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Planning Accidents and Pointing at Them/ Translation and "The Truth of Solipsism"

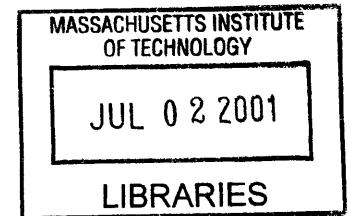
By: Benjamin A. Luzzatto
Bachelors of Art in Sociology, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 1994

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Science in Visual Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
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Benjamin A. Luzzatto, Department of Architecture
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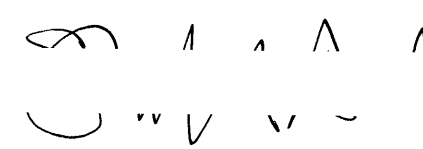


Certified By
Dennis Adams, Professor of Visual Arts
Thesis Advisor



ROTCH

Accepted by
Stanford Anderson, Chairman, Department Committee on Graduate Students



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By: Benjamin A. Luzzatto

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 24, 2001 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Science in Visual Studies.

Abstract:

All the things that drive me as an artist are about the same question. It is a question that may be asked in different ways. I want to know how I am already a part of the world. I want to know if when I look at the world it is the same thing others see. I want to discover why it is not possible for me to experience the world the way it is prior to my seeing it.

The way I have approached answering these questions has been to find ways of accompanying events that already take place in the world. The following is an expression of these experiences.

Thesis Advisor: Dennis Adams
Title: Professor of Visual Arts



“The place I really have to get to is a place I must already be at now.”

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Culture and Value, 7e





Looking for places I am already in

I find myself at a street corner, at a crosswalk, waiting for the light to change. People start to gather around me. They are also waiting for the light to change so they can cross the street. All of us are facing the same direction waiting for the light to change. It changes and the crowd is released. Everyone who has been waiting crosses the street and goes on their way except for me. I stay where I am. The light flashes “walk” but I stay standing where I am. I am now alone on the corner. Someone else walks by me without stopping and crosses the street. The sign is still flashing “walk.”

Eventually the light changes to “don’t walk”. I continue to stay where I am. Slowly, once again, people gather on the corner around me, until they are released again when the light changes. I stay where I am for much of the afternoon.





I find myself sitting on a patch of grass in a small park. I then stand up and lift my arms as if I am stretching. I alternate between sitting and standing every few seconds for much of the afternoon.

To a car driving by, when I am sitting, it looks as if I may have been sitting there for hours. On nice days people often sit on the grass for hours at a time without getting up. Or, if I happen to be standing up when a car drives by, it looks as if I am getting up and stretching ; as if I am about to leave.

To someone walking by it may look as if I am doing exercises.



I walk by a woman sitting on a park bench. She looks as if she has been in the same spot all day. I wonder how long she has been sitting there. I wonder if she ever leaves that bench at all.

I see people walking by the woman on the bench going to and from work. To them it might look as if she had been sitting on the bench all day. They would have seen her on their way to work and also on their way home. People sit on park benches for hours at a time. It would not be out of the ordinary for her to have been there all day. After seeing her for a few days they might think that she sat on that same bench everyday. Even if they came by late at night for some reason, to that part of the city, out of their normal routine and saw her sitting on the bench, they might think that she had come there that night in particular. They would not necessarily assume that she was there every night. They could, however, given the fact that they see her there everyday, think that she didn't have a home, that she had claimed that particular spot as her own; that she spent most of her time on that bench. But they wouldn't know for sure if she ever left. They would probably assume that at some point during the day, when they weren't there, that she went other places. But what if she really never left that bench? I see an elderly man leaning out of a window that looks on to the park. I imagined that he lived in that apartment across the street, that he was homebound and stayed by his window much of the time. He would see her sitting on the bench the most. He would be in the best position to answer my question. He is most like the woman on the park bench in the way that I am curious about her. He sits in the same spot most of the time as well. The man looking out of his window would have to watch the bench the whole time that the woman was there, however, to know for sure whether the woman had ever left the bench or not.

I am in a bed, under the covers. The world is the bed, and I am in it. If I was not there the covers would conform perfectly to the bed, I think. They would take the shape of the bed. If I want to know what the bed looks like when I am not in it, I can do this by knowing the way the covers fall around my body. If I know my own body and I know how the covers conform to me, and where they do not conform to me, because of their thickness, their stiffness, etc., I can imagine how they will react to the bed. I am in the bed, I know how the bed feels to me as I am lying in it. I feel as if I am inbetween, that by understanding how the covers are on me and understanding how I am on the bed, I can imagine how the covers would react to the bed if I were not there. I still do not know how the bed feels to another person, though. But I know that I am like other people.

I want to see what the world looks like when I am not the one looking. what do I see that other people see similarly? what is the difference in how we see, other than them being them and me being me? Knowing how I see is knowing what makes me, me. I want to see how I see, so I can separate it out. If I have to remove myself all together, this is impossible, because I would not really be there to see. Can I place myself in a position, where I can be both a participant in what happens and separate myself from what happens at the same time?.

There are places in the city to stay in the same spot, where the world changes around me, and by changing, without doing anything more than placing myself there, I alternate from being included in what already happens to being separated from what already happens.

I believed that if the changing around me, alternated fast enough, this back and forth would create a fissure from which it would be possible to see the world in this particular way. Staying in this position I would know what happens at the same time that it is happening. In these moments I would be a part of what happens already, but I also would have the ability to observe what already happens as if I was not a part of it - at the same time.

Many of the great hitters in baseball describe the ball to be in slow motion when they are hitting well. It slows down to a still point, where they know what it is going to do as it happens; at the same time that it is happening. A curveball breaks downward, falling hard towards the plate, and because these players are so in tune with the world outside of themselves, have related their bodies to it, have agreed with it, so much, that they become a part of it. They know that the curve is going to drop because they are a part of the world outside of themselves. Knowing what the ball is going to do is, in this state, knowing a part of themselves. It makes sense that they would be able to hit so well, if they are a part of the same thing that the ball is a part of. But they also are there as hitters, distinct from the ball and they hit the ball from that position. They are both a part of what already happens and separate from it at the same time. Time is experienced in slow motion because they are experiencing the same moment from two places at the same time. Athletes are so fluent in the particular languages of their games that they can perform without thinking in a way that separates them from the world. They are so fluent that they can fuse with the world outside of themselves and by doing this they do not lose the part of themselves that has the intention of swinging the bat. But it is different.

If the walk sign switched to don't walk fast enough people and cars would not be able to cross the street using the lights. It would be ignored and people would make do without it.

It is like someone standing at a light switch and flicking it off and on. there may be a moment when the light is leaving the room, (the split second after the light has been turned off). But even if you were to suspend this moment it would be analogous to a fader in which the room was half dark. you would not be able to experience the room as dark and as light at the same time. The faster the transition between the two, the more it seems as if this is possible; like a florescent light bulb that is always flickering between off and on. We experience florescent lights to always be on. They produce the effect of constant light. Saying that it is possible to be a part of what already happens and separate from it at the same time is like saying that in a room where a florescent light is on, you are in a dark and light room at the same time. If a florescent light is on it is light in the room.

I was looking to the city for a place that I am always at already.

I can find myself in the way I move about already. It doesn't matter where I go, as long as I understand my relationship to it...

Trying to place myself in between what already happens and what doesn't already happen is like standing on the sidewalk and calling people over with the movement of your hand as they walk by. When they come over whisper this in their ears as quickly and unobtrusively as possible and then send them on their way;

“just do what you were going to do anyway “

There are times where it feels as if I am less in the way of my seeing.

there is a moment after breathing out, before you breath in again

the room is your room when you are breathing in

the room is your room when you are breathing out

the room is not yours in the moment after you have breathed out, but before you breath in again.

in this moment the room is itself



looking for myself in what I already do

I am at the convenience store. I re-enact the last minute, any last minute. I re-enact everything about myself exactly how it happened, assuming/pretending that this is possible. I move my body in the same ways down to every slight jerk and adjustment. Every facial gesture, breath taken, and sound or word uttered should be repeated exactly. I lean down to look at the candy bars. I look one way, my head moves a little bit in one direction, in a particular way. I reach for a candy bar, pick it up in a particular manner, stand up in a particular way. I am looking at things the entire time. When I stand back up, as I make my way to the register, I am focussing on different things with my mind without thinking about them. When I repeat that minute in the convenience store I am able to repeat it exactly. I move my body in exactly the same way and look at exactly the same things as I am moving in exactly the same way, etc...

While I am repeating that minute in the convenience store I am able to create a separation within myself. It is as if I am viewing myself through myself. I am there in exactly the same way, but the second time I also have the memory of the first time I experienced that minute. I am matching the experience of the repeated minute against the memory of the first. But it is different. I believe it is as if I can, through this exercise, be an observer to an experience I had; so I get to participate the first time and really observe the second. I get to observe myself through myself, watching from a distanced position within myself. But even though everything is outwardly the same, and even though some of the same thoughts may be triggered by the same things, (like the way noticing something twice feels as if it is a thought), I cannot really relive the moment because I cannot relive that minute if I don't remember it and remembering it makes it a second viewing, not a first. If I could perform this exercise without remembering. If I could "program my body and my mind to do it without remembering it, then it would be a first experience. But if I had this ability then I would also not be able to observe it with the experience of being a participant as well. So either way I could not be both a participant and an observer at the same time if I understand them to be two distinct positions from which to experience the world.

I can imagine that it is possible to re-enact a minute in convenience store by the candy aisle, because everything appears to remain the same. Nothing happens. But this is deceiving. Time passes. The memory is either there and the experience is different, or it is not there and I am not able to observe by being distanced from it. The candy bars are still. It appears as if nothing changes. But it does.

If another person was to enter the scene it would not be possible to attempt the re-enactment unless this person was in on it.





Looking for people that I am already in

looking for myself in places I already am

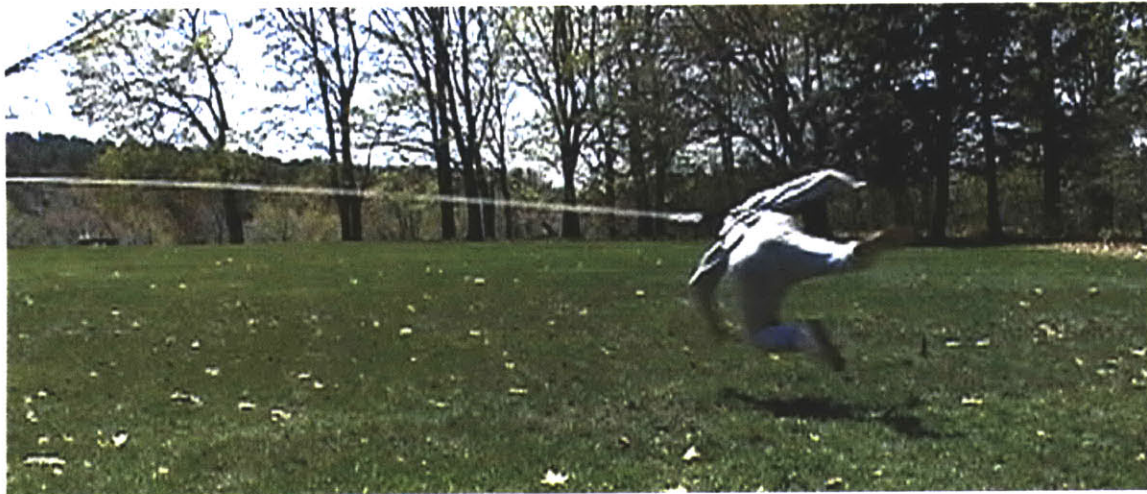
I am walking somewhere thinking about something, nothing in particular, and I trip and fall; there is a moment as I am going down that I know I am going to fall and that there is nothing I can do about it. I lose control, so I give up the struggle to regain control and just fall. I have the experience of leaving my body and watching myself fall. Everything happens in slow motion. I experience the falling and the feeling of hitting the sidewalk. It is as if I experience the fall from two vantage points. I am a part of the world outside of myself watching myself fall and I am the one who falls and feels the experience of falling. Everything happens in slow motion because I have to take in “double” the information, the information from both vantage points at the same . I experience the fall from two perspectives at once and process those two experiences at the same time. Time slows down, so that much more information will all fit in the space that I am used to experiencing from one perspective.



How you experience an accident, or whether you experience an accident at all, has to do with what you expect. If I could plan an accident, I could see from two different places at the same time, and I could see more than one moment at a time.



Even when someone else ties the rope to a certain length that I do not know, when I run away from the tree, I still know that the rope is tied.



If someone had decided not to tie the rope at all...

I would still have to rely on others to do this to me.

When I tripped and fell, I experienced the fall from two perspectives because I understand my body and mind to be two distinct entities. This is deeply ingrained in my culture and in everything that makes me, me. I was able to sense that the way I see has a boundary. By seeing what framed the way I see, the frame revealed its presence to me. I did not really get outside of it, however, as my experience led me to believe.



What I don't expect is determined by what I do expect. If a woman was to give herself the task of sitting on a bench in a city park waiting and looking for something other than what she would see sitting on a bench in a city park, - she would wait there forever.

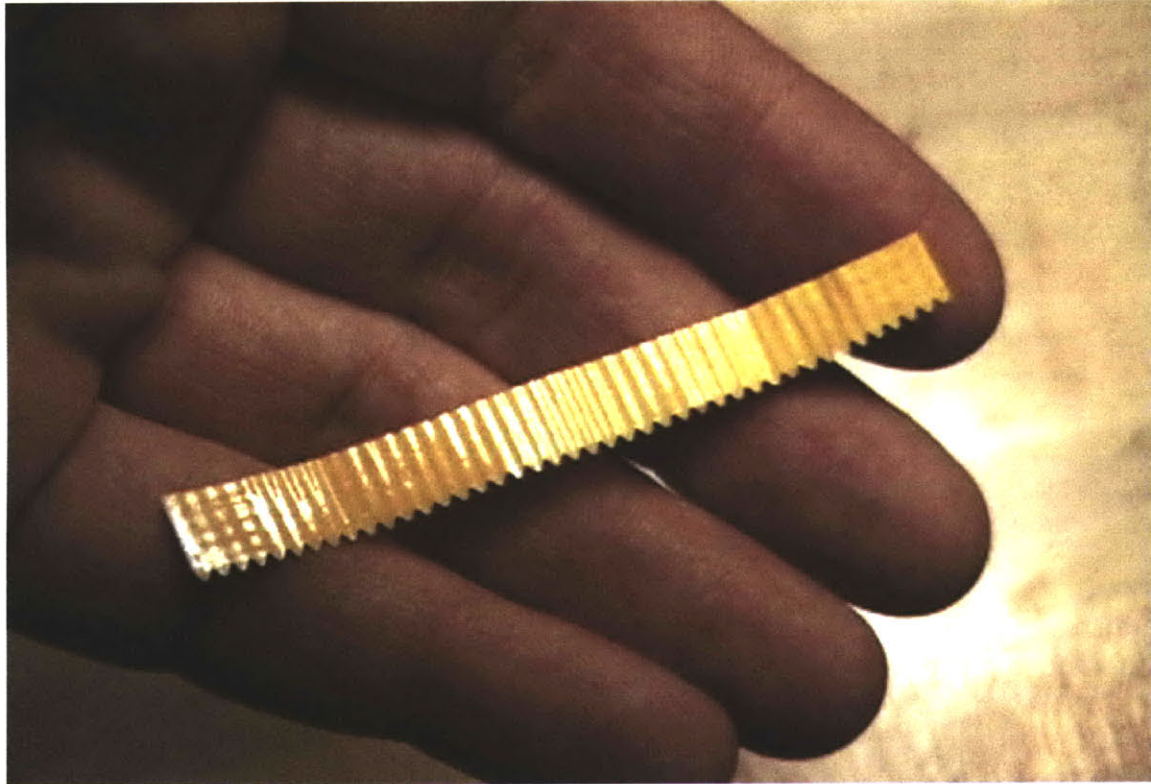
For me to see something, as it is, separate from what I see it as, is impossible, if I am the me seeing it. But for me to understand this, to recognize this, which is understanding how I see; this is possible.

The attempt to see something as it is separate from what I see it as is important because it is the experience of this impossibility.

If I can represent the way that I see, it is an acknowledgement that the way I see is particular to me. It is not the ability to communicate those particularities.

The only thing that can be communicated is that I see in a way that is particular to me. It is the only aspect of my experience that can ever be translated. All that I do is try to represent what I see in a particular way. If I can do that, I communicate that I have done that.

A thing is most itself when it is just at the point of no longer being itself.



A thing is most itself the moment before it is no longer recognizable as itself. It is the point at which those things that make it what it is show themselves. If we can take some of these elements away then we can alter those things without changing it into something else. We can be a part of what it is, of what makes it, it.

Some elements are so inconsequential, (ones that don't alter the thing which we are getting to know to the point of it no longer being itself), that altering them does not really allow one to get to know the thing; to be with it. You can't alter something to include yourself in what makes it, it, if the thing which you are altering is not one of the elements that the thing could not remain itself without. This is the double bind - I am caught between not wanting to alter the world to the extent that it is no longer itself, but wanting to get to know it, to be with it, as it is. But, to really do this, to get to know it, I must become a part of it. Becoming a part of something necessarily means altering what makes it, it, such that it is no longer what it was, but then something that includes you. So the idea is then to locate the point right at which it can be altered and still be it.



This is recognizable as a candy wrapper. What makes that so? What are the distinguishable elements that we can name? - color, the serrated edge, the shine of the paper, the ridges where the ends are sealed together, the kind of text on the paper, its size and configuration, the rip, the scale, the shape (it is in the shape of the part of a candy wrapper that gets ripped off).

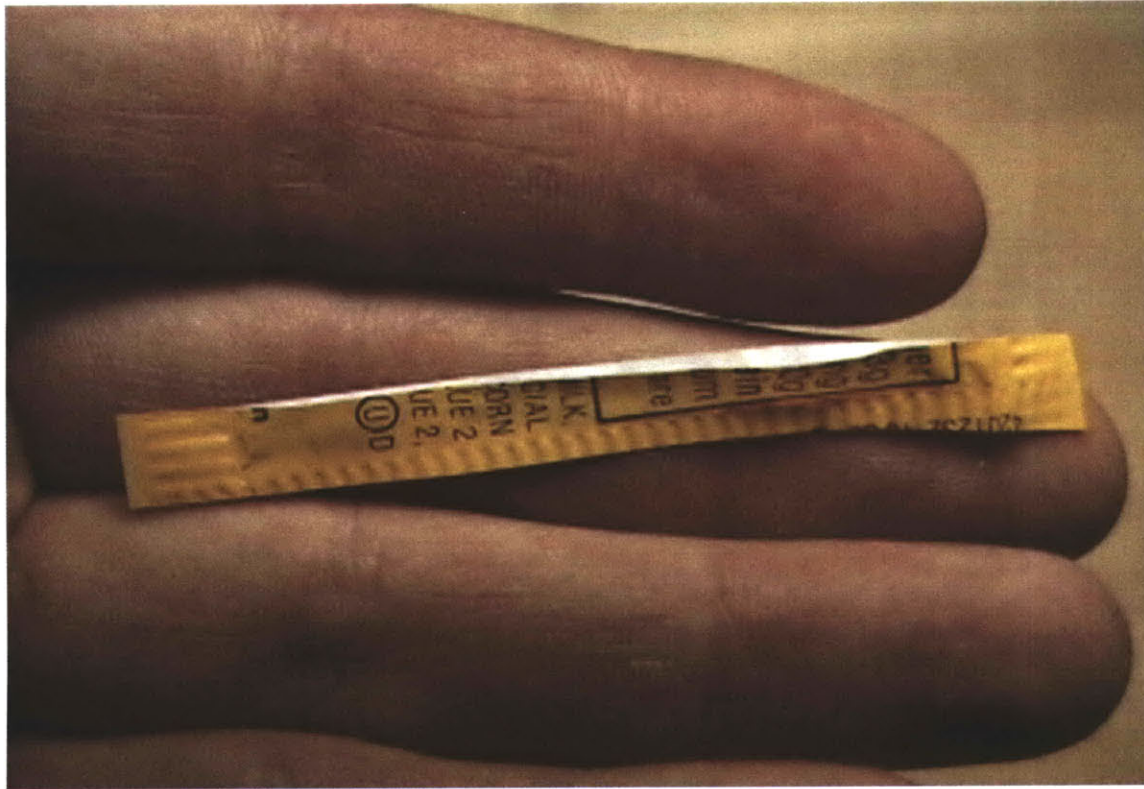
What changes could be made to make this more or less recognizable as a torn off piece of candy wrapper?



and if I emphasize one area, can I take away other elements and have it still be recognizable? In this picture, as opposed to the previous one, the white interior of the wrapping is visible, suggesting more with regard to function/purpose.



If I took away the serrated edge, would it still be recognizable as a piece of a candy wrapper? Yes, but maybe somehow less so...



And what if I took more of the edge off? So now most of the ridges are also gone. Of course the writing and much else still make it a piece of a candy wrapper; but could you look at it as somehow less recognizable as a candy wrapper, now that more of the edge has been cut off?

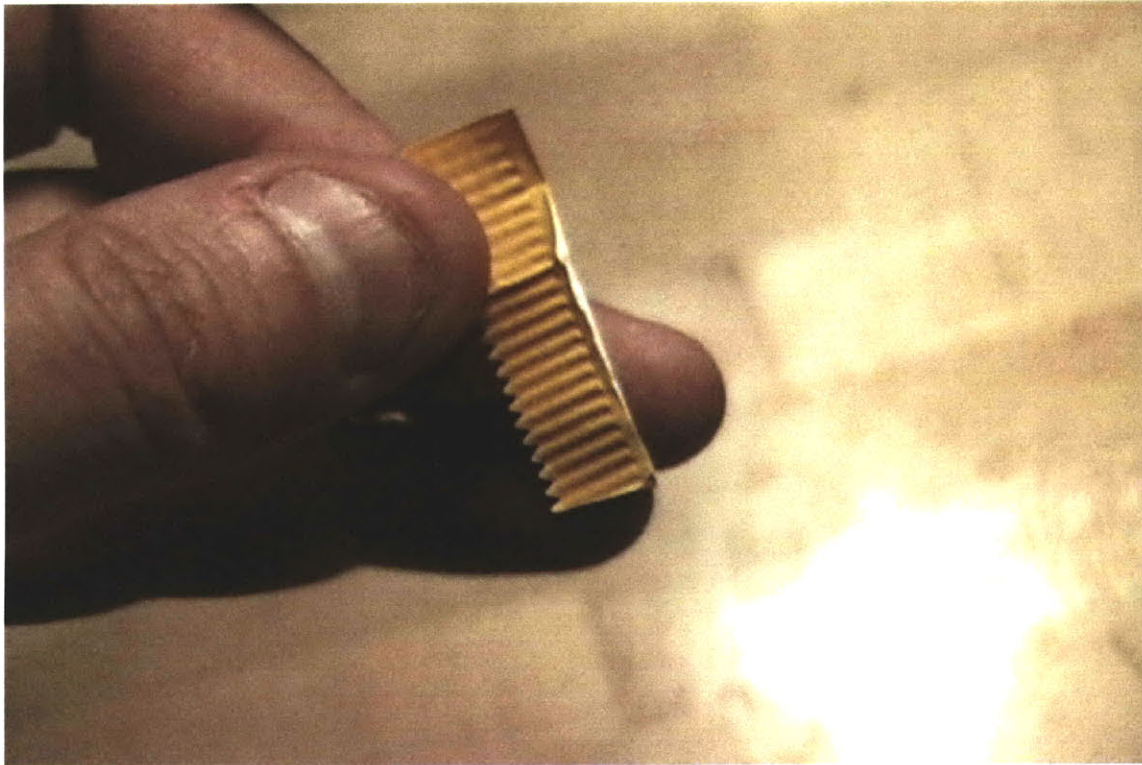


And what if you could no longer see the lip (the white interior)? It still has the shiny look to it, it has text that is found on candy wrappers. But aren't those two features found on other food product packaging? What the white interior contributes to, is the suggestion of the size and shape of the product the wrapper holds. This picture is most likely a part of a candy wrapper, but somehow, without that white interior showing, it is more open to question. The size of the container is lost. It could be a piece from a much larger wrapping, like for a bag of cookies, or another food w/ similar packaging.



And if I only show the lip, it is difficult to say what it is at all. Showing the lip somehow tells us less about this piece as a candy wrapper. It shows us less than the first picture in which just the ridges and the serrated edge show, and it is cut and not torn. But what is it then? It fits into another sense. Maybe it still reads as paper; it is still something small and paper-like; something bendable, something that has an interior. But it is not recognizable as a candy wrapper at first glance, necessarily. If I was told, however, that it is a piece of a candy wrapper I could easily see that, it would make perfect sense.

The first picture was of the edge of the wrapper. It had ridges and a serrated end showing. No text is visible in that first picture, and there is no rip and no white interior that is visible. It was somehow more recognizable as a candy wrapper than the last picture of just the lip showing, but probably less recognizable than the other pictures that had text showing. How much of what placed it in that standing had to do with shape? The length and width of that piece was the length and width of most packaging for candy. Because that first picture had no rip, but a clean cut, and because there was no text, it looked like it had a sense of its own. It could have been just what it was, a thin strip of something paper-like that is ridged and serrated. The first picture also falls into the category of not necessarily being recognized as a piece of a candy wrapper. If I were told that the first picture was a candy wrapper I would immediately recognize that that is what it was (is). In that first picture I understand the objects ambiguity to come from the fact that it doesn't have text, and other things, that others pictures do have. That first picture makes sense upon being told what it is because of its size and shape, (also materiality). What would happen if it were cut in half? What would happen if it no longer suggested the size and shape of the wrapper it came from as much?



Can I see this picture as if I am seeing it for the first time, in a totally different context, to think about what cutting this piece of the wrapper in half does? To see the world as if it has a self and that you have a self that are separate, is so tempting because it puts you in the position of imagining a first untainted sight of everything. By asking the question about what it does to cut this piece of the wrapper in half, I am forced to look at this picture as if for the first time.



What if there were no serrated edges, almost no ridges, and no visible white interior? What if what remained was the text, the shiny material (its thinness), and other identifiable elements, but the three we have been discussing were removed? This picture falls into this category, but because it has none of the elements present that start to suggest shape and size, it feels open in this regard. This could easily be a part of a wrapper to some bag of cookies that was made of a shiny and yellow paper. It could be a wrapper to something larger than candy. But also, it is somehow more firmly a piece of a wrapper, of some packaging, unlike the other pictures where there is no text, and the objects had a sense that could be described as coming from something that was shiny, thin, and paper-like. This object is first and foremost from packaging, even though it may also contain those other elements (shiny, thin, paper-like).



And if I were to remove the writing from the previous object it would not be, necessarily, from the packaging of any food product. But, once again, it would make sense as something thin, shiny and paper-like. In this picture I would not necessarily recognize the paper-like material as a part of a candy wrapper. but if I were told that it was, it would make sense to me. Somehow, recognizing this piece of wrapper upon being told that it was a wrapper, would require more of a leap on my part. In comparison to the other pieces of wrapper, that didn't have text on them,(like the first picture that had ridges and the serrated edge of the end of the wrapper), this picture could more easily be of something else.





Painted black it is more recognizable as a candy wrapper when three sides can be seen. The shape of the package also contributes to our recognition of it as a candy wrapper. When only two sides can be seen, the package could be much longer, it could go on and on. Because some candy is long in this way, the particular type of candy and candy wrapper is unclear. whereas, in the picture with the three sides showing, somehow it is more recognizable as a candy wrapper of the size and shape that it is; even though it could potentially extend out in the direction that is unseen. This may be so because of the way that I am holding the wrapper in each picture. In the picture of the wrapper painted black, in which only two sides are showing, even though ridges are showing on one side, it looks as if I am holding it in the middle. In the picture of the candy wrapper painted black, where three sides are showing, it also looks as if I am holding the package in the middle. The edge is shown. It would be odd if I were holding the package on one end. If, for example, the package continued out on the side that is not seen and it was revealed that I was not holding it in the middle, it would be odd. I assume that this is not the case for some reason. I assume that the package is being held in the middle. Because of that assumption, and the fact that, in this picture I can see the distance from the middle to what I believe to be an end, I can surmise the shape of the whole object. So that if someone were to tell me that this were a candy wrapper, it would be more easily accepted. The distance that I would have to go in accepting that, would somehow be less in the picture of the wrapper in which three sides are shown than in the picture where only two sides are shown.



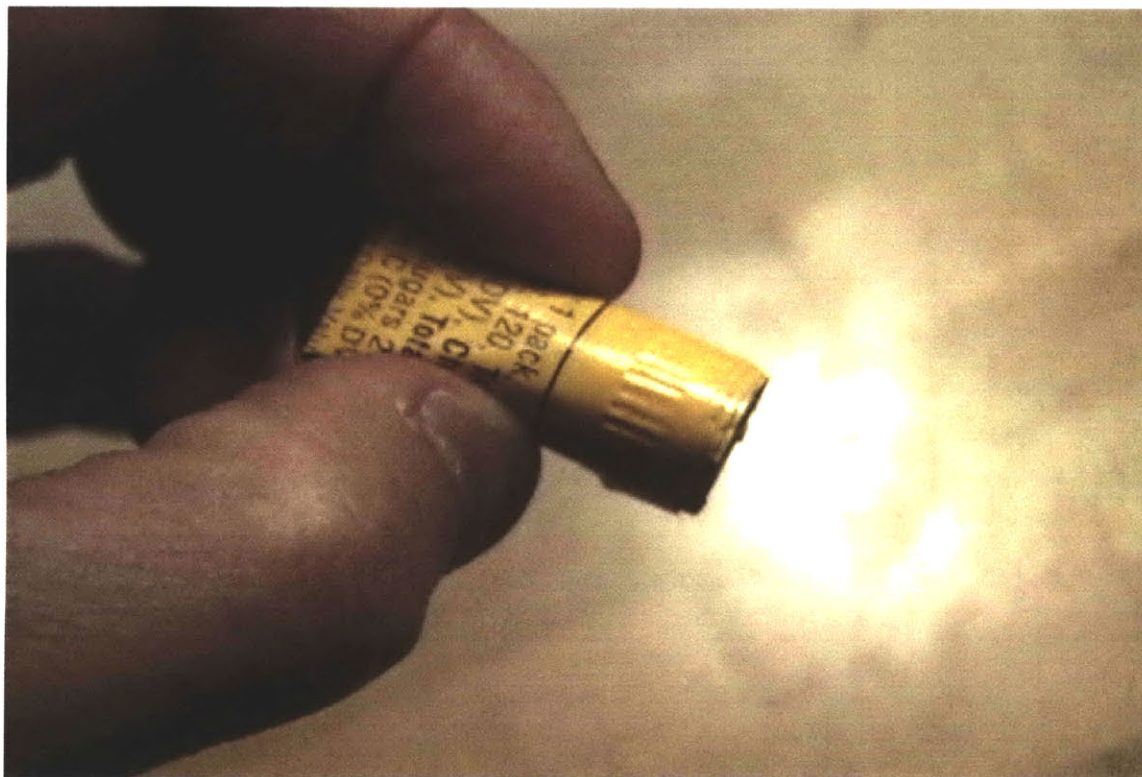
Why is this more recognizable as a candy wrapper...



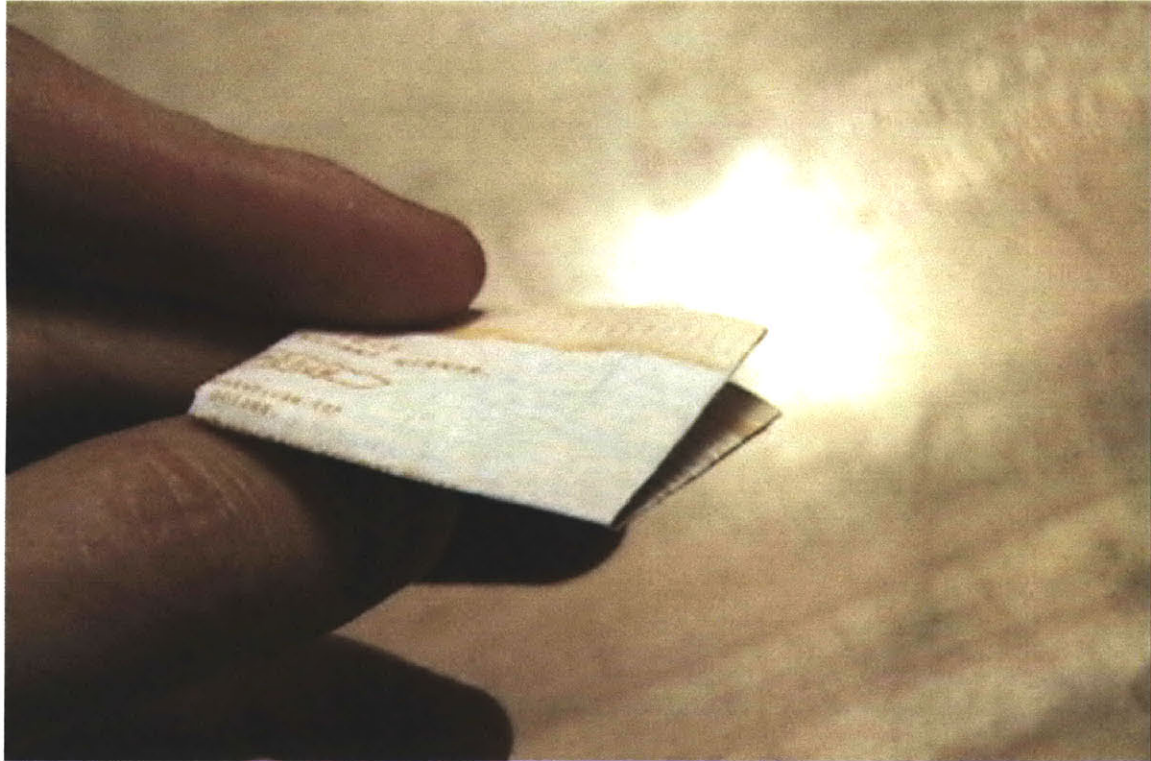
Than this? How does that little box with the word “nutrition” partially visible make it more solidly in the candy wrapper category? They both could be wrappers to some other food that used the same shiny packaging. But that box with the word “nutrition” in it, makes it somehow more firmly in that general category of packaging for some kind of food product. And this somehow translates to it being more recognizable as a candy wrapper if I am told that that is what it is.

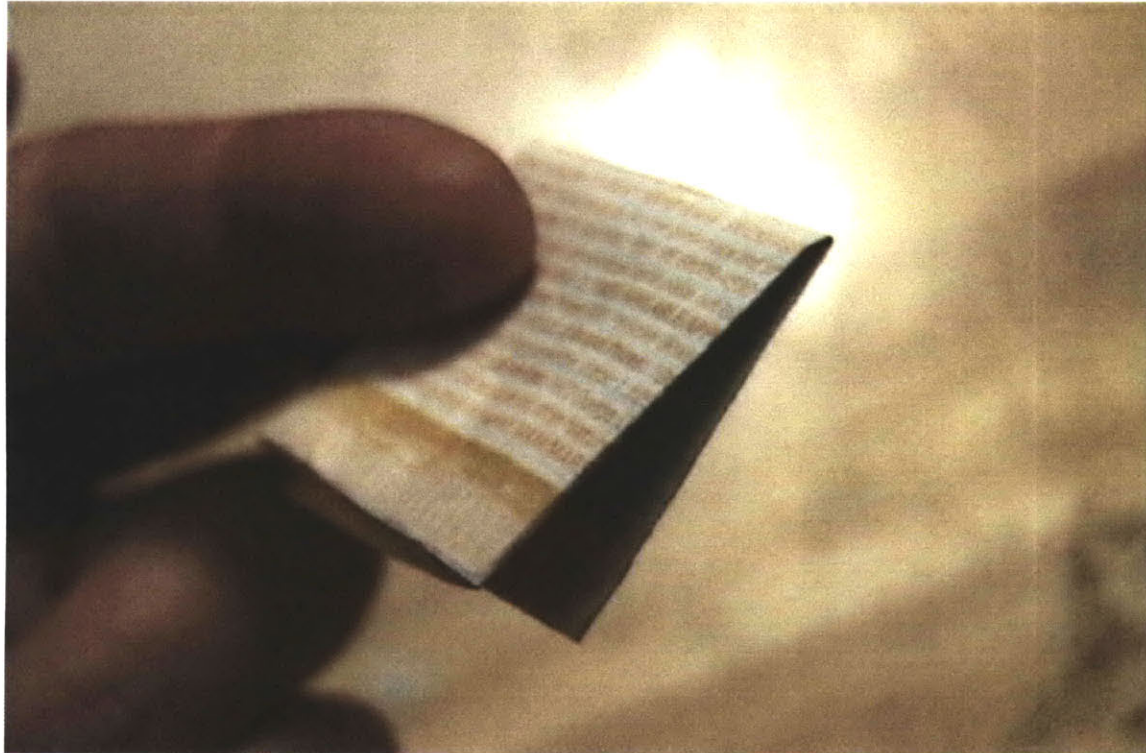


And if I just turn my finger a little bit, moving the folded wrapper to the side, it is more recognizable as a candy wrapper. It is a folded yellow piece of paper, but not undeniably a candy wrapper. Even though the writing is still visible, (and if I were to think about it I could see that this folded piece of yellow paper was probably from food packaging of some kind), the emphasis is squarely off of the text. I am more likely to note that it is a folded yellow piece of paper with text of some kind on it, but not to make the next leap to it being from packaging of some kind of food product. Folded in this way, even with the writing visible, somehow, it is more open.

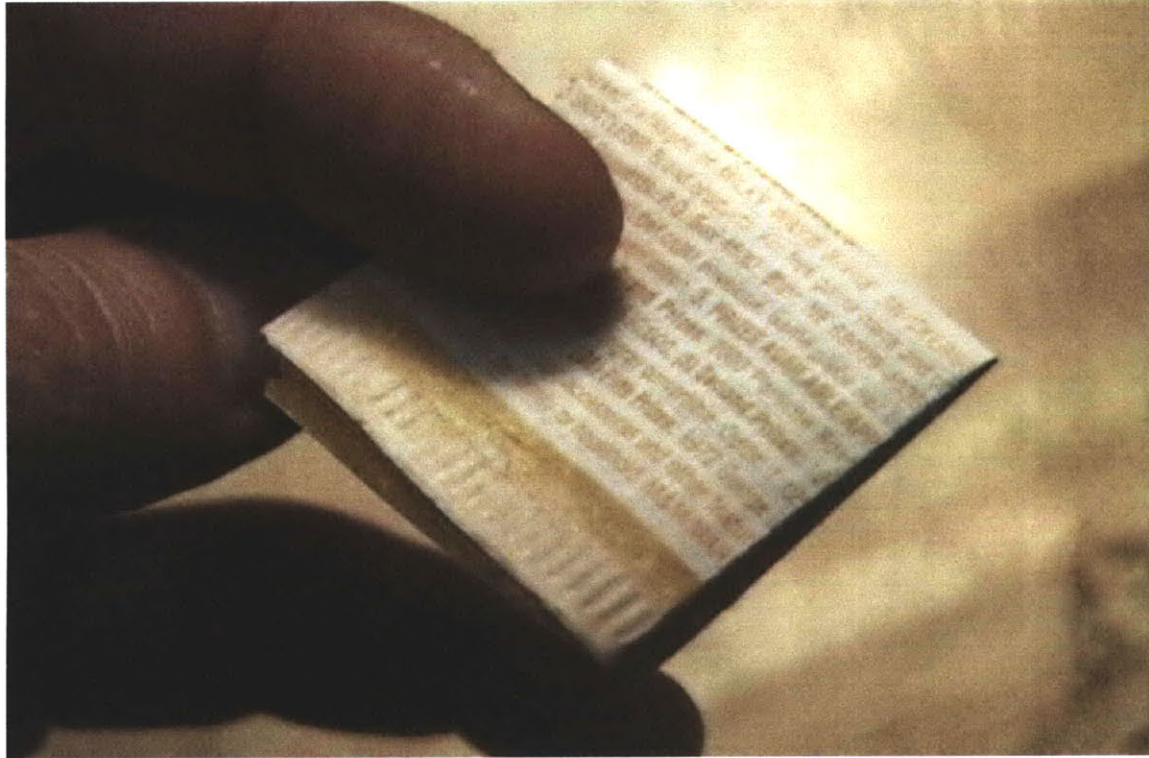


But it is not the folding itself. The folding hides and reveals different aspects of the wrapper. Rolling the wrapper up and looking at it from different perspectives would provide the same kind of discussion. How the hiding and revealing of characteristics differs from rolling to folding tells us how we see the candy wrapper. Only rolling can bring out certain characteristics, and the same is true for folding that is not true for rolling.





What if the candy wrappers are folded inside out? Now we are in stranger territory. We don't often see candy wrappers folded inside out, but we are familiar with the inside of candy wrappers. We usually see the inside of the wrappers along with seeing the outside, after they have already been opened. (a wrapper lying in a trash can, or on the street, for example). But usually the inside remains the inside, meaning that it would take a deliberate turning inside out for the inside of the wrapper to be seen to the exclusion of the outside.

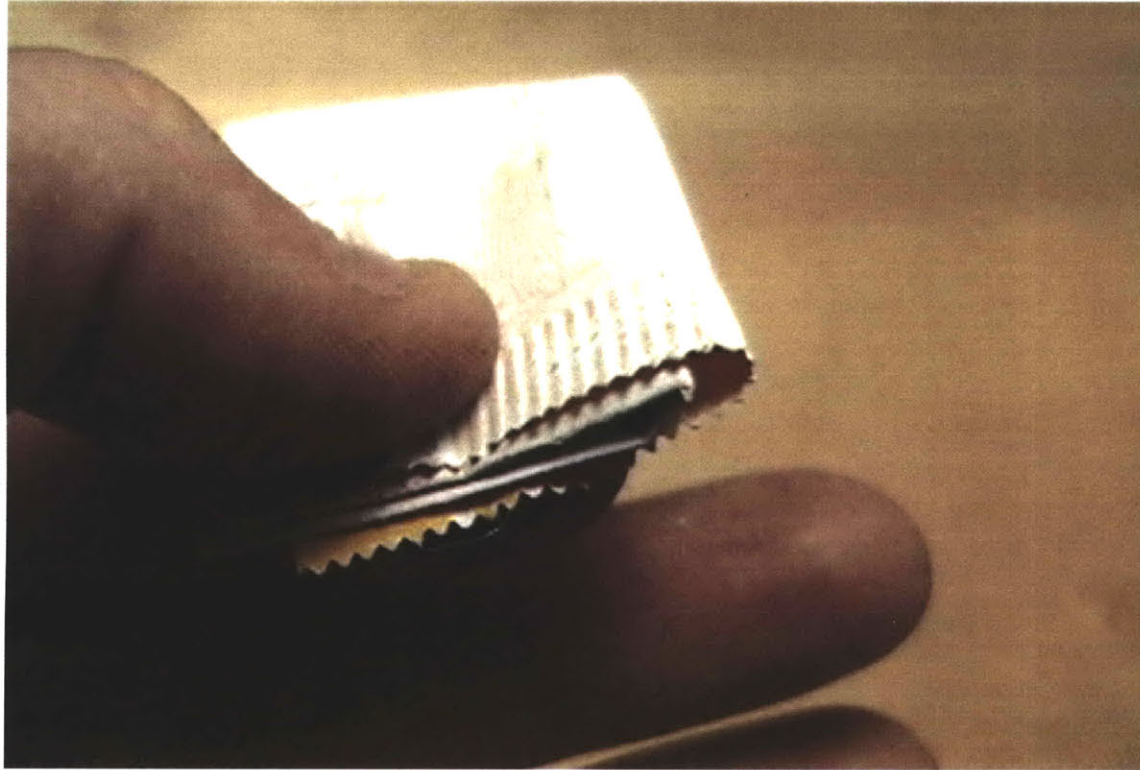


But somehow these pictures of the wrappers folded inside out are still more clearly candy wrappers. Maybe at first glance they are more curious, but upon being told that they are candy wrappers I have enough knowledge of what the inside of candy wrappers look like to see that this is true. This is an opportunity to talk about what this level of specificity shows. What if I never ate candy? Would I be less likely to recognize the wrappers folded inside out as candy wrappers than someone who ate candy all day long, fiddling with the wrappers at their desk as they talked on the telephone?



I look for this kind of specificity because if I can see how I see, than I believe I am able to separate out that part of seeing that comes from me. I am able to imagine what the world is to itself. but I am a part of the world. I am both a part of the world and can see from that perspective and I feel separate from the world in some sense too and I can see from that perspective. How can I see from both of those perspectives as the same thing, at the same time? I am like something else, everything is like something else, it can be understood in relation to something else. the shifting of distinctions between things, these pictures being more or less like a candy wrapper, is how we feel that our understanding is not fixed, and can be altered. Candy wrappers are just something specific, but we could do the same kind of questioning with anything. When you are examining something in this way it is like being in an earthquake, because the ground that you are standing on is shifting anything that you look at will be blurry.





What if it is not inside out and folded, but painted white on the outside? It is folded, and the outside is showing, but it is painted the color of the inside? The farther “away” I get from the original wrapper as it is usually seen, the more I try to locate a single point of ambiguity, the more it is clear that there isn’t one that is fixed, but many understandings all mixed together from many different perspectives.



I roll a crumpled up candy wrapper around in my fingers, squeezing it, holding it lightly, examining it. As I roll it around slowly, I imagine that I can, in each moment, see it for the first time; see it as if it is unknown to me and ask what it is? What sense it has? - And then, I can tell myself that it is a candy wrapper (if I wasn't able to see that first off) and I can ask myself how much, as a matter of degrees, do I recognize it as a candy wrapper, once I have been told that that is in fact what it is.



















What is rain in the experiential sense? It is a liquid that falls from the sky in droplets. Anything that did this I would call rain. What if liquid fell from the sky in a long stream, pouring down continuously, (not in droplets)? To me it would not be rain, it would be something else. What if the liquid that fell from the sky in droplets were colored and not clear. To me it would still be rain. It would be rain that was not clear. It would be colored rain, but still rain. It is clear that whatever it was that fell from the sky, (and you would have to experience it to know) would be somewhere between something considered rain and something that was not considered rain. And if you could figure out the kind of things that straddled this division, (your understanding of rain), you would begin to understand what you know rain to be.

If you wanted to get to know rain more intimately, to be with it, it must not become something else in the process of you getting to know it. It is not the something else that you want to know, it is rain. If I scooped up rainwater in a puddle and drank it, I might then walk past puddles and know them differently, (I would know that I drank from one of them - I would have that experience) but I would not have a similar relationship with falling rain (rain). Once the water has hit the ground it is no longer what I wanted to be with, which is rain. Rather, it is just water, albeit water that was once rain. If I drank water from puddles I would be getting to know puddles differently than if I had never drank from a puddle. If, for example, I could somehow color the rain, have it pass through something that colored it without changing anything else about it, I would have been a part of providing a different experience of rain. It would still be rain, but it would be colored rain. After the experience of coloring the rain, whenever I encountered rain again, my understanding of rain would be changed. If you alter something without it changing into something else you become a part of it. You are included in what makes it, it.



An umbrella made entirely with small funnels. The tiny funnels are made with ink and sugar mixed together. The rain passes through the umbrella and is colored.

Recognizing/experiencing how I understand anything is a precondition for altering myself in relation to it. It is how it can remain separate even while being altered (a separation is maintained). The knowledge/feeling that it can be altered and still be it, is important, in that it shows that the experience of rain has to do with how I understand rain. How I understand rain depends on everything that makes me, me. It is worldly and it changes. It is the only thing that I can change. I cannot change the part of rain which is always a mystery (which is why the hell it and everything else is here to begin with). To confront the mystery of what it is to be in the rain, (which is something that is not rain's alone, but is only expressed in a particular way with rain), I need to acknowledge that which separates me from that mystery. In a sense, that acknowledgement is the mystery, it is inseparable from the experience of rain. It is the experience that only rain can provide. There is the idea that its essence lies behind it, and not in it, that it is something, and that I am something, that are both fixed - that there are two things, the rain out there and the rain that I experience. That is true, it certainly feels that way, but once I have altered the rain, and it remains rain, it is also something else, which we share. We have remained separate but we have also come together.



In order to become a part of something without altering it, I must know how I see it, because what I really have to change is how I see. Nothing changes, everything stays as it is, except to the extent that I am seeing it differently.

If I were to make what a cloud is to me on the ground, I would only have to satisfy the way that I see it. If I did this I would not have made a cloud, I have made what a cloud is to me.

But I still don't know the part of the cloud that is the mystery. If I can make what a cloud is to me, I am able to create a separation, I can in effect, take myself out of the clouds.

By seeing or recognizing, a distinction between my understanding of clouds and what clouds are apart from me, I am able to become a part of the clouds and separate from them at the same time.

On some days the clouds look cottony, thick, well defined, and distinct from one another.

If I were to make one of those clouds and it was almost indistinguishable from the clouds that I didn't make, I would be able to just look at the sky, at clouds as they are, and I would have a different relationship with them. I would then know they were up there and I was down here on the ground. I would understand how we were distinct from one another, and how we were not.



The inside would not matter that much because clouds on those days look solid and opaque up to a point. The interior could be helium inflated urethane cells that lock together in different configurations.



But the helium inflated cells would be too bulbous, and I would have to soften the spaces in between them. The gaps created by the curves of the individual cells could be bridged by wrapping them first with a thin layer of fibrous, cotton-like material.



I could then slowly inflate the cells because the thin layering of cotton would still be light enough to do so.



and then I would have to cover the cells with another layer of thin cotton-like material and begin to shape the cloud.



Then I would have to shade the object with ash to produce the effect of shadows.



Then I would have to add a thicker layer of fiberfill attaching it mostly to the sides of the exterior. At this stage I could really sculpt the form and pull the thicker cottony material around to produce the wispy edges of the cloud.





An accident that had no beginning and no end

If I could see five minutes in this room at one time I would not be able to speak and make sense. Take this example, I pick up my cup to take a drink from it and then put it back down. To ask where the cup is while I am taking a sip from it doesn't make sense if I see five minutes at one time.

If I had the language for experiencing five minutes at once would I be able to experience five minutes at once? If I had the language for experiencing more than one moment at a time and I shifted my position, could I see from those two perspectives simultaneously? Or would this "language" necessarily eliminate the distinction between these two positions?

If I don't name things, assume things separate from one another, I can't speak of them. Looking without distinctions is seeing nothing.

You can't say "this"; point to it, addressing a distinct something whether its in the future or the past. "This" takes place in the present.

How we see normally is a record of a moment in time. Everything is always changing.

Reaching for the candy bar in the convenience store the second time was different from the first, even though it was exactly the same . . .

This is how the new experience I had by coloring the rain, (having it still be rain, but different at the same time), is important. It is how we trip and fall to new experiences and new languages for them. One foot is always in the “old” language as it steps into the “new” language. You can never leave the old language.

I see two of everything. There are two realities occupying the same space and time. One is the world that I have recognized as a projection, a world that comes from me - which is expectation. The other is the world that comes to me: which is what I don't expect.

If I look at the world in this way, accidents are like invitations from the world outside of me. It is the world letting me in to see my frame. I cannot become intimate with something unless it wants to become intimate with me. Forcing something/someone to be something it is not, is not knowing the difference between what you think they are and what they are in spite of what you think. A separation between you and the world outside of you is established (understood) so there is an other to get to know. To really know someone, is to demand a separation, (it is to accept that you will never fully know them). It is an acknowledgement of the mystery. You can't get to know anything if there is not a separate thing to get to know.

Looking with different distinctions, different borders is still not some search for the correct or true distinctions. But changing distinctions, changing languages, is a goal in itself, because it is a reminder that these definitions are not fixed. This is a way of seeing how you see. Specificity reveals how sense is given. At a certain level of specificity we return to where we started. Tautology can be experienced. Depending on how you are looking, distinctions between things, at a certain point, are imperceptible. If you keep chopping up a line, ultimately the cuts become so small that you can't see them, and it becomes a line again. If you then looked closer you would see the cuts again and if you then cut some more the line would re-emerge. A material is most itself right before it is about to no longer be recognizable as itself. Language, because it contains the possibility of tautologies, reveals itself.

Sometimes when I am walking down the street I feel as if everything relates, somehow, to everything else. Maybe it is because of me: because I am always the one who is looking.

A car alarm and the moon made sense together to me the other night. I recognized both, they each had their separate category, but they were also a part of the same thing somehow to me. Give me any two things and if I can show myself in between them, if I can communicate that how I see is particular to me, then they will relate.

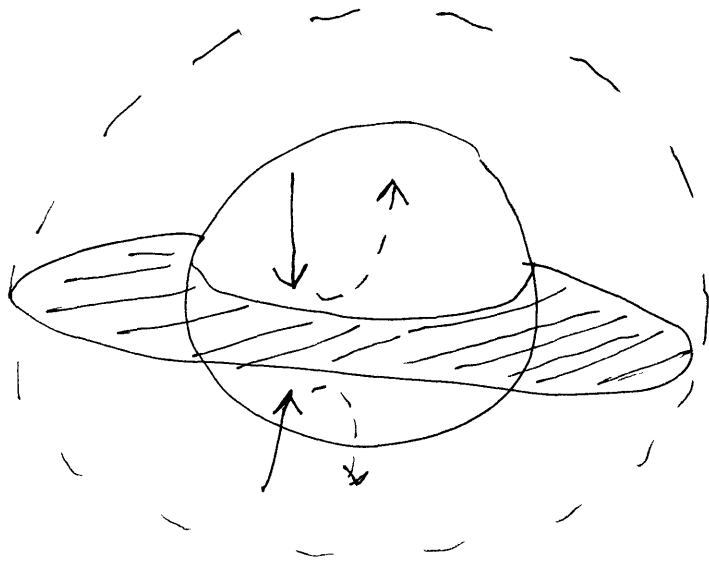


A man is standing in a room waiting and looking for something specific. He is looking for something that;

- could happen at any second, anywhere in the room
- he could potentially miss if he stopped looking for it, even for one moment.

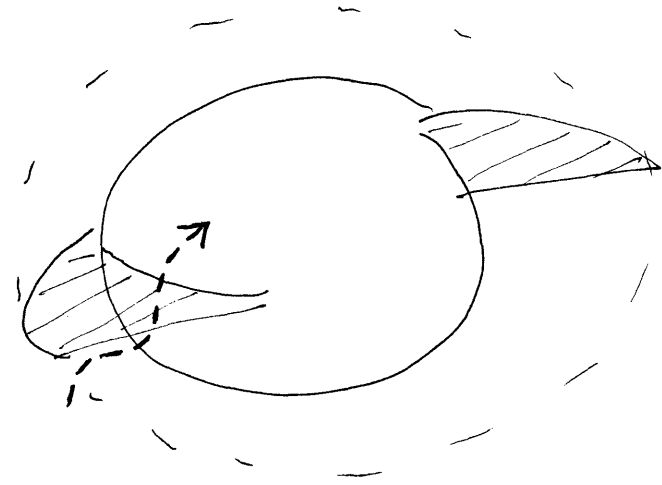
How does one see differently if one is in a state of looking for something specific? Everything else is not that specific thing. Everything else is whatever it is, but it is also not the specific thing that you are looking for.

I am already a part of the world. I don't need to connect myself to it. I need to see how I am already a part of the world.



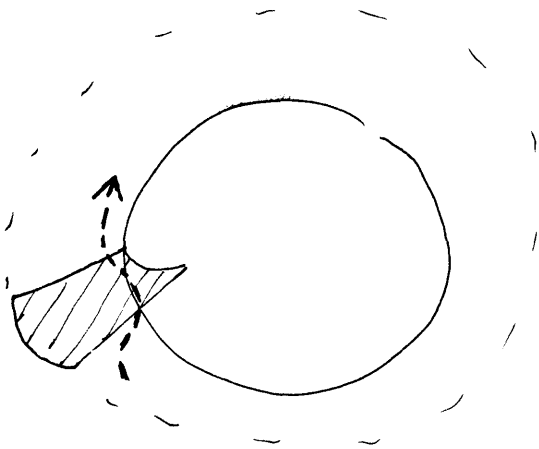
1

The wind blows from the ground to the top of the sky. Using a partition, first block the wind so that it will be on two distinct halves of the earth. Wind on one half of the earth will not go to the other.



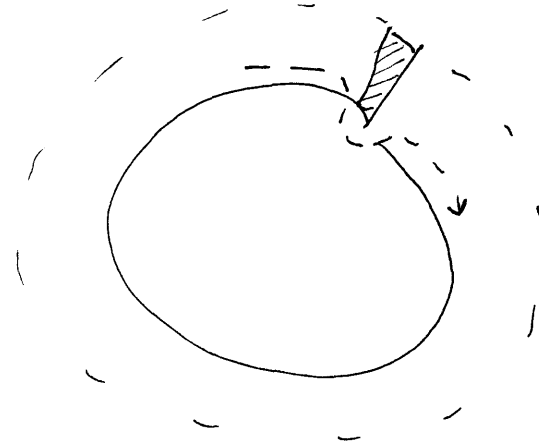
2

If you take half of that away the wind patterns are altered, but are now not limited to a particular place. They are just altered. This is the most important reduction in the size of the panel. From now on, the panels are the same in the most important way!



3

The smaller the panel to the top of the sky becomes, the less the wind is altered, but it is altered in the same way that it is altered in the panel that does not make the world into two distinct regions.



4

The smaller the panels become the less the wind is altered, but it always is altered by the panel and it is altered in a similar way.

If I continue to make the panels smaller . . .

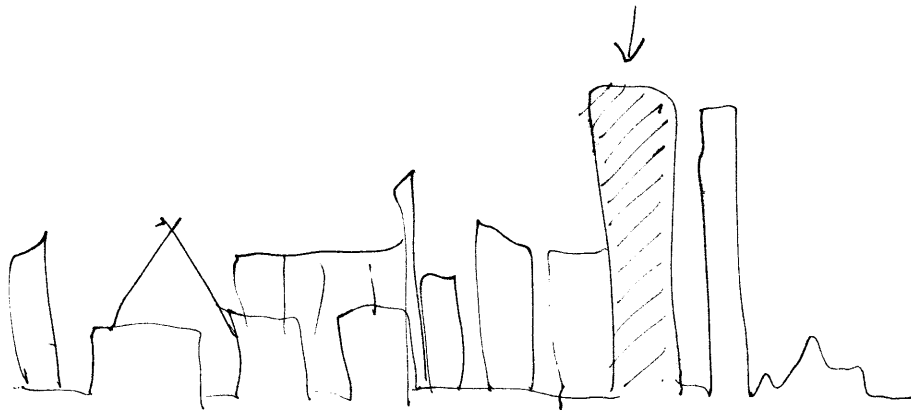


1



2

The size of a city

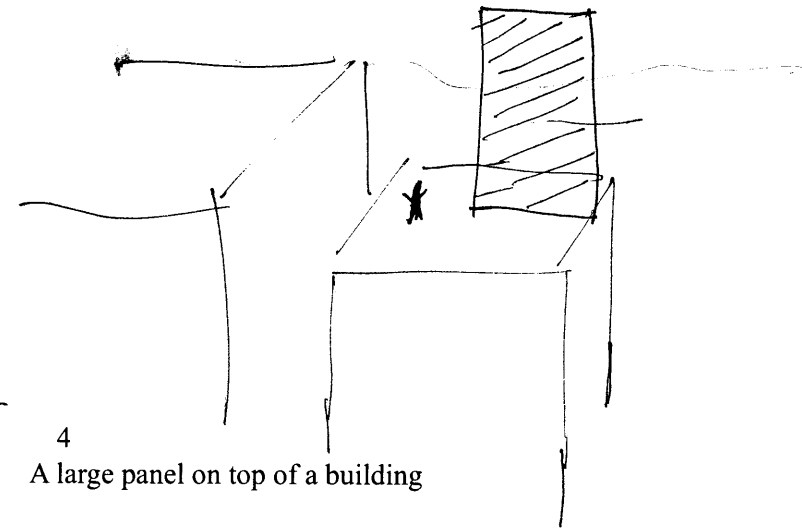


3

The size of a large building.

(At this point I can start to think about not doing anything. I just have to point to an existing building that already does this. Yet, I continue on down, making the panels smaller.)

The size of a part of a city



4

A large panel on top of a building



A panel that is small enough for me to hold myself, on top of the building. The direction I turn the panel alters the wind differently.

I go down onto the street with the same board.



On the street I use a smaller board.



I use a smaller board the size of my torso, holding the board to my chest, turning my body from side to side alters the wind in different ways.



I get rid of the board and just turn my body from side to side, altering the wind differently depending on how I turn.



Then I walk down the street but don't try to redirect wind patterns in any particular way. The wind will be affected by the position of my body whatever it may be.



Then I just go ahead and do what I was going to do anyway with my day. I just do something else.

I put my hands on things and “go along with them”, trying not to lead them, but to be with them as they are.

First I find something that it is absurd to accompany in this way, something that will undoubtedly be altered by my presence. A leaf falling from a tree is a good example. I hold a leaf on a tree where all the leaves are falling around it. I wait there with the leaf. I hold the leaf without affecting it. When it blows around with the other leaves on the tree, I try to accompany it. When it falls from the tree, I try to accompany it.



The leaf has no chance of falling as it would normally fall with me holding on to it. I had to pretend that it was falling. I had to guess based on what I have seen watching leaves fall, how a leaf would fall. But it was my version of a leaf falling, not the leaf's. Some relationships, if approached in a certain way, are too mismatched to have any chance of maintaining a separation. The leaf falls the way it does because it possesses certain qualities that make it fall that way (it's lightness, the shape and the way it catches the wind, etc.). I don't have those qualities, if I judge them in myself in terms of the leaf. Accompanying the leaf in this way is doing exactly that. That's what makes it so absurd.



But this is why separation is so important, because to accomplish this, we must understand that we are looking in a way that assumes the leaf and I are so different that I will never be able to accompany the leaf in its fall. And this is true if I see myself as separate from it. But what do we have in common, the leaf and I?

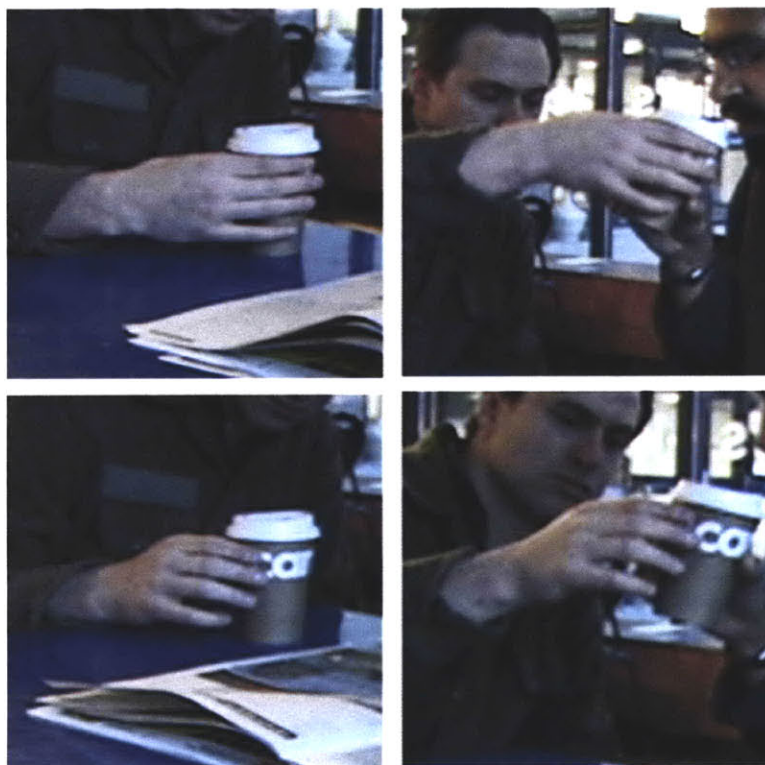








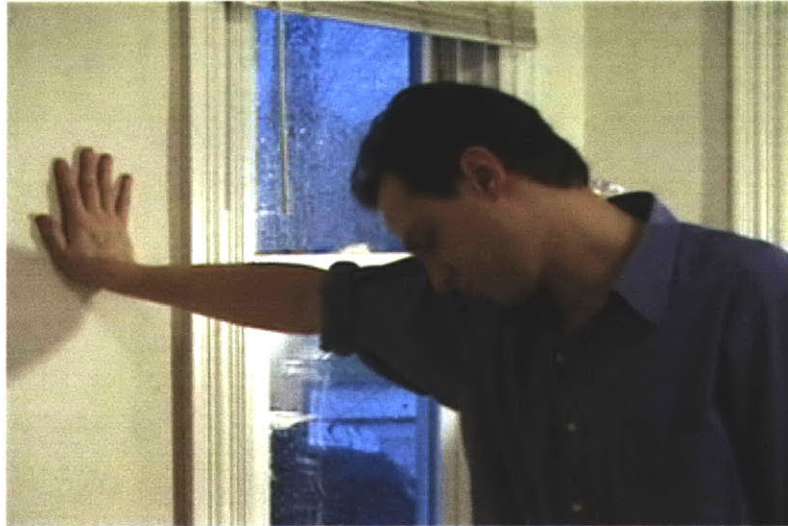
I attempted to accompany a cup as another man drank from it, to hold on to it and remain holding on to it as it was picked up and sipped, and at the same time also to attempt not to let my holding the cup alter its movement/path. To really accompany the cup as it is usually used, to attach myself to that experience, I must not alter the experience so much that it becomes an altogether different experience in the process. In this case, if the accompaniment is too mismatched, like the accompaniment to the leaf, it will be transformed into something else in the process. This example is beautiful because within it, it is possible to both accompany the cup, and at certain times not possible, depending on what the accompanying required of me. When the cup is fully grasped (A1) it is possible to accompany the cup fully when it is on the table and not being sipped. People ALREADY hold cups on tables in front of them in this way. It even looks as if it is my cup of coffee. I am able to be with the cup as it is itself. This already happens. I am placing myself inside of what already happens. However, because of the grip that I have on the cup, the fact that my hand wraps all the way around the cup and holds it in that way, it makes it far more difficult to accompany the cup when it is picked up by the man who is drinking it (A2). If I initially accompany the cup when it is resting on the table by just touching the side of it, it does not mimic what already happens. People do not usually hold cups in this way (B1). So when I accompany it in this way, which is a lighter/looser approach, I am better able to accompany the cup when the man who is drinking from it picks it up to sip from it (B2). I am able to alter the way the cup is lifted to his mouth to a lesser degree than when I wrapped my hand around it (A2).



In one sense, when I am just touching the side of the cup (B), the accompaniment is more itself. At no point does it appear that I am just doing what already happens. Whereas, when I am accompanying the cup by wrapping my hand around it (A1), even though at rest I am most fully able to accompany it as it is. When the man drinking from it picks it up, it is unclear whose cup it is. It is as if it could be my cup that he is taking a sip from; that we are struggling against one another to take a sip. In this sense, when I am accompanying the cup with more of my hand (A), both when it is at rest and when it is being sipped, it could be seen as something that ALREADY HAPPENS, only what happens when it is being sipped from, is then something else; which is a struggle between the two of us to sip from the cup. It is a different thing. I am no longer accompanying a cup that someone else is drinking from, but I am accompanying a cup that could be either of ours. Of course, I can always accompany a cup that is my own cup. This already happens and there are none of these problems. But it is a different thing, it is not accompanying a cup from which someone else is drinking.



Accompanying the wall.



Accompanying the wall inside of what already happens.



The wall will not be changed by my presence in the way that the leaf was.



People already accompany other people in the way that I tried to accompany the leaf.



People already accompany cars in the way I tried to accompany the leaf. They put their hands on them. This already happens.



I was able to run alongside the moving car up to a point. But the car drove faster than I could run. I could feel the feeling of accompanying the truck in this particular way, in as much as that in this particular way I was like the truck. Now I know at what point the truck is no longer like me - and by knowing this, I know what makes me, me (in this particular way). Knowing the difference between the world and yourself, is knowing what makes you, you and what makes it, it. It is also knowing how you are the same. But whatever I got from accompanying the truck is only true for accompanying it in this way.

When I am driving I sometimes feel as if I am a part of the car to some degree, and also understand myself to be distinct from it at the same time. I am able to feel both.

People who get into car accidents, often describe the experience as occurring in slow motion. They describe the feeling of leaving their bodies and watching themselves from outside themselves. They experience that brief moment from two vantage points simultaneously. Time slows down because they are taking in information from both positions at the same time, in the same event. In order to process all that information, time is slowed, so it can all be seen. Like the experience of tripping and falling, the accident is a dramatic shift that reveals how we see - that we think of ourselves as being separate from the world. A way of looking that accepts the fact, that there is inside us, the perspective of being in an accident, in body, of being a participant in what happens, and that there is an outside, which is the world separate from that, a place where "true" observation can take place. The accident reveals this understanding of ourselves that we operate under because it is the experience of this understanding. We are, in a sense, told that there is a boundary. We think that the boundary is our inside and we experience the crossing of that boundary in the accident because we feel as if we can look back at ourselves. The accident makes it seem as if the boundary is something else, something that we can cross, but it is not. We are shown a boundary in that moment. But it is the limit of language. In that moment we do not get outside of it, really, but we are made aware that it exists.

Time slows down in a very particular form of accident. It is this: when there is a brief period where we know that the accident is going to happen, and because of that, within the duration of the accident, we go through a process of accepting it in some way. When I tripped and fell, I only had the experience of leaving my body in a particular kind of fall. When I knew that I was going down and that there was nothing I could do about it, I just let it happen, I gave into what was already going to happen. It is as if expectation and surprise merged. This is what allows you to feel as if you are a participant and an observer at the same time. One comes together and the other splits apart. By one coming together, the other is pushed apart. This pushing apart really shows us how we see, at its most fundamental level. This pushing apart shows us a boundary that is hidden from us most of the time, but that we do not get outside. How can we experience this split, but not have it really be what it appears to be. How is it that this experience of leaving yourself and watching yourself from outside yourself is possible? Why do we protect ourselves from that way of seeing with so much illusion? In a car accident there is a moment when the accident is happening, when the car is spinning out of control, when you haven't hit the other car yet. You see that it is going to happen. You are forced to become an observer of your own accident, of something that is inevitably going to happen. You feel as if you are observing yourself from outside yourself. If it wasn't for this period of knowing it was going to happen ANYWAY, and giving in to it somehow, we would not be able to see the boundary, it would not show us that there is a frame around what we see. We experience getting outside of it. This makes it seem there is evidence of an outside that it is possible to get to. This is how the way we see protects itself, how it makes itself so unchangeable. What is it about this time, between the realizing that the accident is going to happen and it happening that does this? I think this happens in less dramatic ways all the time.



A friend of mine wanted to feel what it was like to play the accordion, so I made finger, arm and body straps so that she could, in effect, accompany me while I played the accordion. These straps were attached around every joint of every finger. It was her fingers that pressed down on the keys and buttons, but it was my fingers that knew what to do. This experience is similar to trying to accompany the cup or car. Even though I/we are able to play the score, it is not a body relationship in which she was fluent already. She doesn't play the accordion. Some relationships if approached in a certain way, are too mismatched (like the accompaniment of the leaf) to have a chance of maintaining separation. The leaf has no chance of being itself. The leaf could not fall to the street with me holding on to it. I had to pretend that it was falling.

When my friend was accompanying me play the accordion she had to be conscious of what I was doing. She had to accept what I was doing for it to work. She could not rely on herself - on her own anticipation and guesswork. She had to know how we were separate to do this. If she just made her body lifeless, it would be as if she were not really there having the experience. If she was not sensitive enough to my "accidents", to the part of the experience that came to her, and not from her, it would have been impossible for me to play the score, because we would have gotten in each others way. She had to surrender control to me in one sense but retain it in another. For it to work, we had to be separate and together at the same time.



I accompanied my friend while she played her violin. Our whole bodies were attached, including our arms, but not our fingers.



She could play certain pieces of music, but could not play other more difficult pieces. There was a point at which my accompanying her, made it impossible for her to play the score. We chose progressively more difficult pieces, pieces we were familiar with, pieces that I had heard her play alone many times before. When she played the easier pieces, it seemed as if my presence did not really alter the music, but as she went on to the more difficult pieces it became more difficult for me not to interfere. So on one level, technically, my body was not used to moving in the way that the more difficult pieces required. With easier pieces I was able to relate her movements with other ways my arms moved that were similar. I got farther and farther away from these familiar relations as the pieces became more difficult.

This is not the whole story. Once my friend started playing pieces that I had not heard, I could not listen to anticipate in any way, it was a mystery at which times I was better able to accompany her and at which times I was not. It was not necessarily the tempo or the number of changes in the score that made it unpredictable. Whether the pieces were more or less familiar to her was also important. She was able to transfer that knowing to me, somehow, and this involved how I know her, her body, who she is in a larger sense, how she plays etc.. My own expectations about the music factored in even though I had never heard the particular score before. If it was a piece of music whose type sounded familiar to me, or if I was knowledgeable about a certain kind of music and she played in that genre (even a piece that I was unfamiliar with) , then that previous knowing helped me to accompany her more successfully.

As the score went on, and I became more familiar with its own particular qualities it would contribute to my accompanying abilities. If the particular score was unpredictable, I would be subject to it. I would be trying not to anticipate or think anything, but doing so on some level nonetheless; wanting to be there, to be a part of the experience, to really listen - So, even if I wasn't listening from a separated position, but if I was a part of the steady repetitive rhythm of the piece, and all of a sudden there was a dramatic shift, I would be "in the way". So the music and the particularities of the piece itself, separate from us, were a determining factor, or so it seemed.

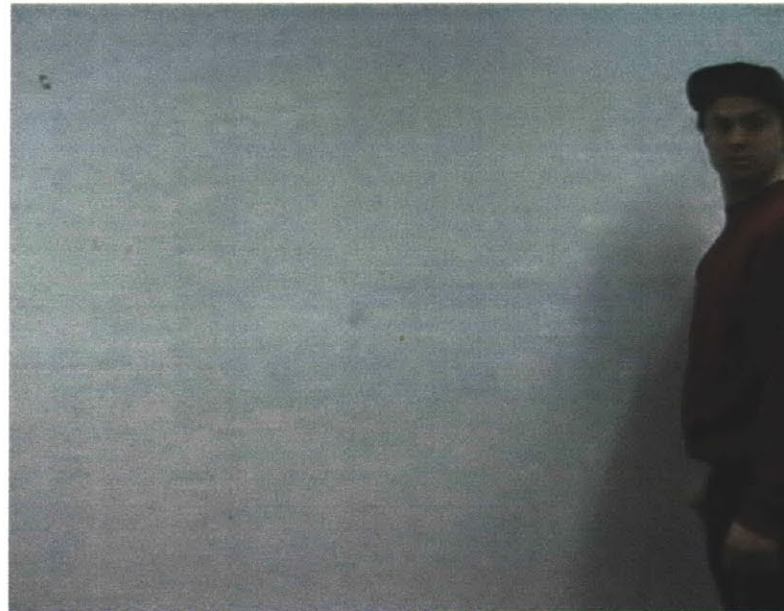
This gets to the heart of the matter, why wasn't I pliable in the moment of the dramatic shift? Simple pieces that relied on close listening, pieces that were subtle, were noticeably altered by my presence. So maybe in the pieces where I felt I was accompanying more successfully, it was just that the character of the piece concealed the alterations caused by my presence. Even disjointed atonal pieces had a kind of built in anticipation in them that I could give in to by being with my friend in a certain way. Why was I able to accompany my friend better in some pieces has to do with what I know about music and what I know about how my body moves. It has to do with everything that makes me, me and everything that makes her, her and with the world around us.

If I am able to see the world as if for the first time, like an accident that never ends, it is the same as me seeing how I see. Or better, the reason I look at the world as if I am seeing it for the first time, is because it shows me how I see, it shows me what accidents are to me. When I am surprised, when something is an accident, it makes me look at it not as what I think it is, but for what it is - as if there was a distinguishable difference. It feigns that there is a difference, that there is a separation between me and the world. This is the way that I see. This is what is ingrained in me, so much so, that it feels as if it is fact, as if my inside was impenetrable, always to some degree cut off from a world that exists outside of me. This is the “form of life” that I operate under, that I am separate from the world. But I am also not separate, and if I know how I see, if I am made aware of how I see, if I know that it is a way of looking, and that there could be another way of looking, then I feel that it can be different, that it is not fixed . . .

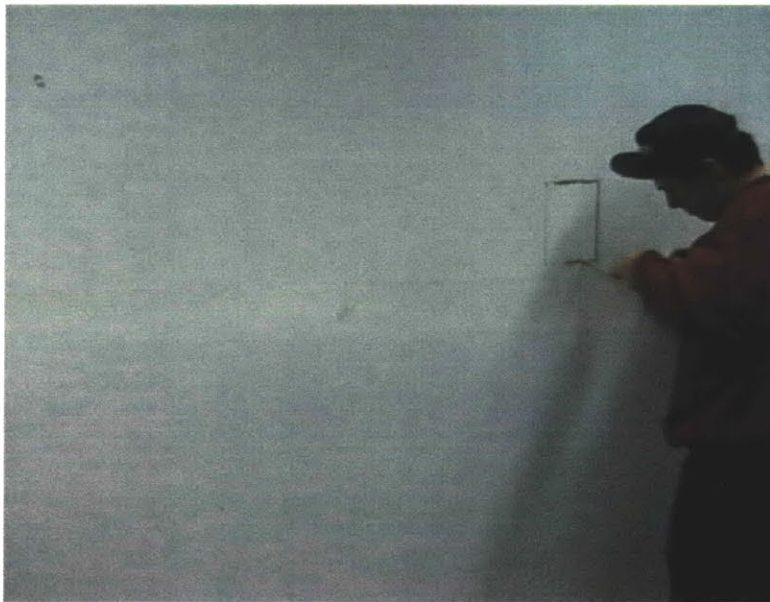
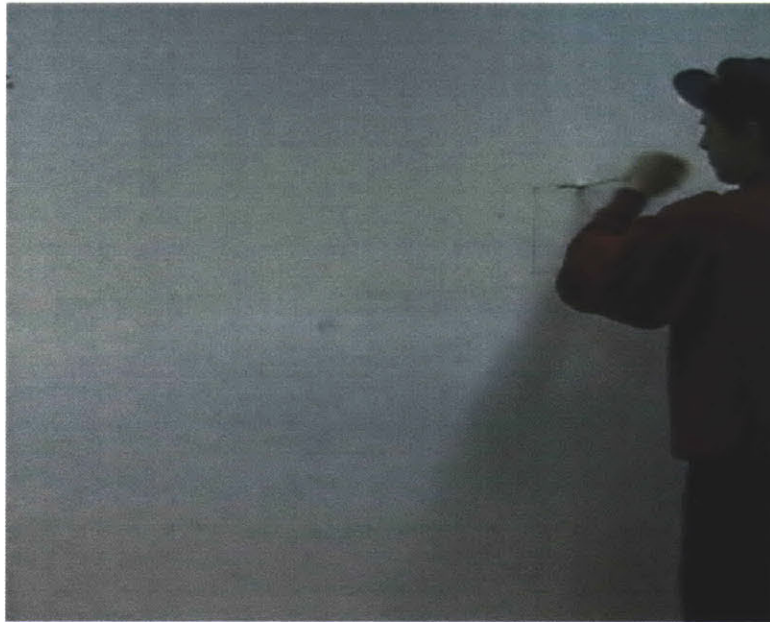
In many of these examples nothing was really altered, but by exploring the way I see, everything changed.

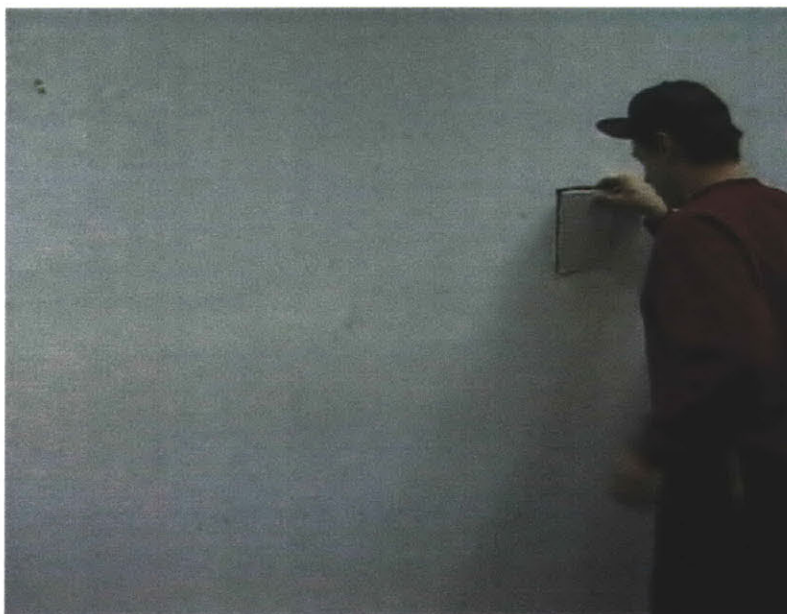
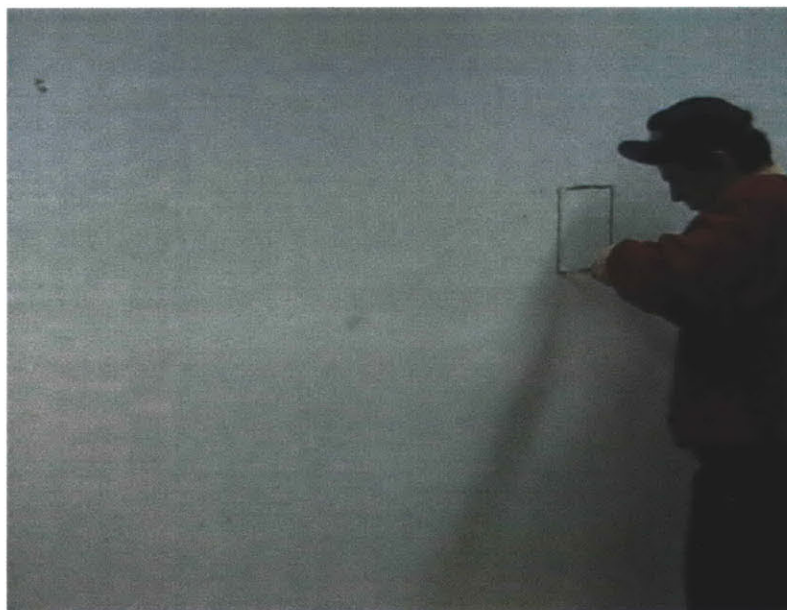
Like a man standing in a room. He does nothing. He is just there looking for something specific. He is looking for something that could happen at any second, anywhere in the room. It is something that he could miss if he stopped looking even for a moment.

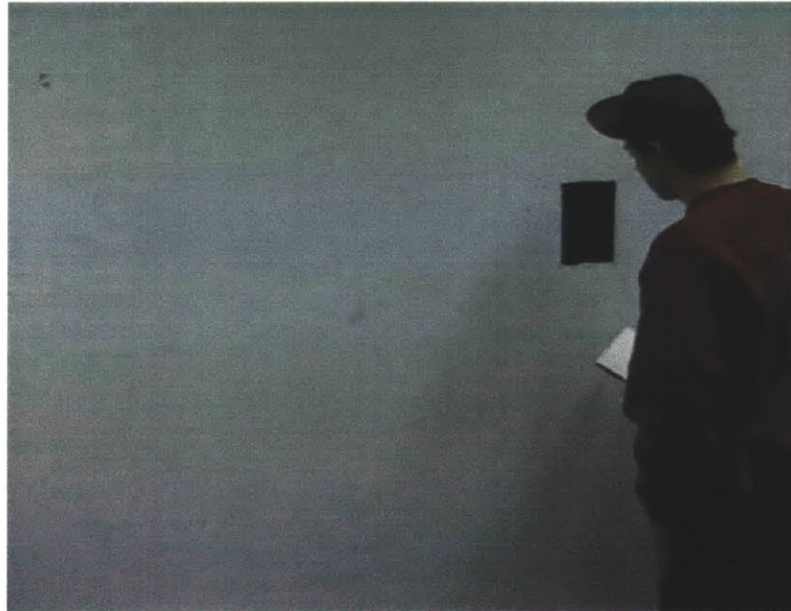
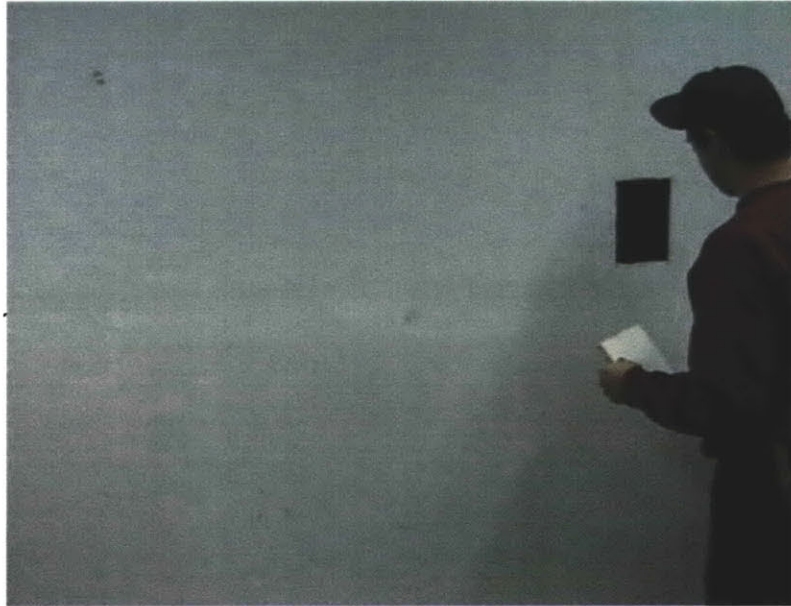
When he sees what he is looking for, he knows what to do.

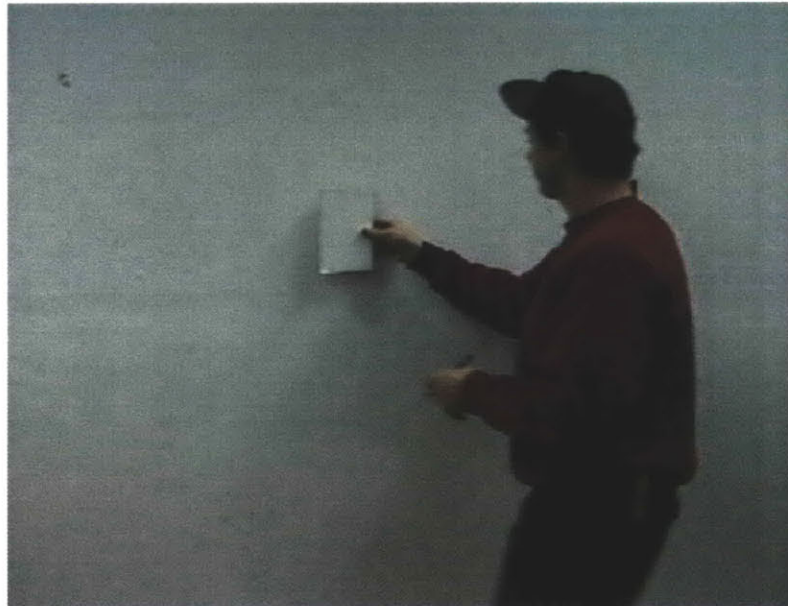


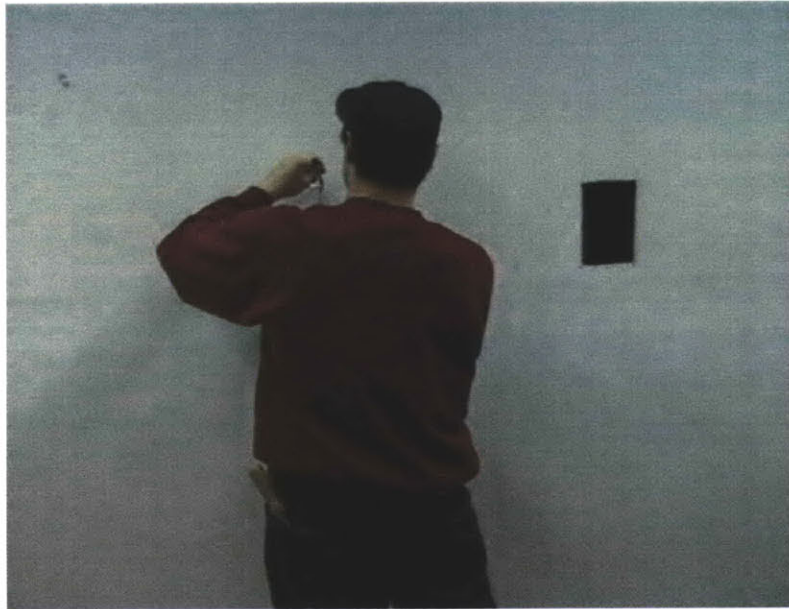


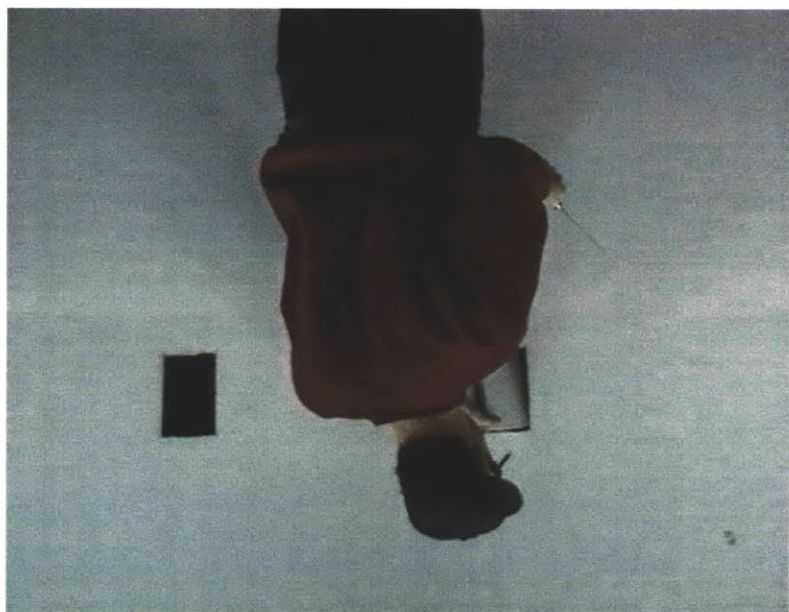


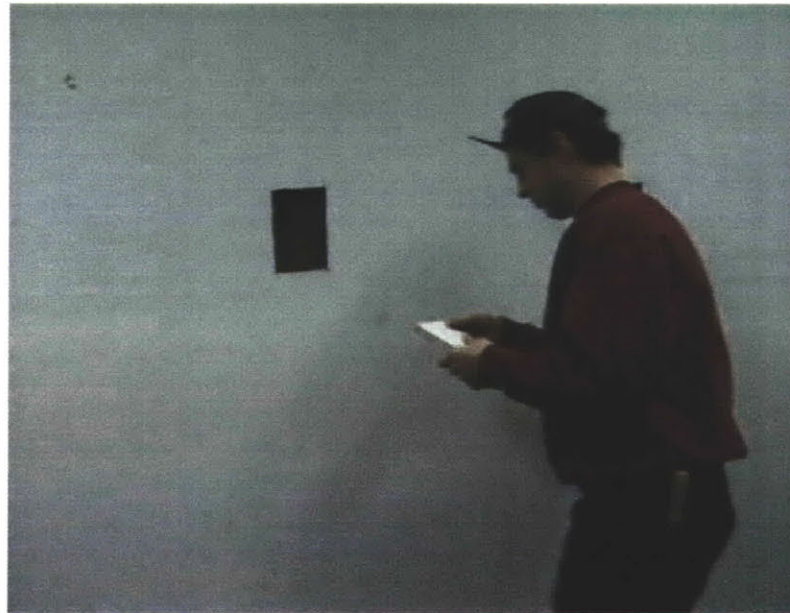
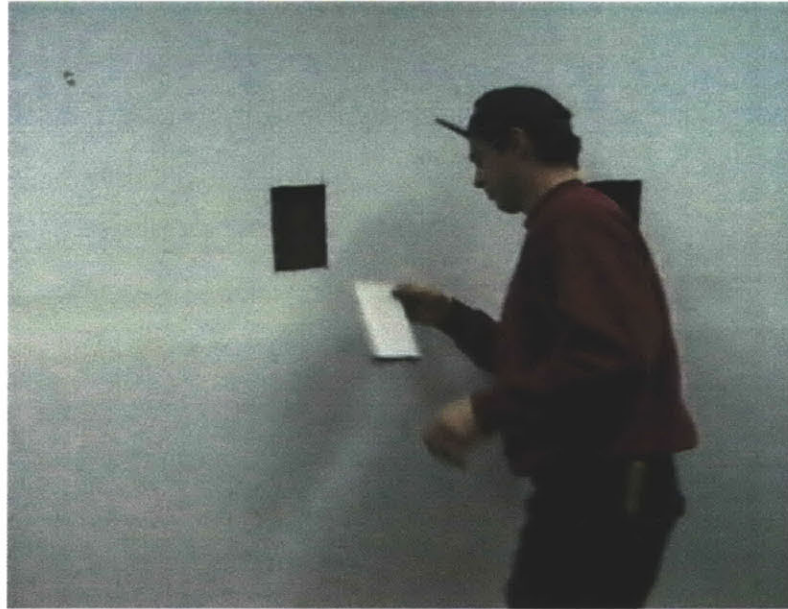


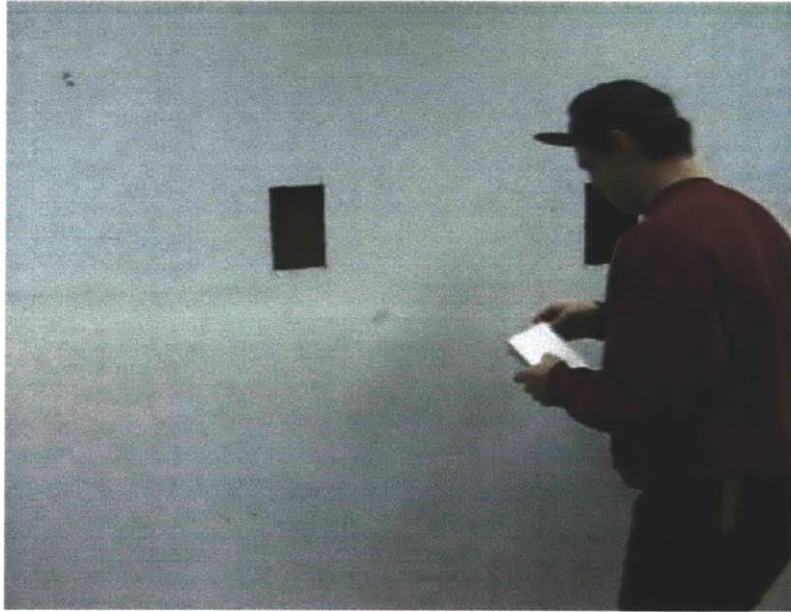
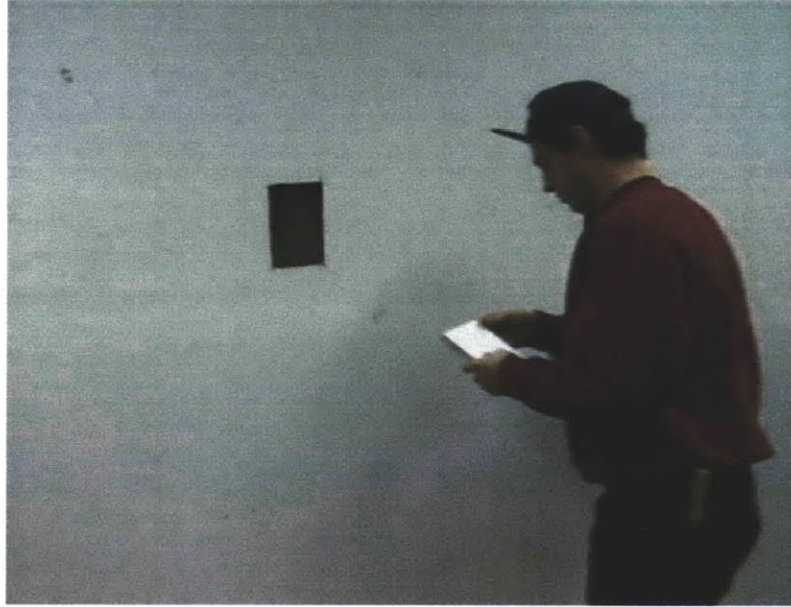


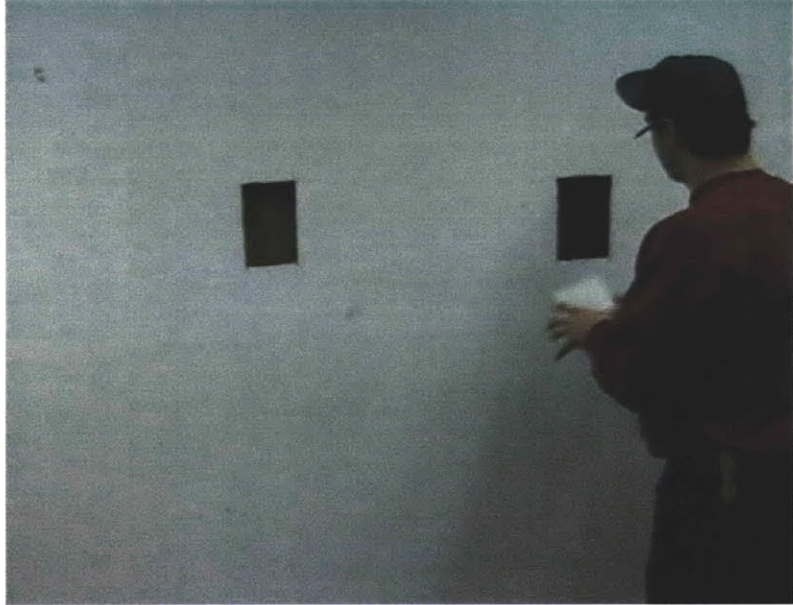








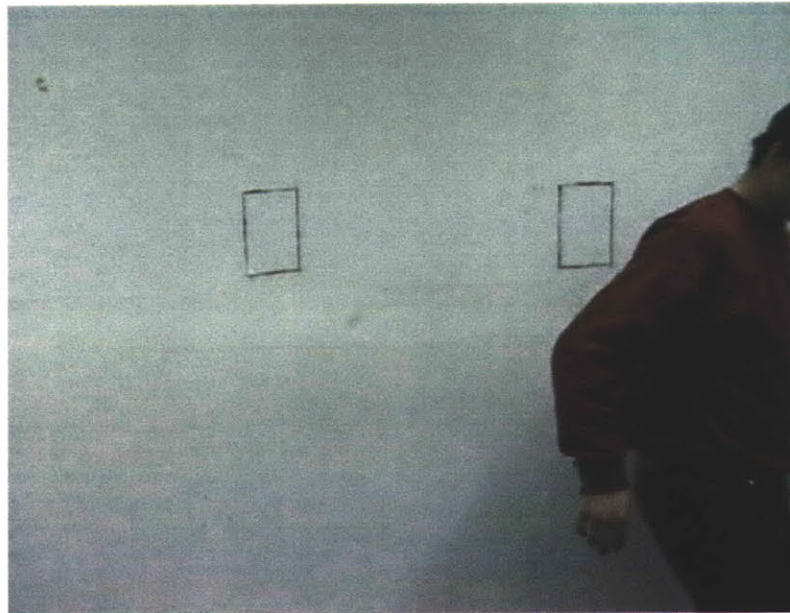


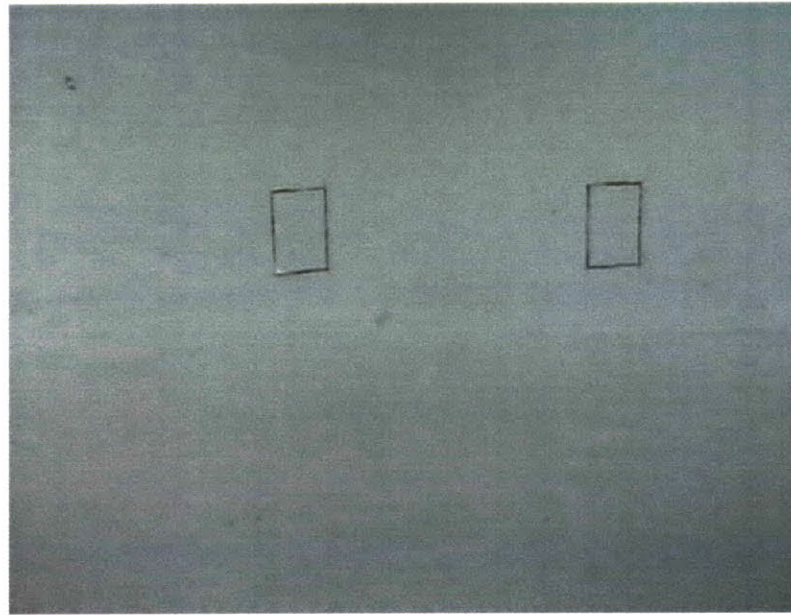
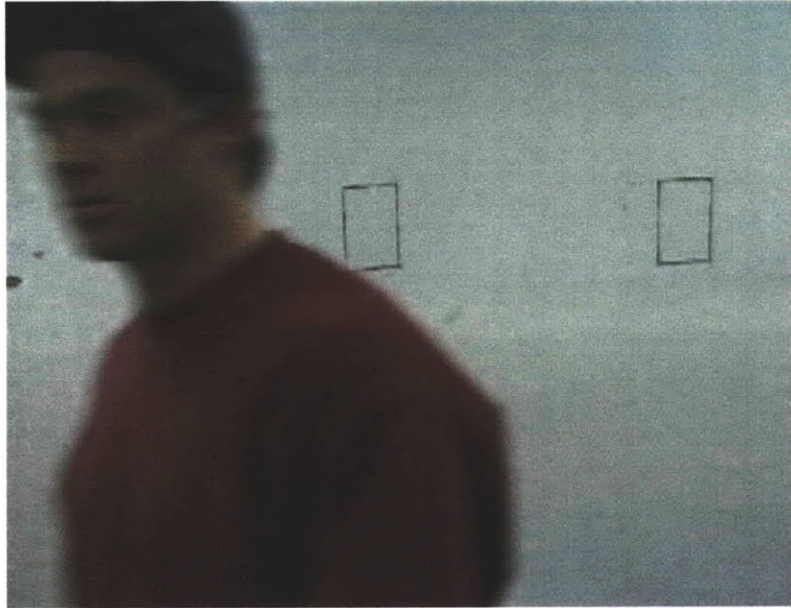


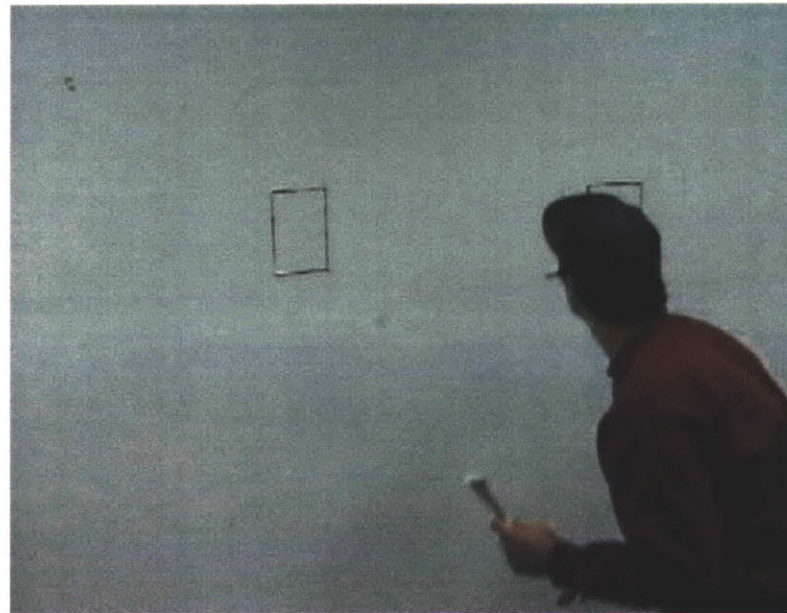
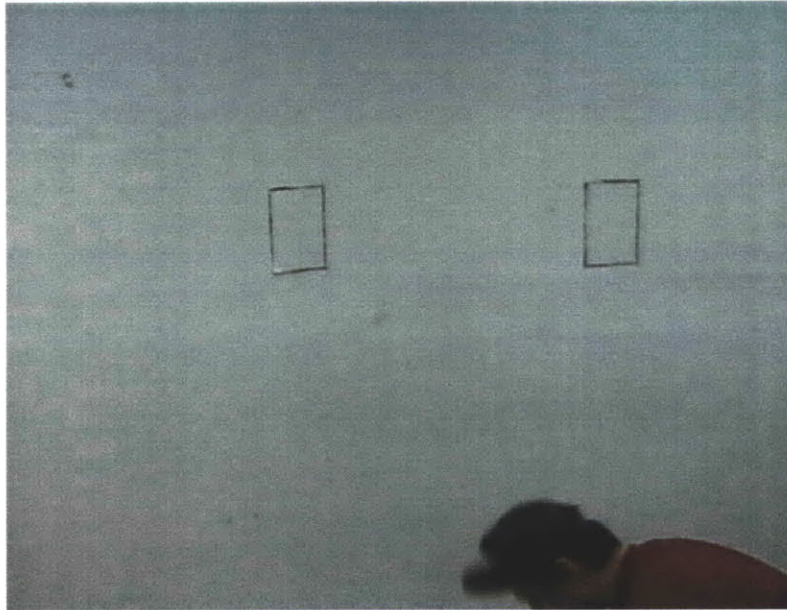




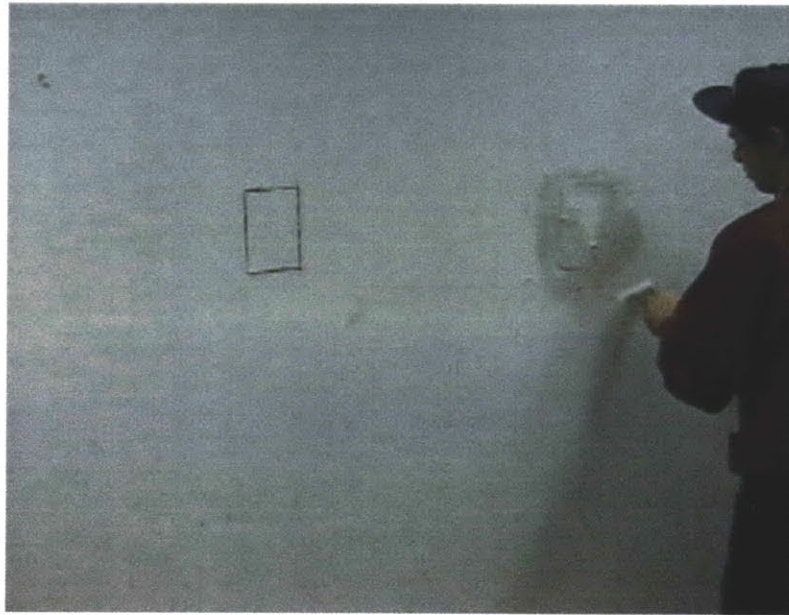


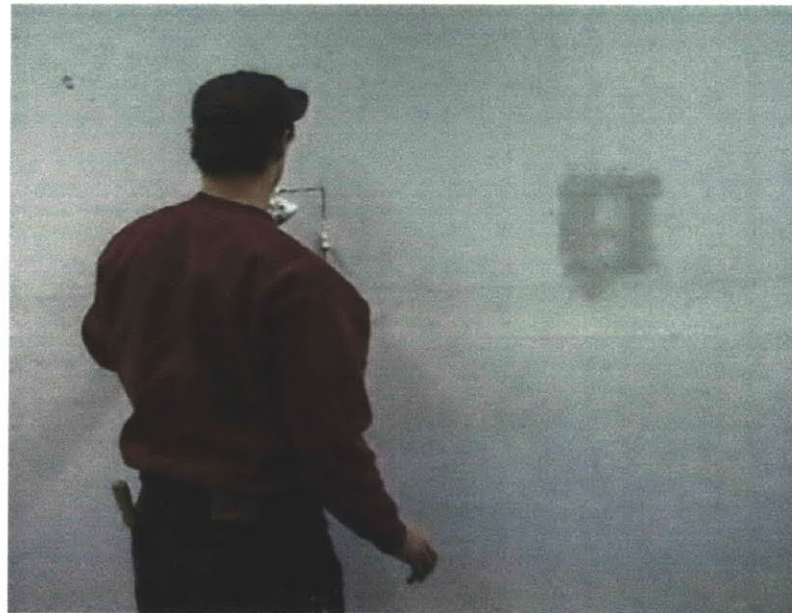
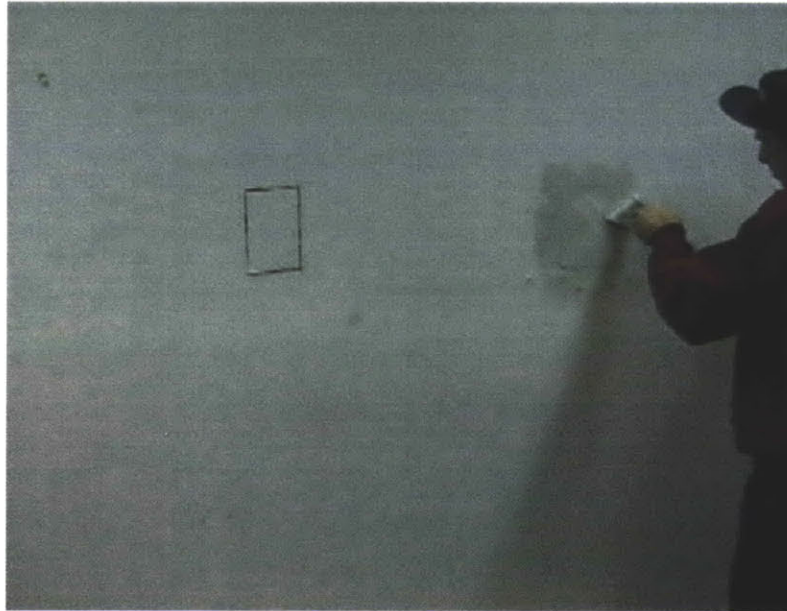


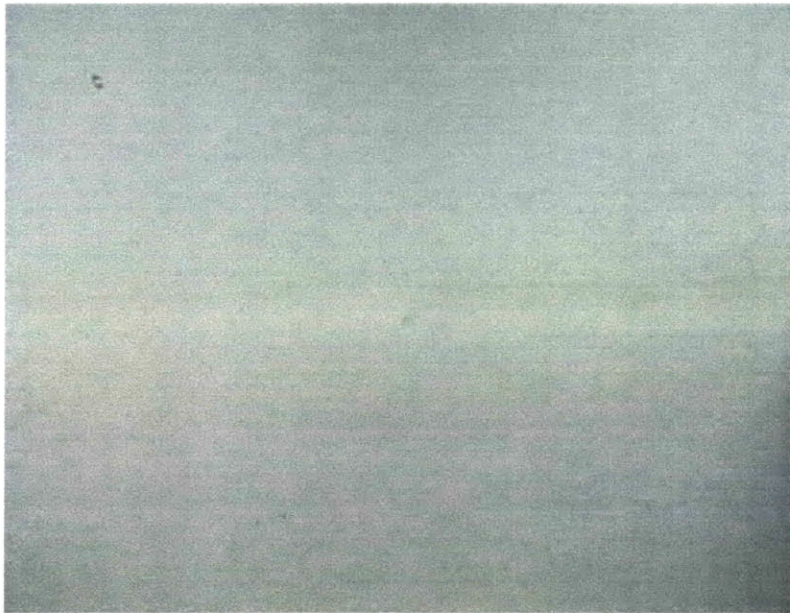
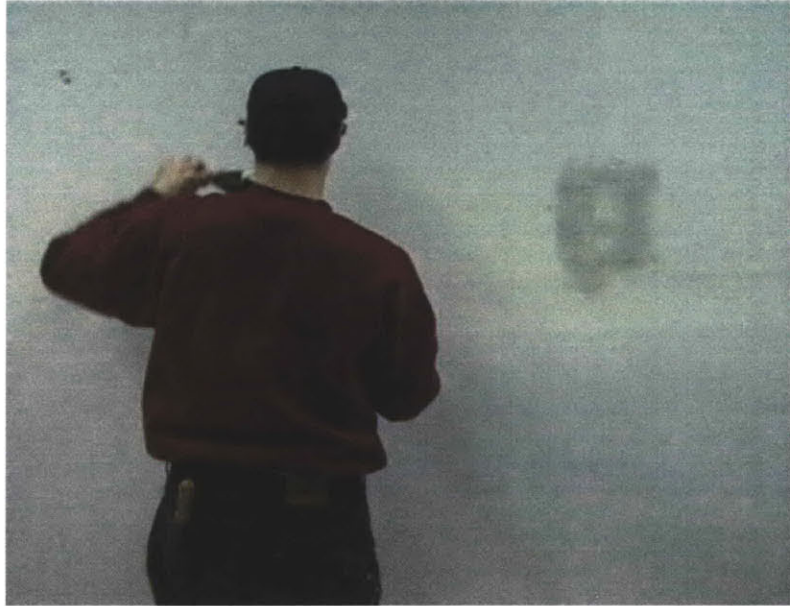












The spackle is sanded and the wall is painted.

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