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Tried it with glasses off too; Sometimes.

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Tried It with Glasses off too; sometimes.

Nolan Fedorow

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

School of Art Design and Art History

May 2014

Preface

There is a difference between talking too much and rambling. I am saddened to say I continue to stand with how I have always felt and declare that I consider myself to possess the ability for neither or both. And it could be something about the weather out right now - I'm not sure – but visions of log cabin-like stacking image-thoughts are dancing in my head as I write. I think my thinking about thinking too much limits me from finding myself in a flow of speech whether it's by talking too much or rambling or both.

In the written portion of my thesis I discuss everyday applications as inspiration for what is within the gallery for my thesis exhibition. I'd like to think the writing is what it would be like if I could talk as if I possessed the ability to talk too much and ramble, both in varying amounts while also having the ability to be able to think too much throughout the whole writing process as well. A mind can wonder when listening to someone talking too much or rambling. Do not worry if you find yourself doing the same while reading this.

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Abstract

I use a small wedge of wood as a tool to pick out food scraps that find themselves lodged between my teeth. I also use a small wedge of wood as a tool to keep a straight door from swinging freely on a crooked house. The small wedge of wood I stuff in between the floor and door as a tool is a controlling apparatus, much like landowners who use fencing to keep people from walking repeatedly through their land and inadvertently creating a path where they shouldn't. A wooden doorstopper will come to adorn a perpendicular-patterned patina across its face.

A baguette had just rode the roof of a silver Golf all the way from a bread store to where I found it on top of the car parked in the space next to me when I pulled in. This I could tell not through the cellophane window built into the paper bag it was packaged in, but from how the very tip of the corner of the bag had become fatefully pinched in the closed car door, the loaf nestled under a ski rack. When the passenger exited the car and closed the door they must have unknowingly re-secured the situation at this location. Because we were at a food store I could assume they had purchased the bread elsewhere and were now at this new international food market for a special product. Not wanting to trouble the seemingly pleasant border collie looking at me through the window of the backseat, I headed straight into the store and right to the customer service desk.

After I explained the situation and recommended he make an announcement over the loud speaker the manager stood up and walked out the front door - I assume to take a look at the scene for himself. Although I continued my shopping trip as normal, I was now filled with the anticipation of hearing a voice on the loud speaker announcing the owner of a silver Golf had a baguette on the roof of their car. But the loud speaker never came on and as I glanced over at the customer service desk on my way to the check-out counter I saw the manager was back to whatever he was doing on a computer when I first approached him upon entering the store.

Waiting in line I found myself sizing up the other customers around me and wondered who was the driver of the newish silver Volkswagen, ski rack, no bumper stickers, backseat border collie, baguette. I had a feeling by the way the cashiers looked at me that they were curious as to what it was I had said to the manager earlier which compelled him to get up and go outside with a confused look on his face. I decided not to tell them

about the baguette on the roof of the car. I figured the owners of the Golf had probably left the store a few minutes before me; they found the baguette on the roof, pulled it inside and shared a chuckle with the oblivious dog as they drove across town.

But to my delight upon exiting the store I could see the car was still parked next to mine and so I briskly walked over to my car, tossed the groceries in backseat, opened the glove compartment, ripped a sheet out of a mini graph-paper spiral notebook, scribbled down “there is a loaf of bread on your roof”, folded and tucked the note under their windshield wiper and drove away without hearing a single peep from the collie. I bet they saw the note in front of their faces and were able to reach up and grab the bread sitting on the roof above their heads. Or maybe the clumsy passenger went to go put something else on the roof and discovered the lost loaf that way. I wondered what they thought about the whole thing and mostly what they wound up doing with my note. I’ve juggled words around to tell this story before, but it wasn’t until I sat down at the computer and got about halfway through typing this out that the noteworthy word combination – pinched loaf – revealed itself to me.

By choosing to tell the story this way I wound up with this complete written account of what happened, as well as an unexpected title for the story that was birthed out of the play of writing words. The phrase - pinched loaf - already had a place in the world aside from my recollection of it and using as the title of a piece of writing of this specific event. As far as I know, it was simply a baguette until it became more than a baguette through its mishandling. I did not necessarily set out to use word combinations in hopes of discovering a title. I set out to tell a story by combining written words. Something happening has the potential for that happening to come to an end. However, by my focus

and attention to the telling of the story through writing the duration of the happening has been extended - It is still happening.

Freezing rain had coated a pine tree with a layer of ice. Walking under this tree the following sunny, but windy day I experienced a faux ice storm as the wind blew the ice shards off the branches and onto me. The footpath that goes through the property I rent happens to traverse under this tree where I happened be caught in this extremely temporary and delightful isolated weather event. Finding myself in this event was just as much a surprise as the chance wordplay title discovery of “pinched loaf”. Wind blowing ice off the branches of a pine tree creates a faux weather event; a misplaced loaf of bread described as a derogatory term for passing bowels.

I suppose urinating on that same tree could be described as experiencing an isolated weather event as well. Though, this scenario holds the same lack of elegance that a quick re-telling of the story of the pinched loaf at a party could possibly possess; a bad joke, a bad story.

The formula of urinating on a tree and describing it as an isolated weather event, so as to tell a joke can be applied to the ingredients of the pinched loaf story: purposely tuck a baguette under your ski-rack on the roof of your car –a scenario depicting a pinched loaf. This can be observed just as a back seat spectator driving by could observe a bumper sticker. A bumper sticker is read and appreciated once understood. An intentionally pinched loaf is everything a bumper sticker wishes it could be as its two-dimensionality holds its message securely into its materiality.

The use of language for the molding of words brought about the surprise connection between the situation of a loaf of bread and a pre-established phrase for something quite unrelated. The odds of me catching that rare, isolated ice storm under a tree in my own backyard were quite slim. The spontaneous personality of these things jumped out at me. A bad joke fizzles into the air; ice shards bounce off of me and melt in the grass.

My repeated use of the land carves out a visible trace of its use. The path is the trace left by things happening to it and on it. Loafs fade-away much quicker than bumper-stickers. Just like the path I walk on everyday in my backyard as I leave my house gets a little more worn down - the same path that goes under the tree that covered me in ice shards. I am leaving and I am to go somewhere else- to do something else- and along with whatever it is I am going to do I inadvertently use the land in a repeated manner revealing years of use foot-carved out of the land.

Though I walk on the path every day I am not necessarily surprised by the personality of the path every day. I'm not sure how I could force personality out of the path and if I did, then I would not experience a surprise. A pattern was revealed by me by moving a potted plant around on the surface of a table (figure 27). Each time I moved the plant to a new location I would dip the bottom of the pot in a dish of black ink and place it back on the table in a different location. I was able to locate a new, different location because the trace of me moving the potted plant around the table had been recorded with ink on the table cloth. To my surprise, after about an hour of me doing this the tablecloth on top of the table began to resemble a composition notebook-like pattern of black and white static.

I recorded myself performing this act and within the gallery nailed the tablecloth on the wall and projected the video onto it within a small rectangle I had scrubbed out of the ink pattern as I would any dirty table cloth - with cleaning supplies and elbow grease. A viewer does not need to watch the whole hour and a half video to understand what is happening. Maybe the loaf of bread pinched under the ski rack that day in the parking lot was the bumper sticker-like joke scenario I am claiming it has the potential to be, but I did not read it that way at the time. Instead I read it as a problem with a solution. Though I did not solve the problem I gained a title for the story of the experience. I used the act of putting something down on a table in a way which revealed to me its surprise personality. I am able to share this complete experience within the gallery. The piece presents itself like a bumper sticker, which is viewed, read, and possibly understood.

When I leave my house I lock both locks on the front door. One lock is the classic little thumb/pointer finger twister on the knob inside of the house. So I twist that into locked position and pull the door behind me. If I hadn't remembered to not put them in my pocket as I grabbed them on my way out the door, then I take my keys out of my pocket and lock the second lock – a deadbolt – from the outside with the key. I put the keys in the pocket that I'm always trying to remember to always put them in and I'm on my way.

It's an old door that can barely keep a draft out of an even older house. I'll save myself the extra unnecessary step of fondling of keys from outside of the pockets to unlock the twist knob if I only lock the deadbolt and forget about the whole doorknob lock process.

And at that point, only having one lock moves the whole concept one step closer to forfeiting its false sense of security altogether.

So when I come back home I find I have forgotten to remember something I was trying to forget and found I had left myself two locks to fumble for in the dark. Something that I am doing is something I had either decided on doing that day or something that has come by surprise that now I must do because I forgot to remember. I can also do something and remember I had to do something else and keep doing what I was doing but I have to remember to do that in which I am supposed to remember to do also. That role can become reversed and the something that has interrupted the original thing I was doing becomes priority and I completely forget to complete that which I originally set out to do. I'll eventually remember what I was doing at first.

When I get in the house I might throw the keys down on a table. Other things might get tossed onto this table as well. Tossing things on this table may become a habit and the table could become so cluttered with things it is no longer the once-functional placing surface it once was.

A table with a bunch of shit on it might as well be upside-down. In fact, it may be better for putting shit on if it is positioned this way. I can hang things like coats or bags on the legs which now stand erect in the air. I can still place things on the surface of the table but now it is the underside of the table top resting on the floor. It's really the same thing, maybe just a little better.

How do I flip over the table? Do I flip the table over so it is laying flat on the ground as mentioned above? I can flip the table over and somehow suspend it from the ceiling so

the flipped over table top hangs positioned at the same height it was at in space when it was standing upright on its four legs. I thought about how I could flip a table over on the axis of the base of its legs and found an interesting situation where the table would be positioned in a hole upside-down so the bottom of the table legs which once supported the table on top of the floor are now sticking upright out of a hole level with the floor.

I posted an ad on Craig's List asking the local community if anyone would be willing to let me dig a hole in their yard so I could place a table in it upside-down. Within a few days I received a response from a gentleman who agreed to facilitate my project. He said he was going to plant a flowerbed once I had filled in the hole and left. A few months later I emailed him the pictures of the table in the hole and explained what had come of the project. I asked him what he wound up growing where I had dug the hole - he hasn't got back to me yet.

A friend of mine who is a firefighter says they all keep doorstoppers strapped to their helmets, some he said, with deflated bicycle inner tubes. They call these wedges of wood "chocks" and use them to "chock-up" a door on their way into a building by stuffing it up in between the top of the door and the corner of the frame.

My doorstopper lies in the corner and gathers dust. When someone reaches into this corner groping for and retrieving the doorstopper, dust lightly soils the hand of the casual doorstopper user who then might occasionally grab a broom to sweep dust out of that same corner. Stewed up by the friction of broom-use, door stopper dust and human oils creates a sludgy mixture that collects on the end of the broom handle. This broom gets

put back where it was propped-up in the corner of the closet on the other side of the house leaving its mark on the walls in the corner.

Like keys living in pockets, things like doorstoppers and brooms are most likely where they usually are. They can also find themselves left in bizarre, sometimes out of reach locations. Because these things are used by people where they become misplaced is usually within reasonable reach. So, just like I understand how hard a glass can be slammed on a table before it breaks I think I understand how my body can stretch to reach something and so I think I know if I can successfully step on tippy toes to obtain what I want. I find myself stretching, twisting, and extending all limbs to attain the prized object of desire. The location of the misplaced object might force upon me the act of conjuring higher powers by standing on something. I experience this strange, unplanned struggle all to achieve what should have been as simple as reaching for something you know is in your pocket – or strapped to your helmet. Like corners of closets seats of pants become soiled when a certain sturdy chair also holds the occupation as the step stool.

Spontaneous solutions like doorstoppers and step stools are an aid in the proper function of things like doorways and closets. I use doorways and closets but I also use accessories like doorstoppers and step stools to better utilize the doorways and closets. I use things like doorstoppers and stepstools aside from their usual problem-solving role. If I go to the closet to grab the broom – assuming that is where it is – I can use the broom as I normally would and go sweep something. Or I could spend time to use the broom a different way.

I took a heavily soiled broom into the gallery and used it not for sweeping but utilized the act of the placing of a broom. I mimicked how one might carelessly toss a broom in a

corner after it is used. I did it over and over again accelerating the accumulation of the sludgy mixture on the walls of the corner. Before long the corner of the gallery where the tip of the broom handle crashed upon was covered with marks and I found I was unable to continue making marks because my repeated throwing had polished the tip of the broom clean. I was able to rest the broom against a wall next to the corner without leaving a mark on the wall (Figure 20). Molding installed on walls prevents chairs from doing the same when they are pushed back across the floor into the wall while getting your legs out from under the table to stand up.

Like having to check on a silenced cell phone or stomp the floor to un-skip a skipping cd, these other affairs become controllable events all on their own by using the available and manageable materials in that space. So if this chair to the right of me, as I'm hunched over the table writing this, were to be in my way of writing across the page as far right as I'd like to, because there is more space on the page over there, I can simply move the chair. But because I am writing this down I allowed one thought to put an anchor down and be recorded via handwritten form. I had already started thinking about how I could just move the book over to the left instead of moving the chair to the right. So I have just found myself critiquing the decision to use language in handwritten form to catalog thoughts and thinking, and all the while, admiring how good my handwriting looks tonight.

Last year for the whole month of February no one told me I had a piece of tape on the seat of my pants. I put one there every morning once my pants were on. At the end of the

day I would take the piece of tape off of my pants before I took the pants off. I placed the piece of tape on a nice piece of paper I had tacked on the wall of my room. I saved all 28 pieces of tape by arranging them in a seven-by-four rectangle and matted and framed the collection (Figure 32). Without some sort of story behind the framed object someone would only understand it as a bluish fuzzy stained-glass looking rectangle under glass in a frame – like someone only understanding a glued and mounted puzzle as its material with no clues that would aid in a connection or understanding to the experience of putting the puzzle together.

Placing a sugar cube on top of a piece of paper under the drips of a leaky faucet won't fix the leak but will rather quickly create an interesting dissolved sugar-pattern trace on the paper. Placing a cobble on a piece of paper under the same leaky faucet will do the same, but won't show a trace of its erosion in my life time. It will also outlive the paper and most likely the house this all takes place in. Like the tape on the pants ritual, but reversed, this is presenting only the action. Like understanding a puzzle as only a puzzle to be puzzled, not a puzzle for the solved-puzzle image. The cobble being dripped on presents itself in a way which shows the action (like doing a puzzle or wearing tape) and through the understanding of erosion, the assumed outcome (like a glued and mounted puzzle or the tape pattern).

A trace will be made on the stone but I will never see it; I am unable to achieve a presentable solution in my lifetime. The outcome is implied and understood though the futile arrangement of cobble eroding under a leaky faucet to make a sand drawing. The futile arrangement which involves assumed erosion on the stone is presenting the problem of time, but time is not a problem all of the time. Understanding the puzzle as a

problem that can be dealt with rather than solved is playing with the problem. I had a fortune cookie say something like this but I can't remember it, and even though I saved it, I can't find it in my wallet.

Leaving the house one day I was forced to stop where I was on the path because laying on its side on ground in front of me was what at first seemed to be a strange, sad looking Christmas tree. This object was extremely unseasonable and seemed odd and out of place. Looking around for some sort of clue as to how it got there or why, I found myself looking up at pine tree in front of me. The top five feet of the tree had been removed and was now lying on the ground. If I were to decide on a way to explain it I would say that I recall it was windy the night before and it must have been blown down somehow – which is really the only reasonable explanation.

I decided to drag the tree-top back up near the house for safe keeping making sure not to accidentally dredge up a croquet wicket along the way. I left the tree and went on with my normal business. Returning home later I started cleaning the tree-top up, removing the side branches revealing a nice-looking post. I wound up cutting 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' off of it for a croquet mallet head but the rest of it stayed stored for possible future use.

I wanted to keep the post because I felt it had the potential to be used for something in the future. Its size was very manageable, sort of like a rake handle but more robust like an ax handle; sizable and sturdy - wieldable. Because of its personality I felt it was more than just usable for specific post-needed projects. I set an object aside for when it is can be used in a way that highlights all of its qualities rather than just its function.

The reasonable size of the artifact played a crucial role in my initial preservation of it. Like picking something up and putting it in my pocket – the pocket is used as temporary storage until the object gets stored or used somewhere else. The objects are in a limbo, in temporary storage until potential are used. Same rule applies for backpack sized objects, and for bicycle handle bar-propping-up-sized objects, and vehicle car trunk sized objects. I suppose things can live in your pockets forever – like keys. Or items can live in the trunk of a car if they do not take up too much room. But lots of times I pick something up much like the reason I did for the tree-top – its potential, manageability - its personality.

I found a way to use the top section of the tree stripped down to its form as the post with potential with the help of a post I had found years ago in a very similar way. The second pole is a telescoping 20 foot plastic pole painted with red and white foot increments which I found in the small wooded plot behind my first apartment. I attached a camera with a timer to the top of the telescoping pole and raised it up into the air right next to the tree with the missing top. It mimics the view the broken-off top used to have and captures a view as a memento for the post. I also set a timer on the camera on a tripod and took pictures of me holding the telescopic pole straight in the air with the post strapped to the very top. It captures a photograph of what will most likely be the only time the branch will be able to relive what it was like at the top of the tree. (Figure 7)

I imagine the post was able to momentarily relive what it was like back at the top of the tree and now also has the photographs as visual reminders of how it came to be. The pole, which before this had been stored away for years now, and just this past summer was used as a support for a vine grow on and up. Currently both the post and the pole reside in a corner waiting for the next time they will be used for something else.



Figure 1: (Installation View), 2014

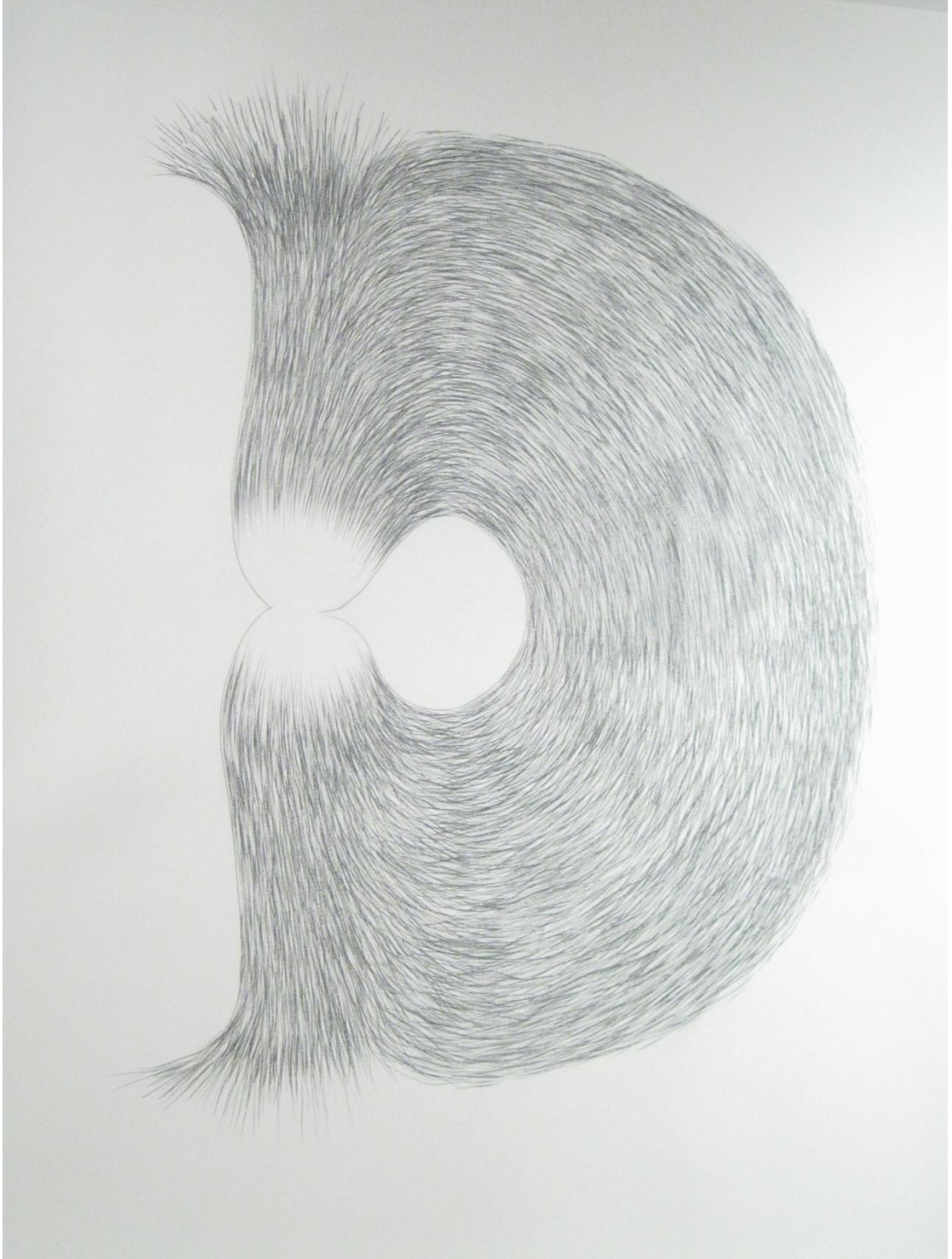


Figure 2: *Illustration for "Pinched Loaf"*, Graphite on Paper, 2014



Figure 3: (Installation View), 2014



Figure 4: *Syllabic Chisenbop*, stamp pad ink on paper, video (01:40 minutes looped), 2013



Figure 5: *Syllabic Chisenbop* (Video Stills), 2013



Figure 6: (Installation View), 2014



Figure 7: *What's a Better Time to Reminisce?* Digital photography, 2014



Figure 8: (Installation View), 2014



Figure 9: (Installation View), 2014



Figure 10: (Installation View), 2014



Figure 11: *Once, But Twice* (video stills), 2014



Figure 12: *Chair-wear*, discarded lawn chair, television, VCR, video (16:59 looped), 2013

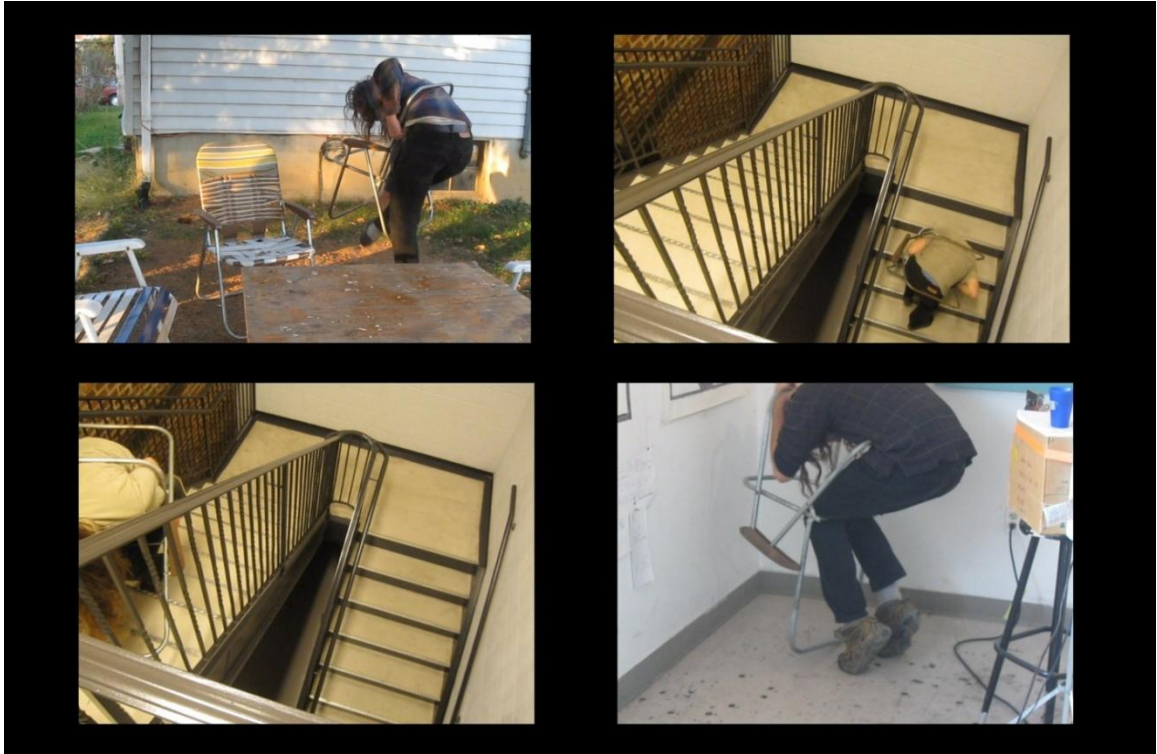


Figure 13, *Chair-wear*, (Video Stills), 2013



Figure 14: (Installation View), 2014



Figure 15: *Pencil with Lowered Expectations*, graphite on paper, altered pencil, 2013-2014

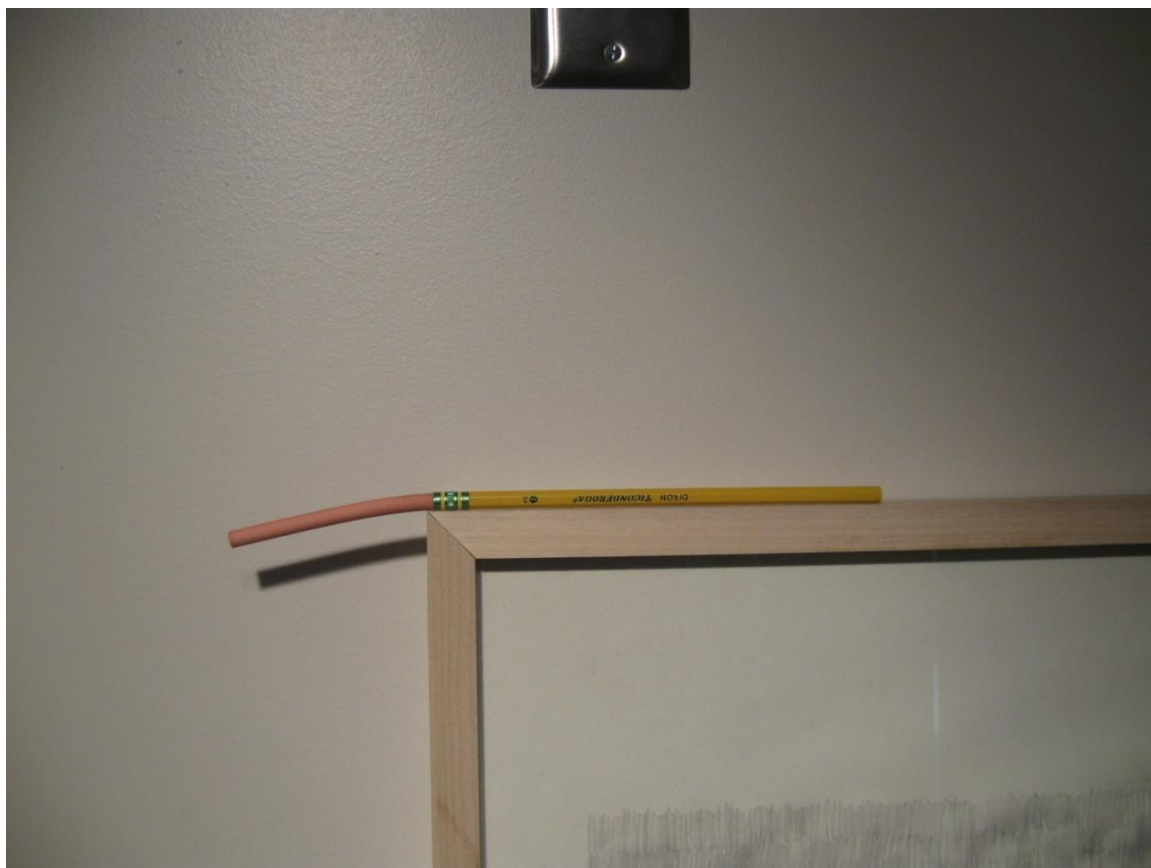


Figure 16: *Pencil with Lowered Expectations* (Detail), 2013-2014



Figure 17: *It Wouldn't Do This So Now It Does This*, dowel, bracket, nails, frame, graphite on paper, 2013

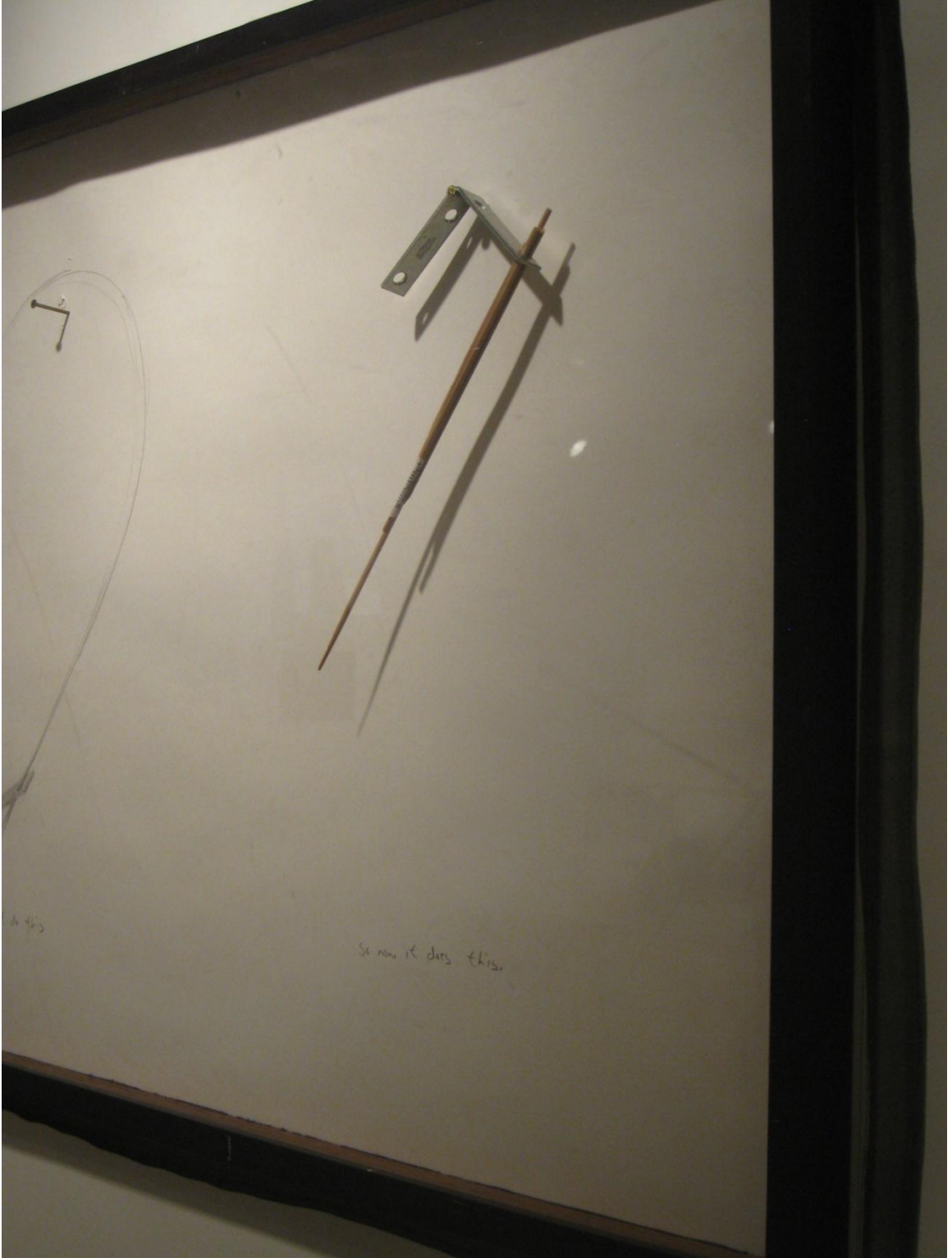


Figure 18: *It Wouldn't Do This So Now It Does This* (Detail), 2013



Figure 19: *Up Keeping Maintenance*, used broom, 2014



Figure 20: *Up Keeping Maintenance* (Detail), 2014



Figure 21: *Trust*, wooden block, printed document, 2014



Figure 22: *Trust* (Detail), 2014

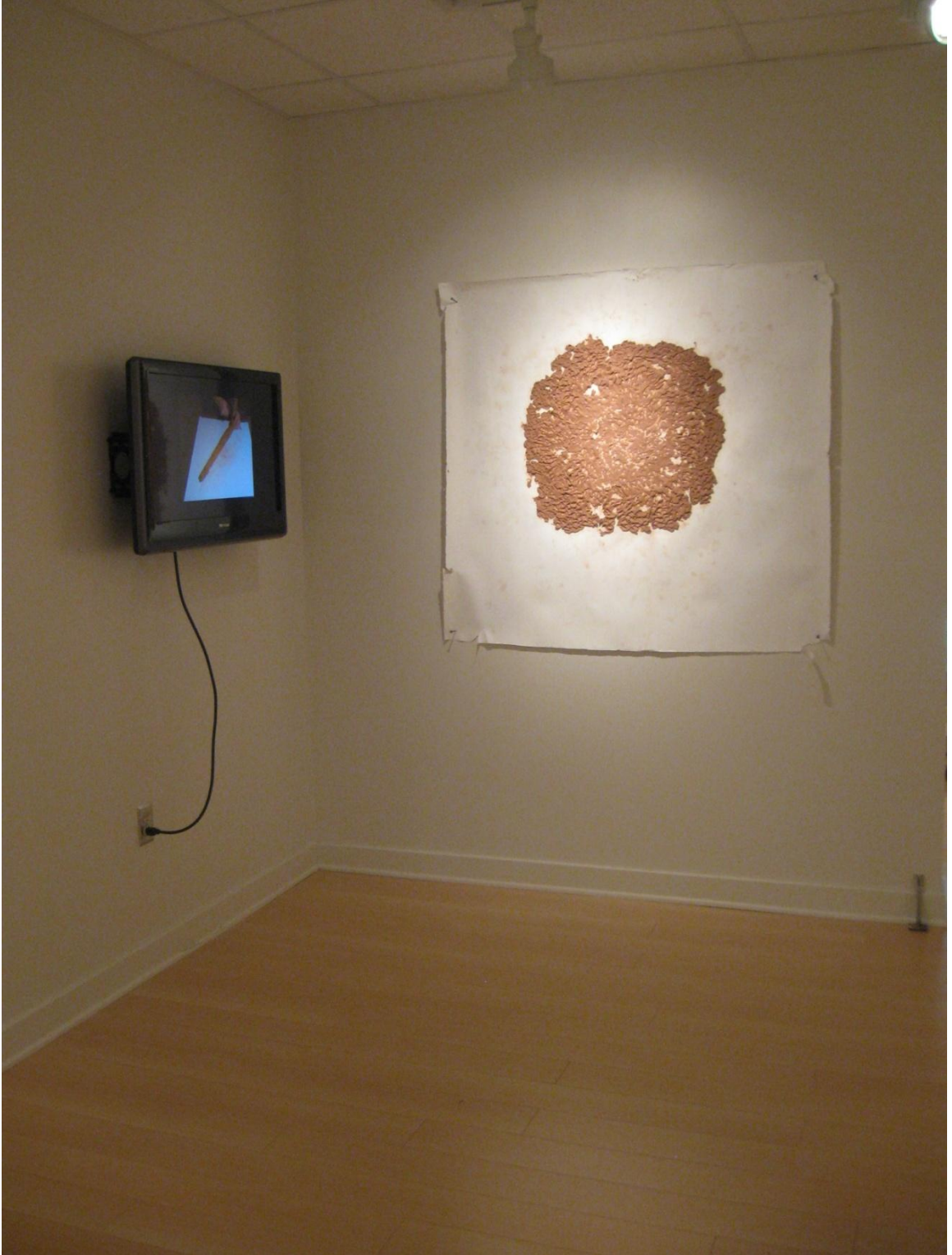


Figure 23: *Campfire Marshmallow*, Oil-based clay on paper, hammer, digital video (01:26:00 hours looped), 2013



Figure 24: *Campfire Marshmallow* (Video Stills), 2013



Figure 25: (Installation View), 2014

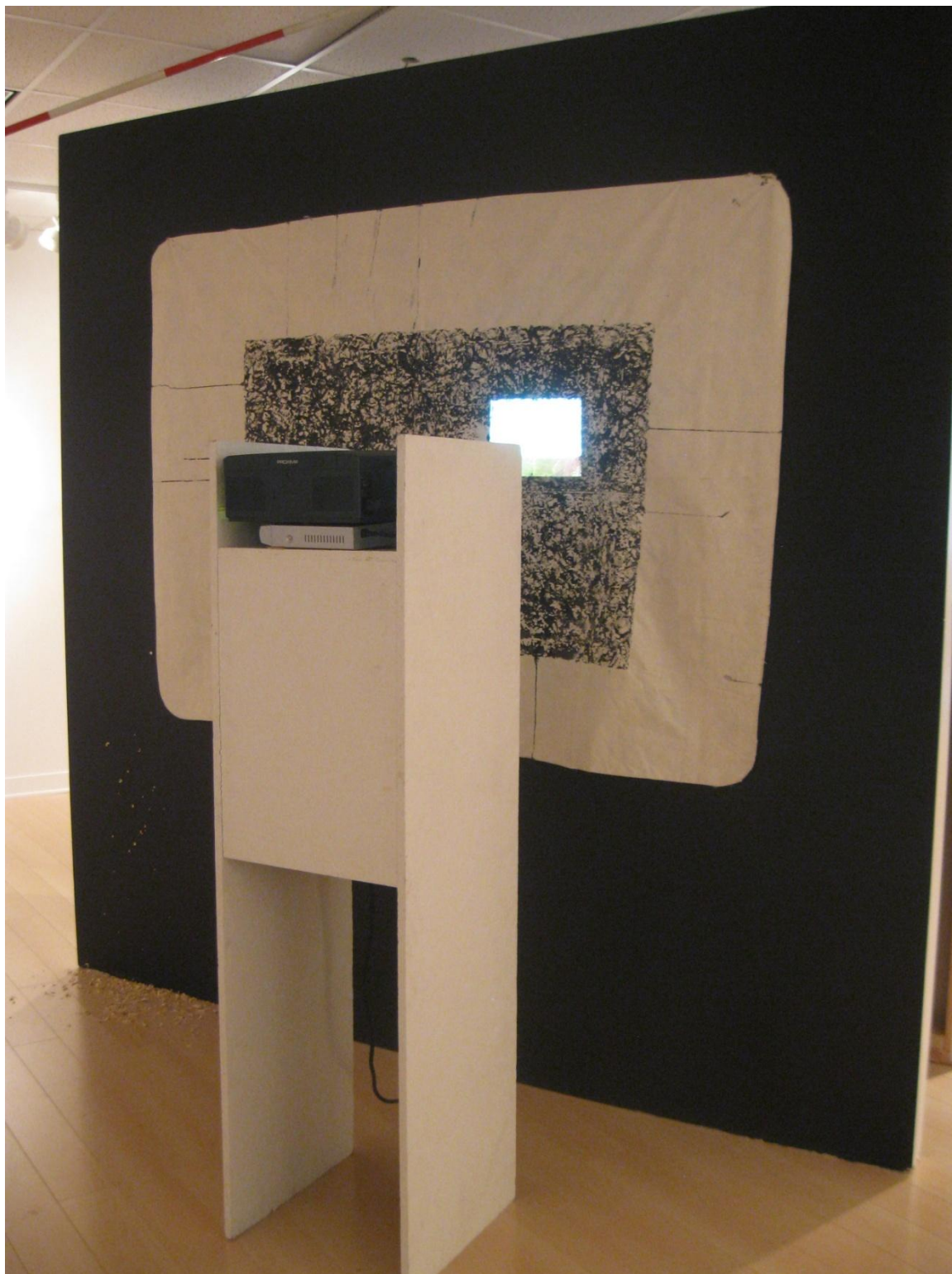


Figure 26: *Compositions with Norfolk Pine (Does this look good here?)*, Vinyl tablecloth, ink, digital video projection (02:00:01 hours looped), 2013



Figure 27: *Compositions with Norfolk Pine (Does This Look Good Here?)* (Video Stills), 2013



Figure 28: *What's The Use?* (Detail), wood shavings, static electricity, 2014

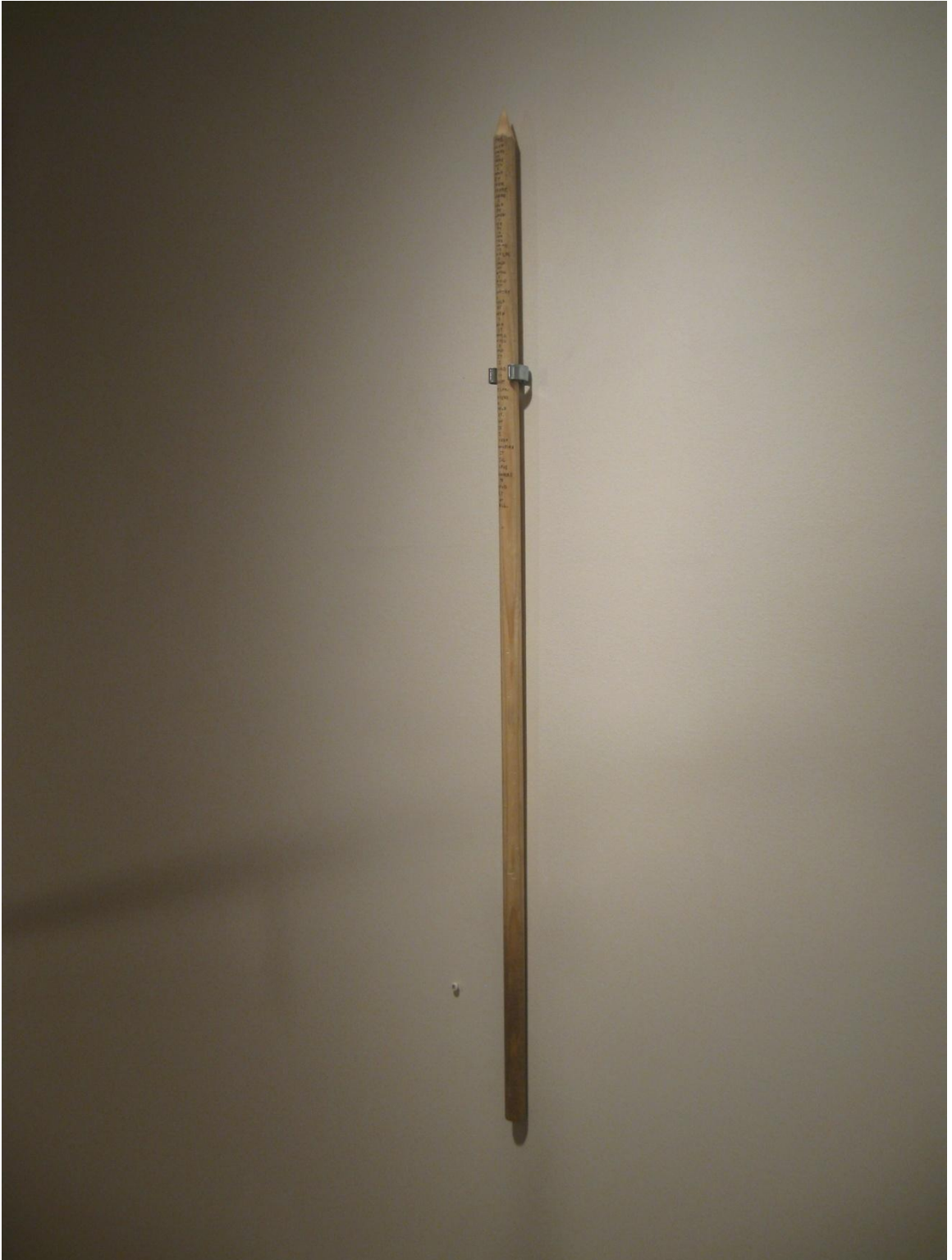


Figure 29: *What's The Use?* (Detail) used wooden dowel, permanent marker, 2014



Figure 30: *Doorstopper Daydreams*, graphite on embossed paper, 2013-2014



Figure 31: *Last Year For the Whole Month Of February No One Told Me I Had a Piece Of Tape On The Seat Of My Pants (I Put One There Every Morning)*, scotch tape, lint, pants, wood, pennies, 2014



Figure 32: *Last Year For the Whole Month Of February No One Told Me I Had a Piece Of Tape On The Seat Of My Pants (I Put One There Every Morning)* (Detail), 2014

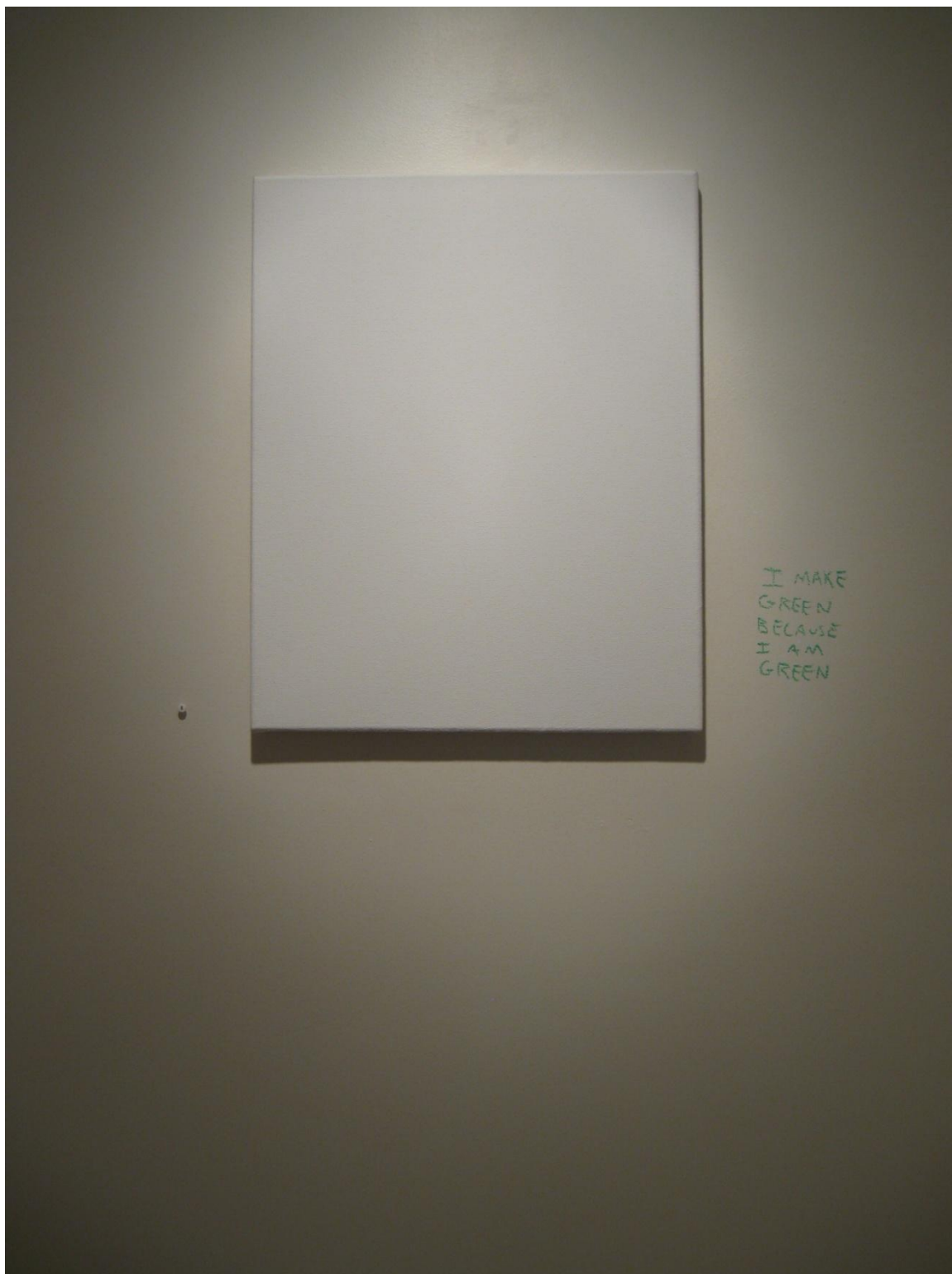


Figure 33: *It Makes Green Because It Is Green*, Stretched canvas, oil pastel, 2014



Figure 34: (Installation View), 2014



Figure 35: (Installation View), 2014

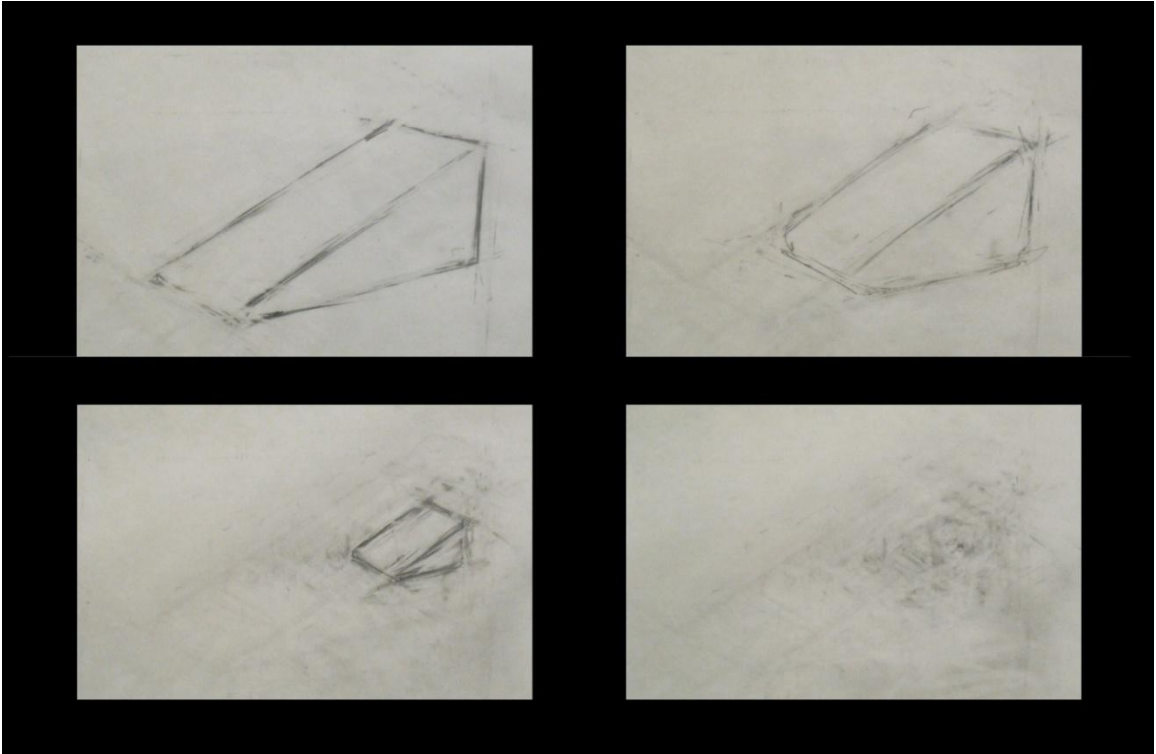


Figure 36: *Chocks Up* (Video Stills), stop-motion animation (20 seconds looped), 2013



Figure 37: *Ring Ring Ring*, digital video projection (05:00 minutes looped), 2013

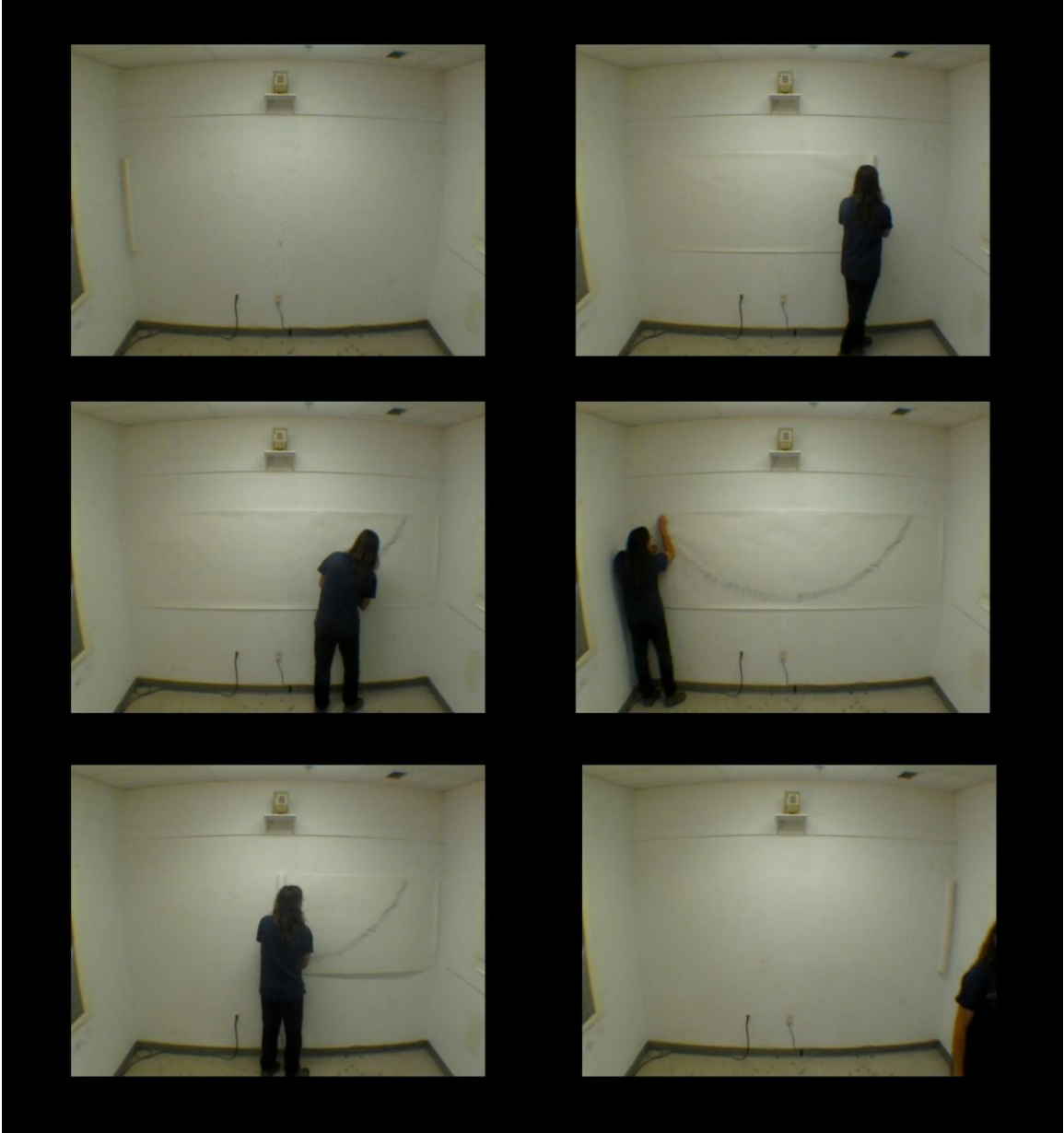


Figure 38: *Ring Ring Ring* (Video Stills), 2013



Figure 39: (Installation View), 2014

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