

**Montage and Autobiographical Narrative: A Psychogeographic Map of  
Three Areas  
Shane Charles Smith**

**Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at  
Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the  
Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art**

**2015**

**Approved by: Jina Valentine, Beth Grabowski, Lien Truong, Yun-Dong Nam**

**©2015**  
**Shane Charles Smith**  
**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

## On Bridging Stories and Relationships

I create work in the way I create relationships....

By weaving stories and history together, my projects are reflective of the past and active in the present. I seek to illustrate a flux between place, narrative, and audience in order to question cultural conditions surrounding representation, authorship, and tradition.

My project-based work crosses many media, including performance, sculpture and drawing, with emphasis on the relationships between “art” and the purposes of creative practice. Exploring montage and intermedia theory, my work defines and redefines the contexts through which I work.

I create work on the psychological, philosophical, and political dimensions that is an acculturation: drawing my ancestral language, Eastern-Abenaki; fulfilling a promise to a Ugandan friend, Moses, by using a museum as a fundraising venue; and devoting a body of work in response to work from a friend, Ben Alper.

My work brings together practices of the body with language. My actions travel across metaphorical levels often while reworking or reframing a previous act, or words, or historical event.

Through my working practice, I seek to engage with geographies of people and structures of idea. I link the past to the present in critical ways, with autobiographical perspective, and through a cultural-political questioning of our era.



Michelangelo, The Damned Soul 1525  
Ink on Paper

“Your Lordship sends to tell me that I should paint and have no doubts. I answer that painting is done with the brain, not the hands; and one who cannot have his brains about him dishonors himself...”

Michelangelo, 1542



How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare  
Joseph Beuys c. 1965 Gold Leaf, honey,  
dead hare, felt pad, iron, fir tree, drawings

“Drawing is the first visible form of my work, the first visible form of the thought...

you have also incorporated the senses- balance, sight, hearing, touch...

the thought becomes modified by other creative strata within the anthropological entity, the human being... And then the last, most important thing is that some transfers from the invisible to the visible and with sound, since the most important production of human beings is language... This wide understanding of drawing is very important for me.”

Joseph Beuys, 1970

“ I do not take the phrase “community of sense” to mean a collectivity shaped by some common feeling. I understand it as a frame of visibility and intelligibility that puts things or practices together under the same meaning, which shapes thereby a certain sense of community. A community of sense is a certain cutting out of space and time that binds together practices, forms of visibility,... and patterns of intelligibility I call this cutting out and this linkage a partition of the sensible.”

Ranciere, 2009





Ben Alper, An Index of Walking  
c. 2013-2014 Photograph



Ben Alper, An Index of Walking  
c. 2013-2014 Photograph

"Instead of remembering more, it is believed that we recall the details of a photographed object or event with *less* accuracy. The photographic image then does not necessarily act as a catalyst for existent memories, but rather as its own autonomous form – a separate visual language freed from the confines of lived experience and prone to fragmentation and manufactured certainty. It is the ghost image that impersonates a memory, manifesting a feeling of authentic remembrance out of the fictional."

Ben Alper, 2013



On a Derive with Ben Alper...





Derived materials  
from Carrboro and  
Chapel Hill



Derived materials, studio installation

Derived studio  
materials



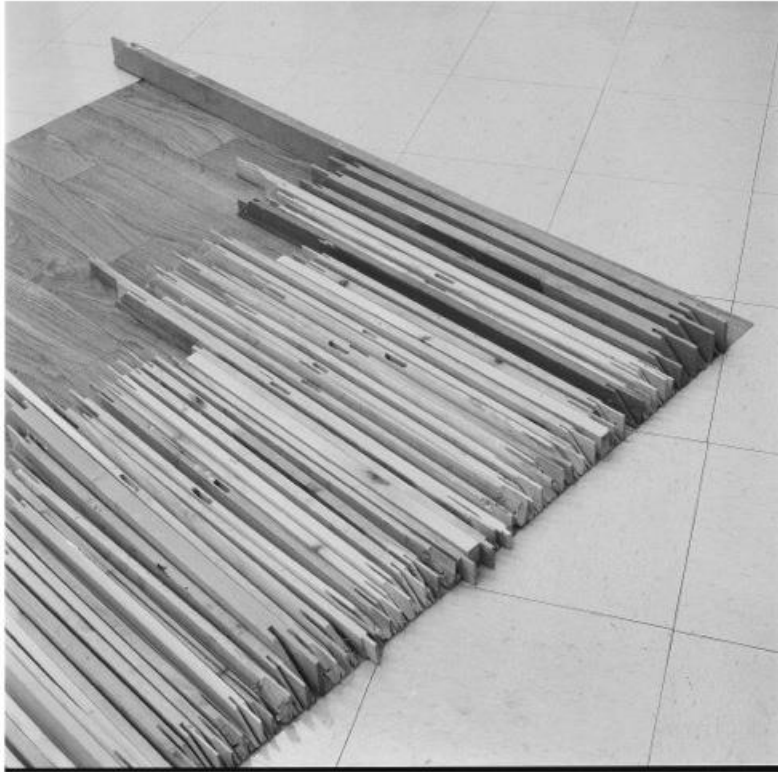




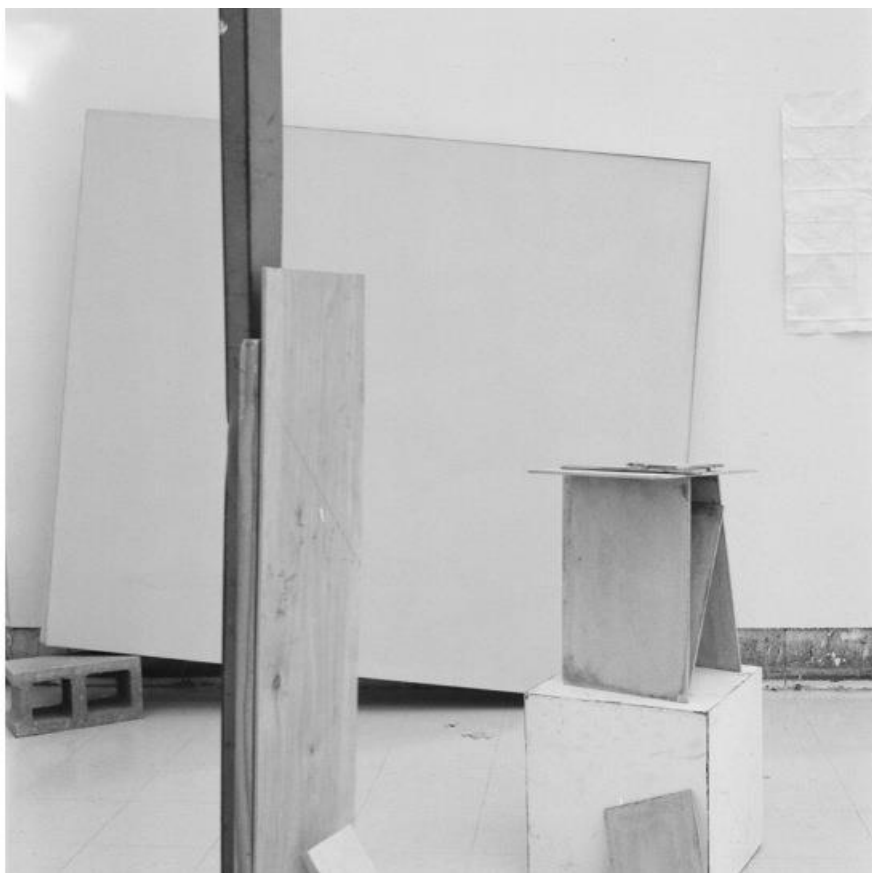
Ben Alper, studio Derive, 2014 Medium  
format B/W film,



Studio installation, Derived materials



Ben Alper, studio  
Derive, Medium  
format B/W film  
c. 2014



Ben Alper,  
studio Derive,  
Medium  
format B/W  
film

A number of contemporary artists and art collections that have defined their practice precisely around the facilitation of dialogue among diverse communities, Parting from the traditions of object-making, these artists have adopted a performative, process-based approach. They are “context providers” rather than “content providers.”

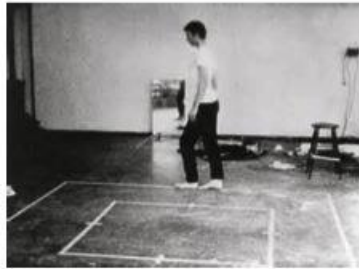
Grant Kester, 2004



A single mat with pieces of gold, for my wife Rachel who lives in New York  
a twelve hour ride away on the Chinatown bus leaving Durham.  
(After Roni Horn)



Roni Horn, Paired Gold Mats, for Ross and Felix c. 1994-1995, Gold



Bruce Nauman, *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square*  
c. 1967-1968 Performance





Excessively Taping Back Together a Large Paper Square

(For Bruce Nauman) Performance



Daniel Buren, Photo-souvenir c. 1964-1966, Paint on canvas



Souvenir photo, (After  
Daniel Buren) 1 of 22  
Tape on found  
paintings



Robert Rauschenberg and  
Susan Weil, Blue Prints  
c. 1950 Cyanotype on  
paper



Model for  
Concrete Print,  
After Susan  
and Robert  
Concrete





“Eurocentrism is different to ethnocentrism, it refers to the ethnocentrism exercised by a specific culture, but to the often forgotten fact that the world-wide hegemony of that culture has imposed it’s ethnocentrism as a universal value, and has persuaded us of it for a long time.”

Gerando Mosquera, 2002



Helio Oiticica, Homage to My Father c. 1972, Print





Stories of my Great Grandmother's (Penobscot culture and loss of the sign) Crayola on canvas



Children's Drawings:  
(Penobscot culture and the  
loss of the sign)



Agelbeum or Frog Monster, ebook illustration

Learning Penobscot  
from  
[Penobscotculture.com](http://Penobscotculture.com)

"Indian red" pastel on  
board





Glen Ligon, Study for  
Negro Sunshine #3  
c. 2006 Oil stick on  
canvas

"Now according to Benjamin, the new author must first of all address the modernist framework of isolated producers and try to change the artist's position from that of a caterer of aesthetic goods to that of an active force in transformation of existing cultural apparatus itself."

Benjamin Buchlou, 1982





Aviform structure: model, Okeeweeme clay



Aviform structure 1; After building a clay monument in the woods I returned and found it taken apart, Carrboro, Okeeweeme clay on plywood (destroyed)





I found pieces of that structure fashioned into a shelter somebody was living in.



Aviform structure 2; I recreated the structure in my bedroom apartment, 105 Jones Ferry rd.  
Apt. f10, Carrboro Okeeweeme clay mix on plywood

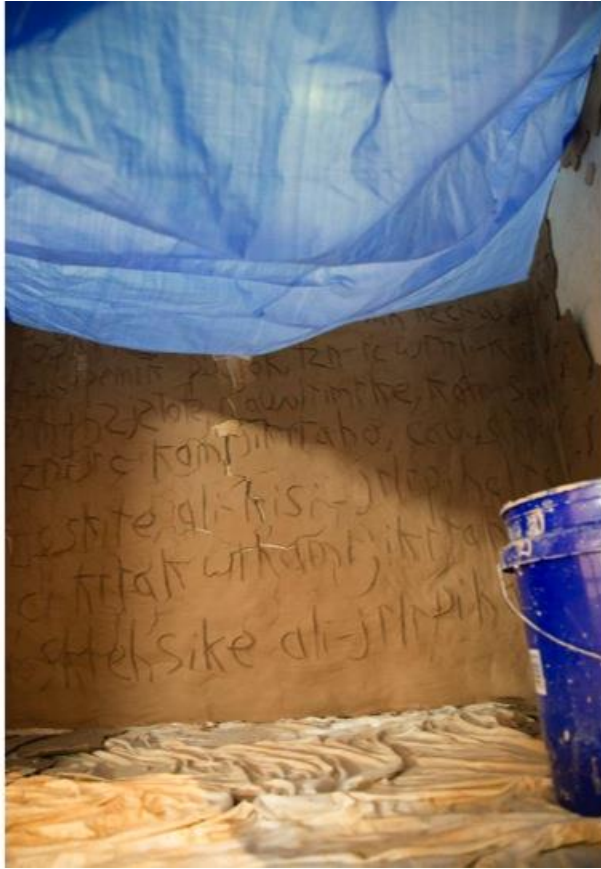


I lived in this structure for three weeks as it dried, cracked and pieced apart, Okeeweeme clay on plywood



Aviform structure 3; I replicated this structure in a gallery, Chapel Hill, Okeeweeme clay on plywood with tarp





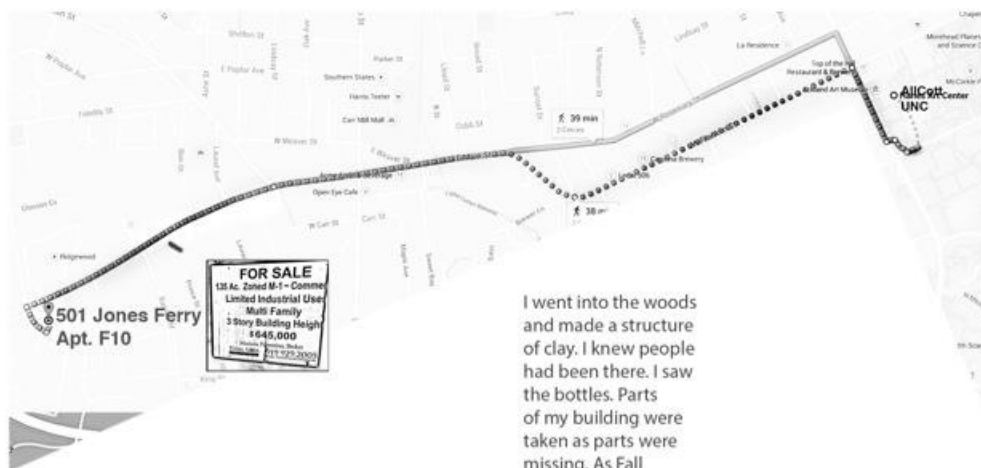
Interior installation  
detail



Installation view with documentation; (photos, versions of the story inscribed in the clay of the interior walls of the structure and materials from each constructed site)

Flyers  
connecting the  
three places of  
construction,  
the woods, my  
apartment and  
the gallery





I went into the woods and made a structure of clay. I knew people had been there. I saw the bottles. Parts of my building were taken as parts were missing. As Fall dropped more leaves I found my tarp, my board, and clay around a mattress in the woods.





During the duration of the gallery exhibit, I installed the clay fragments from the first structure back into the woods



During the duration of the gallery exhibit, I installed the clay fragments from the second structure back into my apartment for view

Site is precisely a function of absence...  
absence is either the trace of a previous  
presence, it contains memory,' or the trace  
of a possible presence, it contains  
immanence''

Eisenman, 1986

Gilberto Zorio, *Stella con arco voltaico* (Star with Voltaic Bow) c. 2007

Electrified metal



A point of intersection of  
several fields of action in the  
world 'where' (w)hat bothers  
the order of things is that  
there is not just a single order

Denys Zacharopolous, 1996



The Aviform sign, "Bird form" cave drawing



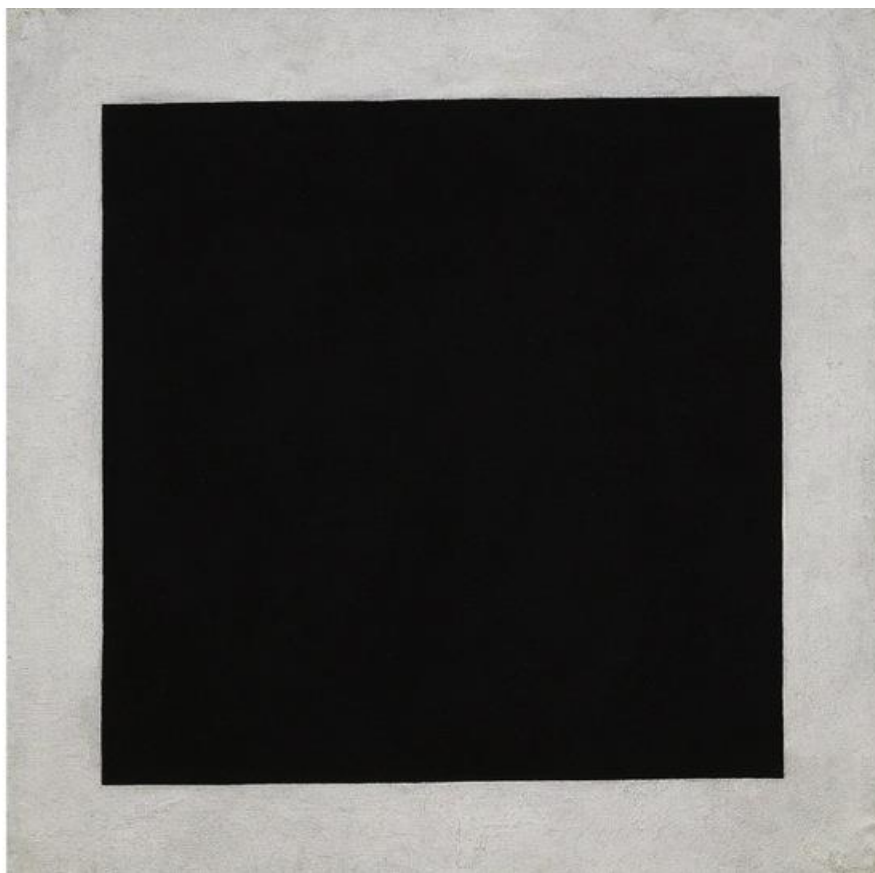


Mario Merz, Igloo c. 2002 Welded metal and earth

A successful piece of art is like a meeting point where energies go and from which energies depart. It's a moment of tension between the inside and the outside, in all senses: in the personal sense and in the sense of the space (...) from my point of view, I'm putting in relationship my inside with this story outside.

Giovanni Anselmo, 1996





Kasimir  
Severinovich  
Malevich  
Black Square  
c. 1923  
Oil paint on  
canvas



Marcel Duchamp,  
Bicycle Wheel  
c. 1963  
Ready-made object

Mission for Moses:  
The Uganda  
playground I designed  
and built with my  
Ugandan friend  
Moses





Uganda playground documentation

...the artwork has not awkwardly,  
but aggressively asserted itself  
back into the gallery context: the  
space of art- but this with an  
aggressive discomfort and a  
complicit defiance.

Ashley Bickerton, 1986

Oliotiga		
Bulungi		
Calag		
Jambo	jam-bo	hi (casual)
OKobache	o-ko-ba-he	What's up
Wazilla	Wa-Zil-le	not much
Waliwo	Wa-li-wi	there is (something up)
Wasizotia	Wa-Si-Ze-ti-ya	good morning
Siviotia	Si-vi-o-ti-ya	good evening
Sula bulungi	Su-la boo-lun-gi	goodnight
Ebiloto ebilungi	ebi-lo-to ebi-lun-gi	Sweet dreams
Webale	way-ba-lay	thank you
Eno	ee-no	so much

Installation documentation: Language learning card



Installation  
documentation:  
Playground design





Installation view, Mission for Moses (A partial replica of the playground made from North Carolina materials, paintings for sale to raise money for Moses' elementary school proposal)





Installation view of the  
balancing beams: Cedar and  
adobe brick (brick was made  
in the "Ugandan way")



25 smaller "Uganda" paintings setup to sell in a private room for interested donors

...once beyond the official enclosures of 'legitimate' art practice many found that they had exchanged their prison for a desert. They learned that there is nothing to be made of a conceptualism, defined in opposition to Modernism, other than an 'official opposition;' and that there is nothing to be made of modernist art history other than a history of modernism.

My remarks here, very far from being comprehensive are intended to point off the highroad of western bourgeois aesthetics to areas where conceptualism may be better grounded for the completion of it's metamorphosis from an essentially Modernist Avant-garde to a socialist practice.

Victor Burgen, 1976