THE SMOKE OF BATTLE PRESSING

By

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The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Matthew Bodett, and they also evaluated his presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination, and that the thesis was satisfactory for a master’s degree and ready for any final modifications that they explicitly required.

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DEDICATION

in time they will see
that you were more important than the
rain.

the feeling of taking a breath.

dedicated to the
second star.
Q: How do I read this?

A: Like you would read a face, the little movements providing the most meaning and setting the tone to hear the words. Or like reading the wind, the grass or a shovel. Not like an equation. Read it like you would jump into a lake: completely.
ABSTRACT

the smoke of battle pressing engages the reader by requiring a sacrifice similar to that experienced in the game of chess. During a famous chess match in 1912 between Marshall and Levitsky, Marshall sacrificed his queen, the most powerful piece, in a counter-intuitive way that led to an immediate victory for Marshall. A sacrifice of similar gravity is made when the reader resigns presumptions or expectations in order to have a more meaningful experience. A sacrifice on my part is made when I remove myself from the artwork and give up my authority over the image in much the same way that Roland Barthes describes in Death of the Author. This dynamic is further implemented and fostered throughout the thesis by drawing parallel metaphors using repetition and subtle variation, dialogue formats, formulas, and specific grammatical changes. Each of these shifts should be understood as a metaphor and taken in stride with the visual artwork as a mirror in which both the artwork and the thesis are mutually enhanced by an understanding of the other.

the smoke of battle pressing is about war: not a specific war, but an understanding that relies on the reader’s experiences, whether they are exterior, as in a physical battle, or interior like a mental state of conflict. This concept is employed in order to investigate the relationship between the artist, reader, and artwork, and the ensuing confrontation, portrayed as a conversation, moves between styles and formats, like chess moves. Each move is significant and directs the outcome of the remainder of the game. The outcome relies on depth of introspection, and its prize is a new, transformative experience founded on an understanding of one’s previous experiences.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.......................................................................................................................... iv
PREFACE................................................................................................................................... v
ABSTRACT.................................................................................................................................. vii
LIST OF PLATES ...................................................................................................................... viii
INTRODUCTION: HOW PERHAPS NOT WHY ................................................................. 1
& EXPERIENCE..................................................................................................................... 3
MAKING NOTHING .............................................................................................................. 12
( ........................................................................................................................................ 19
SOMETHINGSOMETHING................................................................................................. 26
BIBLIOGRAPHY ..................................................................................................................... 31
APPENDIX A: ARTWORK ................................................................................................. 33
APPENDIX B: POEMS REFERENCED .............................................................................. 48
# LIST OF PLATES

| Plate 1. | *the smoke of battle pressing* (Installation View), Matt Bodett | 34 |
| Plate 2. | *the smoke of battle pressing* (Installation View), Matt Bodett | 35 |
| Plate 3. | *Turn*, Matt Bodett | 36 |
| Plate 4. | *Turn* (Detail), Matt Bodett | 37 |
| Plate 5. | *Turn* (Detail), Matt Bodett | 38 |
| Plate 6. | *Turn* (Detail), Matt Bodett | 39 |
| Plate 7. | *Lilacs*, Matt Bodett | 40 |
| Plate 8. | *Lilacs* (detail), Matt Bodett | 41 |
| Plate 9. | *Lilacs* (detail), Matt Bodett | 42 |
| Plate 10. | *Lilacs* (detail), Matt Bodett | 43 |
| Plate 11. | *Year*, Matt Bodett | 44 |
| Plate 12. | *Year* (Detail), Matt Bodett | 45 |
| Plate 13. | *Year* (Detail), Matt Bodett | 46 |
| Plate 14. | *Year* (Detail), Matt Bodett | 47 |
Introduction: how perhaps not why

the smoke of battle pressing and accompanying paper investigate themes associated with war and the individualized responses brought to the work by each reader. Through very distinct decisions that range from selecting found images to the use of poetry, I have combined ideas that layer meaning through creating parameters and exploring metaphors. With the smoke of battle pressing, and throughout this thesis, I ask a significant sacrifice to be made. A sacrifice on my part that forfeits the power and influence of the determinations for the artwork, and sets aside any assumption I have for the outcome of interpretation. I simply put my art out and trust that readers will come to the work with the same level of intent as I have put into the work. A sacrifice is asked on the reader’s part, in which they must give up their own expectations and assumptions of what the artwork is and means. This action is instigated by the reader, out of knowledge that they have power in the process and life of the artwork. Once the sacrifice is made the reader will find that the artwork and thesis ultimately resign themselves from any position outside, and instead become the consequence of reader’s thoughts and past experiences.

Chess is a game with very specific rules. Each piece has a determined pattern. Within that framework there are, what seem to be, limitless possibilities and games. In the Levitsky and Marshall game for the German open Championship of 1912, a move
was made which has been hailed as one of the most beautiful chess moves ever played. Stories say that when the audience saw how Marshall responded to Levitsky’s threats they began throwing money onto the player. Watching chess may be a long and tedious task, but when one understands the structure and the consequences, each move holds a certain power and influence. What was the move that was so important? Marshall sacrificed his queen, the most powerful piece on the board. The move was so unexpected and the consequences so significant that Levitsky resigned the game without any other action. This type of sacrifice is one of the metaphors I explore during this thesis because it is born of parameters and limitations that exemplify my own process and the considerations I ask of my audience.

This idea is used throughout the thesis by drawing parallel metaphors using repetition and subtle variation, dialogue formats, formulas, and specific grammatical changes. Each of these shifts must be understood as a metaphor and taken in stride with the visual artwork as a mirror in which both the artwork and the thesis are mutually enhanced by an understanding of the other. This enhanced vision also acts as a metaphor for the relationship between the artwork and reader, the artwork and the artist, and ultimately the artist and reader. This method of communication is not something existing without a framework. Like chess, the moves and patterns are deliberate and fall within a structure. This structure, while providing some limitations, opens up the interpretation to a seeming infinite number of potential outcomes. Instead of exposing the walls, it provides a horizon.
We had a language of our own. We would use it to signal. He signaled to meet at midnight. I agreed. I packed a bag and climbed out my window. Slid the screen back into place and walked the three blocks to his house. Then we walked to another house, and another. Eventually there were five of us. There was no set plan on where we were going but we settled on going to the park near our homes. Each of us had a bag. Someone had a flashlight and we passed it around. Somewhere in the quite dark night we found out what an experience could be. Keats, Whitman, Amichai, Kerouac, Neruda, Thoreau, and Shakespeare all made appearances. We were not just reading poems, we were Reading poems. No theory entered, and we seldom talked about what exactly the poems meant, we just read. Sometimes we read as if we were performing. Sometimes we just sat, as if alone, and read. Then we packed up the bags and walked to our homes. Replaced the screens. We had a language of our own.

We had a language of our own. We would use it to signal. He signaled to meet at midnight. I agreed. I packed a bag and climbed out my window. Slid the screen back into place and walked the three blocks to his house. Then we walked to another house, and another. Eventually there were three of us. There was no set plan on where we were going but we settled on going to the graveyard near our homes. Each of us had a bag. Someone had a flashlight and we passed it around. Somewhere in the quite dark night we
found out what an experience could be. McKuen, Ginsberg, Thoreau, and Cummings all made appearances. We were not just reading poems, we were Reading poems. No theory entered, and we seldom talked about what exactly the poems meant, we just read. Sometimes we read as if we were performing. Sometimes we just sat, as if alone, and read. Then we packed up the bags and walked to our homes. Replaced the screens. We had a language of our own.

We had a language of our own. We would use it to signal. He signaled to meet at twelve-thirty. I agreed. I packed a bag and climbed out my window. Slid the screen back into place and walked the three blocks to his house. Then we walked to another house, and another. Eventually there were six of us. There was no set plan on where we were going but we settled on going to Lucky Peak reservoir because someone had snuck their car out without getting caught. Each of us had a bag. Someone had a candle and we passed it around. Somewhere in the quite dark night we found out what an experience could be. Keats, Whitman, Ginsberg, Kerouac, Emerson, Byron and Tennyson all made appearances. We were not just reading poems, we were Reading poems. No theory entered, and we seldom talked about what exactly the poems meant, we just read. Sometimes we read as if we were performing. Sometimes we just sat, as if alone, and read. Then we packed up the bags and walked to our homes. Replaced the screens. We had a language of our own.

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going but we settled on going to the school near our homes. Each of us had a bag.

Someone had a flashlight and we passed it around. Somewhere in the quite dark night we found out what an experience could be. Keats, Whitman, Amichai, Kerouac, Neruda, Thoreau, and Shakespeare all made appearances. We were not just reading poems, we were Reading poems. No theory entered, and we seldom talked about what exactly the poems meant, we just read. Sometimes we read as if we were performing. Sometimes we just sat, as if alone, and read. Then we packed up the bags and walked to our homes. Replaced the screens. We had a language of our own.

We had a language of our own. We would use it to signal. He signaled to meet at one. I agreed. I packed a bag and climbed out my window. Slid the screen back into place and walked the three blocks to his house. There were two of us. There was no set plan on where we were going but we settled on going to the park near our homes. Each of us had a bag. One of us had a flashlight and we passed it back and forth. Somewhere in the quite dark night we found out what an experience could be. Michelangelo, Whitman, Thoreau, Auden, Eliot, Pound, and Neruda all made appearances. We were not just reading poems, we were Reading poems. No theory entered, and we seldom talked about what exactly the poems meant, we just read. Sometimes we read as if we were performing. Sometimes we just sat, as if alone, and read. Then we packed up the bags and walked to our homes. Replaced the screens. We had a language of our own.

There is a way that an artist draws from personal experience to create artwork, to
create meaning in artwork. This experience may come from passion and deep conviction, but artist must withdraw from this passion. Artist must transform the emotions into associations. Free from personal prejudice and open for a collaborative process with reader. Artist provides landmarks, by which reader will navigate and calibrate his/her own set of life experiences. Artist creates a balance between expectation and surprise. Expectations are set up and then shattered in order that reader grow and breathe through the new transformative experience. The new experience must be unique to reader and therefore requires that artist, once work has been created, divorce themselves from the art. As long as artist remains a present figure artist is ownerrevelator and reader

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1 Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*.  
2 Sartre, *What is Literature? and other essays*.  
3 Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”  
4 Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*.  
5 Sartre, *What is Literature? and other essays*.  
6 Iser, *The Reading Process*.  
7 Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object*.  
8 Barthes, “The Death of the Author”
will default to the authority of artist.\textsuperscript{9} Artist must have enough confidence in the meaning of associations that artwork will exist. Artist has become inessential in the face of the new essential. At this point the artwork will stand and exist as a facet of this, or another, world.\textsuperscript{10} The work may also fade, unable to breathe on its own, exposing its premature birth.

Artist is silent. Experience is not.

Artwork is hanging on ambiguous non-name facade. Being (non) existing when in presence of reader. Existing, as idea, other times (non).

Reader happens upon the artwork, making it breathe.\textsuperscript{11} Two things may happen: 1. Reader recognizes too easily the experience and quickly replaces it with one of their own, walking away feeling safe in an

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{10} Iser, \textit{The reading Process}.  
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
existence. Reader surpasses the recognition and is rewarded for perception with a new transformative experience. Reader has discovered something that alters the perception of the world, but allows awareness to be a growth and not a barrier. Growth forms a part of the transformative experience. This experience will begin when reader’s expectations are exposed, when those are shattered reader begins to question an understanding of themselves/experience/artwork/surroundings/all of the above. Aspects of past experience determine reader’s understanding and potential depth into artwork. One depth is no greater than another, but each is measured individually. Reader measures experience against their past

12 Rosenblatt, “The Poem as Event.”
13 Bollas, The shadow of the Object.
14 Iser, The Reading Process.
experiences and builds an understanding by which their own growth will occur. Reader is required to reveal themselves in order to experience something beyond/within them. The transformative experience takes hold and reader leaves the artwork physically. Artwork continues to live in the mind of reader and becomes a part of the daily rituals of their life. Artwork is no longer just physical object hanging on ambiguous non-name façade, but it exists as all actions related to transformative experience.

Q: So artist and reader have different experiences?

A: Yes, naturally we all have very unique experiences, even of very similar things, like love, loss, or war. The artwork brings artist’s and reader’s experiences to meet each other. Like if you and I were neighbors and we shook hands over the hedge. We each remain unique and individual, but the hedge becomes that place where the meeting

15 Dewey, Art As Experience.
16 Rosenblatt, Literature as Exploration.
17 Iser, The Reading Process.
18 Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity
occurs. Future conversations are held in that place, and we become a part of each other’s lives though always separated by the object.

Q: Is this the “shared experience” which you referred to earlier in our conversation?

A: Yes it is.

Q: Could you rephrase what the shared experience is?

A: It is actually a moment that would go unnoticed, a moment that can really get lost. But what it comes down to is the experiences of the artist and the experiences of the reader meeting at a point within the artwork. It is the connection made between intent and interpretation that has the staying power. Have you ever seen an artwork or a film and left it thinking your understanding of life is going to be different from that point forward?

Q: [laugh] yes, I think many people feel that way.

A: Right, and they should, but I am saying it is in that experience that the artist and reader connect. That is the shared experience.

Q: But there are many times I have been to a movie, lets say, and left thinking that it was not worth paying for. At the same time someone else leaves there thinking that they have seen a life changing movie, and they will watch it twenty or thirty more times.

A: You shouldn’t think that every movie, even the best ones, would relate to everyone. I can read a poem and think that I never want to read it again, but it is because I do not have a drive to understand how it works because my experiences may not connect with

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Dewey, *Art As Experience.*
the poets. Or I have not invested time to understand and relate the poets experience to
my own. It doesn’t mean that poetry doesn’t work; it just doesn’t work for me at that
time. That is the catch. I expect my audience to be willing to put themselves on the line,
not worry about what I think the work is about or what so-and-so critic may say it’s
about, but really try to understand what they think it is about. Honestly confronting
themselves in the work. This is difficult.

Q: Is this connection why you make artwork? Specifically the smoke of battle pressing?
Making Nothing

1…e6\(^{20}\)

When I make this artwork I do not intend for the readers to experience something more than themselves, but instead I intend for them to experience themselves through confrontation with the artwork.

2. d4 d5

The transformational aspect of my work comes from an arrangement of associations. This arrangement allows the confrontation to fall back on the past experiences and visual decisions being made by the reader.

3. Nc3 c5!?

Each of the associations, whether visual or literary, has been selected for its ability to relate to my experience while remaining open enough for the interpretation of the reader to have grounding and a level of fulfillment from their own past. This is important because it allows me to ground the work directly in my experiences through a

\(^{20}\) “Levitsky-Marshall German Open Championship 1912”
confrontation with the images selected, and it allows the reader to have an honest confrontation with their own experiences.

4. Nf3 Nc6!?

Since the readers are not being asked to go beyond themselves for an interpretation, I am able to navigate an interior response. I am validating the reader’s experiences by allowing their interpretation to be correct while providing an opportunity to expand their understanding by collaborating with my experiences. This allows them to gain critical insight, fostered through the artwork, not in the artwork.

5. exd5!? 

*the smoke of battle pressing* is a direct reflection of my intention to remain as an ambiguous artist. I provide clues to my intent so that the conversation has common ground, but I do not provide answers. Those come from the reader.

6…Nf6; 7. 0-0 Be7; 8. Bg5!? 

I am most interested in creating work that portrays my experiences but allows freedom and collaboration with the reader. This collaboration allows a degree of flexibility to the meaning by providing the reader with the tools to govern their interpretation. These tools exist in the artwork as places where the reader discovers the experience symbols/landmarks/ideas/silence. Each one existing at the capacity of the reader.

8… 0-0; 9. Dxc5!?

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23. Ibid.
I can find you (reader) in my work, even though I am at the beginning of the artwork. By knowing it is a conversation rather than a statement I see you as an invaluable part of the work, supplying experiences that I have not had, and providing meaning that is beyond my vision.\textsuperscript{24}

9… Be6!

We had a language of our own. We would use it to signal. He signaled to meet at midnight. I agreed. I packed a bag and climbed out my window. Slid the screen back into place and walked the three blocks to his house. Then we walked to another house, and another. Eventually there were five of us. There was no set plan on where we were going but we settled on going to the park near our homes. Each of us had a bag. Someone had a flashlight and we passed it around. Somewhere in the quite dark night we found out what an experience could be. Keats, Whitman, Amichai, Kerouac, Neruda, Thoreau, and Shakespeare all made appearances. We were not just reading poems, we were Reading poems. No theory entered, and we seldom talked about what exactly the poems meant, we just read. Sometimes we read as if we were performing. Sometimes we just sat, as if alone, and read. Then we packed up the bags and walked to our homes. Replaced the screens. We had a language of our own.

10. Nd4 Bxc5; 11. Nx36!?  

Early in my youth I had very specific experiences that defined how I saw and reacted to artwork.

11…fxe6; 12. Bg4!?  

\textsuperscript{24} Iser, \textit{The Reading Process}. 
This perception grew from an individualized experience with both poetry and visual artwork.

12…Qd6

I did not necessarily understand that I was creating a foundation for my growth in art, but I did find that the more I looked at and read, the more empowered I felt about my own view of the world.

13. Bh3!?

While unique to me, my view of the world is not the only view of the world. I understand the differences because other people’s reactions to the same artwork or poem may be different and even opposed to my own.

13…Rae8; “=/+

*the smoke of battle pressing* reflects experiences from my life, and creates a visual form, which becomes a way of expressing what cannot be expressed. They are inexpressible for a reason. That is why a reader cannot come upon the idea in one part precisely, but it is a part of all that is the artwork.\(^\text{25}\)

14. Qd2?!

Given a set of landmarks, the reader is responsible for determining what the inexpressible is. If I say that the artwork is about war, then I leave the reader to examine what war means. War is as expressible as Love or Hate, no description can provide the complete picture. The reader must rely on experience to overcome description.

\(^{25}\) Sartre, *What is Literature? and other Essays.*
14…Bb4!

I have chosen to make *the smoke of battle pressing* about war. I chose it precisely because it is difficult to define.

15. Bxf6!?  

Though every one who reads the work will not be familiar with the physical act of war in an immediate sense, every one can relate to an aspect of war in some way.

15…Rxf6  

I have not fought in a war for the United States. I have not fought in a war for any country.

16. Rad1!?  

My inexperience with any war that has occurred in my lifetime does not diminish my ability to understand war and its process and outcomes.

16…Qc5!?  

The wars I have been involved in have been interior. I have battled for an understanding of myself and for my own sanity.

17. Qe2?!  

*the smoke of battle pressing* is like *Peter Pan*. The broad themes can be stated easily. *the smoke of battle pressing* is about war. *Peter Pan* is about youth.

There is more to it than that.
17…Bxc3; 18. bxc3 Qxc3!?

No matter what war means to the reader, the concept is multifaceted: the systematic approach, a seemingly chaotic confrontation, another person who is waiting somewhere for the soldier’s return, casualties and heroes, the rebuilding or emergence of a system. And then the cycle may repeat until a system that works can stabilize itself and remain an active and positive force for a period of time.

19. Rxd5

By making this work about war I have also left the position of definition, the interpretation, open to include many other ideas.

19…Nd4!

Loss.

20. Bd7, “=”

Patriotism.

20…Ref8

Cowardice.

20…g6!?

Idealism.

21. Re5 Rh6; 22. Qg5
Through an open-ended visual discussion I have provided the questions which call into account the personal experiences that lead to some of these ideas.

23…Qg3!!

War is something that we deal with in our contemporary setting. I am not talking about this war or that war. I am talking about war. War. Or war.

White resigns
An experience, like an artwork or poem, is not entirely understood. We look back at our experiences later in life and glean new insights, new lessons, or new outcomes. Each layer of our life provides new experiences by which we measure our surroundings. The deeper we seek out experiences the deeper we will see ourselves. Like an artwork, we can read through our many layers.

“Plywood is a laminated product made up of numerous thin strips of wood laid in alternating directions and bonded with glue into strong, stable sheets.”

The numerous thin strips are as follows:

One photo (or diagram)

I select the photograph carefully from a box at the antique store. The photo of a soldier who is lying on the ground, motionless, is too much. I do not want to talk about death, though it may be an inevitable conclusion for the subject matter. I am looking for the parts of war that mirror my life (your life) lifeinallsurrounding. I am looking for the

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http://woodworking.about.com/od/plywood/p/Plywood.htm
photograph that has a small part in which I can see the repeated notion of military formation. I am looking for the photograph that is missing something/someone that is there only through their absence. I am looking for the photograph that, when the context is removed, becomes about something bigger than war. It needs to become a metaphor.

This must be a found photograph because a photo I have taken myself has been pre-edited by me, or set up with the intention of eliminating parts. I do understand that I am editing the photographs I am choosing, by looking for very specific ones, but the story being told is not only mine. I am finding a position taken by someone else and relating their experience with mine by reducing it to only the essential parts of what I understand.

I find that most of a photograph is unnecessary for what I want to say. I choose very specific portions of the images according to what I want expressed, and then I paint over the rest. This redaction covers the important context of the image but it also frees the essential part of the image from the restraints of time and expectations. My choices as an artist, to select and cover photographs, simultaneously sets up a framework in which the context can be narrowed down and opens up the meaning to be shared with the reader.

The material used to cover is as follows:

Three parts powdered charcoal

One part Gesso

The air becomes acrid with the smoke of the guns and the fog. The fumes of powder taste bitter on the tongue. The
roar of guns makes our lorry stagger, the reverberation rolls raging away to the rear, everything quakes. Our faces change imperceptibly. We are not, indeed, in the front-line, but only in the reserves, yet in every face can be read: This is the front, now we are within its embrace.\(^{27}\)

Painting over the unessential with gritty mud like new-made charcoalgesso removes the context and might “taste bitter on the tongue.” I am freeing portions of the photograph from the expectations of their surroundings. If we see a building with many windows in a landscape with a large red cross on it, we know what the building is and perhaps where it is. When we see only the windows the building becomes both something more and less, and yet it is only exactly what it was. Like powder in the air, covering our eyes and tongue, only small portions of our experience exist.

when our eyes are closed, what do we see?

here are some possibilities:
(1.) blackness or a grey haze,
(2.) nothing at all (not even blackness),
(3.) a field of shifting colors,
(4.) afterimages on a background field of black or gray,
(5.) patterns of color, not obviously related to external stimulus, on a field of black or gray,
(6.) visual imagery of objects, maybe like a dream or a daydream or a faint perception or a hallucination?\(^{28}\)

Perhaps the new-made charcoalgesso is more than smoke or powder. It belongs behind your eyes. Like a memory, persistent enough to remain when your eyes are closed. Or maybe it is something you want to leave unknown. Something you have redacted from your memory/experience.

\(^{27}\) Remarque, *All Quiet On the Western Front*, pp. 51-52
I thereupon wrote several letters to this address concerning American [redacted] but I did not receive [redacted].

Some time after this, [redacted] returned to my home and gave me $300.00. I never knew where GOETZ was living, and when I asked him where I could get in touch with him, he told me to "skip it".

Some time after this, one [redacted] came to my house. I had never seen him [redacted] He told me that he knew me through my friends and he mentioned the name of ADAM GOETZ. He told me that GOETZ had informed him that I had been working on my invention concerning a [redacted] to be used in [redacted] or wherever else practical, and that he was very much interested in it. I am quite certain his name was [redacted] I gave [redacted] a wooden model of my [redacted] made an arrangement. He wanted to be my European agent for the [redacted] and we made an agreement to the effect that he was to represent me in transactions concerning the [redacted]. He also promised to send me a down payment in return for my giving him this agency. I did not receive any money for the [redacted] until a German came to my house and said he was from the S. S. Saint Louis from Germany, and he gave me $500.00 in cash as a deposit, binding my agreement with [redacted]. This man did not even enter my house and just stood at the door, gave me the money, and left.

Some time later, I received two bank drafts at different times from Holland, in the amount of $500.00 each, one drawn on the First National Bank and one drawn on the Manufacturers Trust Company, both in New York City. It was my understanding with [redacted] that I was to be paid $5,000.00 in return for giving him the agency for the sale of my docks.

[redacted] and [redacted] obtained all periodicals and magazines dealing with technical matters published in the United States, and they gave me the address of [redacted] and told me to send this material to this address. I wrote this name and address in my dictionary and shortly thereafter I began to send material of this nature to this address. I also began to obtain information concerning various patents issued by the United States Government and also forwarded these to Shanghai, China.

[redacted] I received a letter from Germany saying that these patents were uninteresting. [redacted] appeared to be an official stationery with German words, and I recall that the initials "A.O." appeared thereon. This letter was postmarked from Bremerhaven, Germany.

Redact [redakt]

verb (used with object)

1. to put into suitable literary form; revise; edit.
2. to draw up or frame (a statement, proclamation, etc).

[C15: from Latin redigere to bring back, from red- re- + agree to drive]
“The just-released list of withheld and redacted documents alone is 189 pages long (PDF), and says emails were redacted or withheld for reasons including that they dealt with personal issues like a ‘child custody matter’ and ‘children, dinner, and prayer,’ staffing issues and potential state appointees.”

My redaction of the photographs exposes the story, the framework, by removing what may have seemed important before. The contextual information is gone and without that information the readers are left to their own understanding and experiences to build a narrative and create a new experience.

The new charcoalgesso is smoke. The new charcoalgesso is the back of your eyes, the back of your eyes when you remember or visualize. The new charcoalgesso is a redaction of the things we want to forget or edit before anyone else can see us. The new charcoalgesso is layer upon layer of the reader’s unapproached self. The new charcoalgesso is a place to start, and a place you have been.

The method of presentation is as follows:

*Three Poems*

*Turn O Libertad*

*Years that Trembled and Reel’d Beneath Me*

*When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d*

(Appendix C)

Walt Whitman, who served as a nurse during the Civil War wrote each of the above poems. His experience of war was considerably different than most others and his perceptions are about interactions and fragmented unity in families and in love. The poems were taken from two sections of *Leaves of Grass*. The first two poems were taken from the section “drum taps” which dealt specifically with his time as a nurse in the war. The last poem comes from the section “Memories of President Lincoln” but within the poems there is no direct naming of President Lincoln, instead Whitman places us in the atmosphere of the cities during the events surrounding the Civil War and the death of Lincoln. The reader is left to fill in the narrative which could be about any loved one, any soldier, any neighbor or even about sympathy for those who have lost.

Whitman’s lack of direct information is similar to my use of redaction. The redaction has caused an opening up of meaning. It has created an atmosphere for my audience. It has created the place in which they begin to understand their own position in regards to war or War through narrative built around selected information.

Each of the poems is transferred onto a wall, becoming a part of its environment. The text of the poem is a typewriter font that matches the style of the descriptive text on the back of the photograph. To mimic the look of the descriptive text I have drawn attention to certain letters, as if the keys were hit harder, by painting over the transferred poem with white gesso. This allowed me to emphasize important passages or words, creating numerous thin strips of meaning.

*Three poems are arranged with seven paintings on each.*

Three Volley Salute:
“[The practice of firing three rifle volleys over the grave] originated in the old custom of halting the fighting to remove the dead from the battle field. Once each army had cleared its dead, it would fire three volleys to indicate that the dead had been cared for and that they were ready to go back to the fight.”

Twenty-One Gun Salute:

All personal salutes may be traced to the prevailing use in earlier days to ensure that the saluter placed himself in an unarmed position. Salute by gunfire is a most-ancient ceremony. The British for years compelled weaker nations to make the first salute, but in time international practice compelled "Gun for Gun" in the principle of an equality of nations.

In the earliest days, seven guns was a recognized British National Salute. Those early regulations stated that, although a ship could fire only seven guns, the forts could fire for honors three shots to one shot afloat. In that day powder of sodium nitrate was easier to keep on shore than at sea. In time, when the quality of gun powder improved by the use of potassium nitrate, the sea salute was made equal to the shore salute -- 21 guns as the highest national honor. Although for a period of time, monarchies received more guns than republics, eventually republics claimed equality.

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32 http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/customs.htm
33 Ibid.
Q: Are we at the end now?

A: [laugh] Well, I suppose there isn’t necessarily an end. Or beginning. Can’t really be sure.

Q: Before the tape runs out will you describe where some of your ideas come from?

A: That is difficult. I mean, there is a lot to that question. I’m not trying to evade your question, but within the framework of our conversation it is difficult to dissect where ideas come out individually, and where I have merged several together.

Q: I am thinking of a painting by Luc Tuymans’ titled Fortune. That painting is ambiguous. It is large and requires the reader to find interpretations within its foggy application of paint. I am not sure what exactly it means, but it feels like that may be what you are going for?

A: I remember seeing that work hanging in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. I spent most of my time in front of that painting. I still haven’t figured it out, and I still think about it often. I like that. That painting was moving to me.
Q: Yet you aren’t painting. You’re using found photography and examining it in perhaps the same ambiguous way that Tuyman explores the subject matter of his painting. Why is that?

A: When I look at something like Tuyman’s painting, I am not looking at it and thinking, “that is how I am going to paint.” Instead I look at it and I examine my reaction, I gauge the level to which I am willing to take myself. Those aspects of the work are of most interest to me.

Q: What spurred this interest in photography?

A: I can’t point to one thing specifically, but I know that there is a reaction to something that poses as a snapshot of “Real” that is approachable for me. I have wanted to do more with found imagery and had formulated ideas and even collected photographs for some time.

Q: Another artist comes to my mind, John Stezaker. Specifically, his series titled, The 3rd Person. This work consists of small cut out portions of found photographs. Each of these cut outs contains a person who was in the background of the image, walking and unaware of the photograph being taken. Is that a good comparison to your use of photographs?

A: I love this idea. The focus for me becomes the unintentional and unaware part of our lives, the background. Small, quiet parts that surround our moments. That is fascinating to me. Yes, John Stezaker is a good comparison.

Q: What is fascinating about that?
A: I think that there is a portion of what happens around us, that defines us, and yet we are completely unaware of it. If we say one thing we inevitably leave out others, but through the omission there is a sort of recognition.

Q: There is an idea that matches what you are saying. The signifier and the signified have a relation to one another, a relationship that is continually shifting and sometimes seen as arbitrary. This even includes the idea that we cannot completely say something, which is an inherent flaw in language. This comes from Deconstruction, Saussure, and Derrida. Do you see their ideas present in your work?

A: I like how I can look at a clipping of a photograph, see portions of a building or a clothing style, and formulate meaning from that. If I spend more time with the photographs I can develop my place outside the frame, I can discover myself as a response to the placement of the “third-person.” Ultimately, this is all a new narrative, removed from its original context and allowing examination.

Q: Isn’t Deconstruction meant to point out some of the inherent flaws or limits in language or systems?

A: Yes, I agree, and that is also why other methods of thinking have been of interest to me. I particularly like theoretical positions regarding the reader.

Q: Reader-response theory sounds like a good fit here. It seems that both Barthes, who wrote about reader interaction with the text as well as photography may be a huge component to your work. Rosenblatt even paved the way for a lot of understanding about

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34 Saussure, Course in General Linguistics.
35 Lynn, Text and Context.
the position of the reader. Their reader is not dumb or incapable of an interpretation that is honest. Their reader, however educated, has genuine experiences that can and will govern their understanding of artwork, and that is just as valuable and valid as any other reading.

A: If I take that understanding and that value of a reader and add it to parts of Deconstruction, like the idea that meaning exists outside of the artist, then I start to gain, for myself, a more complete understanding of what I do. An understanding that relates to my perceptions of the power and influence artwork can have.

Q: Your own perceptions? The “shared experience”? Or more general?

A: Both, but in this context, the shared experience comes as an evolution, in my mind, about the two concepts. The artist has genuine and valuable experiences that are formulated and assigned to a specific painting or group of photographs. The reader also has valuable experiences that inform their interpretation of the artwork. The resulting relationship between the artwork and the interpretation becomes a new experience born of two different but equally valid experiences. If we talk about the new experience, the shared moment, we can see our own interconnectedness to complex systems of interaction.

Q: This is not necessarily a new idea. It’s not even entirely original, but it does not seem like you are shooting for original. Perhaps your work is more about honesty. About working hard with what you or the reader has.

A: I recognize that my own experiences are formed by many sources, and those sources all have a place in my thoughts, but at the end of the day what I express is me. If this
shows a weakness it is because I have a weakness. If it shows a balance, it is because at that moment I felt balance. If it fails, it is because I have flaws. I am not afraid of these things.

Q: Sorry, the tape ran out part way through what you were saying. Do you want to continue with that thought or do we end here?

A: Well I was really just saying that I understand my work requires a certain amount of time and willingness on the part of the reader. I have read poems before and thought, “That made no sense,” and at a later date come across the poem and thought “That was profound!”

Q: So you think your work will be profound? Maybe on a level that we don’t talk about? Profound at a level where someone can realize their importance in the face of the work?

A: [laughing] That is not exactly what I meant, but I hope it would be. Something like that.

Q: Something?

A: Somethingsomething.

Q: Maybe this is a good place to end.

A: The end?

Q: The end.

A: That’s a better place.

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APPENDIX A

Artwork
the smoke of battle pressing

(Installation View)
the smoke of battle pressing

(Installation View)
Turn

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.
Turn (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.
Turn (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.

9 x 12 in.
Turn (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.

7 x 10 ½ in.
Lilacs

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.
*Lilacs* (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.
Lilacs (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.

8 x 10 in.
Lilacs (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.

8 x 10 in.
2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.
Year (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.
Year (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.

2 x 3 ¼ in.
Year (Detail)

2011, Powdered charcoal and gesso on plywood, Toner transfer on wall.

2 ¼ x 3 ½ in.
APPENDIX B

Poems Referenced
**Turn O Libertad**

**By Walt Whitman**

Turn O Libertad, for the war is over,
From it and all henceforth expanding, doubting no more, resolute,
sweeping the world,
Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs of the past,
From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the past,
From the chants of the feudal world, the triumphs of kings, slavery, caste,
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come--give up that backward world,
Leave to the singers of hitherto, give them the trailing past,
But what remains remains for singers for you--wars to come are for you,
(Lo, how the wars of the past have duly inured to you, and the wars of the present also inure;) Then turn, and be not alarm'd O Libertad--turn your undying face,
To where the future, greater than all the past,
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.
Year that Trembled and Reel’d Beneath Me

By Walt Whitman

Year that trembled and reel’d beneath me!
Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the air I breathed froze me,
A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darken'd me,
Must I change my triumphant songs? said I to myself,
Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled?
And sullen hymns of defeat?
When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d

By Walt Whitman

1
When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom’d,
And the great star early droop’d in the western sky in the night,
I mourn’d, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

2
O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear’d—O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3
In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash’d palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the dooryard,
With delicate-color’d blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

4
In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death’s outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would’st surely die.)
5
Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets peep’d from the ground,
spotting the gray debris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear’d wheat, every grain from its shroud in the dark-brown fields uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6
Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop’d flags with the cities draped in black,
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil’d women standing,
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the night,
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the unbared heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour’d around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid these you journey,
With the tolling tolling bells’ perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7
(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

8
O western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I walk’d,
As I walk’d in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after night,
As you droop’d from the sky low down as if to my side, (while the other stars all look’d on,)
As we wander’d together the solemn night, (for something I know not what kept me from
sleep,
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full you were of woe,
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent night,
As I watch’d where you pass’d and was lost in the netherward black of the night,
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

9
Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain’d me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

10
O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea, till there on the prairies meeting,
These and with these and the breath of my chant,
I’ll perfume the grave of him I love.

11
O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke lucid and bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees prolific,
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind-dapple here and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

12
Lo, body and soul—this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying tides, and the ships,
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the light, Ohio’s shores and flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover’d with grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
The gentle soft-born measureless light,
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill’d noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13
Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the bushes,
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!
You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)
Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

14
Now while I sat in the day and look’d forth,
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and the farmers preparing
their crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb’d winds and the storms,)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children and
women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail’d,
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labor,
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its meals and minutia of
daily usages,
And the streets how their throbblings throb’d, and the cities pent—lo, then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,
Appear’d the cloud, appear’d the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.
And the singer so shy to the rest receiv’d me,
The gray-brown bird I know receiv’d us comrades three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

_Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death._

_Prais’d be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death._

_Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly._

_Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death._

_From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night._

_The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil’d death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee._

_Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack’d cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death._
To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc’d with missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter’d and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer’d not,
The living remain’d and suffer’d, the mother suffer’d,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer’d,
And the armies that remain’d suffer’d.

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades’ hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my soul,
Victorious song, death’s outlet song, yet varying ever-altering song,
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again bursting with joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous’d in my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of woe,
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep, for the dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.