

“Shorthanded”

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University Of Washington

2018

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Art - Painting and Drawing

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**Abstract**

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How can the development of personalized language be supported through a survey of visual experience? Interacting with any system asks us to formulate a reaction to the structures of reality. My research into participatory learning explores three trajectories; Individuality, Coincidence, and Survey. Linguistic norms, such as reading from left to right, or segregating vernacular abbreviations and compounds with hyphens or apostrophes, “Real-time,” can be an appropriate analog to the perceptive aspect of objective painting. The record of observation is an abstraction, a shorthand, activating its representation, establishing a colloquial understanding. This vernacular is applied while working objectively. How does this language impose meaning when presented to an audience? What is this vernacular able to distill? Stenography is the seminal operation of abstraction. To foster the individual development of personalized stenographics is to expand a structure for progressive conception and, at the same time, allow contradictions to occur.

I will conduct a material investigation through time-lapse photography of my painting process and two days of community events. The paintings are created from observation as a durational and regimented task that manifests on, or in, a surface through its interpretive sensory record.

Google Drive Folder of Media: [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UfUW2cAmoUx83oMCMw1\\_HV3Yd0NDIEJb](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UfUW2cAmoUx83oMCMw1_HV3Yd0NDIEJb)  
Image Title - File Name - Date - Description

“Resolution II” *David Burr 1.mp4*, 2018. Composited still images of the painting “Willow I”

“R1” *David Burr 2.mp4*, 2018. Composited still images of the painting “Willow I”

“R1” *David Burr 3.mp4*, 2018. Composited still images of the painting “Willow I”

“Dream Sequence” *David Burr 4.mov*, 2018. Composited still images of the painting “Willow I”

“Level Mechanism” *David Burr 5.mov*, 2018. Fabricated structure and participants: Baorong Liang, Guy Moshayov, Lucy Copper, and Emily Taibleson.

“Seattle: Day 4” *David Burr 6.avi*, 2018. Google street view screenshots

“Grouping 1” *David Burr 7.avi*, 2018. Google street view screenshots

“37th ave E Handle: Calvin Osborn” *David Burr 8.avi*. 2018. Google street view screenshots

“Dogwood and Wandering Jew” *David Burr 9.jpg*, 2018. Oil, pen, acrylic and marker on canvas

“Wandering Jew” *David Burr 10.jpg*, 2018. Oil, pen, acrylic and marker on canvas.

## I. Introduction

Stenography is the seminal operation of abstraction. Individual development of personalized stenographics is a mnemonic tool to expand a structure for progressive conception. Shorthands collate information and give users that understand this code quick access to more complex ideas. However, shorthands are missing information which can lead to misinterpretation. Misinterpretation, is a new thought. This new thought contributes to the way we identify the initial concept. This act of misinterpretation and its expansion on the given or accurate definition is productive. It works in a similar way to artistic creation which allows for meddling with commonplace communicative vehicles, often to an abstracted and potentially an absurd end. Our personal stenographic code can become a frame for viewing another's habits.

Perceptual painting is a craft situated in this practice of highlighting this gestalt process of communication. At no particular moment are you to rely on one bit of information to represent the source. While painting, the image of the subject often becomes convoluted and floats between a representation of the subject you are studying and something else. Showing the chronology of this change I have made a series of videos that consist of a catalogue of moments recorded between myself and the subject, a river bushwillow. Perception is the human access point into community and one structure for a shared accessible human experience. The film and animation process involves heavy sampling from a digital archive, my camera the digital observer. This process is another abstraction, a step away, from the first encoding I conducted as painter. It is reducing the significance of the painted object while allowing for better access to a potential moving visual language. The video format is a pragnanz tool for interfacing with the painting process rather than the painted image. Mark becomes actor, repetition becomes gestural and the canvas becomes a window.

In this system of abbreviation there is a distinction between language and discourse. Language is the vehicle of conversation which is designed to have a lower bar for access. There are models implemented in social tuning to create a specialized lexicon which is then the tool of discourse. There is a scale shift between language, discourse and stenography.

Images work as a shorthand for reality. This system distorts the image through the flattening of space and dictation of a format. Through modern communication we are reverting back to a hieroglyphics and a semiotic system. This is expanding the expressive capacity for language due to less face to face communication. Through developments in user interfaces we are learning a new social communication centered around images which are only restricted by our preference for human perspective.

This method of reducing information is a somewhat inefficient communicative tool, however it gives a utility to certain mechanical processes. Using a drill instead of a screwdriver you will not have to experience the same expenditure of energy to achieve the same result. Though this seems over all more productive, as a culture we implement this favoring for utility and reduction on education and experiential systems more and more frequently. Which is decimating the archive of analog functions. Along with the videos "R1" "R1" and "Resolution II," I am collaborating with several artists and speakers to create a series events to be conducted in conjunction with the Henry exhibition. These events provide the audience access to different modes of perception through a variety of individualized processes, which I have deemed as "shorthands."

To organize this programming I am opening the floor to:

Leith Miller, a doctoral researcher in behavioral physiology.  
Katie Schroeder, a installation and video artist.  
Connor Walden, performance and fabrication artist.

The programming consists of a Lecture, a Film, and a performative score. In these works collaboration is an act to facilitate movement between perspectives; involving participants allows intellectual endorsement to take place externally through inference and association. Translating relative ideas resembles a similar format shift to the translation of painting to video. The moment of translation is a simultaneous encoding and decoding of thought. These collaborations are designed to hold this moment in stasis, the abstraction of communication provides a pause in true unknowing. This moment of unknowing defeats our contemporary inclination to simplify mechanical informational systems. Art has allowed us to remove the process from the goal of form, or utility.

Both the videos and collaborations require the manufacturing of a viewer interface. By creating parameters for experience I am reducing the access an audience has to certain aspects of the work, possibly this is transforming the work as a whole. Most notably in the videos we are not able to experience the painting in any way other than on its digital and time-based terms. Facilitating a collective experience is not a democratic manner of sharing thought. My perspective is a heavy bias when providing an opportunity for personal autonomy within a system. What level of accountability do I hold myself and my viewers to once they are implicated in the experience. Acknowledging individual contributions to the whole as standalone events encourages inaction when the whole is a component of a larger centralized structure. There is a necessary element of trust and reciprocity that is employed in collaboration. The experiences are not my own, though through the inclusion of these collaborations in the henry, incorporating my work and goals as a thematic thread implies a sharing of authorship. I am creating these experiences to turn participants into spectacle or specimen, highlighting their contribution to the work as it can be witnessed from outside of the cage created by my instructions.

The word order holds two distinct connotations, it is the pivoting between instruction and structure. Etymologically it is related to the concept of construction, or the verb to build. The act of making is defined by its production. In processing instructions and in processing structure we are reflecting what is built. I am trying to share an experience of reordering language in a peer-to-peer cognitive interaction. Reflection. To do this I am responsible for defining the instructional boundaries of each experience. Institutionalizing the contradictory, the formal nature of trying, attempting, acquiring, accumulating. Maximally colonizing viewer experience for the sake of perspectivism.

## II. Influences

“We cannot imagine such circumstances in any direct or naturalistic way, but only through the extrapolating lens of science fiction.”<sup>1</sup>

Science fiction is no longer a hyper-context in this way, but it has now become a mime of reality. AI is trusted to moderate and construct our aesthetic trajectory as we swipe our way through gendered systems of attraction. Sentences are reduced to 4 characters and people can be reduced to 6 images and 500 words there is a race for social literacy and now emoticons have entered mainstream media representations. As a culture we are learning to be more comfortable with each other through a barrier of technology.

Sergei Eisenstein gives us a definition for the term “Being.”

“The Foundation for this philosophy is a dynamic concept of things:  
Being--- as a constant evolution from the interaction of two contradictory  
opposites.

Synthesis--- arising from the opposition between thesis and antithesis.”<sup>2</sup>

Painting is a process of decoding Being, taking participants of this dynamic interaction interaction and isolating them on a surface to be offered simultaneously. Leveling the barrier of access to each piece of information, though we can still only start with one. A painting is a systematic catalog, a graph, a because of its lateral manner of entering a linear process of reading a painting. While looking, as a painter you become more aware of contexts for observation. When the process of looking is brought into other tasks, we become aware of different things for different reasons. While painting I don’t notice the tree drying its soil and curling into itself as it suffers in this drafty room, I do notice the color of its dirt is cool, and the position of its leaves have descended which can then imply the previous observations. These are the conditions that live inside of parameters. In process I tend to favor systems of perception over systems of control. I will never cover a window, and rarely set up a light for representational purposes. There are no attempts to mitigate one side of the dialectic environment I am perceiving. At a certain point I must be leaving the matter of representation up to a chance happening. From the beginning representation is the parameter I have given the painting.

Looking at Koki Tanaka’s piece “a poem written by five poets at once (first attempt)” we see a theme acting as the separation between artist, subject, and viewer. This “theme” creates a cage similar to the perspective instituted by receiving instructions. The variability in clarity of expectation influences the type of information we can acquire from being outside of the laboratory. Participants in Koki’s practice are forced to employ more of the knowledge they bring with them due to the lack of procedural guidelines. Koki’s video allows us as viewer to witness the collective’s guidelines manifest through self moderation.<sup>3</sup> Connor Walden and I will be distributing pamphlets to museum goers on June 2nd which outline instructions for viewing the art in the MFA exhibition. These pamphlets strip participants of their need for specialized knowledge through specificity of instruction.

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<sup>1</sup> Shaviro, Steven. *No Speed Limit - Three Essays on Accelerationism* pg. 9

<sup>2</sup> Eisenstein, Sergei. *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory, and the Film Sense*

<sup>3</sup> Kuraya, Mika. *Koki Tanaka: Abstract Speaking. Sharing Uncertainty and Collective Acts; The Japan Pavillion at the 55th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale Di Venezia*

In David Wilson's exhibition at the Berkeley Art Museum with the Pacific Film Archive, "The Possible" he invited hundreds of artists to take their practice into the space and invite the audience to work with them. In "A letter from inside the possible" David Wilson states that this experience is "led by artists who are driven to expand their practice by sharing it. Those who have participated are those who have accepted the invitation to work within a collective situation." This situation is a group exhibition that David has related to an experimental school. He goes on to say "In these next two months we will continue to enjoy the filling of our vessel and intermixing the energy of it all, but soon enough we will pour it all out and see where it takes us. And that's the real moment of possibility"<sup>4</sup> David Wilson is again offering instructions without a theme, and here we see a participatory experience with art that specifically enlists the skill sets of its community members to manifest pieces of its experience. When talking about the pouring of the vessel it implies that the individual contributions of artworks from each collaborative practice are what creates the assemblage of the whole "the Possible." This pouring means that there is an end, a product, a whole that is dependent on these objects as they get used, ordered, documented and displayed. The possible is a collaboration between collaborations rather than collaborators.

Looking back at Sergei Eisenstein's analysis of Montage, in *A Dialectic Approach to Film Form*, progression and understanding are controlled by the inverse juxtaposition of visual moments. In the "Resolution" videos I have placed them on one wall, next to each other. The videos are to be experienced as a painting would be, in the open, unconfined by narrative time or seating. The Audience can choose which video to start with, however it is very unlikely that they will start with the middle. I have provided the parameters for engagement through abstract, potentially subliminal, motor cues like tempo, volume, and rhythm. The videos are all of the same painting. This sameness and presentation are modes of control that are on the spectrum between Koki and David's use of theme as invitation.

Perceptual painting places the artist as interpreter, does this obligate them to frame and communicate what they have seen. In Lygia Clark's late career, she offers phenomenological devices that frame a participant's experience as a way of reclaiming a sensorial connection to the world<sup>5</sup>. She is communicating her observations, however the act of understanding comes from shifting a viewer's context rather than semiotic persuasion. Placement of the body and social mind within an activated environment engaged directly with the artist and instruction helps Lygia remove the self from the isolation of capitalist life and the modernization projects of the 1950s in Latin America. In *Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty Full of Lygia Clark*, Suely Rolnik asserts that through creation a person can bring themselves into feeling present even when overwhelmed by the rapidly changing development of this social world. Suely says that the problem facing the receptionist of creation "Is its anesthetic effects on the rest of social life: the ordinary person, that is, every human being, loses control of this activity [...] What emerges is the figure of the "individual," a self-enclosed entity who extracts his or her feeling of self from an image lived as an essence"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Fischbeck, Luke, and David Wilson. *The Possible*:

<sup>5</sup> Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles, California). *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom*

<sup>6</sup> Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles, California). *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom* pg. 62

### III. Methodology & Content

Surveillance requires a platform to view your subject from. We might use the panopticon as the par for excellence in surveillance the omnipotent sits above in his tower. The mode of accessing this information dictates the manner in which the catalog of the painting defines its content. In the Resolution videos viewers are seeing through a monitor, dynamic moments displayed sequentially, and degraded through appropriation. A painting and a video require two different modes of interaction, one of icon, and the latter of time. We come to these objects with this preassigned interaction. We look at a painting, and it is perpetually available, with video you must turn it on, and see it through a device. This is a barrier that has been standing in public lexicon between the digital and the material for a decades.

There is a third format that comes with a normative interaction that is cyclical rather than linear or two dimensional, the gif. In these short videos which are designed to perpetually loop, a segment of the video is a parsing of beginning and end. Many gifs are sequenced in a manner similar to that of timelapse, usually these are representations of scenes from movies, or images implying hypnotic suggestion, subliminal messaging.

Because of the gif's format and manner of distribution I associate it with still images. When loading a .gif file through a web browser it often plays it, slowly, frame by frame first. This is the context of Resolutions. Each video loops and is built around the aspects of a sequential visual language. The mark of an artist's hand is an affect tool which dictates a certain type of participation with a painting, we use mark and shape to guide a viewer through a composition to trigger an emotive nuanced experience. The film form and its loop is just such an aesthetic affective tool. It firstly resembles photography, as each frame is a still image which we through conditioning understand to be related to a camera. It is then reminiscent of fiction, or novels as it is to be experienced through narrative and external human perspective. It belongs **in** the world of cognition not **to** the world of cognition, we do not read meaning from thematic partitions or groupings, we read word by word at first and then categorize similarities into meaning. When we look at a painting we do not read mark to mark, by bringing the painting into a film context we are then more likely to focus on the changing mark, to spend time with individual moments that are intended to be read as a part of a larger category of identifiable imagery. The looping of the end with the beginning is an attempt to level the linear perception of narrative images, the repetition of frames acts almost as a still image in that you are given a simulacrum of stillness, or options on how you recreate your paths.

Many of the material choices during the painting process are derived from a similar lexicon of access. Their parameters are designed to cater to my responsive method of drawing. Markers were adopted as a drawing tool out of a desire to have a large variety of mark but to impose a consistent and depletable source of chromatic media. The conditions posed by a bottle of white out force me to acknowledge the potential all aspects of the white out hold. It can create thick, impenetrable moments of mat white, that does not hold onto its hard edges unless i wipe it away mid drying with a rag. It dries in about 30 seconds, I would maybe give it a minute before using a ballpoint pen over it. These are all parameters for response, the same types of parameters we use when trying to understand a person's affective voice, the type of shoe someone wears and the pace of their step become signifiers as someone enters the room behind you. This leaves the barrier of familiarity, that having a uniform would help mitigate the access to difference, if six

people wore the same shoes and pants everyday for a week and you were blindfolded you would soon be able to determine identity from purely rhythm, and which person is the most conscious of the squeaky spot on the floor. You may not identify these differences but they will subliminally be your interface for codifying personality within this social construct. They become systemic gestures. The painted subject dictates its representation in this way, Painting itself is a process of isolating the vocabulary of distinctive identifying features. We break light into relative conglomerates across a spectrum of light and dark, we isolate color on a pallet to then apply it to its appropriate family and this is how vision helps codify light onto two dimensional form. Making the painting a video there is quite a bit of resampling that goes on, in some cases this re sampling strips the subtleties of representation away from the subject, in the videos of R1 and Resolution II the painting has lost a significant amount of clarity due to repeated compressions and a variety of documentation sources, my digital camera is the second and foremost source of visual information in the videos. The Painting is the first. Layer of record, the information has not been passed through any device other than my sensory perception.

The willow is a visitor in the studio who I brought in as a consideration on what it means to “be” along with a spruce, and dogwood whom are no longer with us. Plants are a figurative subject, and organic form that grows and responds drastically to light over a respectably short amount of time, it is taking in the conditions of environment to determine its growth trajectory from limitation. I am choosing to respond to the plant, to create an opposition to its growth trajectory, by observing and recording where it has been, The intention is to represent, and the plants goal is to be present, or to present. To make the choice to represent something you are engaging with a series of more complex systems that respond to the same environmental limitations the plant must. “I love the color of the leaves on the tree when the light comes in from the skylight right now” is a visual and emotive drive that calls me to paint, rather than the plants more existential need to reach for light and grow into its pot. At an early point I began applying wires to the plants, to encourage certain types of growth. I am taking control of environment, this is outside of the plants capacity for functioning, it does not have the ability to alter another’s course of response, this control is apart of what we perceive as our own consciousness.

On June 23rd, Leith Miller, and I will be offering a workshop to an audience in the henry to attempt to understand how bats know their own voice. Leith studies how nose shape effects bat calls and behaviors for preditorial and social reasons. Through meetings at coffee shops and thrift stores we have collected tools for the workshop. About fifteen curtains, four broken Oculus headsets and an assortment of lights and mirrors have entered my studio. In designing this workshop I have asked Leith what kind of visual, physical and phenomenological aids would be helpful for describing something that she normally is not able to visualize in her text and research. The experience will take place in a dark room with strobing light and each participant will be given a means to either control or perceive.

The largest leap of perspective between being human and trying to understand how bats hear, is vision. Bats use their voice to hear and see simultaneously, they are capable of alternating frequencies and signals while compiling social calls or searching for prey. They only see in stop motion while our eyes are constant and have to emit nothing.

“In order to articulate new normative claims, perhaps the most valuable thing we could hope to

design is a viable glossary with which to name our situations directly”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Bratton, Benjamin H. *The New Normal*. pg. 72

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