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ONE MILLION PAINTINGS 2005-2007: A THESIS

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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BFA, Brigham Young University, 2002

Director: PETER BALDES  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, PAINTING & PRINTMAKING

Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, Virginia  
May 2007

## Acknowledgements

It is probably a rare thing to like everyone you go to school with. Like any other job there is that danger of being thrown-in with a group of people you would have never chosen as peers yet will deal with for half of your waking life. There are those variables in applying to art school which can be studied and avoided, like certain professors, programs, cities, or studio spaces, but you can never know who the other students in your year will be since the faculty aren't even sure until after you accept. It is therefore a special blessing that continues to astound me that I have been so lucky in my fellow artists here at VCU to find such humility, friendship, professionalism, comradery, and humour in Lauren Clay, Jason Coates, Mike Erickson, Heather Harvey, Andy Kozlowski, and Marian Brunn Smith – you, Roy G Biv – have made all the difference in making graduate school the best possible experience. To have that blessing book-ended by equally loveable people ahead of me and behind in school has been a miracle that has made these two years a joy. My faculty have also changed my life, especially my committee Richard Roth, Amy Hautt and Gregory Volk along with Peter Baldes, Ron Johnson, Javier Tapies, Holly Morisson, Barbara Tisserat, Reni Gower, and Ruth Bouldan. Arlene Garrison, I love you.

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## Abstract

### ONE MILLION PAINTINGS 2005-2007: A THESIS

By Jared Lindsay Egbert Clark, MFA

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2007

Major Director: Peter Baldes  
Assistant Professor, Painting & Printmaking

I assist discarded collectives of objects to volunteer themselves for inclusion into the privileged legacy of flatness – assuring them they can be transformed into Painting. Reducing my interventions - often to mere arrangement - respects the possibility of this transformation while frankly retaining the objects' original functional identities.

Every surface of any object is a readymade painting – especially flat ones. By stacking objects and aligning their surfaces on one privileged side into a flat mega-surface, I am composing and collaging – even building – a painting. With my amateur interest in German I latch upon the double meaning of “Bild” to title my objects, describing my continued interest in the space between painting and sculpture.

All my projects transform found objects into ambiguous objects described by Donald Judd as “neither painting nor sculpture”. In addition to the Bilds projects such as the Cutllages, the Kitsch Paintings, Soap Drawings, Text Tubes, and List Drawings investigate different ways to transform the found object into painting.

While my work is formalist it is decidedly post-modernist in its embodiment of the qualities described by Craig Owens in *The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism*.

## CHAPTER 1

### When I'm Coming From

June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1976.

Marilyn Monroe  
Brigham Young  
Terry Winters  
Pat Boone  
Nicole Andreoni (Andy's wife)  
Morgan Freeman  
Andy Griffith  
Aunt Anne  
Chris Purdie's mom  
Nanda's girlfriend, Buck  
Amber's roommate &  
Helen Keller R.I.P.  
all share my birthday.

I think this kind of explains where I'm coming from.

## CHAPTER 2

### Goals

As a new first-year graduate student, having barely arrived to Richmond from Utah, and still moving into a triangular shaped studio recently vacated by Emily Hall at Virginia Commonwealth University; I found myself lounging on a porch at an opening social in the country home of our chair, Richard Roth, and being asked a very serious question by one of the second year painters:

Jody Schwab: “So what are your goals for your two years of graduate school?!”

Jared Lindsay Clark: “To make one *million* paintings.”

## CHAPTER 3

### Minimalist Objects in Maximalist Times

*Half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture...but this work which is neither painting nor sculpture challenges both. It will have to be taken into account by new artists. It will probably change painting and sculpture.*<sup>1</sup>

-Donald Judd, *Specific Objects*, 1965

This prophecy by the formidable minimalist authority Donald Judd remains relevant to what continues to be some of the best new work in the last few years even four decades after its pronouncement. It certainly ignited my own imagination seven years ago as a young painter searching to stretch the limits of painting in his own way. Consider Judd's own sculptural work. Once his fabricated cubes are viewed in terms of paintings, or the painting object, they are simply steel, brightly colored, broadly proportioned versions of the shallow stretched canvas box – the sculptural qualities of a painting emphasized. Sculptures once labeled as boring because they withstand understanding and bar interest now unfold a side panel to offer an entry point into a dialogue– not *the* entry point, but an entry point nonetheless. Looking at minimalism through the lens of painting is like highlighting through decoder glasses previously invisible text. Judd's work is not the only

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Judd. Judd, Complete Writings 1959-1975. (Halifax Nova Scotia, 1975) 74-82

text decoded by the lens of painting among the “neither painting nor sculpture” arts. The earth work of Robert Smithson, the sliced architecture of Gordon Matta Clark, the organic objects of Eva Hesse, the slight of hand of Richard Tuttle, the monoliths of Leonardo Drew, and the installations of Judy Pfaff and Jessica Stockholder exemplify varied and valid responses to the Judd challenge that also excite my imagination when read through my painting lenses.

My own explorations into the space between painting and sculpture were predicated upon meditation of the Judd manifesto combined with a fascination with the dead-end ideas of Clement Greenberg. The fact that the reductive tenets of both minimalism and modernism led to impasses and were often considered bankrupt or unfashionable were the very qualities that made them ideal beginning points. Counter intuitively following closed ideas opened up new forms. I had found that painting in the style of my heroes was the true dead end, and that trying to take work I disliked and make it my own created a friction that could be construed as ‘interesting’. I found the work of Donald Judd boring and been taught to mock the essentialist qualities of modernism but they became, ironically, a genesis of work I would love. My questions centered on: how could I build a new sort of object from scratch – one that was neither painting nor sculpture - yet played with the essentials of painting?

My investigation of the specific object began with a Greenbergian contemplation of what the “scratch” of painting was anyway: wooden stretchers, panels, canvas and white gesso? In exploring these essentials in object making I veered from fabricating with new wood and Styrofoam toward using reclaimed materials scavenged from thrift stores and

junkyards, repairing their cracks and dents with Bondo and wax. Thus I not only found creative energy by revisiting discarded ideas, but mirrored this ethic by using discarded materials. In perhaps another modernist gesture of unity, both my concepts and my mediums sought to resurrect and heal the abandoned, the trashed, the junked, the marginalized, the overlooked, the second-hand, the wasted, and the forgotten.

Tongue-in-cheek I called myself a modernist and, although I suspected that making modernist work in contemporary times was a post-modernist activity, I knew that my work was true to its formalist upbringing at Brigham Young University - even though it had begun to look different than any other work from that school. I had been introduced to Judy Pfaff when she came to BYU to do an installation in the Museum of Art on campus and I was excited to see her work with plaster, metal, and found objects through the painter's lens. Equally thrilling was my secret insight that the installations of Jessica Stockholder were really paintings in real space. I would soon realize that nearly everyone agreed on this point, but it didn't dampen my excitement that had already been building about the possibilities of "neither painting nor sculpture".

As I continued to develop my formalist work at Virginia Commonwealth University my connections to minimalism, modernism, the specific object and installation grew into interests with the readymade, kitsch, conceptual art, and site specificity. In other words, I am an artist who finds himself on thresholds: between modernist and post-modernist tendencies and between sculpture and painting; rubbing opposites together to create frictions which could be construed as 'interesting'.

## CHAPTER 4

### Notes of a Formalist Apologist

*I don't see a dichotomy with formalism and something else. Form and formal relations are important because they mean something; their meaning grows out of our experience as physical mortal beings of a particular scale in relationship to the world as we find it and make it. I don't buy that formalism is meaningless.*<sup>2</sup>

-Jessica Stockholder

Jessica Stockholder is a modernist painter who works with post-modernist sculpture. At least this is what I argue in a paper, *How to Be Everything and Everywhere all at once: The Allegorical Impulse of Postmodernism in the Modernist Paintings of Jessica Stockholder*, for a history class covering post-modern painting with Dr. Robert Hobbs. I choose the topic not only because of my interest in her work as “neither painting nor sculpture”, but as a way to understand and critique where my own work lies in relation between painting and sculpture, formalism and conceptualism, and modernism and post-modernism.

Stockholder's work is clearly formalist and she invites modernist interpretations by ascribing emotional content to the forms. The arguments placing her within formalist and modernist tendencies is not the issue here, more important is the way Stockholder fits

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<sup>2</sup> Barry Schwabsky, Lynne Tillman and Lynne Cooke. *Jessica Stockholder*. (Phaidon Press Ltd., London, 1995) 110

within a post-modernist definition. To do so it is helpful to consider Stockholder's 'modernism' in the context of Craig Owens' landmark ideas surrounding allegory and postmodernism, Owens defines allegory as "one text doubled by another."<sup>3</sup> It is a contextual doubling, like when the New Testament is read through the text of the Old Testament; and literal, as when old graffiti is read underneath the new tag covering it. More interestingly, then, in allegory is when "one text is read through another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic the relationship may be."<sup>4</sup> Owens' most compelling paradigm for allegory is the palimpsest. The palimpsest is the ancient text on animal skin parchment that has been erased or scraped away, yet is still visible through the new text written over it." Stockholder's work is allegorical in this way. It is actually a type of palimpsest itself since the handwritten text of painterly interventions are made on top of actual objects and, therefore, on top of the inherent meanings, functions, and connotations of those objects, or their texts. It is as if Jessica Stockholder recognizes the palimpsest in her work when she says,

*My work makes use of the state of things. I make my work on top of what is already there...it is an interweaving of how I see things, how other people see things before me and how people see the work after I make it.*<sup>5</sup>

Not only do Stockholder's abstractions succeed in creating palimpsests, but also they accord figuratively with Owens' list of allegorical impulses so closely that we are compelled to change our appraisal of Stockholder as modernist to viewing her work as representative of the Allegorical Impulse of Postmodernism. Owens' list of impulses

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<sup>3</sup> Craig Owens. The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism. (October, Vol.12, 1980) 67-86

<sup>4</sup> Ibid



includes site specificity, hybridization of art mediums, appropriation, impermanence, and accumulation<sup>6</sup> – all clearly evident in Stockholder’s oeuvre.

Because of her mastery of ‘combine’ technology, Stockholder is often compared to Robert Rauschenberg. The first impression of work by both artists is often of chaos and randomness. Here are two artists whose style is, deceptively, to include ‘everything and anything’. The randomness of Rauschenberg and Stockholder is deceptive as they actually make chaos cohere into an understandable gestalt. The exuberance that Stockholder and Rauschenberg share is the poetry of limitless possibilities. Its consequence is ephemerality - and this is quintessentially postmodern.

It will be shown in this thesis that my own work, which shares tendencies of formalism and ambiguous identity with the work of Jessica Stockholder, develops on a continuum of the allegorical impulses of post-modernism. Like Stockholder, my work avails itself of the postmodern impulses of accumulations, hybridizations of mediums, appropriation, impermanence, and site specificity.

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<sup>5</sup> Barry Schwabsky, Lynne Tillman and Lynne Cooke. Jessica Stockholder, (Phaidon Press Ltd., London, 1995) 116

<sup>6</sup> Craig Owens. The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, (October, Vol.12, 1980) 67-86

## CHAPTER 5

### The Tyranny of Choice

Of course the mixed blessing of being a painter in these pluralist post-modern times is that any way of making a painting is valid. Ultimate freedom comes with the price of a stifling quantity of choices. The irony we see everywhere in a world of pluralism is that more choices leads to less confident decision-making. Even when a painter narrows in on the intention to deal with the legacy of abstract painting, how does she justify which colors and shapes and combinations are chosen anymore? I have noticed that contemporary abstract painters turn to systems to justify their decisions. For example, a common system strategy painters is to use maps in some way – a zeitgeist I like to refer to as Mapstraction.

I am no different than these abstract painters who cast about for systems to generate interesting work, but since my systems use the found object – both as a system to find paint and as a system to find its surrounding elements, (i.e. its dimensions, support, and walls) – they are embedded with a critique of the arbitrary nature of much abstract work today.

## CHAPTER 6

### I Have a Dream

I once met an artist through an altercation. It was at Claremont Graduate University during a VCU group show - an exchange we did in February of 2006. I had taken a photograph of a gallery interior of the show in which she and her peers were conversing in the background. Her friend anxiously pointed out the transgression and she angrily approached me yelling, "Did you take a photo of me? You have to delete that right now!" As I obediently did so the middle-aged conceptual artist explained her lifelong project of prohibiting records of her image and her voice past those that existed from her youth. I suppose it had something to do with mediated memory, mediated identity, and the Fountain of Youth. My project would be the opposite but just as egotistical.

My dream art shows are ones that are impossible to actualize. A favourite is *The Incidental Portrait*. These are portraits that 'happen' when one is accidentally caught, for example, in the background of a tourist's photograph or filmed on a security camera. If it were possible to obtain every photograph and video clip I would fill a museum with these results of public overlap and surveillance as a massive "incidental portrait".

Another impossible dream show is *The Life Story of Every Thrift Store Object I Have Ever Bought*. As an avid thrifter this show would also be huge, for it would showcase each object along with photographs and other documentation of the previous

owner's(') use(s) of the object along with documentation of my own use(s) of the same object.

I mention this latter dream to illustrate one of the strategies of infusing content into formalist work. Although the work is abstract, every object used fills the supposedly empty formal void with content. Each found object not only carries a message in its medium and a meaning implied in its function, but also a narrative read from its use. Sometimes we are privy to details of the narrative through clues left by the previous owner. This is particularly true of the kitchen cutting boards I collect whose stains and knife marks reference the owner's hand and activity. I value these same storytelling marks for their instant transformation into found drawings and paintings when hung on a wall. Furthermore, these narratives become palimpsests as the text of interventions doubles the text of its previous function(s).

## CHAPTER 7

### Finding the Found

*Finding a painting interests me more than conjuring one from scratch.*

In the years between schools – after becoming Jared Lindsay Clark BFA 2002 and before working towards becoming Master Clark 2007 – I was working exclusively with found materials and wallowing in a conflict between my interest in them as found paintings and my compulsion as a painter to cover them with paint, wax, and white-out strips. It was a conscious tension and I construed it as “interesting”, hoping that the conflict would produce a new, original object. In the fishbowl of graduate school, without the luxury of secrecy, the conflict came to a head. Since I was unsure about my interventions of paint on them I immediately experienced a self-doubt that is perhaps typical of the crisis one should experience in a graduate program. The breakthrough came when I gave-in to a simple but gutsy impulse I had been repressing: to simply abandon paint.

Before graduate school there were things that I collected that were never meant to be part of my artwork. This soon changed. Everything became a potential painting. Like Stockholder and Rauschenberg I adopted an expansive vision of the boundless possibilities of painting. As I dwelt increasingly on the Readymade, Duchamp superimposed Judd in

my base of operations. I began expanding my thrift store collection to include more colorful and materially diverse objects: plastics, foams, electronics, and soaps in addition to the wood I had hoarded. In opening my rules up to accept more objects I balanced it with my new maxim to abandon paint. I would now find paintings by using found surfaces of found objects.

The first piece is small – a breadbox sized group of small toys that is stacked in such a way that a surface of each object lines-up to the same plane as the other objects. The resulting flat surface becomes a modernist grid painting while the opposite plane is broken by the disparate lengths of the objects and their peculiar identities: a wooden truck, a box for pick up sticks, a domino, a wax candle. The flat “painting” surface hangs perpendicular to the wall with the objects themselves pointing down to the floor in reference to the drip of painting.

*Lil’ Bild* (figure 1) makes it immediately obvious that the next step is to increase the scale. Larger rectangular objects like tables, filing cabinets, and refrigerators would also become paintings.

## CHAPTER 8

### Charging My Own Surface

The intention to experiment with readymade object paintings on a larger scale incubated simultaneous to a major exhibition being installed across the block at the Anderson Gallery. *Surface Charge*, a show featuring international artists who worked directly with the wall brought with it a contagious energy and an assault of important artist talks and studio visits that saturated the School of the Arts community with a fertile dialogue. It was the very apex of this energy – the night of the opening reception – that I used to fuel the fruition of my ideas.

The theme and the energy of *Surface Charge* poured into my project as I stayed up most of the night capturing filing cabinets, shelves, and tables discarded from the school's hallway and emptied my own studio of many objects from my own collection. Even stuff I collected but never imagined would be part of my artwork, like suitcases and cassette tapes, became important parts of my 'painting'. It was important that the structure appear out of nowhere and be made of illogical objects yet assert its own new sort of logic. Only two people saw me in the process and none of my peers, since everyone was off celebrating the opening of the show. Thus my charged surface simply appeared and confidently proposed its own existence (figure 2).

## CHAPTER 9

### Bild

*Bild*: (German) a picture

*Build*: to construct by assembling and joining parts or materials.

Every surface of any object is a readymade painting – especially flat ones. By stacking objects and aligning their surfaces on one privileged side into a flat mega-surface, I am composing and collaging – even building – a painting. With my amateur interest in German I latch upon the double meaning of “Bild” to title my objects, describing my continued interest in the space between painting and sculpture.

I not only use found objects, but found structures that dictate the “canvas” shape and size of the Bild. Trees frame and contain rubble, contents of studios are stuffed into window rectangles and hallway entrances, plastic bags are tied to a section of fence and cavities in Styrofoam and open briefcases are filled with soaps and children’s toys as if they were the ideal ground and medium for an abstract painter.



## CHAPTER 10

### The Diorama Tragedy of 1984

When it came to playing with toys I was more of a curator than a kid. My memories of play in Ann Arbor, Michigan consist of re-organizing the placement of furniture and objects in my room and composing my possessions into collections stored in either compartments or displays. Even my prized group of He-man figures were not to fight each other roughly or ever touch the dirt – this would only scrape and soil these small precious sculptures. So it was that as a new Cub Scout I was excited for the assignment to bring a diorama to the pack meeting. My father was an archaeologist and our daddy/son time was spent rock hunting. The plain looking stones he had shown me how to split in half with a precise scientific blow with another rock, opening the halves to reveal fossils, were among my treasured possessions. The small wooden box with velvet-lined interior that I stored them in was equally as precious. This collection was clearly worthy of whatever lofty requirements a diorama proposed. I ambitiously stacked every treasured agate and fossil from my rock collection onto a shoebox lid in a precariously balanced ship form. Glue was unthinkable. Instead I agonized over the consequence of re-stacking the sculpture several times during its transportation from my bedroom to the school gym. Embarrassment and tears joined frustration, not only as I rebuilt the entropic piece under the gaze of intimidating parents and peers, but also as I was introduced to a new definition:

*diorama* (def.) – a meticulously crafted model scene conceived of and constructed to a greater degree by the parents of nine-year-old boys.

Only two decades later has this repressed memory re-emerged, coinciding with a return to my fertile childhood idea of stacking collections as a mode of transformation.

## CHAPTER 11

### A Brief History of *Bilding*

The first *Bild* from that *Surface Charge* night is made in the middle of the hallway known as “the Painting and Printmaking Department” facing the top of the stairs. Its placement is such that a person ascending the staircase would enter the floor and be greeted head on by a dense stack of aging objects at a tall human height of seven feet. Thus the *Bild* imposes theatricality like its minimalist ancestors. Although a freestanding monolith, the *Bild*’s surface is faced to an invisible line that runs parallel to the hallway walls on one side so that, if the *Bild* were widened to block the entire nook in the center of the hallway, it would line-up with the wall and fill-in the gap as a wall itself. This detail is important because architecture becomes the variable that informs the dimensions of future *Bilds*.

*Bilds 2* and *3* (figures 3 & 4) use many of the same objects that made a debut in *Bild 1* (figure 2). Made on the same night They are a little more impolite in describing their relationship to architecture. *Bild 2* is built on a countertop of a shared studio sink next to a wall and steals the communal microwave. The width of the countertop decides the width of the *Bild*’s picture plane. *Bild 3* finds its dimensions in the same hallway as *Bild 1*, but this time it becomes a wall that also obstructs half the hallway.

Not only are the Bilds made of found objects, but their dimensions are also found from the very architecture they are made in. Thus the objects are simultaneously found paint and support and the architecture its found dimensions. The Bilds are never attached – neither to each other nor to the architecture – except by friction and gravity. Their fleeting impermanence challenges the impulse to label them sculptures and gives them an edge of danger that adds to the theatricality of the human encounter.

When leaving the frame of internal architecture to the outdoors a Bild functions differently. The first outdoor Bilds are made in my backyard complete with a pile of rubble leftovers from ambitious home improvement endeavors of my landlord. Cinder blocks, bricks, aluminum siding and pipes suggest that the next advancement in bilding should be that the found materials are actually found on site. This proves problematic since one of the interesting contradictions of Bilds is that they are built from non-building materials. In *Bilds 4* and *5*, (figures 5 & 6) I innovate two ways to transform bricks into Bilds.

Near the backdoor in the middle of the grass lies a cement pad, about four feet wide and two feet long, whose purpose has long been forgotten. The width of the cement pad becomes the width of the Bild picture plane that rises up to nearly 10 feet tall. With *Bild 4* I emphasize the back of the structure by stacking and weighing the detritus in such a way as to have long strips of aluminum and wood defying gravity as they stuck out several feet the entire height of the Bild. The result is like an illustration of a train speeding through the center of the yard and jamming to a halt at the cement pad.

*Bild 5* is made from the leftover rubble of *Bild 4* and stacked between two slender trees that support the unstable stack like a frame; an innovation repeated in Utah (figure 9) and Richmond's Jackson Ward (Figure 10). This simple framing is illogical and logical enough to create a nice ambiguous transformation of the construction leftovers.

The final *Bild* of the first semester adds two more advancements to the repertoire. *Bild 6* (figure 7) forms part of a group show with my painting peers of the same year Lauren Clay, Jason Coates, Mike Erickson, Heather Harvey, Andy Kozlowski, and Marian Brunn Smith. Our show, titled *ROYGBIV*, assigns us each one of the colors in the title. I have red. This parameter gives me the opportunity to expand the pictorial decisions of a *Bild* by constricting the choices of objects used. Before this the *Bild* picture plane was asserted by necessity of physical balance and compositions were mostly incidental. *Bild 6* features an analogous color scheme made of red objects and the browns of wood. The other detail that asserts this *Bild*'s picture-ness even more than its predecessors is its placement *within* the wall. In the stairwell of VCU is found a peculiar cutout in the wall that acts as a window to the expansive floor below. Before this, *Bilds* had only partially blocked architectural passages and had been immediately identified as stacked objects. By filling in the window space entirely and sitting completely flush with the wall, *Bild 6* becomes two-dimensional in real space without compromising its 3-Dness. It is almost an optical illusion. Passerbys often do not realize that the red rectangle is not a poster. Those who do, experience a transformation that the *Bilds* have been yearning for since their beginnings. The danger quotient of *Bild 6* is also increased since its barely balanced objects teeter high above the first floor below.

## CHAPTER 12

### A Green Painting Never Sells

After meeting James Siena in his Chinatown studio I was interested the next day to see the painting he included in a PS1 show entitled *Not For Sale*, an expansive exhibition showing work famous artists kept aside from the market for sentimental or practical reasons. Siena's was a small green painting. It was actually a copy of a painting of the same design but different colour that he had regretted selling. He remade the painting in green following that old gallery maxim, he says, that 'a green painting never sells'.

The maxim unintentionally doubles meaning by implying the ecological content of 'green'. The doubling accidentally works, though, when defining green paintings as the type of outdoor, eco-friendly work of Andy Goldsworthy. Nearly impossible to purchase, his site specific and temporary outdoor installations are the epitome of low-impact ecologically friendly work. While my connection to nature is parallel – using strategies of accumulation and nature as the frame – my medium is opposite since I am using man-made detritus. The art historian Suzi Gablik might applaud my practice since it brings no new objects into the world and, instead, makes use of existing detritus of a culture overwhelmed with its own production and consumerism. It could be construed that my work is a meditation on recycling and saving the earth. It is also work that asserts its

independence from institutions by appearing without a gallery. The Bilds suggest the ridiculousness of the market by being impossible to sell - commenting on the corruption of art through its involvement in consumerism and capitalism. These ideas can be extracted from the work, however the green-ness and punk rock-ness of my installation is incidental to my formal concerns of making interesting “neither paintings nor sculptures”.

## CHAPTER 13

### The Death of the Wall

The first indoor Bilds justify themselves by basing themselves on relationships within architecture. The Bilds become walls that continue the line of an existing wall, as if to not only mimic flatness but also functionality, while actually thwarting function by obstructing hallways, countertops and windows. Where conventional painting is framed and hung on a wall, a typical Bild is framed *by* a wall. Thus not only do found objects in aggregate form the pictorial aspect of a Bild, but the peculiar architectural details that limit its dimensions become a *found* frame. Since the Bild's objects act simultaneously as paint *and* support in one, the surrounding architecture is not the Bild's 'canvas' but there is a strange reversal of logic in following the metaphor to stretcher bars. Stretcher bars are internal and it would seem that the found objects of a Bild would therefore also claim this territory, however, since the Bilds expand to the limits of the architecture, they are figuratively stretched by the walls. Thus the suitcases, filing cabinets, cassette tapes – what have you – are the paint *and* the canvas while the wall is the stretcher bars and the frame. Within this metaphor the museum or gallery wall as we once knew it in relation to painting disappears. The Bild imitates the wall but is its fake while the actual wall frames the Bild but, as the frame and stretcher, has lost its original function as a gallery wall.



Instead of declaring a death of painting or an author, the Bild declares the death of the wall and, therefore, the gallery.

Outdoor Bilds already obviously reject the gallery because they are guerilla, seizing space to live without sanctioned institutions. The development of the outdoor Bilds often uses trees in a similar way that the indoor ones use walls. Like their indoor predecessors, these Bilds are stretched, but now by two trees instead of walls, turning their trunks into frames and stretcher bars. The reference to architecture in this sense is quite a stretch indeed, asking for the equation of trees with buildings. But outdoors the Bilds pose as architecture in two other ways.

It is important to highlight that in the first Bilds the found objects used in ‘bilding’ are not *building* materials. To construct a wall-like structure out of cinder blocks does not have the same transformative power to speak of “neither painting nor sculpture” since it is so loudly architecture and sculpture. This changes outdoors. The commitment to using materials found on site forces the reality that found outdoor detritus is often construction waste like 2x4s, bricks and such. However, when bricks are used between trees, the combination seems strange enough to become something transformative.

## CHAPTER 14

### **The Plane of Privilege**

*I assist discarded collectives of objects to volunteer themselves for inclusion into the privileged legacy of flatness – assuring them they can be transformed into Painting. Reducing my interventions - often to mere arrangement - respects the possibility of this transformation while frankly retaining the objects' original functional identities.*

## CHAPTER 15

### **There's More Than One Way to Skin a Painting**

During my months in Richmond I worked in cycles on seemingly vastly different projects such as large installations, temporary outdoor site-specific work, digital printmaking, and small objects made of all sorts of materials. Despite their initial differences in looks, all of my projects are tightly bonded within my consistent preoccupation with transformation of the found object within the category of “neither painting nor sculpture”.

#### The Fake Readymade

As mentioned earlier in this thesis the found painting is embodied in my work by the kitchen cutting board. Knife slashes incising the surfaces are found drawings - and the obvious solution to transforming them into paintings is to simply show them as readymades instead of obliterating the found marks with paint. However the readymade solution is not enough. The Bilds are a nice compromise – a solution that poses each readymade in accumulation - but they don't transform the cutting boards on a singular scale. One answer comes with technology.

By making a giclee digital print from a scan I could impose one level of mediation and still retain the readymade painting. After scanning the cutting boards and printing them out I did still wasn't convinced that a photo reproduction of the surface was an interesting enough transformation of the found painting readymade (figure 8). I intervened a second time, mounting the prints on MDF board. I enlarged the images of the cutting boards much larger than life on BFK paper and glued them to thick panels. The larger size and the translation of the image onto paper emphasize the transformation of the found marks as painting. By cutting away the excess board to the edge of the photo image the print is transformed again, doubling backwards into its identity as a rectangular wooden object. Like *Bild 6*, the giclees trick the eye but they work in reverse. Where *Bild 6* is made of real objects yet looks like a photograph, the giclee prints are basically photographs that look like a real wooden object. The Fake Readymades continue to fool studio visitors who consider them simply part of my cutting board collection. When let in on the secret the responses are: "wow", "uncanny", "dumb", "smart", "mean", "one liner", and "insidious". Fake Readymades are a successful and unexpectedly provocative solution to the found painting readymade dilemma. Through the mediation of digital photography and re-objectifying the photograph, the impulse to transform the object while retaining the cutting boards' readymade-ness is satisfied.

## The Cutllages

*If visual art can be comparable to poetry, mine is heavy on rhymes and puns.*

This perhaps most true of the Cutllages, which are made with cutting boards and other found wooden tableaus such as Toll Paintings. The very name, Cut – llage, puns on the cuts made in the cutting boards, both the found cuts and the ones of the artist that open up the support surface to collage objects directly into the board. The Cutllages are the third solution to the impulse to make paintings with the cutting boards without actually painting on them. Toll paintings are decorative, folksy, acrylic paintings made on wood – usually by the hand of housewives. The tradition comes from Scandinavia and here it is a strong candidate for the ultimate kitsch painting in America. Using the toll paintings doubles the content of domesticity already infused in the cutting board work. The world of the kitchen represented by the cutting board becomes the scene of play for the world of craft, both stereotypically feminine in their connotations. Perhaps it is strange that a 6’5” 230lb male is making so much work using objects with a history of the feminine hand - or maybe that is a friction that could be construed as “interesting”. The exciting detail about the toll paintings and other wooden folk art crafts is that they are often painted on shaped pieces of wood that, when taken out of context, are uncannily contemporary as abstractions. Legs of teddy bears, duck feet (figure 11), cow haunches, cat tails, and dresses from paintings of girls become ambiguously specific shapes that seem imagined by

an inventive painter working today. Specifically, the rounded shapes and solidly painted abstractions are consistently compared to the dissected cartoon collages of Arturo Herrera.

The collages with cutting boards and toll paintings are completely committed and, therefore, permanent. As change often is, the cutllage transformation is violent. Chunks of the boards are completely sawed out and the pieces of toll painting are often dismembered and chopped from representations of animals or people. Even in painted images of non-figurative subject matter like flowers or text the blunt intrusion of the saw into the precious painted passages is harsh. The violence is healed, however, by the union of the newly abstracted shape with its corresponding vacancy. The space between the two is further filled with beeswax and wood glue, to create a seamless picture plane and fix the new painting in place. The hot liquid beeswax has its practical purpose. Painted on the back seam of the freshly cut pieces it quickly dries and holds the objects and the glue in place. The wax also serves as a further irony about the act of painting itself. It is the only point in the process where a brush is used and the marks of wax are incidentally expressive on the back of the piece, marginalized out of view and entombed just as Jasper Johns slows down and entombs Abstract Expressionism with his encaustic brushwork. In contrast the careful brushwork displayed on the toll painting on the privileged frontal side of the cutllage is divorced from its painter. Appropriated by the cutllagist, the Cutllage paintings allude to the Death of the Author.

The healed and finished Cutllages also invite sexual innuendo since many of the dismembered and simplified arms and shapes become easily phallic – making their

insertion into the board synonymous with penetration. The physical penetration into the board is intensified since usually only one element is inserted into the board.

A more intentional reference is the Cutllages' rhyming with portraiture. Instead of phalluses, the singular cutllaged parts become characters. The later cutllages (made for the thesis show) are intentionally composed into a convention of portraiture by placing them in the lower center portion of the support board.

Cutllages are at their most successful when they play upon the logic of fitting in a different way from the Bilds. Rhymes between a line in the board with an edge in the painted object, for instance, imbue the pairing with a poetic logic.

### The Kitsch Paintings

Following the innovation of the Cutllage technology comes the transformation of collectible figurines. As another ultimate representative of American kitsch – or of the ultimate small kitsch sculpture – these Kitsch Paintings also reference Clement Greenberg's landmark essay *Avante Garde and Kitsch*. They straddle both what Greenberg denounces (kitsch) and what he upholds (essentialism) with a painting surface which is emphatically itself and indivisible from its support.

Just as the Bilds make use of flat surfaces as found paintings and display them in aggregate as a mega painting, the Kitsch Paintings make use of the flat bottoms of their bases as the flat found painting. The resulting abstraction is first seen as an oddly shaped canvas until it is viewed from the side and the identity is revealed as swarms of figurative sculptures.

While the process of developing this series involved many experiments in adhesives and surfaces resulting in distinct types of Kitsch Paintings - from solid colored rubber surfaces to opaque foaming glue (figure 12) as the support to clear epoxy resin (figure 13) suspending the figurines – the most distinctive development of the Kitsch paintings was to return them back to sculpture by sandwiching the painting side of two Kitsch Paintings into a double sided sculpture, forcing half of the figurines to become the base of the figurines that they mirror (figure 14).

### Text Tubes

Tubes are obviously drawings in real space. Luckily I own yards of rubber junkyard tubes brought with me from Utah. In justifying an abstraction on the wall I resort to text. In large cursive lettering I pencil in “RoJo” (figure 15) on the studio wall and use all my red tubes, nailing them directly to the wall in curves which follow lines of my cursive and double back to follow another line – but this idea of my own cursive text being a readymade system for generating abstraction would come back whenever I would sit down to make prints or drawings.

### Pure Paint

Baggies of hotel soaps, collected, never used, and discarded by the previous owner started another thrift store collection. This one got big enough to delve into the realm of purchasing new objects. The singular bar of soap is an automatic readymade painting.



The white rectangles reference both white unpainted gessoed panels and pure minimalist painting objects. The surfaces are seductive like paintings and also compete with oil painting's seductive olfactory power.

Soap is manipulated into painting in three degrees of magnitude:

1. The single bar of soap is emphasized as a canvas by drawing on the surface with map pins; pushing them in according to linear designs (figure 25).

2. a) Soap becomes the paint instead of the support in the Styrofoam based paintings. The rectangular Styrofoam used to pack electronics is transformed into the painting support (also referencing gesso with its whiteness); its particular spaces once used to hold electronics and cords now are used as a found compositional structure to hold found paint – in this case – soap, marble, sponge, and bubblegum (figure 19).

b) Soap is packed tightly into suitcases, the open rectangle of the case becomes the dimensions of the painting – the stacked soap the paint. The travel ready cases are thrown into airplanes, subjecting them to the consequences of being opened by airport security and the jostling in the belly of the plane. The use of soap for these Traveling Bilds is more ironic for in this time of heightened security special new rules have appeared restricting the type and amounts of personal hygiene products allowed in carry-ons. The first Traveling Bild flew from Richmond to Chicago (figure 20) and the second from Richmond to Oakland. Both were exhibited in galleries in those cities.

3. The most ambitious scale involves using thousands of bars of soap alongside marble blocks (harvested from a large collection of trophies) directly glued to the wall (figure 24).

## CHAPTER 16

### The Cleanest Painting In the World

*Bild 20: Pure Paint* is a densely packed wall installation of thousands of bars of soap and a collection of marble trophy bases that pose collectively as a wall painting (figure 22). While the bars of soap reference reductive modernist painting and minimalist specific objects the blocks of marble offer a direct connection to sculpture as another privileged medium of art history. The unlikely pairing of soap and marble thus makes sense in regards to art and because of their similarities physically. The marble and soap rhyme in shape, size and color; forging a logical relationship that has previously been alluded to by soap made to mimic marbling. *Bild 20* puns the purities of the art movements it mimics within its own identity as a cleaning agent. The composition initially reads as geometric abstraction as one is overwhelmed by thousands of rectangular edges jutting out of the wall. The simplicity of a Mondrian grid is corrupted, however, by a jostled, symmetrical pattern underlying the soaps. The soap is made to conform to a map of text drawn on the wall - mirrored cursive spelling "Pure Paint" forms the template. As the soaps follow the rounding lines of the Ps and the other letters the static geometry is animated into a decidedly Baroque design. The collective form is more reminiscent of cathedral organ pipes or an art deco skyscraper than a modernist painting. Playing on these

sublime designs associated with power, the scent actually overpowers the viewer with the stench of sweetness.

*Bild 20* is, in part, a response to Marcel Duchamp who criticized painters obsessed with the smell and look of oil painting as “olfactory artists” along side those obsessed with the visual seduction of painting as “retinal artists” stuck in the medium at the expense of conceptual growth and relevance. While on the one hand the *Bild* champions Duchamp’s readymade by suggesting that soap and marble in themselves are paintings, it also pokes fun at the Duchampian critique of “olfactory” oil painters with its overpowering olfactory presence as a painting and readymade aggregate at once.

## CHAPTER 17

### Guston: A Tribute

At the culmination of my first year in graduate school I wrote a statement for Candidacy in which I brashly proclaimed that I hadn't even "so much as squeezed a paint tube in the last four years". Brushes had been employed as recently as nine months earlier for house paint and beeswax, but setting the marker with oil paint drove the point home dramatically. Somewhat embarrassed by my bravado I immediately wanted to rebel against my rebellion. In setting my own systems for abstraction I had benefited from self-imposed, arbitrary rules as a focusing strategy. I was now ready to break my rule against using actual oil paint. I had just backed-up my anti-paint painting manifesto by exhibiting a large cutluge in the shape of New York, Fake Readymades, and the first Kitsch Paintings in the Candidacy show at Plant Zero. The day school ended that year I broke-out my oil paints which had been hardening in their tubes and tucked in a toolbox stashed in the back of a cabinet - out of site, out of mind. I also unpacked a collection that had been boxed and sitting in my backyard the entire year: kitchen knife blocks.

The knife blocks had appeared in a show in Utah as a stacked wall – the precursor to the Bilds – each with a manipulated surface of beeswax and white house paint. It had been unintentional, but the resulting wall, with the waxy blocks punctured by linear slits for knife holes – looked like a Phillip Guston painting of a building. Ever since then I had

always thought I should make the reference even more committed and paint the surfaces of the blocks pink.

I enlisted the help of a graduate student who was committed to oil paint, Marian Smith, to help me with the strange ‘new’ medium. Together we mixed all sorts of pinks and painted and stacked the new “Guston Blocks” in my studio. It was liberating to break my anti-paint rules and to come to a conventional medium feeling like it was new and fresh.

As soon as they were dry I installed the Guston Blocks at a one night installation show in a hotel room – the massive local installation show taking over the Inns of Virginia called *I Mean, C’mon, Fluff My Pillow* (figure 17). I crossed them over with a Bild sensibility by stacking them with furniture from the hotel room.

The Guston Blocks not only pay homage to his painted buildings, but to his ability to break his own rules in order to do what is needed instead of what one is committed to doing.

## CHAPTER 18

### Lists Are Drawings Too

I sat down the first month or two of my second year to make drawings. Since there were obviously more readymade ways to make drawings, I almost felt like cheating by using conventional drawing utensils: pencil, pen, marker, and colored pencil. I had started to make my to-do lists on nicer paper and then draw tube-like lines over the text in the same way I had done with my Text Tube project a year earlier. They were like blueprints for possible Text Tube pieces. Like the making of the Guston Blocks, I relished in the color and the ironic novelty of using conventional mediums and indulged in making elegant drawings (figure 16).

The list drawings have an unexpected connection to my installation work. The Bilds can be seen as lists of my collections. Carefully stacked in groups the objects can be read in shapes up to down and left to right like lists of cutting boards, cassette tapes, office furniture, toys etc...; suggesting that the drawings are not so much a stretch from my other work.

Intense color play in the drawings of tubes with markers and coloured pencils inspired me to make a painterly intervention similar to the rule-breaking begun with the Guston Blocks. I strung-up all of my rubber tubes in the studio and painted them with

found house paints in bright colors I could mix. Primaries, secondaries, and the Easter-esque tints made a forest drawing of the tubes as they dried from the ceiling of my studio. I had been keeping my eye peeled for a suitable tree for the project that I had in mind. It was late Autumn and storms had broken large branches from some local trees. I wanted to find such a tree and thread my colorful tubes on the ends of its dead branches like a weave – giving artificial fall foliage to compete with the orange leaves of the living trees. I found my tree off a freeway exit in Richmond. Fittingly, the location was a stone's throw away from Diversity Thrift – my favourite Richmond thrift store which employed broad rainbow stripes on its trucks and buildings, echoing the painted lines of my Tree Tubes.

## CHAPTER 19

### On the South Side of Chicago

We returned to our abandoned and burnt warehouse on the south side of Chicago, half-expecting to have a run-in with Bad Bad Leroy Brown, baddest man in the whole damn town, badder than old King Kong and meaner than a junkyard dog. Bordered by the river on one side, train tracks on the other and hiding behind overgrown bushes in the front; our medium sized ruin was the perfect spot for my brand of site-specific-found-object-installation. To our relief (and pride) the tire ziggurat Jimmy and I had stacked to the height of the building the previous evening still stood. I guess Leroy hadn't heard about it yet.

But wingman Jimmy had to drop me off this time and leave me to toil alone in the name of Art. I started to calculate the increased danger this gifted me with: alone, no car, no first aid, cold, wet, south-side, collapsing buildings, King Kong, junkyard dogs, Leroy brown. Exciting! Naturally my first decision was to quickly step into the most dangerous area immediately available to me - the burnt-out offices - to take care of some business in the charred bathroom before getting started collecting all the furniture from the building. With my danger calcs fresh in mind it is safe to use the phrase "nearly paralyzed with fear" when I heard tramping footsteps right around the corner. But instead of crouching behind



the toilet I counter intuitively decided to immediately show myself and stepped out to meet the tramper head on as he turned the corner.

He screamed. I screamed. We told each other why we screamed. Jose introduced himself and confirmed his apparent homelessness by identifying the small-charcoaled room next to us as his place. I pointed to the tire ziggurat and identified myself as the stacker. As he showed me his blackened books, magazines, bed and clothes of his previously ideal home, he simultaneously gained my trust and made me fear for the security of my own two bags of belongings I had stashed around the corner. So I slipped away, grabbed my gear and exited the offices. Although fascinated with Jose, my instincts ordered me otherwise and I fled - following the river upstream toward an abandoned train bridge that offered an irresistible hike. A miniscule adventure, paling in comparison with my second encounter with Jose, an encounter announced by violent banging.

I walked straight into his workroom, nervous again, and startled him a second time. But this time as he spun around, wide-eyed and sweating, he was clutching a hatchet. I then realized I had forgotten to list "chopped-up and eaten by lone axe murderer" on my list of possible dangers of the day and held up my hands as if begging for mercy. He was relieved to see it was me and explained his freelance efforts of harvesting copper wire encased in tubes running through the ceiling. Relieved that I wasn't going to suffer under an axe blade I followed Jose's advice to explore the upstairs offices. His suggestion was of one homeless dude to another - there were still good rooms to spend the night in up there.

Even though I had been straight up with Jose from our first meeting about my artistic purposes at the warehouse, he continued to insist in the obvious fact that I was also homeless. This led to some touching moments of offering me beer, advice, and blankets.

Jose and I were separated again when he left with his duffle to sell his copper wares. After doing some of my art thing I too was ready for a break and I set out under the freeway overpass looking for a gas station lunch. I was excited to see the evidence of more homelessness tucked in the corner right under the freeway. As I got closer and saw a figure behind a makeshift wall of bed sheets and plastic, the figure called to me, "Jared! How did you find me? This is my place!" It was Jose cleaning his wires. I declined his offer to come-up, motioning toward the gas station and promising I would stop by on my way back. By now I was thoroughly amused and enchanted by my 40-year-old Mexican buddy and decided to bring him back some lunch.

He was gone when I returned to his nook home with food and hot chocolate. Secretly glad, I took the opportunity to stare at his elaborate set-up (figure 18). I was impressed. Having discovered many homeless stashes in my year of working outdoors among those places that incubate detritus, (I was beginning to realize that the places I consistently chose to work in, those with neither public nor private surveillance, were the same places the homeless chose to live in) I had come to expect many collections stuffed behind plywood planks. This one, however, was not a stash. It was a home. Carefully folded and plastic wrapped clothes were tucked under a sort of counter. Like a Japanese apartment or a camping enthusiast, fastidiousness, inventiveness and care described the

storage of all his possessions. But it wasn't completely a fortress. Found Christmas ornaments carefully lined the I-beams girding the underside of the freeway - a soiled Spiderman poster thoughtfully arranged as the centerpiece of his decorations.

I found Jose upon returning to the warehouse, back to work hatcheting the wiring, and he offered me one of the beers he had bought with the four dollars earned from his morning of sweat - even though he had asked me three times that day if I drank - effectively breaking my heart to the point of nearly trying alcohol for the first time in respect of the magnitude of his offer: the guy with nothing offering me everything. I declined and went to explore the only part of the warehouse unknown to me: the showers. When I came back out and smelled smoke even stronger than usual, I returned to find that Jose had built a bonfire *inside*. It was a perfectly practical fire: he needed light (in the one windowless room in the building) to harvest more wire. Amused and stunned, I stuck around coughing to watch. Finally, Jose, with dangerous levels of smoke in his lungs, ran out sputtering and shutting the door with the bonfire still fuming inside. He reported that he had to abort - not because of the danger to his health - but because the smoke might be seen and the cops would be called.

It was then that I knew it was over. I called Jimmy to abort my own mission. Jose left, packed with even more wire, and offered me not only extra blankets, but to stay with him in his under-the-freeway home that night. Touched, I declined but promised to see him the next day.

True to my word, I showed up early the next morning. But instead of Jose, men in orange vests and hard hats were beginning the official clean up of our little warehouse by

chainsawing down the protective bushes. The window of opportunity now closed, I drove away sadly, passing Jose's overpass home and waving to the sheet wall, hoping he would find more wire and blankets to make it through the Chicago winter.

Contact with Jose was the first time I had met one of the homeless who had been implied in nearly every outdoor installation I had done. I had been alarmed by evidence of outsider presence in my home when doing my first outdoor Bilds in my backyard lurking next to a rough alley of Cary street, uncovering needles and baggies stashed in the piles. I found evidence of camping and collecting at my second site in Utah. By the time I made the Tree Tubes and the Jackson Ward Styrofoam Bild (next to my second apartment!) – I had begun to verbalize an interest in this consistent connection between my choices in where to bild and where transient people lived and stored their lives. Both of these Bilds featured nearby stashes of clothing and possessions. It was clear that I shared similar needs to the homeless. We both needed to find a nook within society that was out of the scope of public and private surveillance - preferably a place with lots of cool stuff to make a home with. This is where I realized I had found another space to expand in conceptually. Not only is my work surprising because of its logical assertion of illogical combinations when discovered by a passerby, but because of its proximity to homeless homes and its use of objects which are also disenfranchised there is a tension in authorship: is the Bild a shelter or monument made by a homeless person - or the work of an eccentric artist?

## CHAPTER 20

### Lucrative Small Spaces Between Things

Balancing between boundaries and straddling thresholds is a practice in squeezing between ideas and conventions to push out small spaces for oneself to inhabit. The hollows I create conceptually, for instance, between painting and sculpture, postmodernism and modernism, and the gallery and the wilderness are mirrored in my work physically: fitting asphalt or Styrofoam chunks in the spaces between trees, suitcases and cassette tapes in a window, and a wooden teddy bear leg in the grain of a cutting board. The bankrupt and broken status of both the ideas and the objects loosens their resistance to improvisors like myself who come, intrude and pillage as they please, and make the space their own.

## CHAPTER 21

### Come, Come Ye Saints

*Come, come ye saints, no toil nor labour fear;  
But with joy, wend your way*

Through October and November of 2006 I visited an unofficial dumping ground in Williamsburg, Brooklyn three different weekends, spaced over a month. Having been suggested the site by fellow student Amy Chan who promised I would find plenty of junk for urban-waste-site-specific installation. I quickly focused my efforts on a dead-end lane to the riverfront with a view of the Manhattan skyline across the water. The challenge to improvise with what I was given in addition to my desire to reference painting nearly stumped me in this area with unfamiliar materials. The first weekend, with artist friend Joe Penrod, we used PVC pipe as a hatched drawn line by threading the tubes through the openings of a chain-link fence (figure 22). As a last minute addition, I had taken a broken box fan (which I had picked-up off the curb on our walk from the subway), tied it to the fence and immediately witnessed it ‘turn on’; not electrically, but powered by the breeze coming from the river. I excitedly tied plastic bags and strips to the fan and was instantly gratified by the life being blown into the trash. But it was time to leave.

Two weeks later I returned with VCU students for our mass gallery trip lead by Gregory Volk. In my free time I was able to scrounge-up all of the wet and rotting bags from the swampy trash lane that was my palette. Black liquor bags, large black trash bags,

enormous clear trash bags, white 'I love NY' bags, precious blue bags, and an orange balloon indicating the recent Halloween were carefully attached like parachutes onto my 'canvas': one square section of chain link fence sticking out from the rest. The PVC pipes were still protruding out the other side and now were reinvented into a sort of wind tunnel machine that was powering the gentle rise and fall of air filling the bags (figure 21).

I felt like Dr. Frankenstein. Not only had I made something totally unexpected to me (resulting from self inflicted rules of working with found objects, found site and limited time), but it was *alive!* This thing was breathing! And it was a massive, natural collective breath - the simultaneous sighing and exhaling of one hundred lungs of varied species, united by one mouth. It was grotesque – these soiled and urinated trash bags still reeking with their stench, animated into breasts or testicles to the Freudian eye. It was also gorgeous – not only breeze but also sunlight was caught in the rounding bulbs that transformed garbage into living painted light which gently bobbed and buoyed. I knew I had to return a third time to Brooklyn to record my Frankenstein's monster respirating on video.

During my third trip the PVC pipe had been reclaimed – probably by the contractor who had haphazardly left them there. What I did next really didn't make sense to me until later. I sorted through the mounds of clothes that had been dumped at the end of the alley next to the pond. If the reclamation of the wet trash bags had made me cringe, yanking molding socks and putrid underwear out of the refuse made me revolt. If that wasn't gross enough, I took my new pile of clothes and carefully folded each article as if I was working

at the Gap and piled them on a raised wooden plank I had set-up behind my breathing fence. It looked like a yard sale.

I then made the front side of the fence “painting” into a makeshift outdoor gallery. Broken palettes were collected and tiled on the dirt in front of my breathing fence for a classy wooden floor. I had invited everyone I knew in New York to come to my opening (including making a fool of myself nervously inviting the staff at Pierogi Gallery nearby) and prepared a makeshift table of cookies and sodas. I set a plastic chair in front of the breathing bags to wait for my public. I was facing both my piece and the Empire State Building – which was across the river and now lit-up against the dusking sky – and began meditated on what had just happened.

### The Tyranny of Imaginary Girlfriends

New York. The dream *and* the hell. *The* city. An archetype for young artists, tensioned within the equal and opposite forces of the pinnacle of fantasy and the depths of destruction. As in all fantastical relationships, it is easy to let the magic of fancy buoy the weight of heavy reality and soggy pessimism while the relationship is far from being realized. While distant, she is a tragically unrequited, perfect beauty. Such the unattainable girlfriend was New York for me as a hopeful from Provo Utah applying to graduate programs in 2003 and again in 2005. I knew that entering a graduate program in New York City would be the justification of the gritty reality that I pushed to the background of my dreams. By the time I had courted New York over those few years and been accepted into Hunter College (my dream girl) a new lady had appeared to compete



with my heart. I met Virginia Commonwealth University after a horribly humid drive without air conditioning from D.C. Despite the empty lazy studios and the opaque, sticky air, I met Richard Roth and Emily Hall and I knew something special was going on.

I had always been a prayerful person and knew that those pleas had been heard and answered throughout my life. For years I had hopefully asked to be let into the door to New York via graduate school. So it was strange to have that door opened through Hunter College and then to feel counter intuitively inspired to walk through another door to Richmond, Virginia. Within hours of receiving the counter-acceptance call from Richard Roth and praying about it, I felt a clarity in my heart and mind that VCU was the place for me. I could hardly believe it, but I knew it.

I recount this as a backdrop to what happened to my New York dream girl. As I identified increasingly with Richmond and VCU during my first year, the door to New York closed in my mind as “not for me” and, without the excuse of going to grad school there, she again became the symbol of impossibility and destruction. So it was that at the midpoint of my two years in Richmond I was in a tug-of-war between competing logics about New York City. On the one hand as a single, youngish and ambitious-ish artist, New York was the only logical move after school. On the other hand it was, again, imminent destruction! What happened in Brooklyn I have come to understand through the allegory of the Mormon pioneers.

### A Promised Land

Having endured persecution and eviction from cities, even of their own creation, from New York, Ohio and then Illinois (which imposed an extermination order only recently pardoned); Mormon believers finally were led to a promised land that they would be able to keep: Utah: a desert inhospitable and far away enough to discourage their enemies from going out of their way to ruin their lives. It was an unwanted desert that, under their faith and toil, would soon blossom with unprecedented vegetation. The trek across the western plains, however, subtracted wealth, health, limbs and family members – exacting a cruel tax on a collective faith already ruthlessly tested by mobs who had burnt their towns and temples, had tarred their bodies, taken their lives and shot their prophet. It was while pulling handcarts across desert expanses, extreme in temperature and distance - with every reason for misery and despair that this hymn was trusted and sung:

*Come, come ye saints, no toil nor labour fear;  
But with joy, wend your way  
Though hard to you this journey may appear,  
Grace shall be as your day.  
'Tis better far for us to strive  
Our useless cares from us to drive;  
Do this, and joy your hearts will swell –  
All is well! All is well!*

*Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard?  
'Tis not so; all is right.  
Why should we think to earn a great reward if we now shun the fight?  
Gird up your loins; fresh courage take.  
Our God will never us forsake;  
And soon we'll have this tale to tell –  
All is well! All is well!*

*We'll find the place which God for us prepared,  
 Far away in the West,  
 Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;  
 There the saints will be blessed.  
 We'll make the air with music ring,  
 Shout praises to our God and King;  
 Above the rest these words we'll tell –  
 All is well! All is well!*

*And should we die before our journey's through,  
 Happy day!  
 All is well!  
 We then are free from toil and sorrow, too;  
 With the just we shall dwell!  
 But if our lives are spared again  
 To see the Saints their rest obtain,  
 Oh, how we'll make this chorus swell-  
 All is well! All is well!*

This is the very hymn I found myself playing on my harmonica as I sat there on that cold Brooklyn night meditating with gently breathing trash bags and the lights of Manhattan. I would soon feel that the hymn was an intuitive choice. It seemed that no friends were showing up, but I was having one of those rare moments of pure poignancy. Of course, harmonicas and the night New York skyline can do that, but even the physical act of facing those plastic bags breathing at me – and me breathing back through the harmonica – was this sort of conversation that told me what had really been going on that Fall. I had come to the city as a pioneer with unsettling fears and anticipations of hardship and failure. I was leaving comfort, ease and success and had put myself to work in an undesirable corner of the city. I had rescued the bags from the most revolting liquids I had ever put my hand to. I had collected them all and carefully tied them to the fence. My transformation of them, although brought about by a tenacious and hardy work ethic, was

meager compared to the magical transformation added by nature – making my piece blossom with unprecedented sublimity. During the three-weekend process of making that dead-end alley my own by cleaning it and reorganizing it into my developing Bild language; I had not realized until sitting in front of the piece - with a new life of its own – that its development was a microcosm of my concurrent emotional and mental shift concerning New York. Opposite the pioneers who had originated in New York and migrated west to Utah, I had come from Utah as an artist pioneer into New York. I had not feared toil nor labour in the inhospitable corner of an intimidating city. What I had feared was now soothed as the work in that corner of Williamsburg had made it my own.

A friend, Jeffrey Butler, appeared and I asked him if he would film me playing the harmonica in front of the piece. I had not anticipated adding performance art to my repertoire, and I was just getting used to the idea of video, it just happened organically. As he filmed me playing *Come, Come Ye Saints* another magical transformation was added to the piece when, in a moment of fleeting and unexpected sublimity, the trash bags were lit up from behind like jellyfish when a car pulled up to park behind the piece. It happened on film during the harmonica performance as if to mimic the firelight of the campfire of the frontiersman pioneer, playing his harmonica at the end of a long day on his journey West. I was that frontiersman, but my journey was the opposite direction. Coming from Utah where my pioneer ancestors settled, my personal journey to a Promised Land is, ironically, to the New York our pioneering left from.

Figure 1: *Lil' Bild*, Found Objects 2005, 8"x18"x12"





Figure 2: *Bild 1*, found objects 2005, 8'x11'x5'



Figure 3: *Bild 2* (detail), found objects 2005



2005, 4'x8'x6'

Figure 4: *Bild 3*, found objects

Figure 5: *Bild 4*, found objects 2005, 4'x10'x15'



Figure 6: *Bild 5*, found objects 2005, 5'x7'x1'





Figure 7: *Bild 6*, found objects 2005, 3'x4'x8'



Figure 8: Cutting boards held by the artist with digital prints in the background, 2005





Figure 9: *Bild 7*, found objects 2006, 5'x7'x1'



Figure 10: *Bild 14*, found objects 2006, 10'x7'x3'

Figure 11: Untitled, cutllage 2006, 5"x5"

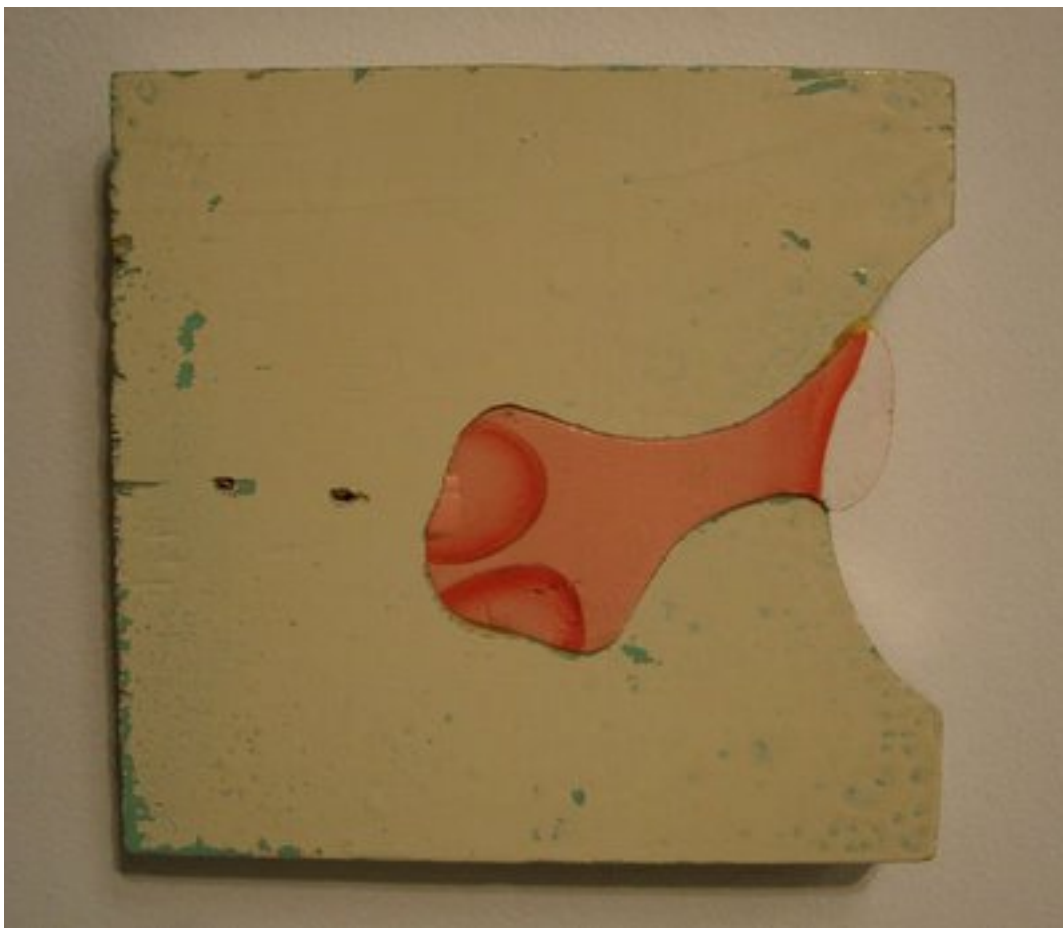


Figure 12: *Bunny Bild*, bunnies in gorilla glue 2006, 2'x1.5'x.5'



Figure 13: *The Races*, figurines in epoxy resin 2007, 6'x3'x1'



Figure 14: *Blacks and White*, figurines, epoxy resin, rubber 2007, 12"x6"x15"







Figure 15: *RoJo, tubes and nails* 2005, 10'x7'



Figure 16: Hurricane Ernesto is Coming Tonight, pen on paper on BFK 2006, 7"x10"



Figure 17: Untitled (Guston Blocks), wax, house paint, oil paint on knife blocks 2006



Figure 18: Jose's home under a Chicago freeway overpass, 2006.

Figure 19: Studio Shot, soaps in Styrofoam on table, Kitsch paintings on wall, 2006



Figure 20: *Traveling Bild (Richmond to Chicago)*, soap & Styrofoam in suitcase 2006



Figure 21: *Brooklyn Bild*, plastic bags on chain link fence 2006, 6'x8'x4'



Figure 22: Joseph Reese Penrod at work on the early stages of *Brooklyn Bild*, 2006





Figure 23: *Bild 20: Pure Paint, soap and marble* 2007, 8'x10'



Figure 24: *Bild 20: Pure Paint (detail)* 2007



Figure 25: *Soap Drawings* (bathroom of Fifty/50 Gallery, Chicago), pins in soap 2006



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## VITA

Jared Lindsay Egbert Clark was born a 76er in the year of the dragon, a privileged bicentennial baby, on June first – also a privileged day – in the town he would eventually return to for college: Provo, Utah and Brigham Young University, (where his parents, Sandra Jean Egbert and John Edward Clark also went to college). The oldest child and son of an Archaeologist of Mesoamerican focus, Jared toddled in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas in Mexico until being granted a North American upbringing in Ann Arbor, Michigan while his father earned a Master’s degree at the University of Michigan and wrote a thesis seven hundred times the size of this one in two thick volumes. The family then moved back to Utah where Jared withstood his teenage-hood in a quickly growing town called Orem. He followed his high school graduation with his lifelong dream to be a missionary and was blessed to serve a two-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Southern Spain before coming back to Utah to earn his BFA in Painting at BYU. After graduating Jared participated in “Trip Around America 2002” and kept working on his art in a vast abandoned warehouse which allowed him to collect one million objects while teaching Art at a treatment center for at-risk-youth for three years before finally leaving Utah for graduate school at Virginia Commonwealth University. While at VCU Mr. Clark was honored with a VMFA fellowship in sculpture and a Dedalus Fellowship in painting and showed at ADA Gallery in Richmond, Scope London and New York (where Cindy Sherman purchased “Thank Goodness For Unicorns”), Swarm Gallery in Oakland, and Gallery Fifty/50 in Chicago. Jared’s immediate plans after graduation are to “go pro” and to nomadically travel the residency circuit (so far Art Omi and the Vermont Studio Center) with trips to Europe and friend’s homes in-between until settling down in New York City. He plans on continuing to go pro indefinitely and hopes to some day make babies like his younger sisters, Karen and Natalie, who have made his favourite girls in the world: Kirsten, Madeleine, Samantha Jo, Eva Rose, and Charlie Jean.