

Finding Home and Losing Space

By

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Abstract:

My research focuses on an investigation of how my body reacts to spatial and sensory information and developing visual motifs and metaphors that poetically capture somatic interruptions in my daily life. While subjected to the onset of neurocardiogenic episodes that cause me to have uniquely altered sensory somatic encounters, my body feels like a receiver for a multitude of sensory information from internal and external environments. Sometimes objects, shapes, spaces and sound change instantaneously, and my body is left to respond accordingly, losing parts of vision, sense of touch or ability to hear. I look to these somatic experiences for inspiration in making art. Key research questions have guided my practice, such as What can the fragmentation of spaces that occur in these moments provide my practice? How do I translate somatic experiences, such as a corner of a room disappearing or a wall floating upward through the ceiling, into a visual narrative? How does one remain orientated in such a moment and how can one's (re)orientation be transposed into an art installation? My aim was to make sonic, visual and material gestures about these experiences to better understand them and the relationship between sensory and spatial perception. Much of my inquiry assesses the aesthetic content of the 'home' as a way of mapping the manner in which my body and perceptions are 'organized' by and within the world. I draw on the work of Gaston Bachelard and Tim Endensor, among others, to not only develop my discussion of architectural spaces and its aesthetics but also as a way of navigating my personal experiences of architectural spaces that enclose the fragility of my body and its reliance on an external environment for orientation.

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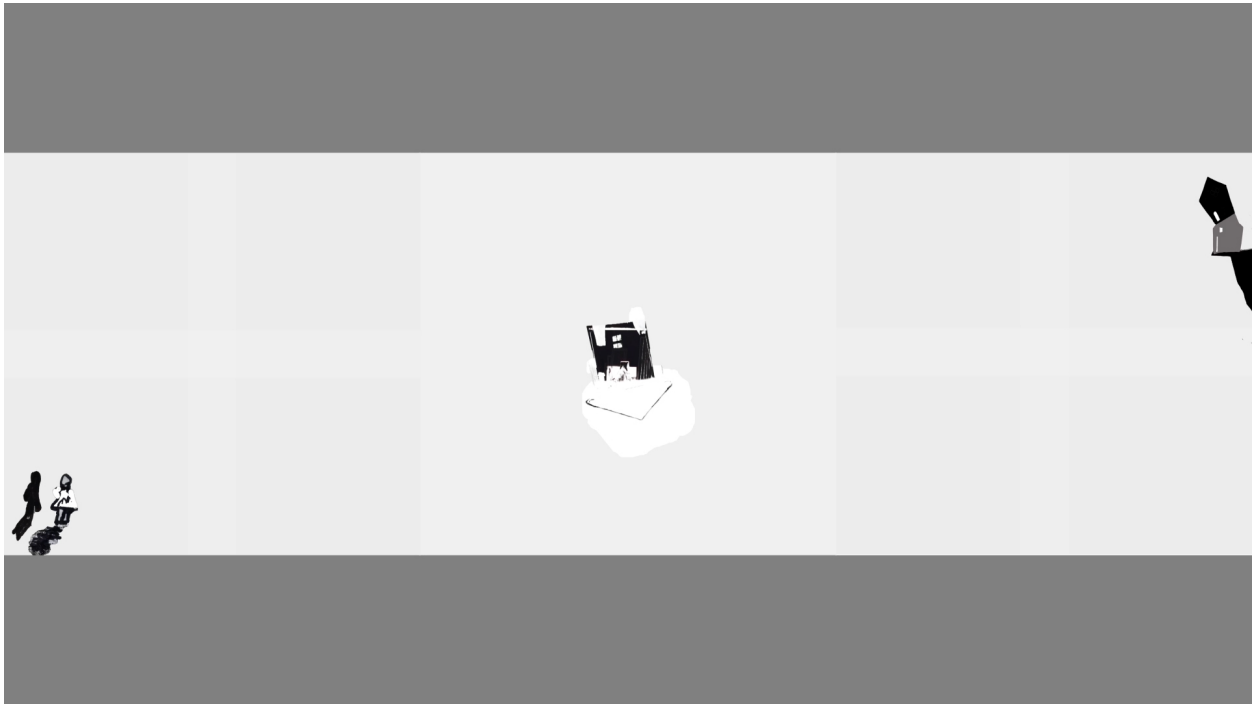
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Finding Home and Losing Space: An Introduction to My Art Practice — Somatic Experience

My art practice revolves around an examination of somatic experience — the haptic, auditory, visual, gustatory moments that inform one's imagination and understanding of daily life. My work aims to explore how mental states of lucidity and somatic ranges of fidelity¹ have the potential to build subjective allegorical narratives that would otherwise only be fragmentary sensory moments. I frequently experience acute altered mental and sensory events, such as seeing parts of a room evaporate, objects that appear incomplete, or I hear high pitched noise, etc. These events are intense moments that happen erratically and have the ability to puncture normal daily life. What then can artistic translations of say, evaporating rooms and incomplete objects as distinct from, for example mundane chores reveal about the complex sensory somatic connection of body and materiality of the world? For me, these somatic experiences function as a metaphor for disoriented or obscure bodily experiences. In practice, drawing, animation and sound based inquiries sample then translate a dysfunctional narrative in response to said experiences. Actions and compositions made about perceived spatial misalignments become a thread through the work, providing the structure I feel necessary to investigate the polyphonic nature of my obscured sensory relationship to the material world and the vernacular of gestures and translation in its relation.

¹ For me fidelity is the aesthetic and perceptual degree of clarity or precision of an image or sensory experience in translation or reproduction.



<https://www.stevenwhalley.com/projects/#/excavate/>

Fig 1: *Excavate*, 3 channel audio/video installation. (still) 2016.

I want to propose for a moment, the notion that my perceptual figuration resembles that of a house; an idea that has permeated through my practice after my initial iteration of my project titled *Excavate* in 2016: (see fig. 1 above). In this work I formed a narrative from past works, I began to notice how images of architectural construction and daily actions or chore were used with prevalence in much of my work. I became interested in the disruption and destruction of physical structures. I recorded video of an excavator tearing apart a house close to my work. The images of the house being destroyed was quite vivid and the event left me with a feeling of emptiness. I didn't re-

alize the impact this experience would have on my practice. I came to understand that the 'home' as an architectural space, shaped my aesthetic experiences of the built environment and in turn, the manner in which my body and perceptions are 'organized' by and within the world. The idea of 'home' as a perceptual device is partially borrowed from Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, in which Bachelard speaks to the way in which objects and rooms of our past and present can perceptually inhabit one's experiencing the world. He says we tend to exist in "hierarchal" homes where rooms have specific order and purpose. People designate certain emotions, ideas and interactions to rooms of memory. Spaces such as attics, corners and basements provide a bridge between internal and external perceiving of worlds. This makes me think of my past and present gestures made in the rooms in which I reside. Through action like chores, ones navigation and use of these rooms and objects physically changes through the layering of repeated gesture and afforded comforts that grow with these experiences. In intimately familiar spaces the body is able to perform with awareness of structural nuances, and embedded furnishings with a near subconscious ease. For example knowing the correct tension needed to open a particular bathroom faucet and avoid getting sprayed with water, or even when it is dark—the early morning, avoiding the spot on the stairs that makes a loud creak so as to not wake anyone. These are instances of the body's familiarity with its environment. The familiarity in the somatic knowing of these architectures and objects such as cupboards, knobs, switches, keys,

stairs and so on, formed through repetitive physical engagement and embodied responses, is similar to how I perceive my actions in making and sensitivities to the materials I use for my artwork. Perhaps not describable or even noticeable in the work, I try to perform similar actions in every form my art takes.

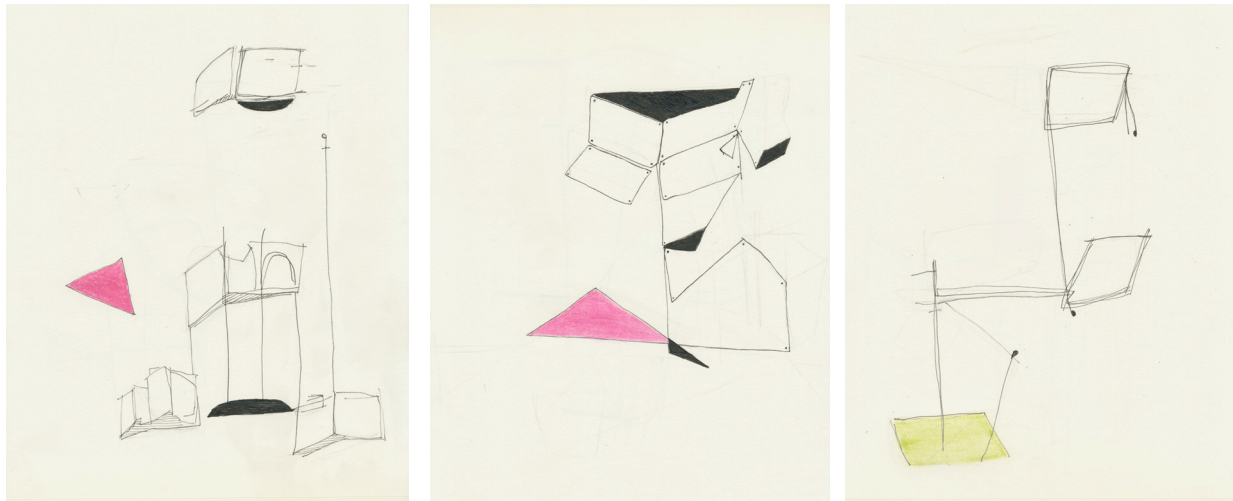


Fig.2: *Space Observations*, Graphite, Ink, Crayon. 2018.

In retracing experiences as a way of working through elusive somatic oscillations between the body and spatial orientation, I usually begin with photos or drawings. Something immediate. I feel there is a relationship between partly constructed architectural encounters and abstracted somatic experiences which helps make sense of my range of sensory experiences. In an effort to explain how I use these experiences to make art from, I first want to examine the impact places of architectural ruin have on mental and

sensory experiences put forth by Tim Edensor, reader in Cultural Geography. In his article '*Sensing the Ruin*' he addresses the sensual effects marginal and mass urban spaces have on the human senses. According to Edensor human sensual experiences in a city exist in two ways. First is the city perceived as the '*constant cacophony*' of urban environments that people are subject to. In such environments we experience a physical and mental exhaustion, coined by George Simmel as "*neurasthenia — a condition held at bay by the development of a blasé attitude to shield the individual from this overwhelming assault.*" (Edensor, 2007. 218) Second, Edensor says contemporary urban spaces are becoming "progressively desensitized" through architectural forms, policies and planning that help condition people and their behaviours in these spaces. Signs, lights, traffic and migration provide an understanding and directive navigational experience of urban spaces through daily interaction with surfaces and objects that evoke prescribed sensory responses. An example of this space would be the mall foodcourt. That is, my experiences of malls is of a sterile environment and this sense of sterility is one that I set out to explore in a series of drawings titled '*Space Observations*' (see fig. 2). The aim was to focus on translating the sterility of public spaces and my somatic experience into images. The works are reactions to the sensory impression I get from a space. In these instances I look for the afforded fragmented imagery that is present and reflective of my sensory experiences. I draw through the memory of my own somatic sensory abstractions and trace the merging of these moments through new gestures.

Edensor writes that in dealing with modes of contemporary urbanity, “The resulting structure of feeling or sense of place of urban dwellers is, then, grounded in the predictable routines and in the material and sensual qualities that are repeatedly confronted in everyday experience.” (218)

I often wonder what qualities of these space studies is present to other people, in the actual spaces and these drawings? Can these drawings become object or sound, inhabit a space and potentially develop their own sensory figuration?

Chore



Fig. 3: *Square Legs*, 3D Printed Rubber and Acrylic. 2018.

In making artwork I tend to minimize and desensitize spaces. Looking at the negative space as much as the gestured marks. This choice is integral to my research. I look to distill moments in making, both conceptually and aesthetically, using everyday chore and gestures such as a recording of a broom sweeping a floor. This sonic score mimics the waves on a beach, from which several drawings emerge, that become object.

Translations in process and material propel my practice. It often feels like I am drawing a continuous looping line.

I am compelled by this exploration of repetitive and reductive impulses and I make efforts to reduce background information, amplify and repeat residual marks and moments. In preparation for my thesis exhibition, I have been exploring the repetition of drawn gestures in different mediums; whether layering and keying sound, video, folding up drawings and notes or most recently printing my drawing in a rubber based acrylic material. I want to use hand made gestures in my work. Marks made by hand carry sensual and embedded knowledges. The above image (see fig. 3) was my first attempt in translating my drawing into a three dimensional printed form.

This object look like an impression of the drawing, almost fossilized in its resinous encasing and quite clearly an artifact of mixed processes. The appearance is rough and crude as I work out the kinks in the process, however it feels like a quick intuitive ges-

ture drawing that I gravitate towards in my practice. Living in a rapidly changing part of Toronto, I feel connected to unpolished and incomplete forms of architecture, understanding this landscape in the image of home. It is often, as discussed above, my experiences in foodcourts brightly lit spaces, where I experience aesthetic surface abstraction in sensory interaction due to things like shiny acrylic, LED lights, illuminated branding and signage. Often the fragility and temporality of the structures and walls and the way these spaces are curated, produces sensory experiences that provide me a different image and understanding of real and subsequently imaginary spaces. Edensor refers to these places “blandscapes,” a term coined used by Art Critic Jim Drobnik. This is appropriate as ‘blandscapes’ promote vague and surface based interactions with space and are sensually disorienting or dampened. He calls them “*aseptic places, created by the modernist drive towards deodorization, that are so empty that they lead to an alienating sense of placenessness.*” (Drobnick 2002, 34).(Edensor. 2007, 3)

I find this fitting to my own sensory experiences with place. Over the course of a day sounds, textures and smells help give order or disorder to experiences. In fairly recent explorations I found myself attempting to layer media, materials and drawings from experience in attempt to disorient the work; bring disorder to squared images and projections. More specifically, I was looking for a way to change how one or several mov-

ing images operate and change on concrete textures and with material framing explorations.



Fig. 4: Projection Tests,
Cable, Paper, Projec-
tion. 2017.

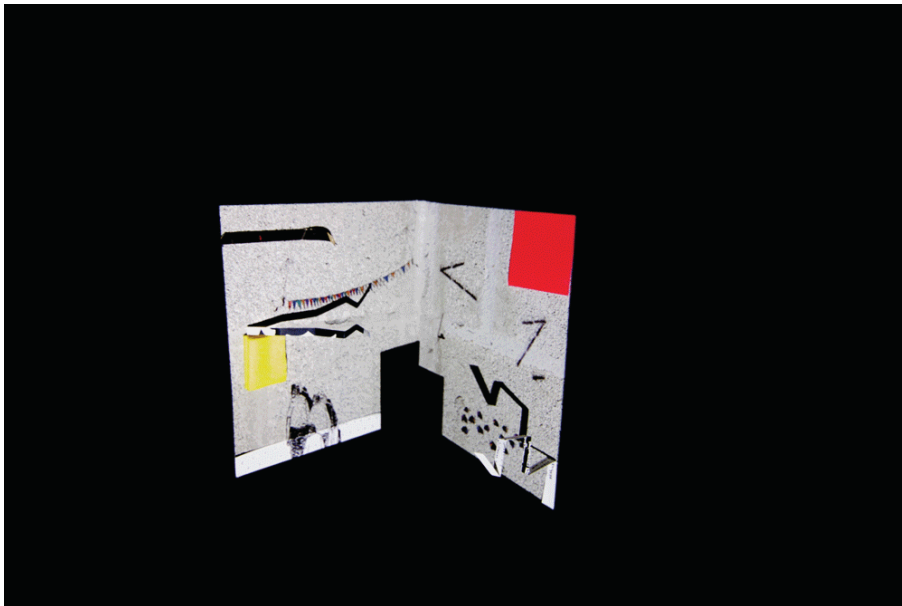


Fig. 5: Projection Tests,
Felt, Paper, Projection.
2017.

This past fall, as part of the Maker Space Residency program at Charles Street Video in Toronto, I performed a series of tests thinking through ways to frame projected images that was not was either confined to or intersecting with the materials and natural architecture of the building. I was interested in using materials that were immediately available in the space and the space itself as a framing mechanism for my animation/installations (see fig 4-5). I began working with projection mapping software to crop the edges of the animations to fit with things like audio cable, notes and drawings, tapes and more office based supplies. I was able to accomplish partially nested and hyper focused compositions that were restricted and reimagined by the walls, corners and objects of the space. Using the natural architecture of the space as a canvas of sorts brought some excitement in the process. I found myself responding to the space like I do when drawing. I could perceive somatically disorienting sensations in response to the way the image folded into the corner of the room in the middle image. The moving image against the concrete corner broke free of traditional projected forms and seemingly inhabited the room. This was exciting, however I also experience failures as with very little to no budget, I was unsuccessful in producing an adequate projected image in a well lit space.



Fig. 6: *Staring down*, Photographs. 2016-17.

I often feel like I am placeless in obscure sensory experiences. When losing a sense of the space around me, I reach for the corners and pieces of furniture, or focus really hard on the edge of a shelf, table or railing searching for clarity in familiarity — trying to ground myself to something real. It is difficult to find words to express a frequent and stuttered drifting in and out of known and unknown states of physicality. Sometimes just trying not to fall down is a chore. I find myself needing to understand my visual field in order to remain physically upright and conscious. In the early stages of all my projects I find myself walking through places like alleys, underpasses and decon-

structed buildings as they provide me with the environment that induces a similar response to past memories of sensory somatic experiences. Like Edensor's ruins, these places afford me the ability to observe things I would not typically see, say on a sidewalk. I notice a beauty in the reference of infrastructure scribbled throughout streets of my city (see fig. 6) Spray painted gas line locations, underground coverings, and patches accidentally spilled paint all contain an aesthetic quality that is unfinished, quick and gestural, and part of another set of systems, relations and languages. These are non artistic gestures that through my engagement with them become familiar strangers of sorts. Perhaps these images are not always present in the work but they are always part of my process of thinking about making. Familiar strangers afford an array of presumable truths and the ability to fabricate hypothetical narratives around people, places, and things.



Fig. 7: *Waiting Lines*, Collage, Ink (8.5 x 11 in) 2016.

In *Waiting Lines*, I was trying to understand how embodied processes and routines of making are reliant on the spaces in which they occur. I understand spaces to leave a residual trace in one's sense memories. To investigate this in drawing, I decided to push the boundaries of the canvas and processes I was using. At the time I was frequently visiting an alley by a theatre in Toronto where I would make notebook drawings. I enjoyed the act of ripping sheets out of the notebook after completing a drawing. I started to rip out plain ones after a while. I noticed the subtle variations in the surface of the discount notebooks' plain sheets. I had an aesthetic and sensory response to the act and material associated with the paper and the shadowed alley. I decided to explore what the blank sheet of paper can do through acts of repetition. The background of *Waiting Lines* is the blank page from my notebook ripped, scanned, slightly shifted and rescanned multiple times, then digitally layered and printed on card stock. There is a residue that builds with each layer forming a clouded texture that emerges from the edge of the sheet. Misalignment is something I look for in making. There is something in mistranslating experiences that speaks to my own understanding of the world; something about the slightly askew that feels more complete than something perfectly framed. When presented with opportunities to adjust or edit an image, I often cannot resist reworking it. In doing so I believe the deeper these images get impressed on my memory. The saturated black building structure drawn on top of the image represents what I see in my experience. The buildings lose their texture, the telephone wires re-

cede until they vanish entirely. The image, in attempt to represent my somatic experience fails, but reveals how my actions start to trace my attempts to understand my body's relationship to space and builds new allegory through processes and material manifestations.

One key question in my research is, can processes of repetition provide an entry point to finding new ways of using materials from other routines and art making processes? How do I take drawings in notebooks and translate them into exhibition spaces? I decided, if I wanted to find material connections for my gestures, I would have to use the recognized patterns in my practice as a guide in translating between mediums. The drawings I was making seemed more related to a place, time and state of mind than the materials I was using or intentions in composing. Repetition in making was revealing my work was more as a collection of my mental states while tracing elusive moments of sensory reflexiveness. What are materials that can speak to this? My hope was that addressing the sensory impacts of these uncomfortable encounters provides insight into material investigations. As Edensor says,

"Through valorizing certain forms of sensual experience, such instructive regimes create a reflexive body which "[becomes] the training ground for the double process of educating the senses and making good use of them" (Edensor 2007 219)

In drawing, gestures can often feel natural. I feel mark making with a sense of immediacy and control are integral to constructing an image. However, original iterations of quick intuitive gesture drawings and phone captured video footage change when transferred onto a computer. I see the images differently; when slowed down, using nondestructive softwares allows me to view multiple versions of my original gestures and create moving sequences from them as well. I start to feel inhabited by these images when they are on my computer; seemingly thinking through them daily. This type of thinking and making through recycling image introduces a slow slippage into the work. Creating more nuanced and fragmented investigations.

I personally enjoy watching processes of degradation and destruction. There is a physical nature to taking something apart. I am interested in the ways in which one thing become another and what is lost or gained by translations. My body learns through acts of translation. This lead me to the creation of several animated gifs from my drawings. The work below *Lawnmower (House)* is one of many made. The lawnmower moves in and out of the frame on constant loop, shaped like a house on one end it is allegorical. Repetition in animation has the ability to stand in for daily interactions, and potentially show how they embed in sense memory through acts of chore and repetition. For example, If I was to lie with my face against a carpet I immediately have a sense-room memory experience — a memory of me on the floor in my grandmothers



living room eyes fixated on the warm fuzzy images on her massive cathode tube television beautifully encased in a thick and weathered veneer. I can feel the carpet on my face because this sensation is fully embedded physical memory. I can smell the fresh cut grass coming in through the window as my uncle mows his adjoining lawn. The memory and resolutions of material experience linger in my body but

Fig. 8: *Lawnmower (House)*, GIF 2017. is degraded and layered with many other experiences that reframe it in context. Exactly what is real and what is fabricated is unclear at this point. I began to think if animations are able to trigger these types of memories and physical responses in a viewer.

I believe images both inhabit and are inhabited simultaneously where a blending of real and imaginative can occur. A loss in centrality in my sense orientation can often feel as though I am deaf or it can leave me blind in vision and touch, helpless in a dysfunctional body. In making art I often try to understand a current visual field by rearranging, filtering and cropping images and following patterns. In the artwork titled *Sidewalks* (see fig. 9), I looked to confuse how a sidewalk surface is perceived. I took several similar photos of sidewalks from my commute and layered them together until



Fig. 9: *Sidewalks*, Digital Collage 2017.

the composition of the image was completely full. In doing this I was calling attention to concrete surfaces that people walk on everyday. These normally vague and unnoticeable surfaces can evoke a new sensory response by altering the way in which they are typically visually encountered. Does filling the edges of the frame with surface image evoke a more somatic engagement with image? In forming an image that is not actually perceptually attainable in everyday architectures, speak to my own disoriented past and create a unique sensory experience for an audience?

My success in translating these somatic experiences varies, so I try not to think in qualitative terms. Everything in making is helps frame my sensory perception and becomes

important in some way or another. Expressing embodied sensory focused moments often produce varied degrees of aesthetic fidelity between my artworks. I feel this is where the metaphor of home affords an understanding of deeply embodied physical responses to objects, images and space as an awareness of perceptual spatial flexibility. The home acts as a place that inhabits complex infrastructures that operate in support of the home. It is not only the physical structure of a house but a relational space to grow with. Understanding home in this way requires the ability to step outside of the house. To help explain how this works for me, I turn to Lisa Robertson's idea of "scaffolding as analogy" presented in her work *Occasional Work and Seven Walks from the Office for Soft Architecture*. Robertson writes that scaffolding,

"Explains what a wall is without being a wall. Perhaps it describes by desiring the wall, which is the normal method of description. But also the scaffold wants to fall away from support. Its vertigo is so lively. The style of fidelity of scaffolding is what we enjoy. It finds its stabilities in the transitions between gestures." (Robertson, 2003, 163)

As stated above, finding stability is important to understand an environment. This notion of finding stability in transitions is interesting to me because I feel as though I am in constant transition, whether in making art or subject to a sensory episode. Understanding a space relationally to one's body is often taken for granted. Transitions often appear to have no physical artifacts. When known objects and structures transform or

change without notice there is a bodily reaction or sensorial hiccup. That is the sensory artifact. The body is unable to orient properly to the occurrence, and there is a period needed to recalibrate. When a body enters a completely unknown place, it relies on memory to fill all sensed voids. There is searching through known past understandings to inform the present. For example, in my work titled *Space Observations*, I often prioritize sense memory over vision in making images because it speaks to the transitory nature of perceiving spaces. It is more like the view from the scaffolding surrounding a house. Scaffolding as a structure provides stability and is able to stand in for the oscillation between somatic experiences and actual experiences of inhabiting a space that manifests in making. Unlike the house, scaffold permits an understanding of somatic experience through its structure. Its vantage is from the exterior looking in on its inner frameworks. What is important from this is scaffolding provides structure that encases construction and allows one to step outside of the metaphorical 'home' if only to look inside it or work on it. Robertson continues,

"We are furnished by our manners and habits. Yet we can't see what they are. We can't knowingly possess our own ways. They carry as a cadence in the body; repeatedly we reach to lift the curtain, the dictionary, the cup. This is a measure. Each gesture rhythmically completes itself with its object." (*Robertson, 2003, 197*)

This was also important to read as it shed light on an important role that chance and play with fidelity and gesture have on my making. A common aspect of my artistic rou-

tines and gestures is the removal of surface and background. Finding different or unique ways to show and use these acts is part of my rhythm in making. The cycle is complete when I remove enough information from an image to satisfy the memory of the original interaction. As Robertson says, I can't knowingly possess my own ways. For me, I begin to understand what these memories aspire to be through becoming more familiar with the habits that I perform with all material. In my artwork called *Yellow Door* (see fig. 10), I wanted to trace the destruction of a building. This is a place I would visit and draw daily. I would sit in the same spot and draw it nearly every time I was there. I knew the building was set for demolition. Much to my delight after the building was demolished all that remained was the dirt and yellow door, so it was then I decided to pay an homage of sorts to the building. I removed all physically drawn marks using photoshop paint except for that of the door and dirt behind the stairs. In my memory of this place, the dirt and door remain in focus but the rest of the spatial information blends into a vague wash of similar surfaces.

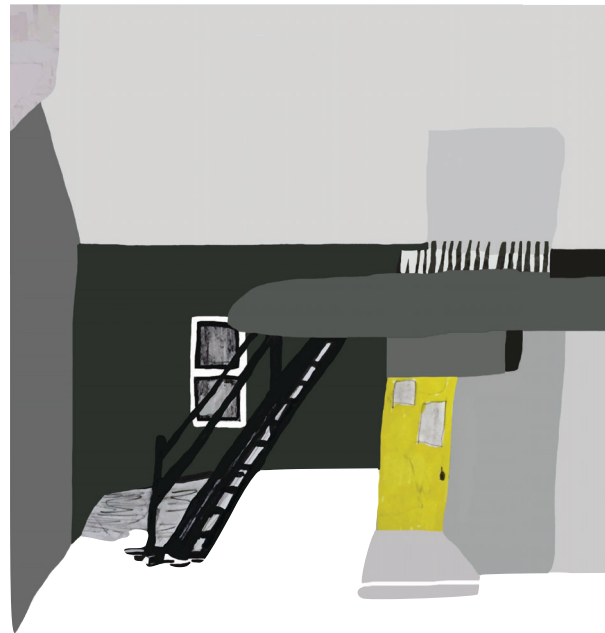


Fig.10: *Yellow Door*, Digital Print. (32 x 48 in) 2016.

Furniture and Maps

I want to further reflect on Robertson's notion that we are furnished by manners and habits. We furnish our inhabited spaces for safety and comfort. To give a sense of place. What does that say about manners and habits as furnishings? Placement of intimate artifacts and curated adaptations of space reveal much about our need for comfort in physical spaces in order to situate the body and mind. One feels more somatically in rhythm through well structured relationships with belongings. Much like a photograph on a night stand, furnishings help trigger memories and embodied experiences that are layered and complex. These ontologies act like the carpet from my example above, providing a gateway to other physical sensations and responses that reside somatically imprinted. If my body is a home, then my gestures made, tools used, and habits/processes explored are the furnishings of it, and for me, fall very much inline with Robertson's premise. Material manifestations from these moments become modular pieces. Like furniture, I move them around constantly, looking for compositions and arrangements that help understand my habits and bring a resolution to experiences.

Gaston Bachelard says,

"But over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is in a group of organic habits. After twenty years, in spite of all the

other anonymous stairway we would recapture the “first stairway,” We would not stumble on that rather high step.”(Bachelard, 1958, 36-38)

Bachelard considers the physical structures and acts within a house as something that is physically inscribed in us and in sense memories. I wonder if making from sense memories is continually searching to recreate or understand the first sensory experiences of this kind that I had? I often visualize parts of my grandmothers house when in sensory flux. It is the first place I recall having obscured sensory experiences. The house gives an image to interior and exterior experience of sense memories. The house as an object is capable of inhabiting actions of daily life and repelling those from external forces. Like the body, the house ‘shelters’ daydreaming. It’s rooms ‘protect’ the dreamer. It allows one to make gestures for and of the world from a safe vantage. It is these environments that afford new perceptual understandings, and material relationships. The house becomes home.

Fig.11: Chris Marker’s “Petite Planete”

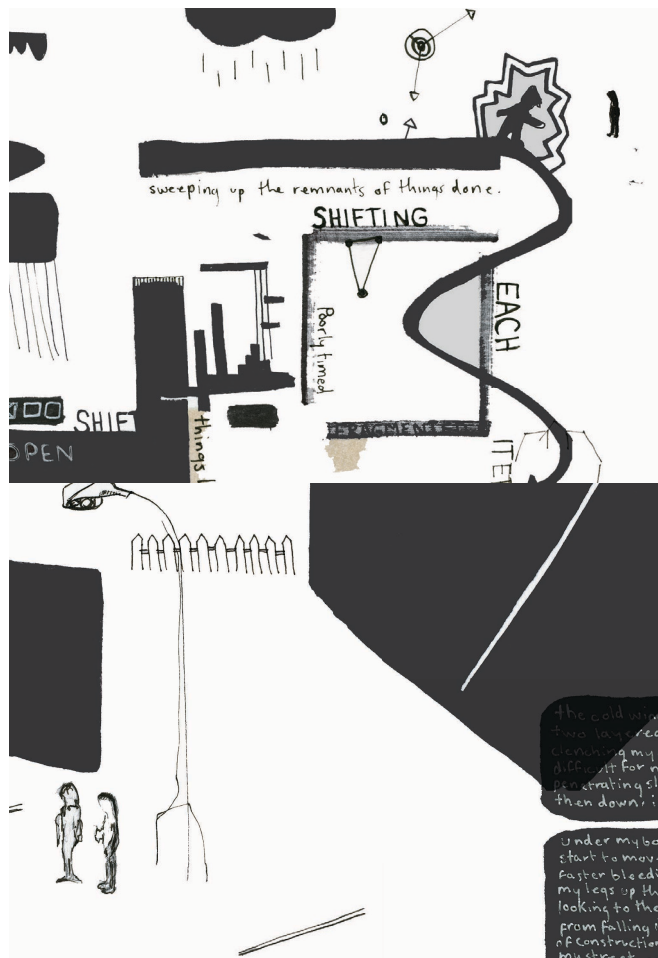


In searching for ways to frame my bodily relationship to place I came across Chris Marker’s *Petite Planete* series (see fig. 11), where he enlists help of local individuals or group of individuals to construct a guide for

cities, as to provide a more authentic experience. Each volume varies in how it is



planned. There is a large variance in emphasis placed on history, art and politics. The photography and personal perspective reveal a subjectiveness and familiarity that is not present in a traditional travel guide.



In making my artwork *Morning Map* I noticed a similar subjectivity in how I was describing one of my altered sensory experiences. I recalled one cold winter morning in which I got lost several times on my way to work. At first I wanted to construct a sequence of text and image like Marker's guides, providing a linear view of the experience. I rendered between three and eight drawings a day for three weeks.

Fig. 12: *Morning Map*, (details) Ink. 2017.

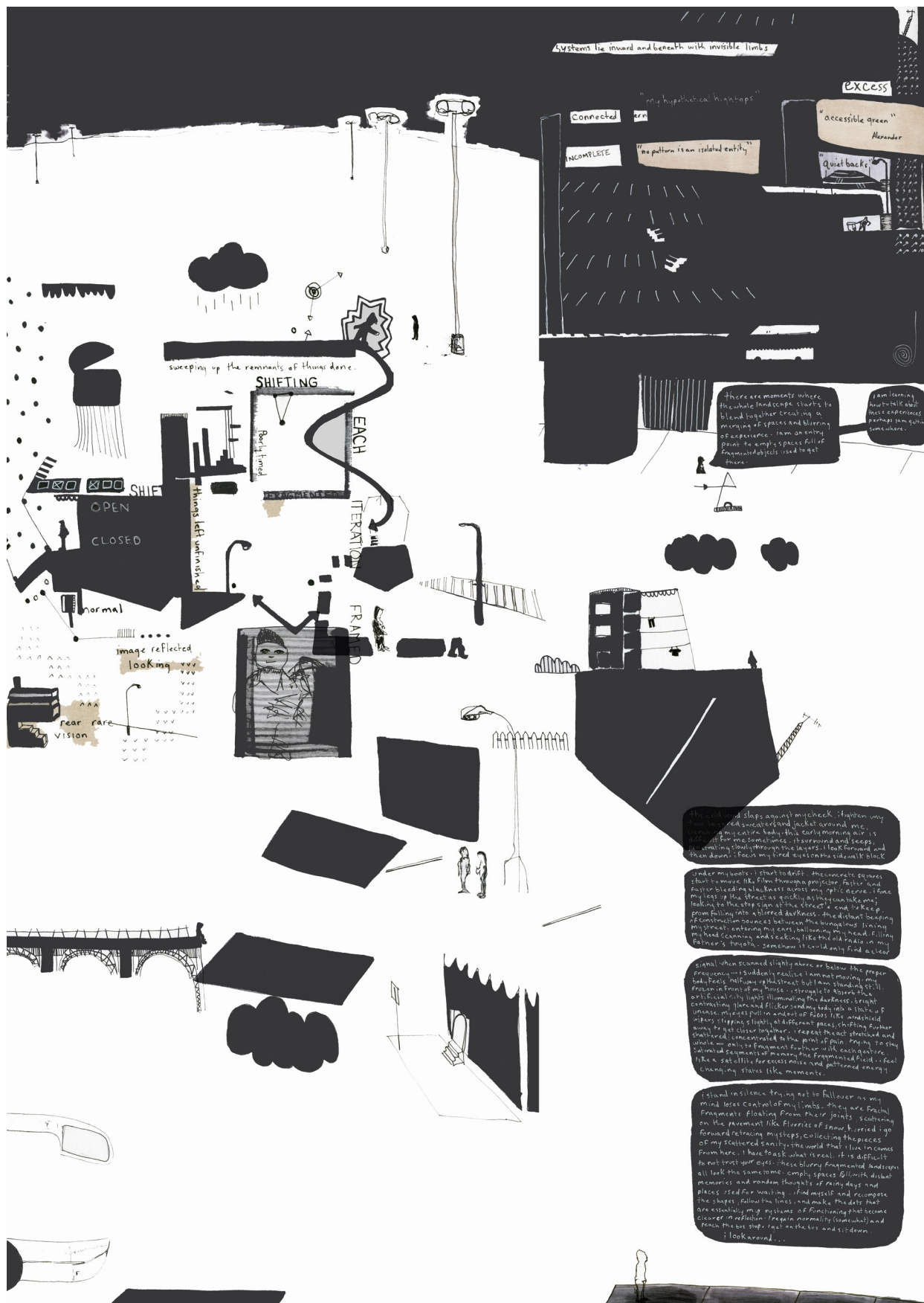


Fig. 13: *Morning Map*, Ink. (30x40 in) 2017.

I could see how narratives emerged through the collecting and layering of drawings. Each drawing would recall a particular part of the experience. I was collecting as much information from my memory of the event, walking the same route and sitting in same spots. There were notes and illustrations of people and places from my commute to and from my job. Objects and places such as clouds, parking lots, fences and street lights were landmarks that stood out in the recollection of these incomplete moments. I was hoping to reveal what a loss of discernible perceptual images looks like. Most images remain incomplete like I experienced them in the moment. This work started to raise the question, what degree of fidelity is needed in representation of these moments and is a sequence accurate and reflective of my experience? I noticed there was a looping way of viewing the image that was a result of layering notes, text and images. I was intrigued by this type of composition.

In Morning Map, several points for entry were created as I began to arrange the images into one composition. I think of it as a sensory geographical map for this morning encounter. The map provides a useful way to see an environment flattened; without consideration for time. A map allows me to see the larger scope or a focused location providing a shift or pull in focus. In tenuous sensory experiences, establishing a visual discernibility between figure and field, require a similar gesture.

This work was successful in disorienting the viewers engagement with the image. Moving forward, I looked to continue trying to trouble the ways in which one reads an image in efforts of speaking to my somatic experiences. In doing so, I believe I am looking to give agency or ontology to the somatic encounters and the spaces in which they occur by borrowing from how I perceive oscillations between sensory and spatial architectures. The map does this. What else does this? Edensor's discussion of place understood through bodily encounters with architectural space helps me to frame my experiences in this manner. He says,

"place is sensed and senses are placed" (2005), the sensual and practical engagement with familiar space depends upon materialities, not merely the cultural understandings that emerge out of broader discursive and representational epistemologies. It is therefore essential to reinstate the affordances of place and space, those qualities which are spatial potentialities, constraining and enabling a range of actions. For space is "a concrete and sensuous concatenation of material forces" (Wylie 2002: 251) which possesses an agency to impact upon the sensibilities of those who dwell and move within." (Edensor 2007. 225)

Recording Movements

Around the same time I became intrigued by the work of Fernand Deligny, who was interested in what he refers to as the "Arachnean." The Arachnean is a web like form of nature; much like that of a spider web, this web is perceived as a social structure. The web essentially is an analogy for a network as a different mode of social behaviour and

organization are needed to properly understand action within it. He states these networks “nothing more than a permanent or accidental assemblage of interwoven lines.” (Deligny. 2015. 77)

Fig. 14: Deligny, “Mapping of Wander Lines”

http://www.kunstkritikk.no/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/1_deligny.jpg

In his projects he works with autistic patients to draw and paint their journey to and from places such as home and school, over time. He then layers these images on top of each other. This artwork was created from a repetition exercise of tracing and mapping the participants walks. Similarly I was performing similar repetitive acts through daily drawings and recordings. Once again, I began to notice the familiar dramatic variations in fidelity of gesture and expression that occur over time. I found my gestural marks and all tracings to be subject to changes in daily readings, thought or action. Perhaps I could perceive my practice as Arachnean or at least rhizomatic in nature. The path like lines visible in Deligny’s work were absent in my studies as my movements in these moments were undetectable in recollection. I was collecting the landmarks and waypoints and the path is assumed.



Fig. 15: *In a Minute*, Animation (still) 2017.

<https://www.stevenwhalley.com/projects/#/in-a-minute/>

In his conclusion of '*Sensing the Ruin*,' Edensor applies Susan Stewart's ideas of how the body experiences somatic memories to space,

"the senses are shaped and modified by experience and the body bears a somatic memory of its encounters with what is outside it" (1999: 19). Similarly, place thus imprints itself on the body and is carried by it through time and space (Casey 1987)" (Edensor 230)

In this sense the body records the world around it storing in memory, images, spaces sensations and experiences. Poetic representations of experience are a response to navigating between familiar and unfamiliar surroundings and not having a fully adequate language at my disposal. In such environments as Edensor writes, “the body is not merely reactive to the effusion of sensory affordances but also actively engages with the things it beholds.” (229)



Fig. 16: *In a Minute*, (Installation) 2017.

For example, when hearing an emotional ballad that makes you feel sad, a physical and imaginary response takes place. The song, albeit for a short period of time can become embedded as a mental impression and influence one's state of mind and emotions. Sampled, if you will, the patterns, loops and melodies of the song can linger, repeat, and be imagined anew as an accessible and retrievable layered index. A song can be mentally stored and/or recalled over time in a sort of semi-permanent moment as well. Perhaps only partial of the original, the song inhabits the body and the material somatic interaction affords a flexibility of interpretation and understanding through artistic expressions. The fidelity of the experience of say, hearing a song shows how the body processes sensory information with a tendency towards a poetic and playful gathering of space information.

I carried the things learned in *Morning Map* into my piece *In a Minute* (fig. 15), exhibited in July 2017. Much like *Morning Map*, the intention to disorient and fragment the viewer's experience and have several non functional narratives operate in the same viewable space became a priority. Essentially another map of losing senses and visual architectural forms, '*In a Minute*' uses similar methods of collecting, layering and removing parts of image and sound that I have used before. It also constructs one image from many renderings of past experiences. By animating and adding sound to the composition this time, I feel this work took the idea of multi phonic viewing further than

Morning Map. Animation brings time and movement to the images and creates additional entry points and moments for crossover between moments through momentary alignments of image and sound. I realized that sound as a sculptural object was able to affect a viewer's sensation of memory more than images and could possibly be a way to get closer to somatic and reflective responses while viewing artworks. I also had to make responsive decisions in how to show the work due to space and light restrictions. This resulted in showing it on three screens instead of projecting the full composition. This problem presented me with yet another opportunity and propellant into material use in framing my images.

In particular, I began to see cable as material for making. It was materially able to mimic drawn line present most all of my work and offer functionality. This was an important discovery as cable has always been present in my installations but never thought of as an artistic material. This installation now provided me with a blueprint to making larger drawings with material, sound and projection in physical spaces.

When in certain rooms and at certain heights I pick up low level audio signals somatically. Waveforms penetrate my body sometimes growing in amplitude until my head becomes overwhelmed by the sound of radio frequencies, as if my brain was a FM radio and someone was sweeping across the bandwidth. The cable is a conductor, it



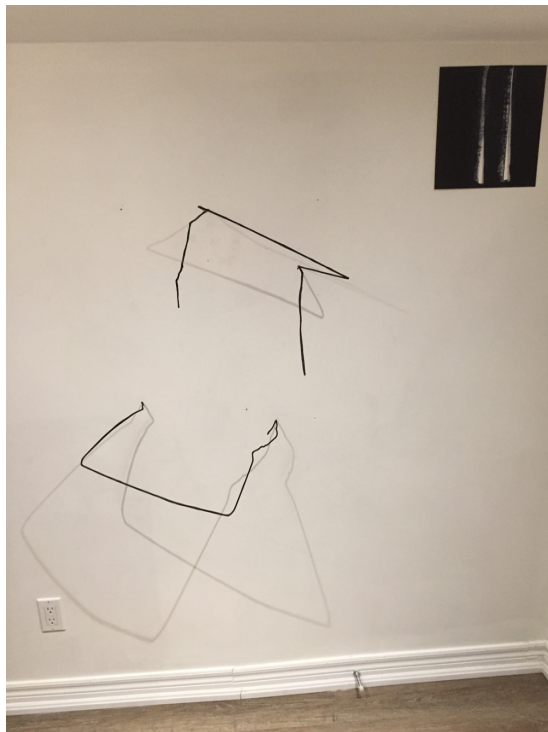
speaks to functionality, connectedness and fragmentation of my everyday routines. It can be a wonderful or dreadful thing to work with. In my employment I have always used a large assortment of cables doing various thing with them, but mainly plugging them in and out of various ports, and of course wrapping them.

Fig. 17: *Cables*, Ink (8x8 in) 2018.

When working with cable, one should treat it with care; using proper techniques to maintain their longevity and functionality. They tend to work best when neatly wrapped using certain coiling techniques. These are not only the gestures of the cable — part of its own 'memory' and 'embodied' capacities — but also the gestures that I was interested to incorporate into my artwork. Moving forward, I wanted to see what happens when I replace these patterns with more destructive and reductive ones.

Material Investigations

I began working with cable and quickly started to wrap other materials such as wire in the vinyl tubing used to make cable. The forms on the wall started to appear architectural and fragmented. This is the material space I was looking for. Things like clothes



hangers become unrecognizable lines on the wall. Drawings become texture and relation to the form. These fragmented forms are fairly accurate representations of what happens to architecture in my altered sensory experiences. The next step is to add the electronic components of the work to induce a sensory oscillation for the viewer.

Fig. 18: *Basement Investigations*, Paper, Ink, Wire, Cable. 2018.

Using forms and objects from my everyday life in my artwork was starting to make sense and my work was able to move away from screens and pages and into three dimensional spaces it tries to describe.



I think of my practice as a series of never ending continuous analogous gestures, that over time and with practice afford space for reflection and focus through making. Working with things in this way provide the direction for future endeavours. The work propels itself. My current gestures and habits inform future works. Drawing becomes a psycho-somatic performance that I translate through different mediums and medias; one that changes and grows over time.

Fig. 19: *Basement Investigations*, Projection, Paint, Mesh, Wire, Carpet. 2018.

Looking ahead, I am curious how to trouble the boundaries of images as a body, image as sensory experience and perhaps image as mode of thinking further than I have already. Can further fragmentation and repetition of these spaces produce new ways of understanding bodily responses in transitory contemporary spaces? How can I build the home metaphor to connect all facets of my making? I do know images and movement can reveal an oscillation between body and space. I am intrigued by residual somatic effects of spaces in the body and their intersection with memory, imagination and performed gestures. I wish to continue investigating the nature of images created by a

tracing of sensory events. By recording and abstracting daily routines, experiences, and the architectures of home and neighbourhood, I hope to find ways to speak to the elusiveness of place as understood by my body.

Reflection

In reflection of the thesis exhibition I have discovered much about how I want to show and think about the installational languages I have learned through this program. I am now curious about ways to install different types of research, images, records and objects of this research to coexist with or in context to other works.



Fig. 20: *Sensory Map* (1992), 2018. Detail.

I am now able to conceive different ways in which one piece can sit next to or inform another that uses a different language and set of formal concerns. This is exciting moving forward, as my practice seems less confined to certain materials, processes or visual languages than ever before. For example *Sensory Map* (1992), uses one primary method or language of installation which lends itself to a certain uniformity throughout the piece. I am curious how using juxtaposing different languages in installation can provoke different entry points to the work, that is more reflective of the way in which my work functions in studio. Finding ways to add layers or multiple entry points in installation is something I hope to achieve through my work moving forward.



Fig. 21: *Sensory Map* (1992), 2018.

I am also interested in thinking of ways to create more visceral and physical responses with space and object for the viewer. In what ways can I intersect with or affect the viewing experience that illicit intended somatic response will be important for this body of work in the future. Perhaps this can be done using larger material gestures or intersections with space, or more pointed choice in materials to have intended readings forefront the work. How will the work benefit from having more specific intentions through material choice and spatial compositions?

Lastly, using my drawing practice as a basis to build components from, I am compelled to explore sound as a more focal point in my practice. How can a project stem from a really simple bodily idea or action and can I speak to this action in material? In what ways can combining translations create unique sensory encounters? Can a series of artistic gestures made about an everyday or universal bodily action take on a new set of sensory and sociopolitical concerns? What dialogue or experience can this research provoke in viewers? Furthermore, can drawn forms house objects like speakers, screens and more drawing to think about memory and navigating space?

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