

TAYLOR DAVIS



SELECTED WORKS

1996–2018

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Leslie Scalapino

for Taylor Davis

thighs aren't any place for them

[board is with in one.]

mirror which is behind (not reflecting or seeing) board no kneeling or windows fireflies

no kneeling fireflies thighs—ones

[also] 'at' orchids

ones-fireflies.

thighs. 'no' neck in night.

people's blackness-rain not being any beside [at the same time]

being beside not being any—people as 'leapt'—and beside—'one'

green being blackness-rain / none—'to' one—they are.

skating killing depredations green

fireflies walking green—ones

evening running right toward 'people' not thighs—ones

'in' evening orchids ones legs and feet right toward people

banks river having walked on water 'past' lines orchids

why is running right toward people isn't one—[and] is river—blackness being

toward 'only' and that being orchids flaps [when 'past' people]—when one runs toward

green as night is unmarked

ones run toward—'people'—'at' night-greenery there—

Note

Friendship is a spatial syntax, as if rendering interior that is 'oneself' which is (also) being rendered as space of actual geographical location. It's space-based, written in China while on the Yangtze River and while here.

Though geographical space was determining the space that is one's (present) apprehension as the syntax: a different space occurs that is outside mind—also—by being (within) it.

In the whole text that is *The Public World*, the intention is to propose observation of one's own culture by superimposing 'outside' on it. *Friendship* is an 'outside' geography (in Asia, in this case) rendered as one's interior spatial sense. Land as thought.

'One' is not obliterated by land.

Geography cultural analysis as rendered/filtered only interiorly—is here scrutiny. Using geographical location (as only configuration, that is, spatial conceptualization/syntax) *Friendship* is the converse of definition *by* place. Time as being—syntactically impermanence. (See "Thinking Serially" in *For Love, Words, and Pieces*.)







OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: *Untitled (lower pasture)*, 2001, plywood, pine, and mirror, 85 1/2 x 32 x 23 1/4 inches
Collection of James Hull and Donna Veverka

Intersectional Minimalism

Ruth Erickson

Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible.

—Helene Cixous

When I meditate on Taylor Davis’s wood sculptures from 2001–02, I cannot help but think about a phrase that has been much used recently: intersectional. At the time Davis made these slated, wooden sculptures, “intersectionality” was not the buzzword it is today but rather used by legal theorists to argue for the interdependence of sexism and racism. Introducing the term in 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw criticized “feminist theory and anti-racist policy discourse” for being “predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often do not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender.” She goes on, “The intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated.”¹ A radical proposition, “intersectionality” challenges us to recognize the intertwined nature of all social categorization, and to make the relationships and interactions between race, class, gender, ability, geography, and so forth foundational to any analysis.

Davis’s work has often been aligned with minimalism due to the artist’s penchant for unadorned materials, repetition, geometry, and tight lines. The artist has at times bristled at this association, which is not surprising, especially given the historical movement’s association with expressions of unchecked masculinity or, as Anna Chave put it, “the unyielding face of the father.”² Indeed, Chave cites Robert Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture” (1966) as evidence of how the artists first associated with minimalism defined their work by denying subjectivity and interrelations: “Intimacy producing relations have been gotten rid of in the new sculpture.”³ Rather, Davis relates her aesthetic preferences to formative years spent on a farm as a child, falling in love with the clarity and economy of rural architecture as well as the visual and physical properties of the predominant building material, wood. Visiting an installation of Donald Judd’s perfect metal cubes in Marfa, Texas, Davis looked out the window to see a long train with rows of cattle cars, finding a minimalism more perfect and necessary than any of its usual heroics.⁴ This approach relates her more closely to the generation of mostly female “postminimalist” sculptors—Jackie Winsor, Hannah Wilke, Dorothea Rockburne, and Eva Hesse, among others—who in the 1970s and 1980s proved how, through a modicum of relatively elemental forms and materials, sculptures can function like hinges among bodies, states of being, natural and manmade materials, and sites, updating the exclusive ethos of minimalism.⁵ Davis comes a generation after these women artists and early in her artistic practice begins working with a restricted vocabulary of forms and materials associated with a minimalist idiom, as



Untitled, 2001, pine and mirror, 40 x 45 x 7 inches
Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston. Acquired through the generosity of The Robert Davoli and Eileen L. McDonagh Charitable Foundation

evident in her sculptures from the early 2000s. In looking closely at these works, I sought novel language to describe how they operate and to signal qualities of Davis, the person who made them and who I know. Thus, I propose the frame “intersectional minimalism” to reexamine Davis’s wood sculptures made around the time she received the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston’s artist prize (now the Foster Prize) and had her related solo exhibition at the museum. With this phrase, I hope to highlight how these sculptures activate shifting relationships between viewer, object, and site through minimal means and an interdependent and nonhierarchical model.

Leading up to Taylor’s ICA exhibition, she completed two sculptures that staged encounters between a minimalist object and an embodied viewer. *Untitled (crate)* (2002), appears to be a shipping crate standing on its side. Rather than the cheap wood and sloppy nails that characterize the ubiquitous palette, Davis’s sculpture is constructed of simple bright pine, joined together at varying intervals by neatly sunk screws, its edges and corners precise. Davis cares deeply about craft, about paying attention to details in construction and material choice. The spare logic of the form signals her attentiveness even as it recalls mass-produced objects in warehouses and on the arms of forklifts everywhere. The sculpture is both in continuum with the world and something added to it, and this simultaneous relationship to figuration and abstraction is the beginning of the work’s intersectional appeal. *Untitled (crate)* possesses a narrow, rectangular volume at its center. Davis has embedded mirrors in the interior faces of the boards used to frame the volume, producing an illusion of infinite depth and breadth, a kaleidoscopic array of light and shadow. One sees reflections of the ceiling, walls, and floor, the play of light coming through the open sides, and a reflected image of narrow boards repeating like a running fence. It is an infinite and modulating visual field produced by the object’s form, its placement within an environment, and the movements of the viewer(s).



OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: *Houdini*, 2001–02, pine and mirror, 46 x 6 x 31 ½ inches
Private collection, New York

A similarly scaled work standing forty-six inches high and just six inches deep, *Houdini* is an inverted rectangular U built from pine to which Davis has attached two sets of boards that differ in size and spacing. As one moves around or past this sculpture, there is a kind of visual flutter, an optical effect created by the variation of the gaps between the slats. The experience recalls the mesmerizing view of flickering train tracks from a driving car, or perhaps a proto-cinematic device like a zoetrope, in which the gaps produce the visual perception of movement. That is one possible experience. Along the top plane and vertical side of the sculpture, Davis has also carefully embedded mirrors. Standing at this end of the work, then, you see a cropped view of your lower half reflected and, on the top, a reflection of the wall and ceiling in front and above you. The viewer is divided into two, a separation at the solar plexus, a division between the sensual and the analytic. At the center of this sculpture, between the two sides, is a narrow space that is neither accessible to peer into nor prominent but that locates a void, a narrow slice of emptiness. As in *Untitled (crate)*, the interior volume of *Houdini* conveys a sense of potential, like a field about to be planted or a lung about to inhale. These sculptures from 2002 index how Davis's concise manipulations of form offer viewers multiple invitations to see themselves and the space and time of their encounter as interconnected with the structure of the object.

For the ICA exhibition, Davis pursued her core interests to create two site-responsive sculptures. As she stated at the time, "I'm interested in visually conflating the viewer and architecture within the frame of the sculpture while the viewer continues to move in both physical and associative space. Both locations at the ICA—the lower gallery and the bottom of the stairwell—are low in the museum's architectural hierarchy. The sculptures I build will definitely be informed by the contextual and emotional qualities of these spaces."⁶ *Pallet*, built of milled sycamore and mirrors, sat on the floor at the bottom of the stairs, the lowest point in the museum's building. Rather than standing on end, as in *Untitled (crate)*, it lay flat on the floor, seven of its eight boards replaced by mirrors. The effect was that, peering down at the sculpture's mirrored surface, you could see the open stairwell spanning the height of the museum's Boylston Street space, glimpsing reflections of the multi-leveled building and the viewers who moved within it. *Pallet* held everything in sight from the museum's nadir. The other work in the exhibition, *Untitled (Container)*, is nine and a half feet high, fifteen feet long, and almost four feet deep. This pen-like construction took up the central core of the first floor gallery. Like *Untitled (crate)* and *Houdini*, it has two different sets of boards fastened at two different intervals to produce the flutter effect of *Houdini*. Because the interior surfaces of the boards are mirrored, when you circumambulated the room-size sculpture, you caught glimpses of walls, the sculpture, yourself, and others. Any single board might reflect any element of the sculpture, environment, and viewer that happens to be positioned opposite its mirrored surface, and because the spacing of the boards and openings vary, there is no clear rule of seeing but rather many enticements. An enlarged opening on one side of the sculpture encourages another viewpoint, one from inside the sculpture, along and through its corridor of reflections to an outside. In a review of Davis's presentation of *Untitled (Container)* at the gallery Triple Candie in New York, *New York Times* reviewer Ken Johnson wrote about

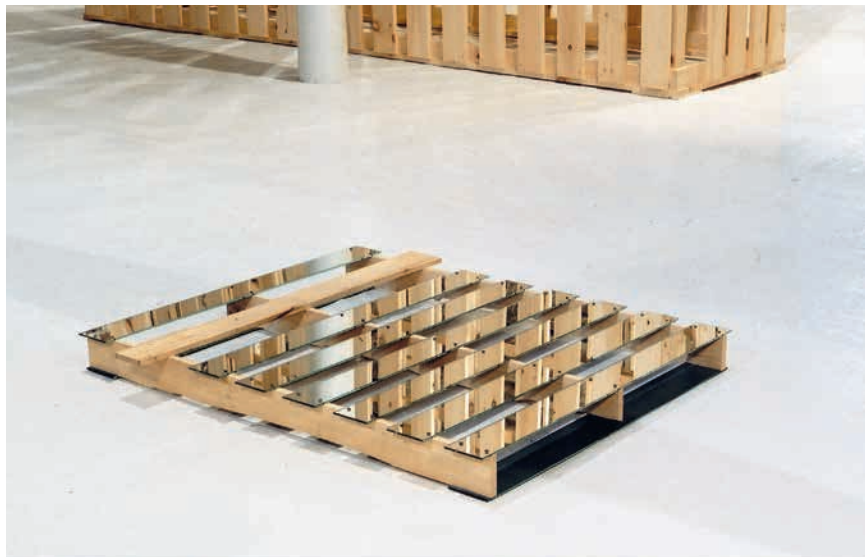


Untitled (crate), 2002, pine and mirror, 114 x 182 x 46 inches

the work, “Following the structural logic is like wandering through a maze, a vivid lesson about relations between perception and cognition.”⁷ Certainly, Davis’s work triggers the complex processes of perception and cognition, of seeing and understanding, and further, it allows for those contextual conditions, such as atmosphere, other viewers, moods, textures, and self-recognition, to be essential factors in the encounter.

Untitled (crate), *Houdini*, *Pallet*, and *Untitled (Container)* set up an equitable exchange between object, viewer, and space, allowing these components in all of their intricacies to be interdependent and non-hierarchical. From conception to craft, Davis assures that no one entity is singled out as chief or more important; hers is a multidimensional conceptualization through the languages of minimalism. If the idea of “intersectionality”—so central to the Black Lives Matter movement—has contributed new recognition of how the laws, policies, and culture that underpin America’s racial divide relate to gender and class inequalities, can we imagine an “intersectional minimalism”? Can we see in these sculptures novel ways to conceive of the art object, the viewer, and the space of the museum together, as deeply interrelated in the powerful yet fragile ecosystem of art? I think so.

1. Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics,” *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, no. 1. <https://philpapers.org/archive/CREDTI.pdf>, accessed January 25, 2018.
2. Anna Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” in *Art in Modern Culture: Anthology of Critical Texts*, eds. Francis Francina and Jonathan Harris (New York: Icon Editions, 1992): 270.
3. *Ibid.*, 273.
4. Conversation with the artist, January 12, 2018.
5. See the important, prescient exhibition and catalogue, Susan Stoops, *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the '70s* (Waltham, MA: Rose Art Museum, 1996).
6. Interview with Jessica Morgan, 2002, <http://taylordavis.net/writingJM.html>, accessed January 25, 2018.
7. Ken Johnson, “Art in Review: Taylor Davis,” *New York Times*, November 1, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/01/arts/art-in-review-taylor-davis.html>, accessed January 25, 2018.



ABOVE: *Pallet*, 2002, wood and mirror, 4 5/8 x 51 x 44 3/4 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee
OPPOSITE: *Untitled (crate)* (detail), 2002, pine and mirror, 114 x 182 x 46 inches









Untitled (2way), 2003, pine and two-way mirror, 96 x 16 x 27 inches
Collection of Robert Davoli and Eileen L. McDonagh

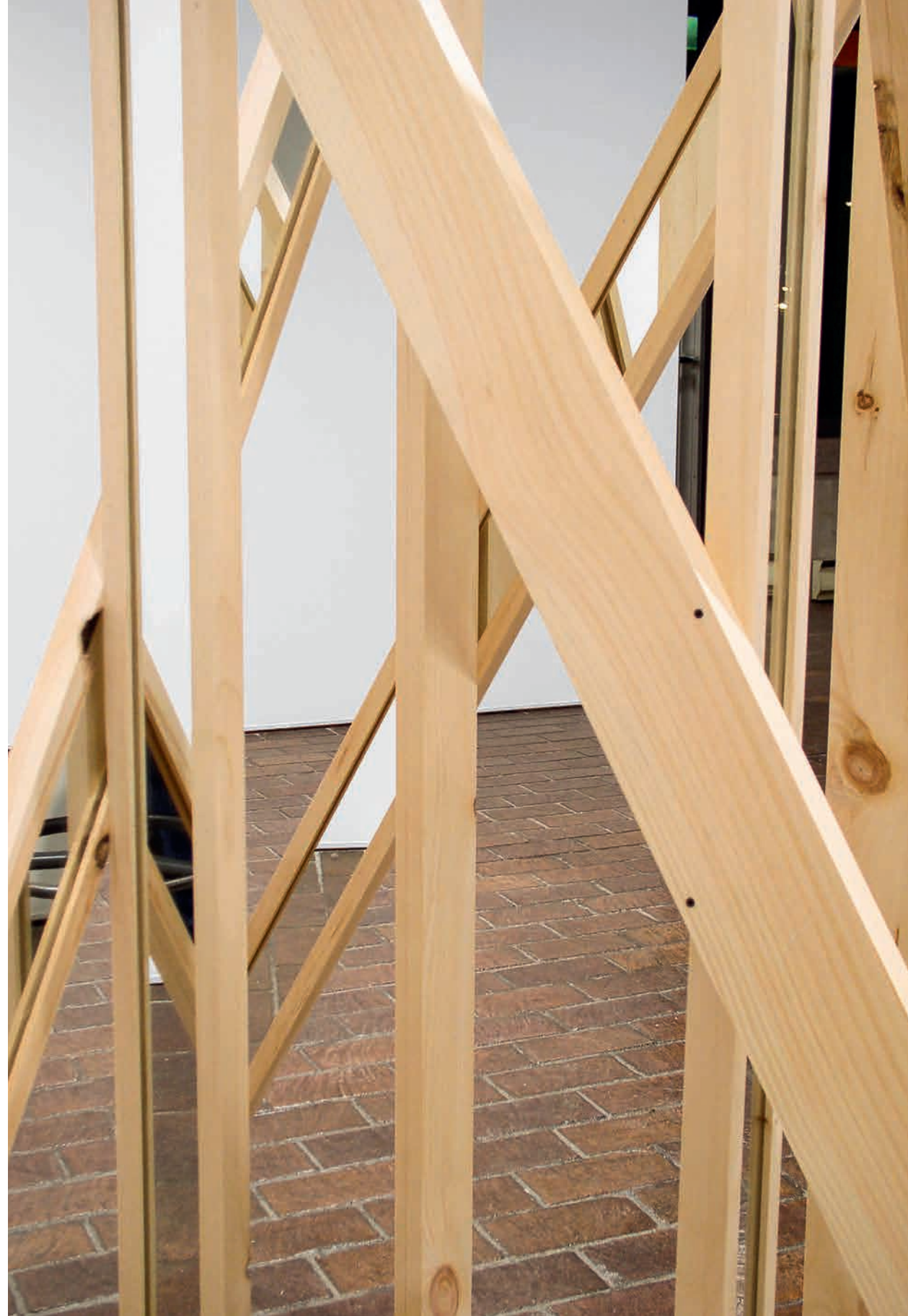


ABOVE AND FOLLOWING: *Untitled (pink/rosa)*, 2003, plywood, pine, and pink/rosa mirror, 87 x 14 x 11 inches





ABOVE AND FOLLOWING: *Fifth Business*, 2003, pine and mirror, 78 x 60 x 60 inches (approximately)
Collection of Robert Davoli and Eileen L. McDonagh





Ann Lauterbach
Sweet Timothy

And now to begin as if to begin. Composition is not there, it is going to be there and we are here. This is some time ago for us naturally. There is something to be added afterwards.

—Gertrude Stein, “Composition as Explanation”

I have often thought that Taylor Davis’s works want to tell us something, to speak.

In fact, language is often tasked to contend with and augment the way her work creates an articulated presence of an almost unbearable muteness.

Articulated because she pays such extreme attention to material syntax: how each part fits, touches, another is everywhere evident, and is the condition of—demand on—our perception. Her works want us to stay in their presence, to stare closely, as if to claim a kind of intimacy. Bodies in space, contending with time.

We see relation; singularities become complexities the way words become sentences. Meaning is eventual; it happens over time. The eventual meaning is not definitive but associative; we dwell in the visual field created by the objects and wait for them to call forth figures, narratives, reveries from our interior stores. Here is a kind of box made of a finished pine frame with steel mesh sides. Inside, we can see a bale of hay. The bale of hay fits into the box in such a way that we know it was made especially to hold it. There is a delicate interplay between the regularity of the steel mesh and the almost animated texture of the bale of hay within. The piece is called *Sweet Timothy*. Sweet Timothy is the name of a grass.

In 2005, to complement her show *Farmer’s Daughter*, Taylor Davis wrote a narrative about the making of *Sweet Timothy*: “Today I completed my cage for a bale of hay, which isn’t meant to be a cage but as an enclosure for the bale to stay,” she wrote. She didn’t like that word, “cage,” in part because she seemed to think of the bale of hay, made of sweet timothy and alfalfa, as a living creature, needing “headroom”: “The bale has head-room but little extra space in front and back, or on either side.” It seems, also, that the bale has memories, and that the working title for the piece was “don’t go,” which, she wrote, “falls on time’s dead ears: associatively the memories held by a single bale (e.g. cut open and shaken out onto the floor of the horses stall) have been remade countless times,” and, she continues, this first, initial experience is replaced by memory, which then, also, changes over time. Concluding, she remarks, “Physically, the object held is a series of actions passed: the bale a living section of field, cut, dried, and bound tightly, taken from context; an object in an object in a room in a city. Here already gone.”



The temporal and spatial collapse: here/gone. Place remains (here), time passes (gone).
As time passes, place also is altered. The body moves.

This written narrative, with its underlay of violence (cut, dried, and bound tightly), of baleful acts, asks the viewer to enter an affective register that the piece itself only barely signals. We see the constructed pine enclosure with its steel wire, the bale held within. The bale is hairy, variegated, its colors in a muted woven tangle. There is a sense of rapt distillation, or condensation, a narrative implied, without discernible beginning or end, held, kept in. The bale seems to be peaceful, resting. Not a cage, certainly, but possibly a kind of casket, made of plain pine beautifully, carefully, exquisitely assembled. The bale could not have expected to be treated with such consummate care, such precise tenderness, following the actions past of its journey. It expected to be strewn out onto the floor of a stall and consumed by a horse.

The bale is perhaps feminine. The horse is perhaps masculine.

It is one of the mysteries of works of art that they contain or keep or enclose more than one temporal register, more than one narrative.

Sweet timothy, the grass, was named for an American farmer named Timothy Hanson, who cultivated it as hay for horses in the early 18th century.

O Lordy, pick a bale of cotton

O Lordy, pick a bale of hay

The familiar refrain: a work song, a spiritual, sung by American slaves working in the fields. Perhaps *this* bale of hay stands in for those living creatures who were transported from their homes to unfamiliar places, their sense of belonging violently erased. This is one of the possible narratives evoked.

"Don't go."

Sweet Timothy was part of the 2005 show called *Farmer's Daughter*. Taylor Davis amended the title with the narrative cited above called *Untitled (gone)* set beside a curtailed or sliced recitation of a somewhat lewd folk tale about a farmer and his daughter and a "lost man," who asks to stay at the farm. Sure, says the farmer, "But you can't touch my daughter." At the end of this narrative is the line "I will tell you the truth, I" which sits across from the final line from *Untitled (gone)*: "*Here already gone.*"

Narratives intertwine; parts are incomplete; erased, like memories, like sentences. We want to halt time's abridgements, to enclose the narrative so that it cannot go on. *Don't go*. Stay. Here, you are safe from time's incursions, protected from the invasive hunger of the temporal maw.

Don't touch my daughter: keep her from the vagaries and violence of intimate life. The enclosure is a coffin or, maybe, just a safe space. The horse is hungry. Time will not be stilled. The price of liberty is history.



ABOVE AND FOLLOWING: *Farmer's Daughter #2*, 2005, plywood, pine and bale (sweet timothy and alfalfa), 16 x 20 x 37 inches







PREVIOUS: *Farmer's Daughter*, 2006, installation view at Samson Projects, Boston

ABOVE: *Untitled*, 2005, plywood, pine tar and cotton bandana, box: 16 x 14 x 14 inches; bandana: 19 x 19 inches
Private collection











A drawer is passed down between things.
Some thoughts on Taylor Davis's *Untitled (Apple Tree)*
Rochelle Goldberg

It is not what is in the drawer that is important. Importantly, if the contents of the drawer are left untouched, then this content will still be there, in the drawer, when the drawer is opened in the future, sometime, later.

To return a drawer in trust of this future . . .

But the artist is always touching things. The knowing return to or storing of content, in the context of this touching of things, in the continued touching of things, places the drawer's content in the future marked as both future and stump. If to hold is to stump. The stump that is held, here, utters growth beyond any bracketing of content. Even if cut, the stump was in time, growing.

The drawer holds the contents of the drawer itself . . .

Wood in varying grades of use, potential use, and dis-use, composing a drawer and its contents—a drawer that detours back through itself to signal its own construction. The detour is so large that the drawer cannot re-enter the cavity from which it made an exit. The stump is blocking this re-entry, resting taller than its cornering edges, which are flush and not flush. As each edge wraps its other edge, their relative heights are deliberately cut short of each other. Neither side is in agreement on exit or re-entry. Even on the floor it won't stay easy.

The content of the drawer grows out of that which contains it . . .

The drawer's detour back through itself embraces differing logics—human and otherwise. Spalted, burrowed, and chewed. Accepting tiny visitors that consume details to contribute content. The larger of the few ate around the soft tissue trailing the stump. While the smaller bites pierce perpendicular to rings. Narrower to follow. Passage is marked even if the visitor has vacated.

The drawer revolts from hold to holding . . .



Untitled (Apple Tree), 2006, milled pine, plywood and apple stump, 8 x 19 x 18 inches
No longer extant



Declaration of Interdependence

David Levi Strauss

“TO HARASS OUR PEOPLE AND EAT OUT THEIR SUBSTANCE.” That’s the line cut meticulously into two leather belts in my possession. Taylor Davis gave me the first belt, in a natural finish, soon after she started this sculptural project. I was pleased to receive it, but didn’t wear it, much, and ended up hanging it horizontally over the entrance to my library, where it remains, secured by nails driven into a 250-year-old chestnut beam, under a gold panel by Daniel Martinez, reading, “Venceremos” (We Will Win), from his *Divine Violence* room in the 2008 Whitney Biennial. Taylor graciously gave me a second belt, carrying the same inscription, in black, and I have worn that one quite a bit. It’s been especially satisfying to unbuckle, draw out, and brandish it to make a point in a heated conversation.

I’ve had some time now to ponder the words carved into these belts, and my thinking about them has changed. Thomas Jefferson penned them, of course, to drive home the odiousness of the Crown’s treatment of settlers in the American colonies. Following the Introduction and the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence, the Indictment is a forceful list of grievances against the colonial power, a bill of particulars detailing the King’s “repeated injuries and usurpations” of the colonists’ rights and liberties.

The British Crown sought to raise money to administer the colonies through taxes and tariffs on goods that were not produced in the colonies, but had to be purchased from Britain, including glass, lead, paints, and paper. But it was primarily the import taxes on tea and wine that caused the most unrest. The Townshend Acts of 1767 led to the seizure of the *Liberty*, a sloop owned and operated by one of the wealthiest businessmen in the colonies, John Hancock, who stood accused of avoiding paying taxes on a shipment of Madeira wine. The Boston Tea Party followed in 1773, the Intolerable Acts in 1774, the American Revolutionary War in 1775, and Hancock’s signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The American hatred of taxes, with or without representation, was there from the beginning, and conservatives have often quoted grievances from the Declaration to support their policy demands, especially their arguments against government bureaucracy (now called “The Deep State”), and other perceived curtailments of their own self-expression.

The language that Jefferson used in the Declaration, “to harass our people and eat out their substance,” was probably hyperbolic at the time (“truthful hyperbole”), since there were only about 50 officials in the British Customs Service assigned to oversee a population of 3 million people in the 13 colonies to try to keep people from smuggling and avoiding import duties. It’s unlikely that many colonists were really being eaten out of house and home by these officials. My anarchist friends say that most of these grievances and charges were actually designed to obscure the real estate swindles and massive land

grabs being perpetrated by big businessmen in the colonies, like John Hancock. Sound familiar? And whose Presidential signature rivals John Hancock’s today in ostentation?

I think the words of Thomas Jefferson in 1776 have come back to haunt us. We no longer need the British Crown to “harass our people and eat out their substance.” We can do it to each other! Our grievances have come back to define us. The American experiment in democracy, only 242 years old, is facing the most serious threat to its existence yet, and it is coming from our own, democratically-elected President and the people who support him. But even more disturbing than that is the needling complicity of all the rest of us, wrapped in our technological self-absorbed cocoons, demanding things for our present selves, but turning against any of the demands of the greater collective good. If this new Century of the Selfie prevails, it will most certainly *eat out our substance* and leave us empty shells, full of ourselves and forgetting Jefferson’s call for us “to mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”



To Harass our People, 2007, strap leather with stainless steel buckle, 1 ¼ x 42 inches
Collection of David Levi Strauss





A.K. Burns

One stands alone exhibiting a phallic look, a stump protruding vertically from the ground. The trunk may be a tree's central superstructure, but it's the branches and roots that labor ceaselessly. These sprawling members simultaneously lurch towards radiant celestial heat and push the watery depth of our terrestrial bowels. With girth dependent on their productivity, severed members leave one at quite a loss. Yet, even after being cut down to size, one is steadfast. Some would call it overcompensating, full of individual hubris, assertiveness and pride. Adding injury to insult, along strolls the metaphorical, nibbling through the cambium sheath. Bearing a toothy grin, beaver satisfies herself by stripping away the surface and exposing one's vulnerabilities.

Two pairs of oversized front teeth cannot be contained by her furry trap, as beaver's upper and lower jaw, working in concert, fell a tree in less than ten minutes—comparable to a chainsaw wielding lumberjack. Ripping the cord of a 45cc chainsaw releases an explosive sound. Trees blunted. Logs yielded. After they are delivered, steamed and debarked they are placed on an industrial scale lathe. Spinning against the pressure of a sharp blade, the log unravels into a single lengthy sheet of veneer, to be trimmed and composited into regimentally formed 4 by 8 foot sheets of ply. Constructed in the space between these two—human and animal actions—an inverted post and lintel intersects a circle cut into the base of an open-top box. Glaring down at the knee-high object, it appears like an explicit diagram of penetrative relations. A conjoined binary, the vertical walls act more like a perimeter for the lonesome stump than a container, the crest of its head peering out over the top of the fence.

Three dimensions are the supposed limit of human perception. Clunky animals that we are, it's through movement that one's understanding of space is affirmed. As one moves, past and around, the boxy form reveals its baroque underpinnings. The figure of the veneer may come from a single sheet but it appears otherwise. Identity built through multiplicity, the arrangement of surfaces assembles itself like a three-dimensional quilt. Stitching together a patchwork of radically different grain, arranged to upend any perception of consistency. As the voyeurs' body navigates, the surfaces shift symmetrically between continuity, difference and different continuity. In this *ménage à trois* a hidden actor lurks—the turntable, perpetrator of revolutions, initiates the counter movement. Four seasons mark the passing of time, depending on your position of course. Here in the north, turn east for waxing illumination, turn south for an evening, and turn west for the hot pink waning. Any way you slice the pie, quadrants are assembled from right angles. Edges meet and corners form. Enclosing four to be exact. Dependable, productive, punctual and obedient, four—the same number of letters as its value. For all its practical leanings, different shaped rectangles emerge from an equal area measurement. One atop the other, two surfaces distinctly out of sync are anchored in a pivotal union. Placing a record on the spindle, a tone sets the hands on a clock. Manually, when one is least expecting it, a turn occurs, they cross but never meet and things remain askew.



1 2 3 4, 2008, mossy cup oak log chewed by a beaver, plywood and steel turntable, 14 x 32 x 30 inches
Collection of Anne R. and Greg M. Avis

Turning To Oliver Strand

Day enclosure (day day enclosure enclosure), shining rings: mounds or hills,
signals, spheres, was walking beside a, had to
turn to continue walking beside the, were folding - holding the absent
person's hands in my hands, facing the absent person, bright pooling fronts and
backs, approaching from the side, covering, distances pooling and crossing from the
approaching
person to, approaching from the split, were continuing to approach beside,
substrate. Who was covering me-anyone? Who was covering the object? Transparent
limb, transparencies, overlapping transparencies being
pulled apart, lifted off
the absent person's face-hill, delicate torso. Feature? Placement? Delaminating/
pooling without stopping, raised edges? No distance to the next person? Bark edge,
where the branch's growth "had to" turn - is - to reveal the transparent limb beside it,
the cross section, without
stopping to
be pressed by/away - folded? Below and how much, and how much without
stopping? Before?

Everyone day enclosure without stopping to to away to
without stopping to turn the handkerchief or fingertips where the sleeve
receives-received anyone-everyone, smoothing the, padding the
wrapping the forearm where the wrapping
the sleeve where the perimeter doesn't change anything head, "I love you" head
tilts back and between the quiet breaths soft quiet
closed lips the jaw opening the
jaw humility-tenderness opens-empties changing color. The backs and the
fronts. Day endayday: impart - receded - allow - then. Where where
anyone-everyone looked through to from the opposite side covers both of the
faces or lobes, lifted wavering or reaching to, approaching in - how do you
find where the location unfolds to receive you-anyone, the next person?
Holding-belonging
touches can't
feel the flush part.



Untitled (for James Castle), 2008, black walnut plywood and sugar maple, 65 x 33 x 21 inches

Corner day daydayday: face-sphere if unrepeated unrepeating
face-signal if
standing shouting distance the outbuilding - toward - the fence, the face at the
correct time, standing to one side, joined
with what, covered, uncurls around
whatever holds - bundling-chevron, the extra part - it together, substrate.
Unfolded matchbox's four notches, bluejean inseam grommet. Holds itself together/up
the thickness of
one sugarmaple board or shin top of the foot, shim
or substrate, corner-corner edge-edge suspending hovered (unfastening,
unembracing) around (unsplitting) which surfaces? Tilted? Exact volume meeting us
where
no part is hidden by its extent. Face.
Joint. Where can what is covering me show itself? What is what is showing the
substrate covering anything - the centers - from?

Is the shape given?
Edge-edge something enclosure-daydayday, day-edge, day-corner, corner, circle:
four stacks or faces, four eyes, four ears, four nostrils, three mouths, four slots, four eyes,
four ears, four nostrils, three mouths, opposite
sides. Fifteen
continuing to turn around the fifteen crisp and empty unseparated successions:
eye, ear-nostril, mouth, eye-eye, ear-nostril-nostril-ear, mouth, eye, nostril-ear,
mouth, projection, socket socket. Is
the third mouth. Arrive. Turning
the surround, the pictures, the housing, the opposite side. Continuous with.
The opposite side touches the front without covering it. Does the location itself have to
have a housing? Seeing the opposite side carried
to the front - the pictures, turning,
continuous with or through to the corner, the window, the centers, turning, the
third mouth, the extra side. Holding-belonging
recognized by position and number of continuous rows, splitting,
reiterated all
the way across, edged unedged untwisting unrepeating.



Untitled (for James Castle), 2008

Up to, "comes up to" my/everyone's eyebrow, leaning to touch forehead to,
feet together,
the corner, to each corner. Next unbounded arc, repeating, edged day day plumb
line in addition, in addition to, lowering, what
the circular extent many positions from which the sliver, almost edge-on ¼"
on the inside
of the brace, below, between - was, between the wings, covering what it holds
together? Covers what holds it almost plumb? Is called
"everywhere" - smoothing again. Pane-panel "itself" seems turns-turning to
or from the next panel and the absent person, like a batten, crossed the center,
the structural part, like an automobile inside a Boise redwood, separations,
the pile
needs to the needing the correct location, pointed to the reflection where
the third and fourth pieces, breathing in and out (carrying),
stopped moving.

Rising-raising?
Everywhere-everyone, in addition to, in day-brace, buckling, reach, props/spans,
leaning
forward to take a step back hand and
right ankle projecting from the back of the right thigh in, toward the front,
standing almost
touching the heel to the back, the opposite sides of the braces, bending, the
pith, bending straightening: dayday
dayday, piths
holding something in air beside each board, centers of gravity rippling into
the seams? Holding my face between the absent person's hands along
the crease? Absent housings crossing the extra part the absent person's leg
repositioned my mouth with. Enclosure day-voice enclosure day day housing
enclosure day enclosure/anyone (placement) (stack-day): if the
unabandoned could
stand still beside where nothing's left, remaining, zero radius motionless beside
a face I have never recognized before - waiting. Can.





Phantom Limbs
Catherine Lord

Loving a tree is a long-term proposition. Mourning a tree is forever.

I write longhand because five months after the latest hurricane there is no electricity in most of Dominica. Maria took the leaves off the trees in the rain forest, then the bark off the trunks, and then she washed leaves and bark and trunks down every ravine, along with boulders and rivers of mud. Dominica has, they say, 365 rivers, meaning 365 ravines. Maria, Maria, you make she wet, wet wet, says the 2018 calypso hit. She put sofas in mango trees and boats on verandahs. She saved one precious library of bird books but smothered the village that held the house that held the library. She took out dozens of lives and almost all the shade.

My yellow lined pad sits upon a rough plank of saman, culled because it was crippled by another giant that crashed down the cliff behind it. The muddy scar is hundreds of feet tall. The inn's owner has disguised the outline of what once was shade with exotics rescued from the sludge: torch ginger (pink), tree fern, bamboo, a rare ginger (red), begonia, brugmansia (also pink), crown of thorns, balisier, heliconia, verbena (purple foliage), croton, bromeliads, crinum, and what may become a bearing guava. Above the garden, up the cliff, a slope of trees sprouts greens leaves straight from gray trunks. Their canopies gone, the survivors look like nothing so much as a tropical diaspora of Joshua trees competing with rapacious coralita vine.

Taylor Davis would love my board. It was sawed, by hand, not from the trunk of the saman but from two higher branches that grew so companionably that they merged. Taylor would be able to parse the board better than I. It takes a forensic bent, or perhaps a kind of psychoanalytic empathy for the childhood traumas of the larger flora, to read backwards from a slice of wood. Trees are (at least the interesting ones, the escapees, the strikers, the saboteurs) provoked into defense by the history of their encounters with dangers, among them drought, flood, insects, fungus, axes, shade, nails, saws and barbed wire. Taylor is drawn to the evidence of such histories, to the deviants, to the crippled, to the wayward, to the enormous difficulty of explaining what, exactly, a tree might be, where one ends and another begins.

In an ideal world, *ONE EIGHTH DEAD CENTER* should be viewed alone in a conventional white cube, perhaps pin lit, but definitely on a dark floor with unremarkable grain. That way, as you circle, as you pace to and fro, you realize that you stand in the ghost of the canopy of a tree. You move in empty space around what looks from afar like nothing so much as a medieval blunderbuss, or, from a slightly different angle, a prosthetic leg. You realize that you are picking your way through a tangle of phantom limbs. You are maybe twenty feet up, teetering in a wrangle of memories that sit high above the ground, looking down at a meticulously cut section of a burl that interrupted



ONE EIGHTH DEAD CENTER, 2008, cherry burl, 21 x 4 x 5 inches



ONE EIGHTH DEAD CENTER, 2008

the intention of a cherry tree. The bark has been removed and the lower half of the burl has been cut entirely away, eliminating half of the sphere so that it can sit true upon the floor. The remaining part of the burl was halved, vertically, then halved again, also vertically, offering to our attention only one quarter of the burl and about fourteen inches of trunk. The outside of *ONE EIGHTH DEAD CENTER*, the part you cannot see when you first enter the gallery, is weathered to pearly grays. The inside, heartwood and sapwood in shades of reddish brown, pulls you toward the center of the room. The intruder that made the burl, likely a fungus, was suffocated in what seems to be a massive overreaction of the tree's immune system. "Gall" is another name for "burl." Galls provoke trees to anger. If I count my rings correctly, it took the tree about fifteen years to get its groove back.

If you had never seen a rain forest, or if you were temperamentally disinclined to wonder why large trunks lack branches and leaves, life on this island would appear to be splendid, just another day in paradise, rum punch and banana fritters served at one p.m., except that the rum factory is gone and so are the bananas.

My saman is the unusable end of a plank, one giant knot and ragged bark. Destined to form part of a kitchen counter in the rebuilding of this small inn, the board has been marked in pencil for cutting, but I could not let a galaxy of tree rings land in the burn pile. Besides, I have in mind a breadboard. The galaxy won't fit in my suitcase. Dominica officials are reluctant to let the board go. What if there's an insect in there?, they ask.

Taylor knows and loves the piece of land in Maine from which her piece of cherry was culled. It belongs to an old friend who stewards the forest. The burl is not just any scrap of future chipboard, or firewood, but a living thing raised on land and in light she's visited for many years. Taylor takes her trees personally. She can provide the arboreal histories that intersect her history—who planted them, when, and why. Most people don't pay such close attention. *ONE EIGHTH DEAD CENTER*, then, is about filling a white cube to the brim with phantom limbs, with spindly twigs, with serrated, slightly scratchy leaves, with presences and histories that must be inferred. If the cube happens to have windows, absence spills out. You don't have to have a thing for trees to wonder why the room is almost empty, but if you choose to figure it out you might well let yourself be seduced by its silent didacticism.

No chance of that with *Tbox 1*. It chatters. Indeed, it preaches in defiant, almost alarmist, perhaps hysterically overwrought tones. The reference is to an apparatus of somewhat hazy origin but definitely mastered by Peter Frampton by 1970 to marry voice and guitar in such a way that they can never again be distinguished. Birch plywood, the material that forms the weight of *Tbox 1*, comes from trees harvested on farms and milled in such fine layers that there's no way to work back to the trauma of a single individual. (Plywood is not a candidate for psychoanalysis.) Taylor is the only person I have ever encountered whose first impression of Donald Judd's *100 untitled works in mill aluminum*, installed in baronial splendor in Marfa, Texas, was that the fabrication was sloppy. Some screws, she muttered while perambulating the shrine, were inserted at an angle. *Tbox 1* is perfectly joined, no screws, no glue showing. It consists of an open topped upper box fitted precisely over a lower box that meets the ground with four horizontal flaps, like a

carelessly tossed down moving box. It thus suggests a mass of something once contained or a mass of something about to fail at being contained: ideas? arguments? repressions? Hard not to leap to disobedient Pandora frenetically chasing the pain and pleasure she loosed upon the world, but do not blame the woman. Here she gets to say FUCK YOU. Here she uses a blue painter's tape to accentuate the shapes drawn by the grain of the tree, originary moments dissolved by repetition and interred by the workings of industrial efficiency. The double FUCK YOU is the fact that the pointing and gesturing and chattering consists of meticulously painted forgeries. *Trompe l'oeil*, all the way down to the ripped edges of the tape. Artifice lies with artifice, in both senses of the verb. There's something carnal about this, something bossy dom. Like the tape, with the tape, *Tbox 1*, performs. And if the tape is a fraud, what does that say about the plywood? What does that imply about the idea of a box?

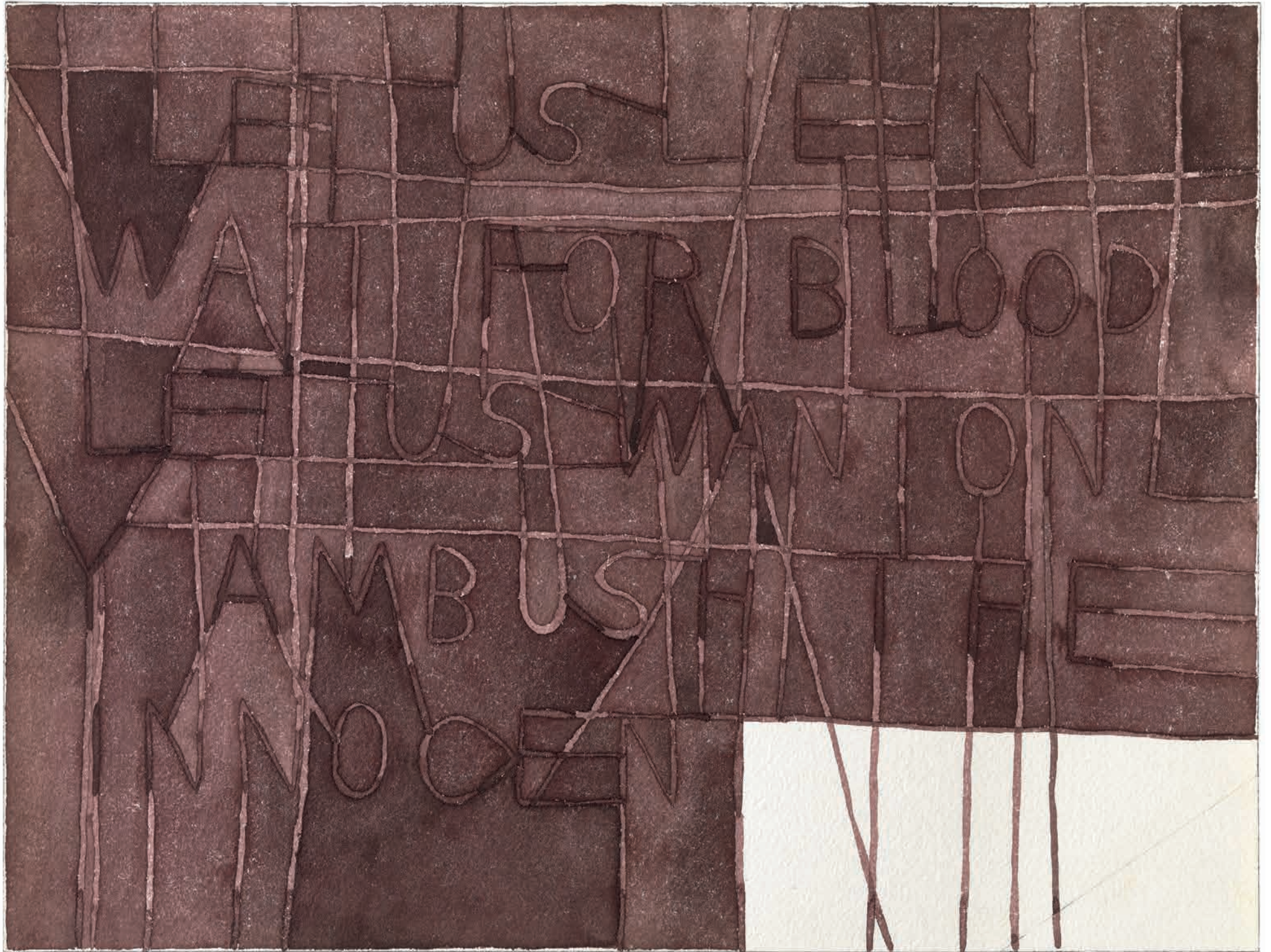
I am determined to remove my chunk of saman from Dominica, because it replaces, in the underbrush of my memories, the saman that grew halfway up the road from Roseau to Pont Cassé. Its canopy shaded the courtyard of the folly of an American: something to do with Standard Oil and an extractive zone. After bantering about politics with the airport bureaucrat, she lets my saman emigrate. She wishes me luck with American immigration. I carry the board through JFK, sticking out of an Adorama shopping bag. The inhabitants of any forest exist in symbiotic relationship to each other. Leaves, birds, bugs, capillaries, roots, tubers, rain—they communicate. The community defends its selves.

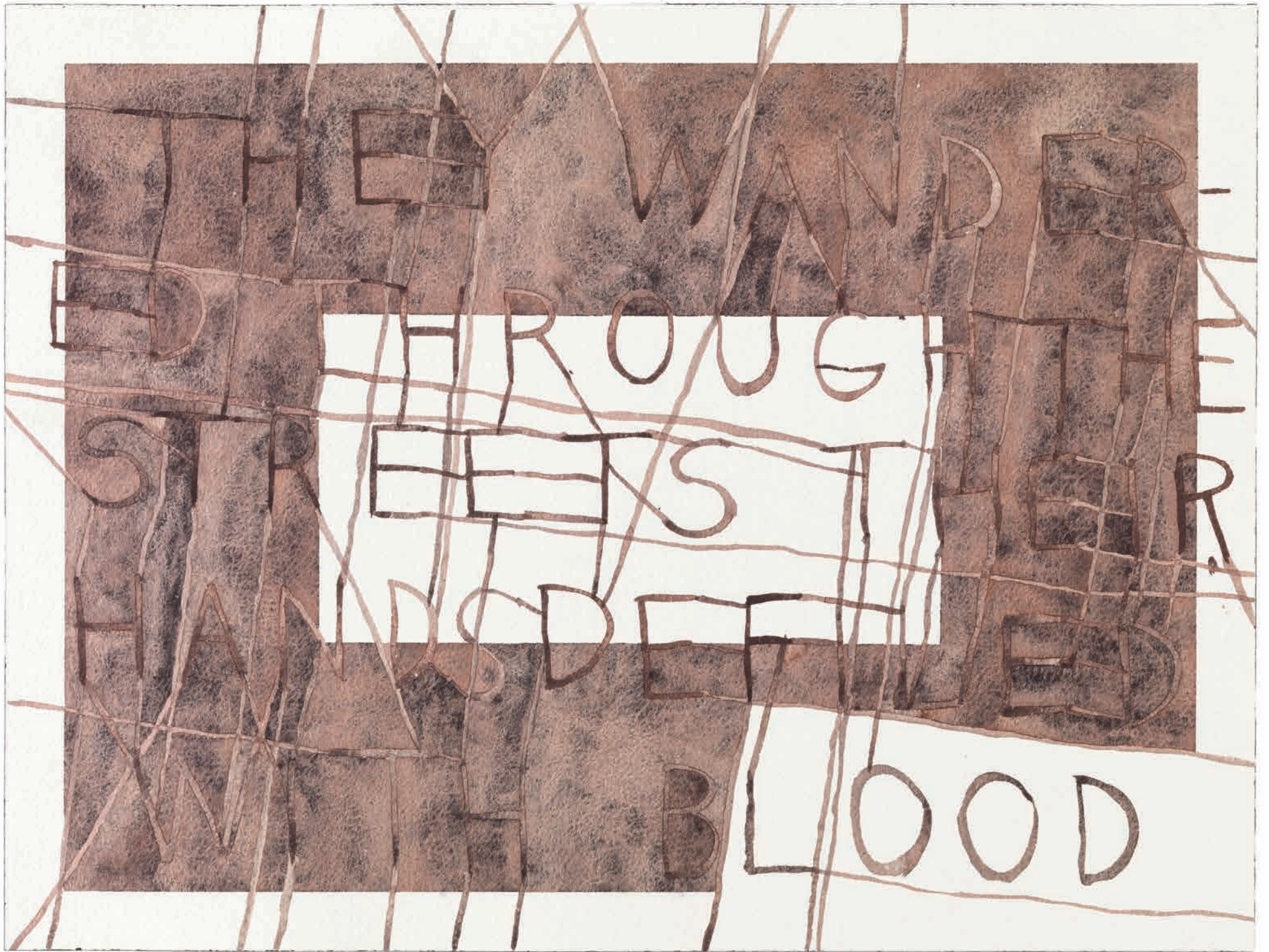




Slider, 2010, black walnut plywood and cherry log fragment, 22 x 5 x 23 inches (width variable)
Collection of Abigail Ross Goodman







Richard Klein

I periodically receive a reminder of Taylor Davis's work via the postal service. This prompt for thinking about the artist is not in the form of a letter or exhibition invitation, but rather the quarterly issue of *FarmTek*, the printed catalogue of the Iowa-based agricultural supply company founded in the 1970s. *FarmTek* sells everything from chicken coops to hay tarps and its pages display the quirky materiality of farming in the twenty-first century. Davis, who spent her grade school years living on farms in Washington state and Minnesota, has frequently incorporated images cut from the pages of *FarmTek* in her work, revealing a fondness for both the catalogue's oblique evocation of the rural landscape and the odd, encyclopedic juxtapositions found in its pages. On another level, however, Davis's interest in the supplies and equipment illustrated in *FarmTek* speaks of a practical, problem-solving side that is implicit in the variety of objects she makes for us to consider in addition to the quiet, but rigorous, level of craft she employs. For instance, looking at Davis's work in the glare of a Valutek™ 400 Watt Metal Halide Low Bay Light (*FarmTek* fall 2017 catalogue, page 113) an inventory of agricultural vernacular is subtly evoked: hay rack, gambrel barn roof, corncrib, warped pine board, feedbag, shipping pallet, watering trough, flypaper, rail fence, tanned leather, collapsing outbuilding, hutch, and yes, even the plain pine box. This aesthetic is filtered through the reductive side of modernism, but this restraint is humanized by both the consistent use of wood as a material and a deadpan wit that reminds me of the optimistic quip "It's cold, but it's a dry cold!" uttered in the winter by denizens of the northern plains. *FarmTek* doesn't sell grommets, but Davis's ongoing series of jeans with grommets on the upper thighs confounds the practical with a nod and a wink to the tarp that covers the American woodpile.







How Something Gives Jenelle Porter

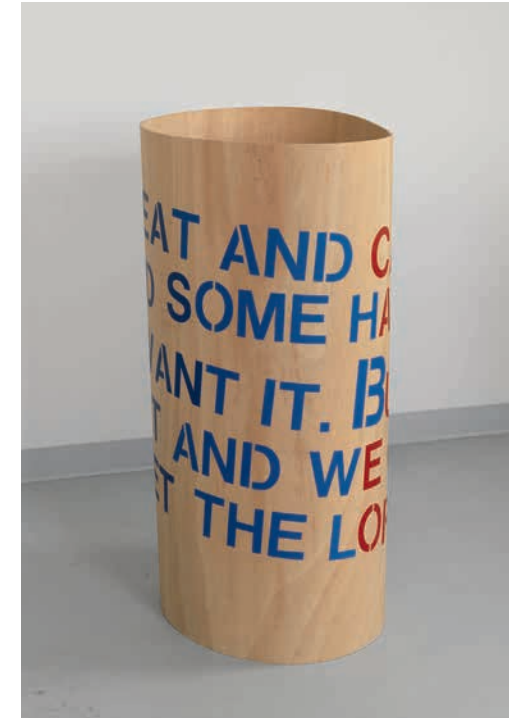
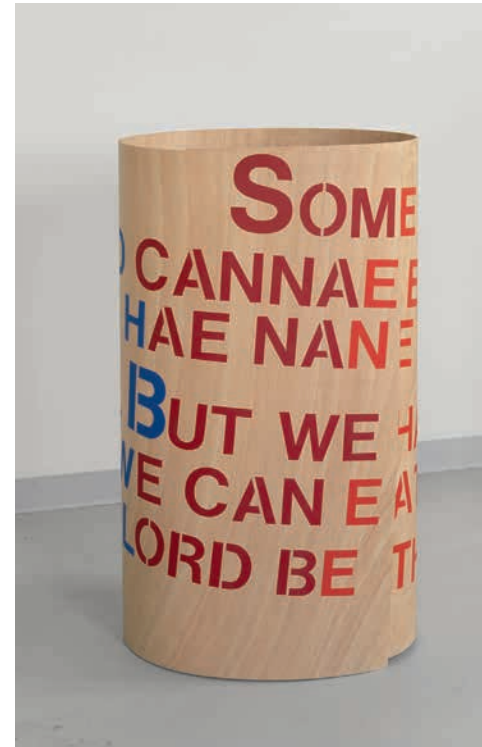
It is possible, he said, to be in love not with someone but with their eyes. I mean, with how eyes that aren't yours let you see where you are, who you are.

—Ali Smith, *Autumn*

A sculpture, in its most conventional description, is a three-dimensional object ideally experienced in the round. Consider your movement about a sculpture. Do you stop at each side? Stop when you apprehend each side will repeat the one prior? Stop in front of the side you decide is the front? Move continuously at a metronomic “sculpture” pace? Sculptors know; know all about how lazy we can see, how pressed for time, how impatient to “get it.” You know. Taylor Davis knows, however, that certain forms encourage circumambulation, that a cylinder adorned with a spiraling sentence may invite a prolonged engagement. Reading generates a destination; a period informs you that you’ve reached the end of the journey. Getting there requires a certain prescribed pace, a kind of dance. You’re choreographed by words. You come by the end to realize you’re at the place where you started: looking at a form in space.

If the ground of the artwork is a receiver—a receiving surface—it follows that certain kinds of grounds receive certain kinds of things. The ground, in the case of Davis’s series of wood cylinders (2011–), receives painted words. This cylinder developed from a desire to depart (if temporarily) from past works, specifically sculpture and drawing which might be simply surveyed, for our comparative purposes, as rectilinear—enamored of lines and edges. Rolling up one of her watercolors, Davis modeled a scroll that she then scaled up and constructed with an inexpensive, flexible laminate called Wacky Wood. It gives. (I think of the time Davis explained to me that her artwork, in general, is about how something gives.) Using highly saturated colors in oil paint, Davis inscribed each cylinder with a single text from, for example, a popular novel, a prayer, or a couplet. The words she uses are significant for reasons as diverse as their sources. It may be the specificities of tone, syntax, and voice; their particular affect; sentiments that point to the changelessness of human relations; or a tendency to head off in multiple directions.

The first of the cylinders, *SOME HAE*, records a Scottish mealtime prayer attributed to Robert Burns: “Some hae meat and cannae eat, and some hae nane that want it. But we hae meat and we can eat so let the Lord be thankit.” The letters are rendered in Helvetica, the queen of Swiss typefaces: a font so famous it has its own documentary film. In other words, the typeface is as quotidian as a prayer. The prayer connects to one of Davis’s earlier watercolors that reads, “When I had it, I didn’t want it.” Recognizing what she did have, Davis painted the prayer in shades of cadmium and cobalt, a nod to the illuminated manuscript’s lavish rendering of capital letters. *SOME HAE*’s prayer begins



SOME HAE, 2011, oil paint on Wacky Wood, 45 x 25 x 21 inches

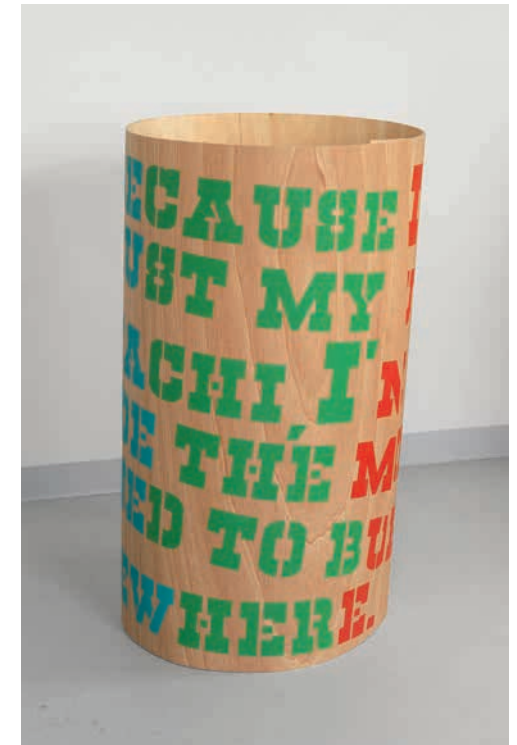
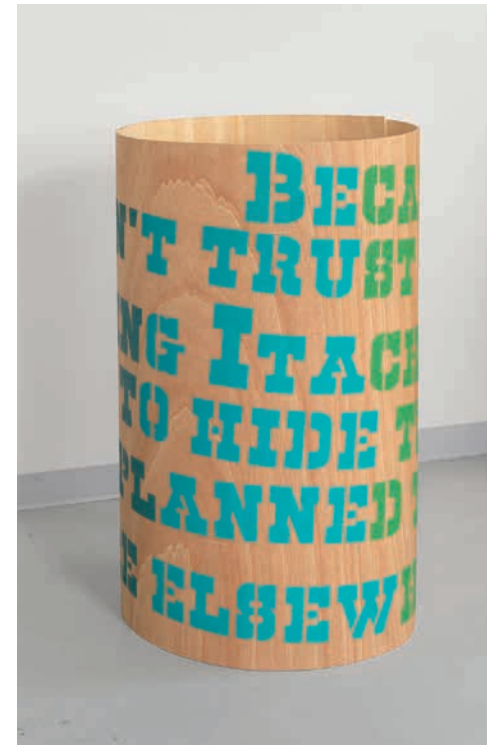
at the top of the cylinder with a large S. One must circle the sculpture to read the prayer, a walking meditation. You walk, and look, and read, ingesting the text, like a meal, with your eyes and mind and body.

If a cylinder is a place *SOME HAE* might be a table, a surface upon which to express gratitude. Or, it might be a container, as in the treasure hunt-like cylinder of *Because I*: “Because I couldn’t trust my underling Itachi, I’m going to hide the money I planned to bury here elsewhere.” The sentence is from the graphic novel series *Dororo* (volume 3) by Osamu Tezuka. Considered among Japan’s most respected and influential manga artists, Tezuka, alongside Shigeruu Mizuki (*NonNonBa* and *Onward Towards our Noble Deaths*), and Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima (*Lone Wolf and Cub*), draw words and characters that stretch across the page, breaking the frame, shaping sound, and enriching meaning. Their work directly inspired Davis’s wrapping sentences. Tezuka’s phrase, with its circular syntax (“here elsewhere”), its hierarchal language (“my underling”), and its promise of riches (“hide the money”), fuses with the vessel-like space of the cylinder. Davis uses a typeface called Cowboys for Tezuka’s adventure, shading the descending sentences in vertical bands of red, green, and turquoise blue that fracture the map of words, throwing us off the trail. Davis pokes fun, goads us to circle, seeking the treasure, only to be informed that the treasure isn’t *here*, it’s elsewhere.

Since she was young, Davis has long been drawn to and repelled by the notion of male heroics; what boys are allowed and encouraged to do, in contrast to what girls are expected and discouraged from doing. In *Men of Honor*, Davis introduces adult male codes of conduct with the phrase “Men of honor talk amongst themselves, Victor, in a special language. I’m addressing you now in that vocabulary.” The sentence—painted in an exaggerated palette of U.S. military gray, gold, black and blue—is from Herman Wouk’s 1971 novel, *The Winds of War*. Nazi banker Wolf Stöller tries to establish kinship with Navy Commander Victor “Pug” Henry, the book’s protagonist. (And in the book Stöller continues, “These are matters of incredible delicacy. In the end, beneath the words there must be a spiritual kinship.”) When viewing and reading this cylinder’s directional “you,” Stöller’s implication of Henry nets the reader/viewer: the viewer becomes a made man.

The masculine world of *Men of Honor* is softened by the curving hand-drawn typeface in which the sentence is painted. The individual letters mesmerize. The font is called D.Goode after its creator, an autistic young man whose mother Davis came to know during a 2011 residency. Goode’s mother, after seeing Davis’s *SOME HAE* shared her son’s notebooks, which were filled with carefully lettered lists of the titles and release dates of animated Disney films. Each page, a list of three or four movies organized chronologically, reads like a chant: *Bambi* (1942), *Bambi* (1947), *Cinderella* (1950), *Cinderella* (1957), *Bambi* (1957), *Cinderella* (1965), *Bambi* (1966), *Cinderella* (1973), *Bambi* (1975)....

D.Goode languishes in its flourishes, in its painstaking precision. It’s an emotional face, emotion-filled, care-*full*. It’s ornate where Helvetica refuses ornament, feminine where Cowboys is masculine. D.Goode is unprocessed, unfiltered—it’s one person’s handwriting. Davis painted Goode’s handwritten Disney film lists on a series of painted



BECAUSE I, 2011, oil paint on Wacky Wood, 45 x 27 x 27 inches

split hides. The leather splits are flexible, dyed shapes that relate to parchment manuscripts. Their soft, ground receives the letters in a way utterly different from the smooth ground of the cylinder. The letters sit atop the wood surface while on the hides, the oil paint constricts the leather's fibers creating an edge that looks incised, impressed. The hides are sliced length- and crosswise then fringed, a process Davis likens to a release—a kind of liberation of letters. Installed, they may look like a cast off cloak or a casually strewn throw.

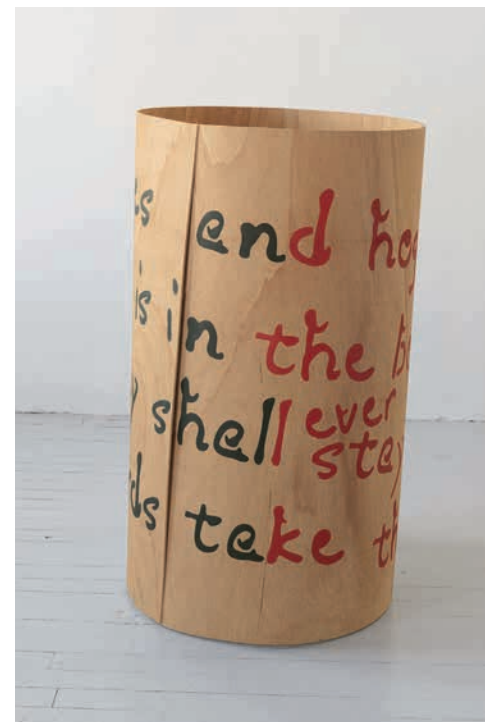
“If you steal a horse and let him go, he’ll take you to the barn you stole him from,” is from William Gass’s “The Pederson Kid,” a bleak story about bleak farmers amidst a murderous and murdering Midwestern blizzard. Pioneer types, written about in Cowboys typeface: a vernacular typeface for the vernacular. The font is as important as the four solid colors—black, green, blue, and brown—in which the sentence is painted, as important as the cylindrical ground of thin wood. The four colors are organized in vertical columns that divide the sentence structurally—unlike the other cylinders—into a four-sided sentence. The cylinder becomes figuratively cubic:

FROM.	HIM	GO	HIM
	LET	HE’LL	STOLE
IF	AND	TAKE	YOU
YOU	HORSE	YOU	BARN
STEAL	A	TO	THE

You begin in the middle, then down up, down up, zigzagging and circling. You’re addressed as in *Men of Honor*: “If you.” A stolen horse, a barn-bound horse. Frontier logic.

Davis’s use of text concedes the vagaries of words, the multiplicity of meaning, the things words share and the things left out. Her work invites us to see differently, to devote time, to see more. I find it gives me permission to write words about words on sculptures that (dare I cliché) move me, literally and figuratively. Art works and words slow. Us. Down. (Thankit!) And when we slow down, we see. George Saunders wrote that Grace Paley’s stories show us ways to “see better. If you only really see this world, you will think better of it, she seems to say. And then she gives us a way to see better: let language sing, sing precisely, and let it off the tether of the mundane, and watch the wonderful truth it knows how to make.”¹ Let loose the words. Let the words give.

1. George Saunders, “Grace Paley, the Saint of Seeing,” *The New Yorker*, accessed online March 3, 2017.



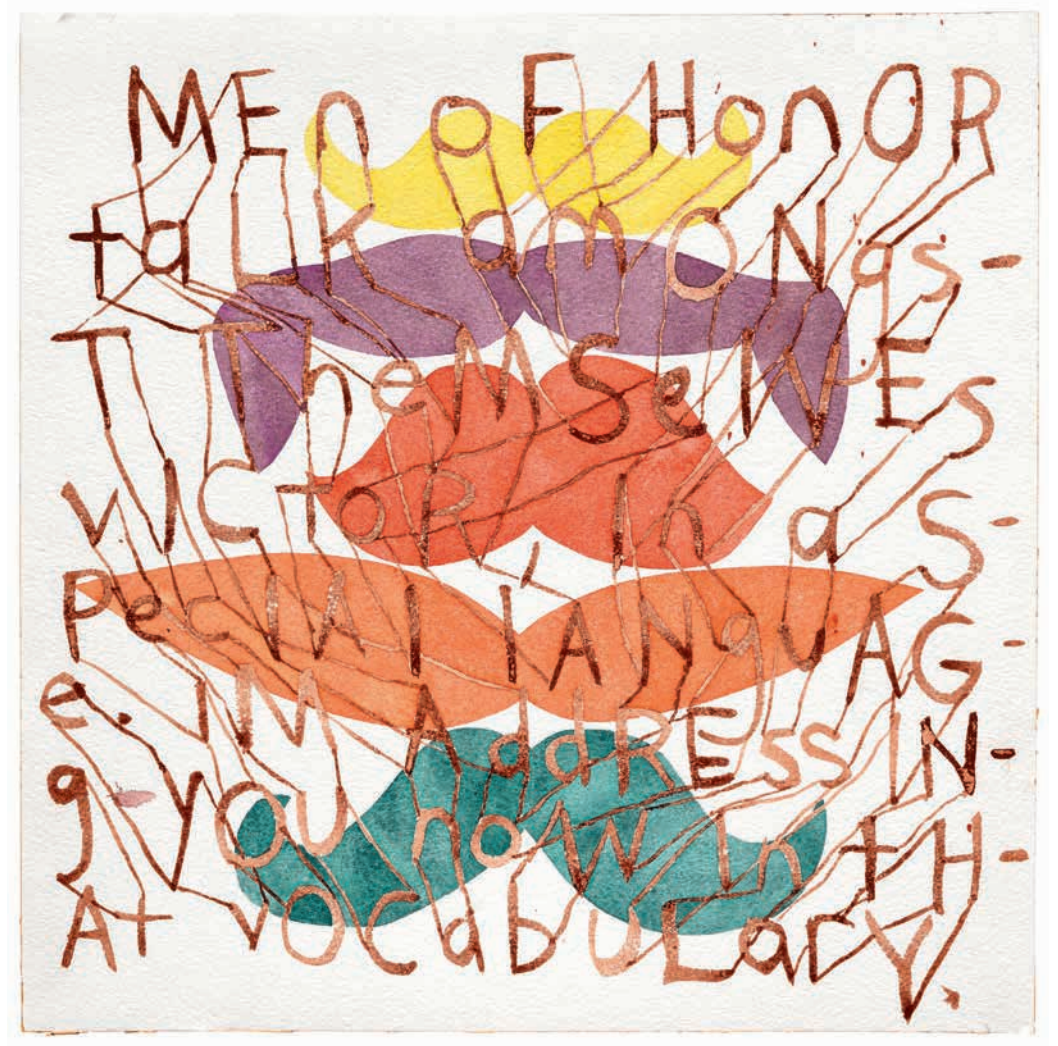
ABOVE: *Horses, mules and hogs*, 2012, oil paint on Wacky Wood, 46 ½ x 28 ½ x 24 ½ inches
 FOLLOWING: *Taylor Davis*, 2012, installation view at Dodge Gallery, New York

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Six Ways Conny Purtill

Taylor Davis named the work you see opposite *Five Fingers and a Thumb*. This is such a funny way to articulate the number six, wouldn't you say?

We start with a cube, which (maybe obviously) has six sides. Each side of this cube is made with six identically-milled planks of wood. Every specification for the making of this object is repeated either six or thirty-six times. With an object like this, which so fundamentally embodies the number six, why a hand?

A couple things pop into my mind: the classic five-finger-and-a-thumbed villain, Count Tyrone Rugen from *The Princess Bride*. And, did you know one of the ways to represent the number six with one hand is to throw up the “hang loose?” So chill. Also, it's hard not to notice the protuberant plank on each side of the cube. If you give each side of the cube five fingers and a thumb, then this cube is flipping birds!

Still, we're looking at a cube, and we're thinking about a hand, and it's not simply so Taylor can make an easy-going yet angrily-crass cube. “*Relax, I'm a cube, roll with me. Oh, and by the way, fuck you and the history of art you use to define me.*” I mean, that's really good, but it's just the beginning.

Back to the question, “Why does Taylor have us thinking about a hand when we're looking at a cube?” Is she nudging us to think about the hand of the artist? Her hand?

Making the cube.

Start with thirty-six planks of white pine, each identical in length (imperfections included). Mill each plank exactly the same, with four grooves and four soft corners—two grooves in the top surface, one in each side, groove-less bottom (the top and bottom surfaces become exterior and interior surfaces, but we're not there yet). Lay six planks side-by-side to form a square, slide the fourth plank up exactly half the length of the plank to create a hanging plank. Affix the six planks to make one side of the cube. Do this six times. Now it gets slightly funny. Assemble the cube so two opposing corners act as poles (think of our planet's north and south poles), each pole drawing in three hanging planks. At the north pole, the tips of its three hanging planks create a broad triangle. At the south pole, a tighter triangle. The cube is locked together and sits south pole down, on the tips of the three hanging planks, which hold the cube up, just off the ground. (Note this subtlety: If you turn north to south, and rested the cube on the north pole's hanging planks, the corner of the cube would rest neatly on the ground—no lift. This is beautifully *not* symmetrical, and so pleasing to analyze.)

One reason *Five Fingers and a Thumb* is so pleasing to analyze is because Taylor comes at this work with an irrepressible commitment to craftsmanship, and she has the hand(s) to back it up. I don't know Taylor's position on the word perfection, but the word is a constant when I spend time with her work. Everything that comes from Taylor is



ABOVE AND FOLLOWING: *Five Fingers and a Thumb*, 2012, milled white pine, 43 x 43 x 43 inches

perfectly tuned. *Five Fingers and a Thumb* is a stunning example of her skill and commitment to detail. It is absolutely beautiful, elegant, subtle, and rigorous. The first time I saw this work in Taylor's studio, the closer I got to the object, the more I lost my breath.

But just when you think *Perfection!* more strangeness. There is something peculiar about nudging people to think about the hand of the artist, all the while attempting to make something so well crafted the hand becomes distanced from the object. The more you see Taylor's hand, the less you see her hand.

Thinking more about the first time I saw the work, I think about what I experienced even before being stunned by its making: I felt an immediate and specific emotional connection to this object. It's a phenomenally potent form in that within the logic of the structure, a move is made (the fourth planks are slid half way out), and with both grace *and* effort this object holds itself up. This work does not sit Zen-like; it's battling to stand. Just as I'm battling to stand. This work is emotional and optimistic, and suddenly I'm hit with the seriousness of Taylor's intentions.

As Taylor and I stood in her studio, *Five Fingers and a Thumb* stood there with us. It was another being in the room. And, as this emotional connection drew me toward the sculpture, the craftsmanship flipped it right back to being a spectacularly-made non-being. Flippity flop! My intellectual eye sees an object, my emotional eye sees a being, and my third eye sees a super-chill cube flipping a bird six ways.





Power Object Michael Brenson

Fingers and Thumbs No. 2 is very peculiar. Although each of its six sides is essentially the same and the logic of the construction is clear, or at least it's clear that the construction has an overriding logic, the sculpture defies orientation and each point of view offers a different experience. All of its lines may be straight but the sculpture cannot get straight. It seems permanently, ontologically askew. And what is its logic anyway? Maybe this meticulously sawed and milled black walnut construction is not about rationality but about fantasy, or in equal parts availability and alarm. Maybe it is a knot.

The sculpture is the size of a tot and a bit like one in that it seems as if you could hold hands with it and go for a walk. If you bend your head and look at it at a forty-five degree angle, it can suggest a square humpty-dumpty-like body, or perhaps a flat and anonymous sign of a body, with two straight stiff legs at the floor end and, at the top end, two straight stiff arms raised above the head in a gesture of stretching, or of surrender—of “please don’t”! It's as architectural as anthropomorphic. If you kneel down and peer through the openings on all sides, the cube rotated into a fat diamond evokes a miniature worksite, or the model for a sleekly carpentered square room whose floor and walls will never be completed. Now, in comparison with this tiny architecture, we are giants.

While the interior retains its magnetism, the sculpture projects frantically away from itself. It seems to badly want the ceiling and walls. It seems to reach across and beyond whichever space it's in. Maybe the right shove would cause it to start rolling like a tumbleweed or to spin out into space like Dorothy's house in *The Wizard of Oz*. Yes, we can move close and touch and run our fingers and thumbs along the grains of the elegant wood but the sculpture also fires in all directions and maybe all those openings could slam shut. From ten-to-fifteen feet and further away, the sculpture seems so explosively taut that it appears capable of detonating, like a bomb, or of being tripped, like a mine.

Its defining tension is between collapse and lift. Between succumbing to gravity and taking flight. The sculpture seems to be forever falling and trying to right itself. Struggling against collapse seems to be its condition. It wants to stand upright but it can't. It's being pulled down against the floor, which is not its home but the hard impervious topside of a grave. The sculpture wants no part of the still and the sealed. The cube will not cease to be a passage, a space of wonder, a way through. Escape is still possible; but it isn't.

Fingers and Thumbs No. 2 does have a sculptural family. H.C. Westermann is part of it, I think. So is Louise Bourgeois, Donald Judd, Claes Oldenburg and David Smith. But this sculpture's struggle against gravity is more dire than theirs. The floor was not their enemy. It is a death trap here. In the struggle against this pull, I feel a much older history. Statuary is part of it. So are eerie gesticulations and the beginnings of sculptural speech. These other sculptors reckoned with the enormity of sculpture's ancestral memory, too.



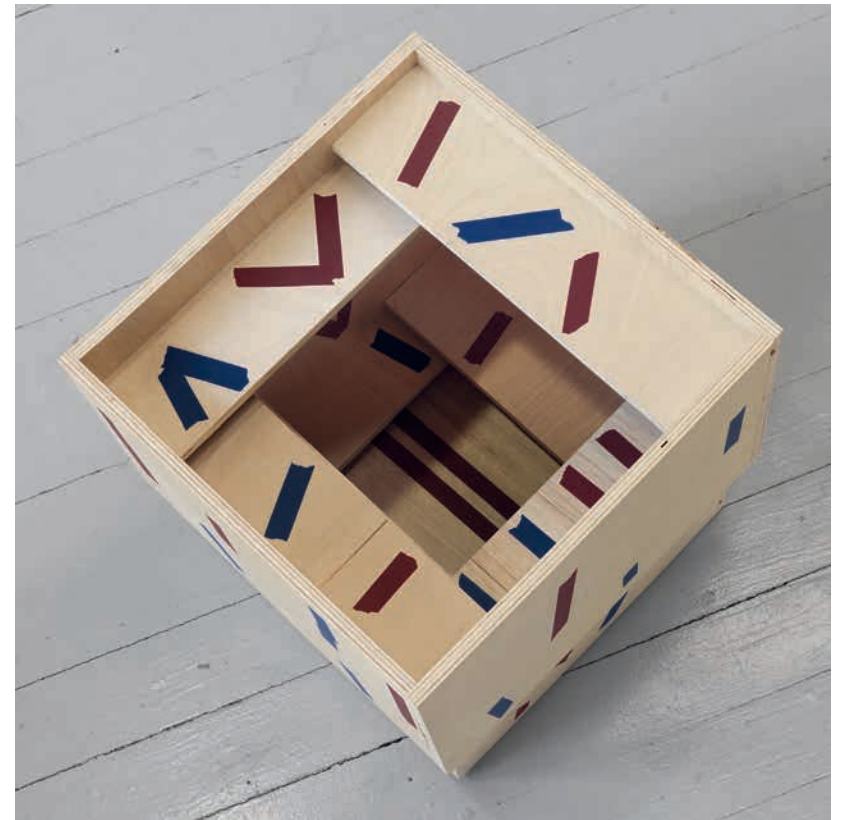
Taylor's sculpture is so physically present but its elsewhere are overwhelming. While I may be here with you, in this space, her sculpture seems to be saying, what is "here"? There is much to discover in me, many directions we can follow, but be careful. Our relationship cannot be easy. I possess and am possessed by a wild and dangerous knowledge.





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: *Tbox 1*, 2012, birch plywood and oil paint, 14 x 16 1/2 x 16 1/2 inches
Collection of Kristen Dodge and Darren Foote





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: *Tbox 3*, 2012, birch plywood and oil paint, 15 x 14 ¼ x 14 ¼ inches
Collection of Marlene Meyerson





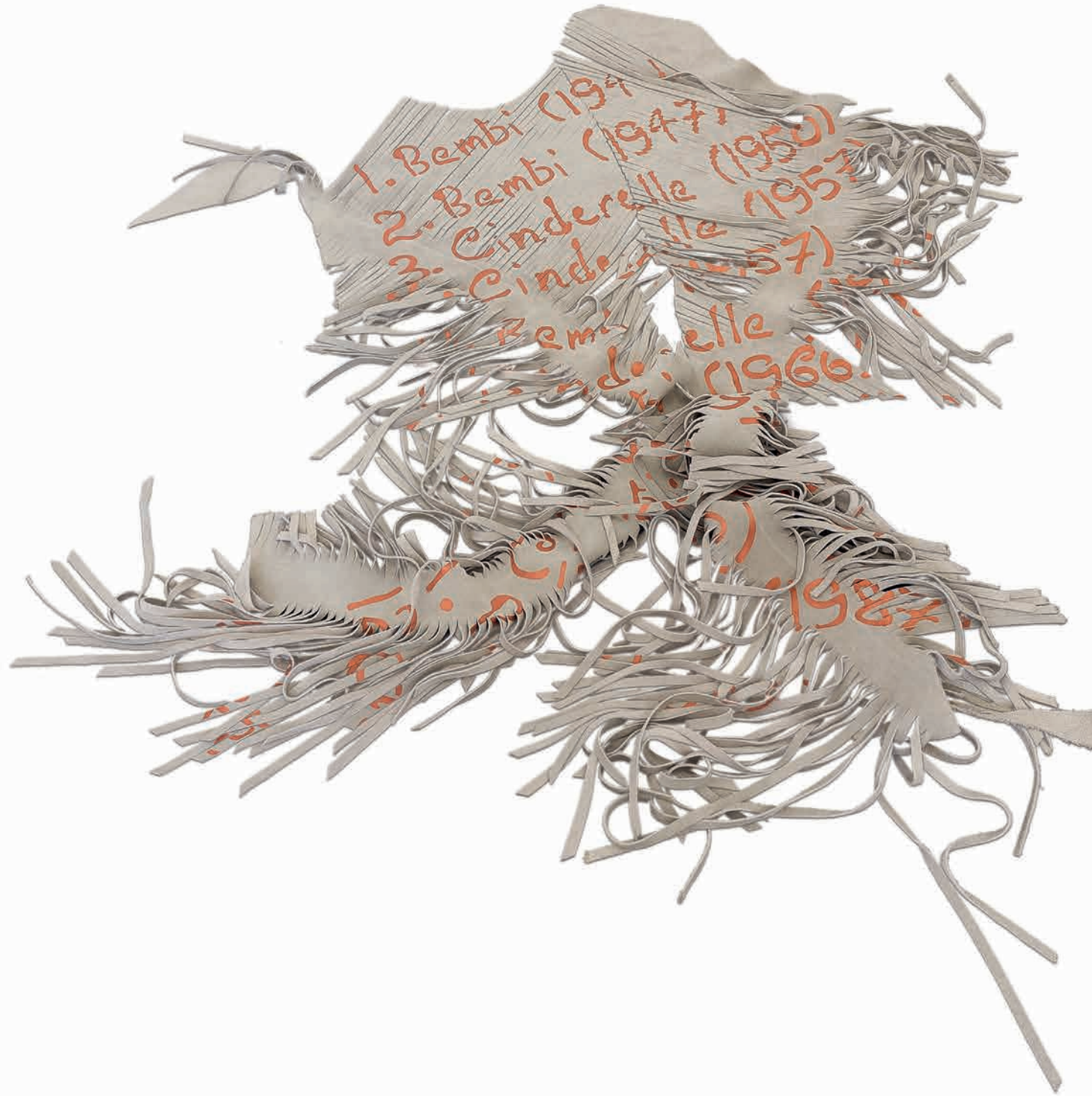


Anselm Berrigan
Freegrets

negative spock space around the heavenly downward pull
duck reflection pondering eternity upwardly into projector
fuzz interrogates plane, all resistant chemicals go mannerist
in the dollar down shirt etiquette frogs present, prepared
always, in relief, for what must come, for what's mustily
coming, for work acids, grease, blue superior punctures
in the tarp, we get the flock out of grist in space shoved
behind I've got sunshine off the fade into phase tincture
today we pulled the gnarliest pipe gruel out of the wall
hole, line's edge makes its own nest for the mouth pitched
open to be fed, safety & net don't really, if you got wings
go together, crotch-light apparatuses, we animals stare into
the slats to resemble human positions, sounds, sets, position's
a sound, behind the flat sequence nodding, I wanted, zoom in
to reintimate, to see the pattern alive in the wild, dirt apron
chases dirt, squid hand meets wrassled appendage, I keep saying
shit's due today, & board fucks floor to play at boundaries
in a frame's eros, little tapes de-illustrate the lonely memo
sloppy treason's the anti-mobile, birds sleep standing, they
absolutely have already said things to you, "we've seen drawn
frogs worship standing mollusks," "froggrets passed for work
acid & grease," when you accept being perceived laterally yr
in the conversation, dispersed composition's a first love
first non-cartoon surface to dig in, from the external world
& take hold by reading into, the microcosmic reel into slug
embrace, added to muses, yellow corners between surfaces
given off, away, by entwined lines, skunk right angle defense's
hot woeful loves in line, but their reasons are under seal, my
reasons too are under seals, we like the tremulous grid, we
drink to ward off anxiety of that grid's ever straightening, we
misdistinguish webs & nets & grids & supports, do they not
all propel avian portals up to our eyes, beaking affection?

for Taylor Davis





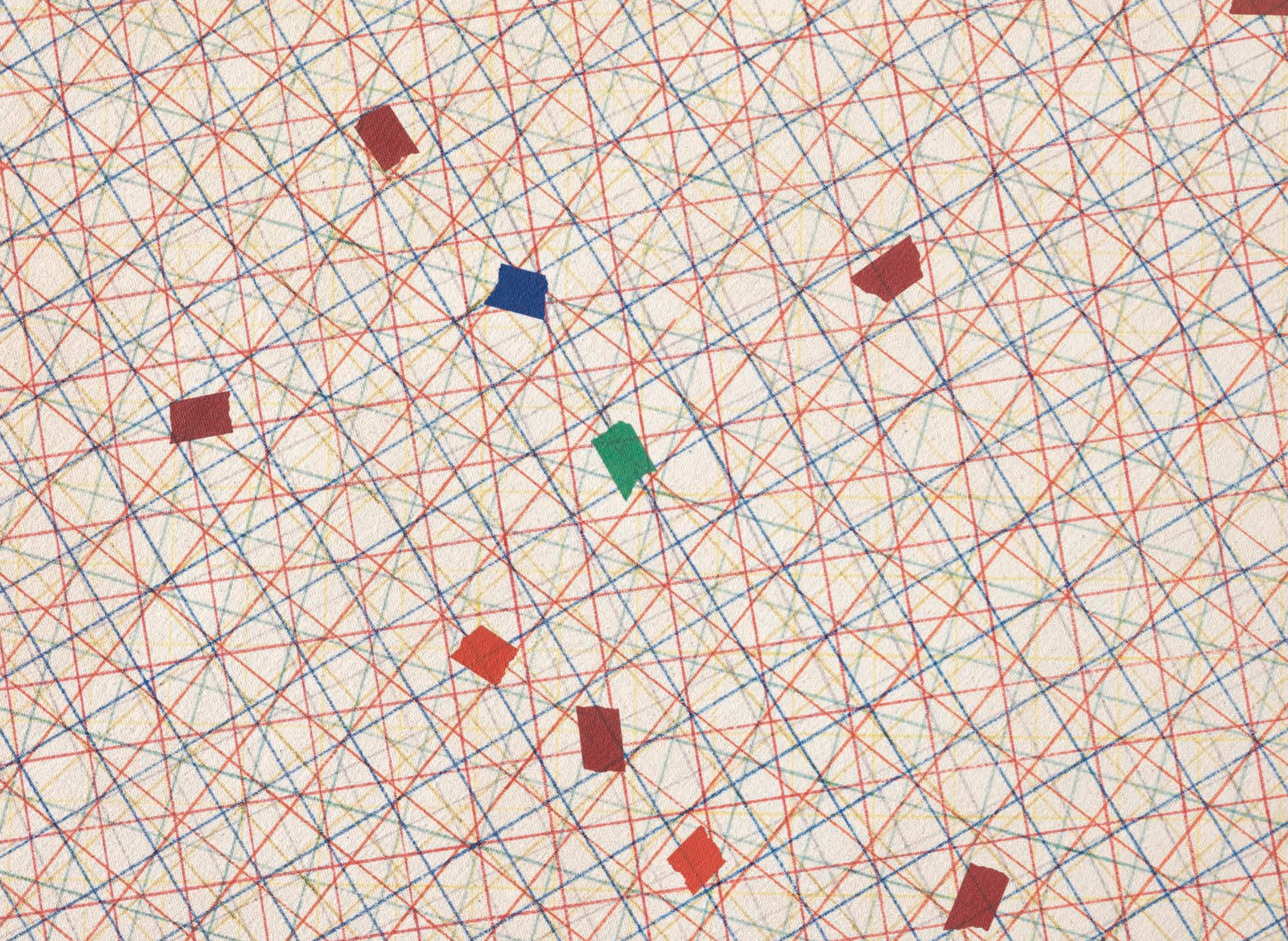
OPPOSITE: *Cinderella Bambi*, 2013, leather paint on dyed suede, original hide approximately 52 x 48 inches; installed dimensions variable

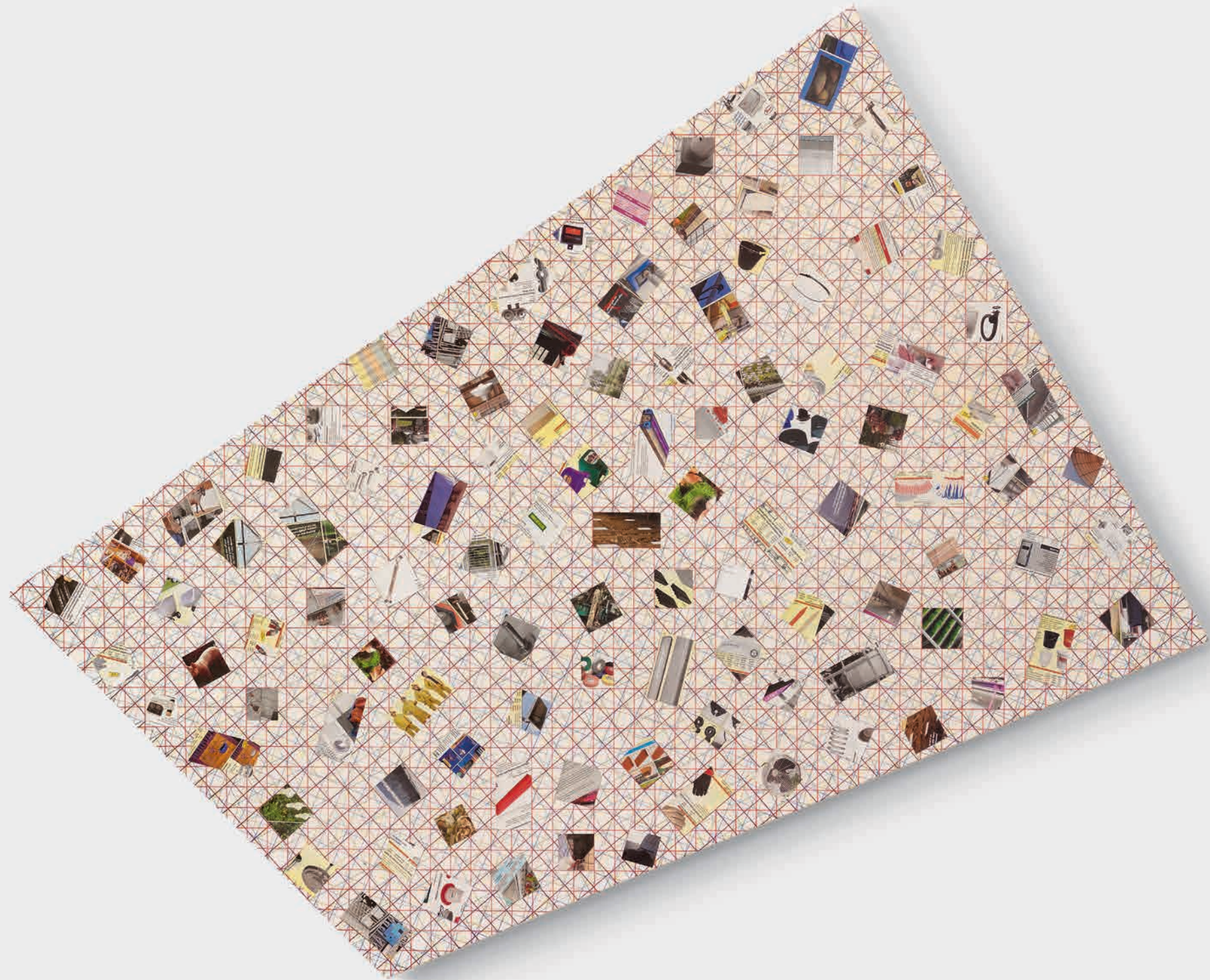






ABOVE AND FOLLOWING: *Untitled (Diamond Canvas)*, 2014, alcohol-based marker and oil paint on sized canvas, 76 1/2 x 75 1/2 x 1 1/2 inches





FarmTek Canvas No. 2, 2014, alcohol-based marker and collage on sized canvas, 75 1/2 x 60 x 1 1/2 inches

Dictionary Helen Molesworth

I grew up in New York City. For a long time, I thought the very definition of a city was a space marked out by a grid. I loved learning that Fifth Avenue divided Manhattan into two halves: East and West. I found it magical that the building numbers fanned out from Fifth Avenue in each direction. I suppose it was my first experience with how the logic of symmetry rarely works. Taylor Davis grew up in the West. She once told me a story about how when she got a new pair of dungarees her mother would send her down to the river and tell her to get them wet while she was wearing them so they would shrink and soften and form to her body. No one ever says anything like that to someone who grows up in Queens.

Even though I grew up in New York, I live in Los Angeles now. Everyone says Los Angeles is impossible to map; it's a city with no order, just sprawl. But I think it's a grid bounded on the west by the Ocean, to the north it stops at the hills, at the eastern edge is downtown and the mountains, and to the south, well that goes on for what feels like forever. When Taylor comes to Los Angeles she sometimes stays in our guest cottage, which is a fancy phrase for a refurbished garage. She always travels with pencils and watercolors and notebooks. She makes drawings, many of which consist of colored lines that wobbly conform into a grid, only to be cut over and over again by diagonals. Eye-twisting stuff, compulsive stuff, pattern logic.

When I am feeling blue my mind tends toward the conspiratorial, so lately that means I worry a lot about the grid going down. I am more wired than I want to be. I don't even have a CD player anymore. I read fiction and the newspaper on my iPad. When the grid goes down we will lose the web. It's odd how some old terms persist (rolling down the car window), grid is starting to feel like one of those words. When the grid goes down I won't be able to look up anything on the web, so I kept a dictionary—at least I'll be able to look up words. It's an old, faded, and frayed red cloth bound edition, one of the ones with the line drawings that accompany the entries. As a child, I often read the dictionary as if it were a novel. It amazed me that you could have a string of words that were related to one another, as well as whole pages where none of the words made any sense next to one another. I particularly loved the words that came with pictures. It's not that I didn't love the words, I did, and I devoured them. But I was always drawn to the difference between how the words and pictures felt, even when they meant the same thing.

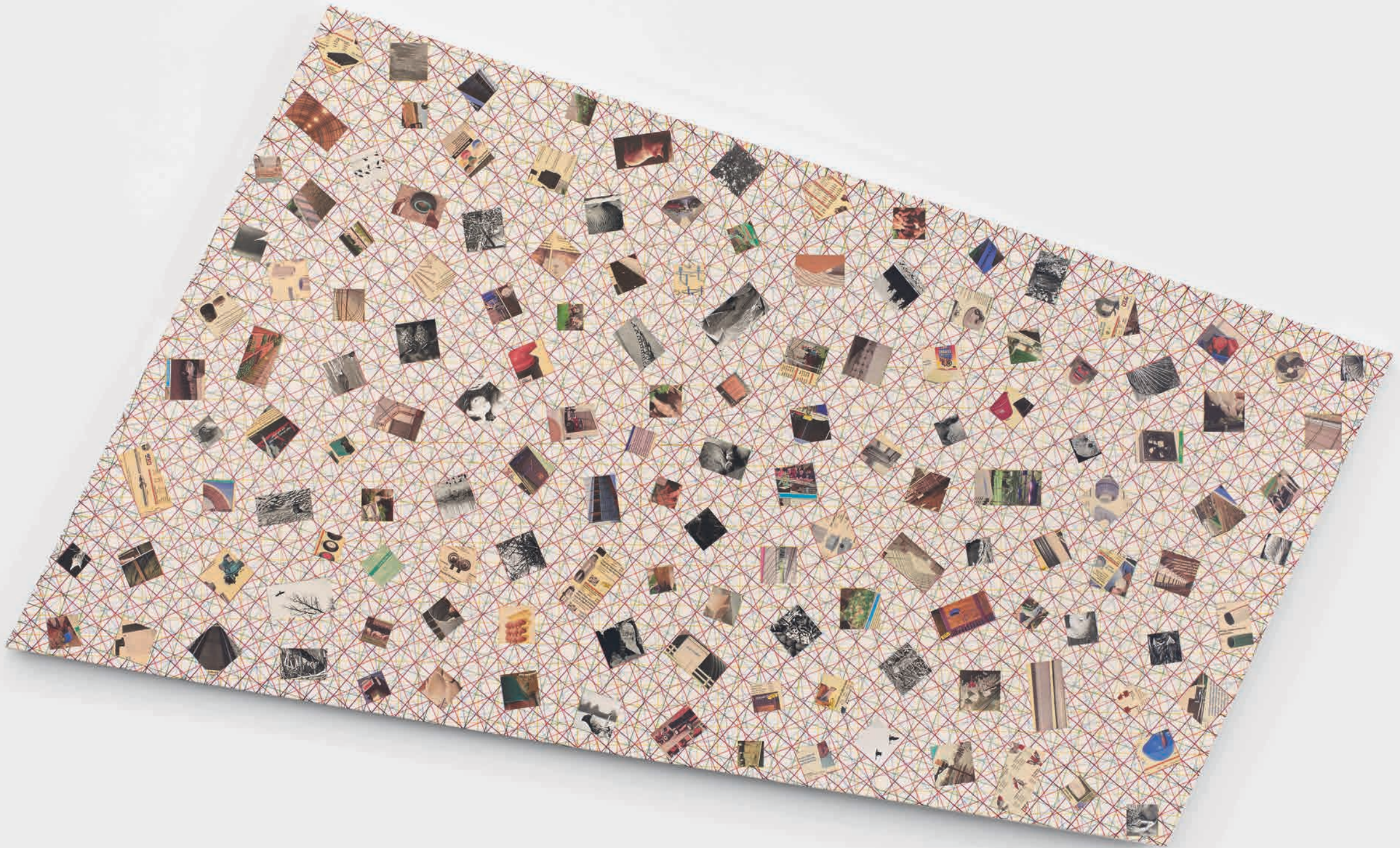
Taylor's drawing/collage/paintings remind me of the aimless diversion of reading the dictionary (and the encyclopedia) as a child. They contain the pleasure of the infinite, of knowledge everywhere leaking through your fingers, escaping your mental and physical grasp. Sometimes I feel like I literally cannot see Taylor's work; they just extend everywhere, in every direction. It's not that they're too fast, because her work is quite slow. It's more like they are too extruded and attenuated. It took me a long time to see what the work looked like, much less what it was doing. When I say I can't see them it's because for me

their energy is all about stretching and straining and broadening. Like an actual physical stretch, I feel the tension, and sometimes I confess I seize up. I think "This picture is too hard for me," and then, after I ease up a bit, I can see it. This feeling reminds me of what it's like to look at a painting by Agnes Martin—with whom I think Davis is having a really profound conversation. In each, Martin and Davis, I find everywhere a yearning for the line to traverse the geometrical plane of the canvas. The quest for a horizon line. The repetition of these gestures and the way they tangle the compulsive with the meditative.

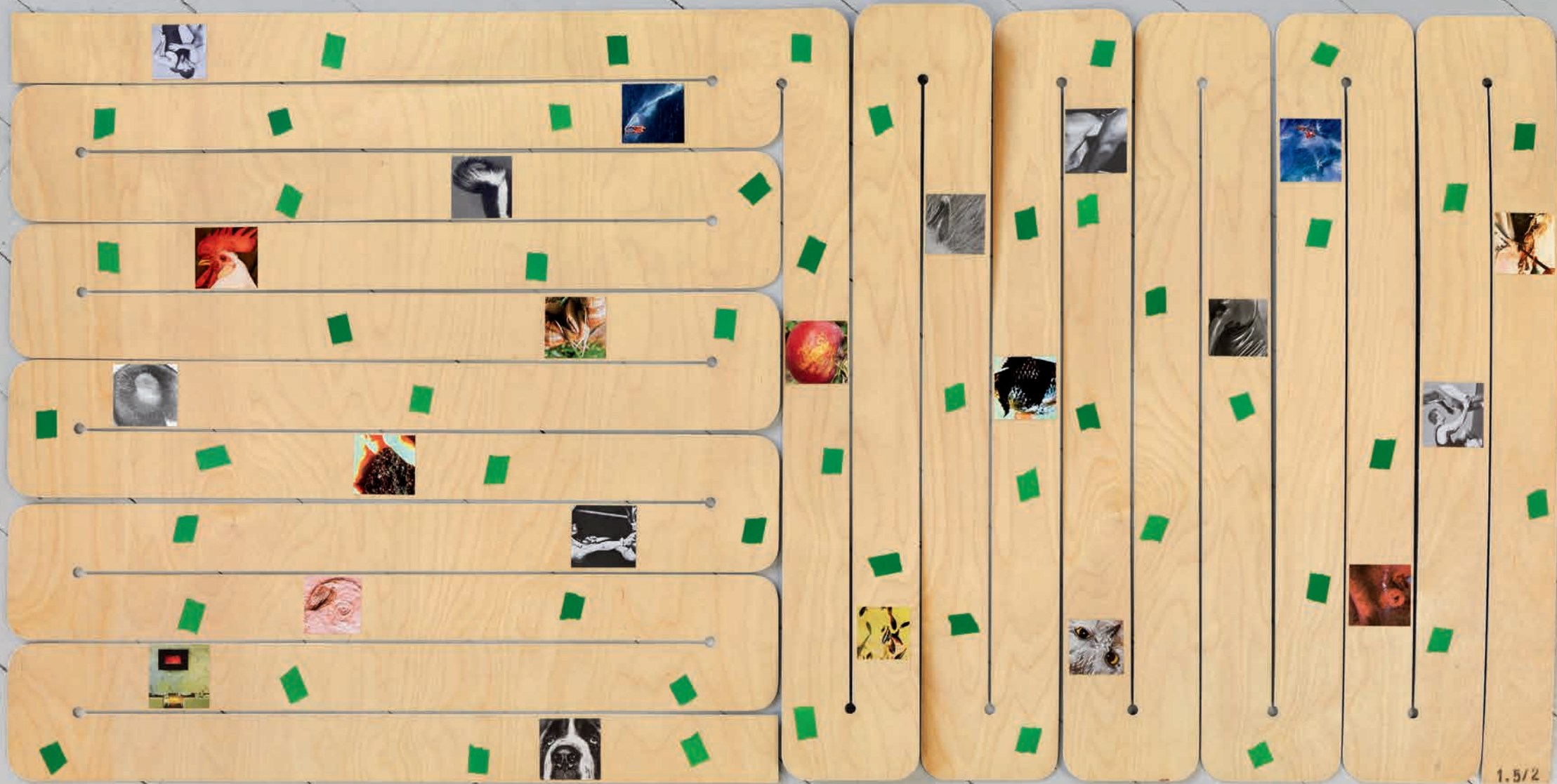
If Martin's work bears some relation to the landscape of the American West—its scale, its quietude, its poetic mythical qualities—then Davis is about the rest of it, the stuff of the world, and how that stuff appears as pictures, reproduced everywhere, all the time, and how the past appears in the present, everywhere, all the time.

When I look at *Flower, Mule, Fig, etc.* I see the Nazca lines laid on top of the Los Angeles grid. I see the radical space-time continuum of everything all at once and all together. I see how we make things small so we can understand them. Her collaged canvases demonstrate how everything is both related to, and broken apart, from everything else. But maybe more than even "demonstrate," they enact how all of the connections between things (humorous, morphological, inscrutable), and all of the breaks (the utter and complete randomness of how words get attached to objects), don't make any kind of inherent sense. In this space of radical arbitrariness, *Flower, Mule, Fig, etc.* intimates that while we might think what makes us human is all the great stuff we make with our big wonderful opposable thumbs, what *really* makes us human is our need to tell a story about it all. That last idea comes from the writer Ursula Le Guin, who said the stories we tell—starting with the sexist myth of hunters versus gatherers—is what truly distinguishes us from animals. For Le Guin, "The novel is a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us."

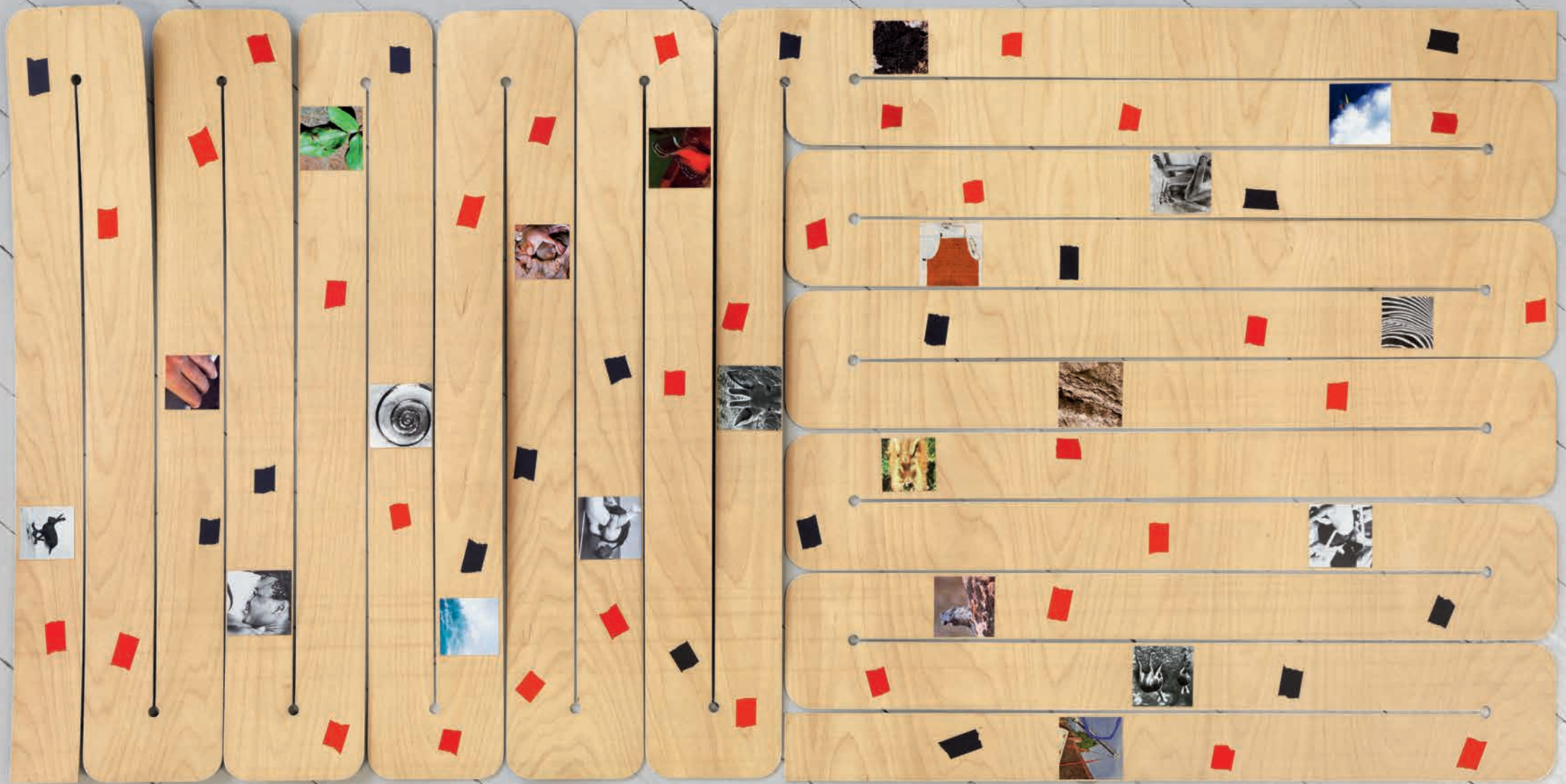
The novel gathers its protagonists and weaves them together. But Taylor is not a novelist, she's an object and image maker. So, her medicine bundle gathers and then disperses. She is a sower. She lays down a ground and litters it with figures. She knows there are an almost infinite number of combinations. Some folks might feel let off the hook by the sheer enormity of it all and take refuge in chance. I think the thing I love the most about these pictures is that they understand that chance is a totally respectable, even honest, response to the proliferation of words and things. But the degree of care taken to make sure that every drawn line is absolutely straight, and that the weight of each line is consistent across the entire length of the canvas, and that the edges of every cut-out image are perfect, the commitment to keeping the scale of all of the images the same, combined with the promise (always kept) that every line will reach every edge of the canvas (this is why they aren't squares or rectangles, so we understand this fidelity to the problem of the edges), is Taylor's way of saying that there are no ethics in chance. The evidence of labor—intellectual, aesthetic, physical—in these pictures (labor that Davis doesn't hide, but doesn't make a point of showing either), suggests to me that for Davis ethics resides in deliberation, in deciding where to put one thing and then another, whether or not the pieces fit together, whether or not the picture makes sense. In the end, the story we tell is what matters most.



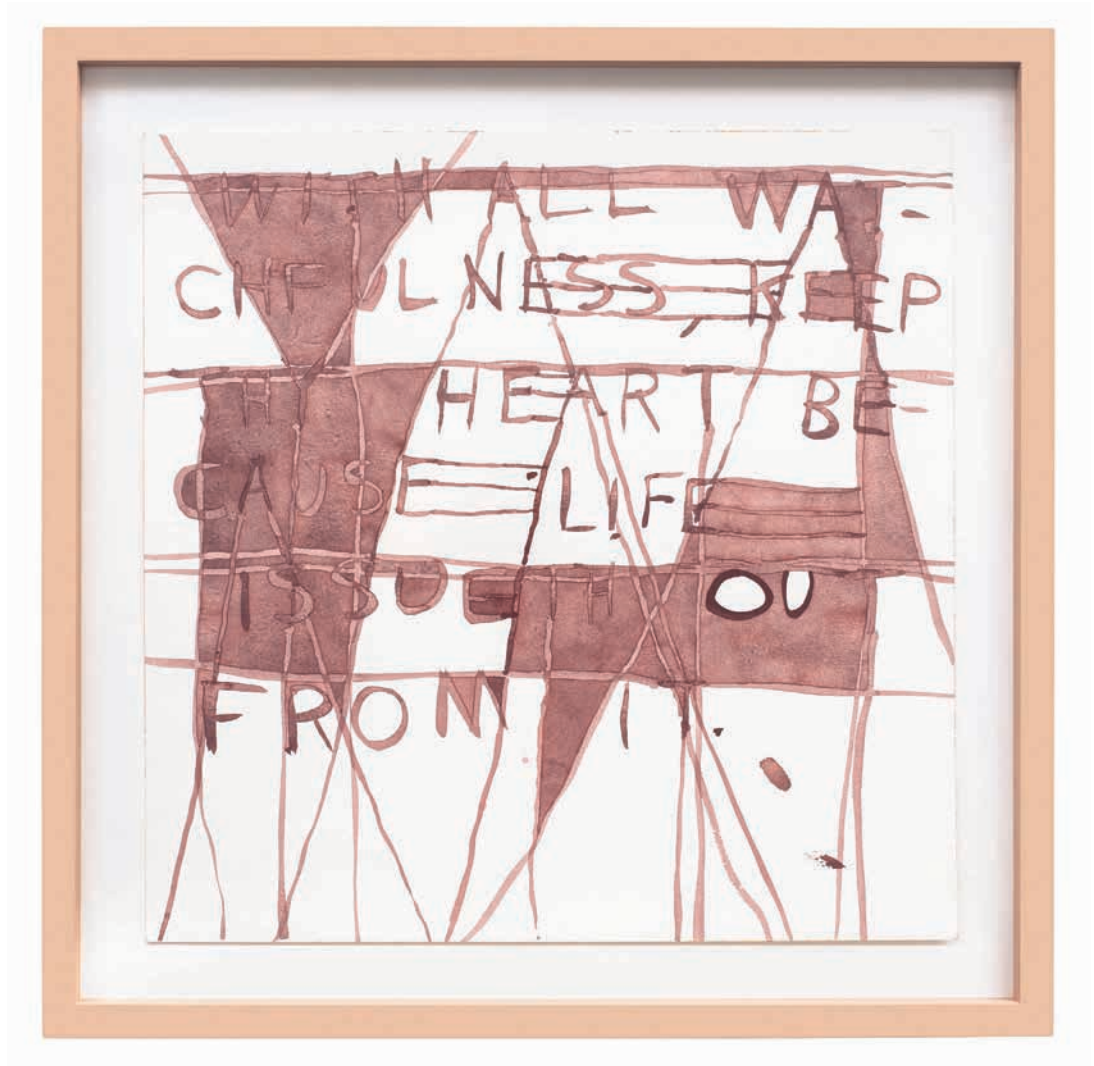
ABOVE AND FOLLOWING: *FarmTek Canvas No. 4 with Birds*, 2014, alcohol-based marker and collage on sized canvas, 59 x 90 x 1½ inches



1.5/2









BRWG (West), 2016, oil on canvas with hand-built poplar stretcher, 66 x 56 x 1 3/4 inches



BRWG (South), 2016, oil on canvas with hand-built poplar stretcher, 66 x 56 x 1 3/4 inches



BRWG (Northeast), 2016, oil on canvas with hand-built poplar stretcher, 66 x 56 x 1 3/4 inches



BRWG (Southwest), 2016, oil on canvas with hand-built poplar stretcher, 66 x 56 x 1 3/4 inches

R/G/B/W (W/W/GS/D)

Lucy Raven (and Gertrude Stein: "A Box")

Redgreenblackwhites woven together / Like a shaker box / But / With a tightness of touch
that can't be / In even the most finely worked of three dimensions / Here it's felt / Because
constructed / Layered like a lathe wish / As overlays in a complex of moves that just /
Signal the process of their making / When they turn / Lock into new / Integral forms

Image objects with your body in relation / And you looking at / Two other bodies in
relation / Though you're also there / In the room / Plumb / But off kilter

Conversation / Real / Talk / Foregrounded as a medium of exchange / *Value / Stripped
down* / To acronym / To be used like a cowry shell / An abstraction of value / But / One /
Whose innate form is also that of a gift / Two / An image / Object / But one that can
also be spent / Given up / Reused and repeated and recombined into a poetics that is
grasped not as a series of letters or words but as a syntax of interlocking parts that could
not be any other way / And yet / There are so many others / 192 imagined permutations

The equation doesn't matter / So much as when / Standing in their presence / You know
that there are others / Pairings / Each triangulated by the body in front of them / Each
in relation to the body that made them / And that makes four

A Box.

*Out of kindness comes redness and out of rudeness comes rapid same question, out of an eye comes
research, out of selection comes painful cattle. So then the order is that a white way of being
round is something suggesting a pin and is it disappointing, it is not, it is so rudimentary to
be analysed and see a fine substance strangely, it is so earnest to have a green point not to red
but to point again.*





Nancy Shaver

The clarity of things and NOT.

Overwhelmingly. Overwhelmed always by the tactile sense of form in Taylor Davis's work. My eye is continuously caressed by the clarity and attention to form. It is a physical response, perhaps almost as visceral as my being able to touch with my hand. The texture of the work soothes my eye and body.

The texture is a result of rigorous investigation of structures of the work: wood itself, paper, canvas, frame, stretchers, watercolor, paint, collage. These materials in Taylor's hand are forced to show up alone, show themselves to my eye, alone, and then working together. The precision of seeing and making is felt in my eye. A bit of repose.

Chaos exists and is accepted in the choice of verbal/visual content taken from our complex, ever-growing wealth of information. Information and various meanings that are available to everyone. The colors, red, green, white, and black are fraught with an accumulation of cultural meaning, as is The Psalms. Perhaps the meaning of red, green, white and black is both being questioned and accepted here, hung crookedly, but perfectly balanced. The canvasses are hung from a single nail, co-ordinates in the grid of the structure used to match the vertical and horizontal surfaces in a room. The Psalms as used here as a neutral, in our confusing times of violence disagreement, over politics and placement of religion. The Psalms in Taylor's work are shattered.

The wood grain in *The Spinner* is crazy. I am most accustomed to the concentric beauty of wood grain in made objects. This hodgepodge of shapes repeats while confusing direction of grain is at the heart of this work. The grain of the wood used is tied to an image of a pinwheel. An object that by its nature reveals a different being, if in motion or in repose. The edges of the facets of the pinwheel are both straight and irregularly curved.

The clarity of things and NOT.

At the same time as looking and thinking about the picture Taylor sent me, I have been reading *On Weaving* by Anni Albers. The book, from a friend, has given me form for my discussion of Taylor's work and the word texture; I like thinking about this word in terms of both the intuitive and the rational.

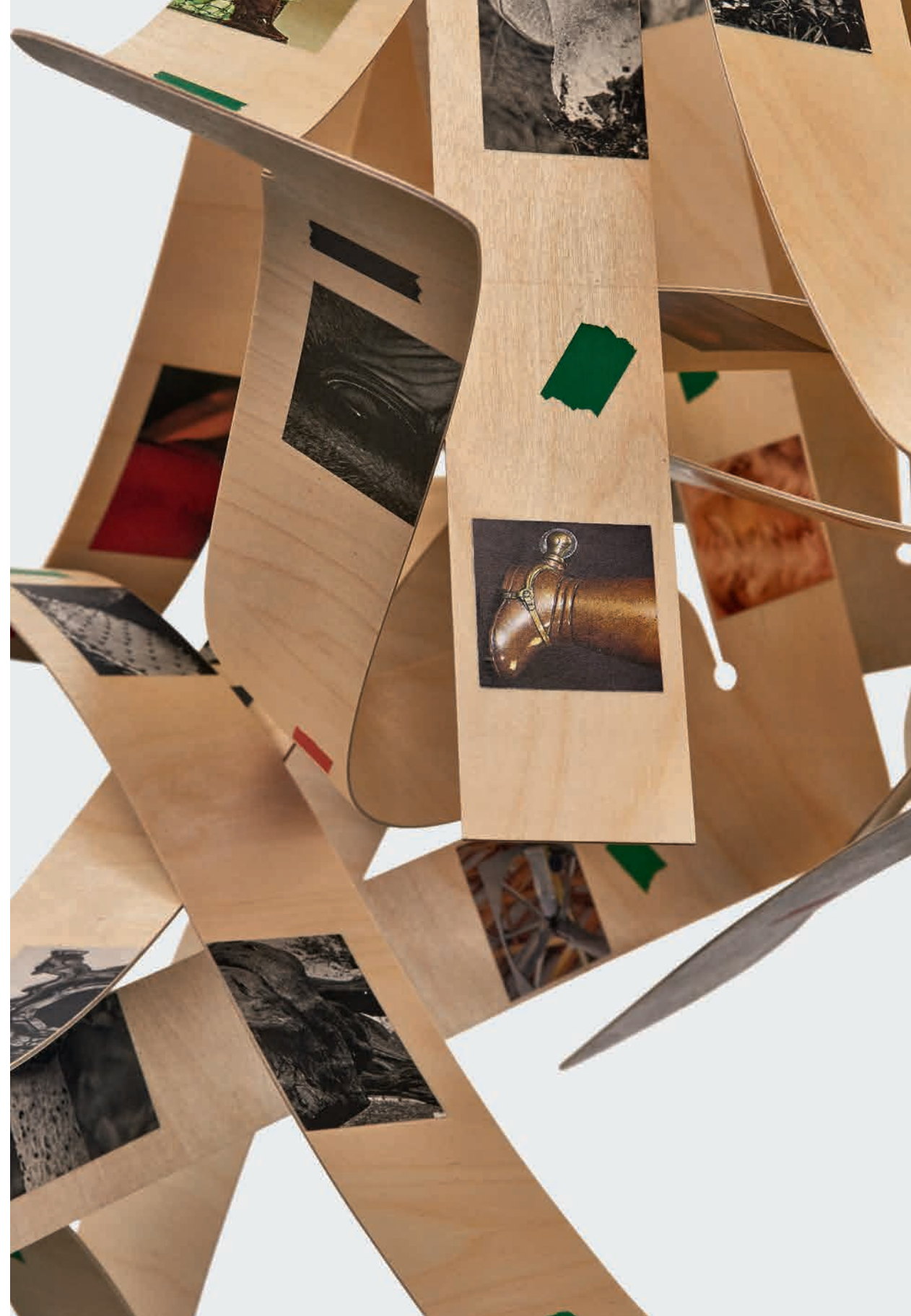
Anni Albers is needle sharp in presenting the structure and content of weaving as she sees it. She made me think of Taylor as well. The clarity of structure gives way to discussion of texture. Texture can be seen and felt. Texture is a surprising element, both logical and irrational. Something that is physical and the sense of its form can be triggered by sight, or is it memory? A memory in the eye and mind. Whatever this is, intuition or logic, the play between the two is rich for exploration. Taylor explores.

Taylor is a teacher: her clarity—and articulation of visual thought—a gift to students. She is committed to passing on this love of work and relentless thinking about work. Passing this love on through the work itself, and through the profession of teaching.

On and on, and on and on.



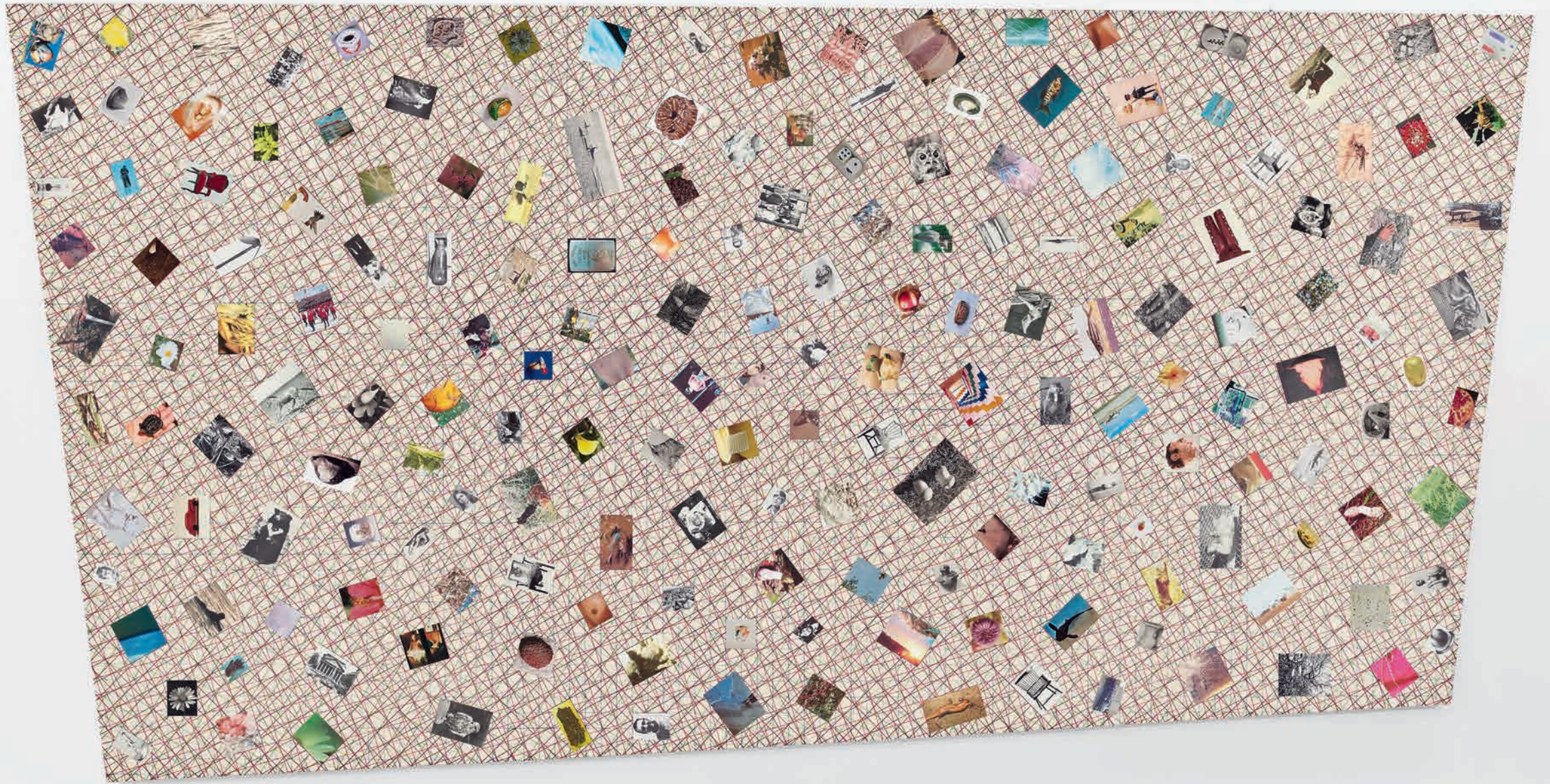
OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: *Mobile #4*, 2016, aircraft grade birch plywood, oil paint and collage, flat: 24 x 48 inches; installed dimensions variable



OPPOSITE: *Mobile #4* (detail), 2016







Taylor Davis' *Flower, Mule, Fig, etc.*, the most recent of her Cardinal Grid collages, has a built-in zoom, by which I mean to say it exerts a distinct pull. Seeing the work in Taylor's studio, I am drawn closer into the all-over tumble of images on the large irregular rectangle. As my attention wanders I continue to shift and position myself in relation to the work. Later, looking at a photograph on my computer screen, I again pull closer, enlarging the image and experiencing a moment of resolution anxiety. But yes, the file supports a close viewing: Paw, breast, figurine. Bear, face, fruit bowl. Chaps, owl, aeroplane. Udder, leaf, chair—all word groups I come up with following the logic and rhythm of the title. They are intriguingly odd combinations, even as they say nothing yet about tan lines, dewdrops, stitching, woodwork, muddiness, feathers, or fur; nor about the fading of colors, the grain of offset printing, the subtlety of grey tones, and the way that reproduction technologies date images. I am reminded of the quicksand pleasure of online image searches, but the speed and physicality of my viewing experience are very different. The images I am looking at stem from a technological past, a time before the internet, when the encyclopedia was supposed to contain the world's wonders and catalog its riches. This seems dated now, in this age of accomplished discovery and accelerated exploitation. A sad mammal in a cage—another zoom.

Taylor's step-by-step process calibrates chance and control to her purposes, which in concert with her sustained meditation on looking establishes a complex visual politics, a diagrammatic but expansive view onto (and of) the world. The collages use found images and orient them along found coordinates; even the shape of the support is generated through a chance operation. However, in each consecutive step of finding, Taylor sets her search terms with care and specificity.

As a first step in the making of the collages, Taylor generates the shape of the support by throwing a soft material onto the studio floor. The resulting jumble is then enclosed with stretcher bars, the form suggested by the throw, its proportion related to an animal or human body by her choice of material—a blanket or one of the suede animal skins that appear in other works. Taylor tells me that she is looking for a trapezoid shape that is not too dramatic and implies movement (a tousled blanket, a reclining body) rather than the stability of a frame with right angles.¹

Onto the stretched canvas Taylor then draws overlaid colored grids spaced at 1¼ inches, their orientation in relation to the support again determined by chance. These seven grids—blue, red, green, yellow, brown, grey, and magenta—become the coordinates for collaged-on pictures, whose representational content is organized according to five terms—people, places, plants, animals, and things. Seven colored grids and five types of image establish two asynchronous loops that guide the placement of pictures in the next step: working through her typology according to a set sequence, each cut-out picture drops into the right angle of a grid, with types, colors, and sizes continuously shuffled in misalignment.

The arrangement spirals from the lower left corner counter-clockwise toward the center, a kind of puzzle that becomes more and more challenging as the relations between the small collaged pictures and the emerging large picture of the piece multiply. Subcategories and narrative threads emerge—a particular shade of peach, a washed out green, the qualities of black and white reproductions, frogs, flowers, phallic mushrooms, a cotton plant, an atomic bomb, Stalin embalmed, a satellite image of Tchernobyl. Rather than stable categories, people, places, plants, animals, and things are wobbly first assignments in a lengthy layout process, which, as it moves along, establishes its own specificities and requires more and more substitutions.

Taylor's pictures are methodically chosen from her collection of books. In the act of cutting they are separated from their context and transformed. De-captioned, the images become artifacts: physical objects that refer to material reproduction histories and point back to intentionalities (and ideologies) of making. When I ask Taylor how she identifies a “good book” for collage, she speaks about the importance of the photographer's gaze, of being able to feel it. I'm interested in this mobilization and multiplication of points of view as sites of articulation and difference.

The Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro distinguishes representation as a construct of the mind—analogue to a noun in a sentence—from point of view as a pronominal positioning of bodies in relation. “A human being sees him- or herself as such. However, the moon, the snake, the jaguar, and the mother of smallpox, see him or her as a tapir or peccary that they kill.”² One's status as human or animal, friend or enemy, is not an essential trait but a relational positioning. De Castro is writing about Native American cosmologies, which are radically different from Western conceptions of the world. They certainly are incommensurate with the journalistic or ethnographic worldview that dominates in Taylor's picture books. If, in our library, “to know is to objectify,” according to the Amerindian perspectivism of hunter and prey “to know is to personify.”³ The Other is granted personhood exactly because of their “perspectivity”—“the ability to occupy a point of view.”⁴ Looking at *Flower, Mule, Fig, etc.* and experiencing its zoom I enter a conceptual and formal flip-space—picture planes precariously form and float to the surface depending on the movements of my attention, only to be superseded by the discovery of another visual rhyme or narrative connection. It seems to me that this unstable, pronominal viewing experience in which multiple points of view coincide in one body affords *Flower, Mule, Fig, etc.* the ability to chip away at Western epistemologies and their encyclopedic hubris.

1. Studio visit with Taylor Davis on December 6, 2017.

2. Gerhard Baer, as quoted in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Perspectivism and Multinaturalism in Indigenous America,” in *The Forest and the School/Where to Sit at the Dinner Table?* (Cologne: Akademie der Künste der Welt, 2014), 318.

3. *Ibid.*, 324–5.

4. *Ibid.*, 320.

Trying to Diagram Dan Byers

email from Taylor:

ps. check this out about the psalms, from Wikipedia

Communal laments

Communal laments, in which the nation laments some communal disaster. Both communal and individual laments typically but not always include the following elements:

- 1) address to God,
- 2) description of suffering,
- 3) cursing of the party responsible for suffering,
- 4) protestation of innocence or admission of guilt,
- 5) petition for divine assistance,
- 6) faith in God's receipt of prayer,
- 7) anticipation of divine response, and
- 8) a song of thanksgiving.

In general, the individual and communal subtypes can be distinguished by the use of the singular "I" or the plural "we." However, the "I" could also be characterizing an individual's personal experience that was reflective of the entire community.

I want to diagram the networks of Taylor Davis's recent two-dimensional works, which bring together photographic images, drawing, painting, text, recent past, deep past, and frightening present.

First there is a translucent lattice of connecting lines. Then painted text and a faint grid of shifting colors. Yearbook pictures align with the grid. Shapes made by opaque and transparent paint, and cut images, fit in the spaces between words, between rows made by words, between drawn lines, painted text, and photographic edge. There are so many between once you start trying to fill them.

I approach the works as allusive teaching objects, ecstatic maps, beautifully awkward choreographies of encounter. The pleasures of attempted code-breaking give the work its electrical current.

That current brings with it an obdurate pleasure. I don't automatically learn. I have to search, because the spaces in between, the connections, are either obliterated or mute. I desire, and I extend myself, grasping at familiar fragments placed with such frank mystery into the image and material worlds that Taylor creates with her labor. The evident labor is the first invitation into the work. Because that care, and commitment, is something you want to be close to.



Who are those teenagers, again? Where do they come from? Why do their floating faces feel so inevitably placed? Partially because they hug the edge of a grid line. The faint grids underneath suggest a plan. They make a pattern. The grids give the faces somewhere to be. Patterns repeat.

What does that say? The letters are painted, reading as loose tendrils as they become words. Or also scaffolding, bearing the same tonal, color value as the organic diagrammatic structure painted over the grid.

Those sweet inchoate adolescents smile expectantly from their tiny image windows, unaware that they are caught in an emphatic system of lines, shapes and letters. The painted and collaged shapes are redactions, rests, that fill gaps and propose a logic of placement.

Each rest is formed by taping, their authoritative edges articulating opaque, dense fields of color. They suggest both the forceful blankness of redacted text, and miniature monochrome abstract paintings—censored words and transcendent forms punctuating a field of lyrics and faces.

Taylor gives much attention to edges. The tiny portraits are removed with impossible care, forming crisp corners. And the painted pauses, appearing like decals, break from the paper's toothy surface with a sign painter's carefully assured edge. These edges fill the space, populating it with boundaries.

The words form interrupted sentences. Psalms. Stuttering psalms. Their palliative rhythm and didactic clarity is hacked, scrambled by those redactions, rests, and faces.

These are ancient mantras, created to comfort the afflicted. The incantations evoke deep history, times when visceral bodily harm, loss, cruelty, hope, trauma, and charity carried elemental consequence. Hard times.

What do these children of the 1960s, teenagers of the 1970s, know of 2018? What does 2018 know of those centuries thousands of years before Christ, centuries during which these words of care and caution formed the deep grooves of a collective culture?

How did we arrive at this frightening world in which we find ourselves? Is it part of a plan? A logic? The worse it's ever been, we say. How do we make consequential language to describe the fear, the cruelty, the meanness of civil society, the gutting of empathy?

Those psalms are declarative stomach punches. They are pungent balm. And the way they sit, in washes amongst painted hard stops and floating portraits of uncertain children, gets at the eerie melody and glitchy cadence of the normalcy that covers everything, that obscures the debilitating drone of our contemporary debasement.

I've tried to create a kind of sequential diagram of my own understanding of Taylor's work, or at least my projection onto her process, and its effect on me.

THE DESIRE FOR A LOGIC, A PATTERN
THE PATTERN OF GAPS
THE LOGIC OF MARKS
THE PATTERN OF GRIDS
THE LOGIC OF PORTRAITS
THE COMMITMENT TO THESE LOGICS, THESE PATTERNS
THE RELATIONSHIP TO THAT COMMITMENT
THE LABOR OF THAT RELATIONSHIP
THE AESTHETICS OF THAT LABOR
THE ASSOCIATIONS OF THAT AESTHETIC
THE DISTILLING OF THOSE ASSOCIATIONS
THE FAMILIARITY OF THAT DISTILLATION
THE UNEASE OF THAT FAMILIARITY
THE PLEASURE OF THAT UNEASE
THE LEARNING IN THAT PLEASURE
THE PROVOCATION IN THAT LEARNING



Cambridge Common
Fanny Howe

One day I fell into a ditch
Where two cows hung over clover, unmoving.
They seemed to be sleeping but their coats twitched.

A group of children was snoozing nearby.
Don't wake us up!
they cried.

I kneeled with my fan and swatted the air.
Sandwiches, and small canteens were spilled nearby.

Flies delivering maggots appeared.

I hate buzzing sounds I said to the kids.
Shut up, a little boy cried. "I'm dreaming."

So we all fell asleep that afternoon
Like tourists beside a dolmen.
We were lost I think.
There was a river birch
At a tilt, I saw. And standing on
The wall was a quiver-full of brushes.
Nobody wake us from our dreams.

A lot of boys and girls were forced from home.
They are asleep so don't wake them.
They were transported by wood on the sea.
I'm fast asleep, please.
I wish I could see a day when we
Had our own acre and shared the guitar
But I am dreaming so don't wake me now.

When the boys and girls lift
Their arms over their heads:

(hands up, don't shoot)

Then the creed has only four words we can believe.

The pallor of—say
someone who never passed through the God phase.

Silvery gray is its weather.

Soft char rubbed off a gun-barrel or an eyelid.

It's lonely around the closer you get.
Menacing roadworks bother the birds.
The girls are trying to sleep.
Light flutters on their hair hushing
signals dim. The ghosts of gods
shuffle in the sugar maples the color of champagne.
Guys are cooking up some chicken stew for supper,
Just add water.
Outside of there: Twigs and city mist.
Leaves like brown gloves shrivel at the tips.

Neon clothes hangers brighten the corner
One boy sleeps face up on a bench.
A gold badge shines above his head,
Another lies on the floor at Juvenile Hall.
I wish a yellow crocus would grow on the linoleum.
Children need a rest, their minds are swimming in junk and fists,
they want the liquid unconscious.
Look at them sprawled where George Washington stood,
their backpacks like skunks curled in the shade.

This book is dedicated to Susan M. Schardt, my Sue.

There are different forms of work in this book: what I made, what I made with others, and what others made for me. None of this would have been possible without my mother, Carolee Copthorne Young, and my parents, Robert G. and Betsy B. Davis. Their love began things. Their love continues things.

I look to my family, friends, and colleagues for how to work and live. My heartfelt gratitude for the art, activism, teaching, poetry, curation, design, and writing of Anselm Berrigan, Michael Brenson, A.K. Burns, Dan Byers, Ruth Erickson, Rochelle Goldberg, Fanny Howe, Richard Klein, Ann Lauterbach, Catherine Lord, Helen Molesworth, Ulrike Müller, Jenelle Porter, Conny Purtill, Lucy Raven, Leslie Scalapino, Nancy Shaver, Oliver Strand, and David Levi Strauss.

Special thanks to:

Eileen McDonagh and Bob Davoli for their unparalleled support.

Kristen Dodge for her fierce ways.

Stewart Clements for his patience.

Rick and Sama Lawrence for their love and lumber.

The whole of this book is a gift from Conny Purtill and Jenelle Porter. I will happily take a lifetime to repay their vision, generosity, and friendship.

—Taylor Davis

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EDITOR: Anselm Berrigan

DESIGN: Purtill Family Business with Taylor Davis

COLOR SEPARATIONS: Artproduct, Los Angeles

PRINTER: Conti Tipocolor, S.p.A., Italy

PHOTOGRAPHY: Katarina Burin: 133; Clements Howcroft: 5, 8–13, 15–17, 19, 21–23, 31, 33, 35–37, 39–43, 45–51, 53–55, 57–59, 62–65, 67, 69, 71, 73–75, 77–78, 81, 83–88, 91, 93–95, 97, 99; Stewart Clements, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 113, 115–124, 128, 131, 134, 136–137, 139, 140–142, 146, 150–155, 164, 176, 180, 183, 187; Taylor Davis: 61; Phoebe d'Heurle: 126, 157–161, 163, 168–169, 171–172, 175; Marc Holland: 20, 25; Phillip Jones: 26–29; John Kennard: 19, 21; Sue Schardt: 2

FRONTISPIECE: Taylor Davis in Castine, Maine, August 2001.