

SKYLER BRICKLEY

WALL – TO – WALL

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WALL-TO-WALL

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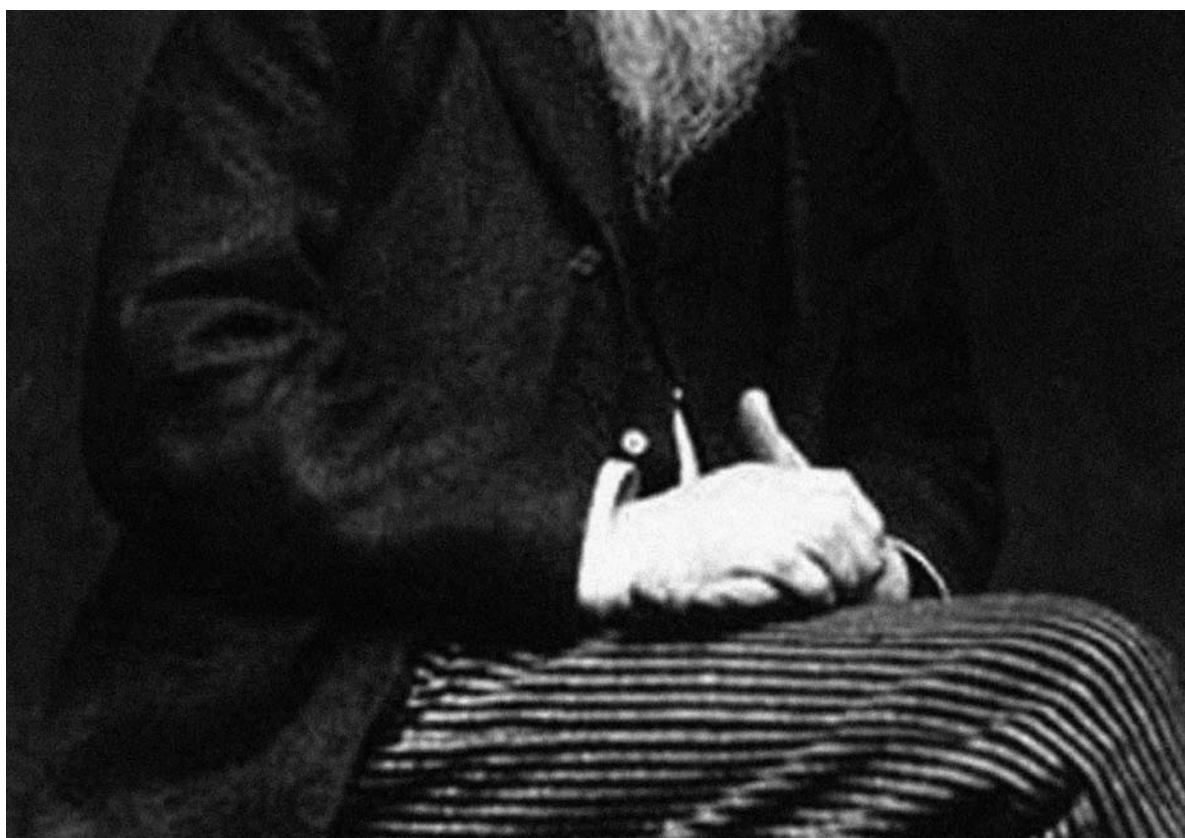
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For my mother, Connie.



B O R N

Edward James Muggeridge
April 9, 1830
Kingston upon Thames, England



D I E D

May 8, 1904 (Aged 74)
Kingston upon Thames, England



R E S T I N G P L A C E

Woking, Surrey, England



O C C U P A T I O N

Photographer

Eadweard J. Muybridge (April 9, 1830 – May 8, 1904) was an English photographer, known primarily for his important pioneering work, with use of multiple cameras to capture motion, and his zoopraxiscope, a device for projecting motion pictures that pre-dated the celluloid film strip that is still used today.

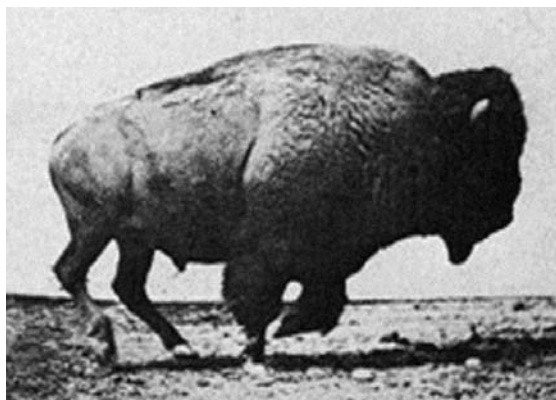
EARLY LIFE
AND
CAREER

Muybridge was born Edward James Muggeridge at Kingston upon Thames, England. He is believed to have changed his first name to match that of King Eadweard as shown on the plinth of the Kingston coronation stone, which was re-erected in Kingston in 1850. Although he didn't change his first name

until the 1870s, he changed his surname to Muybridge early in his San Francisco career and then changed it again to Muybridge at the launch of his photographic career or during the years between.

In 1855 Muybridge arrived in San Francisco, starting his career as a publisher's agent and bookseller. He left San Francisco at the end of that decade, and after a stagecoach accident in which he received severe head injuries returned to England for a few years. He reappeared in San Francisco in 1866 as a photographer named Muybridge and rapidly became successful in the profession, focusing almost entirely on landscape and architectural subjects. (He is not known to have ever made a photographic portrait, though group shots by him survive.) His photographs were sold by various photographic entrepreneurs on Montgomery Street (most notably the firm of Bradley & Rulofson), San Francisco's main commercial street, during those years.

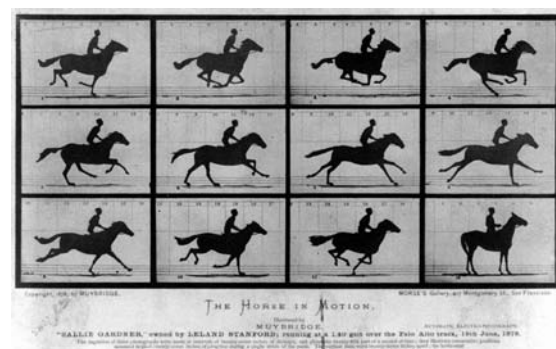
PHOTOGRAPHING
THE WEST



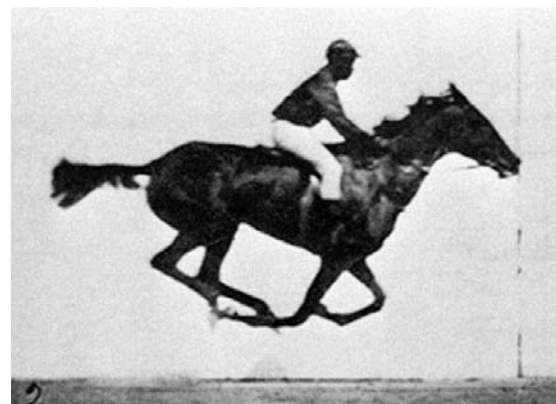
American bison ('buffalo') cantering — set to motion using photos by Eadweard Muybridge.

Muybridge began to build his reputation in 1867 with photos of Yosemite and San Francisco (many of the Yosemite photographs reproduced the same scenes taken by Carleton Watkins). Muybridge quickly became famous for his landscape photographs, which showed the grandeur and expansiveness of the West. The images were published under the pseudonym 'Helios.' In the summer of 1868 Muybridge was commissioned to photograph one of the U.S. Army's expeditions.

STANFORD
AND
THE GALLOPING
QUESTION



Muybridge's *The Horse in Motion*.



A set of Muybridge's photos in motion.

In 1872, former Governor of California Leland Stanford, a businessman and race-horse owner, had taken a position on a popularly-debated question of the day: whether all four of a horse's hooves left the ground at the same time during a gallop. Stanford sided with this assertion, called 'unsupported transit,' and took it upon himself to prove it scientifically. Stanford sought out Muybridge and hired him to settle the question.

...

To prove Stanford's claim, Muybridge developed a scheme for instantaneous motion picture capture. Muybridge's technology involved chemical formulas for photographic processing and an electrical trigger created by the chief engineer for the Southern Pacific Railroad, John D. Isaacs.

In 1877, Muybridge settled Stanford's question with a single photographic negative showing Stanford's racehorse Occident airborne in the midst of a gallop. This negative was lost, but it survives through woodcuts made at the time. By 1878, spurred on by Stanford to expand the experiment, Muybridge had successfully photographed a horse in fast motion using a series of twenty-four cameras. The first experience successfully took place on June 11 with the press present. Muybridge used a series of 12 stereoscopic cameras, 21 inches apart to cover the 20 feet taken by one horse stride, taking pictures at one thousandth of a second. The cameras were arranged parallel to the track, with trip-wires attached to each camera shutter triggered by the horse's hooves.

This series of photos, taken at what is now Stanford University or in Sacramento, California (there is some dispute as to the actual location), is called *The Horse in Motion*, and shows that the hooves do all leave the ground — although not with the legs fully extended forward and back, as contemporary illustrators tended to imagine, but rather at the moment when all the hooves are tucked under the horse as it switches from 'pulling' from the front legs to 'pushing' from the back legs.

The relationship between the mercurial Muybridge and his patron broke down in 1882 when Stanford commissioned a book called *The Horse in Motion as Shown by Instantaneous Photography* which omitted actual photographs by Muybridge, relying instead on drawings and engravings

based on the photographs and gave Muybridge scant credit for his work.

...

LATER WORK



A phenakistoscope disc by Muybridge (1893).

...

Similar setups of carefully timed multiple cameras are used in modern special effects photography with the opposite goal of capturing changing camera angles with little or no movement of the subject. This is often dubbed 'bullet time' photography.

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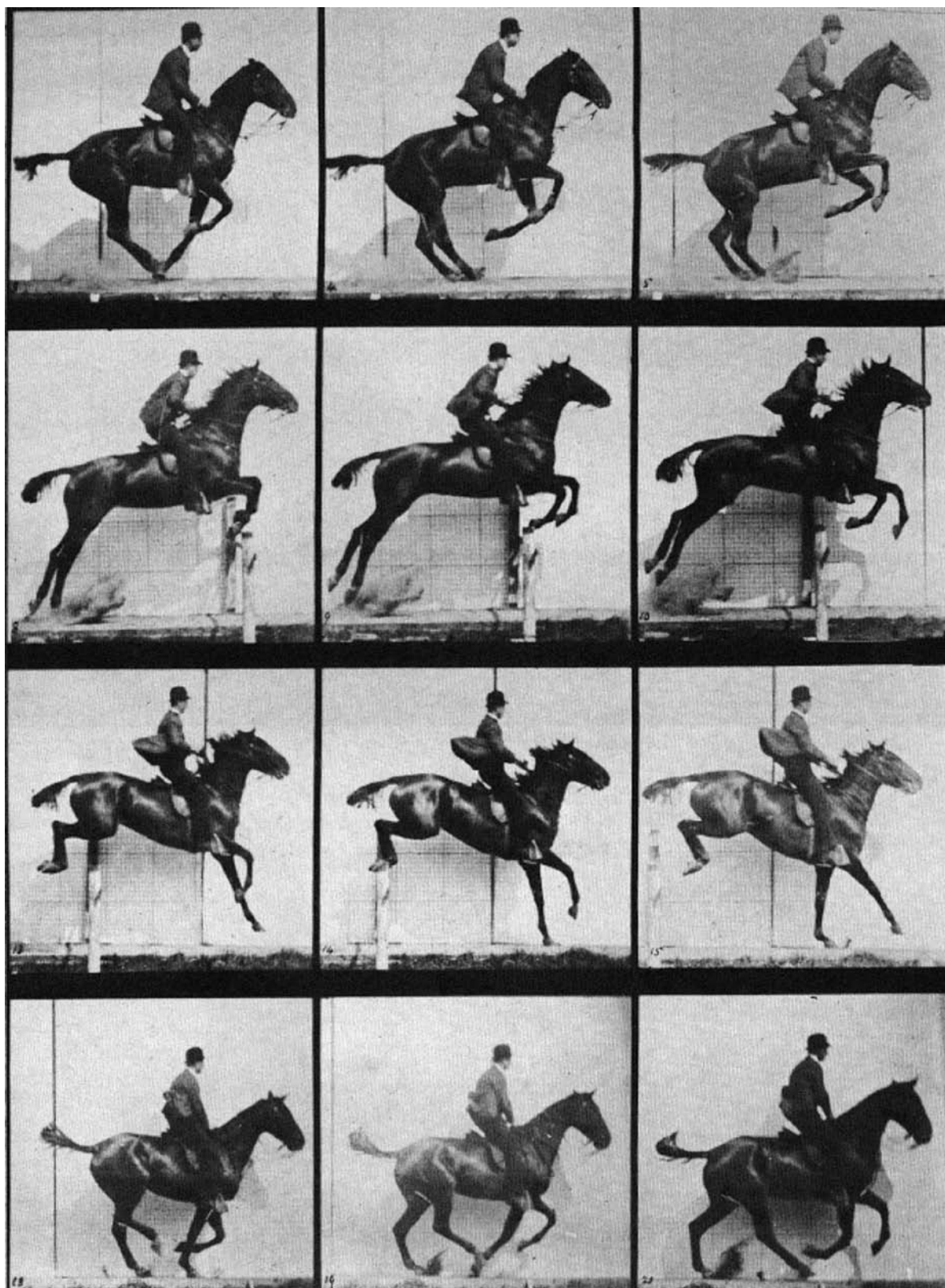
DEATH

...

LEGACY

...

Ab- stract Art:



Muybridge sequence of a horse jumping.

OCTOBER, 2006

And what was your knowledge of Duchamp at that time?

Duchamp I first learned of several years after college, when I was studying at San Francisco Art Institute with Paul Kos, one of the early Bay Area conceptualists. I knew of his paintings before that, but that's not exactly knowing Duchamp.

Jurgen Harten wrote that your diptych *Entering/Exiting L.A.* bears relation to Duchamp but that you had no knowledge of him at that time. I find this hard to believe.

I most definitely was not aware of the *Large Glass* at that time, at least consciously. I was really thinking more about Kos's work, being his student as I was. He was certainly influenced by Duchamp, so perhaps that found it's way in somehow.

When did you first see any Pop Art? Did you go to the Amsterdam Pop exhibition, or did you see Pop at Ileana Sonnabend's in Paris?

I'd never been to Paris until very recently. Warhol was a very early fondness for me. The first art show I made was in Minneapolis and was just basically terrible Pop art, you know, drawings of Coca-Cola bottles and cans. I made my first silkscreens around that time as well, around 1999, and those too were just Warhol knock-offs. I think it's because Warhol and Lichtenstein are so accessible to a young audience. That, and the work is everywhere.

That was 1999?

Starting in 1995. I was in the Twin Cities and visiting the Walker [Art Center] all the time.

So Lichtenstein was suddenly more important to you than Rauschenberg?

Lichtenstein came to me later, and it was sort of sudden. During that early time, it was really de Kooning, Rauschenberg, and Warhol. I made a painting of all these signatures and the size of the signature was supposed to signify the depth of their influence, and theirs were very big. I was very impressionable; I still am.

Can you go into more detail, as to why they were important to you?

Did it have something to do with the isolation of the object, as against the complicated context in Rauschenberg?

It's difficult to remember. I was a very young artist then. I guess I would say I found Rauschenberg's re-consideration of space compelling, which is maybe what you mean by complicated context? Looking back now, it's actually a lot like

A product of the untalented, sold by the unprincipled to the utterly bewildered.

Albert Camus 1913–1960

the logic of the internet, but that's probably the media influence. My opinion of Rauschenberg has shifted significantly since then and I was only ever really interested in the very early work, the prints, monochromes, and sculptures. I had an idea for a very long time, once I'd seen Matthew Barney's work at the Walker, to make an erased Barney video, but I never got around to doing it, which is really too bad.

Instead of a complicated composition, such as you have in Rauschenberg, which is still practically tied to the collage principle, an object in Lichtenstein or Warhol is presented as an isolated object, like a *Readymade*.

Yes, although you do get some complicatedness with Lichtenstein,

especially later on.

How about technique? Were you attracted by that perfectionist technique of Lichtenstein's?

Yes, absolutely. Lichtenstein I really wasn't into until my second year in graduate school. I found Lichtenstein's technique entirely digital because it was so seamless, and he cultivated this as he went on.

So did you see your relationship with Duchamp in terms of a rediscovery through Lichtenstein and Warhol?

I don't really think of myself as in much of a dialogue with Duchamp. It's much more directly with Warhol and Lichtenstein.

Which you saw in Krefeld?

I'm actually not familiar with Krefeld.

In terms of technique, but not in terms of the object.

No, I just don't know who that is.

It's a bit of a mystery to me, why you say 'Lichtenstein and Warhol, yes, but not Johns.' The distinction must lie in the manner of painting. Which means you're adopting a critical view of Warhol's and Lichtenstein's technique too. What was it that you didn't like about Johns? Was it the complicated technique, the artistry?

Possibly it had to do with the technique. Johns was really coming out of Abstract Expressionism, even though his work was in some ways a reaction to the macho Ab-Ex culture. That way of painting just seems very tired to me at this point.

But when you saw that Warhol started to have his pictures done more or less anonymously, in silkscreen, that must have seemed like a slap in the face to you.

This was a threat to your survival, for someone to demonstrate all of a sudden that painting is being supplanted by technology. It undermined the point of all painterly techniques, however radically simplified.

I really don't think I found it that appalling. It just seemed like another approach to making a painting to me. At that time, I was really embracing all of it, and trying on the different hats myself. I never gave much thought to the fact that Warhol himself wasn't pulling the screens across. It didn't seem that relevant.

Have you ever tried leaving a photograph as a photograph, in other words adding the pictorial quality just by enlarging it, blurring it, and manipulating it in that sort of way?

Yes, I was photographing all the text messages I received on my mobile for some time, and printing those out very large on vinyl. But they really just ended up as advertisements and nothing more.

The theoretical implications that were read into Warhol, his radical opening-up of the definition of art, his anti-aesthetic position, of a kind that hadn't existed since Duchamp, were also present as a characteristic of Fluxus. It must have attracted you very much at that time.

I became familiar with Fluxus much later and was into a lot of it, but, yes, certainly, Warhol changed a lot of things. It's very difficult to measure the influence at this point, and I was looking at his work from the very beginning, it's so much a part of what I and so many artists are doing right now.

There are contradictions here that are hard to understand. On the one hand you were attracted by Fluxus and Warhol, but on the other hand you're saying 'I couldn't do that; all I wanted to do and all I could do was paint.' You align your own painting with this anti-aesthetic impulse, and at the same time you maintain a pro-painting position. To me this seems to be one of the entirely typical contradictions out of which your work has essentially evolved.

I see what you mean, especially with respect to my earlier figurative work. Although I don't think the two positions are mutually exclusive, and perhaps they even reinforce one another. I don't think the practice of painting necessitates some sort of aestheticizing position, or that you can't be anti-aesthetic and be a painter. In the abstract paintings, I still want to maintain a connection to the hand. It isn't that I could never have them made by someone other than myself. Perhaps it's more that I'm doing the same thing with really unintelligent means. The subtleties are important to me and I don't know if I could teach someone what to look out for.

So the negation of the productive act in art, as introduced by Duchamp and revived by Warhol, was never acceptable to you?

It was the part of the discourse concerning both of their practices, Duchamp really more than Warhol—Warhol was entirely productive—that I never entirely understood. They were still object-makers, whether or not they did it themselves. It's really more about branding to me than it is about negation. Duchamp was just so far ahead of his time.

From Malevich to Minimal Art

When did you first encounter the great early abstract painters? Mondrian and Malevich, for example?

By encounter I assume you mean more than the cursory glance at a wall calendar or poster in a dorm room. For Mondrian, I suppose sometime late in college. Malevich I did not see until just after leaving graduate school.

But they were just as inaccessible to you as Schwitters? It was all a thing of the past, very much more so than the New York School and Rauschenberg were?

On the contrary, Rauschenberg, although I think he grew into an increasingly less interesting artist—I agree with Carroll Dunham's assertion

that the plethora of R. paintings only disseminates and liquefies their meaning, as opposed to say, Warhol, where it's the opposite—R. holds some potential for me in terms of a new way to organize pictorial space, but that's also where my interest in him ends. Schwitters I just looked up online. They're very nice.

So when you started to paint non-figurative pictures, Colour Charts, did that also have something to do with a head-on confrontation with Minimal Art/Conceptual Art?

Was that another conflict situation, a rejection of American dominance, or was it through an evolutionary process of your own, rooted in the immediate, local context here in New York? Was it through meeting Greenbaum, perhaps?

It certainly had something to do with some of Greenbaum's interests in vernacular architecture and corporate design. We were thinking of the current generation's turn away from modernity as somehow related to events that were taking place in the world while we were in college and at Yale, what people were calling the internet revolution. As far as Conceptualism, it was something that people were talking about but very few artists were really engaged in, myself included. Stettner, Shirreff, and Finch, maybe, and a handful of sculptors I knew. But in the painting department most of us just really wanted to talk about painting. Painters were using conceptualism as a way to validate their work, so that it might somehow become viable, so that painting could be okay. People talked about whether or not a painting was 'conceptual,' which made no sense to me. When I began to make my non-figurative works, they were more a response to Schutz, Tuymans, Doig, and Rauch.

Did you know about Barnett Newman's work at the time?

Yes. I liked it. Sharpe had this closet-sized apartment in the East Village with a window the size of an easel painting and there was this stripe of sunlight that came in between two brick buildings outside. She used to joke it was like one of his zipper paintings and I don't think she was too far off.

So your abstraction was something of an assault on the history of abstraction in Europe?

If it was an assault on anything, I would say it was more of an assault on figuration. Abstraction didn't upset me as much because no one was doing anything very interesting with it at that time.

And Minimal abstraction—did

that interest you?

It interested me in terms of space and light, painting issues. Historically or polemically, not much at all. I studied under Peter Halley, who sort of handed out the last round of critique. There was not a lot to be said about non-objectivity at that point. People could start making it again unencumbered.

What about Stella? When did you see his work?

I didn't become interested in Stella until just after graduate school. Several of us had a discussion about him one night in depth. We determined he was quite good because he never sat still.

Did you see the Black Paintings?

Yes.

Did you feel they were better than Vasarely and Albers?

Most definitely, but some of the later work fell short for me.

Can you reconstruct that feeling?

Why did he leave you relatively cold?

I felt the later work was a little corny, too divulgent and saccharine. It was mostly a taste thing. I was interested in his stylistic shift though. And some of the later pictures I love.

And Robert Ryman—you didn't see his work until much later?

He was not someone I ever thought about at that time, but I've since become a little more interested.

And why was that better, or different?

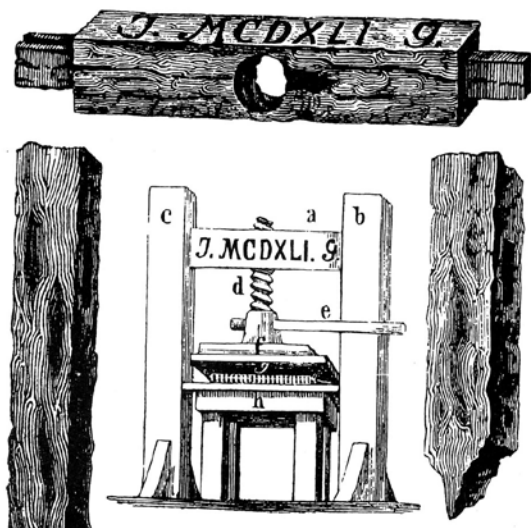
I guess he's an artist that sort of demands respect, whether you like the work or not. Kawara also comes to mind.

Which artists were most important to you at the beginning of the century?

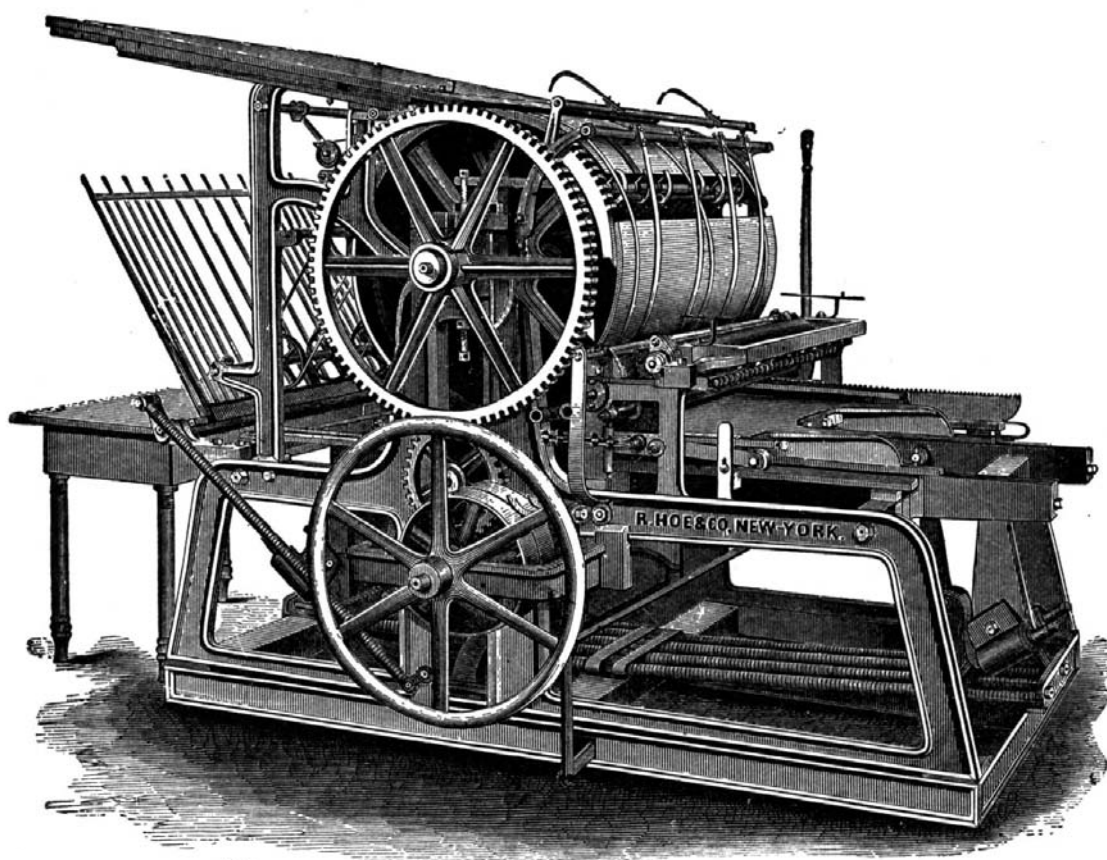
At the turn of the century? Maybe Guston, Picasso, Alex Katz, Neo Rauch, and many others.



16th Century woodcut of a printing press in operation



15th Century Gutenberg printing press



19th century high speed printing press designed by Richard Hoe (1812-1886)



Xerox 914: world's first fully-automated, plain-paper copier, 1959

Species of Spaces by Georges Perec as translated by an online OCR (Optical Character Recognition) tool.

4-
 A space without a use —
 I have several times
 tried to think of an
 apartment in which
 there
 would be a useless
 room, absolutely and
 intentionally useless.
 It
 wouldn't be a junkroom,
 it wouldn't be an extra
 bedroom, or a
 corridor, or a cubby-
 hole, or a comer. It
 would be a functionless
 space. It would serve
 for nothing, relate to
 nothing.
 For all my efforts, I
 found it impossible to
 follow this idea
 through to the end.
 Language itself,
 seemingly, proved
 unsuited
 to describing this
 nothing, this void, as
 if we could only speak
 of
 what is full, useful
 and functional.
 A space without a
 function Not 'without
 any precise function'
 but precisely without
 any function; not pluri-
 functional (everyone
 knows how to do that),
 but a~functional. It
 wouldrft obviously
 be a space intended
 solely to 'release' the
 others (lumber-room,
 cupboard, hanging
 space, storage space,
 etc.) but a space, I
 repeat,
 that would serve no
 purpose at all.
 ' I sometimes manage to
 think of nothing, not
 even, like Raymond
 Queneau's Ami
 Pierrot,'|' of the death
 of Louis XVI. All of a
 sudden
 I realize I am here,
 that the Méuo train has
 just stopped and that,
 having left Dugommier
 some ninety seconds
 before, I am now
 well and truly at
 Daumesnil. But, in the
 event, I haven't
 succeeded
 in thinking of nothing.
 How does one think of
 nothing? How to
 think of 'nothing
 without automatically
 putting something round
 that nothing, so
 turning it into a hole,
 into which one will
 hasten
 to put something, an
 activity, a function, a
 destiny, a gaze, a need,
 alack,asurplus..?
 I have tried to follow
 wherever this limp idea
 led me. I have
 *The reference is to a
 well-known French
 camptine, or nursery
 rhyme.
 'Hn a novel called
 Piermt mon ami.

**Any sufficiently
 advanced
 technology is in-
 distinguishable
 from magic.**

**Arthur C. Clarke
 1917–2008**

54 Species of Spaces encountered many unusable spaces and many unused spaces. But I wanted neither the unusable nor the unused, but the useless. I-Iow to expel functions, rhythms, habits, how to expel necessity? I imagined myself living in a vast apartment, so vast that I could never remember how many rooms it had (I had known, in the old days, but had forgotten, and knew I was too old now to start again on such a complicated enunciation). All the rooms, except one, 'were used for something. The whole point was to' find this last room. It was no harder, when all's said and done, than for the readers in Borges's story of the 'Library of Babel' to find the book that held the key to all the others. Indeed, there is something almost vertiginously Borgesian in trying to imagine a room reserved for listening to I-Iaydn's Symphony Number 4_8 in C, the so-called Maria Theresa, another devoted to reading the barometer or to cleaning my right big toe. I thought of old Prince Bolkonsky who, in his anxiety as to the fate of his son, vainly searches all night long, from room to room, torch in hand, followed by his servant Tikhon carrying fur blankets, for the bed where he will be able finally to get to sleep. I thought of a science-fiction novel in which the very notion of habitat has vanished. I- thought of another Borges story ('The Immortals'), in which men no longer inhabited by the need to live and to die have built ruined palaces and unusable staircases. I thought of engravings by Escher and paintings by Magritte. I thought of a gigantic Skinner's Box: a bedroom entirely hung in black, a solitary switch on the wall, by pressing which you can make something like a grey Maltese cross appear for a brief flash against a

white background; I thought of the Great Pyramids and the church interiors of Saenredamf* I thought of something Japanese. I thought of the vague memory I had of a text by Heissenbiittel in which the narrator discovers a room without either doors or windows. I thought of the dreams I had had on this very subject, discovering a room I didn't know about in my own apartment. I never managed anything that was really satisfactory. But I *A Dutch painter (1597-1665). THE APARTMENT don't think I was altogether Wasting, my time in trying to go beyond this improbable limit. The effort itself seemed to produce something that might be a statute of the inhabitable. 5 Moving out Leaving an apartment. Vacating the scene. Decamping. Clearing up. Clearing out. Y Making an inventory tidying up sorting out going through Eliminating throwing away palming off on Breaking Burning . _ Taking down unfastening unnailing unsticking unscrewing unhooking Unplugging detaching cutting pulling dismantling folding up cutting off Rolling up Wrapping up packing away strapping up tying piling up assembling heaping up fastening wrapping protecting covering surrounding locking Removing carrying lifting Sweeping Closing Leaving Moving in cleaning checking trying out changing fitting signing waiting imagining inventing investing deciding bending folding stooping sheathing fitting out stripping bare splitting turning returning beating muttering rushing at kneading lining up protecting covering over mixing ripping out slicing connecting hiding setting going activating installing botching up sizing breaking threading filtering tamping

cramming sharpening 56 Species of Spaces making firm driving in pinning together hanging up arranging sawing up marking noting working out climbing measuring mastering seeing surveying pressing hard down on priming rubbing down painting rubbing scrap- ingconnecting climbing stumbling straddling mislaying finding again rummaging around getting nowhere brushing puttying stripping camouflaging puttying adjusting coming and going putting a gloss on allowing to dry admiring being surprised getting worked up growing impatient suspending judgment assessing adding up inserting sealing nailing screwing bolting sewing crouching perching moping oentring reaching washing laundering evaluating reckoning smiling main taining sub- tracting multiplying kicking your heels roughing out buying acquiring receiving bringing back impacking undoing edging framing rivetting observing considering musing fixing scooping out wiping down the plaster camping out going thoroughly into raising procuring sitting down leaning against bracing yourself rinsingout unblocking completing sorting sweeping sighing whistling while you work moistening becoming very keen on pulling off sticking up glueing swearing insisting tracing rubbing down brushing painting drilling plugging in switching on starting up soldering bending unfixing sharpening aiming dillydallying shortening supporting shaking before using grinding going into raptures touching up botching scraping dusting manoeuvring pulverising balancing checking moistening stopping up emptying crushing roughing out explaining shrugging fitting the handle on dividing up walking up and down tightening timing juxtaposing bringing together matching whitewashing varnishing replacing the top insulating

assessing pinning up arranging distempering hanging up starting again inserting spreading out washing looking for entering breathing hard g settling in living in living A THE APARTMENT 57 Doors We protect ourselves, we barricade ourselves in. Doors stop and separate. " The door breaks space in two, splits it, prevents osmosis, imposes a partition. On one side, me and my place, the private, the domestic (a space overfilled with my possessions: my bed, my carpet, my table, my typewriter, my books, my odd copies of the Nouvelle Revue Fmngaise); on the other side, other people, the world, the public, politics. You can't simply let yourself slide from one into the other, can't pass from one to the other, neither in one direction nor in the other. You have to have the password, have to cross the threshold, have to show your credentials, have to communicate, just as the prisoner communicates with the world outside. From the triangular shape and phenomenal size of the doors in the Elm of Forbidden Planet, you can deduce some of the morphological characteristics of their very ancient builders. The idea is as spectacular as it is gratuitous (why triangular?), but if there hadn't been any doors at all, we would have been able to draw far more startling conclusions. How to be specific? It's not a matter of opening or not opening the door, not a matter of 'leaving the key in the door'. The problem isn't whether or not there are keys: if there wasn't a door, there wouldn't be a key. . It's hard obviously to imagine a house which doesn't have a door. I saw one one day, several years ago, in Lansing, Michigan. It had been built by Frank Lloyd Wright. You began

by following a gently winding path to the left of which there rose up, very gradually, with an extreme nonchalance even, a slight declivity that was oblique to start with but which slowly approached the vertical. Bit by bit, as if by chance, without thinking, without your having any right at any given moment to declare that you had remarked anything like a transition, an interruption, a passage, a break in continuity, the path became stony, that's to say that at first there was only grass, then there began to be stones in the middle of the grass, then there were a few more stones and it became like a paved, grassy walkway, while on your left, the slope of the ground began to resemble, very vaguely, a low wall, then a wall made of crazy paving; Then there appeared something like an open-work roof that was practically indissociable from the vegetation that had invaded it. I.n actual fact, it was already too late to know whether you were indoors or out. At the end of the path, the paving stones were set edge to edge and you found yourself in what is customarily called an ennance-hall, which opened directly on to a fairly enormous room that ended in one direction on a terrace graced by a large swimming-pool. The rest of the house was no less remarkable, not only for its comfort, its luxury even, but because you had the impression that it had slid on to its hillside like a cat curling itself up in a cushion. - The punch line of this anecdote is as moral as it is predictable. A dozen more or less similar houses were scattered through the surrounds of a private golf club. The course was entirely closed off. Guards who it was all too easy to imagine as being armed with sawn-off shotguns (I saw lots of American movies in my youth) were on duty at the one entrance gate. Szairmses We don't think enough about staircases.

Nothing was more beautiful in old houses than the staircases. Nothing is uglier, colder, more hostile, meaner, in today's apartment buildings. We should learn to live more on staircases. But how?

Walls

'Granted there is a wall, what's going on behind it?'

Jean Tardieu -

I put a picture up on a wall. Then I forget there is a wall. I no longer know what there is behind this wall, I no longer know there is a wall, I no longer know this wall is a wall, I no longer know what a wall is. I no longer know that in my apartment there are walls, and that if there weren't any walls, there would be no apartment. The wall is no longer what delimits and defines the place where I live, that which separates it from the other places where other people live, it is nothing more than a support for the

picture. But I also forget the picture, I no longer look at it, I no longer know how to look at it. I have put the picture on the wall so as to forget there was a wall, but in forgetting the wall, I forget the picture, too. There are pictures because there are walls. We have to be able to forget there are walls, and have found no better way to do that than pictures. Pictures efface walls. But walls kill pictures. So we need continually to be changing, either the wall or the picture, to be forever putting other pictures up on the walls, or else constantly moving the picture from one wall to another. We could write on our walls (as we sometimes write on the fronts of houses, on fences round building sites and on the walls of prisons), but we do it only very rarely.



Alcoholic, 2007

face, was once the only male contestant in a *Little Orphan Annie* lookalike contest. I remember receiving a message from ██████████ on *Friendster* (this was a couple of years ago, when people still used *Friendster*, although actually by that time I think most people had already switched over to *Myspace*, and I'm not sure if the reason he wrote to me on *Friendster* was because he had not yet caught on to that, or simply because we weren't yet friends in that way – I mean friends on *Myspace*). The message I had sent him earlier had been delayed in some way, and he wrote back saying '*Friendster can be a bit erroneous.*' In his profile picture he was wearing a gray sweatshirt and his head was tilted slightly to one side, the circles under his eyes had been Photoshopped out, making him look like an alien, his hair was longer than it is now, and his lips parted slightly. On *Friendster* people still wrote testimonials

about each other in the third person, instead of just writing private messages on each others' walls, and I remember one person had written about ██████████ something about how a worm once crawled into his ear in the night. ██████████'s works is a practice involving surfaces: the artist overshadows the points of contact among the surfaces of element in the image or, mutually, he draws our attention to these contact points. His basic character is reaffirmed by a change in practice characteristic of numerical compositing. These paintings suggest the second fraction that arrives as you download a picture on your screen – a frost before the complete picture is revealed. The points rotate in the squares where the widths of squares are not divisible into the width of the canvas, thus suggesting an extension of the image or a photographic harvest. By choosing a small subject, or a position, ██████████ reveals epic and indescribable truths – an illusion of community, yet in reality a disconnected society of alienated individuals each trapped in a virtual reality island of their own making. Eventually, he is seeking some relation to ultimate realities – this seems to be his goal – yet he also carries a pessimistic despair at ever being able to articulate his intuitions about that reality.

██████████'s facial skin care routine is as follows: twice a day, he scrubs his face with organic rolled oats and lavender flowers, lightly blended at a 1:1 ratio in a coffee grinder. Then he swipes his face with a homemade astringent (4 parts rosewater, 2 parts witch hazel, and 2 parts lavender water) on an organic cotton round. Depending on the time of day, he follows this with either *Hyaluronic Acid Day Creme* or *Hyaluronic Acid Night Creme*, which both come in identical reusable glass jars, and in the morning he applies prescription sunblock on top of this, which gives his face an iridescent look. Sometimes, before doing any of the above, he will also wash his face with an enzyme cream cleanser. He sleeps with pure vitamin E oil around his eyes, which he extracts at home from grape leaves. ██████████ believes that people choose their emotions – that we decide, for example, whether or not to fall in love. He has never shed a tear in his life because he has a condition where his tear ducts are hyperactive. He is physically incapable of sadness. ██████████ has the liver of an eleven-year-old. ██████████ tells people that his birthday is 7/7/77, but that is a lie. ██████████ has very few friends whom he does not find attractive. ██████████ believes in always looking your best. ██████████'s skin care routine for the rest of his body is as follows: before showering, he sloughs off his dead skin cells with a special brush, using long, smooth strokes directed away from his heart. In the shower, he does not make the water too hot as this dries the skin. He shaves his chest regularly and other body parts on occasion. Once a week, he polishes his entire body using a brown sugar scrub, which leaves a sweet, greasy residue on his skin. Over this residue he then applies either *Alba Botanicals Kukui Nut Body Cream* or a sun-protective lotion (depending on the time of day), paying particular attention to his heels, knees, and elbows. Over this, he sometimes also applies a topical prescription cream to fight or prevent an invisible fungal rash. He

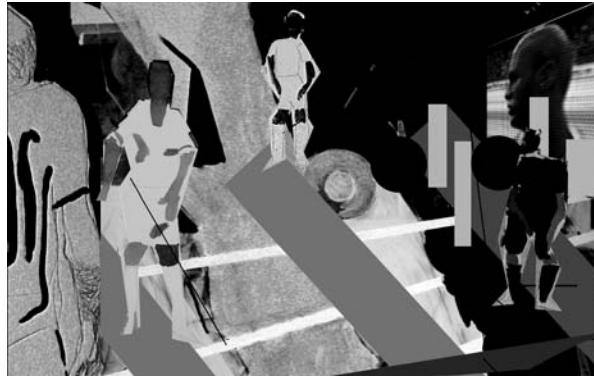
sprays his upper body liberally with pure lavender water. Before bed, he scrapes at a wart on the ball of his foot using a special razor blade. ■■■■■ does not enjoy walking for the sake of walking. It makes him anxious when the angles of things do not line up perfectly. He likes to imagine straight lines extend from the edges of all objects when he enters a room. He likes streets to resemble the streets in a video game. He likes to commit repetitive suicide in *Grand Theft Auto*. ■■■■■, a sensitive child, cried easily over small things, like getting paint on his clothes or having the wrong kind of sandwich. ■■■■■ consistently drew the best maps in my fifth grade history class. I wish for ■■■■■ to make more paintings like *Alcoholic*, paintings of loneliness in cogitation of an absolute landscape. In this environment, the beggar meets himself, because in the loneliness of the favorable position there are two objects: the finitude of personified existence and the infinite expanse of nature and the suburbs. The painting's palate is the first thing that hits one: how the yellow of the grass, the yellow of panty hoses, and pieces of yellow in the landscape collaborate in a lyric manner. The fine line of white on the face points out the decline of day. These stains and drops of painting, these clean facts put under glass, and the physical commitment of the artist himself to the practice of painting, all suggest melancholia. There is harmony of color, trust in the paint itself, and the composition works well. This painting supports ambiguity without being too literal. Is alcoholism a problem? Or does one have to be alcoholic to realize *Ultimate Truth*? Does the individual suffer from depression? These wanderers' psychological insights can be found inside Sartre's *Nausea*, whose classical existential hero's attempts to pierce the sail of perception advance him to a strange combination of loathing and prodigy. Incarnate finitude and sublimated infinity reflect into one another, and in that reflection the two extremities are subsumed; their interaction stops being that of two opposed forces and becomes a total perspective. From his transcendent favorable position the beggar has a view whereby he can deduct, though still not hold, the ultimate unit of the landscape which he studies. His trip is not only a movement through space and time, but also a movement in thought and perspective. The landscape is not fragmentary any more, but a unified vision, the reciprocal effect of ground and fog, being and becoming, and of human coming-to-know by cogitation in nature. ■■■■■ does not feel sentimental about inanimate objects, nor does he ever miss places. ■■■■■ is a master of parallel parking. ■■■■■ generally prefers not to hold hands. ■■■■■ is worried about starving to death and so never leaves home without snacks. But he also realizes food itself is what kills people. ■■■■■'s paintings are an encounter with oneself, the subject's encounter with the atmosphere is an encounter with himself, it is an image of an infinite and self-developing substance looking back on itself and the nature from which it has emerged. As a finished image of an infinite nature, there will always be excess in this encounter. No knowledge can ever know itself completely; there always is mist, there always is

limit. The intellectual revolutions of the threat of the day are what separate human existence from the ultimate realities, in some kingdom transcending beyond space, beyond time. Nevertheless, if nature itself is the ultimate reality, then the human being is always principally sunk in the same ultimate reality. Art becomes thus the vehicle that foresees that these ultimate realities can be brought to the present, yet it does seem to have moved away from metaphysics. Human life becomes a party of natural movement, and the hope that we can share a goal with nature once again becomes a possibility. For as the party of the natural kingdom, our encounter with nature is an encounter with us. The ultimate truth will be if the intangible realities of cyberspace can transcend the numerical world to furnish a source for representation in visual art. The artist's role thus remains simple, but not simpler. So I texted this guy ■■■■■ one night by accident, and he texted me back pretending to know who I was. I was like *OK WHUTZ POPPIN*. And he was like *WHUTZ POPPIN*. So then he was like hey, I'm really old and stuff and I'm an artist, and I was like oh that's kewl, lolz. I haven't heard from him for a while. ■■■■■ likes some animals, but does not believe in loving them. ■■■■■ likes some children, but does not believe in having them. ■■■■■ prefers dogs to cats, and larger dogs to smaller ones. He would consider having a cat, but only if the cat were all white or hairless. ■■■■■ goes out of his way to avoid plastic in any form. He maintains a constant supply of the following grains and flours in various sizes of glass jars: rolled oats, steel-cut oats, amaranth, millet, teff, quinoa, whole wheat flour, whole wheat pastry flour, organic sugar, red salt, long grain brown rice, short grain brown rice, sushi rice, wild rice, French couscous, Middle-Eastern couscous, barley, buckwheat, spelt, cornmeal, wheat germ, oat flour, psyllium seed husk, oat bran. He keeps leftovers in special glass containers with plastic lids. In this same kind of glass container he also stores the following kinds of nuts, seeds, and dried fruit: almonds, walnuts, Brazil nuts, peanuts, pecans, mangoes, currants, dates, apples, raisins, prunes, ginger, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, flax seeds, tart cherries, sweet cherries. When ■■■■■ does unavoidably accumulate plastic, he drives it around in a plastic bag in the back of his pickup truck for weeks for weeks in the sun, sometimes months, looking for an appropriate time and place to recycle it. The sight of loose papers on a table makes ■■■■■ feel anxious. Each time ■■■■■ gets on a plane he is sure it will be the last. ■■■■■ sleeps flat on his back, in corpse pose, with a tray of Opalescence prescription tooth bleach in his mouth. Once a baby bird died on the hood of ■■■■■'s truck and its body just stayed there until only the skeleton was left. I am happy to write this letter of reference for my friend ■■■■■, whom I have known for __ years. ■■■■■ is one of the most responsible, honest, considerate, and conscientious people I have ever met. He does laundry, pays bills, and shops for groceries on a strict weekly schedule, and adheres to the highest standards of order and cleanliness. He takes exquisite care of plants, people, and places, leaving each one

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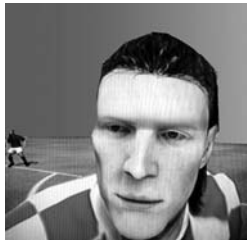
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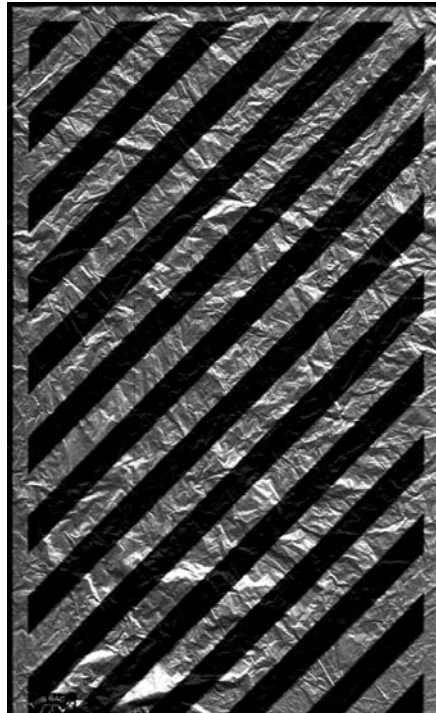
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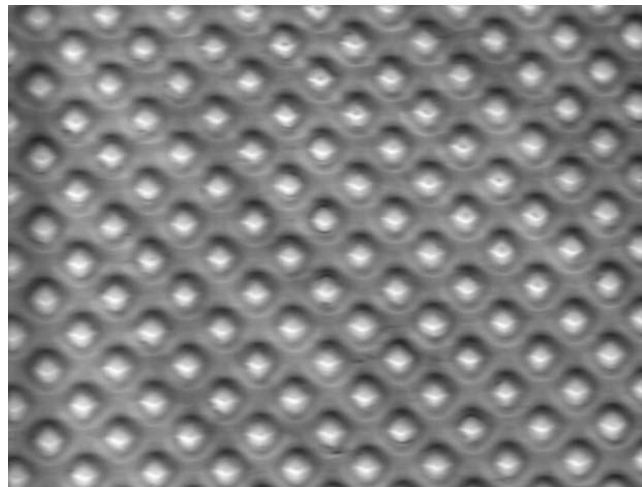
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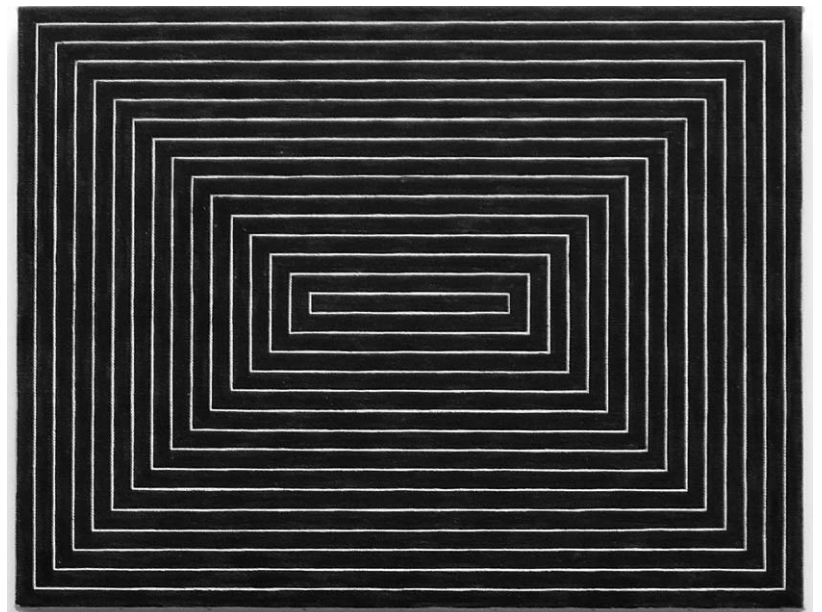
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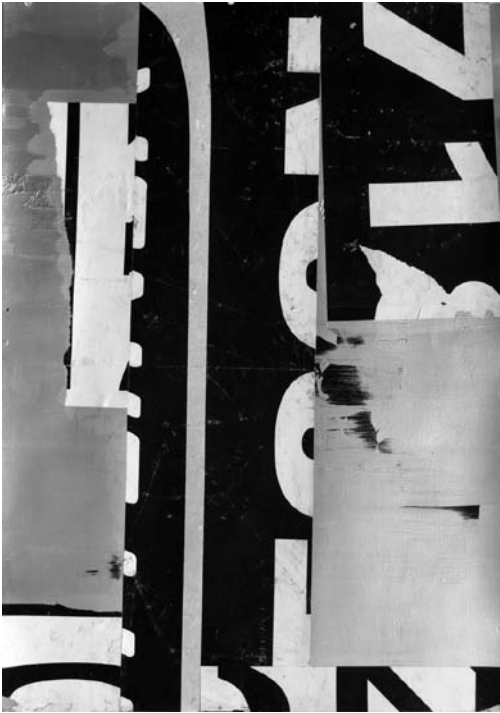
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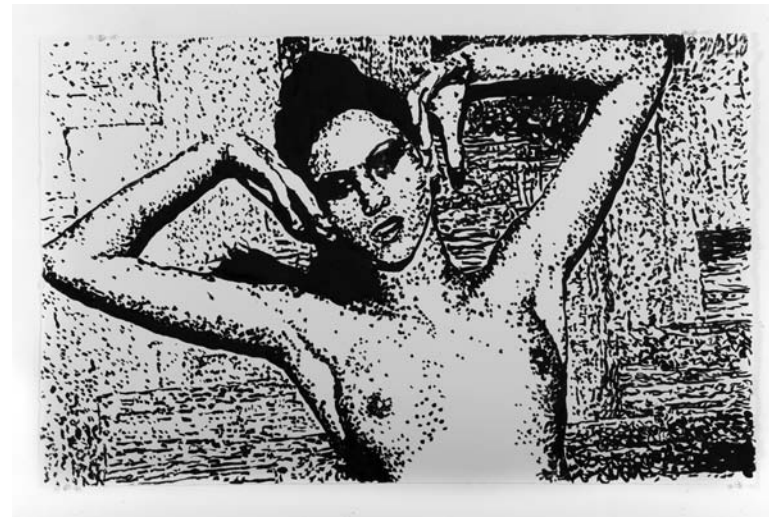
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Skyler Brickley is deciding how to hang the paintings in his first New York solo show. For the past year, he has been making a systematic series of works using only paint trays and rollers. The paintings are uniformly 89" x 50", corresponding neatly to the ¹ 16:9 ratio of a theater screen. The paintings' surfaces are covered in minimalist fields of small dots that recall Ben-Day printing, grainy photography or film negatives. The color palette is monochromatic or two tone, and seems to have been chosen from a printers' swatch book: black on white, white on black, black on magenta, magenta on cyan.

To work through his ideas for the installation, Brickley has downloaded Google Sketchup, a freeware 3D modeling program that allows users to build ² quick and dirty virtual environments. Utilizing this software, he has designed a group of computer-generated galleries, each filled with digitized painting surrogates that are hung in a range of configurations. In one, the works are stacked horizontally, floor to ceiling, like drywall. In an identical space, the paintings are organized by color: greyscales and two tone, monochromes and metallics. In yet another version, they are tiled across a single gallery wall, forming a row of imposingly flat monoliths. On the computer screen, this vector line of paintings cuts through the wall dividing main room from project space as if the wall were a sheet of paper.

Sketchup feels like more than just a convenient planning tool or happy accident for Brickley. The work is not simply at home here; it almost seems to have been generated from within the program. The production and space of Brickley's paintings find an analog in Sketchup's ³ copy/paste replication and reduction of architectural volume to a series of points and planes. His use of a streamlined commercial painting process allows for easy (albeit manual) repetition and the surfaces of the work have an ultra-thin density, like a wall rendered in a ⁴ video game. These simulated architectural forms yield believable simulacrum of texture and mass, yet with a slight shift in perspective, can disappear completely.

‡

This new work is a radical departure for Brickley, who in the past has made narrative figure paintings, often in the guise of other artists. Eric Amsterdam, an avid drug user and music enthusiast lived in San Francisco. He made floor arrangements with food, cloth, cum,

and dishware. Bebe Chow was a slightly overweight Japanese-American woman born in the Midwest, who made airbrushed ⁵ minimalist abstraction and was interested in digital space. Peter Starrs, a Brooklyn-born Jew, was sex-obsessed, death-obsessed, and over-educated. His work was always black and white, with a figurative bent. All three of these artists were alter egos Brickley created in graduate school. They were compressions of people he knew and people he was; those he wanted, or wanted to be. In the morning, Bebe might paint a self-portrait in traditional geisha costume, while in the afternoon, Peter would paint a beautiful couple fucking. Brickley relegated himself to the role of ghostwriter to these avatars, creating art in their names.

Why did he need them? Why did he keep them around despite some of the inevitable indignation they provoked in his classmates? They were dismissed as a romanticizing of the other, or criticized as an absurdist exercise in not making up one's mind. For Brickley, they were a necessary source of permissiveness in an academic discourse that demanded self-definition. They were a site of refusal, *noms de guerre* that offered an escape from the pressure to present a cohesive self.

It was, quite literally, a highly productive strategy. Brickley produced. A lot. Working figuratively, and often from photos, he circled around themes of self-presentation, photography, and theater. In his oil paintings, photos, and watercolors, models stared vacantly at photographers who kept their backs turned to us. On large panels, groups of young people gathered center stage to stare past their audience. Characters were run through ⁶ color filters and costume changes. They were repeated, reflected, cropped, and blown up.

The players in these works were often placed into cultural narratives that were borrowed with the casual aplomb of a ⁷ historicized fashion shoot. In one recurring series, a crowd of multiracial teens gathered around a pubescent ⁸ fallen Jesus next to an ochre river. They appeared again in a large sequel of an oil painting, bedecked in face paint against a magenta field.

Brickley's promiscuous borrowing of cultural tropes also extended to his attitudes regarding artistic style. He blatantly bootlegged the work of historical and contemporary artists, with no attempt to cite or integrate his sources. The techniques of Laura Owens, Peter Doig, Phillip Guston, and Utagawa Hiroshige were employed as surface effects layered over his ready-made figural arrangements. While this plagiarism might be understood as a working through of influence, it also evinces a deeper skepticism about the development of a 'personal' style. This ideal of artistic development, with all its assumptions of internal unity, was something Brickley was uninterested in pursuing.

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Compared with this early ⁹ pluralism, Brickley's latest body of work is his most restrained and uniform to date. While the paintings don't exactly feel personal, they are more consistent than the previous work. They have a program of scale, proportion and technique in line with a minimalist approach, while his interest in print technology groups him with a younger generation of artists exploring the impact of a hyper-mediated culture on painting.

The series can be roughly divided into two groups: dot paintings and roller paintings. Both are made using commercially available foam rollers and paint trays. With hermetic economy, Brickley generates the surfaces of his work directly from these devices. In the dot paintings, square sections of roller trays are dipped into acrylic paint and then pressed against the canvas, resulting in an uneven grid of circles. This basic printmaking strategy is utilized across the work in ¹⁰ modular arrangements of tiny spheres. In the roller paintings, the textured paint trays are used inversely to create impressions in a foam roller as it is pushed through acrylic paint. The dimpled roller is then run like a print head, top to bottom, across the canvas. It loses pigment as it goes, leaving behind a record of the space between the dots, like a ¹¹ negative of the paint tray.

In this work, Brickley seems to have dropped any lingering interest in narrative and intensified his focus on painting as a site of surface presentation and historical reckoning. The canvases negotiate a connection between the reductive aesthetics of sixties minimalism and its more recent manifestations in fading technology and design. His geometric compositions and use of simple vernacular materials recall ¹² Frank Stella's early stripe paintings. Like these seminal works, Brickley's systematic bands of deskilled material application provide an illusionistic depth. The dot patterning, redolent of Xerox reproductions, functions as an ironically handmade replica of these long-in-the-tooth tools. This reworking of modernist composition *vis-à-vis* distributive technology forms a link to the inkjet monochromes of Wade Guyton, who, like Brickley, is also working in a sort of ground zero of visual production.

If the earlier work seemed to exuberantly mimic secular pop culture and Photoshop filters, the newer series feels decidedly less giddy. By evoking pre-digital imaging, Brickley draws a sobering link between painting and other examples of technological obsolescence. Indeed, the roller paintings enact a sort of entropic ink cartridge running on empty, while the appearance of the compositions as rows of worn, ¹³ empty celluloid is hard to shake. How are we to view these works? Are they brick walls? Dead ends? Yve-Alain Bois writes of post-modern abstraction undergoing a mourning process for the lost hopes of Modernism. Is Brickley lowering the curtain on an obsolete media age? Is the necrophil-

iac Peter Starrs having a last fling with mid-century abstraction before stepping into the bracing air of a post-studio practice?

‡

How we read these works implies different storylines for where Brickley's projects might go. Has he reached an ¹⁴ aesthetic of negation he's ready to occupy? A 'mature' style that, like the work of his teacher Peter Halley, allows for seemingly limitless variations within a clear paradigm? Alternatively, have the paintings reached a point of reference saturation? Do the allusions to other media precipitate a spilling over from a straight painting practice into an expanded field of production? Brickley has already carried out large site-specific ¹⁵ wall works that address the house-painting possibilities raised by the roller application. As Sketchup has proven, the virtual metaphors of the work easily open it to new possibilities for film and ¹⁶ digital dissemination. Can the questions the paintings raise continue to be answered by more painting? It could also be that the end game Brickley seems to be playing is in fact a clearing of the slate in anticipation of an unforeseen restart or new direction, something his history of lateral moves suggests.

Crucial to the consideration of these questions is the fact that Brickley continues to make the works manually. While Wade Guyton or Cheney Thompson expose painting's soft spots through the use of more efficient and detached mechanical processes, Brickley thus far seems determined to explore his questions within the medium—a sort of ¹⁷ post-painting done by hand. In this regard he shares a productive link with Jasper Johns, as both artists engage in a sort of material mimetics while they interrogate painting's shortcomings. In this stubbornness to work within paint, there is a lingering humanism. Like Johns, Brickley may utilize templates, but his continued involvement shows a receptiveness to the inevitable accidents that occur within well-laid plans—the idiosyncratic fuckups that pervade human endeavour. There is a ¹⁸ humor and sensuality in this that speaks to a deeper investment. To quote Gerhard Richter:

One has to believe in what one is doing, ...in order to do painting...But if one lacks this passionate commitment...then it is best to leave it alone. For basically painting is total idiocy.

The title of Brickley's upcoming solo show, *Wall-to-Wall*, harkens back to a 1960s architectural phenomenology even as it gives a shout-out to Facebook's ¹⁹ transparent mode of social exchange. How will he reconcile these spheres of cultural reference? How will he make clear his overlapping interests in physical production and ²⁰ dematerialized experience? Is the hanging of the paintings in a gallery setting anachronistic in the face of their perfect Sketchup environs? These are the questions Brickley will need to engage with as he plans this installation. And the next.

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