

VISIBLE LANGUAGE 42.1

VARIOUS, 70-108

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RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903

## **Abstract**

This section is comprised of a grouping of writings, art works, or a combination of both, in a series of artist project pages. The eight artists included here present a broad range of interests and approaches, yet can be seen as related in their address to ideas concerning the challenge to link language and materiality in the contemporary moment. Seen here is a collection of artist's works that take up a concern for the physical act of marking, by way of the machine or hand, whether for writing or recording. Other aspects of the works display an interest in the pertinent relationships between present and past, and between pre-existing cultural forms or conventions concerning cultural expression and language—and in their subsequent "reframing" as contemporary art, as critique and as dialogue.

# " I M A G E " A N D

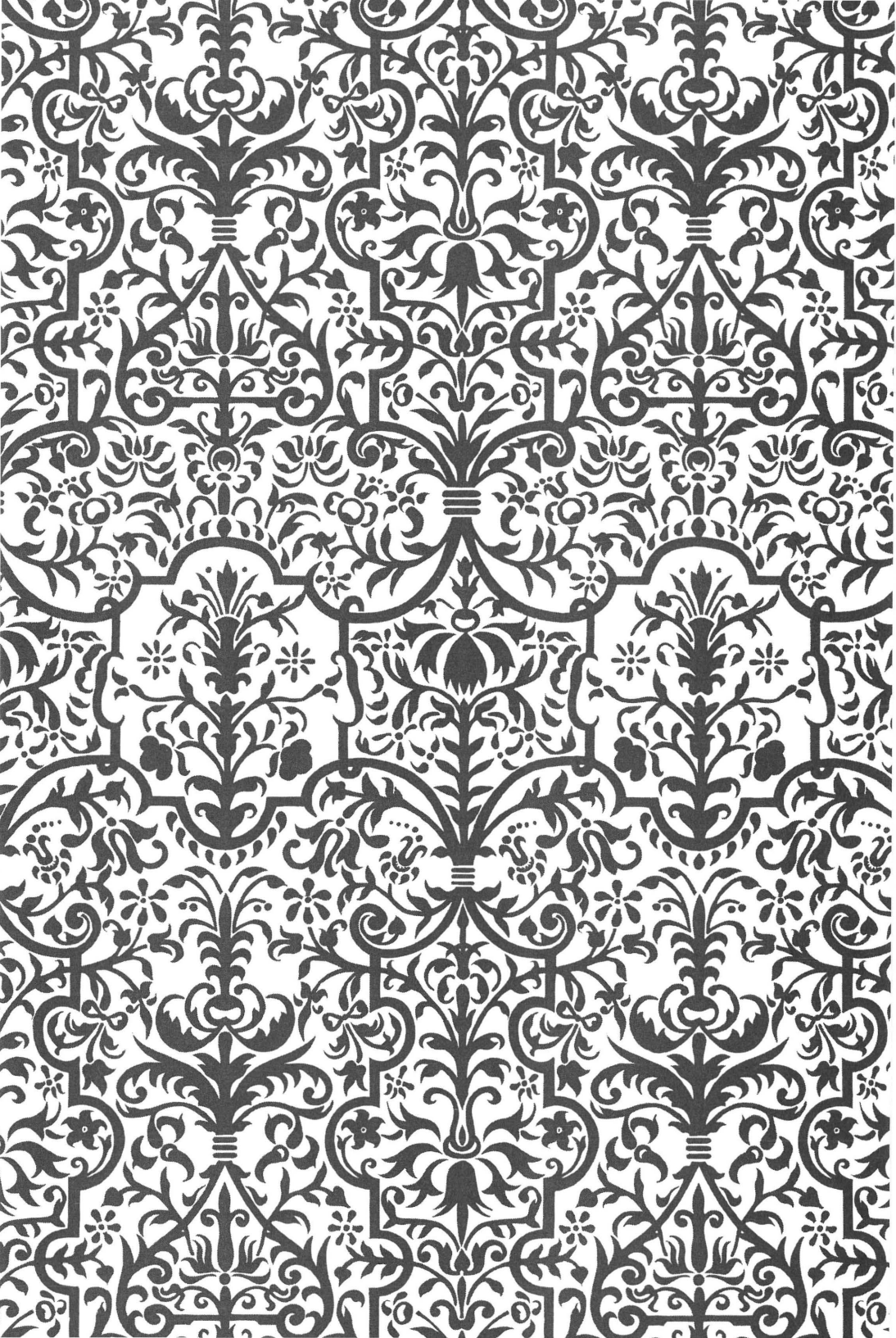
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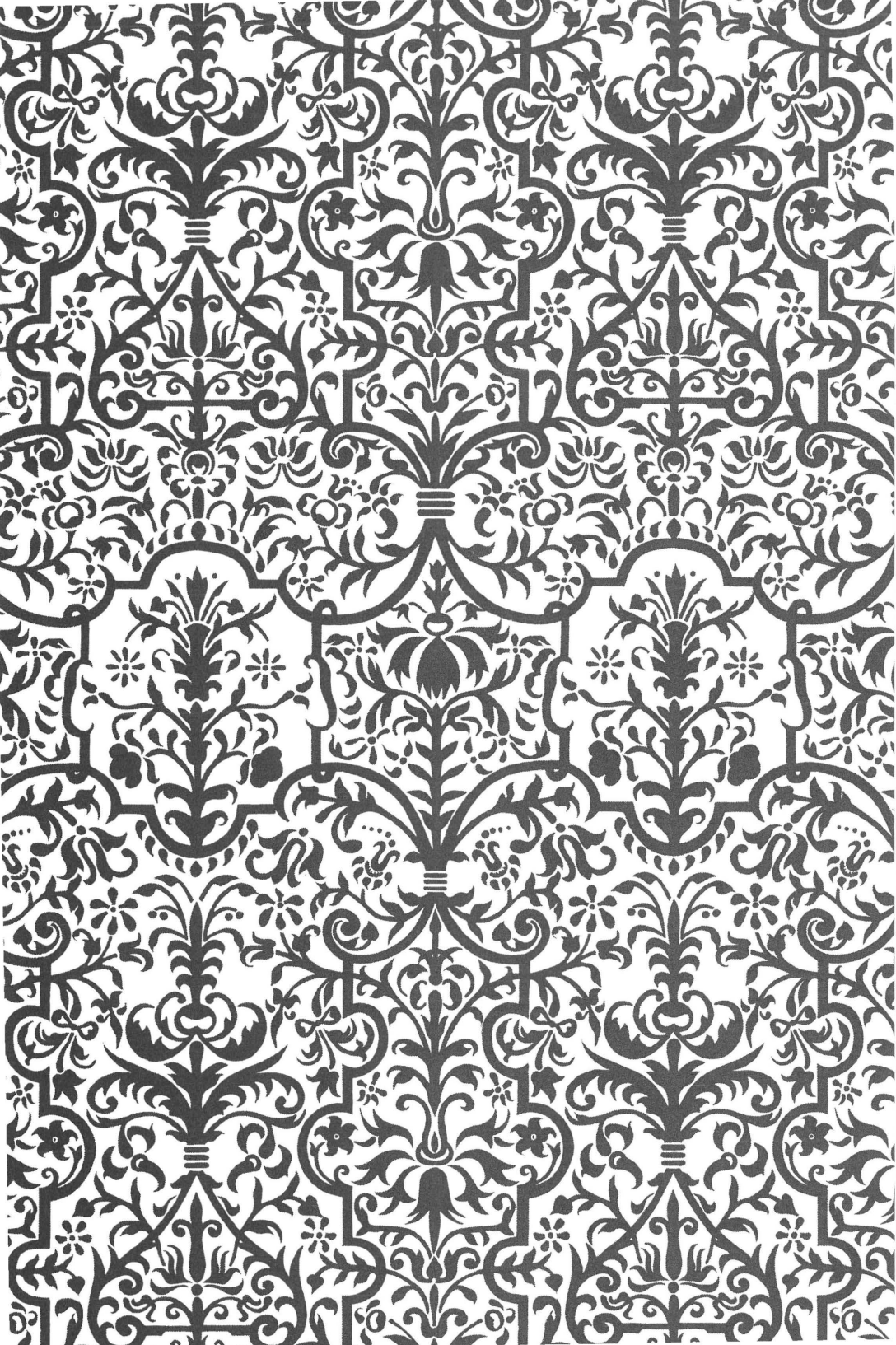
J E A N N I E T H I B

The 'image' on the first two pages is a Victorian allover design. The 'text' on the following pages is comprised of elements—decorative flourishes and stylized natural forms—extracted from that design and arranged on a grid. The glyphic quality of the isolated fragments in the 'text' ties them to language and to their rootedness as a sign. This work, presented here as a page spread, is based on *Divide* (2001-2005), an installation of 125 pinned black felt elements installed most recently on a 12' x 52' wall.



Figure 1 Jeannie Thib 2008. Image (detail), next pages Image, subsequent pages Text. All are a special artist's project for *Visible Language*.









## FLAMING WORD

BLAIR BRENNAN

"Words are things"; so says the Judge, in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. In the grip of McCarthy's sanguinary tale a reader might look for solace. "It is only a story and these are only words," one might say for reassurance but McCarthy has already doused that bridge with kerosene. "Words are things. The words he is in possession of he cannot be deprived of. Their authority transcends his ignorance of their meaning."<sup>1</sup> It does not matter if we were once ignorant of this fact; words are things.

McCarthy's book is about blood and time and the west. The mythic west remains a potent symbol, a complicated hybrid of history, weather, geography and popular culture. During its recent centenary, my home city celebrated with pancake breakfasts, fireworks displays and a festive cattle drive through the downtown core of Edmonton, "the northernmost North American city with a metropolitan population over one million."<sup>2</sup> Like much of the Canadian and American west, my home city and province, is a place where more than 100 years of Hollywood hard-sell (remember, *The Great Train Robbery* was made in 1903) collides with a legacy of working farm and ranch families who, like everyone here, have been effected by successive waves of oil based boom and

bust economy.

It never occurred to me that I might make art about this place. I'm not a landscape painter. I'm not interested in geography or weather and only slightly curious about history. I am, however, fascinated by myth (including the mythic west), magic, ritual and language. To some extent, these interests have been consolidated in a recurring feature of my text-based art—steel branding irons and the marks they make. In construction, my implements are similar to functional livestock brands. However, separated from the seasonal ritual of farm and ranch, branding becomes highly symbolic. It is writing that combines repetitive ritual acts (heating and branding) with primal elements: fire, steel and 'skin' (leather, rawhide, clothing, books, drawings, photographs and the occasional art gallery wall).

The branded text includes initials, acronyms, magic spells, curses (both kinds), palindromes, punch lines, other marks of symbolic import—word-things, both grave and ridiculously glib with power that extends beyond any literal reading of the text. A branded mark on leather or rawhide looks like crispy bacon. Blood flowed and organs once pumped and beat on the other side of this support, a guarantee that any

story written on this 'page' will contain blood, time and something of the mythic west. Even when looking at burnt paint on gallery walls or the burnt paper of a drawing or book, it is not hard to imagine that the canvas for this mark could have been alive and kicking (perhaps even human). Branding irons, and the marks they leave, create a palpable uneasiness that is distinctly different than that of any other written word.

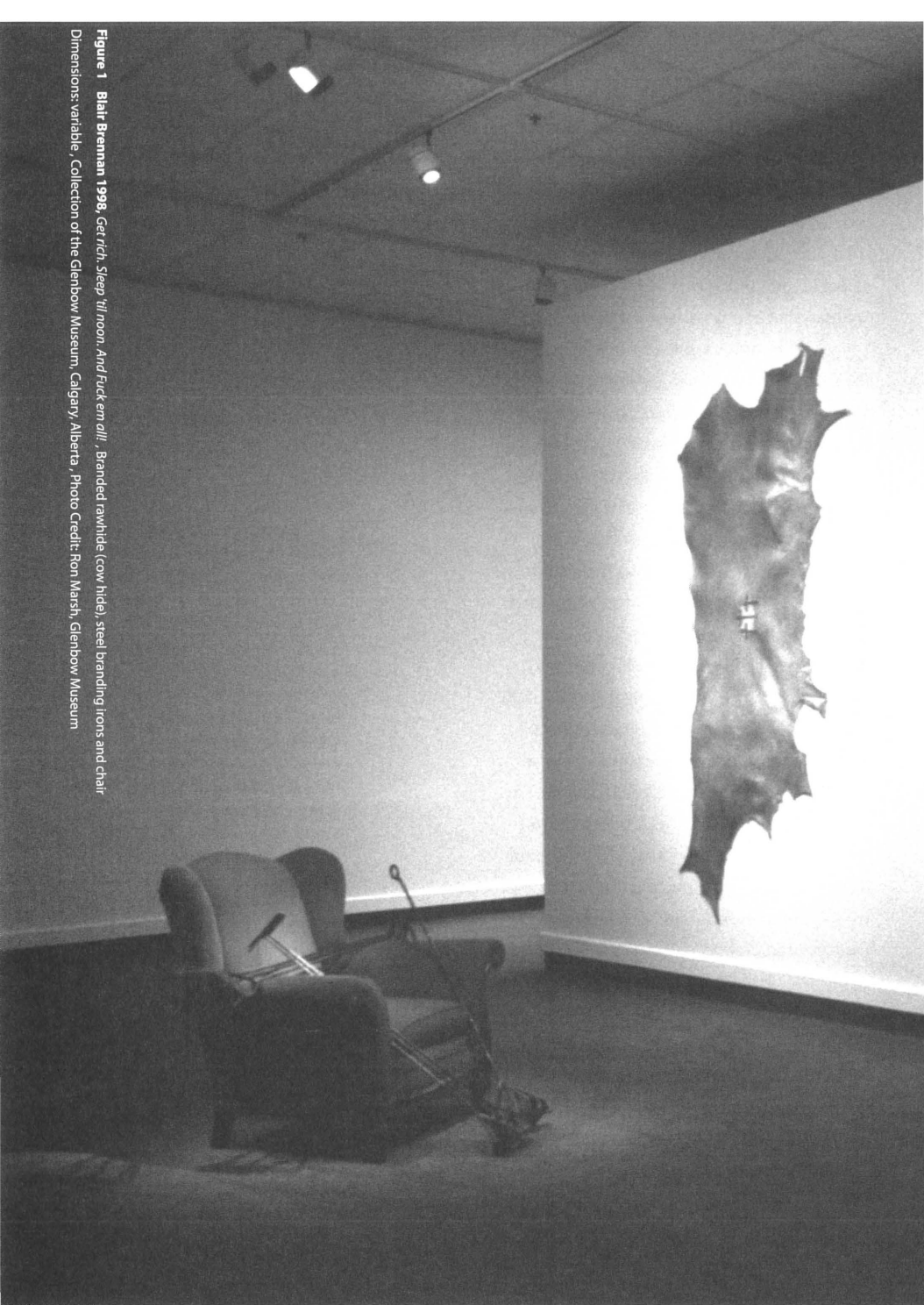
I might aspire to noble thoughts, like Yeats idea that "Earth herself may be only a sudden flaming word,"<sup>3</sup> but the truth about language and me lies in less reputable literature (though Yeats might still approve), a lurid occult book called *The Evil Eye*. "There is abundant evidence in all lands of the value attached to certain words, usually written, though they may be merely uttered, to keep off evil from, or to bring good to the user."<sup>4</sup> Cattlemen, who lived here before me, may have shared my belief in apotropaic words. In *Cattle Brands and Cow Hides*, Hortense Warner Ward suggests that prehistoric magical inscriptions became marks of ownership. To this day, Ward explains, stock brands are a combination of rudimentary legal protection and psychic defense,<sup>5</sup> putting into words my intuition that forged steel branding irons are a sort of magic wand.

Writers, more frequently than visual artists, have been allies in my exploration of the magical function of language. McCarthy and Yeats (as mentioned), William Blake, Dylan Thomas, T.S. Elliot, powerful southern writers like Flannery O'Connor, Harry Crews, and the irreverent Beats have been important resources for my own word-work. William S. Burrough's writing and his use of Brion Gysin's cut-up technique have been especially influential.<sup>6</sup> Burroughs writ-

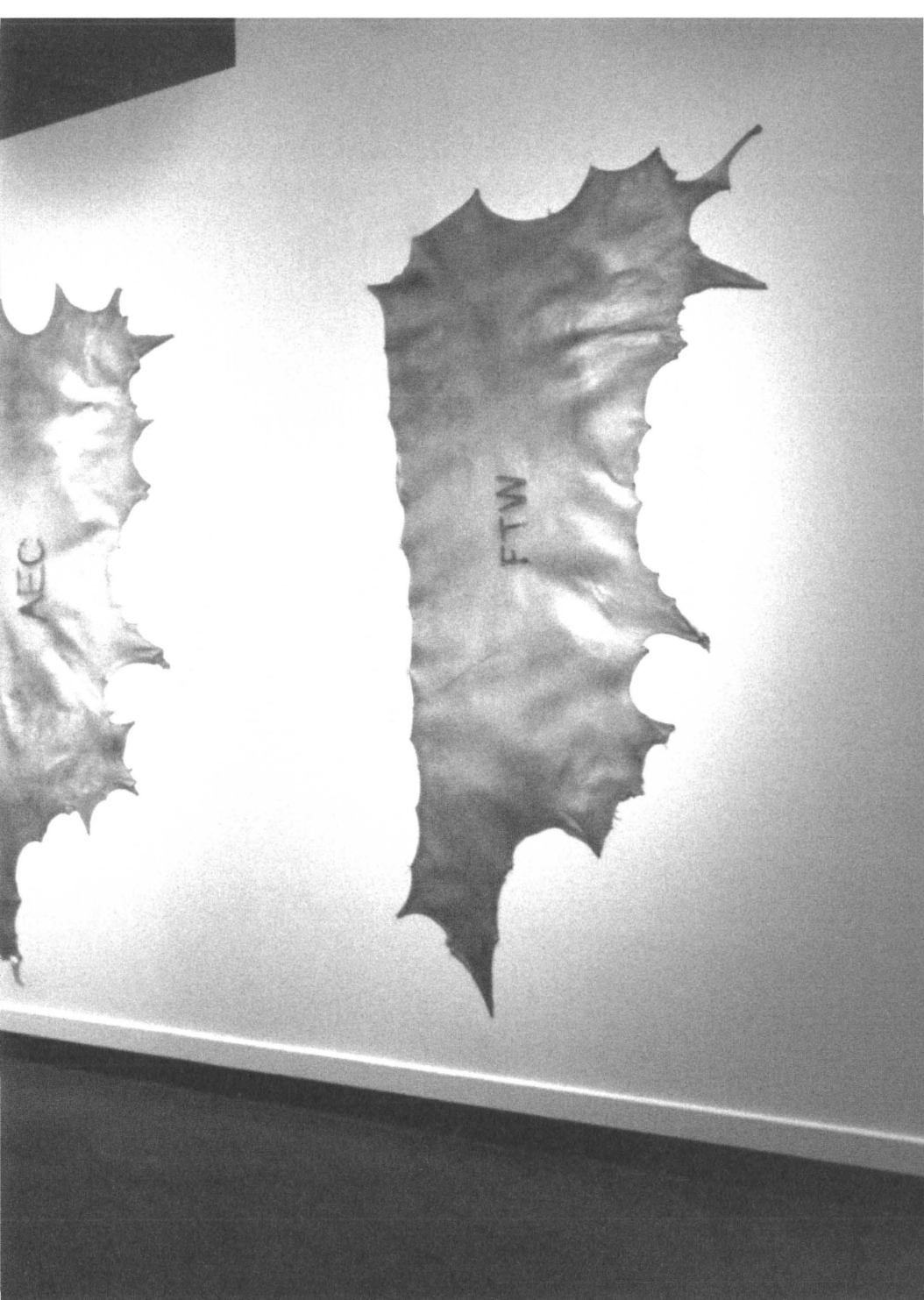
ing and visual art have been described as an attempt to disrupt the 'controlling structure'<sup>7</sup> and 'restrictive logic of language.'<sup>8</sup> This seems a noble aspiration and one that I hope might be advanced with a kind of irreversible and apocalyptic word-magic where words are made of fire and steel and written on the skin.

#### E N D N O T E S

- 1 McCarthy, Cormac. 1992. *Blood Meridian*. New York, NY: Vantage International, p. 85.
- 2 Wikipedia online encyclopaedia, s.v. "Edmonton." <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmonton> (accessed June 20, 2007).
- 3 William Butler Yeats. In Finneran, Richard J., editor. 1997. *The Yeats Reader: A Portable Compendium of Poetry, Drama, and Prose*. New York, NY: Scribner, p. 23.
- 4 Elworthy, Frederick Thomas. 1989. *The Evil Eye: An Account of this Ancient and Widespread Superstition*. New York, NY: Bell Publishing Company, p. 400.
- 5 Ward, Hortense Warner. 1953. *Cattle Brands and Cow Hides*. Dallas, TX: The Story Book Press, p. 3-4.
- 6 Though born in Britain, Brion Gysin spent his childhood and early adolescence in Edmonton. Little information has been published on Gysin. For those interested, I highly recommend: Geiger, John. 2005. *Nothing is True Everything is Permitted The Life of Brion Gysin*. New York, NY: Disinformation, or Kuri, José Férez, editor. 2003. *Brion Gysin Tuning in to the Multimedia Age*. London, UK: Thames & Hudson Ltd.
- 7 Luce, Mark. 1996. Burroughs' Impact Universal. *Lawrence Journal-World*, Sunday July 21. <http://falcon.cc.ukans.edu/~luce/wsb7.html> (accessed January 12, 1999).
- 8 Luce, Mark. 1997. El Hombre Visible. *Kansas Alumni Magazine*, no. 1. <http://falcon.cc.ukans.edu/~luce/nova1.html> (accessed January 12, 1999).



**Figure 1** Blair Brennan 1998, *Get rich, Sleep, till noon, And fuck em all!*, Branded rawhide (cow hide), steel branding irons and chair. Dimensions: variable. Collection of the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta, Photo Credit: Ron Marsh, Glenbow Museum



**Figure 2** Blair Brennan 1996, *Perish Like the Word*

Text branded on wall, steel branding irons, steel box, propane bottle and torch, canvas bag, fire bricks and various small tools,  
Dimensions: variable , Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Photo Credit: Blair Brennan

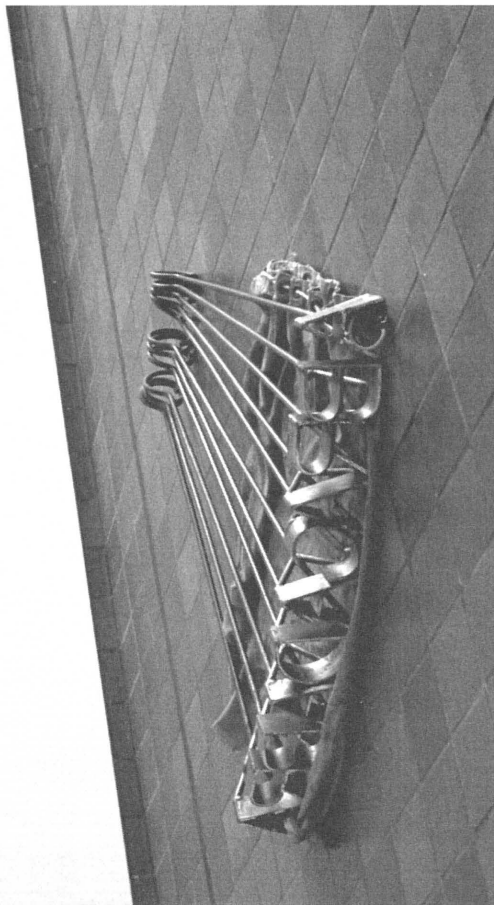
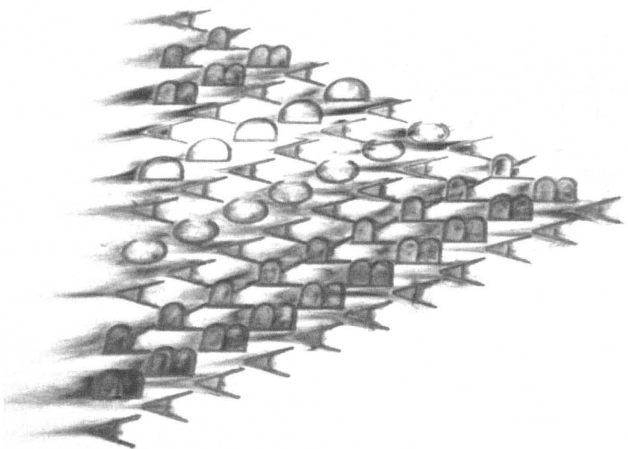
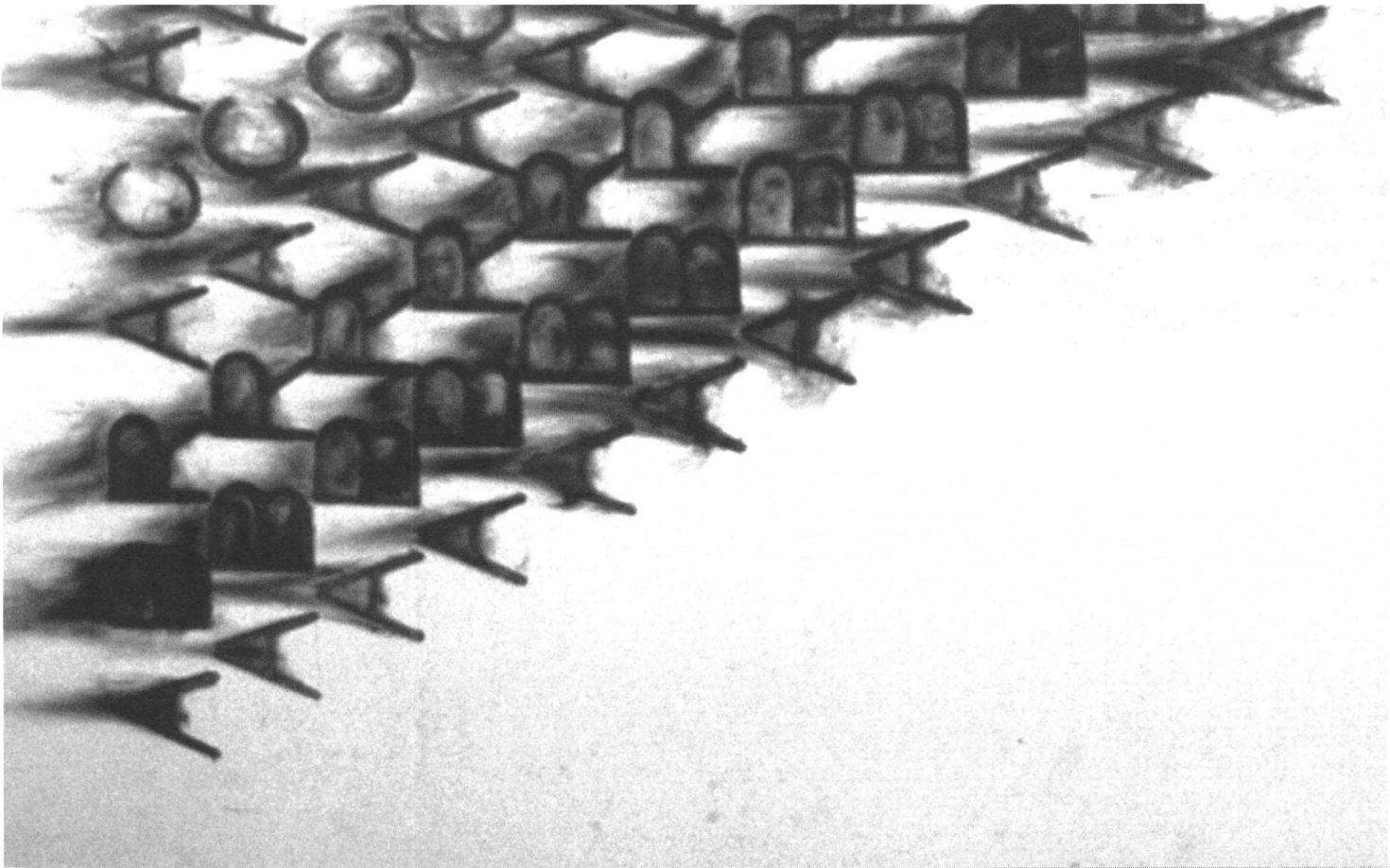


Figure 3 Blair Brennan 1996, *Perish Like the Word* (detail)

Text branded on wall, steel branding irons, steel box, propane bottle and torch, canvas bag, fire bricks and various small tools,  
Dimensions: variable, Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta,, Photo Credit: Blair Brennan



# SUBVERTING A CARIBBEAN

## 'NATURAL' HISTORY

J O S C E L Y N G A R D N E R


... unsettling brittle pages from the past... probing between stiff lines of official text to divulge unspeakable narratives concealed within... liberating ghostly traces of Creole women whose lives have been reduced to mere footnotes in the recording of an oppressive colonial plantation history...

Using illustrated publications, prints and artifacts found in Caribbean museum collections as a source for examining social narratives on 18<sup>th</sup> century Caribbean plantations, my lithographic prints probe the construction of female Creole identity from a postcolonial feminist perspective. By subverting methods of documentation used by artists and writers to record Atlantic culture, my work points to the colonial construction of this identity as Other and asserts a space for the multiple female subjectivities not recognized in the 'official' (male) historical canon.

In *Plantation Poker: the Merkin Stories*, a multi-panel suite of black and white stone lithographs on frosted mylar (2004), I juxtapose line engraved drawings of female pubic triangles with italicized text to form a visual statement (15ft wide) framed by red quotation marks and a culminating red full-stop. The text reproduces personal

diary entries made by Thomas Thistlewood, a plantation overseer living in Jamaica between 1750 and 1786, who shamelessly recorded his countless sexual encounters with dependent female slaves in over 10,000 pages of manuscript containing detailed accounts and descriptions of daily events that took place on his Jamaican sugar estate.

Playing on the pubic triangle as a symbolic site of female sexual exploitation during slavery, *Plantation Poker* critiques 18<sup>th</sup> century documentation strategies commonly used to inscribe 'difference' on colonial bodies and identities through both metaphor and irony. Alluding to the practice of classification and cataloguing that was typical of ethnographical publications during this period in which 'curious' objects (often imagined by the artist) were illustrated laid out as inert specimens for examination alongside texts that described them, these emblematic images evoke illustrations characteristic of publications such as Hans Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* (1707). Intricate Afro-centric hairstyles are woven into each individually displayed pubic triangle together with tools of torture used during plantation slavery (whips, spurs, shackles). Viewed alongside Thistlewood's words (some in Latin) which matter-of-



factly record precise details of each act of sexual violation, these carefully engraved 'curiosities' create an ambiguity of meaning between image and text that mimics a similar strategy found in the illustrated natural histories. Kay Dian Kriz has noted that the disjunction between illustrations of natural specimens (flora and fauna) or human artifacts, and the written descriptions of them found in natural histories, often functioned to maintain a sense of mystery so that no fixed meaning could be established. Such illustrated 'marvels' embodied both the fears and desires aroused by the strangeness of a new world and the authors of both image and text were charged with the problem of presenting 'difference' to excite curiosity while maintaining a fine balance between the known and the unknown.<sup>1</sup> Here, these printed works replicate peculiar imagined objects that destabilize the recorded facts displayed beside them.

These prints also draw on the symbolic function of wigs worn by European men in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to signify social order by suggesting hair decoration as a form of self-empowerment. Ironically, the *merkin* ("counterfeit hair for a woman's privy parts") became fashionable in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain because of the prevalence of syphilis, the cure for which caused hair loss. Analogous to the beard, the merkin was literally a 'pubic wig' that I now reclaim to speak to the invisible and unrepresentable aspects of Creole women's daily lives. The painstakingly braided hairstyles and suggestively phallic placement of the implements of torture illustrated on each triangle serve to empower the imagined female body. The (male) text collides with this visualization of female power to undermine 18<sup>th</sup> century

semiotic systems and counter the inscription of 'natural' mastery over the (black) female slave body. The semi-pornographic implications of the pubic triangle as fetish for scopophilic consumption also reference illustrations of slave torture found in abolitionist literature such as Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition* (1790) where tortured semi-undressed black bodies reveal the horrors of slavery while simultaneously titillating the reader.<sup>2</sup>

The elegant script and stylized images in my work veil the repulsiveness of the painful history they both trace and subvert. By referencing printed work that functioned to confirm particular forms of (constructed) knowledge, I question the depravity of the colonial plantation system through the private words of one of its male protagonists and leave the viewer to ponder the wider implications of a colonial discourse which supported the violent subordination of enslaved peoples as a 'natural' right of white (male) privilege.

#### ENDNOTES

1 Kriz, Kay Dian. 2003. Curiosities, commodities and transplanted bodies in Hans Sloane's *Voyage to ... Jamaica*. In Quilley, Geoff and Kay Dian Kriz, editors. *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, pp. 85-105.

2 Wood, Marcus. 2003. John Gabriel Stedman, William Blake, Francesco Bartolozzi and empathetic pornography in the *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*. Quilley, Geoff and Kay Dian Kriz, editors. *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, pp. 129-149.

Thursday, 20th October, 1768

"In m. Exam Sally, mee, Saph Store at foot  
of cotton tree by New Strand side, Off  
mouth used from the house  
(and now here)"

Monday, 14th December, 1768

"Bookish... was delivered of a girl, a mulatto."

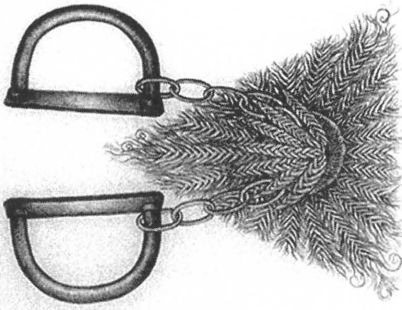
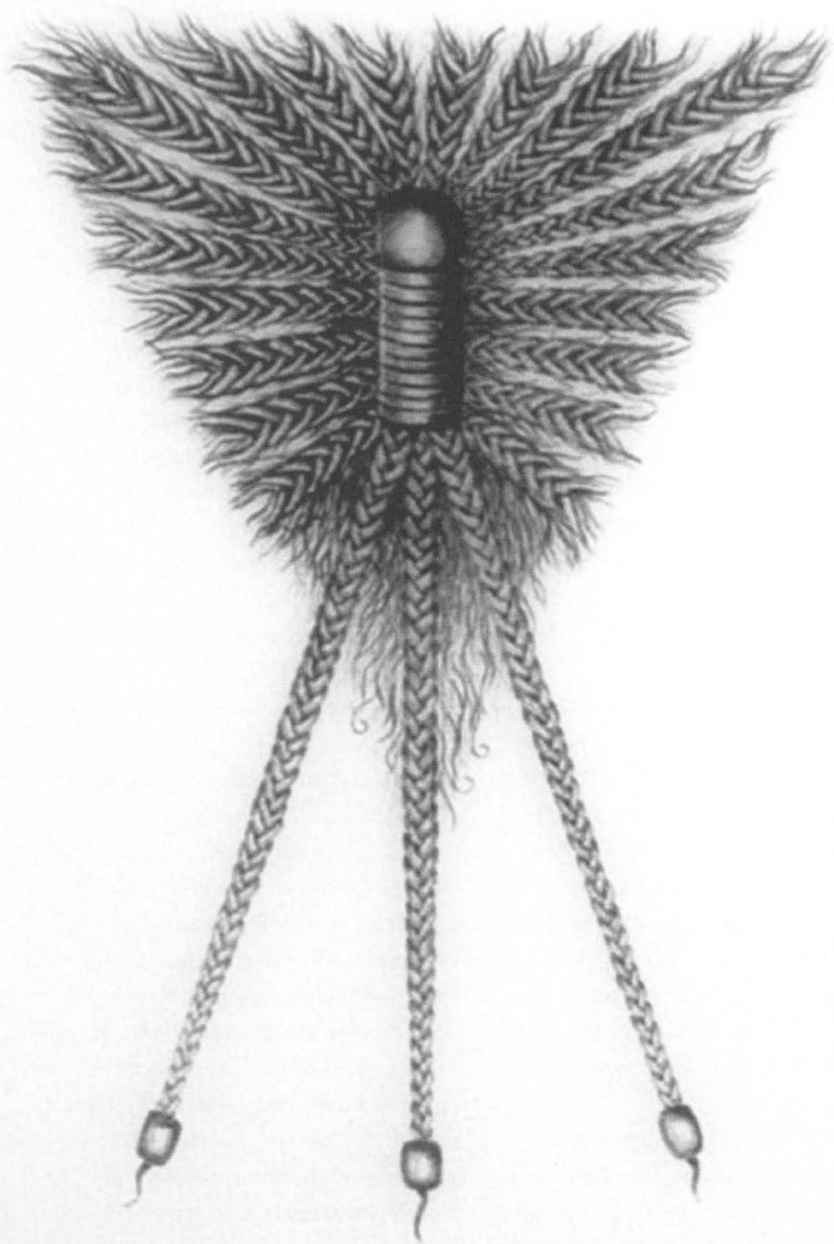


Figure 1 Joscelyn Gardner 2004,  
Detail from Plantation Poker: the Merkin  
Stories  
Lithograph/vinyl on frosted mylar, 15' x  
3'2" (16 panels at 18" x 18", 9 panels at  
18" x 6"), Photo Credit: John Tamblyn

Figure 2 Joscelyn Gardner 2004,  
Detail from Plantation Poker: the Merkin  
Stories  
Lithograph/vinyl on frosted mylar, 15' x  
3'2" (16 panels at 18" x 18", 9 panels at  
18" x 6"), Photo Credit: John Tamblyn



# A W R I T E R ' S

## M A N U A L

B A R B A R A B A L F O U R

Textual quotation and stylistic mimicry, in addition to my own writing, recur throughout my art production. In making words visible, I have used my handwriting—transcribed manually or printed by hand, as well as computer fonts—printed commercially or in a newspaper. My text-based artwork is made public, literally, by these instances of publishing.

I have employed quotation to reference the writings of others: witnesses to the appearance of a feral girl (*Wild Child*, 1991) and pain theorists (*Pain Index*, 1991), as well as Freud and Kristeva (*melancholia & melanomata*, 1996). Similar to a medieval scribe, I have copied and re-presented these texts, yet my handwriting appears in various guises: as three styles of calligraphy hand-printed in lithography, cursive script in pen on index cards and my 'personal' software font.

Wary of handwriting being commonly upheld as a signifier of authenticity and truth, I tamper with this convention. I try not to encourage accepted notions of the 'hand' in opposition to the machine, whether typewriter, computer or press. Jacques Derrida offers this rebuttal to reductive thought:

But when we write  
"by hand" we are not in the

time before technology; there is already instrumentality, regular reproduction, mechanical iterability. So it is not legitimate to contrast writing by hand and "mechanical" writing, like a pre-technological craft as opposed to technology. And then on the other side what we call "typed" writing is also "manual."<sup>1</sup>

There is clearly no simplified manual to follow in this regard.

Some of my projects engender an inscribed form of call and response. In *21 Questions* (1992), my rhetorical queries were published anonymously, in weekly installments, in the personals section of a free newspaper. Throughout the twenty-one week project, and much to my surprise, I regularly received responses to questions such as: 'Do you ever have regrets?' and 'Do you trust me?' In another project involving audience participation, I made available copies of a bilingual *Proust Questionnaire* (1999) in an installation referencing Marcel Proust's cork-lined bedroom/writing room.

In deliberate acts of emulation, I have mimicked the style and language of certain mass-produced products. At

almost- first glance, one could mistake my sewing pattern for the real thing (*Loofa-Suit*, 1992). Instructions carry the illusion a step further, although any attempt to sew a jumpsuit out of sections of dried squash would prove difficult. Confronted with lengths of caution tape strung between traffic delineators or barricading a path, a law-abiding citizen might instinctively be inclined to obey the imperative warning: "DANGER – I THINK I AM FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOU." But is this admonition as straightforward as it seems?

me  
nd  
In *100 Things That Make Me Happy* (2004), I transcribed one hundred items from a non-hierarchical list as an *aide-mémoire* in my quest for contentment. Subsequently printed on post-it notes, the handwritten 'things' have taken two forms: a casual cluster hang displayed on a wall and an edition of reconstituted stacks of notes. In both cases, the ink might prove to have a longer shelf life than the paper it is printed on.

In other text-based work, I have taken to repeating myself willfully. In *QWERTY works for me* (2004), I was inspired by the fortuitous discovery that I am able to type my given name using only my left hand. Making reference to the specificity of my name (holding in abeyance the knowledge that others exist with the very same name) and the given format of the anachronistic computer keyboard (as if it were designed for me, which it was not), I typed my name, over and over, on sixteen pages of corrasable (correctable and erasable) typewriting paper. Consciously ignoring the software program's attempts to correct my errors, I found this repetitive process, in spite of my cramped fingers, to be anything but boring.

The theme of repetition and

difference returns in my recent prints, as in the form of floating iterations of the word 'dread' hovering over a heavier mass composed of the recurrent word 'regret' (*Living in the Present*, 2006). In *Low Self-Esteem* (2006), against seemingly unrelenting waves of this term, isolated terms such as 'equanimity' and 'cautious optimism' offer relief. Recurring mantras in *Limbo* (2007) and *to the nth degree* (2007) suggest a way to conjure up unimaginable, unfathomable concepts. In *Love is the Warp (Guilt is the Weft)*, from 2006, the interwoven word-structure acts as a formal analogy for co-dependency, particularly in relationships with loved ones. In surveying my work, I am beginning to worry that I am repeating myself too much. I also know that repetition never really ends up being the same.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Jacques Derrida. 2001. The Word Processor. In Derrida, Jacques. 2005. *Paper Machine*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, p.20.

almost anything caramel

inspiring obituaries

remembering those  
moments of epiphany

the time  
the world

re-reading Proust

the cottage

immortality

Figure 1 Barbara Balfour 2004, Detail from 100 Things That Make Me Happy  
Lithography on post-it notes, 3" square (each), Photo Credit: Mike Stevens

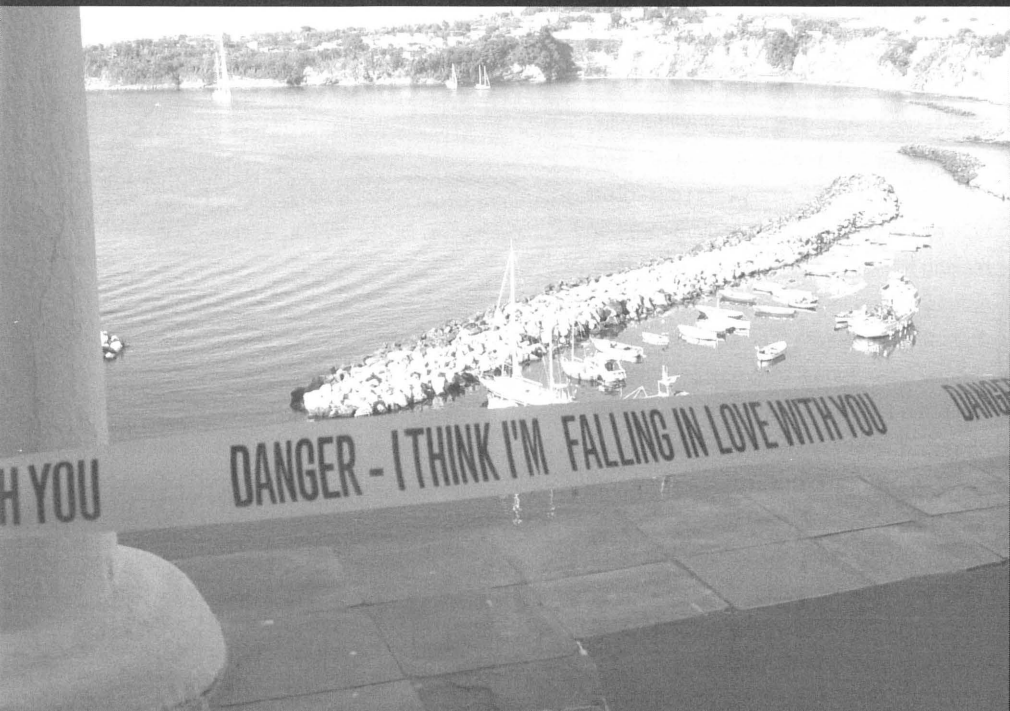


Figure 2 Barbara Balfour 2004, Installation view of DANGER

Biodegradable caution tape, 3" high and variable length, Photo Credit: Barbara Balfour

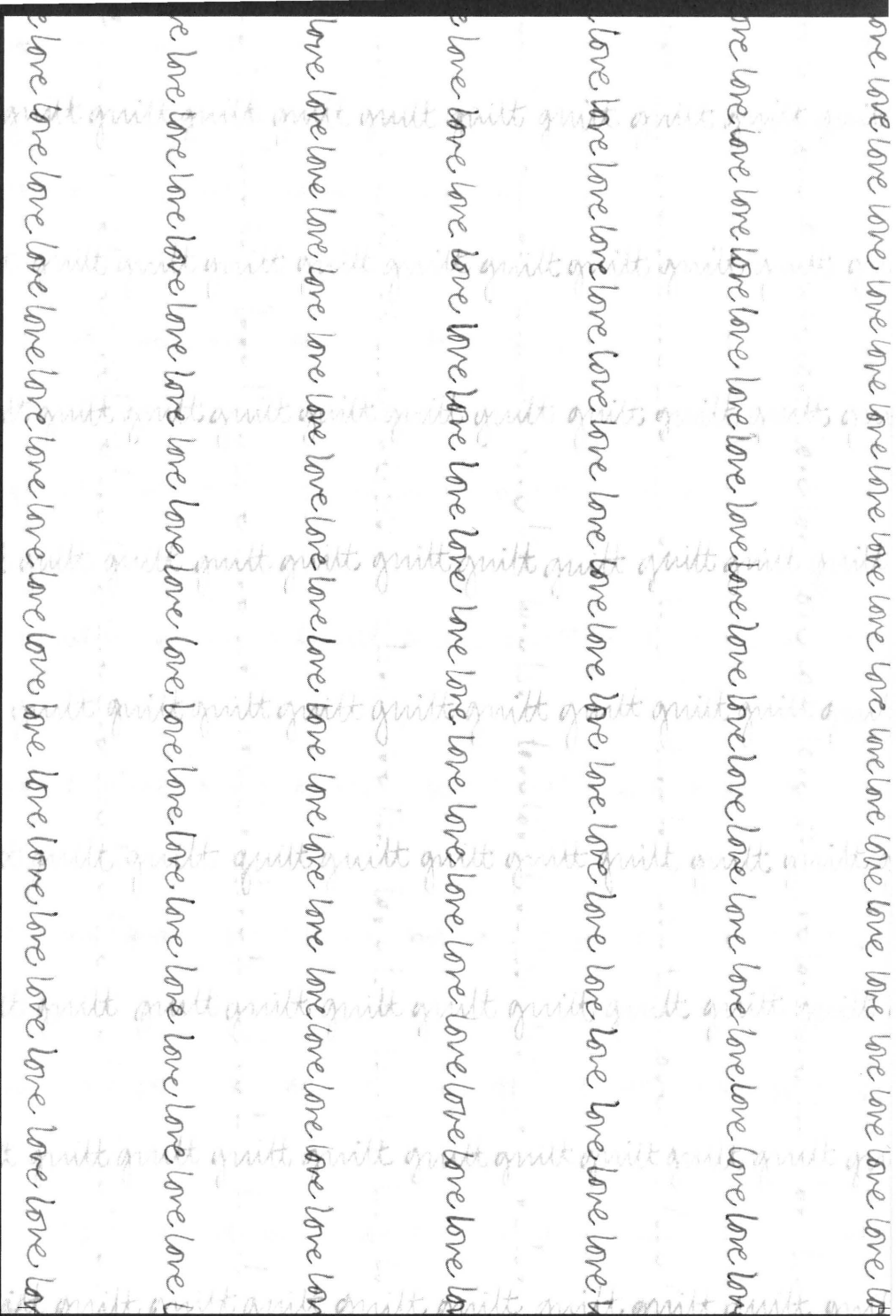


Figure 3 Barbara Balfour 2006, Detail from preparatory vellums for Love is the Warp (Guilt is the Weft)

Ink on vellum, 26" x 20", Photo Credit: Mike Stevens

ALL MUSIC ASPIRES

TO THE CONDITION

OF IMAGE

DAVID MERRITT

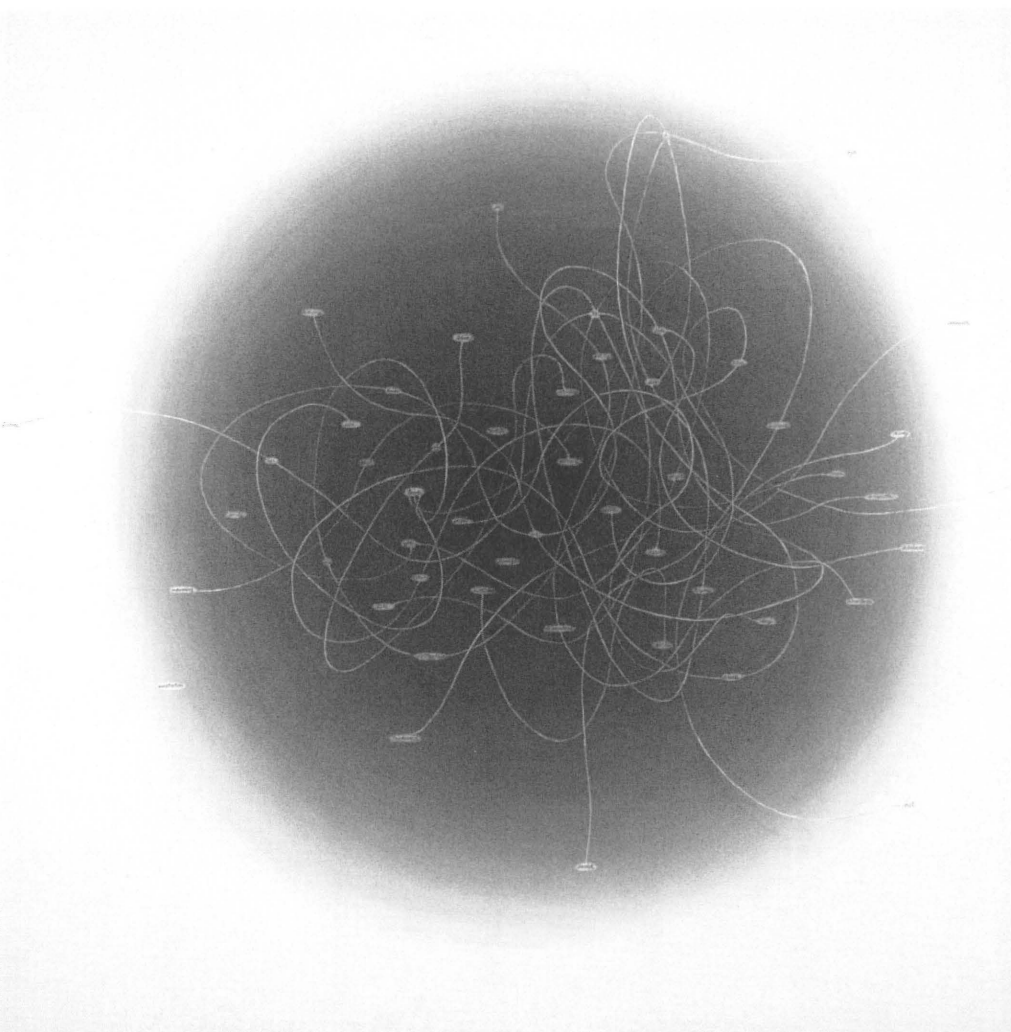
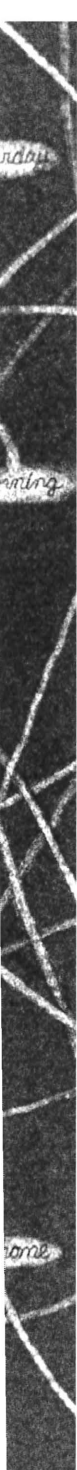


Figure 1 David Merritt 2007, gary, Graphite on paper, 34" x 46"



I am interested in embodied aspects of the visual, particularly its material and performative possibilities. A good part of my work is drawing based.

I approach drawing less as a historically determined medium than as a temporalized material practice. As such I see drawing as an open-ended endeavor that both visually and physically manifests properties of duration: through the blind excursions of line, the cumulative deposits of markmaking and the precarious suspension of both in a space of potential erasure. And distinct from more explicitly time-based technologies, drawing exercises duration through its materiality—as negligible or spare as that may be. Indeed it is in this somewhat frail materiality, as much as the various actions which mark it, that drawing takes up its place in time, and offers us a physical (and imaginary) place in its fictions.

A frequent tactic of my drawing work has been to conflate the visual with the aural. This has involved pursuing a rather inverted logic that treats the image less as a thing than as a perceptual event (akin to speech 'disappearing in the event of its appearance') and sound less as an event than as substance (in the Lucretian sense of 'all sound is body'). Following this approach, I try to take up both drawing and writing, as much as viewing and reading, as essentially transformative activities of tracing.

The most systematic and internalized link between the aural and the visual in everyday life is probably to be found in language. Phonological alphabets work in charging a specific set of more or less arbitrary marks with visually inscribing a more or less arbitrary set of sounds we make with our bodies. Our ability to act within and between

these two very different systems is only possible by virtue of our own inscription into a common linguistic system, however incomplete or errant that may be. Musical notation systems also function in complicating the act of inscription with that of performance. Though mechanical audio recording is also frequently described as inscribing sound, it is one that appears to assume a more reified and retrospective form. Recorded song titles can be seen as located at the crossroads of these various systems, as linguistic fragments relating to a kind of triple inscription of the aural—phonetically, musically and mechanically.

In the past, I have been drawing song titles. Essentially this project involves gleaning the contemporary boneyards of popular music charts, particularly databases of the music industry (such as Allmusic, Rhapsody, etc). Working through these sources, the drawings usually begin with an impulse to trace the collective thoughts found accumulating around a commonplace theme, such as those completing the phrases 'me and my,' 'on my mind' or 'love machine.' The thematic of these drawings are also chosen to playfully inflect the ambiguous intimacies of both language and the recorded music the titles serve to index. For example, they are often organized around song titles stemming from linguistic shifters like 'you' and 'me' or 'here' and 'now.' Still other drawings in this project have been assembled from the collapsed orders of industry 'best of' lists—such as "BMI Top 100 Airplay Songs of the 20th Century," or the "Top 11 Heartbreak Songs of All Time." As visually re-mapped in the drawings, the song titles are broken up and dispersed in such a way as to open onto new, non-linear, neighborhoods of interpretation.

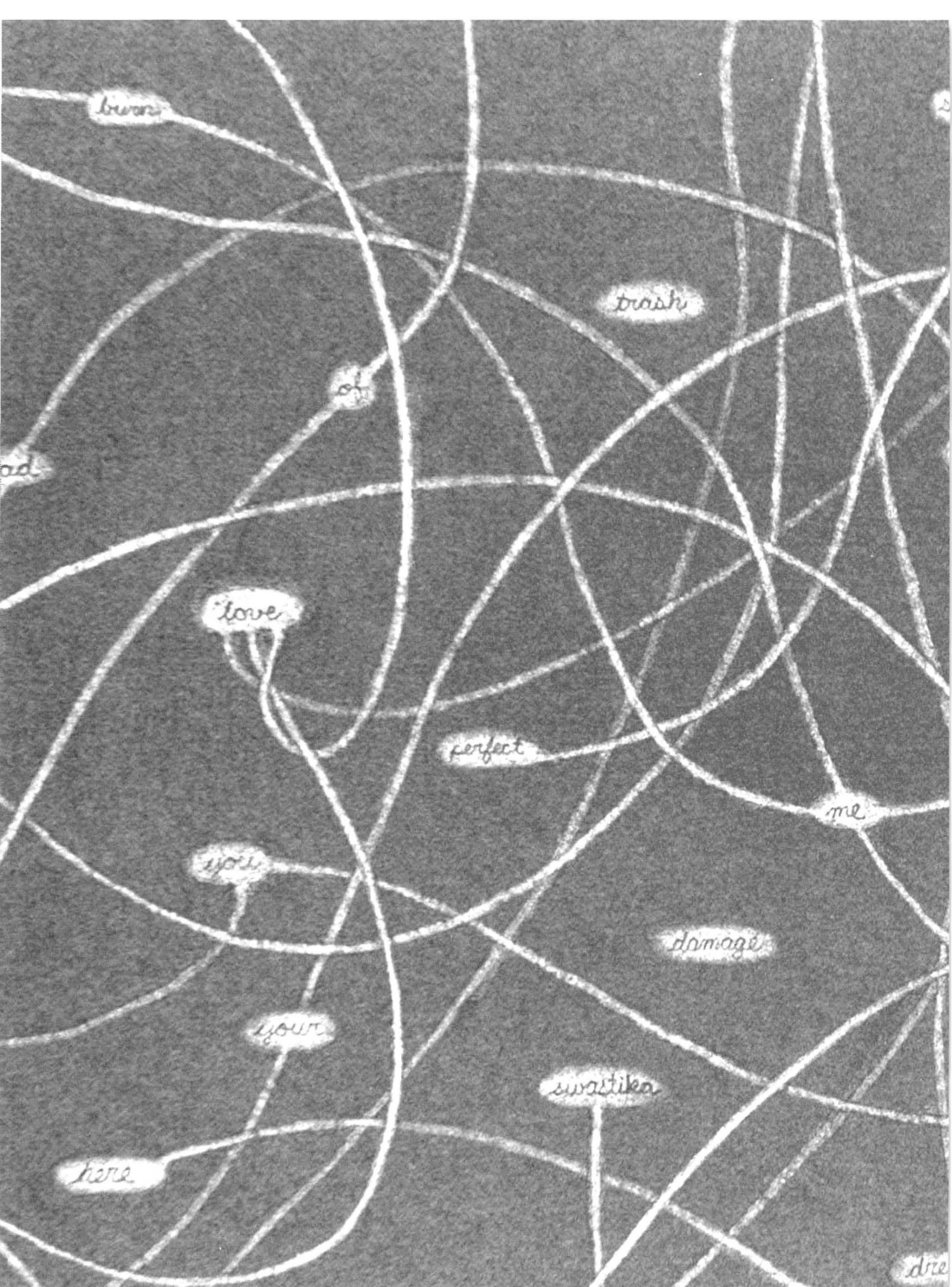
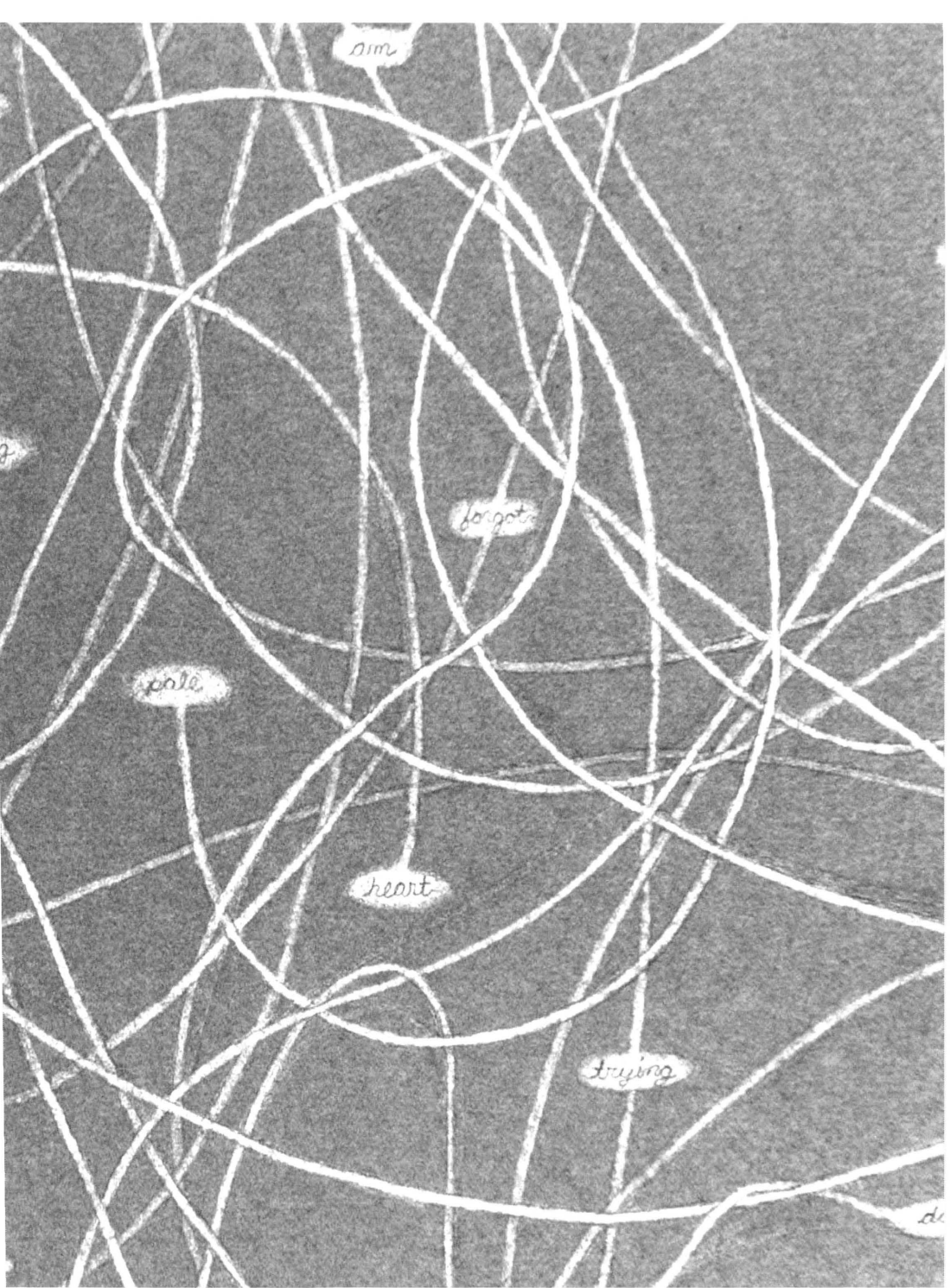


Figure 2 David Merritt 2007, gary (detail), Graphite on paper, 34" x 46"



EXCERPTS FROM THE  
DRAWN LIKE MONEY  
SERIES

The *Drawn Like Money Series* is a group of drawings, made with pen and ink, based on my own photographic images of the Canadian Arctic. The works are intended to resemble the conventional engraved syntax found on paper currency. *Drawn Like Money*, which was occasioned by a collaborative project entitled *Art and Cold Cash*, is excerpted here to demonstrate my interest in representations of landscape and wildlife through visual rubrics that have come to confer notions of economic value upon pictorial representations.

*Art and Cold Cash* is an art project connecting contemporary art and discourses surrounding money with the development of works in video and drawing by a five-member artists' collective. Jack Butler, Sheila Butler and I are contemporary Canadian artists who have lived and worked in the Canadian North. Beginning in 2004, we undertook an artistic collaboration with writer, Ruby Arngna'naaq, and artist, William Noah. Those two Inuit members of the *Art and Cold Cash* Collective lived through the change from barter economy to capitalism in Baker Lake, Nunavut, Canada. So, the experience and knowledge of Arngna'naaq and Noah are linked with the perspectives of Jack Butler, Sheila Butler and myself. A

key factor in this project is the history of twentieth century Canadian art as concurrent with the relatively recent introduction of capitalist exchange in the Canadian Arctic. As a creative response to the historical conditions around which it is centered, the project is committed to collective art making and analysis as culturally necessary and creatively expansive at this time of increasing globalization.

Specific to the *Drawn Like Money Series* was the idea that nationhood in Canada has in part been forged in relationship to images of the land, including those painted by artists and illustrators whose works were modeled on a British idea of landscape; by the paintings of the Group of Seven; and with regard to other such representations displayed on paper money since the mid-twentieth century and earlier. Images of the land have been used to promote Canadian nationalism in a number of ways, including, as Emily Gilbert has shown, by "drawing upon the kinds of natural images that have long fed the Canadian imagination."<sup>1</sup> Thus the circulation and flow of currency bearing landscapes in Canada has historically been a means to encourage within the minds and hearts of citizens involved in daily capitalist exchange nationalist sentiments

tied to representations of the land. And such representations have also been used to promote an idea of Canada as uniquely allied with notions of wilderness and 'the north' outside the country's borders.

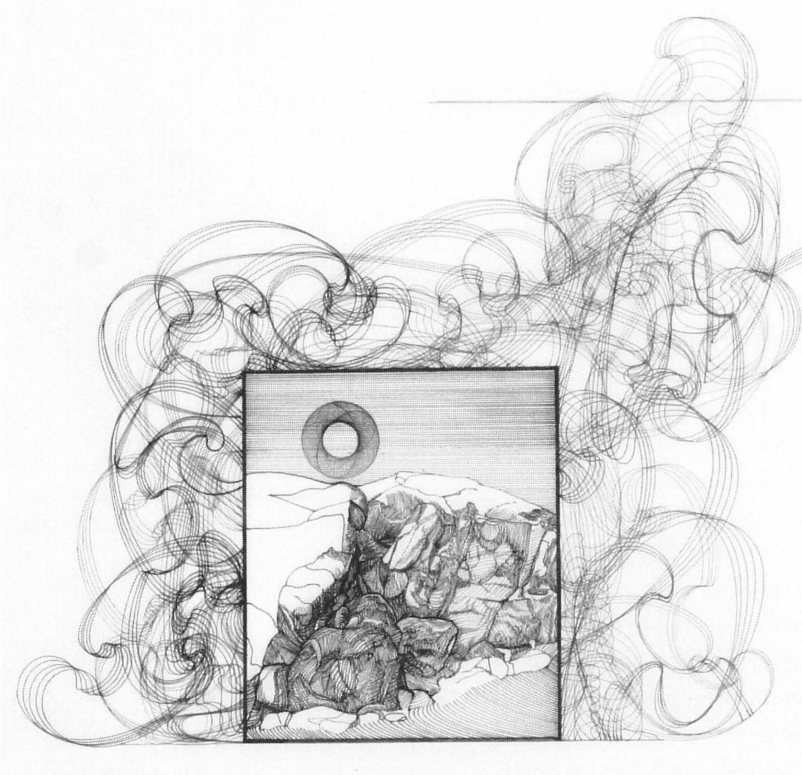
An engraved image entitled "Eskimos Hunting by Ice Floes" from 1974, shown on the back of the Canadian two dollar bill, appears intended to further the promotion of Canadian nationalism. Utilizing an ostensibly 'natural' icon, the traditional northern aboriginal hunt was elided with landscape as an authenticating representation of Canada. While such images from the Canadian North have historically been included within the scope of nationalist iconography, the contemporary moment demands a reflection on the 'canon' of such a body of images—and a creative critique of the 1974 two dollar bill image specifically. Furthermore, the state of the environment and the attendant impact on Indigenous Peoples demands a consideration of how representations such as those on national currency are historically constituted and ultimately traded upon. A key question which circulates around this topic is: How do the markers of 'authentic' Canadian-ness shown on currencies come to be exchanged in daily life, and what is the 'cost' to those who are, or to what is, shown?



Figure 1 Patrick Mahon 2006, Detail from Drawn Like Money #5  
Ink on Vellum, 30" x 44" (each), Photo Credit: Kim Clarke Photography

#### Endnotes

- 1 See Gilbert, Emily and Eric Helleiner, editors. 1999. *Nation-states and money: the past, present and future of national currencies*. London, UK: Routledge.



**Figure 2** Patrick Mahon 2006, Detail from Drawn Like Money #4  
Ink on Vellum, 30" x 44"; Photo Credit: Kim Clarke Photography

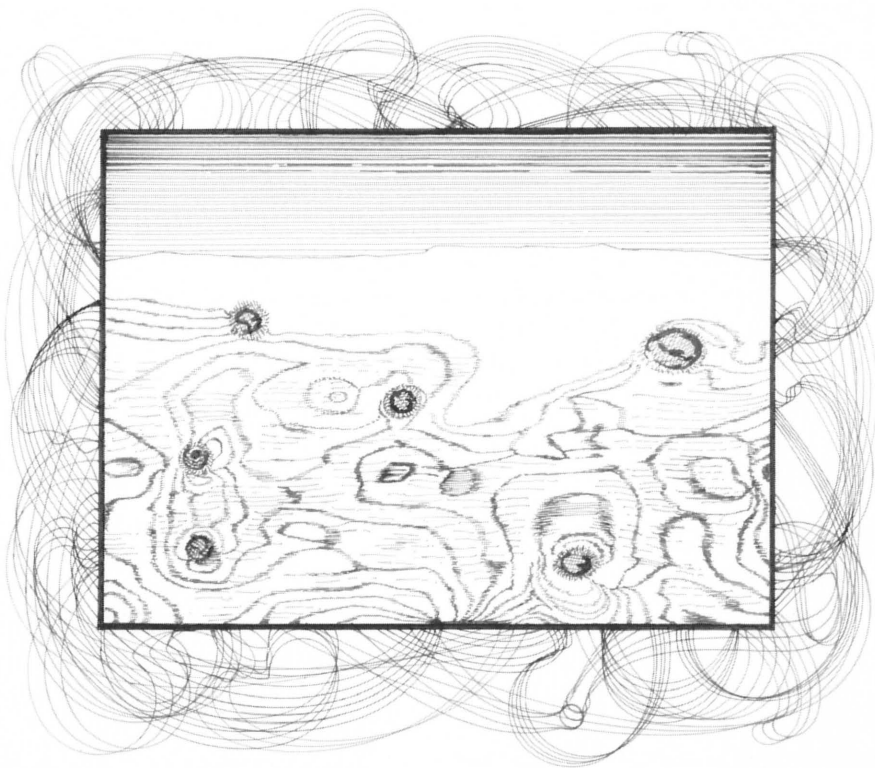


Figure 3 Patrick Mahon 2006, Details from Drawn Like Money Study #2  
Ink on Vellum, 30" x 44" (each), Photo Credit: Kim Clarke Photography

# T U R N I N G , T U R N E R , T U R N E D

D A V I D S C O T T A R M S T R O N G

Entering and exiting, that is what makes the image: appearing and disappearing. Not first representing, but first being or making a time...the time [*temps*] of making or taking an image, the time of time itself, which opens the eyes.

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*

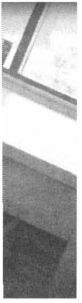
Much of my work is concerned with the idea of *passage*—the spatial and temporal index at the heart of the image. Images always come from some place else, almost any place really. They present themselves before us, now; whether fleeting or lingering with our look, yet what the image presents to us is an opening. We may stand here but we see elsewhere.

The images that make up the work (*After Turner*) glance off an *image* and an *anecdote* supplied by another artist, J.M.W. Turner. In his apocryphal account of the genesis of the painting "Snow-Storm" (which accompanied an engraved print reproduction after the painting) the artist tells of being 'lashed' to the mast of a steamer ship in order to see first hand the

effects of a storm at sea. This sequence of prints *re*-produces, by affixing a camera to the spinning cylinder of a printing press and opening the iris for progressively long to short exposures, a circular (vortex-like) encounter between the architecture of the machine and the disorientating effects of 'weather.'

In my own photo based prints weather is not so much captured as it is created through an opening to time—and the condition of *exposure*. What interests me in this relationship between reproducibility and weather, or the disorientation and dissolution of pictorial space, is how the repeatable image, turning in on itself, is revealed at its most vulnerable, tenuous (illusory) point. At that point between: appearing and disappearing. The image is created in the unfolding, contingent act of looking.

I see my art practice as engaging such transitional moments. Moments caught between the apparatus (processes, framing, craft) and its other (disruption, entropy and residue). Thinking through my work, marked as it is by a chronic interest in print based



media, I fold together traces of print, photography and filmic serial structure, into an encounter between technology and material dissolution, posing questions about the fundamental relationship between presentness and past-ness, language and materiality.

What is a medium? A confluence of the past and present? Less, a fixed set of processes and material determinations (although why reinvent the wheel?). A medium is a whirlpool. Like the whirlpool of water that forms in any common sink when the plug is pulled, a medium is a system of self-organization. For it both conserves energy in forming a 'whirl,' yet it is only sustained by both an external source feed such as the tap, or by the volume of water in the sink and the release of excess energy through the drain. The self-organizing yet dynamic whirl occurs in the middle, between what comes in and what goes out, a gathering and a release of energy.

Turner later wrote about his experience, saying, "I did not expect to escape, but felt bound to record it if I did." Putting aside for the moment the disputed

historical veracity of this scenario, I can't help but imagine the impossibility, under such conditions, of keeping one's eyes so resolutely open, trained to the task of seeing, of exposing oneself so fully to the elements. I can only suspect that the majority of the four hours the artist was affixed to the ship's mast were spent with his eyes closed, shielded from the driving wind, snow and water. Looking is made up of such degrees of exposure and repose: openings and closings. We see what is there before us, but also after us: *after* images (where the image that opens before us is that which is seen when one closes one's eyes) or, what is left of the image upon exiting the scene.

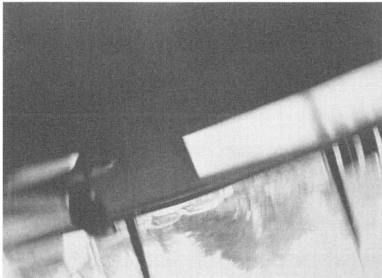
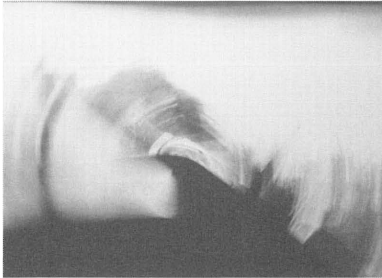
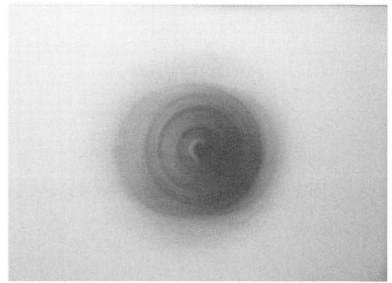
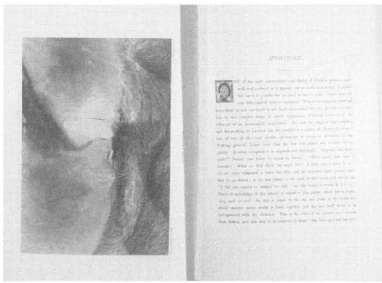
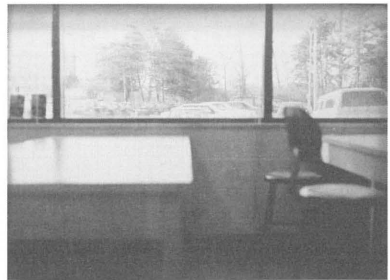
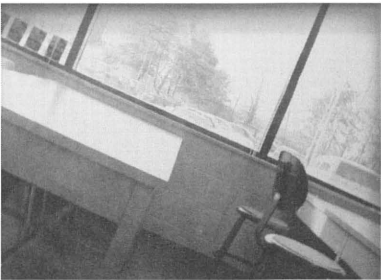
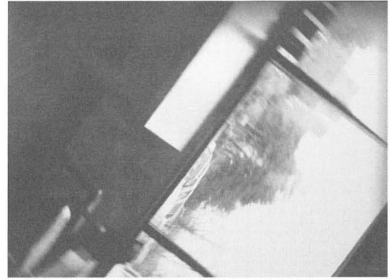
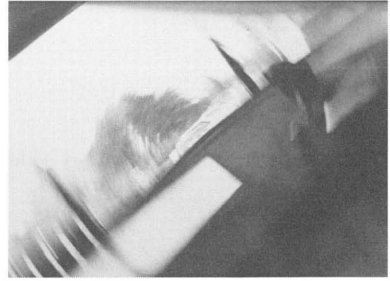
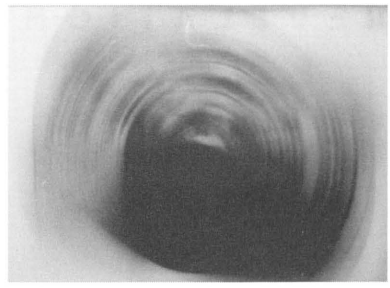
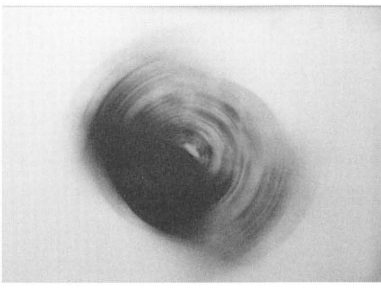


Figure 1 David Scott Armstrong 1999/ 2007(After Turner), Photolithography, chine collé on rag paper. An installation sequence of 16 prints, 23 x 31" (each), Photo Credit: David Scott Armstrong



# REVELATION SERIES

M I C A H L E X I E R

These are the first 23 works in the *Revelation*

series and each exists as a laser-cut steel, wall-mounted

sculpture. Each image is the result of a private ritual in

which a phrase is revealed to me. Each phrase is written

with my left hand and later obscured with my right. The

marks both join the letters together and make the revela-

tion harder to decipher.

Lives & Works [Revelation 1], 2006

THE SAME THING  
EVERY DAY

Lives & Works [Revelation 2], 2006

THE SAME THING  
EVERY DAY

Lives & Works [Revelation 3], 2006

THE SAME THING  
EVERY DAY

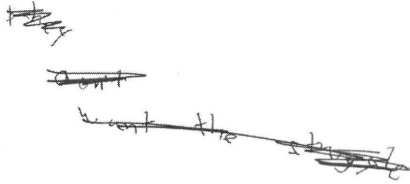
Lives & Works [Revelation 4], 2006

THE SAME THING  
EVERY DAY

Lives & Works [Revelation 5], 2006



Lives & Works [Revelation 6], 2006

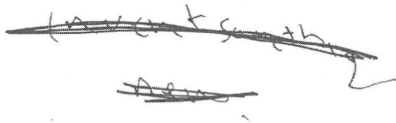
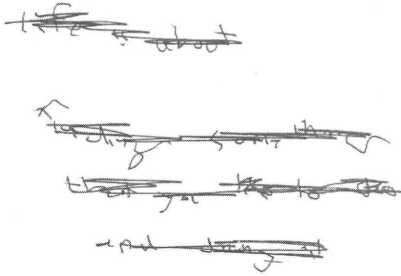
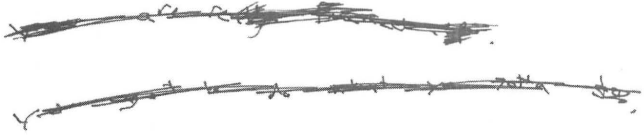
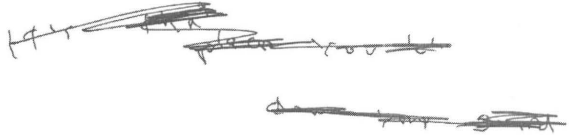


Lives & Works [Revelation 7], 2006



Lives & Works [Revelation 8], 2006





~~you are the~~  
~~world at large~~  
~~expectation~~

~~The good Lord~~

~~be in that way~~  
~~that you are~~  
~~—~~

9 -  
~~step into it~~

Lives & Works [Revelation 17], 2006

Handwritten scribbles consisting of several horizontal lines with some vertical strokes, appearing as if written with a pen or marker.

Lives & Works [Revelation 18], 2006

Handwritten scribbles consisting of several horizontal lines with some vertical strokes, appearing as if written with a pen or marker.

Lives & Works [Revelation 19], 2006

Handwritten scribbles consisting of several horizontal lines with some vertical strokes, appearing as if written with a pen or marker.

Lives & Works [Revelation 20], 2006

Handwritten scribbles consisting of several horizontal lines with some vertical strokes, appearing as if written with a pen or marker.

~~you get to that~~  
~~if you want~~  
~~to get to that~~

~~what you get~~  
~~to leave~~  
~~what you get to~~  
~~leave is what~~  
~~you get.~~  
~~what you get~~

~~you~~  
~~get~~  
~~to~~  
~~get~~  
~~to~~  
~~get~~