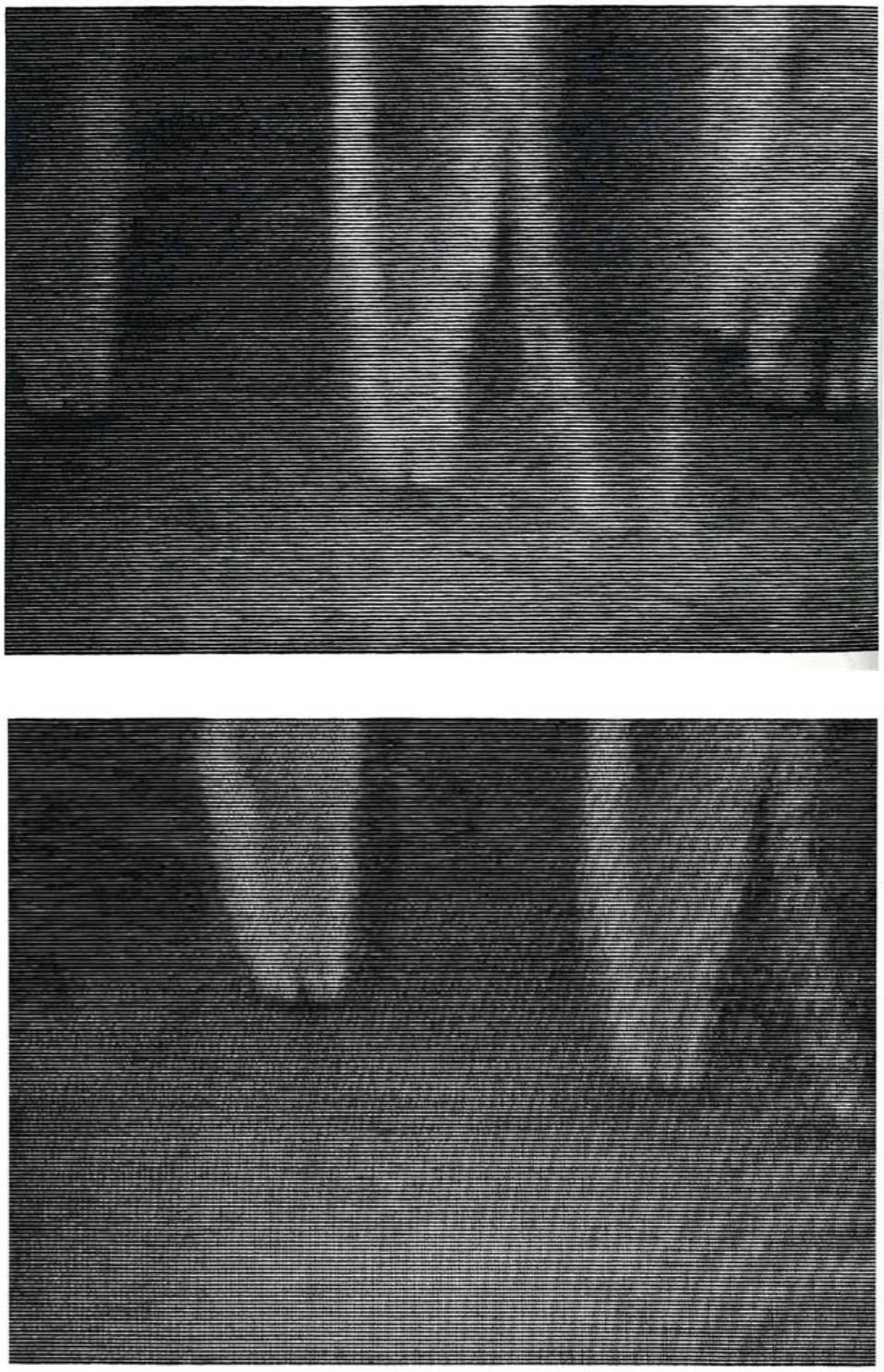


Figure 2.17 Baumgartner, *Gelände*, Woodcut on Atsukuchi Japanese paper, 2010.

Chapter 3



Figures 3.1-2 Christiane Baumgartner, *Trails I + II*, Woodcut diptych on Kozo paper, 2008.

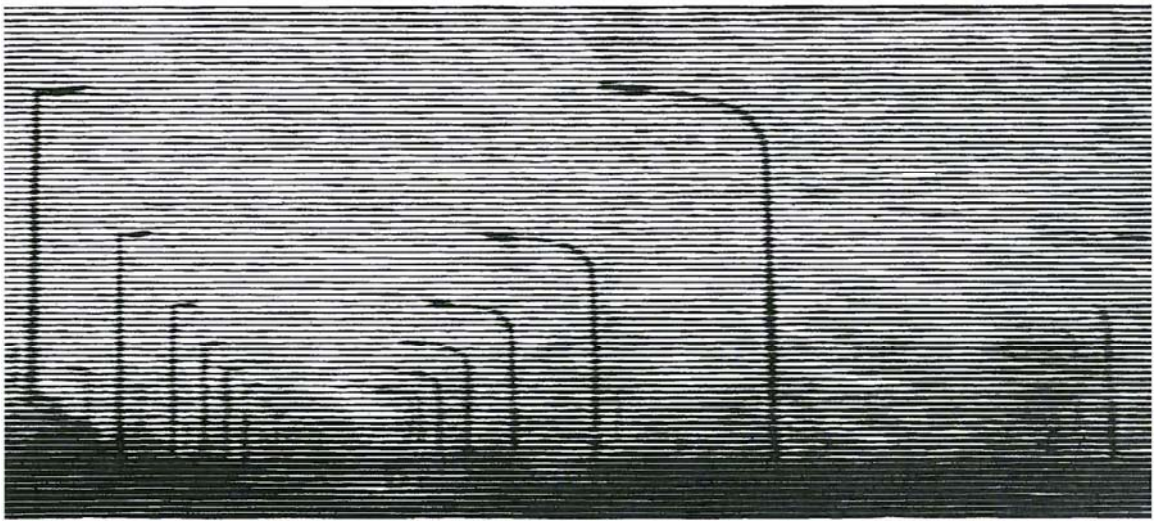


Figure 3.3 Baumgartner, *Less Than One I*, Part of a series of five woodcuts on Japanese paper, 2002.

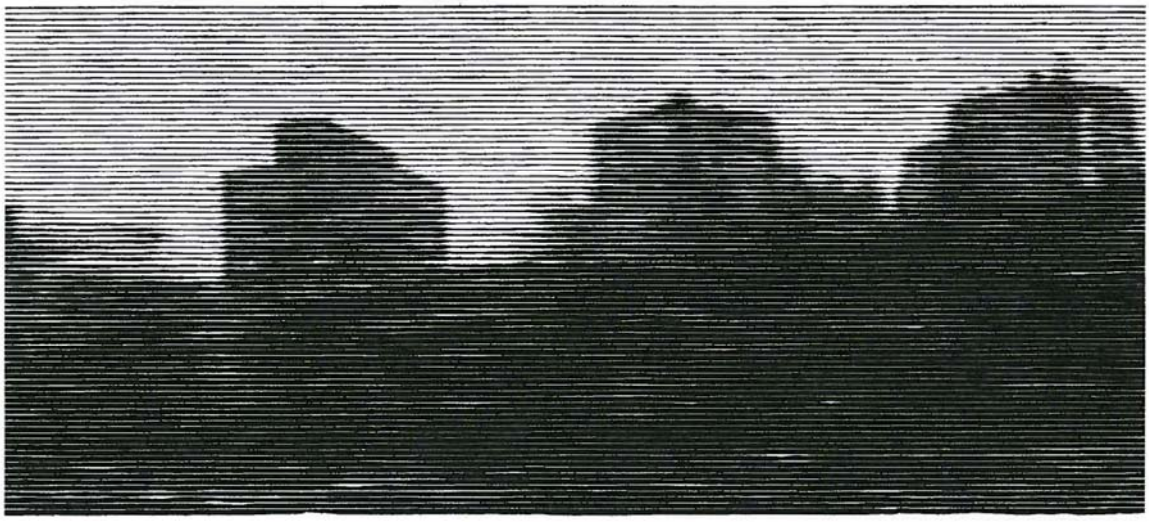
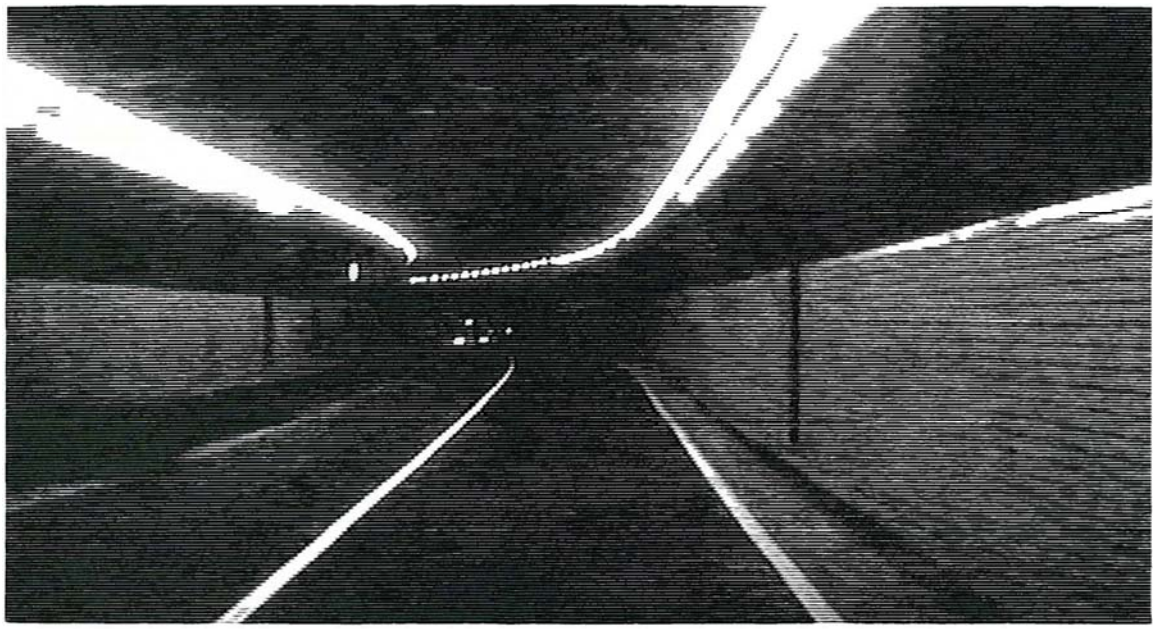
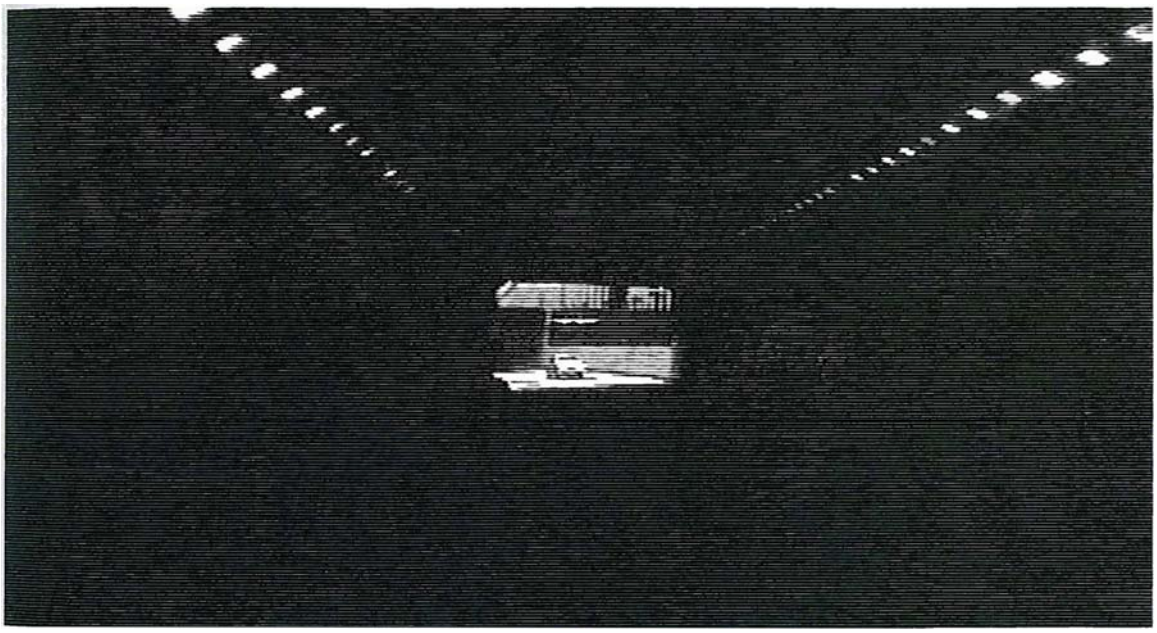
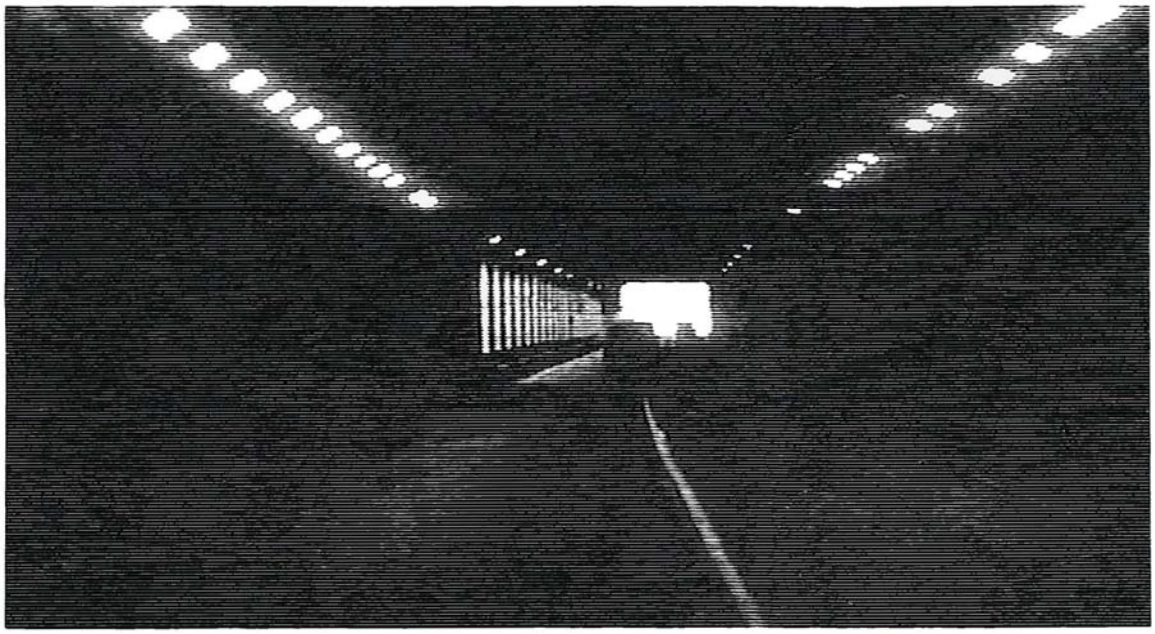
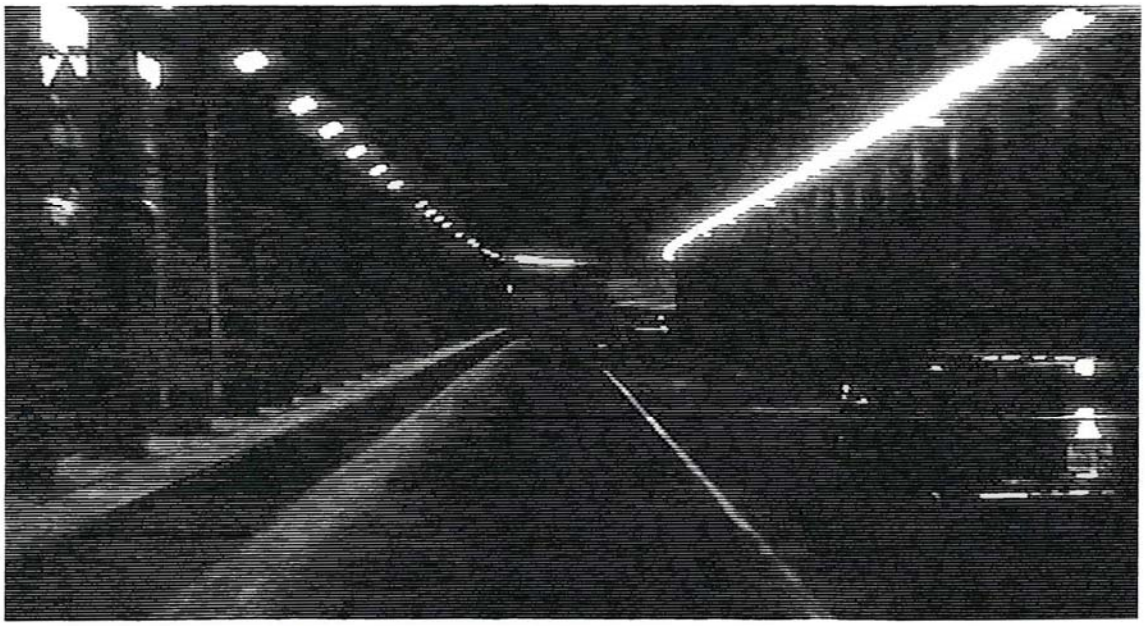


Figure 3.4 Baumgartner, *Less Than One III*, Part of a series of five woodcuts on Japanese paper, 2002.









Figures 3.5-8 Baumgartner, *Solaris I-IV,* A series of four woodcuts on Kozo paper, 2008.

Figure 3.9 Martha Rosler, “Beauty Rest,” from the series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*, Photomontage, printed as a color photograph, 1967-1972.

Figure 3.10 Rosler, “Photo-Op,” from the series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*, New series, Photomontage, 2004.

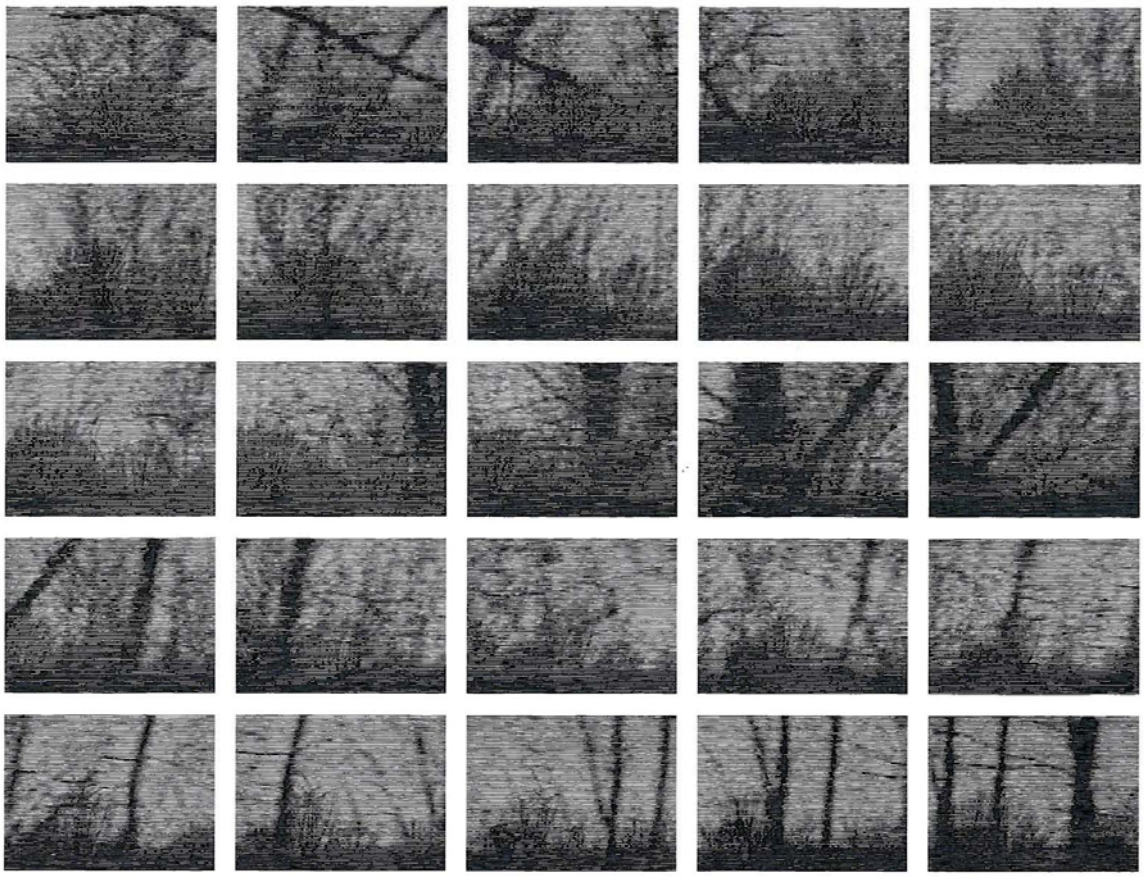


Figure 3.11 Baumgartner, *1 Sekunde*. Cream cloth covered box containing title page, colophon, and twenty-five woodcuts on Zerkall paper, 2004.