Documenting Douglas Huebler: His Early Conceptual Works 1968-1975

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Abstract

This dissertation considers the early conceptual work of Douglas Huebler, from 1968 to 1975, focusing on his drawings, mapping, and photographic strategies. It argues for his singular place in the emergence of American conceptual art merited by his inventive linguistic approach to the image, a systematic procedure that extended beyond the conventional tenets of conceptualism and generated a particular openness to his surrounding world.

This is the first monographic treatment of Huebler's early career, examining the critical phases of his work in relation to the art and linguistic currents of the time. The introduction contains biographical information relevant to Huebler's production—his path from Michigan to his innovative years at Bradford College in Massachusetts where he began his conceptual art in collaboration with New York curator Seth Siegelaub. Each chapter includes detailed analyses of selected works from his categories of location, duration, and variables, those pieces that have particular significance in relation to his carefully devised text. His work is situated in relation to other artists producing in a similar vein during the 1960s and 70s, such as John Baldessari, Lawrence Weiner, and Robert Smithson. Huebler often preferred procedure by chance, presenting the results as snapshot photographs that were shuffled in sequence and often with seemingly disjunctive language. Using the caption, cliché and aphorism, Huebler asks the reader to question conditions of appearance in the photographs, allowing the viewer to go beyond direct visual perception. The dissertation concludes with a look at his *Everyone Alive* series.

Contents

AN INTRODUCTION TO HUEBLER'S EARLY WORK

> In Huebler's terms, the text 'collides' or 'dances' with the image…What looks so familiar, becomes unfamiliar, as it is annoying. We crave familiarity and instead we are made dizzy…It is possible to navigate through Huebler's multi-layered constructions. It's just that his is not an easy art.[1]
>
> —Mike Kelley, "Shall We Kill Daddy?" (1996)

Thesis overview

Despite his unsettling title "Shall We Kill Daddy?," Mike Kelley, Huebler's former student at California Institute of the Arts, fully recognized the reason that his beloved teacher's work has been overlooked in the mainstream literature—it is not an easy art. It is intellectually playful and purposefully frustrating, requiring a careful navigation through multi-layered constructions of language with image. Douglas Huebler (1924-1997) was a primary figure among the first generation American conceptualists including Lawrence Weiner, Robert Barry, and Joseph Kosuth, those whose group exhibitions in the late 1960s and early 1970s have become hallmarks in conceptual art, and yet scholarly examination of Huebler's work has been uneven at best. This dissertation argues for Douglas Huebler's singular place in the emergence of American conceptual art merited by an inventive linguistic approach to the image that generated a particular openness to his surrounding world and extended beyond the conventional tenets of conceptualism.

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[1] Mike Kelley, "Shall We Kill Daddy?" exhibition catalogue essay in *Origin and Destination: Alighiero e Boetti and Douglas Huebler*, eds. Marianne Van Leeuw and Anne Pontégnie, Spring 1997 (Brussels: Société des Exposition des Palais de Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, 1997), 156. Also in *C31 Magazine* (December 1996 – January 1997), online http://strikingdistance.com/C31nov/kelley.html>.

This is the first monographic treatment of Huebler's early career, examining three critical phases of his work and their relation to the art and linguistic currents of the time. Most art history surveys of the twentieth century give Huebler a cursory glance and a handful of exhibition catalogues have given him substantial consideration. This is why my mentor and thesis advisor Howard Singerman saw the need for further research. The scope of this thesis is limited to Huebler's conceptual works from 1968-1975, including background information relevant to his production, and an analysis of selected works from this period that best represent my argument. This document is not a catalogue of his works during this period. I examine many of his better known works as well as some less recognized pieces which are exemplary of his approach to an examination of the relationship of image and language.

My discussion involves a close reading of Huebler's language in relation to his drawings, mapping, and photographic strategies. I consider Huebler's work in relation to the ideas of relevant thinkers on such topics as analysis of a line, twentieth century theories on time and space, and linguistic and social theory. I situate his work in relation to other artists producing in a similar vein during the 1960s and 70s, demonstrating how and why his production is distinctly provocative for analysis.

Toward the mid to late 1960s Huebler began to mark locations—on the ground, onto road maps, and in his photographs—as sites for documentation of spatial perception and awareness of one's surroundings, accompanied by written instructions for the production of the experience. These instructions and the

corresponding photographic record of the procedure became his particular signature form of documentation well into the 1970s, revealing his thoughts on the conditions of appearance in both social and physical space. Huebler often preferred procedure by chance, that is, by unpredictable circumstances, presenting the results as snapshot photographs that were shuffled in sequence. He was careful to make the distinction that the photograph, in his work, is a supporting document to explicate the procedural idea as opposed to merely illustrating it.

If one characteristic of critical thinking is the ability to think in terms of multiple reasons for an act, certainly Douglas Huebler's thought process is critical— he thought in terms of variables. Life was a series of variables, waiting for different intervening effects, multiple ways of seeing the same thing. Huebler's approach was an intense investigation of the three divisions of his interest— Location, Duration, and Variables. These categories were fluid sets within a system that allowed the viewer to go beyond direct visual perception.

Thesis structure

One might assume that the headings Location, Duration, and Variables would lend a logical arrangement for this dissertation however such an approach would be deceiving. Huebler shifted from one category to another according to whatever temporal or spatial conditions he sought to redefine, whether expanding lines on a map or exposing underlying meanings in language. The works in each of his categories are designated numerically but are often not in chronological sequence, while all three categories overlap topically to varying degrees. For instance, a piece

showing a readymade map of New York City streets, despite its obvious geographical focus, does not fall under Location but is instead entitled *Site Sculpture Project: Variable Piece #1, New York, 1968*, and involves random movement. Huebler purposely creates a complicated net to untangle. When thinking about my own structure for this dissertation, I decided that an arrangement by duration, location, and variables seemed more archival than investigative and might ignore the fact that these are intermingled issues, nuanced in ways that could more logically be considered by medium. For this reason, I have arranged Huebler's work as drawings, mapping, and photographic strategies. Within these, I have given rigorous attention to certain works that, to my mind, are the most compellingly rich to set Douglas Huebler apart from his contemporaries. These are works that have not been given in-depth analysis previously, indeed most of his works have never been given the treatment they deserve, and the ones I consider have not been situated in their proper historical, philosophical and linguistic contexts.

Before turning to each chapter synopsis, I believe it is important to explain Huebler's general intention for his duration, location, and variable pieces. This should help sort out his projects and show how they overlap. The *Duration Pieces* include his drawings and photographs investigating physics and perception of time or his fictional narratives involving time, such as a diminishing monetary reward until the capture of a bank robber. The *Location Pieces* include designated routes drawn onto readymade road maps, geographic points to be photographed along the way, and places for action such as mailing or moving materials from one site to

another. During the late 1960s, his text for these locations proposed a visceral experience, like imagining that his lines on a page are revolving at infinitesimal speed, or looking at an itinerary on a map not necessarily meant to be traveled. Soon the mapped locations took on more physical intention, specifying travel according to the procedural text, such as to points in the Mojave Desert. *Variable Pieces* is Huebler's most comprehensive category, beginning with his photographs of random social interaction with instructions and extending broadly to his best known and most ambitious project—to document the existence of *Everyone Alive,* a photographic series begun in 1970 that he divided into multiple subsets. Some of the *Everyone Alive* project appears in my chapter on mapping however most of it involved photography and so is found in the photographic strategies chapter.

This introduction will provide a broad overview on how to navigate through Huebler's early conceptual work. I introduce a synopsis of the basic arguments in my three subsequent chapters—those that form the body of this dissertation, briefly citing several of Huebler's relevant works as well as certain artists and philosophers whose work directly applies to them. Then I annotate the foundational sources on Huebler as a reference that may prove helpful for further study. Finally, I review his path to conceptualism, weaving in biographical information as it relates to his art production and his teaching career. Within this, I note his significant minimalist exhibitions and point to his formalist constructions that predict his geometric propensities in mapping.

Synopsis of chapters

In Chapter One, I examine Huebler's conceptual drawings from 1968-1975 as a major shift in his work, away from abstract painting and minimalist sculpture. I begin with his points and lines, those that illustrate his sharp pivot into conceptual practice and lay the groundwork for his ideas on space and time as experiential procedures in art. While the drawings are seminal for his later ideas on mapping and photography, here I show why they are worthy of investigation in their own right and should be set apart as innovative early works. This chapter looks at how and why Huebler so adeptly prescribed a superspatial environment for processing time and motion in his drawings—how his succinct descriptors radically alter our perception. Other factors such as social space and the culture of information and seriality during the 1960s and 70s played a role in his conceptual drawings. Within these parameters I point to the thinking of George Kubler, Henri Lefebvre, Nicolas Bourriaud, critic Jack Burnham, and artists Marcel Duchamp, Robert Rauschenberg, George Brecht, La Monte Young, Yoko Ono, Mel Bochner, Piero Manzoni, and Dan Graham. I illustrate Huebler's transition to socially oriented drawings as his work became more playful and humorous. Finally, I analyze his geographically specific drawings from the mid 1970s—scenarios with text that referred to ephemeral qualities of appearance, such as capturing the 'essences' of persons from their historical environment. Huebler's drawings exhibit rigorous attention to his structural model of text with image while opening his work to natural occurrences, often infused with random behavior from everyday life. I give particular attention in this chapter to three of his more socially involved drawings: *Sky Wedge Project*

(1968), *Duration Piece #1, Bat, Baseball, Time 105 Minutes, Snow's Field, Truro* (1968), and *Variable Piece #90, Israel* (1974).

Chapter Two is my analysis of Huebler's procedural mapping from 1968-1971, the years in which his thinking on location and duration is distinctively innovative. The production of art maps during the twentieth century was extensive and I footnote a few important proto-conceptual ones here.[2] My chapter focuses on those that directly relate to Douglas Huebler, such as the psycho-geographic maps of the Situationists in late 1950s Paris, the nonsites of Robert Smithson, the mapping of John Baldessari and related work of Lawrence Weiner. Finally, I look at certain social theories that shed light on Huebler's mapping, in particular Michel de Certeau, Fredric Jameson, and Henri Lefebvre. Huebler's maps document unseen borders, unframing the grids of traditional maps, documenting sequential time and linear space using geometry, mailings, and photography—procedures all governed by his text. Toward the end of this chapter I show how Huebler's maps worked in ways that opened social space as I connect them to Lefebvre's cognitive mapping. I examine several works included in Seth Siegelaub's catalogue *Douglas Huebler: November 1968*, such as *Site Sculpture Project: Variable Piece #1, New York City* (1968), *42nd Parallel* (1968), and *New York-Boston Exchange Shape* (1968), then *Cape Cod Wedge Exchange* (1968), and the later works *Location Piece #13, Kern*

[2] A select few twentieth century art maps that exhibit political intent in an approach that may be considered proto-conceptualist: *Surrealist Map of the World* by Paul Eluard to voice opposition to colonial domination in the 1930s, Duchamp's iodine stained map of colonial America in the profile of George Washington, Jasper Johns' encaustic and stencil to blur the boundaries of each of the United States, Alighiero e Boetti's embroidered maps of war torn regions in the Middle East, and there are many more.

County, California (1969), and *Variable Piece #48: Document for the entire visual "Appearance" as far as the eye can see* (1971).

Chapter Three articulates Douglas Huebler's inventive strategies for language alongside his photography—he asks us to question what we see and consider the ways that words can reconstruct various notions of appearance. I delve into the seemingly incongruent and sometimes disjunctive relationships between word and image in many of his Location and Duration Pieces (listed below). Huebler's use of the cliché and the caption are given close attention, particularly as they relate to Walter Benjamin's and Roland Barthes' thinking on the photograph with coded text. Henri Bergson's ideas on duration are applied to Huebler's sense of time and timelessness in random play, for instance the flow of time against strictly timed camera shots to photograph a basketball game. Huebler's thinking on de-aestheticization and the concept of originality are considered in relation to earlier procedures of Marcel Duchamp, Yves Klein, and Robert Morris. I look at Huebler's sense of portraiture (Bernd Becher, English royalty, ancient Biblical characters) as he modifies the image through fictional scenarios, often asking us to 'see' the ephemeral. I compare the close proximity in photographic intention between Huebler and his colleague John Baldessari. The notions of depictivity in photography are discussed in regard to Jeff Wall and Huebler. Toward the end of the chapter, I analyze Huebler's text with pictures according to Norman Goodman's symbol system of denotation and explication. Huebler's "Everyone Alive" project ends the chapter with illustrations and discussion. Huebler explains the project:

> I developed the 'Everyone Alive' project as a logical form through which to forward the examination of the natural/cultural dialectic that was of primary interest to me. The obvious impossibility of its declared program turns its photographic representations into free floating signs attached to the equally readymade terms of culturally fabricated aphorisms and sayings. As in all my work this project is meant to put the question to its audience about how willing it is—and anyone else—to accept arbitrarily constructed relationships between language and appearances.[3]

The following works in Chapter Three are given detailed treatment: *Location Piece #6 – National* (1970) a newspaper project, *Duration Piece #2, Paris* (1970) on time and timelessness, *Duration Piece #7, Rome* (1973) on aspects of water at the Fountain of Trevi, *Duration Piece #15, Global* (1969) his "Most Wanted F.B.I. Edmund Kite McIntyre" poster, *Variable Piece #101 West Germany* (1973) on Bernd Becher, *Location Piece #7, New York* (1971) on the Pier 18 project, *Variable Piece #7 Global 90F (Blue Series)* (1971) questioning context in pornographic photography, *Duration Piece #31, Boston* (1974) documenting the New Year upon the nude, *Variable Piece #70, 633* (1971) about facial resemblances to Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith Beheading Holofernes,* and *Variable Piece #506 Tower of London* (1975) as seeing the 'essences' of royal prisoners.

The Epilogue closes my dissertation with an assessment of what is at stake in such a study of Douglas Huebler, my personal reflection on his legacy, and what I hope to accomplish with this research.

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[3] Marianne Van Leeuw and Anne Pontégnie, eds. *Origin and Destination: Alighiero e Boetti and Douglas Huebler* (Brussels: Société des Exposition des Palais de Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, 1997), 134.

Foundational sources for Huebler research

My approach to the literature on Douglas Huebler has been informed primarily by archival research and exhibition catalogues. The most important archival sources for Douglas Huebler are the Archives of American Art, the Getty Research Institute, and the Museum of Modern Art. The Archives of American Art contain the Leo Castelli Records in which are found Huebler's correspondence with the dealer as well as exhibition catalogues of Huebler's shows at Castelli Gallery in New York and elsewhere in Europe. The Getty Research Institute holds the Douglas Huebler Papers as well as the Panza Papers containing the documents retained by Huebler's most prolific collector, Count Giuseppe Panza di Biume of Milan, Italy.[4] The archives of the Museum of Modern Art contain the Seth Siegelaub Papers which shed light on the emergence of Huebler's part in initiating what is now known as the first catalogue-only exhibition, for work that "didn't need a space."[5]

There are numerous short references to Douglas Huebler in books and articles and a few more substantial exhibition catalogues from Europe. Huebler's lengthy interview with Hunter College graduate student Patricia Norvell in July 1971, published in *Recording Conceptual Art (2001)* and edited by Norvell and Alexander Alberro, serves as one of the few substantial primary sources in

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[4] Count Panza collected many of Huebler's early conceptual works as documentation of their procedure with the artist's original signature. The correspondence between Panza and Huebler reveal that they were relatively close friends and that Huebler could speak frankly to his patron about personal matters. Panza had great insight into conceptualism's receptivity in Europe and America's lack of understanding about it, which is why he was able to collect a wide range of American conceptual works that he frequently loaned for exhibition. The Getty has Panza's original sales receipts which give an indication of market value of Huebler's art during the 1970s and 80s.

[5] Of particular relevance are Huebler's notes to Siegelaub which elaborate on his drawings and maps for this seminal *November 1968* exhibition, as well as critic Dore Ashton's part in suggesting that Huebler show with Siegelaub.

Huebler's own words and is the most telling oral history about his transitional reasoning from minimalism to early conceptualism.[6] Michael Auping's 1977 interview "Talking with Douglas Huebler" for *Journal of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art* is one of the best primary sources of Huebler speaking about himself.[7] The artist clarifies some of his concerns about art and how he addresses them, in particular emptying his work of irresponsible signifying and giving the responsibility of interpretation to the viewer, concerns which I address in the following chapters.

In 1973, Lucy Lippard described Douglas Huebler as "one of the most imaginative and broad-ranging early Conceptualists" in her annotated bibliography *Six Years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972,*[8] and she includes several Huebler quotes. Yet even today his name is often unrecognized in twentieth century art in America. One of my compelling personal questions in researching the sources on Huebler has been to ask why he has not figured more prominently in the literature on American artists while in European art circles he is widely known.[9] A few writers have considered the question. Some of the answer

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[6] Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell, eds. *Recording Conceptual Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 144. Norvell's cogent queries about the artist's documentation in art, such as how is it to be apprehended, is an important part of their conversation. Her interview examines his early minimalism and his attention to location spatially and mentally in drawing and mapping. Huebler discusses drawing a point with Norvell: "I could put a point on paper or on my hand and move it around —on this point are all the points in the room, as invisible measures of space in time" (144).
[7] Michael Auping, "Talking with Douglas Huebler" *Journal of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art,* No. 15 (July-August 1977), 37-44.

[8] Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: the Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1997), xviii.
[9] In October 2014, the Université Louvain Catholique in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, held a conference devoted entirely to the work of Douglas Huebler titled *Douglas Huebler: Human Systems*

lies in Mike Kelley's poignant "Shall We Kill Daddy?" which adamantly challenges the prejudice of ageism which the younger artist Joseph Kosuth (born in 1945) had laid against Huebler and which beset Huebler's conceptualist reception in the 1970s. Kosuth, in his *Art After Philosohy* (1969) had written:

> It is not my intention to point out a negative aspect of the work, but only to show that Huebler – who is in his mid-forties and much older than most of the artists discussed here – has not as much in common with the aims in the *purer* versions of 'Conceptual Art' as it would superficially seem.[10]

As Mike Kelley understood, Kosuth failed to comprehend Huebler's work and his prolific writing at the time in the late 1960s and early 1970s sealed an unjustifiable encumbrance, one that Kelley found quite distasteful.[11] Although Huebler used conceptualism as a premise, he went beyond the movement's strident allegiance to the sovereignty of the idea and its philosophical and linguistic foundation as formulated by Kosuth.

The issue of why Europeans have long appreciated Douglas Huebler is reflected in the fact that his most significant exhibition catalogues are from Europe. The 1979 exhibition catalogue *Douglas Huebler* at Stedelijk Abbemuseum Eindhoven, Holland, contains several important reprinted essays: Lucy R. Lippard's

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as 'Cultural Readymades." The proceedings are to be published in Fall 2015 by the Université de Rennes, France, co-sponsor of the conference.

[10] Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy" in *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), 26. Also in Alberro and Stimson, eds. *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1999), 172.

[11] Kelley, 157. Kelley notes "unfortunately… we still expect artists to conform to some clearly constructed time line of progressive art historical development. Kosuth's estimation that Huebler was too old to be a pure Conceptual Artist has become entrenched in the history of Conceptualism, as it now stands." (157) Although Kelley devotes much of his essay to Huebler's late work *Crocodile Tears,* he considers the early work of mapping and photography to be instrumental in setting the stage for orientation toward social art, one that Kelley himself inherited from his teacher.

"Douglas Huebler: Everything about Everything," Jack Burnham's "Huebler's Pinwheel and the letter Tau," April Kingsley's "Douglas Huebler," Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe's "Douglas Huebler's Recent Work," as well as several of Huebler's drawings and photographs not found elsewhere.

Curator Anne Pontégnie's catalogue essay "How Does a Ping Pong Game Become an Event?" for Huebler's 1997 exhibition with Alighiero Boetti in Brussels, titled *Origin and Destination,* includes an essay by Huebler and is a perceptive critique of his oeuvre, situating Huebler as a far more complex artist than has been perceived in America. [12] Seth Siegelaub reiterated this feeling in an interview with curator Michel Claura in 1973 in *XX^e siècle*.[13] Several catalogues from Huebler's European galleries, such as Sperone in Italy, Fischer in Germany, Lambert in Paris, are available in the archives I have noted above. These were the dealers who "understood much more quickly the importance of conceptual art, and understood immediately the profit angle that they would be able to target."[14] This may be due to conceptualist thought occurring in the work of the New Realists, such as Yves

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[12] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 118, 147-148. The exhibition sought, in Pontégnie's words, to "rediscover the agitational potential of Huebler's propositions."(118) Pontégnie knew Huebler personally and she understood how Huebler's strong interest in Zen philosophy was a foundation for his ideas on the immanence of perceiving the moment. Three artists 'claimed their right to silence' in 1997 when Pontégnie asked them about Huebler's work—Kruger, Prince, and Levine (118)—possibly because Huebler had criticized those who don't mediate their work using text (147-148). This may stem from his commitment to language in art from his teaching days. I note that Pontégnie takes several cues from an earlier Huebler catalogue by Frédéric Paul (1993) that I mention subsequently.

[13] Michel Claura, *XX^e siècle,* 41 (December 1973), 156-159.

[14] Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds. *Conceptual art: a critical anthology* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 1999), 289.

Klein and Piero Manzoni in the late 1950s in Europe, a full decade before artists in the United States adopted it.

French curator Frédéric Paul interviewed Huebler and writes with insight in the exhibition catalogue entitled *Douglas Huebler* (1993) at the Fonds Regional d'Art Contemporain in Limoges. Paul notes several factors in Huebler's work and personality that lie at the origin of misunderstandings about the artist: his age, his independent nature and anti-dogmatic stance, geographical isolation, the late development of his work, its humor, lack of an immediately identifiable style and a refusal to limit the work to any single theme or formal approach.[15]

Jeff Wall's essay "'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography In, or As, Conceptual Art" (1995)[16] looks at the 'refunctioning of reportage' and its de-skilling/re-skilling in art photography of the conceptualists, writing with an astute understanding of Huebler. In *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality* (2001),[17] Anne Rorimer briefly reviews his transition from minimalist sculpture to his photographic systems. Her illustrations of his work are clear and precise and her index and documentation have led me to several important sources for Huebler

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[15] Frédéric Paul, exhibition catalogue, *Douglas Huebler* (Limousin, France: Fonds Regional d'Art Contemporain, 1993), 28.

[16] Jeff Wall, "'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography In, or As, Conceptual Art" in Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer, eds., *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965-1975.* Exhibition catalogue with essays by Lucy R. Lippard, Stephen Melville, and Jeff Wall (Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, and Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 1996). There is no index to this catalogue, which is much needed to reference the information in the three essays. Each artist has submitted his/her own bibliography amounting to a barely adequate listing. The value of this catalogue is its alphabetical compendium by artist, giving vital statistics, exhibitions, footnotes to conversations, and illustrations.

Wall situates Huebler's photography-text in relation to Smithson and Graham and notes that Huebler 'parodies the assignment' (257). Comparing Huebler to Mondrian, Wall sees their work as analyzing relationships by depicting them as a structural schema— a contradiction of the very nature of photography producing a 'reportage without an event' (257-258).

[17] Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality.* London: Thames & Hudson, 2001.

research. Alexander Alberro's *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (2003) focuses on several conceptual artists and Huebler receives extensive attention with excellent illustrations. Alberro considers Douglas Huebler in a contrasting light with Robert Smithson and Allen Kaprow.[18] Liz Kotz, in her *Words to be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (2007),[19] looks at Huebler in regard to his words that dislodge the image in a system of analytical propositions, with attention to his maps.

The path to conceptualism: Huebler's early years from Michigan to Bradford

Douglas Huebler knew from childhood that he wanted to be an artist, as he told Patricia Norvell in an interview in July 1969.[20] Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1924, he grew up "in an extremely poor farming family"[21] which suffered through the Depression. At age 17, he joined the Marines straight out of high school and served as a non-commissioned Staff Sargeant intelligence officer[22] during World War II on Peleliu Island in the South Pacific theater, officially journaling the daily accounts of American bombing strikes against the Japanese anti-aircraft gun

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[18] Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 68. Alberro writes that Huebler 'completed' Smithson by eliminating metaphors and emphasizing temporality, and that Huebler's work has a 'disempowering effect on Kaprow's Happenings by leaving decisions up to the viewer whether to act or not.' (68)

[19] Liz Kotz, *Words to be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 2007), 213-219.

[20] Alberro and Norvell, 153.

[21] Kenneth Reich, Obituary: "Douglas Huebler; Helped Start Conceptualism", *Los Angeles Times,* July 15, 1997. Charles Douglas Huebler was born October 27, 1924, to Charles David Huebler and Leillia Lucy Nowland Huebler. He died on July 12, 1997, in Truro, Massachusetts.

[22] Paul, 31.

positions on the islands of Koror and Babelthaup.[23] These aerial surveillance missions would have an impact on his later conceptual mapping projects. Following six years of military service, Huebler enrolled at the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1948, funded by the G.I. Bill, and then moved to Paris during the same year to take courses at the Académie Julien. He became a commercial illustrator/designer at an advertising agency in New York City in 1950 until threat of being drafted for the Korean War prompted him to enroll at the University of Michigan where he earned a Bachelors degree in 1952 and Masters of Fine Arts in 1955.[24] His early paintings during these Midwest years derived from the style of Max Beckmann, but when he moved to New York his approach changed, as he states:

> My own early work evolved from an early Expressionist bias deriving from the highly influential presence of Max Beckmann in the Midwest during my student days; when I landed in New York a few years later I made Abstract Expressionist painting but gradually developed a more minimal approach resulting from my readings in Zen, Existentialism and Phenomenology.[25]

By the early 1960s Huebler's painting consisted of geometric hard edges with intense color saturation, not unlike Peter Halley's later circuitry diagrams in the 1980s.[26] Hard edge was a clear turning point toward his minimalist sculpture.

His first academic teaching position was a brief tenure at Miami University of Ohio from 1955 through 1957. The next year he was hired to teach drawing,

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[23] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 127. Also in Peter Wollen, "Mappings: Situationists and/or Conceptualists" in *Rewriting Conceptual Art,* edited by Michael Newman and Jon Bird (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd, 1999), 39.

[24] In 1953 Huebler married Mary Elizabeth Brock, whom he had met on an ocean liner traveling to Paris. They had three children: son Dorne and two daughters Darcy and Dana. Huebler's marriage to Mary ended in divorce in 1973. After he began teaching at California Institute of the Arts (1976-1988), he married Stephani Wienschel and they had one daughter Kate.

[25] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 125.

[26] Illustrations of Huebler's expressionist painting as well as his geometric abstraction may be found in his article in Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 124-125.

graphic design, and art history at Bradford Junior College in Haverhill, Massachusetts, a small exclusive school for young women located upstate from Boston near the Vermont border. The Bradford years (1957-1973) proved to be productive for Huebler. He served as chair of the department during his entire tenure. Huebler described his procedure for abstract expressionist painting between 1958 and 1961: "I used cement, slapping it on the canvas and throwing paint on it and letting it roll around, taking a very natural course."[27] His period of abstract expressionist painting ended with his monochrome reliefs, shown four decades later by curator Olivier Mosset in his group exhibition of conceptual artists entitled *Before the End: The Last Painting Show* at the Swiss Institute in New York in the fall of 2004 through January 2005. In a review of the show, Michael Corris described Huebler's reliefs: "Huebler's surprising relief painting looked like a ghostly washboard, with its yellowing commercial white paint."[28] By 1962, Huebler quit painting altogether. In a later interview with Michael Auping he remarked, "When I got down to minimalist painting, I stopped painting because I didn't want to be that focused. I didn't like the limitations when I got the paintings down to the most minimal statement you can imagine."[29] It was a natural transition to move from hard edge relief painting to formal minimalist sculpture.

> I painted until about 1961, at which time I decided that my works had become so visually reductive that little distinction existed between the image within the canvas and that outside of it. As the painting had become an 'object', I went 'off the wall' and began making construction, which soon became associated with such terms as

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[27] Alberro and Norvell, 146.
[28] Michael Corris, review, "Before the End (The Last Painting Show): Swiss Institute New York" in *Art Monthly,* 282 (Dec 2004-Jan 2005), 26.
[29] Auping, 41.

> 'minimalism' and 'Primary Structures'. Such designations did not exactly apply because I was more interested in making forms that expressed extensiveness rather than interiority.[30]

Huebler's minimalist sculpture was a repertoire of large geometric shapes in the vein of Donald Judd or Robert Morris, using the new industrial products of postwar America, such as Formica as a facing over plywood. His *Bradford Series #14* (1967) (fig. 1) is an architectonic system of cement-formed rectangles fitted together in a serial system that could be positioned in multiple ways and could conceivably be expanded by adding more units. Placed outdoors, *Bradford Series* had no privileged viewpoint and no surface reflection, and the neutral gray was meant to be seen in only natural light. It locked together geometrically with dovetailing but was intended to be comprehended as a whole with no central spine or focal point. Soon Huebler began to consider the relationship of his sculpture to "the rest of the world."[31] He described his work to Norvell as a 'springboard' that seems to have three functions—from the viewer's location, to the work, and then out to the world. This idea will prove pivotal for his Location Pieces in mapping and photography when he purposefully empties them of aesthetic qualities and engages them with the social environment.

Already somewhat known in the art world, Huebler gained recognition when curator Kynaston McShine included him among forty-one other sculptors in the landmark 1966 minimalist exhibition entitled "Primary Structures: Young American and British Sculptors" at The Jewish Museum in New York. For this show

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[30] Paul, 175.
[31] Alberro and Norvell, 136.

Huebler presented *Bradford Series #10-65* (1965) (fig. 2), a precision hard edge piece of Formica on wood. For the catalogue entry under his name, Huebler wrote

> I wish to make an image that has no privileged position in space, and neither an 'inside' nor an 'outside.' Color is used to float the weight and the parallel lines to move the form from volume towards flatness (or illusion). The formica is a skin that relieves the object of its 'history.'[32]

But by 1967 sculpture had become a limiting medium for Huebler. [33] His objects had restrictive boundaries even when placed outdoors—concrete was cumbersome, the Formica warped—limitations which he began to realize could only be overcome through conceptual art. "I was absolutely destroyed to see how puny they looked outside...the alternative was to frame the environment," he told Norvell.[34] Huebler talked about his sculpture dilemma with his younger departmental colleague at Bradford Junior College, his close friend Donald T. Burgy who would become a noted conceptualist in his own right. In October 1971, he described to Burgy his move away from the object when he made a little canal across a bend in the Charles River near Bradford: "I then realized that all of these things could be very subtle… imposing forms onto nature without being bounded."[35] His reading of Zen philosophy, existentialism, and phenomenology had led him toward a more expansive way of viewing the world in relation to his art.

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[32] Kynaston McShine, *Primary Structures: Young American and British Sculptors,* exhibition catalogue April 27- June 12, 1966 (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966), n.p.

[33] Paul, 29. Paul states that Huebler abandoned sculpture in 1966. Although it is possible that Huebler may have been reevaluating his approach during 1967, his first exhibition of conceptual work was not until November 1968, curated by Seth Siegelaub and discussed at length in the next chapters.

[34] Alberro and Norvell, 137.

[35] Lippard, *Six Years,* 251.

Conceptual art, by its very nature, was an opening of his thought that grew out of minimalism's 'less-is-more' constraints. The focus on precision and measurement, necessary for Minimalist fabrication, was now transformed into his drawings and mapping with an enlightened and invigorated imagination.

Meantime while at Bradford, Huebler was actively showing at invitational exhibitions and publishing articles as Charles D. Huebler, such as promoting the art department's program in the *Bradford Junior College Bulletin*, where he gives hints of his change in thinking about form as immeasurable and subject to forces that occur at random and simultaneously. He writes in the *Bulletin* that "unfamiliar and changing patterns in human activity and the environment appear constantly to jar our notions of reality and order."[36] He continued that now art was to be judged, not by how it looks, but by its content to reveal what it does in relationship to the whole environment.[37]

The Bradford community was the location for much of Huebler's important early work. *Location Piece #8, 1969,* known as *Secrets,* was one of his earliest purely conceptual pieces as a system generated only by language. *Secrets* occurred in the dormitories and on the campus grounds in a process that undoubtedly created psychological intrigue or at least an emotional purging of sorts. For the initial procedure, he sent out a memorandum to all four hundred students asking them to write down their most important secret on paper, burn it in an ashtray, and return the ashes in an envelope to him. He then mixed all the ashes from the sixty-

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[36] Charles D. Huebler, "Bradford's Art Program" in *The Bradford Junior College Bulletin* (December 1967), 13. Courtesy of Special Collections librarian Elysia Hamelin, Haverhill Public Library, Massachusetts.

[37] Huebler, "Bradford's Art Program," 14.

three envelopes that were sent back, and, on May 25, 1969, he had the faculty children run and scatter them at random all around the campus.[38] He described *Secrets* in an interview with graduate student Patricia Norvell as "the most loaded piece I've ever done," implying that it was charged with psychological aspects, so to photographically document the *Secrets* piece would have been merely adding 'ornament.'[39] He clarifies his approach to rejection of the object, or at least the dematerialization of it: "I don't think anything is art. I think that no thing is art."[40] No object remained to clutter the world, claiming *Secrets* as a systematic work remaining only as a verbal description.[41] Huebler seemed to teach through understatement: "I don't like the idea of anyone teaching conceptual art…It can be talked about, but not taught."[42] He considered *Secrets* to be an art procedure gleaned not from lecturing but from doing.

Huebler's foray into the documentation of sites for his conceptual art exhibitions was also fostered at Bradford. In February 1968, while he was still producing minimalist sculpture, Huebler initiated an outdoor group exhibition at the college inviting his friends Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner, and Carl Andre. They created such ephemera as boundaries of earth measured with string or sections of designated air space. This energizing intellectual circle was a fertile milieu for this thinking in advance of the Location pieces in mapping. Later that

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[38] The Panza Collection Papers, Box DH9, Getty Research Institute.
[39] Alberro and Norvell, 139.
[40] Alberro and Norvell, 142.
[41] Huebler allowed some of the anonymous *Secrets* to be printed as a list in the exhibition catalogue *Software: Information Technology: Its Meaning for Art*, Jewish Museum, 1970 (New York: Printed Matter, 1970). Also reprinted by James Hoff as *Mémoires* (No Input Books, 2009).
[42] Auping, 43.

winter, Huebler attended a seminar for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology chapter of Experiments in Art and Technology or E.A.T., an international group begun in 1967 in New York by Robert Rauschenberg and others to promote innovation in new media through engineering and other technologies. This event resulted in the most significant pivot in Huebler's thinking about scale and expansion. He was displeased to hear an artist on the panel suggest that he would like to build a sculpture "larger than the Empire State Building."[43] Soon after, in May of 1968, Huebler joined Barry, Weiner, and Andre in an exhibition at Windham College in Putney, Vermont, which inaugurated his own new work, in particular his map art. Minimal sculpture was no longer of interest, as he now foresaw the possibility of a refocus—to abandon formalism and invent his own system to challenge modernist aesthetic traditions.

His close collaboration with the dynamic young New York entrepreneurial curator Seth Siegelaub resulted in a landmark exhibition catalogue *Douglas Huebler: November 1968* and launched his new production strategy—to investigate spatiality in drawing and mapping without the need for a gallery or even a formal object. This *November 1968* catalogue exhibition established Huebler as one of the founding conceptual artists and is discussed at length in my mapping chapter. Huebler would later look back at the Bradford years as the time when he formulated his opinion on the vacuous usage of language in art criticism of late Abstract Expressionism of the 1960s:

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[43] Jack Burnham, *Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1974), 50.

> During the years when I was teaching various art history courses I became increasing aware of the significant role played by language in the way Art was received, noting how, after hearing and reading an appropriate menu of words, students were enabled to 'see' what they were supposed to see in art objects… I found myself reading yards and yards of words spun out by formalist art critics in order to prop up Abstract Expressionism's late mannerist phase—Color Field Painting—with what seemed such excessive apologia as to convince me that Rhetoric was about all that remained of the creative energy that had driven the modernist enterprise into the mid-Sixties.[44]

In reconsidering and challenging the assumptions that critical language can make about art, Huebler nevertheless always retained his roots in teaching art history and used it as a reservoir for rethinking his approach to visuality. In a 1977 interview, he told Michael Auping, "A lot of what I am doing now grew, in a way, out of my experience with teaching."[45] He realized that the traditional language of formalism about such topics as Cezanne or Cubism was specialized to only those accustomed to its usage, and he felt that critical language was often separated from the work itself.

By 1968, he began building language into his work as his own form of critique, utilizing tools of description as a radical experiential methodology in his drawing, mapped art, and photography.

> What I was doing was to set up a system or a structure or an idea which would direct me to do the things that were demanded in order to complete: that meant to go places…So what it finally comes back to is the idea of these locations, the idea of the system, and that demands language…I began to get into the whole notion of language to really read our experience, and how. . . as many years as I had teaching art or art history, how much we use language and then try to cover it up.[46]

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[44] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 124.
[45] Auping, 43.
[46] Alberro and Norvell, 139.

Following a visiting artist position at Harvard University's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts from 1973-1975, Huebler accepted a teaching post at California Institute of the Arts in Valencia in 1976. He was appointed Dean of the School of Art in 1978 and remained at CalArts until his retirement in 1988. He died of pancreatic cancer at age 72 in his beloved Truro, Massachusetts, the Cape Cod site of much of his early work, on July 12, 1997. His work has been exhibited at such institutions as The Tate London, Museum of Modern Art, Guggenheim Museum, as well as numerous galleries in France, Italy, Belgium, and Germany.[47]

[47] An extensive listing of Huebler's exhibitions may be found in most of his catalogues and online at www.inglettgallery.com/admin/bio_pdfs/51.pdf from Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.

Chapter One

HOW TO LET A HUEBLER DRAWING SPEAK

> The drawings speak during the instant that you perceive that point, for instance, and until the end of the time during which the words are being read…It's not about *that,* but about *this*, about the equation between the language you are reading and the image you are seeing.[48]
>
> —Douglas Huebler, 1977

The act of perceiving a Huebler drawing requires a particular mindfulness of the duration of the experience—an awareness of one's own cognitive process of seeing and reading his fusion of line and language *until* the words end. From the instant that you perceive the point or line until you finish the last word, the drawings ask for a certain durational presentness that consciously passes within a time frame. To say that the instant can be prolonged or deferred is not a contradiction since, by such deferment, the mind encompasses a middle area of comprehension in a durational space. Duration occupies a significant place in Huebler's work and his drawings are no exception. When Huebler says "It's not about *that,* but about *this,"* he intends for his drawings to speak through their accompanying language that locates them in the here and now, not in the *that* of something apart from the viewer, like a news story or a work of fiction, but instead in the *this* of the experience, in the viewer's innate sense of active and engaged involvement. Even though the drawing may be only a solitary point with text for the procedure, the two elements—language and drawing—combine to yield the

[48] Auping, 37.

complete work. Huebler is saying that his drawings purposefully pull our attention to themselves and nothing else (they are about *this)*, that his language and image are equal partners in producing a procedure of intellectual vigor. This chapter will examine his drawings from 1968-1975 as a major shift in his work, away from abstract painting and minimalist sculpture into constructions of points and lines that call attention to their own specificity as well as to the expansive ideas that they generate. The existentially small point is speechless until Huebler's language gives it a voice.

Huebler's conceptual drawings were a marked divergence from what he considered to be the limitations of minimalist sculpture. The drawings achieved what sculpture could not—they eliminated the material shortcomings of an object to expand into surrounding space. While the drawings are seminal for his later ideas on mapping and photography, here I show why they are worthy of investigation in their own right and should be set apart as innovative early works.

Huebler had no technical limitations on his drawing: "I learned to draw like a whip!"[49] as he described his early interest in art. During the 1950s he was encouraged during his graduate training to steer away from representational subjects toward abstract expressionism in painting and minimalism in sculpture, styles that he maintained until the mid 1960s. Gradually he began to feel constrained by his minimalist work, as I discuss in the introduction, and his ideas on sculptural space took a new turn. I shall show how his thinking began to change in relation to certain drawings that have a minimalist sensibility stemming from his

[49] April Lloyd Wilson, "Douglas Huebler" in *Contemporanea* (September-October, 1990), 52.

sculpture in geometric shapes but I begin this chapter with his conceptual drawings of points and lines, those that illustrate his sharp pivot into conceptual practice and lay the groundwork for his ideas on space and time as experiential procedures in art.

In conversation with Michael Auping, Huebler said, "For me, language may refer to a point on a page. The point alone is not very much. The language has to be well made."[50] Around 1968 Huebler began to draw deceptively simple points and lines accompanied by plain but precise language intended to open his work for discursive interpretation in an infinitely expansive way. The text invokes an enormous scope of perception—for instance, to imagine one billion revolutions per second when applied to a rotating line, or the concept of a point receding from the picture plane into infinity. Our perception is stretched between the polarities of a specific mark and its infinite expansion in a sensation that enlarges time and space far beyond its physical edges on the page. His careful wording is absolutely integral to an understanding of each drawing as well as to an overall comprehension of his process—his language allows the drawing to speak for itself as a conceptual experience.

The drawings are more prescribed than his maps and photography in that they are less random in variable experience. This chapter examines how and why Huebler so adeptly prescribed a superspatial environment for processing time and motion in his drawings—how his succinct descriptors radically alter the perception of a single point or a straight line and how factors such as physics and the culture of

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[50] Auping, 43.

information and seriality during the 1960s and 70s played a role in his thinking about art. Within these parameters I point to the thinking of George Kubler, Henri Lefebvre, Nicolas Bourriaud, and others who investigated how we perceive space and time, critic Jack Burnham who recognized Huebler's significance early on, as well as other artists of Huebler's day who were producing conceptual drawings, such as Mel Bochner, La Monte Young, Yoko Ono, Piero Manzoni, and Dan Graham. Like Huebler, all were imagining, measuring, projecting, and conceptualizing their marks in new and radical ways which I will show were in the legacy of Duchamp.

Perspective in draftsmanship has always been a foundational aspect of evaluating skill of the hand and eye, yet the ways that artists have rendered perspective radically changed in the twentieth century. The Cubists and the Constructivists banished the Renaissance receding perspectives of Alberti and Leonardo in pursuit of flattened geometric planes. The mathematical concept of a fourth dimension in non-Euclidean geometry also prompted the Cubists to analyze form as extending into multiple views from simultaneous multiple viewpoints, moving away from the picture plane. Douglas Huebler, who by the late 1960s had been teaching art history for several years and was steeped in its twentieth century movements, regarded his conceptual drawings as extensions away from the planar surface of the page, and these spatio-temporal exercises assumed a primary place in his drawing scheme.

The conceptualists who had been trained in formal drawing saw no need to continue practices that had been the staple of traditional classroom techniques. The spatial ideas generated by Cubism and the formal geometry of the

Constructivists coalesced into new ways of measuring time and space taken up by the conceptualists in the mid and late 1960s. As a part of this trend, Douglas Huebler shifted his focus from academic drawing techniques, which he was teaching at Bradford Junior College in Massachusetts, in order to explore his own ideas on duration and spatio-temporal drawing and mapping. He began working with a simple dot or line accompanied by a succinct typed statement that directed a conceptual procedure for the drawing to extend away from or sometimes leave the two dimensional plane altogether and proceed into space.

One may think of the ancient master Apelles' single fine line painted to prove his skill when his rival Protogenes[51] called upon him for a visit only to find the signatory mark in Apelles' absence. Huebler's line is as authoritative as Apelles's gesture, yet in contrast it has no anecdotal referencing, no allegorical allusion in the literary sense. Huebler's partnering of line and language is a collaborative effort toward the drawing's authoritative purpose— to activate the procedural statement for the duration of its reading. His points and lines would be meaningless without his explanatory text about how to perceive them. This chapter activates his drawings in all their turns and spins, with the hope that my extrapolations of the point, the line, and the geometric shape will not become as tedious as translating Pliny's dissertations on Greek artists like Apelles.

We will perceive Douglas Huebler's lines as suspended in space or expanded into an infinite field of perception, unbounded except in the narrowest sense by the page. During a symposium entitled "Art Without Space," moderated by Seth

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[51] Pliny, *Natural History,* XXXV, 81, translated by H. Rackham (Loeb Classics).

Siegelaub on WBAI-FM New York on November 2, 1969, Heubler stated his thinking on perception: "The act of perceiving is what concerns me rather than what is perceived, because it is more interesting to find out what it is we do when we do perceive."[52] This chapter will examine several of Huebler drawings with an eye toward what occurs when we perceive them.

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After 1968, Huebler rarely created art without an accompanying written explanation or text and his drawings were no exception. In the early conceptual drawings, the language dictates a particular way to see them, although an open intellectual approach is expected, in fact requisite, for comprehension of the work. His language first poses a kind of interference to simple perception, not as an obstruction but an intervention that prompts some intellectual work to get beyond what we see, to imagine the drawings as the text asks us to do. Moreover, the drawings exemplify the artist's own vast imagination about ways to perceive.

The first group exhibition of Douglas Huebler's conceptual drawings was in *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner* (December 1968), a show curated and published by Seth Siegelaub and John W. (Jack) Wendler in New York—and displayed exclusively in catalogue form. Each artist contributed twenty-five consecutive 8 ½ X 11 inch

[52] Lippard, *Six Years*, 130.

pages reproduced by offset lithography.[53] Since Xerox photocopying was expensive, the curators utilized offset probably in the interest of cost savings more than defying the publishing establishment (creating a catalogue that would ultimately be destined for today's art market as a valuable commodity). This was not the first time that the catalogue only format had been used. Huebler had inaugurated this idea for himself a month earlier when he suggested it to Siegelaub as a format for his one-man show *Douglas Huebler, November 1968*, discussed in the following chapter on Huebler's mapping. Alternative spaces such as a catalogue-only exhibition or art produced solely as a magazine or book, such as those that Ed Ruscha or Dan Graham were making, were becoming the venue of choice for many conceptualists.

It should be clarified that similar formats such as Mel Bochner's earlier group exhibition *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed as Art,* also known as *Xerox Book,* at the New York School for Visual Arts, December 1966, were not presented as a catalogue per se, although admittedly the line of demarcation is thin here between exhibition and catalogue.[54] This landmark show is generally cited as the first conceptual art exhibition. Perhaps Bochner's phrase 'Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art' may set it apart from Siegelaub and Wendler's show, which was clearly art originally meant to be solely displayed as a catalogue. Bochner had planned at the outset to have the drawings and ephemera in his exhibition framed, not solely displayed as

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[53] The photographic negative is exposed onto photo-sensitive plates and then dual-rollers with a rubber blanket printed the image onto paper.
[54] Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art* (Phaidon, 1998), 116.

photocopies. The well known story goes that Bochner's friends lent him their drawings, diagrams, receipts, a music score page from John Cage, and other ephemera for the exhibition but the gallery director was unimpressed with the works and refused funding to frame them. Then Bochner photocopied four sets of the one hundred works reduced to notebook page size and put them into four loose-leaf binders placed on pedestals. Bochner's duplication in notebook form presented the ideas of the artists without the pretensions of being unique works by their hands and was a major step in the de-skilling tendencies of conceptual art. Bochner's show was generative in that it questioned the status of art and materiality since 'the drawings and other visible things' were not *necessarily* meant to be regarded as art (but for most, they were) having been mechanically duplicated and placed into an art context, the gallery. Douglas Huebler was not included in the Bochner show of 1966 but he may have been aware of it, which could plant the idea for his catalogue-only format for his *November 1968* exhibition with Seth Siegelaub.

Getting back to the Siegelaub and Wendler exhibition held two years after Bochner's show, Douglas Huebler's twenty-five pages of drawings show that he had become intensely interested in the space around points and lines. He began his first page with a single point located at the exact center of the paper. As his drawings develop spatially in the next few pages, he elaborated on two points placed in the middle of the page— A and B, a few inches apart, each 'moving' in its own either infinite or strictly measured way, as the text beneath them reads:

> A represents the end of a line located at a 90 degree angle to the picture plane and moving back in space to infinity. B represents the

> end of a line located at a 90 degree angle to the picture plane and moving back in space one inch.[55]

Euclid, in his *Elements (Bk. 1, Def. 1),* defined a point as "that which has no Parts or Magnitude," leaving the aspects of parts and magnitude woefully undefined. We may assume from what Euclid has given us that a point has neither length nor volume. Huebler's points A and B first appear stationary on the page until we read they are projecting back in space at 90 degrees to the picture plane, each at a different length—one immeasurable, the other one inch. By duplicating in serial progression, the points have become conceptual lines. While both points remain adhered to the surface, they take on characteristics of action into an unseen space of our mental construction. Huebler refers to both lines as "moving back in space", and the participle *moving* refers to simply extending the line in length or distance from an endpoint, rather than compounding the movement with such variables as speed or velocity (intriguing elements that he will soon enough take up). He counterpoints the perception of their movements—one having limitless expansion, the other an abrupt finality. As parallel lines in strict Euclidean theorem, they will never intersect and we may assume he is dealing with planar geometry regarding the flat surface of the page.

Lucy Lippard, in her 1972 essay "Douglas Huebler: Everything About Everything," briefly discusses what she calls his "point" pieces of 1969-70, noting that Huebler is not a diagrammatic artist but instead communicates a fantasy with

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[55] Roger Hurwitz, *Douglas Huebler: The Transparent Wall*, exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, October 4 – December 30, 1979, n.p.

"clues to perception" as unrestricting guidelines rather than instructions.[56] Lippard was one of the few critics perceptive enough to understand Huebler's work in the early 1970s. To my mind, these point and line drawings are clues to perception mixed with Huebler's inventive notions about what the most basic elements of drawing can do in space, that is to ask us to see in a new way.

In subsequent pages of the Siegelaub-Wendler catalogue, Huebler moves toward a quasi-measured yet invisible and nearly unimaginable perception with his text typed under two points A and B: "A and B Represent Points Located 1,000,000,000 Miles Behind the Picture Plane." The statement stretches to find the unknown in the known, as if the known points A and B now have become endpoints in a new way of perceiving an exceedingly long receding perspective. The drawing is endowed with a hyper-spatiality through its own temporal extension. The points are ideational even though we see them on the page. The work is purely conceptual only through his insertion of explanatory language, a strategy he will retain throughout most of his early career. He later tells art historian Ann Rorimer in June 1994 that language "demands the reconsideration of the experience of any phenomenon.'"[57] Surely to experience something that we are told is a billion miles away is a phenomenon. Huebler may have been referring to astronomical phenomena—for instance, the speed of light emitted from stars (points) thousands of years ago and traveling billions of miles into present time. In the same vein as a billion miles, similar statements about distance or length were being made by other

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[56] Lucy Lippard, "Douglas Huebler: Everything About Everything" in *ARTnews* 71 (December 1972), 30.
[57] Rorimer, 139.

artists, such as in Dan Graham's *March 31, 1966*, exhibition at Finch College in 1967 listing such precise physical measurements as ".00000098 miles to cornea from retinal wall."[58] With such attention to measurement—extremes from the specific to the infinite—conceptual drawing entered into a new sense of spatiality in art in part influenced by the data-oriented information age of the 1960s and 70s. The measurable and immeasurable aspects of Huebler's conceptual drawing will be one focus of this chapter. For now, let us consider his transition from the point to the line.

Douglas Huebler had formally studied drawing at the Cleveland School of Art (1948) and the Académie Julien in Paris that same year, was later a professional illustrator in New York and had been a professor of studio art since he began teaching at Bradford Junior College in 1957. It cannot be argued that he had not been fully entrenched in academic draftsmanship since he had mastered the ability to teach the subject and was well aware of the elements of the discipline. As the minimal element for a drawing, the point perfectly suited Huebler's quest to find an expansive avenue for his work without taking up volume. With no parts and no magnitude, a point is nevertheless visible on the page. Having a philosophical bent, Huebler would have naturally asked his students to consider ideas about the elements of drawing, such as is the point in a drawing an object? It is a non-object but it is not immaterial when its intention is to create a shape or an action as the focus of an idea. He may have asked his students how can a point have action if it does not become a visible line? His own work answers the question: by energizing

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[58] Lippard, *Six Years,* 14.

the point into a conceptual field in which nothing is static, away from the initial deception that it is just an unassuming dot when suddenly it can shoot backward or forward into space, creating a connection between the planar and the hyper-dimensional. Points take the characteristics of particles, which, according to particle theory, are atoms or molecules in constant motion in an ever expanding universe. Huebler launches the points from the page just a few inches from our eyeballs into an invisible dimension, a perceptual distancing process whose instructions are both specific and unlimited—such as 1,000,000,000 miles behind the picture plane.

For ancient astronomers, the point in relation to the stars was a tool of measurement which took shape as lines in constellation drawings with conceptual depth and movement, gaining more exactitude in later centuries. We casually use the term to pinpoint a place or location, like digitally dropping a pin onto our GPS maps, when actually location is a concept, as it is in a constellation or in Huebler's drawings. Albrecht Dürer instructed about the importance of the single point to sight perspective: "If you are in a large chamber, hammer a large needle with a wide eye into the wall. It will denote the near point of sight."[59] Dürer was speaking in orthogonal terms, yet his words relate to Huebler's drawings since the Renaissance master draftsman shows the viewer a special technique—how to see the unseen, as invisible lines of perception. To see the unseen is a theme that obsessed Huebler throughout his life whether in drawing, mapping, or photographic strategies.

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[59] Albrecht Dürer, *The Painter's Manual: A Manual of Measurement of Lines, Areas, and Solids by Means of Compass and Ruler,* trans. Walter L. Strauss (New York: Abaris Books, 1977), 393.

Drawing is more than a mechanical skill and even the single point can determine the space around it. In an untitled Huebler drawing that critic Peter Plagens included in his 1969 essay "The Possibilities of Drawing," a lone point exists in the center of a page with the following statement typed beneath it:

> Represented above is a point whose actual location is 10" ahead of the eyes of the percipient. At the exact instant that its location is perceived the point moves off into random patterns of direction that describe the entire space of this room and continues to do so until the percipient has departed.[60]

Although Plagens' article is a cursory survey of late twentieth century American drawing, he saw a connection from Robert Rauschenberg to the drawings of both Douglas Huebler and Eugenia Butler, a Los Angeles artist and gallery owner who showed the work of early conceptual artists such as Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, and John Baldessari from 1968 to 1971. Plagens notes that "it is irrefutable that the drawings of Eugenia Butler and Douglas Huebler owe tremendously to the clearing and planting of Rauschenberg," and Plagens continues by crediting Rauschenberg's "acting in the gap between art and life" which lead Butler and Huebler to the gap itself. [61] First, let us consider Butler and her conceptual drawing and how it relates to Rauschenberg and Huebler. As an example of Butler's drawing, Plagens uses *An Information Transfer* (undated)—Butler has placed only the title in capital letters in the center of the otherwise blank page—and he notes that it is "pure, unparticularized, untrammeled thought: the information that this information

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[60] Peter Plagens, "The Possibilities of Drawing" in *Artforum,* 8:2 (October 1969), 51.
[61] Plagens, 55.

transfer transfers is the information that this is an information transfer."[62] Butler's drawing is more conceptual than Huebler's single point accompanied by his text. So how do Butler and Huebler fit into Rauschenberg's gap? Rauschenberg had begun to explore the un-making of art during the 1950s, in particular with his famous erasure, with permission, of a drawing by Willem de Kooning which Rauschenberg simply titled *Erased de Kooning* (1953). The physical act of rubbing out the ink and crayon drawing of a twentieth century master left its remains as a new work by Rauschenberg. This was a de-skilled act upon a skilled work to question the process of making, less of an assault on de Kooning's abstract expressionism than an act of Rauschenberg's thinking on new ways of making by voiding, such as drawing with an eraser. The act of erasure leaves a void between what we know was there and now what is gone, with the question of how to regard the surface? Two decades later, Butler and Huebler decided not to engage in conventional drawing but instead to make their drawings speak through the text printed on the page (Huebler's single point is a focus while Butler used nothing but the title as text). They have voided any hint of imagery other than possibly the typeface itself. Huebler's wording *'represented* above is a point…' signals his only reference to drawing as representational. Rauschenberg's gap—a voiding of imagery or marks—was a clearing of the representational and spatial field for Butler and Huebler. There is no evidence that Butler and Huebler collaborated as artists, however, as his curator, she may have had some influence upon him and

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[62] Plagens, 53.

certainly they had similar interests in their ideas about the importance of language in art.

Huebler's drawings are a construct of mental projections into an imaginary ephemeral space, making them something other than what they are. Perhaps one may think of this as a Magrittean treachery—*ceci n'est pas une pointe*—a play on words in which the point is merely the illusion of a point, what we directly visualize is not what we are *told* we see, and the point is conceptually someplace else. The physical point situated behind the planar page is abstract in that it is a representation of a virtual location, as much about imagination as it is about visual perception.

Huebler's above statement—that his point once perceived at 10 inches from the eyeballs randomly moves in directions around the entire space of the room—acts in another kind of gap. This gap is between the stable point on the page that is now quickly derailed into hyperreal paths, all relationally re-routed according to the viewer who walks in paths around the room. It relocates itself every time the viewer's vision shifts to follow it. When the point or the line is located in space in relation to something else—the edge of the page or the cornea of the eye— its neutrality begins to erode as description seeks to give it a certain context, that is, by moving around in patterns that 'describe the space' of the room. Now the beguiling little point assumes a capacity to move within the viewer's physical environment as an imaginary construct, a movement that could, for some, become a neurotic fixation. Our eye creates unceasing conceptual orthogonals to the point of a kind of haunting of Dürer's needle hammered into the wall to denote the point of sight!

The viewer has involuntary control of the point here, according to where he or she moves. When "the point moves off into random patterns of direction," as Huebler tells us, it becomes the ward of our own perception and we are the producer of the results. Such a random movement of this point reminds me of those tiny black dots called floaters that seem to be attached on the surface of our eyeball yet dart around with every motion of the eye.

Normally the straight line is regarded as anonymous and unassuming, the shortest distance between two points in Euclidean geometry. Duchamp investigated the aleatory properties of measuring a straight line in his *3 Stoppages Etalon (3 Standard Stoppages)* of 1913-14 by dropping three one-metre horizontally straight lengths of thread onto a canvas from a height of one metre, each resulting in a different length from end to end upon landing. The French term *stoppages* is the invisible mending on a garment, which Duchamp purposefully considered in 'measuring' the invisible or the unpredictable. For his boxed presentation he placed three wood slats, one edge of each cut to match the profiled curvature of the fallen threads, alongside the three serpentine lengths of thread, each thread glued to a Prussian blue canvas strip (each strip then adhered to a narrow piece of glass) in the same random path as it had fallen. The wood slats served as templates for measuring his random system. For his Museum of Modern Art exhibition in 1953, Duchamp added three conventional one-metre rulers to *Stoppages* to further clarify his process of fabrication. In his notes found in *The Box of 1914,* he described the distortion of the threads as "the new shape of the measure

of length."[63] Whether by gravity-activated threads or language-activated lines like Huebler's, measurement is a relative endeavor within its own context, as Duchamp had proven.

With Huebler's adoption of line in its most abbreviated forms, such as a line moving back from a point on a planar surface at a 90 degree angle, the simplicity becomes more potent as a cerebral structure in relation to the text as the reader imagines an invisible perspective. Other artists were dealing with concrete linear measurement as an arbitrary concept during the 1960s, such as Robert Morris with his *Three Rulers* (1963) hung vertically and each marked with a different system of regulated numbering as a clear homage to Duchamp. Mel Bochner's *Measurement Rooms* (1969) showed taped measurements of the room's linear dimensions (in feet and inches) in relation to the viewer's own physical measurements (height) which affected their perception of the space. Piero Manzoni's *Linea* (1959) is another example of conceptual measurement and I shall take up Bochner's and Manzoni's process presently.

Huebler was not the first artist to consider the experiential potential of the point and the line when juxtaposed with written directives or conditions. Working in New York in the early 1960s, George Brecht, La Monte Young, and Yoko Ono were producing succinct instructional texts to perform an action which they called an event accompanied by only a point or line. George Brecht's *WORD EVENT · Exit, spring 1961* is what Liz Kotz notes as a "Post-Cagean event score or word piece"[64]

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[63] Dawn Ades, Neil Cox and David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 79.
[64] Kotz, 59.

deriving from Cage's music in the 1950s. Cage's landmark composition *4'33"* (1952) consisted of typed numbers and words instead of traditional score notation, directing the exact duration of minutes and seconds for aleatory occurrences in the environment while performer David Tudor sat at the silent piano. Brecht's piece utilized the point or dot before the word · *Exit* in the mode of a bullet symbol to draw attention to a ubiquitous signifier that may be taken as both verb and noun. Another Brecht word event of 1961 consists of two bold dots with two words under the all caps title TWO DURATIONS: one dot in front of each lower case typed word: "· red" and "· green" centered in a framed rectangle, as if the dots stand for traffic signal lights of unspecified duration. Duration became a major structural aspect of Huebler's work in ideas taken perhaps taken as much from Cage as from the New York Fluxus artists' interest in performance and is discussed at length in my mapping chapter.

For composer and performance artist La Monte Young, the line became a straightforward 'score' for performing a singular physical action with capability for repetition. Young describes why he was interested in the qualities of line:

> I felt that a line was one of the more sparse, singular expressions of oneness, although it is certainly not the final expression. Somebody might choose a point. However, the line was interesting because it was continuous—it extended in time.[65]

Young's *Composition 1960 #10 to Bob Morris* (October 1960) consisted of the imperative "Draw a straight line and follow it." The typed sentence was centered on the page under the title, and the artist's name with the month and year of

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[65] La Monte Young, "La Monte Young" in *Theatre of Mixed Means*, edited by Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Dial Press, 1968), 204.

production were typed below the sentence with no visual image whatsoever, not even a line. In a variation of this piece *Composition 1960 #9* (also in October), Young drew a straight line on an index card (which could be photocopied for wide dispersal) and slipped it into an envelope on the back of which he typed the title, his name and date above the following text: "the enclosed score is right side up when the line is horizontal and a little above center." That the line is a score clearly shows Young's allegiance to Cage who had been his teacher in New York. This work is strikingly similar to Douglas Huebler's drawings in which Huebler employed the actual line or lines above a text that described the line itself, in contrast to Young directing the viewer to perform a physical action, for instance, Huebler would type "the line is located at 90 degrees to the picture plane and moving back in space one inch" as cited earlier. Whereas Huebler intended his line to be a cerebral exercise, Young or his participants actually drew the line with chalk as an action in several performances, notably with his fellow artist Robert Morris at Harvard in 1961 and later the same year at Yoko Ono's Chambers Street concerts in New York City.[66]

Yoko Ono analyzed the point in multi-dimensional space. In her 1966 lecture "To the Wesleyan People," Ono explained: "A dot can exist as a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 dimensional object all at the same time or at various times in different combinations as you wish to perceive. The movement of the molecule can be continuum or discontinuum at the [same] time."[67] She is referring to spatial dimensions that cannot be seen with the naked eye. The molecule can move as a

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[66] Kotz, 85.

[67] Yoko Ono, "To the Wesleyan People," in *Conceptual Art,* ed. Peter Osborne (London: Phaidon, 2002), 200.

continuum of points to create a line or as a discontinuum of points separated in space. This work is in Ono's more ephemeral mode of imagining as an act of art production. Similarly of course, Huebler's drawings are meant for contemplation, not for actualization. They have a synthetic quality that defies strict metrical analysis, yielding instead to a kind of galactic space. Perhaps Yoko Ono was thinking in this super-spatial way when she posed no definition for 4, 5, and 6 dimensions and Douglas Huebler as well when he located his point 1,000,000,000 miles beyond the picture plane.

Let us consider the line as the shortest distance between two points. The points mark a segment of line that could conceptually extend infinitely beyond its endpoints into space. Returning briefly to Douglas Huebler's two points A and B both at 90 degree angles to the picture plane, A is moving back in space to infinity and B is the end of a line moving back into space one inch. Elementary in geometry, a ray is a part of a line that has one endpoint and extends in one direction without ending (to infinity), therefore Huebler's line A is a ray while line B is a segment. The ray's potential is not merely for drawing but for its natural energy in physics to generate motion—as speed, duration of time, force of trajectory in relation to the earth and limitless other variables. Huebler often drew a straight vertical line down the center of a page and captioned it in a simple sentence such as "The line above is rotating on its axis at a speed of one revolution each day,"[68] or another line captioned with similar brevity but more sense of action: "The line above is

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[68] Lippard, *Six Years,* 167. Reprinted from *Douglas Huebler,* exhibition catalogue, The Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Mass., May 8—June 14, 1970.

rotating on its axis at a speed of one billion revolutions each second."[69] Again, we are asked to see the unseen. This creates a conceptual tension, a gap, between the neutral black line and what the artist says it is, a tension of shifting between the visual and the invisible, between the representational and the ideational. His activated line generates conceptual energy from its axis of rotation regulated by his specific duration of time—one revolution each day or one billion revolutions per second— sourced from the text alone. Huebler's statements are postulates—explicit assumptions rather than axioms or even commonly accepted notions. They challenge visual veracity while telling us that there is more here than meets the eye. There is a spatial bent toward physics and perceptual psychology, yet his concept need not be logical, as Duchamp tells us, and must be taken in context with the line itself. To comprehend one billion revolutions per second is impossible in actuality but it is entirely possible in theory.

Many of Huebler's drawings deal with permutations of velocity and duration in space based upon his description of how they work together, though sometimes he dealt with color as an imagined element. In a large untitled ink on paper drawing (48 ½ x 36 ½ inches) shown in 1990 at the Holly Solomon Gallery in New York, which the gallery checklist notes to have been done between 1968 and 1975, the white surface contains forty vertical straight lines arranged in four rows of ten parallel lines each. The exhibition catalogue shows this work in black and white and there is no evidence that Huebler produced it in colored ink, which makes his text compelling as it reads:

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[69] Auping, 39.

> Represented on this surface are: Ten green lines 9 inches long (each situated at an angle of 65 degrees to the picture plane)* Ten blue lines 21 inches long (each situated at an angle of 70 degrees to the picture place)* Ten black lines 24 5/8 inches long (each situated at an angle of 75 degrees to the picture plane)* Ten purple lines 4 inches long (each situated altogether on the picture plane)
> *(Only the bottommost point of each line touches the picture plane) [70]

Only when activated by his text do the rows assume their conceptual qualities—now to be seen as different colored lines with somewhat precise lengths, such as 24 5/8 inches, and in graduated angles from 65 to 75 degrees in relation to the flatness of the page. The unseen but specified extensions of length are situated in various angular positions, arranged as a lineated system into four categories of imagined color. The adjective *delineated*, conventionally meaning that which is shown or specified, may fit as well in the sense that the drawing is a literal delineation of the idea. Huebler's wording "represented on this surface…" is notable in its inference to say that these lines symbolize something else, that they illustrate an idea. The lines represent the language while the language represents an activated concept that we do not see on the physical page—another type of intellectual derailment of the reflexive aspect of words and image. The text describes the line segments from the point where they 'touch' the picture plane at their 'bottommost' (not a geometric term) to the various extended lengths, all except the purple lines situated altogether on the picture plane. The segments require language in order to escape the two-dimensional surface, but do they require color as a necessary component of the system? Probably not, which actually could be Huebler's commentary on

[70] *Douglas Huebler,* exhibition catalogue, Holly Solomon Gallery, New York (September 6 – October 6, 1990), n.p.

the arbitrariness of color to represent location or situation. The colors green, blue, black, and purple are noted in plain perhaps sterile description, only as possible hues in our mind since he uses only ink and a typed statement to represent them.

Measurement had become an overt act of art production by the mid 1960s. The Italian conceptualist Piero Manzoni worked with the possibilities of single lines in varying lengths as early as 1959 when he produced *Linea m. 19.11 (Line 19.11 meters long).* Manzoni drew a single unbroken line in ink on a strip of paper, rolled it up and placed it inside a black cylindrical tube with cap, as if to 'contain' his creation. On the outside, he glued an orange identifying label with his name and the metrical length of his line. In an artist statement of 1960, Manzoni wrote, "Time is a different thing from what is measured by the hands of a clock. The *Linea* does not measure metres or kilometers, but is zero, not zero as the end, but as the beginning of an infinite series."[71] Manzoni's statement seems contradictory to his label specifying precise metres which is exactly his point. What we are told is measured line cannot be limited to itself or to a container since it is an idea —a line is a measure of time/duration as well as a functional demonstration of one's labor to produce it. In 1961, Manzoni further explained his *Linea* series: "The nature of the *Linea* is eternal and infinite. The concept is everything. I put the *Linea* in a container so that people can buy the idea of the *Linea.*"[72] Manzoni frequently dealt with the concept of selling, in itself a function, by cleverly packaging his ideas. Like Manzoni, Douglas Huebler creates his own structure to announce his ideas, albeit

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[71] Peter Osborne, ed. *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 64.
[72] Osborne, 64.

with less materiality than the Italian artist's container of the non-containable. Huebler's text placed alongside his drawings can give either specific or infinite expansion to his line, often without the need for any literal measurement or exact duration. When he writes about such ideas as a line rotating one billion times per second, Huebler's structure of words and lines is his methodology to reveal infinity on a page—purely a concept of endless time onto a two dimensional surface.

Mel Bochner was making straight lines with black adhesive tape, which he called his "Working Drawings," around the perimeter of a gallery and writing the measurements alongside them, such as his *Eyelevel Cross Section* (1969) in which the act of taping a single horizontal line as a mode of measurement was the subject of drawing rather than the measurement itself. These measurement pieces directly affect the viewer's physical space from a pedestrian orientation, as a construction inscribed with numbers in feet and inches. Sometimes Bochner would produce a numbered series of line segments, like a series of points in a sense, using a felt tip pen to draw on masking tape adhered directly onto the wall. Measurement for Bochner is a language: "I want to examine the contradictions inherent in the relationship between the social nature of a language (measurement) and the individual nature of perception (each viewer's perspective)."[73] Although Bochner dealt with measurement to define space in a different manner than Huebler, the statement here shows that the two artists had something in common—examining the socially coded nature of language and numbers in relation to how the individual viewer may experience the work.

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[73] Bochner interview with Claire Legrand for exhibition *Mel Bochner: Measurements: Works from the 1960's/1990's* (Dijon, France: Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain de Bourgogne, 2002), 26.

Huebler's language asks the viewer to decide what is possible about his line drawing, not necessarily what is true, and the answer depends upon whether one is skeptical or open to his premise. He is posing a challenge to evaluate representation and attribute new conceptions to the image. An open-minded decision naturally brings certain personal factors into the field, such as a proclivity toward physics or just the ability to imagine. On March 17, 1969, during a group interview entitled "Time: A Panel Discussion" moderated by Seth Siegelaub at the New York Shakespeare Theater, Huebler explains his theory on the topic of time in art:

> We measure space through objects existing in the world, and I think we measure time the same way. They're both boundless; they're only conventions that we use… I think it's perfectly fair to say that time is what each of us says it is at any given moment. But as a convention, it suits our purposes within the terms of the particular structure that we want to give to it.[74]

If time and space are 'what each of us says it is' and we give it our own particular structure, everything is relative and relational. This may lead one to think of Robert Morris' "A beam on its end is not the same as a beam on its side," [75] yet I wish to clarify Huebler's drawings as set apart from the phenomenological strategy employed by Morris. Huebler remarked during an interview with Anne Pontégnie in 1997 that his transition from abstract expressionist painting to minimalism "resulted from my readings in Zen, Existentialism and Phenomenology,"[76] so he was well aware of the popular philosophies during the 1960s. Some artists readily

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[74] Lippard, *Six Years,* 82-83.
[75] Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part II" in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (University of California Press, 1968), 235. Reprinted from *Artforum,* October, 1966.
[76] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 125.

adopted phenomenology into the perception of their work. Robert Morris was exposing phenomenological conditions of perception in the presence of his minimalist sculpture—a "theatrical" experience of presence, according to Michael Fried—that is, the variable relationships of the viewer to the placement or display of his work. Huebler told Auping in my opening quote for this chapter: "The drawings speak the instant that you perceive that point until the end of the time during which the words are being read." The drawings speak to one's perception for the duration of the reading. This is different from Morris' sense of gestalt in his *Notes on Sculpture* which, for Morris, was the viewer's immediate kinesthetic and spatial perceptions of the object as a whole. For Huebler, his drawing begins with one's perception of the point or line as activated by reading his language in a durational experience that ends at the close of reading. The drawing has a beginning and end—the critical experience of the perception is its temporality, the time frame of the reading. The words are placed in the viewer's field of vision on the page, usually located below the drawing, as a structural format for his system in order for the reader to visualize the invisible. Apprehension of the space within or around the drawing requires, in much of Huebler's work, a privately cerebral response to his language.

Huebler works on a physically smaller scale than a gallery but a larger conceptual scale, even the absurdist scale of infinity, when implemented. What may seem reductive is expansive, stretched by language. The drawings create for the viewer a spectacle of the senses, constantly in action only for the duration of the reading as a structural system for perceiving the work. Alexander Alberro, in his

Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity (2003), writes about Huebler's development pre- and post-1968 leading to his major focus on structural systems and less on the phenomenological:

> If in the early to mid-1960s Huebler sought to undo and outdo the late modernist paradigm of autonomy and duality, placing in its stead a phenomenological paradigm of visual experience that emphasized the inextricable relationships between bodily, perceptual, and temporal experience, the labyrinthine mesh of information that comprised his post-1968 work generally displaced that phenomenological model in favor of a structuralist paradigm of visual experience and signification.[77]

A system is established between the drawing, the words, and the viewer's active perception to form a tripartite structure that Huebler will retain in variables throughout his mapping and photography.

Huebler made a significant gallery breakthrough in 1969 when he started showing on the west coast and in Europe, specifically in Los Angeles and Seattle as well as Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, while he was teaching on the east coast at Bradford Junior College in Massachusetts (1957-1973). The Los Angeles curator Eugenia Butler, whose drawings I mentioned earlier, championed him along with several conceptualists in her show *Conception, Perception* in 1969 at her gallery at 615 N. Le Cienega Boulevard. Earlier that same year, Huebler had submitted a proposal to a neighboring exhibition space called 669 Gallery at 669 N. La Cienega where Butler worked before she opened her own venue. In his proposal for Gallery 669, he listed several works as *Site Sculpture Projects*, one of which was a line drawing entitled *Rose Bowl Piece #1* (1969), (fig. 3). There is no record that

[77] Alberro, 82.

Gallery 669 accepted Huebler, yet the *Rose Bowl Piece #1* is an example of his thinking about merging his conceptual art and everyday life during this time. Looking like pick-up-stix dropped onto a game board, the drawing consists of straight lines depicting planned or random football passes thrown during the game. His accompanying text describes the work:

> No distinction will be made as to whether or not the pass is completed but only the actual flight of the ball from the point where released to the point of first contact either with the hands of the receiver or the ground.[78]

In *Rose Bowl Piece #1,* each flight of the football from its point of release to the end point of contact is a focal point (belaboring my *point* here). Huebler abruptly locates each throw onto his simplified yard-lined football 'grid' using varying degrees of ruler-drawn diagonals for each pass, with only slightly more precision that a coach on a pre-game blackboard. Important to him is the procedural aspect of double-viewing in this piece, that it was drawn for the viewer while the artist watched the game on television in Massachusetts—a playfully casual combination of game strategy and art, employing quotidian tools—a ruler and pencil or pen—to render two dimensions of multiple complex physical movements. Huebler will further develop sports themes, especially his own participation in basketball, in his mapping and photography.

By 1970, his drawings were often socially encompassing. The external world seeps into them in playful ways of human interaction, especially the physicality of sports abstracted into his geometric systems. The social underpinnings in his

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[78] Seth Siegelaub Papers, Folder 1.B.9, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

diagrammatic drawings relate to his interaction with friends, family, and the larger world. Huebler was fully capable of incorporating the figure within his scope of conceptual drawing even though it may seem incompatible in such work. For his *Sky Wedge Project* (1968), (fig. 4 and 4a), Huebler handwrote the following procedure directly under two outline-drawn riflemen who stand in a rocky landscape as they shoot toward the sky : "Two rifles fired from 'A' and 'B' toward point 'C' located about one mile away and 1,000 feet high. Fired simultaneously the two bullets converge, thereby completing a wedge." This 'sky' wedge is a geometric plane existing in space. The two bullets converging 'about one mile away' will not likely collide but their rays will create the wedge. It is the nearly complete spatial triangle that interests Huebler rather than the accuracy of the bullets' trajectories. This wedge is created from a sporting event taken to the level of art, an activity in which he and fellow artist Edward Kienholz engaged in 1968, seen in Figure 4a as they hold up a target board for a photograph. Huebler included this photograph of Kienholz and himself alongside the drawing in his exhibition catalogue entitled *Douglas Huebler: Variables* at Fonds Regional d'Art Contemporain in Limoges in 1993, curated by Frédéric Paul. Ironically, the one-mile-away target of the piece is a far cry from the real target in the photograph.

In *Sky Wedge Project* Huebler's materials for the wedge are bullets and air. The wedge is conceptually contained by angles of trajectory, rays if you will, forming a geometric plane from the two rifles as grounded endpoints projecting to a place unmeasured in the atmosphere. Robert Barry, one of the four so-called 'founding conceptualist artists' along with Huebler, Kosuth, and Weiner who

showed with Seth Siegelaub in 1968, also used atmospheric properties in a non-material, or at least undetectable, way. Barry's *Inert Gases/Helium, Neon, Argon, Krypton, Xenon. From a Measured Volume to Indefinite Expansion* (1969) were natural elements originally taken from the atmosphere, normally for such industrial uses as lighting (also a traditionally formal element in art) and released by the artist back into the atmosphere to become immeasurable and invisible. Barry and Huebler were creating art that vanishes after the moment of its making—after the de-pressuring of the tanks or the shooting of the rifles—although, strictly speaking, Huebler's sky wedge as depicted in his drawing is less conceptual than Barry's defusings that were documented as blank white cards with his name and title printed on the lower edge for his Siegelaub show in April 1969.

Duration was a central aspect of Huebler's drawing, in fact it was an obsessive concept in much of his work. It was a method of structuring time as relational according to the variable ways it may be perceived. Sometimes Huebler counter-played real time/duration (as clock time) against the length/duration of moving objects, such as the illustrated trajectory and length of baseball hits in his *Duration Piece #1, Bat, Baseball Time: 105 minutes, Snow's Field, Truro, Mass.,* (1968), (fig. 5). Here he diagrams the directional lines of baseball hits during a Little League game. Two identical squares represent the field—the Truro Tigers' hits on the left over the not-quite-"diamond" square and the Truro Senators' hits on the right—with Huebler's text beneath them. The dashed lines for ground balls and solid lines for balls in the air project from home plate until the point where they are caught. What may be very short foul balls seem to project, in lines perhaps like the

light reflection off a real diamond finger ring, and spread back toward an invisible catcher. There is no curving of the lines in space and no indication of the speed or force of each hit. Huebler charts those that "actually moved (hit) during the game," by drawing his line segments (they not vectors since they are not fully described in degrees or length) from a straight downward perspective with no depth of field yet the diagonals naturally try to escape into three dimensions. This is a playful amalgamation of the documentation of hits, perhaps those noted during his own children's Little League game, and a sterile geometric perspective of aerial dynamics, an abstraction of the visible world condensed into a single point with projectiles. The drawing utilizes his abstracted grid (the baseball diamond) as a template for plotting action in directional lines coded (as dashed or solid) by his descriptive language. Huebler overlays the duration of a documented social event (105 minutes on July 1, 1968, from the title) onto an abstract linear system by diagramming the number of unmeasured but relationally located hits (a professional baseball game would keep a detailed measurement of each hit). Huebler's topology merges the variability of social interaction—the Little Leaguers' random hits—with a kind of phenomenological geometry, filling an empty square with action. *Snow's Field* serves as an example of the fluid use of his notions of duration, location, and variables by incorporating each of them into this one drawing, as well as using them as categorical headings for his entire oeuvre.

The Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre devotes much of his book *The Production of Space* (1974) to considerations of our place as physical beings in social space. I would like to draw a line from Lefebvre's space of social practice to

Huebler's Little League baseball field diagrammed as art. Lefebvre's thinking about social space involves using the sensory phenomena we glean from our surroundings to create social products, such as art, that result from symbols and signs, products that project energy into a social space:

> When we evoke 'energy', we must immediately note that energy has to be deployed within a space. When we evoke 'space,' we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to 'points' and within a time frame. When we evoke 'time,' we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein.[79]

Huebler tells us that the Little League game was played on July 1, 1969, at Snow's Field and it lasted 105 minutes. There is nothing unusual about this fact other than that it becomes an integral part of his textual description. The text integrates time and place, now abstracted and deployed as social space onto his energy field, which is no longer an empty square but a type of grid for lines and points related to the frame. The energy from the baseball hits is deployed in lines from a central point (home base), projecting through a frame of what he tells us is a social space for baseball but what we really see is a square with diagonal lines. This work is a case in point(s), pun withstanding, showing us how to comprehend what Lefebvre calls a "logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice,"[80] with its various demographic, geographic, and chronological aspects. Demographic in that the game is played by children (watched by adults), geographic since we know its location is Truro, and chronological citing both time expired and date of occurrence. Similarly,

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[79] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991), 12. Original in French, 1974.
[80] Lefebvre, 11.

two men firing their rifles toward a single point 1,000 feet into the sky also results in the same social space that Lefebvre is talking about—one in which the physical body generates the energy for the production of social space depicted as an artist's geometric imaginings.

Around the mid 1970s, Huebler begins a return to hand drawn expressionist imagery. In *Variable Piece #90, Israel* (July/December 1974), (fig. 6), shown later at his solo exhibition entitled *Douglas Huebler* at Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, January 11 – February 1, 1986, he describes this drawing as "conventional renderings" of the faces that might be perceived as embedded in an enlarged photograph of random trees taken during a car ride in Israel. The dark rapid cross lines allow partial facial characteristics to appear, like rubbings off a stone. He describes his process in the typed text:

> In July, 1973, trees along a highway in Israel were photographed, in a random manner, from a moving automobile to determine if any signs of the eternal presence of our own Biblical ancestors could be found within the natural environment of the Holy Land. Un-retouched enlargements of the photographs do, in fact, reveal the appearance of many faces. For this piece the artist has made conventional renderings of some of the faces in one of the enlargements to assist the perception of those who may not perceive in the same manner.[81]

Huebler had used a similar technique of perceiving faces that appear from stone in other *Variables* discussed in my chapter on his photoconceptual strategies, specifically in his *Tower of London* piece, but I include it here to bring the drawing into focus as an example of his change in attitude about perception, particularly his new regard for the ephemeral in his work as a method of crossing time periods.

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[81] Douglas Huebler, exhibition catalogue *Douglas Huebler,* 11 January – 1 February, 1986, Leo Castelli Gallery, 224. From Leo Castelli records, CA 1980-2000, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

What are we to make of Huebler's interest in *essences* as ephemera randomly gleaned from past times? Essences may refer to the non-material, even spiritual, aspects of human beings—ideations never actualized or imaged—brought into the reality of an actual drawing , or the genetics inherent across generations as seen in facial types. In *Variable Piece #90 Israel,* Huebler imagines facial likenesses from history and draws them across time as essences of their imagery, situating them with what look like more contemporary faces to create a mélange of anonymous characters. He does not give us specific dates from the past and we may assume that he determines the presence of these Biblical ancestors in present time, sometime before the month and year of the piece (July/December 1974). Marking calendrical time—which had heretofore been rather precisely imprinted in his work—is changed to a different kind of duration here, as imagined relationships reaching across unmeasured time. Art historian George Kubler conveyed his ideas on the variables of time in *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1962). Kubler connects cross-cultural eras using non-calendrical time since chronological (solar) time favored by history is not relevant to a true understanding of changes in art:

> Unfortunately the tissues of history today have only one dimension that is readily measured: it is calendrical time, which permits us to arrange events one after another. But that is all. The domain of the historical sciences remains impervious to numbers. We can nevertheless use the language of measurement without numbers, as in topology, where relationships rather than magnitudes are the subject of study. Calendrical time indicates nothing about the changing pace of events. The rate of change in history is not yet a matter for precise

> determinations: we will have advanced if only we arrive at a few ideas about the different kinds of duration.[82]

Kubler was a broad thinker about how to regard 'the history of things,' one whose ideas apply to conceptual art as well since it is part of the grand narrative. Douglas Huebler's drawings are 'things' which can evoke a topology of social relationships which are generally immeasurable in time.

Gazing at trees along a highway in modern day Israel stimulated and entranced his perception to leap back across centuries. To perceive "the eternal presence" of ancestors from the Holy Land emerging from an enlarged photograph of light and dark areas in blurred trees implies a radical turn from his earlier dots and lines on a page. He marks five corresponding locations as letters A - E from the trees to the facial images with the same type of round white labels that he used in his mapping projects during this time, here as a system of locational documentation from the natural to the supernatural. Huebler senses a phenomenological topology in these photographs, perhaps only discernible due from the motion of his vehicle creating a fleeting sensation. The faces take shape on his page—some with Near Eastern features with headbands, others in more contemporary rendering, some bearded some not. The lower right face illustrates Huebler's professional draftsmanship ability in shading and texture, perhaps recalling his earlier commercial drawing career in New York. The uncovered head and sharp features of this face reveal similarity to faces of nineteenth century artists (I particularly think

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[82] George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), 76.

of Courbet's profiled self portrait in his 1854 *The Meeting,* or *Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet*, but there are several others).

Critic Jack Burnham, in his "Huebler's Pinwheel and the Letter Tau" (1974), adeptly places Huebler with Duchamp in the double functioning of their work—what may seem to be deceptively simple can be inverted by chance, like spinning a gaming wheel and then tossing the dice in roulette, or sometimes by unseen deeper sources like the variability of the letter Tau in ancient Hebrew. As he notes in this essay, Burnham sees such a connection between Duchamp's *Monte Carlo Bonds* (1924) and Huebler's *Variable Piece #90, Israel*, both of which engage in the methodologies of chance undergirded by nuanced explorations of the validity of myth. In a letter that Huebler wrote to Burnham dated May 31, 1974, the artist explains his objectives for the 'Israel piece,':

> It's necessary that the information follow the model (avoiding esthetic or subjective choices on my part) in order to keep the model neutral—that is, with no intervention of my feelings concerning the 'face,' the 'tree,' 'time' or anything else in order that the model have "wholeness" within the assembly of its parts…My finding/rendering of faces in the trees is built into the construct which follows the well-known cultural mythology that "the gods are everywhere"…Obviously I am playing off those models (random sequence versus the omnipresence of the gods) to create a unity which I call a 'work.'[83]

Huebler's triad of photography-drawing-language was established as a model before he wove in the cultural aspect of ancient beliefs gleaned while traveling in the Holy Land. Apparently these drawings manifested themselves somewhat subliminally, like a surrealist channeling, from a seemingly unrelated photograph of

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[83] Jack Burnham, "Huebler's Pinwheel and the Letter Tau" in *Arts Magazine,* vol. 49 no.2 (October 1974), 35.

nature and they were integrated as a seamless part of the whole. Human perception naturally skips from the actual to the imaginary, with no regard to thinking about the connecting paths.

In a similar but more analytical mode of image transference across time and form, John Baldessari explains his *Concerning Diachronic/Synchronic Time: Above, On, Under (with Mermaid)* (1976): "I am asking you to believe the airplane has turned into a seagull and the sub into a mermaid during the time the motorboat is crossing."[84] Baldessari's photographed images are ordered in six frames to be read across the top frame as airplane *becoming* a bird in flight as similar shapes in synchronic time, or from the top down as the airplane flying, to boat speeding, to submarine submerging, all as diachronic action, and then across to the mermaid swimming as synchronic again and we could continue up to complete the cycle. There is a hint of the subliminal in Baldessari's airplane to bird analogy, a synchronic phenomenon of likeness of shape with no narrative or history, no cause and effect. Comparing Baldessari's work to Douglas Huebler's *Israel Piece,* Huebler's mental cross-reference from the shadows of trees to faces of Biblical ancestors is more subliminal, more subconsciously intuitive. Huebler suggests a diachronic historical narrative that crosses eras, from ancient to the present, while the faces are drawn from a hazy location within nature, synchronically. The faces may have been hastily sketched but they show his mastery of the hand whereas Baldessari uses photography as a mechanical device for pairing images that might otherwise be disparate in another context.

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[84] Coosje van Bruggen, *John Baldessari* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1990), 35.

Could Huebler be satirizing attempts at depicting in a realistic manner in the *Israel* piece or creating a literal 'impression' to visualize appearances from myths—"the gods are everywhere"—that can never be truly captured in art? There is no evidence of this in his textual descriptions nor in his public comments, yet his work was becoming more humorous and satirical during the mid1970s, certainly with his late career series *Crocodile Tears* of drawings and paintings after the 1980s in which he mimicked famous works from art history by 'correcting' them for a pretentious art public. Regardless of Huebler's intentions in regard to his drawing the essences of ancient people as perceived from a road trip, the next chapters show that his art documented his socially interactive space, what he lived as a social experience of everyday life.

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In looking back at the early stages of Huebler's conceptual drawing, it may be said that, in Sol LeWitt's dictum, "the idea becomes the machine that makes the art."[85] The text generates the energy to activate the points and lines. I suggest that the drawings evolve in subtle ways that allow randomness and social behavior to gain the upper hand, as in his baseball drawings or the road trip in Israel. This is achieved through a precise articulation in his text that compels the reader to look deeper into his drawings. His language is not an eloquently vocalized persuasion, instead it works as a clean straightforward statement of procedure with no

[85] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" in *Artforum* 5:10 (Summer 1967), 80.

extraneous verbiage. Each drawing becomes an articulated structure coupling language and shape in order to speak, freeing the drawings when a dynamic reading projects them into imagination. Whether Huebler's activities mark a page, the earth, or the gods, his language has a spatio-temporal sensibility that puts his drawing on the stage as a major player in his overall work.

Huebler's drawings opened perceptual possibilities beyond any modernist restriction of formal arrangement or mythic valuation of painting. His procedures create an interaction with the viewer as a social understanding. He poignantly explained how a simple point can effect a lasting social relationship—a relational aesthetics—between two people: "Imagine a point that exists halfway between us. Its position will change as we move about but it will now continue to exist as long as we both do."[86]

Huebler mentioned in an interview with Patricia Norvell on July 25, 1969, that his concerns come from gestalt as "where something is in relation to you, in relationship to the rest of the world, and so forth," however he goes on to explain that his own work is "a springboard from your location, its location, and then the rest of the world, rather than as a thing upon which one focused for a final experience."[87] We have seen how his *rest of the world,* such as football and baseball and faraway travels, played a significant part in the later drawings. This aspect of his work will become prominent in his mapping and photographic strategies.

Jack Burnham recognized Douglas Huebler's distinctive approach to conceptualism. Burnham contrasted the artist's work with his fellow conceptualists

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[86] Hurwitz, n.p.
[87] Alberro and Norvell, 136.

who, as the author put it, were engaged in 'logical analysis, transformational grammar, and set theory':

> As Huebler's work demonstrates, it is not the dogmatic 'purity' of a work nor its intellectual complexity that determine the art quality of a proposition; rather, its ability to be integrated within the paradigms of nature ultimately determines aesthetic validity.[88]

Aesthetic validity for Burnham, however vague, is an entirely changed concept by the 1970s, one with almost no relation to earlier modernism. It is surprising that he uses the term since it was so often taken in vain, even by Huebler, but Burnham uses it as a new understanding of how conceptual art could change society. Burnham clarifies and validates Huebler's niche as an artist who works within 'the paradigms of nature' and social life, with none of the loud dogmatism or cerebral pretensions exhibited by some in the field.

I believe that Douglas Huebler's conceptualism has relevance to *relational aesthetics,* a term from French critic Nicolas Bourriaud that has entered common usage to show social trends in contemporary art in the 1990s. Like Jack Burnham before him, Bourriaud's aesthetics define the production of art as it *relates* to the world, to nature and to those with whom we engage our activities and our intellectual outlook. Huebler's drawings in this chapter are a seminal microcosm of how his conceptual art evolved from the private space of the apprehension of a dot or a line to the relational aesthetics of art engaged with the everyday, with the experiences of commonality like a baseball game or friends shooting rifles at a

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[88] Burnham, "Huebler's Pinwheel and the Letter Tau," 35. Huebler did several variations of face drawings for *Variable Piece #90, Israel.* Burnham includes one in his article; the drawing I use for exhibit here is from Huebler's 1986 exhibition catalogue which includes the artist's text, shown at Leo Castelli Gallery and now located in the Leo Castelli records, CA 1980-2000, Archives of American Art.

common invisible target. This was "art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context," as Bourriaud describes the artwork of "social interstice."[89] Douglas Huebler's theoretical horizon of social interstice was broad yet not far enough for him to fully realize his legacy—that he was a precursor of social trends to come in contemporary art.

Those who first recognized Huebler's intellectual talent and social proclivities in art were his close friends such as Seth Siegelaub, Lucy Lippard, Jack Burnham, and later gallery owners like Leo Castelli. The person who has made the most astute remark about Douglas Huebler was his most prolific collector, a wealthy patron from Milan whose papers relate their friendship and foreshadow his legacy—Giuseppe Panza, who wrote:

> An artist like Huebler gives importance to daily facts of life that otherwise would be forgotten and disappear with time. He is showing you that every aspect, every event, of reality is something important.[90]

This chapter has shown Huebler's evolvement from the more internal perceptual drawings with their deceptive simplicity toward his imaginary perceptions of the natural world and his place in it. By the mid1970s, Huebler revived his former academic draftsmanship, not in a backsliding reversal of representational technique but in a new socio-perceptual production, a social intake of the details of everyday life. He would take the potential of his points and lines to move vertically and horizontally at random and use it in his mapping

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[89] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics,* trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with Mathieu Copeland (Paris: les presses du reel, 1998), 14.
[90] Sarah Tanguy, "The Beauty of Thinking: A Conversation with Guiseppe Panza" in *Sculpture* 29:1 (January-February 2010), 8.

procedures where they were to be read as locators for documentation of procedures—an experiential approach with less need for the transcendence of perception asked by his drawings.

Chapter Two

UNFRAMING THE GRID: HUEBLER'S PROCEDURAL MAPPING

> The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more. I prefer, simply, to state the existence of things in terms of time and/or place. More specifically, the work concerns itself with things whose interrelationship is beyond direct perceptual experience. Because the work is beyond direct perceptual experience, awareness of the work depends on a system of documentation. This documentation takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings and descriptive language.[91]
>
> —Douglas Huebler, 1968

A discursive analysis of Douglas Huebler's art maps involves more than an archival attempt at classification of his sense of cartography; here it will be a method of examining how and why he came to produce his map-based works, as well as his innovative sensibilities in procedural mapping—to look at how he joined the geographic site to whatever procedures might be generated from it, and, more importantly, to consider how his written propositions for executing these procedures can result in an openly engaging and fluid interaction between the map reader and the map. Moreover, my argument will situate Huebler's practice in relation to other relevant artists of the time, such as Robert Smithson, Lawrence Weiner, Carl Andre, and John Baldessari. Finally, I will examine certain theories that may shed light upon his work, in particular the social thinking of Michel de Certeau, Fredric Jameson, and Henri Lefebvre.

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[91] Seth Siegelaub, exhibition catalogue *January 5-31, 1969*, n.p. Also in Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1972), 13, and Lippard, *Six Years*, 74.

Huebler's World War II flight missions over the Pacific may have been instrumental, I posit, in his art mapping because they required precisely plotted aerial routes over vast distances to sight specific targets or territories of tiny land masses surrounded by water. The islands were photographed and descriptions were written as site-specific documentation for military use. Huebler's own comments about his wartime maneuvers do not clarify whether he was actually charting routes or merely navigating from existing ones as the crew searched for signs of change on the ground. He describes his duties:

> I accompanied pilots on observation flights in order to determine if targeted anti-aircraft positions had been either destroyed, or moved, as was often the situation. Whatever new information we brought back was displayed on our large map with coloured push pins, and that information played an important role in the intelligence briefings delivered before each strike.[92]

His early experiences in aerial photography for reconnaissance mapping during World War II were a basis for his later expansive spatial sensibilities in both drawing and mapping:

> I have not given much thought to that wartime experience until I found myself searching for alternative methodologies for the expression of my creative interests, but the memory that time returned as I began to sense the significance of the map as a most essential kind of conceptual model.[93]

By the time Huebler began to mark his proposed itineraries onto his art maps of New England and New York City around 1968, his focus had evolved—his instructions for reading them would propose variable approaches (what he called

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[92] Peter Wollen, "Mappings: Situationists and/or Conceptualists" in *Rewriting Conceptual Art,* edited by Michael Newman and Jon Bird (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd, 1999), 39.
[93] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 127.

his "*either/or* system"[94]) within a given set of operations in order to initiate the project. These approaches involved using language to amplify the two-dimensional constructions of the maps.

Douglas Huebler's map projects require someone to read his instructions and activate them. He referred to this person as a *percipient*—likely from the Latin *percipient* which, for Huebler, implies a more involved understanding than mere perception; percipient suggests a person with a particularly heightened sensory awareness or keen discernment. The idea of ~~a~~ctivating his work will evolve into procedural mapping , often with options for completion by Huebler's percipient. The term *procedural* should be clarified here: art historian and critic Terry Smith, in conversation with artist Mary Kelly in 1995, categorized conceptual art into four trajectories—*performative* as art happening with an audience, *processual* as actions within a system often politically motivated, *procedural* as "nominations of a series of actions or a sequence of thoughts," and *propositional* as language-based.[95] I surmise that Douglas Huebler could fit under most of these headings in various ways, yet, to my mind, he best aligns with the procedural due to his scripting of serial actions, albeit with random effects, which will be considered here. I agree with Terry Smith's placement of Huebler under *procedural*, yet it is unclear exactly what is meant by Smith's singular phrase "such as Huebler's social measurement mappings"[96] as an example of this category. Perhaps Smith is merely considering

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[94] Alberro and Norvell, 140.
[95] Alberro and Stimson, 450. "A Conversation about Conceptual Art, Subjectivity and the *Post-Partum Document,"* discussion between Mary Kelly and Terry Smith on March 10, 1995, Chicago, previously unpublished.
[96] Alberro and Stimson, 450.

Huebler's later opening up of his procedures in mapping to include the documentation of actions of persons in relation to their surroundings, often measured in time frames as I shall illustrate subsequently.

Huebler developed a procedure of tracing routes onto readymade maps accompanied by his commentary, and, by 1968, he began to include photographs of sites along the way and quasi-legalistic propositions for proscribed actions as his mode of documenting particular locations. The proposed procedures were usually typed in paragraph form (although some were hand-lettered) and were always headed by the specific title and number of the work and ending with the month, year, his typewritten name, and sometimes signature. A typical closure above his name would be "The photographs and maps of this location join together with this statement to constitute the form of this piece." A proposition, unlike a contractual agreement, may ask for reciprocity but does not require it—a fact that will prove salient to all of his work. For Huebler, the map was always a secondary component of the procedural concept.[97] In the context of his whole system, the map, the photograph, and his text will become integral parts to the whole and should be read as one piece. His alterations were upon the surface of maps and did not change their basic geographic imagery while his intent was to address the variables of how these alterations might be perceived.

Huebler's transition from minimalism to conceptual art had begun in the mid 1960s with his questioning of the limitations of minimalist sculpture. His work at

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[97] The artist's letter to Siegelaub, undated, spring 1968, in Seth Siegelaub Personal Archives, Teaneck, New Jersey, Museum of Modern Art Archives, Box 5, file 118.

the time consisted of geometric fabrications of Formica-encased plywood, usually for outdoor display and often with connecting parts that could be turned or conceivably expanded. Yet he wanted to experiment with a more conceptual sense of expansion as a means of refuting traditional ideas about formalism in sculpture.

> By the end of 1967, I concluded that Minimal objects require the culturally determined environment of galleries and museums in order to generate their intended *gestalt*, but, because such objects are *real* in the same sense that a cube, for instance, is real, I found that when I set some of my pieces outside of my studio, their essential reality was quickly smothered by that of the natural environment that surrounded them.[98]

In 1994, he wrote to Anne Rorimer, a contemporary art historian and curator, about his transition from minimalism to conceptual art, describing his search for a way to demonstrate his new ideas. Rorimer explains that it was "a methodology for deconstructing — dismantling — whatever, the rules of formalism, of aesthetics, etc., which nonetheless might preserve the 'sense of infinite expansion,' in Huebler's words, imparted by the free-standing sculptures."[99] This transition from minimalist sculpture to conceptual mapping has a concrete story, according to Huebler himself:

> As an experiment, I drove some very long nails (spikes) into the ground, configuring them into the shape of a large oval, but, because the nails could not actually be seen, I made a drawing of that shape and beneath it printed words which described its measurements, the location of the site, and the date; of course, what I quickly recognized that that the drawing was, in fact, a *map*.[100]

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[98] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 126.
[99] Rorimer, 135.
[100] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 126.

Huebler's friendship with the New York impresario curator Seth Siegelaub, beginning in 1965, brought his ideas on methods of presentation to fruition in a momentous way. Ever the creative entrepreneur, Siegelaub inaugurated a radically new mode of distribution of Huebler's work in the exhibition *Douglas Huebler: November 1968*—the show was in catalogue form. Although Siegelaub considered his mailed announcements to be an art component of the show, the Huebler catalogue was the major focus for exclusive display in Siegelaub's private apartment at 1100 Madison Avenue, unpretentiously neither a studio nor gallery. Lucy Lippard described the situation for the art public: those who ventured to see the *real* art were "met at the door of a rather seedy apartment by the rather seedy 'dealer' (Seth Siegelaub) in his usual working costume—bathing suit or undershorts."[101] Siegelaub is quoted as saying "for the Huebler show, the pieces were lying in the closet. There was nothing on the wall. As a matter of fact, we did have some people that came up to the door…maybe two or three people a week who walked in from the street, or called up."[102] Of the fifteen works produced for the catalogue, four were photocopies of Huebler's spatial relationship drawings, discussed in my previous chapter, and the others were photocopies of his so-called 'Site Sculptures' produced on paper as maps with procedural instructions, sometimes with accompanying photographs. In essence, the catalogue was a reproduction as well as the exhibition itself; it was this booklet consisting of 8" x8"

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[101] Lucy Lippard, "Douglas Huebler: Everything About Everything," 29.

[102] Frederik Leen, "Seth Siegelaub: Conceptual Art: Exhibitions" in *Forum International* no.9 (September 1991), 66. Also in Rorimer, 282, note 65.

sheets bound together that Siegelaub took out of the closet to show those interested enough to inquire about it.

Huebler no longer required an actual physical location to show his work, even though Siegelaub provided a physical, albeit non-institutional, space in this case. This radical system of distribution and display was groundbreaking in conceptual art. According to the Museum of Modern Art's description of the catalogue from the Siegelaub Papers archived in its collection, this *Douglas Huebler: November 1968* is the "first exhibition in which the artist's book embodied the exhibition itself ."[103] Even though Siegelaub produced the catalogue copy, it was with the full authorization of the artist who was now able to completely control the contents, as well as have a say in its distribution—an unprecedented strategy. This approach gave the artist full rein to explain and interpret his own work within the catalogue medium by the inclusion of his written propositions; no curatorial essay was needed. Huebler was quite clear about his role: "What I say is part of the art work. I don't look to critics to say things about my work. I tell them what it's about."[104] The politics of administration and curatorial involvement was a critical personal issue for Huebler. Other artists, such as Joseph Kosuth, were also eschewing the power of the critic, as the politics of making art without the need for any professional promotional critique became a major component in conceptual art.

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[103] Chronology of Projects, The Seth Siegelaub Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, 2012. Here the word *book* refers to the exhibition catalogue. This online MoMA annotation does not give a specific file reference, however it is an accurate description of what I gleaned from the Siegelaub Papers during my research.

[104] Alberro and Stimson, 202.

In his *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (2003), Alexander Alberro details Siegelaub's intricate strategies to subsidize the November 1968 catalogue printing and its distribution, as well as his unsuccessful attempts to secure patrons for Huebler's work. It is unclear whether the idea for having the documentation become the work itself should be attributed to Siegelaub or to Huebler. Of the various comments about who should get the credit, some seem to indicate that the initiative was conceived jointly, implying that there may be no need to establish a singular ownership of the concept: according to Alberro, "In one blow, Siegelaub eliminated the bulk of the material object and replaced it with documentation."[105] Yet Siegelaub himself has insisted "This new form of documentation arose directly from Huebler's work itself."[106] Siegelaub's comment bends toward curator Frederik Leen's more definitive statement: "Huebler suggested to do the show as a catalogue. Anyway, this corresponded with the given that Siegelaub had no gallery space."[107] If one takes Leen's opinion to be the case, then Douglas Huebler's action is a monumental moment in conceptual art, one that has been overlooked by most art historians. Whatever the circumstance of decision-making between Huebler and Siegelaub may have been, the documentation signaled the artist's ownership while the distribution of the documentation was Siegelaub's forte.

Siegelaub's enthusiasm for promotional techniques was not always echoed by Huebler. According to Alberro, "Huebler's work was changing so rapidly that he evidently began to have doubts about the feasibility of the exhibition project," as

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[105] Alberro, 73.
[106] Liz Kotz, "Seth Siegelaub 1941-2013," in *Artforum* 52:4, December 2013, 48.
[107] Leen, 71, note 7. The Seth Siegelaub Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, file I.A.64.

the artist searched for ways to fit the documentation into the parameters of the catalogue.[108] Whether the material was a copy was of no consequence. For the minimalists and conceptualists, de-skilling by disavowing the appearance of made-by-hand art was a political move away from modernism toward an art that democratically promoted the notion that anyone could do it. This negation of the object opened new options, certainly for Douglas Huebler, by allowing the percipient to viscerally take part in the creation.

One of the more engaging and complex of the fifteen works for Siegelaub's *Douglas Huebler: November 1968* catalogue was *Site Sculpture Project, Variable Piece #1, New York City* (August-September 1968) (figs. 7 and 8). It is a diagrammed system of drawing and text revealing Huebler's ideas on the impermanence of supposedly static locations and his unframing of geometric shapes when randomness is interjected into the operation. Both illustrations show the same map with three squares and dots designating the markers, which he notes in the description. Figure 7 is undated and hand printed and is likely the original version since it first appears in the November 1968 catalogue, whereas Figure 8 contains type-written text and more detailed elaboration of his locations and process, noting names of the buildings in Manhattan, the street intersections, and the designated ratio of the squares' dimensions to each other (under Part II of his typed text). This later illustration of *Variable Piece #1, New York City,* was shown in 1975 at Galleria Sperone in Turin, Italy. In my analysis here, I shall primarily refer to Figure 8. Three concentric squares are drawn in consecutively increasing scale

[108] Alberro, 75.

onto a street map of mid-town Manhattan; each square's points are designated from smallest to largest as A^1 to D^1, A^2 to D^2, A^3 to D^3 with the largest square just below Central Park. The smallest square A^1 to D^1 designates markers placed into elevators "thereby being carried into random and vertical directions" while the next square A^2 to D^2 has markers placed in "static and permanent location" and the largest square A^3 to D^3 designates the points/sites for markers placed on automobiles and trucks which, when they begin to travel, will create "a random and horizontal spatial description" (in the artist's typed text below his map in Figure 8). Huebler talks about this work during a lecture at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, on March 31, 1970:

> All it was doing was creating a similar relationship to a conceptually transferred location. There's no inside, no outside. These are little points described on a map, described by language as to what they stand for, but in actual physical fact of course, there was nothing there. There's nothing to be perceived through normal experience. And for me, this was an irony, that the experience of nature is bound by conventions. We take a chunk of it and put a frame around it and the frame can be like the frame on these paintings or the frame can be language, the frame can be documents.[109]

Here in *Variable Piece #1,* documented location becomes his abstracted frame, since he says there is "no inside, no outside" of his squares if one physically walked them on the streets. When Huebler says "there was nothing there" in the above quote, there *was* actually something there—the small fabric stickers marking his specified points, as he describes them in the text in Figure 8. What he probably meant in the Nova Scotia talk is that there were no physical lines drawn or placed on the streets.

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[109] Lippard, *Six Years,* 60-61.

In art critic Michael Auping's 1977 interview with Huebler, the artist explains his thinking:

> [I] create a formalist field, so to speak, and then to try and empty it. The statement is meant to undermine the image…I mean to be setting up a number of ironies. I've spoken seriously, and I am very serious, but you know an awful lot of the work is meant to twist things to the point of almost absurdity. I don't want to celebrate absurdity, but I do mean to challenge a lot of premises.[110]

His map of square areas is the formalist field, only to be 'undermined,' as he says above, by his text. As I shall demonstrate, Huebler's use of text to undermine the image is not to be taken as a method to weaken or sabotage the map's imagery, but instead to provoke a more acute attention to the very function of his language to expose a question, to function as a co-active component in his work. In this *Variable Piece #1,* he challenges the authoritative aspects naturally implicit in written language by employing a highly specific quasi-definitive description of the procedure only to insert randomness within the details, which I shall analyze now.

Huebler's full typewritten text is a strategic component of the piece as it keys the details to decipher the work. He notes that all points of the center square A^2 to D^2 (the static one) "describe a ratio of 2:1 to the smallest square A^1 to D^1" —yet the scaled measurement of the center square to the smallest is erroneous. It is actually closer to 4:1. The reader might give him the benefit of the doubt, that this is simply an error of drawing, yet, considering Huebler's normal attention to precision, he could be setting up a more complex idea. Why would he create a misleading yet

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[110] Auping, 44. *Variable Piece #1* also appears in *Douglas Huebler: Select Drawings 1968-1973,* exhibition catalogue, Galleria Sperone, Torino, Italy, 1975.

subtle ratio that is only discovered upon close observation? Since the ratio is inaccurate, one may infer that he uses the statement for this piece to challenge or unframe the image. The reader is told that the positioning of the markers on two of the squares — the smallest and largest— is not static, that the markers designate conceptually moveable objects—hidden elevators at the four points of the smallest square and unseen vehicles at the four points on the largest square, all traveling in different directions to transport people that can only be imagined. Now his method of unframing becomes perhaps more obvious. This appears to be an overt challenge to the traditional framed grid in art history by 'emptying its formalist field,' in his words to Auping, and opening it up with moveable objects that cannot be bound by a frame or by his statement. Indeed, there could be no more precisely geometric urban grid than Manhattan that would beg to be unframed in art. Huebler has unframed his diagrams not only by skewing a ratio, but more significantly, by allowing randomness of motion from certain points.

These observations lead one to the larger question of how are such details of site specificity and precision of measurement to be regarded in art, especially if they seem incorrect or prompted by chance? One may posit that they are to be considered solely within the context of a logic internal to the art work itself and are subject to its coherent sensibility, that is, they are relevant not as mathematics but as art. In 1971, Victor Burgin observed in his article "Rules of Thumb," that, when art uses mathematics,

> considerations of either its truth or its falsity are simply *irrelevant*…The elements of a work assume, in their mutual relations, an autonomous status subject only to criteria of internal coherence.

> We do not ask 'is it true,' but only 'is it valid' within the terms of its own axioms…its existence as an assembly of *meaningful* signs.[111]

This is a Wittgenstein concept of logical positivism that Huebler may have known, as other artists were discussing the philosopher's ideas at the time, notably Joseph Kosuth. Maps as art attain coherence only within their own intentional context. Huebler assembles the "meaningful signs" within his own axioms. With *Variable Piece #1*, he challenges the assumption that maps are static geographical readings since the world is constantly in flux upon whatever place a map may represent.

Huebler is quoted above that he does not want "to celebrate absurdity" but he does intend to "challenge a lot of premises." Others have done so in literary narratives about seemingly capricious mapping using absurd ratios. One is reminded of Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded:* the fantasy map is rendered on a scale of one mile to one mile (1:1) rendering it utterly useless, or of Jorge Luis Borges' pseudonym Suarez Miranda of 1658 whose map in "On Exactitude in Science" is so vast, also on the scale of 1:1, that it too is a parody of itself. Each of these maps attains coherence only within its purposeful absurdity. While theirs are vivid narrative descriptions, Huebler's mapping is a more subtle depiction of his ideas overlaid upon actual locales. His elevators and vehicles exist beyond what a map can capture, as they move from the map's two dimensions conceptually into three, horizontally and vertically. Carroll and Borges were masters of illusionary worlds where imagination was the means of expression.

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[111] Victor Burgin, "Rules of Thumb" *Studio International* 181:933 (May 1971), 237-239.

Douglas Huebler's maps are not far from this concept even though he had no intention of being literary.

Returning to *Variable Piece #1,* Huebler gives his coordinates, in the two squares that do not have stationary locations, the directives of vertical and horizontal movement. If numbers are concrete quantities of measured relationships, just as street maps should be in relation to actual places, then Huebler's moveable markers belie any sense of permanence. Consequently, like Burgin, he infers that geometry need not be concrete or confining when used in art; he makes us examine this proposition by diagramming his map to explain the flux of any situation— by 'framing' and then 'unframing' the physical geography to emit his message. The rigid street grid of Manhattan serves as a convenient system of mapping to be undermined as he shifts from two to three dimensions in order to expand beyond the frame.

In 1957, Marcel Duchamp, in *The Creative Act,* expounded on his definition of 'art coefficient' which may have resonance with Huebler's calculations toward an unpredictably fluid outcome when using mathematical relationships:

> The personal "art coefficient" is like an arithmetical relation between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed…the digit of this coefficient has no bearing whatsoever on his verdict…the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.[112]

Duchamp's *Green Box* contained such an idea about algebraic relationships in that they are variables according to other factors that may not always be calculated.

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[112] Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, eds. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 819.

There is no finite result when the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world. Huebler's ratio diagramming is less important than his use of purposeful randomness in vertical and horizontal movement, each with an infinite number of variables when activated in time and place. Variables will become a hallmark of his work.

The early twentieth century Dadaists experimented with chance, later channeled through John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns during the 1950s—those who were capturing real sounds and images from the world in randomly combined arrangements and, in the case of Johns, encaustic painting on collaged maps with stenciled words and letters. These techniques emerged again in the 1960s for Huebler, as random trajectories to be taken, marks on maps to be examined, a combination of many signals of stop and go in all directions. What first appears to be codified on a grid is actually an allegory of synchronic motion. What may at first imitate scaled geography and concentric squares becomes a system of chain reactions developing into a new concept: the rigidity of city blocks is unframed to become a conceptual playground of urban activity. Huebler's site specificity in *Variable Piece #1* becomes hypersensitive, a mix of visceral sensations. Now we have amplified the volume and rhythm of Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie* to take Huebler's conceptual vehicles across the city in left/right turns or to go up and down in elevators at random intervals and stops.

Also in the *November 1968* catalogue, *42nd Parallel* (sometimes called *42 Degree Parallel Piece)* (August/September 1968) (fig. 9) is an ink-on-map work describing 3,040 miles across the continental United States through fourteen towns

located exactly or approximately on the 42 degree parallel. The work is a compression of vast mapped scale into a single conceptual work, using certified mail receipts of the sender (the artist) and the receiver (the Chambers of Commerce) from post offices all along the 42nd parallel.[113] Huebler is working with a wide unseen line whose physical and social geography is unchanged by the art. He described his methodology for this piece to Lucy Lippard as

> A system existing in the world disinterested in the purpose of art may be 'plugged into' in such a way as to produce a work that possesses a separate existence and that neither changes nor comments on the system to be used… An inevitable destiny is set in motion by the specific process selected to form such a work, freeing it from further decisions on my part. I like the idea that even as I eat, sleep or play, the work is moving towards its completion.[114]

According to Huebler's statement in the *November 1968* catalogue, he describes his *42nd Parallel* as "contained sequential time and linear space in present time and place." The time zones are visually and conceptually contained by the borders of the map since the linear 42nd parallel governs both present time and abstract line across the entire map. The sequential aspect of time in *42nd Parallel* is a significant part of the work: the mailing process creates a system of sequencing the process—not only to document locations all along the line, but to sequence reciprocity as a broader form of social geography through a type of documented exchange.

Mailing was not an entirely new medium for artists such as Huebler. During the late 1950s in New York, Ray Johnson had begun a process called "mail art" by

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[113] Rorimer, 137. Huebler sent at least eleven, possibly fourteen, requests to Chambers of Commerce in his chosen towns along the parallel, according to Rorimer. At least ten receipts were returned to him. He lists the towns in Siegelaub's catalogue *January 5-31, 1969.*

[114] Lippard, *Six Years,* 62.

sending collaged fragments of words and images, either mimeographed or reproduced in offset lithography taken from such contemporary media as celebrity fan magazines and overlaid with his personalized messages to friends and acquaintances asking them to "please add to and return" or "please add and send to…"[115] Johnson both directed the procedure and allowed the recipient some leeway in how to handle the work. Meantime on the West Coast from 1955 to 1964, Wallace Berman was mailing art and poetry assemblages in envelopes conceived as a journal entitled *Semina* to his friends. Most issues of *Semina* were language and collage works by Berman himself, his literary friends of the Beat generation in San Francisco, and other authors he admired such as Herman Hesse and Antonin Artaud. Berman's journal was considered art for dissemination in its own right, a lithograph and letterpress production usually on unbound loose-leaf cards, allowing recipients to rearrange the pages, yet, as poet Michael McClure described it, "there are so many rules in the putting together of a *Semina* and it is so precise a game of art."[116] Curator Michael Duncan considers *Semina* "as a kind of traveling group show in an envelope" not unlike Duchamp's *Box in a Valise* of 1935-41.[117] Berman was fascinated by games of chance and often included Hebrew lettering in games relating to mysticism in *Semina*. Both Ray Johnson and Wallace Berman were instrumental in establishing mail art as a form of institutional critique against

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[115] Alex Sainsbury, "Ray Johnson: Please Add To & Return" exhibition catalogue Museo d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, November 6, 2009 – January 10, 2010, 97-98. Ray Johnson's mail art process was jokingly suggested by Fluxus artist Ed Plunkett as the New York Correspondance School (Johnson intentionally misspelled *correspondence*) in 1962, a title Ray Johnson adopted for a loosely associated group of his fellow artists and friends who participated in his mail art.

[116] Michael Duncan and Kristine McKenna, *Semina Culture: Wallace Berman and His Circle* exhibition catalogue Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, California, September 17 – November 26, 2005 (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2005), 22.

[117] Duncan and McKenna, 27.

gallery exhibition. While the *Douglas Huebler: November 1968* exhibition catalogue clearly leans toward this format of art distribution, it was not in the vein of Berman's countercultural assemblages and may have more affinity with Ray Johnson's individualized work. With the postmarked mailings to establish time and location for *42nd Parallel,* Huebler's work displays a straightforward systematic procedure to which he adds the variable of uncertainty about whether the piece's documentation will be reciprocated and thereby returned and completed by unknown correspondents. *42nd Parallel* simply expands the infinite possibilities of a line. It recalls some of Huebler's earlier linear drawings of the mid 1960s in which a line takes on spatial aspects of conceptual containment of time, such as one billion revolutions per second. His sequential photographs of what he called 'time zones' taken through the plane window during flights across the United States in the late 1960s also seem to meld into *42nd Parallel* as a way of documenting time and space. In a lecture at Northwestern University's Block Gallery in January 1993, Huebler said that *42nd Parallel* was an attempt to make "the largest but least intrusive or impositional sculpture imaginable."[118] He continues to refer to his work as sculpture stating that he wants it to be unobtrusive, not in the sense of effacement but instead as conceptually expansive. By investigating geographical latitude, an abstraction in itself that is conceptually imposed upon the earth, he pursues his intention of going beyond the visual into things unseen.[119] The

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[118] Rorimer, 137.

[119] Huebler produced similar pieces during 1969. One without mailings was for the *Prospect 69* exhibition, September 30 – October 12, 1969, in Düsseldorf, based on imaginary measurements along the 45th degree parallel by photographically documenting each 24 hour point at noon (approximating 8,800 linear miles each hour) to "fix 24 hours of sequential time at one instant in real time." See Seth

outcome of the *42nd Parallel* mailing project depends on those whom he does not know or see, in places he may not have been and will leave no mark upon. He will soon turn to locales that he knew more intimately.

Huebler displayed his ideas on relocation or "exchange" of site sculpture in the November 1968 catalogue piece entitled *Cape Cod Wedge Exchange* (July 1968) (figs. 10, 11, 12). With this work, he now began to include photographs and sometimes sculptural materials to document locations that coordinated with his marked maps of places where he lived and worked. Importantly, this project included a detailed nautical chart map—a type with which he had worked extensively during his military days—of the peninsula of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, including the town of Truro where he lived at the time, as well as the harbor of Wellfleet. Using a felt tip pen for the working drawing (fig. 10), he drew a precise geometric diagram in boldly marked lines of a large square backed by wedge shapes, one connected as a triangle, the other open on the 'unseen' side, as if alluding to a Sol LeWitt-type sculpture of open box shapes yet here flat on the map. I shall consider whether this map could reveal a subtle metaphorical displacement of his minimalist sculpture, here without volumetric mass.

Cape Cod Wedge Exchange demands a close examination of the details of his marked sites, first when considered alongside his text handwritten on the working drawing, and then his subsequent full description of it (his text in its entirety

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Siegelaub Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, File I.A.64. Another in February 1969, *Location Piece #1 New York – Los Angeles,* involved photographing the airspace over thirteen states from "straight out the airplane window" and placing them with an American Airlines System Map. See Panza Collection Papers, Box DH4, Getty Research Institute.

below[120]) which was typed alongside the completed map drawing of 1968 (fig. 12). The left part of Huebler's working drawing shows the streets of Truro and Wellfleet with both bayside and Atlantic beaches, over which are scribbled numbers, dates, and cursory notes such as '80 passes from the road' or 'children' and 'markers.' At the right side of figure 10, a nautical chart map of the entire north part of Cape Cod appears to be folded or pasted along the edge of the Truro-Wellfleet town map. Huebler designates this combined map as a 'working drawing' as he has written in script above the title, and then 'Summer 1968' and his bold signature. The description of his procedure is neatly hand written in all capital letters directly onto the right side as follows: 'small wedges made of concrete driven in earth as markers at points E/F/G/H/I/J. Pebbles from Corn Hill Beach (A), sand from London Nook Beach (B) and Meeting House Road (D), and [clean?] water from Ballston Beach (C) mixed with concrete for forming wedges.' Each of these locations is clearly marked on the completed map (fig. 12) by circled capital letters A-J. The concrete wedge forms were small geometric solids (no exact dimensions are given in his text), produced from materials indigenous to the region, in a sense reminiscent of Huebler's earlier minimalist sculpture phase and now literally minimal in scale. They are points of exchange from the physical locations drawn as a geometric overlay onto his aerial photograph of the Cape (fig. 11) to the points on

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[120] The typewritten procedure for *Cape Cod Wedge Exchange* appears in the exhibition catalogue *Douglas Huebler*, Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1979, n.p. This description differs significantly from the artist's handwritten procedure on the 1968 working drawing. The Eindhoven catalogue states "The wedges were then taken to the locations which had been previously drawn on a map in the configuration of two wedges, more or less 'twisting' from two shared locations (E and F); the wedges were simply left on the ground, or sand, one at each site thereby connecting all locations with markers composed of substances common to Cape Cod." The verb 'twisting' is applicable to the shape in figure 12.

the completed map (fig. 12), just as his mailings in *42nd Parallel* exchanged materials and concepts. These small concrete 'sculptures' (if one may call them that) serve as physical markers for locating the ten connected points of Huebler's geometric drawing, not unlike the way his small fabric stickers were physical markers for the map coordinates in his *Site Sculpture Project Variable Piece #1, New York City,* discussed above. The aerial photography of Cape Cod peninsula recalls his World War II flight photography in the Pacific, while his white drawing overlaid onto this photograph shows a transition in this thinking, from his minimalist Formica sculpture to these conceptually placed shapes as sculptural elements collapsed onto an expansive landscape.

Does this exchange shape factor, such as *Cape Cod Wedge Exchange,* have affinity to Robert Smithson's Nonsite work? Both artists relocate natural substances, such as pebbles and rocks, in order to revaluate them in a new light as art outside the traditional gallery. Huebler's handmade concrete wedges mark locations directly corresponding to his art map, whereas Smithson relocated earth materials from their original site in order to heighten comprehension of them in a contrasting location. Rorimer writes about Huebler and Smithson that "Maps thus supplied the artist with real points of departure for the creation of imagery from which he, as author, could distance himself. In Huebler's work, maps do not have a documentary function with respect to place, as they do in Robert Smithson's Nonsites."[121] Although Rorimer does not explore the possibility of Huebler's wedges as a conceptual extension of minimalist sculpture, she does note that maps

[121] Rorimer, 136.

allow him a 'distance' to create his imagery. He can mark his territory by dropping his minimalist wedges at the same coordinates as the mapped locators and then permanently document and distance the locations with photography, in itself an unobtrusive type of removal or displacement. Where one may disagree with Rorimer is on her above statement about Huebler's maps 'not having a documentary function with respect to place.' Certainly his shapes have a mode of portability in that they could be used on various mapped sites, but I argue that his maps have a more important documentary function, that is, to mark location. In fact, his marked and labeled sites were more specific than Smithson's Nonsite maps. One might say that Smithson's maps in a gallery are not entirely documentary and Huebler's are not entirely generative—they are both rather in-mixed. For example, Smithson placed framed maps and photographs of the sites of his work on the walls of the non-site gallery in conjunction with the natural site's earth or mirrors or rocks in boxes on the floor, while alluding to his concept of displacement and entropy as a naturally generative process with some documentary aspect of place, such as the industrial sites of Passaic, New Jersey, likened to monuments of antiquity or mirrors displacing sites in Yucatan, Mexico. Douglas Huebler's mapping procedures in plain language framed on the gallery wall are not intended to refer metaphorically to a site even though they provide a link directly to it; they document location for a procedure to occur, such as along the 42nd Parallel.

Huebler's descriptions are not as metaphorically elegant as Smithson's writings. Huebler purposefully empties illusion from his sites when he overlays an

abstract geometric shape onto the map and never embellishes his description of it. In writing his straightforward procedural plans for activating a piece, Huebler's ordinary vernacular is more in the vein of Donald Judd's purposefully prosaic writing style, that is, strictly matter of fact with no illusion or embellishment and emphatically non-narrative. Huebler occasionally mentioned during panel discussions and interviews that his writing was in the open-ended and methodical style similar to the French author Alain Robbe-Grillet of the 1950s and 60s,[122] a non-narrative style in which diverse quotidian activities, even trivialities, are interposed in the text of the novel.[123] This is quite different from Smithson's writing style of layering his ideas in penetrating geological fathoms.

Alberro, in his *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, considers the writing styles of Huebler and Robert Smithson to be dissimilar yet, in a sense, complementary:

> In order to preserve his own creative identity, Huebler completed Smithson, as it were, by being more literal than the latter, dropping his emphasis on spatial metaphors of inside and outside, site and non-site, and replacing these with an emphasis on the temporality and practice of making.[124]

Smithson's language of entropy or confinement coded his meaning in metaphor. On the other hand, Alberro notes that Huebler did not claim any connection between

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[122] Lucy R. Lippard, "Time: A Panel Discussion," *Art International* 13:9 (November 1969), 22.
[123] Guillaume Le Gall, "Temps, espace et dispositifs photographiques chez Douglas Huebler" paper delivered at conference *Douglas Huebler: "Human Systems" as Kind of Cultural Ready-mades,* 24-25 October 2014, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgique. Le Gall's essay also considers Huebler's use of everyday motifs to contain "les sentiments, voire parfois une forme de trivialité" despite his precise and systematic use of language, not unlike Robbe-Grillet.
[124] Alberro, 71.

what the artist called "raw information" and meaning. [125] His language was emphatically literal in order to function as ungarnished documentation that could allow expansion of thought; this was a pragmatic function rather than didactic in instruction. By emptying language of metaphor or illusion, he produced more options for interpretation. Not only is Huebler's linguistic style clearly more literal than Smithson's, it is seen, as Alberro ascertains, as a procedural evolution toward temporality. Alberro's thoughts serve to put Huebler in a significant place in the linguistics of conceptual art: his unembellished text honed a system of documentation based upon the temporality of immediate perception.

Huebler had told Michael Auping that his concern about art critics was the fact that they could attribute qualities that transcended accurate factual analysis and would become, in essence, untruths or myths:

> [The critic could] endow appearance with some mystical or mythic quality by simply investing it with words…[my art] is a criticism about what I consider to be the irresponsible use of signifying. We have come to a point where things are very accessible and the more they get stacked up with myth, the more easily they're consumed and the more bullshit they become. I would like to try to help unload this stack of myth. This stack of myth is related to man, his culture, and not just art. I'm using art to speak to these concerns. My basic concern, and I will call it conceptual in this sense, is to point out that there is an equation built between the perceived image or sign and the language that directs your attention to the sign. These signs are given. The point, the line, the photograph is given. They are, in a sense, specifics. I point from the specifics toward the general."[126]

For Huebler, exaggerated or imprecise use of descriptive language is irresponsible in that it veneers the work with myth, ignoring the simple equation between the

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[125] Alberro, 70-71. See also Huebler in conversation with Donald Burgy, Bradford, Massachusetts, 1971, in Lucy R. Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art.
[126] Auping, 41.

indexical sign or image and the basic words referring to it. Overly acculturated language excludes other ways of looking at the world, forming myths that cloud value judgment. In the next chapter on Huebler's photography, I consider Roland Barthes' thinking in *Mythologies* (1957) in which the philosopher analyzes how myth distorts meaning. Douglas Huebler understood this and sought to rid language of restrictive signification or vacuous form (as in Barthes's use of *form* as opposed to *meaning)*, such as the cliché. Huebler's carefully constructed yet ordinary language is the basis of his system to interpret his specific imagery, opening the point, line, map or photograph to variable approaches within his broader and more general methodology.

What Huebler called the irresponsible use of signifying may also be an indirect repudiative reference to the specific formalist style of Clement Greenberg and to an overly refined modernist rhetoric of the 1950s and 1960s during which some artists, particularly painters, allowed Greenberg much leeway in describing how their work was to be seen and what it signified. Huebler spoke adamantly about his feelings toward modernist criticism:

> I began to feel hostile to critical aesthetics, because it began to create special value for pure appearance, like the idea of one color being better than another color. To do that very often excludes other ways of looking at things…[this] is related to overly culturized language and overly refined descriptions of experience.[127]

Everything Huebler produced dealt with art criticism, whether it was rejecting critical exegesis or unframing the traditional grid. Later in his career during the 1980s, his disenchantment with art critics and the gallery establishment

[127] Auping, 42.

became more overt, particularly in his cartoon parodies entitled *Crocodile Tears*. What could Huebler have meant in the above statement to Auping that he 'points from the specific toward the general'? Perhaps his art is intended to use such specifics as marking location or photographing the moment as a method of incorporating a more general outlook toward his Location, Duration, and Variables, asking the percipient to observe the immediate, to perceive the everyday as categories of his broad systematic procedure or to encompass everyday life into a generality. Allan Kaprow in his *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* considered the terms *specialist* and *generalist* in his 1983 essay "The Real Experiment:" "The maker of artlike art tends to be a specialist; the maker of lifelike art, a generalist."[128] If Kaprow's "artlike art" refers to painting or sculpture, then Huebler's categories of ordering the world extend well beyond the specific act of making, that is, they extend to a generalist's outward approach toward "lifelike art." I will explore Huebler as a generalist through his photographic neutrality in the next chapter, as his strategies begin to incorporate a broad social outlook.

After *Cape Cod Wedge Exchange,* Huebler continued to draw various geometric lines on maps of sites around New England, such as a pentagon drawn onto a map of the Putney, Vermont, countryside around Windham College in 1968, or hexagons onto his *Site Sculpture Project: Boston-New York Exchange Shape* (fig. 13) of the same year, both shown with photographs of the corresponding points in each locale. For *Boston-New York Exchange*, he marked the geometric points by placing one-inch square white stickers at the physical intersections corresponding

[128] Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life,* edited by Jeff Kelley (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 201.

to their map coordinates and taking photographs at time of the marking. It is not specified whether the photographs are *of* the marked site or taken *from* it, however the text states that there was "no attempt made for a more or a less interesting or picturesque representation of the location." The hexagon overlaid onto New York is angled to neatly parallel the grid lines, while the same shape onto the streets of Boston appears arbitrary, unable to find its orientation to any straight line.

Huebler's expansion of spatiality beyond a framed grid may be compared with Carl Andre's 'razed sites.' Andre's horizontal repeated floor plates created a flat grid in relation to their surroundings, which he described as "more like roads than buildings," giving allusion to a geographic expansion. In some ways, this has proximity to Huebler's mapping, but Huebler establishes a more temporal location on the site with photographs and handwritten dates and his signature. Andre also referred to his floor installations as 'cuts' into the space of the site to orient the perspective downward as a grounding effect. A downward grounding is a more pertinent analogy for Huebler to Andre's flat floor pieces: in order to perceive the work, it is necessary to see it from above. Huebler's land mass must be conceptually viewed aerially as his geometric lines hover over it, like surveillance through a lens.

This scopic effect becomes more obvious as he expanded his conceptual radius to the west coast with a large circle drawn over corresponding urban maps of *Seattle-New York Exchange Shape* (July 1969). The exchange factor in these maps relates to exchanging the same dimensions for each equivalent shape, that is, that the same sized circle is concentrated over both cities. No longer intersecting in

squared coordinates derived from a street grid, the circles here are lines transparently encasing each city center; they ask us to focus upon the variables of each urban design as we peer down into the core. Transparency opens the view while the circular line appears to contain it. To my mind, none of these simple geometric forms are as complex as the *Cape Cod Wedge Exchange.* They do not reveal a proclivity toward illusionary depth as did the wedge shapes, nor do they show a significant thematic development of the procedure other than empowering the scopic viewpoint.

Huebler's exhibition opportunities accelerated after the November 1968 show, due in large part to Seth Siegelaub's engagement with the New York conceptual artists. Siegelaub's strategies of institutional critique were his hallmark as an innovative mode of curatorial conception. He was actively involved with the artists in creating shows in experimental venues and even more interested in promoting them through novel uses of advertizing. Siegelaub claimed a crucial place in the history of conceptual art with his seminal group exhibition in Manhattan entitled *January 5-31, 1969,* held in a rented office space at 44 East 52nd Street. The exhibition was comprised of works by Lawrence Weiner, Joseph Kosuth, Robert Barry, and Douglas Huebler, all of whom joined Siegelaub's insurgent challenge against traditional gallery display by claiming that their art was embedded in this new strategy for exhibition—within the catalogue—and that their ideas were the primary focus, rather than the physical material commodified for display. Siegelaub was exhibiting in almost the same catalogue-only format that he and Douglas Huebler had produced two months earlier in November 1968,

however now there was actual display of physical actions and materials of documentation, for instance, Lawrence Weiner did a wall removal piece and a bleached rug mark, Joseph Kosuth a thesaurus statement as his art as idea, Robert Barry produced radio wave and inert gas pieces and photographs of an outdoor monofilament demarcation. What Lucy Lippard might call an undeniable tendency toward dematerialization was in the air and Siegelaub infused it with a collective presence—his catalogue format confirmed him as the agent and director of a new tactic of production for his art fraternity.

When critic Gregory Battcock reviewed the *January 5-31, 1969* exhibition in his article "Painting is Obsolete" for the *New York Free Press*, he had profound insight into its political importance when he stated that the show proves that

> everything that happened in 1968… REALLY meant something and it will result in something because it already has in this show…it's an exhibit that doesn't have any junk in it, doesn't have anything at all really…it only grabs your mind…perhaps it isn't art and maybe it's art criticism, which would be something I've suspected all along.[129]

Battcock had likely talked about the show with Seth Siegelaub, who like Battcock himself was actively opposed to the Vietnam War and both were politically radical for the time. Battcock immediately saw this exhibition as a political form of institutional critique and a revolutionary product of its time—anti-war, pro-civil rights, exposure of feminist and gay issues—even though the artists never vocalized anything overtly political in the catalogue statement. Battcock was right about their motives as art criticism: this show not only "demolishes the Museum of

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[129] Gregory Battcock, "Painting is Obsolete" in *New York Free Press* (January 23, 1969), 7.

Modern Art… but all those painting courses they are still cranking out in the 'art' schools."[130] He was wrong about the demise of museums and the end of painting.

As for Douglas Huebler's part in the *January 5-31* show, he listed eight works, each as succinctly described as if it were a museum wall label—title, date, medium, procedural duration (five years for his piece at Herald Square) or measurement (3040 miles for *42nd Parallel*, or 4000' for the radius of *Times Square Circle Shape*). Of these eight, only two black and white photographs were included: 1) sticks and leaves documenting the map route for the *Haverhill-Windham-New York Marker Piece*, and 2) a daytime shot of random pedestrians at Herald Square in New York City called *Duration Piece #7* (1968). Huebler's display of the *Haverhill-Windham-New York Marker Piece, 1968,* was in the form of a notebook in a seemingly casual placement, open with photographs on a windowsill. Each photo for the notebook was a random shot taken every fifty miles along the route that connected three places that were significant in Huebler's life—he taught at Bradford Junior College in Haverhill, Massachusetts, exhibited at Windham College in Putney, Vermont,[131] and at Leo Castelli in Manhattan. One might ask why would Huebler include Castelli's gallery in this 1968 map since he did not exhibit with him until 1971? One reason may be that most artists were well aware that Castelli was 'the big name' gallery at the time and Huebler simply wanted to mark it.

Another of Huebler's works performed and listed but not pictured in the *January 5-31* catalogue, was *Duration Piece #6, 1969.* It began as a seven feet wide

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[130] Battcock, 7.

[131] Lippard in *Six Years,* 57, describes this Windham exhibition: one piece for one day October 23, 1968: five soil samples with photographs from points on his mapped hexagon.

square of sawdust to be stepped into upon entering the room. This tracking process was photographed every thirty minutes for six hours by the receptionist, the not yet famous Adrian Piper. At the end of the first day, the sawdust was swept up and Piper's photographs documenting the footmarks were taped, like vertical footnotes, on the wall—and, inconsistent with usual ideas about duration, these photographs were purposefully out of sequence.

Siegelaub organized exhibitions almost monthly during 1969-1970, all of them revolving around his core American conceptualists, always including Huebler and also collaborating with the Europeans, such as Daniel Buren, Jan Dibbets, Robert Long, and Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin as the British founders of Art & Language. The exhibition *One Month,* also known as *March 1969,* further expanded Siegelaub's entrepreneurial venues around the world, in which he invited each of thirty-one artists to make a work on one assigned day during the month, with Huebler on March 14th. Siegelaub's logistics to wean certain key conceptual artists from the traditional gallery mechanisms were successful for the moment. His incessant strategy of exclusive catalogue exhibition would have important repercussions toward the process of de-valuing the object while democratizing its reception.

Alexander Alberro discerns that Lawrence Weiner and Douglas Huebler have an entirely different model of text from Kosuth's tautological linguistic base—theirs is "one that integrates the decentering of the artist into its formal and constitutive elements in an attempt to democratize the production and reception of art."[132] This

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[132] Alberro, xxii.

sensibility of democratizing art is implicit with Weiner in his statement for the *January 5-31, 1969* catalogue, "the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership". This statement resonates with Duchamp's proclamation in *The Creative Act* (1957) on the spectator's important role in a work—"the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act."[133] Lawrence Weiner claims that the artist or anyone else can fabricate the piece or that it need not be built at all, calling into question whether the actual existence of a work is of any relevance. During 1960s and 1970s, Weiner was creating language art as facts using the verb tense of past participle, such as the general phrase "an amount of paint poured directly on the floor and allowed to dry," or the more specific "one gallon water base white paint poured into this hole." These were not directives from the artist himself but acts that could have been or could be taken by anyone, and, as Alberro notes, the past participle "simultaneously allows for the conclusiveness of the description as well as the prospect for future realization."[134] Weiner was adamantly opposed to an artist directing any action to the receiver, stating "to use the imperative would be for me fascistic."[135] Huebler saw the decentering of authorship from a different perspective—the percipient could read his propositions in variable ways always within his written parameters, such as documenting the procedure's various named locations in maps and

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[133] Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act" talk given at meeting of the American Federation of the Arts, April 1957, Houston, Texas. Reprinted in *ARTnews* 56:4 (Summer 1957).
[134] Alexander Alberro and Alice Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built" in *Lawrence Weiner* (New York: Phaidon, 1998), 49.
[135] Alberro and Zimmerman, 49. Originally in John Anthony Thwaites, "Lawrence Weiner: An interview and an Interpretation" in *Art and Artists,* London (August 7, 1972), 23.

drawings and marking duration by timing or photography. Huebler's process is perhaps less corporeal than Weiner's placing the viewer in the same space as the materials for the either physical or imagined process—such as poured paint or bleach on a rug, or removing a section of gallery wall. Whereas Wiener's acts describe everyday materials from the household environment used in a specified manner, Huebler's work necessitates documentation of something farther away in the world—a readymade map for marking location and photography or mailings for duration of time. Huebler's map work by its very nature asks for involvement in an environment larger that one's immediate surroundings.

By using plain language that anyone could understand, both Weiner and Huebler were moving away from an elite art-oriented milieu toward a wider public. The socially democratic stance against authorship with its bourgeois trappings of modernism had particular meaning for art in 1968 as power to the people was being chanted in the streets, yet Weiner and Huebler were more subtle in their political approaches than some artists of their time. By 1977, during his interview with Michael Auping, Huebler was looking back to compare his work to Weiner's, saying that his own work is less focused than Weiner's and more open to interpretation from social mediation.[136] Openness to interpretation by the percipient would prove to be one of Huebler's legacies in conceptual art. His ideas on social mediation and its aspects of social psychology will be further considered in the next chapter on his photographic strategies.

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[136] Auping, 41.

In the late 1960s, many conceptual artists followed the minimalists outdoors in a plein air liberation from the studio, heeding Daniel Buren's warning against the dangers of studio production. By summer of 1969, Douglas Huebler was producing hidden site sculpture in the California high desert. North of Mojave, *Location Piece #13, Kern County, California,* (June 1969) (fig. 14) was composed of three half gallon sealed plastic containers of distilled water buried in the ground for any traveler able to locate and, in Huebler's words, 'disinter' it. This piece was not complete until it was presented alongside its labeled map and photographs of the artist with a friend as they dig the three holes, marked as A, B, and C in printed capital letters glued onto each photograph.[137] The work has a certain humorous absurdity (besides that Huebler takes a 'dig' at earth art) in that the thirsty traveler must first obtain and then study the photographs in attempt to actually excavate the scavenged treasure, and even then, the desert is deceptive. But we need not go to the desert to see it. Now, his work was not only portable (as map, photographs, and text) but supposedly it was decommodified, at least for the time being, and could be displayed anywhere.

In 1972, critic Max Kozloff published the following statement by Huebler as part of an article in which Kozloff denounced conceptual art:

> The documents prove nothing. They make the piece exist and I am interested in having that existence occur in as simple a way as possible. Where a thing is located involves everything else and I like that idea much more than how I "feel" about it or what it looks like.[138]

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[137] Rorimer, 36.

[138] Max Kozloff, "The Trouble with Art-as-Idea," in Alberro and Stimson, eds., 270. Originally in *Artforum* 11:1 (September 1972), 261-265.

Huebler's statement maintained an allegiance to the idea of location as primary over the documentation of the process. But Kozloff misunderstood the rationale behind it. Kozloff said that they [the conceptual artists] prefer "deliberately undigested accretions of data, documentations without comment, the purveying of information for its own sake, and the measuring of meaningless quantities or changes in location of some object or phenomenon."[139] To the contrary, Huebler's sense of location, especially evident in his mapping, incorporates his ideas about how variables give new meaning to place. For him, the document is secondary to the ideas that are generated by location and its environs, in other words, site specificity generates the variability within his projects.

The artist who perhaps comes closest to Douglas Huebler in conceptual mapping is John Baldessari, when Baldessari utilized the capital letters *CALIFORNIA* as physical markers for his ten sculptures in *California Map Project* (1969). Each of the capital letters was reproduced onto the landscape, enlarged in different materials indigenous to each area and documented with photographs. Huebler, soon to become a professor and dean at Cal Arts (1976-1988) where Baldessari taught, was likely aware of such conceptual activity on the west coast during the late 1960s. Baldessari was also concerned with marking economic and social boundaries that were designated by local governments as low income areas; in his *Ghetto Boundary Project* (1969), co-produced with George Nicolaidis, he affixed two thousand silver and black stickers onto telephone poles and street signs around a fifteen mile radius bounding a poverty stricken area in southeast San Diego—an art

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[139] Kozloff, 270.

of social consciousness calling attention to urban marginalization, and more political than Huebler's stickers around Manhattan to challenge the framed grid structure of the map as in *Variable Piece #1, New York* discussed earlier. Baldessari's *CALIFORNIA* may be compared with Huebler's *Location Piece #13* near Mojave in that both deal with remote mapped locations marked as sculpture sites (Huebler's perhaps more conceptual with buried water bottles) and documented by photography. Where Huebler differs from Baldessari here is in the procedural arena, that Huebler's propositions in *Location Piece #13* arrange a scenario for the percipient to activate the *idea* of finding water buried in the shifting desert sands.

Huebler's photographs are a temporal marking of place governed by his preset procedure of exchange. The introduction of the photograph as an integral part of the mapping documentation clearly yields another type of development in his work—his ideas on duration when attached to location. Alberro considers the photographic elements of the artist's synchronic and diachronic road mapping as characteristic of duration:

> Simultaneous with the synchronic, [the] holistic aspect of the road map is the more diachronic, sequential dimension also evoked in Huebler's charted automobile trips. As the viewer's eye followed the path of the trip, the frozen space of the cartographic document thawed, becoming filmic and unfolding in a continuous present.[140]

This insight helps us understand several aspects of Huebler's work: there is a synchronicity of overall comprehension of the road map as a complete system, as well as a diachronicity or progression when the 'filmic' aspect of photography is incorporated into the work. Photography allows a sense of charting in the

[140] Alberro, 66 and 68.

procedure, which seems to unfold 'in a continuous present,' as Alberro calls it. Here is where we can see at once a merging of Huebler's three themes: Location and Duration with random photographic Variables. A readymade Mojave Desert map is synchronic only until the A-B-C locators are placed on it and the photographs of the artist and his friend prove an activation of the piece—at which point the work assumes a diachronic dimension.

Street maps became sites for action for many conceptual artists in the 1960s, such as Sol LeWitt or Vito Acconci, as they challenge the institutional politics of the museum/gallery system by creating new performative venues. This was the inheritance from Fluxus and the Happenings a decade earlier, yet, now that maps are designating the event, the process becomes a more locational experience. Where Douglas Huebler's maps begin to differentiate from the others is in his more open social intent, and less of a darker psychological investigation, such as Acconci's fetishist work. Huebler creates a fictional scenario which is quite different from the actual peregrinations of Acconci or Richard Long. Perhaps we might regard Huebler's urban maps as quasi-anthropocentric in that they become centered not as much on the artist's own experiences but on a kind of personal disembodiment of imagining the experience through 'walking' the map. Even though sometimes the percipient would actually perform the procedure coordinated by the map, Huebler's concept of place remains a procedural fabrication according to his set of variables upon a marked location.

Huebler's mapped coordinates are intended to designate precise location accompanied by a proposition for real or imagined progressive movement. Usually

his propositions for travel were fictional in the manner of *dérive*, like Guy Debord's Paris turned into an imaginary situation of wandering by intention, not really quixotic, to amplify actual places as displacement sites. Both Debord and Huebler closely administered their mapping aesthetic, which Debord called psycho-geography, by proscribing locations for situational awareness. Arrival at a particular street or section of the city would create, at least for the Situationists, various ambient experiences or feelings that would make the walker inclined, even psychologically propelled, toward another geographical area of the city. Like Huebler, the flow of spatiality in the psychogeography of the Situationists goes beyond measured accuracy into a participatory and creative venture, one in which procedural action on a multitude of variable paths is primary for fluid experience with the place. Geographers Dennis Cosgrove and Luciana L. Martins explain the spatial flows of such mapping:

> It is the spatialities of connectivity, network linkage, marginality, and liminality, and the transgression, permeability, and erasure of linear boundaries and hermetic categories by spatial 'flows' that are increasingly said to characterize experience in the late twentieth century world.[141]

Procedural mapping opened up a new fluid process for producing conceptual art space beyond representing it as a two-dimensional retinal experience. For Huebler, the activation of the proscribed text and the photography of the event

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[141] Dennis Cosgrove and Luciana L. Martins, "Millennial Geographics" in *Postmodern Geography: Theory and Praxis,* edited by Claudio Minca, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 182-183.

created a system of linkages—from geography to performance, from geometry to the perception of what lies underneath and beyond it—and more broadly, procedural mapping connected his ideas with a wider world.

From his essay "Walking the City" (1980) on how human movement alters the urban fabric of New York City, philosopher and urban sociologist Michel de Certeau's thoughts may be invoked in ways similar and contrasting to Huebler's sensibility of mapped location. As Certeau views Manhattan island from atop the World Trade Center, he realizes that walking is the only way to truly experience it, that how one sees from above is a "fiction" when compared with the practice of everyday life:

> An Icarus flying from above these waters, he can ignore the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below…It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to his lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.[142]

Certeau does not mean that there is *nothing more* down below; for him, the vantage point from above does not show the real world. Similarly, Huebler's work is a kind of fiction arranged onto mapped locations to be viewed from above. Through his scope, there *is* something more down there, as Certeau describes at the end of his essay:

> Things *extra* and *other* (details and excesses coming from elsewhere) insert themselves into the accepted framework, the imposed order. One thus has the very relationship between spatial practices and the constructed order. The surface of this order is everywhere punched

[142] Michel de Certeau, "Walking the City" in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by S. Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, original in French edition 1980), 157.

> and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve-order.[143]

Huebler examines the relationship between his own 'spatial practices and the constructed order,' such as by suspending geometric shapes over his maps to modify the aerial viewpoint so that variables may be seen below, like Certeau's leaks of meaning through a social sieve.

Richard Long and On Kawara had documented their own travels on maps and photographs to establish their individual place in time on the earth, often measured in geographic zones. In his essay "Nomads: Figures of Travel in Contemporary Art," James Meyer has considered this later trend of itinerate art as "lyrical nomadism:"

> a mobility thematised as a random and poetic interaction with the objects and spaces of everyday life. Reconciling the Dada/Surrealist strategy of an arbitrary encounter with the real with a contemporary 'Slacker' feeling of aimlessness, this nomadism transfigures the most ephemeral and incidental contacts for aesthetic contemplation.[144]

Huebler's propositions for activation of his work were decidedly not in the mode of 'Slacker' aimlessness, for either the viewer or the artist. Whereas Long and Kawara were the subjects of their own travels, more in the arbitrary mode of nomadism, Huebler himself, in contrast, was not the focal point of his work. His practice was to produce random interaction with the spaces of everyday social life in a discursive manner between the percipient in interaction first with the site and then with the artist himself as the documenter of the event. Huebler's maps often *proposed* travel

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[143] Certeau, 163.

[144] James Meyer, "Nomads: Figures of Travel in Contemporary Art" in *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn,* ed. by Alex Coles (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2000), 11.

by others who would photograph the itinerary; then he would arrange the final presentation as markings on the map with the framed photographs alongside. I am claiming that Huebler's maps were more socially invitational and interactive than other map artists of his time and that this approach would become a postmodern trend in the mapping discipline. There is a certain open condition of the senses in his procedural mapping. One may make this sensory connection from Guy Debord to Huebler's mapped 'situations' of mediated interaction with the city's environs—mediated in the sense that the proposition could be opened and altered in its procedure by sensory stimulation (if it was performed) and then changed by Huebler's arrangement of accompanying photography. By skewing the final photographic sequence of these visceral travels, Huebler eschewed two of the innate functions of photography—seriality and archiving—in a self-reflexive manner by calling attention to their own operations. Not only are these functions natural to the camera, they are the main components in any aspect of documentation and ripe for artistic interpretation, especially in regard to data collection and information systems.

The conceptual artists' interest in information systems during the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in major art exhibitions on issues of mass media in a new world of technology. Douglas Huebler was included in the most significant ones: *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (July 2 – September 20, 1970), organized by Kynaston L. McShine, an enormous show of over one hundred artists, and *Software: Information Technology: Its Meaning for Art* at the Jewish Museum, New York (September 16 – November 8, 1970), curated by Jack Burnham.

Burnham's catalogue essay considered 'software' to mean the flexibility of conceptual art procedures to transcend mere logistics and data collection—to include the variability of functions. Huebler's *Variables* theme alludes to this flexibility, which, for him, is art within the parameters of a procedural system to be mediated by data. More importantly, Burnham sensed that Huebler's work was innovative for its attention to ordinary situations:

> Huebler isolates the mundane into a series of tiny esthetic acts. He makes his own rituals but he is also encouraging the viewer to realize the utter ordinariness of these presentations. Huebler's value lies in his special point of view which, of course, is a kind of existential therapy that others can use as they see fit. In this sense his work embodies a rejection of the precious and idiosyncratic as a legitimate artistic statement in the present decade.[145]

Burnham's phrase that Huebler 'isolates the mundane into a series of tiny esthetic acts' signals a new meaning for the term *aesthetics* in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a topic outside the purview of this paper, however Burnham was fully aware of the merits of the mundane in art. He recognized a breakthrough toward a democratic sensibility of commonality in the 'utterly ordinariness' of Huebler's work and that it could serve as 'a kind of existential therapy' for those who embrace it. If Burnham's assessment is correct, not only could the percipient alter the work (at the very least constructing a new reading of it) but they could be altered by it.

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[145] Jack Burnham, "Comments on Douglas Huebler," *Documenta V, 1972*, Leo Castelli Gallery Archives, Box 66.24, Archives of American Art.

By 1970, Huebler's procedural mapping became more focused on the non-aesthetic aspect of appearances in his randomly shot photographs documenting his travels. Just as his drawings had a thoughtful absurdity for their spatiality, the propositions for his mapped routes expanded into vast territory—to visualize everything in sight and then non-aesthetically mitigate its appearance. In *Variable Piece #48: Document for the entire visual "Appearance" as far as the eye can see*, (1971) (fig. 15), Huebler's itinerary from his adoptive hometown of Bradford, Massachusetts, to the Manhattan gallery of his dealer Leo Castelli is sketched on a readymade map alongside his typed proposition: to shoot random photos from the highway in the direction of travel—'as far as the eye could see.' (I note that this phrase is a cliché, a form of speech which Huebler would utilize to full advantage in his photoconceptual strategies, discussed in my next chapter). The completed presentation of this work contains 650 photographs in silver gelatin prints, lined in the frame as if just developed on darkroom contact paper and tightly arranged by the artist. From these, one photograph was chosen by someone else to be the 'most aesthetic' viewpoint and it was enlarged and placed beside the proposition and the map. Gérard A. Goodrow notes in *20th Century Photography* that, even though the photographs of the New York City bridges in this work may have some aesthetic appeal, "less emphasis is placed on the quality of the photographs than on the best possible capture of the various optical phenomena."[146] I posit that, while Douglas Huebler was concerned with optical phenomena (as well as clichéd forms of language) as it related to his notion of visual appearance, at this point, he was more

[146] Gérard A. Goodrow, *Twentieth Century Photography* (Cologne: Museum Ludwig and Taschen, 1996), 281.

focused on the documentation of a system to mitigate or modify visual appearance as a denial of traditional aesthetics. In a signed statement of his definition of art, Huebler explains his conceptual system, one consisting of variables on numerics, duration, language propositions, and photographs:

> My work is concerned with determining the form of art when the role traditionally played by visual experience is mitigated or eliminated. In a number of works I have done so by first bringing 'appearance' into the foreground of the piece and then suspending the visual experience of it by having it actually function as a document that exists to serve as a structural part of a conceptual system. The systems used are random or logical sets of numbers, aspects of time, or propositions in language and the 'documents' of appearance are photographs that have been made with the camera used as a duplicating device whose operator makes no 'aesthetic' decisions.'[147]

'Appearance' is to be given no aesthetic consideration whatsoever. What is visible is restructured into his conceptual system. He does not mention an archival methodology in this declaration, yet clearly his broad sense of arrangement of the components to include the appearance of everything as far as the eye can see is evidence of his concern to produce art that is both expansive and inclusive.

The 650 photographs taken over the two hundred and forty mile drive for his *"Appearance" as far as the eye can see* would require at least three photographs taken every mile and there may have been lots more. The camera whose operator makes no aesthetic decisions becomes a device as simple as a yardstick serially measuring duration, documenting random locations. A complementary aspect of this piece is Huebler's instruction that someone else should chose the 'most aesthetic' photograph to be enlarged for the final display of the work (alongside his

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[147] Douglas Huebler file, Location Piece #2 folder, manila envelope Special 1367-078, Panza Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

proposition, the map, and the 650 contact sheet sized photographs). Democratically speaking, anyone could choose it. Not only does the artist have nothing to do with the enlarged focal piece chosen by someone else, he shows complete disinterest in any aesthetic decision about it. The emphatic phrase in his above definition of art—that the "operator makes no aesthetic decisions"—is a conviction that will be retained throughout his career, sometimes with great irony as we shall see in the next chapter.

Other artists during the 1960s and 70s had created works of aesthetic withdrawal, some famously as Robert Morris ceremoniously withdrew the existing aesthetics from a work he had sold. Sol LeWitt had produced altered maps of "democratic drawings" with a permanent prix fixe of $100 to rail against the art market's inflationary tactics. These tactics allude to methods of art distribution forged against the centralized gallery-to-museum system in attempt at authorial control of exchange value. In a slightly different withdrawal of aesthetics, Douglas Huebler challenged the author function in a Barthesian endeavor of birthing the reader by giving the percipient—here, the one who chooses the 'most aesthetic' viewpoint—partial license to activate a seemingly main component of the work, which is ironically to choose a photograph with no particular significance. Are Huebler's percipients being duped into thinking their opinion matters? We are asked to read between the paradoxical text: Anyone can be a producer of the aesthetically insignificant as a function of making the production itself significant. I wonder, did Huebler employ a certain *jouissance* or pleasure in allowing the

average person to be a part of his result? It is possible that he did, since his is a wry but kindly social humor.

A balancing act occurs in Huebler's work between its linguistic governance and procedural disorder—that is, between his typed 'official' terms of the proposition and the possibility of random happening. Ordering or cataloguing is usually implied in the verb 'to document' and deciding how to arrange an idea is critical. To catalogue a collection into a system is to index it for access, in a sense to govern it. Douglas Huebler gave his percipients the opportunity to access his ideas by working through the mapped system like an index on their own. He does not impose a meaning upon it, but that does not imply that his intentions have been submerged under the archive. His propositions and maps are an index, perhaps more so than his photographs; they are keyed to his photography in order to expose his idea.

Site specificity was, for Huebler, explicit and precise in his mapping in order to document an ordinary place in a specifically organized and random way. Perhaps here in *Variable Piece #48 "Appearance" as far as the eye can see,* the photographs of highway underpasses could in a sense be an archive of Americana but what overrides is a determination that the procedure be the result of a system to investigate appearance. An anonymous photographer, perhaps the artist himself, shoots the constant passing of locations, the aesthetics of the best is given over to someone else's discretion, and the system returns to the artist who arranges the final presentation. Alexander Alberro explains: "Huebler's work canceled all gesturality or expressivity on the part of the artist through its insertion

of a diagram, and its emphatic foregrounding of a predetermined scheme that precluded all subsequent decision-making and intuitive processes."[148] The diagram or schema for Huebler's idea was the text with maps and photographs—this was the structure or backbone for the procedural result. Others were producing various types of schema in decidedly non-aesthetic ways that have affinity with Huebler: Ed Ruscha's quasi-map of buildings along Sunset Boulevard and Dan Graham's *Homes for America* had codified the banality of urban architecture in photographic repetition. Huebler had a similar sensibility toward repetition in photographing the mundane as an important part of the everyday to support his marked maps.

Even though Huebler joined with his colleagues and Seth Siegelaub in anti-capitalist moves away from the traditional gallery, by 1971, he and others had joined the stable and stability of art dealer Leo Castelli. Perhaps Siegelaub thought that his own exhibition efforts had been in vain in New York since he did not actively exhibit again in the States after 1972 and he left for Europe to pursue other interests. Later Huebler, in a 1982 statement, justified his own return to the art marketing system, within the context of the times, as a dialectical stance rather than 'head-on' confrontation that realistically never intended to collapse the art system:

> Conceptual art had never been really bent on collapsing the very institutions—the art galleries, museums, collectors—through which their nature must be communicated. There are those who wrongly perceive Conceptualism as having had such an ambition, and who declare the entire enterprise to have been co-opted because it (necessarily) remained thoroughly within the art system. The

[148] Alberro, 80.

> conduct of ideological activities in the 'real' world can always be virtuous, always be politically 'correct', simply by being exercised through head-on confrontation with an opposing ideology. In the 1960s Conceptual Activity assumed a dialectical stance towards various art-world ideologies because head-on confrontation would have failed to produce any affective discourse, thereby rendering it a non-issue.[149]

This dialectical stance is a pragmatic reflection on Huebler's part in that he does not justify any kind of selling out by the conceptualists by 1970. The statement reveals his mentality toward mediation and his ability to face the facts about the conceptual art market. Alex Alberro describes the change in the concept of art ownership and collecting: "…there never was a time when they [the conceptual artists and dealers] did not intend to market their art… ways were developed to transfer the 'signature' of the artist, or 'a certificate of ownership' for the work to the art patron."[150] This is not to say that artists, such as Lawrence Weiner or Robert Morris, did not want to bring down the capitalist system during the Vietnam War, but soon most of them, like Huebler, acquiesced to the market.

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Douglas Huebler foresaw conceptual art's potential to spawn a new social dialectic for succeeding generations of artists by documenting the manifestations of daily life as emblematic of a world view. As noted in Tony Godfrey's *Conceptual Art* (1998), Huebler predicted conceptualism's ability to engender a greatly expanded view of the world:

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[149] Godfrey, 254.
[150] Alberro, 4.

> The form of Conceptualist practice that associated its dialectic with phenomena and events in the world not only *does* manifest works: moreover, its potential to engender a view of the world has hardly been tapped.[151]

What is the impact of Huebler's mapping upon conceptual art and how does it engender his so-called world view? His mapping procedures can be un-framed to situate our place in relation to others and to the greater social world, beyond a grid or a photograph. His mapping is an open system that allows ordinary phenomena and actions—those carried out by others in specific locations, such as selecting 'the most aesthetic' photograph or conceptually finding buried water bottles in the Mojave—to become part of his larger initiative to expand the projects into the outside world.

Seen from a neo-Marxian perspective, philosopher Fredric Jameson, in his essay "Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" first published in 1984 in *New Left Review* and later as a book, forecasts the effect of what he terms 'cognitive mapping' to solve the confusion of our individual placement in a late-capitalist global society. Jameson asserts that "the political form of postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale."[152] The mapping of abstract geographic coordinates (the perception of one's place in a late-capitalist society) with empirical data into a cognitive mapping system can, in Jameson's view, position the individual to regain one's spatial coordinates in the world, and

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[151] Godfrey, 254.

[152] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" in *New Left Review* 146 (July-August 1984), 89-92. I note that the reprint (Duke University Press, 1991) of this essay in his book of the same title is considerably edited on the topic of cognitive mapping, see p.54.

therefore cognitive mapping asserts its Marxist pedagogical mission. The theoretical issues of cognitive mapping allow an analysis of representation on a higher and more complex level. Postmodernism, as a political component of the global spread of late-capitalism, can create a heightened intensity of worldwide social awareness. Jameson's version of late capitalism co-opts negative consumerism (pastiche or meaningless commodities) by stretching its now broad communicative skills into a more comprehensive socialism, or what Jameson considers to be the proper Marxist dialectic of utilizing both the worst and best sides of capitalism for the possibility of more effective cultural politics.[153] Given this, how does Jameson's cognitive mapping apply to Huebler's procedural mapping? The territory of Huebler's art making and the ever expanding scope of Jameson's global thinking have, to my mind, some overlapping in fluid areas of social networking. Jameson states that the individual's sense of place is a construction of "an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories."[154] Huebler's mapping from 1968 to the mid 1970s maintains such fluidity for variation of trajectories within his social systems. As Jameson explains, one aspect of cognitive mapping is a 'Lacanian' convergence of the Real conditions of one's existence with the Imaginary, both converging into a world view of one's social and economic space—a social cartography—with "urgent political consequences."[155] Jameson's cognitive cartographic space is

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[153] Jameson, 86.
[154] Jameson, 89.
[155] Jameson, 90-91.

unrepresentable in that it does not employ social or economic symbols as referents but instead is "a world space of multinational capital" which may engender "a new political art," hence the political form of postmodern art.[156] Huebler's mapping had not reached Jameson's advocated postmodern stage, yet it does produce a sensibility of going beyond any cartographic restrictions (the grid or the frame) when reading his procedural texts as social space. From his geometric shapes, such as those overlaid onto site-specific locations like Manhattan streets in 1968, to his mail art documenting the 42nd parallel across the United States or the various time zones around the world, Huebler saw the map as a tool for applying a socially expansive system of dialectic communication through an art environment that conceptually engages people and places in social space.

At the beginning of this chapter, I opened with Douglas Huebler's words: "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more. I prefer, simply, to state the existence of things in terms of time and/or place." In closing, part of this statement needs clarification in relation to a cogent statement by French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre. According to Lefebvre, merely to state "the existence of things" is insufficient:

> According to Marx (and no one who has considered the matter at all has managed to demolish this basic analytical premise), merely to note the existence of things, whether specific objects or 'the object' in general, is to ignore what things at once embody and dissimulate, namely social relations and the forms of those relations.[157]

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[156] Jameson, 92.
[157] Lefebvre, 81.

Lefebvre was concerned with the process of production—not the material product per se but how production creates social space due to a multiplicity of factors such as divisions of labor and class, social time within an environment, and one's relationship with property. Although he may never have read Lefebvre's statement, Douglas Huebler fully understood this concept. This is not to say that Huebler was a Lefebvrian yet his thinking is in line with the philosopher's theory of social space. By 1968, Douglas Huebler no longer saw any need to make objects that clutter the world, meaning sculpture or painting. Instead he turned to mapping to investigate the social space created by reading them in variable ways, producing a relationship of the percipients with the map—social by its very nature—that becomes a process to explore how space is produced and experienced as a mental construction or conception. While one may say that Huebler's work does state the existence of things (people, places) that are not objects, these 'things' are actually situations that can never be separated from their social context—they ground our social space.

My drawing chapter looked at Douglas Huebler's attention to the everyday aspects of life in his art, such as documenting the time and place of baseball hits or the trajectory of bullets while target shooting with a friend. In this chapter, we have seen how Huebler folded quotidian activities into social occurrences that position his art onto a cognitively mapped scale. I close my discussion of his mapping on a theoretical note with Fredric Jameson and Henri Lefebvre to help orient the placement of Huebler's mapping as a significant contribution to conceptual art in a world headed toward rapidly changing ideas about open social systems. I posit that Huebler's mapping strategies were generative in projecting

the intentions of Jameson's cognitive mapping as well as Lefebvre's production of social space. Lefebvre regards social space as a system for new ideas: "Social space is what permits fresh actions to occur."[158] As Huebler's mapping became more social, asking the percipient to act out his procedure, gradually he turned to photography as his exclusive documentary medium, still within the categories of location, duration, and variables, which I explore in the next chapter.

[158] Lefebvre, 73.

Chapter Three

HUEBLER'S PHOTOCONCEPTUAL STRATEGIES

> Michael Auping: "In other words, the text is not a description of the photograph in any way." Douglas Huebler: "Absolutely not."[159]
>
> One not only wants to be understood when one writes, but also, quite as certainly, not to be understood.[160]—Friedrich Nietzsche

Huebler's statement to Michael Auping leads to an overarching question: How does language accord meaning to photographs? And, closer to the text, how does Huebler's art expose an uneasy relationship between what is depicted in a photograph and his accompanying language—his words seemingly posed to make us question how they connect to the image. We must not be deceived by a casual first reading of Huebler's texts alongside his photography as his is a strategy that demands attentive examination. Douglas Huebler creates a delicate balance between his language and the photograph, asking the viewer to explore the nuances of this relationship. As Nietzsche implies, the writer may use strategies to distance those who do not make an effort to comprehend the work or even those who do attempt it. The incongruent and sometimes contradictory relationship between Huebler's use of language and image is a key aspect of his photoconceptual strategies. The photograph may be situated with a counter-narrative or even an impossible one.

By using photography with textual procedures as his strategy to eliminate what he called the 'irresponsible use of signifying,'[161] Huebler initiates a wry

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[159] Auping, 38.

[160] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* Book V, Aphorism #381.

cerebral commentary on certain types of language usage, in particular the cliché and the caption. In this chapter, I will first look at how Huebler's photoconceptual strategies became less aligned with his procedural mapping of specific locations and more concerned with duration. Within this, I shall posit a connection with the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Secondly, I shall examine Huebler's textual procedures as his critique of photographic truth, that is, as an examination of his notion of appearance in a photograph. *Appearance* is a term with several connotations, two of which are used by Huebler and must be clarified for their dual contexts in this chapter. Like his category "Variables," Huebler's concept of appearance varies: 1) Appearance can refer literally to what we see in the real world that can be denoted in a photograph, or 2) it can be that which only seems to appear as it looks, as a photograph that needs to be evaluated or re-thought in the context of his words. Photography is the most neutral medium to show both denotation and connotation of appearance. Huebler repeatedly stated that he works to push forward the characteristics of content and then use language to suspend them, so that appearance and language "lose the power to be literature and set up a character of randomness."[162] His carefully crafted language in plainly worded text presents to the viewer this character of randomness with various ways for one to think about the image and engage in the mental process of making it. Huebler's text generates procedures as variables with which the viewer can produce the work. He explains,

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[161] Auping, 41.
[162] Auping, 38.

"All of my works have been directed towards the process or the capacity of a work to generate the making of the work by the percipient."[163]

Huebler's use of captions and other text descriptors are a methodology to analyze what first appears to be the content of a photograph (what we see) in relation to his language (what we read); they then expose the risk that a viewer takes in making assumptions about visual representation. His work will be contrasted with John Baldessari, Jeff Wall, Dan Graham, and others who utilized language to mediate their photography, and I shall briefly situate Huebler's linguistic work against that of Joseph Kosuth. I shall further explain how Huebler's approach to language in art may be aligned with Roland Barthes' philosophy of the coded photographic message, Walter Benjamin's writing on the importance of the caption, Emmanuel Levinas' concept of the face, and Nelson Goodman's classifications of a label and its explication.

Huebler's technique of using language in a system to 'suspend' the importance of appearance is one of his most significant photoconceptual strategies:

> I set up a system, and the system can catch a part of what is happening—what's going on in the world—an appearance in the world, and suspend that appearance itself at any given instant from being important.[164]

Upon activation of the text, we see that the contingent photograph of 'what's going on in the world' is not the primary element; it is an essential component of his system of language with images that challenges the viewer to see it in a new way. His words often collide with the image and the text requires more intense thought to

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[163] Auping, 37.
[164] Alberro and Norvell, 147.

figure out how to approach it. The one who must interpret this juxtaposition of imagery and language is what Huebler calls the *percipient* who now becomes an active subject, one who becomes engaged in the act of production.

As Huebler's focus changed from mapping to photography, language remained a mediating tool that would become more complex in its application to the image. He explains: "Anything visual in the work washes through the language; the objects are at the service of the idea in the construction."[165] The idea, always proposed as a procedural system, takes overall precedence in his work.

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Huebler began a departure from procedural mapping in the early 1970s while simultaneously giving his photographs a more independent role, one in closer relationship with his text. However there are a few instances during this time when his work was primarily readymade from newspapers. His *Location Piece #14* (October 1969), shown that same month at the Stadtisches Museum exhibition *Konzeption/Conception* or *Conceptual Art – No Objects,* was a framed composite of clippings of the weekly exchange of translated editorials (German and English) between the *Haverhill Gazette* (the artist's home town in Massachusetts) and a local newspaper where the museum is located in Leverkusen, Germany, about 20 km north of Cologne.[166] The articles were about what Huebler called 'typical' domestic issues, written and published by the editors and not addressed to the other

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[165] Wilson, 51.
[166] Godfrey, 207.

newspaper but rather exchanged, translated, and reprinted to show a sampling of everyday occurrences in the two towns. This international exchange initiated by Huebler was a system of mailings of recorded place and time, with the newspapers serving as the index to location as well as a trans-Atlantic journaling about activities in the two towns. More importantly for Huebler, the exhibited work itself, shown in Leverkusen, was primarily a documentation of his systematic process of exchange.

Later that same month (October 1969), the managing editor of the *Haverhill Gazette,* Joseph Moran, gave Huebler a position as special correspondent and photographer to cover the Washington, D.C., peace march of November 15, 1969, and Huebler traveled by bus with a group of activists to the demonstration. On the following Monday, November 17, one of the artist's photographs of the event appeared on the front page of the newspaper, showing the 'Haverhill contingent' as two men (identified in the caption as from Northern Essex Community College and Bradford Junior College) holding a large banner in hand-painted capital letters stating "SPIRO! THE EFFETE SNOBS ARE HERE! WHERE ARE YOU?" alongside Huebler's article entitled "It Was A Frustrating Paradox."[167] Huebler writes about the irony of traveling hundreds of miles to participate in the march on Washington held on the Mall, only to be densely packed in a shoulder to shoulder crowd that could not move, much less march.[168] His personal documentation of the event and the political implications of the banner are signs of the growing outrage against the Vietnam War and a mockery of Vice-President Agnew's opinion about the

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[167] Paul, n.p.
[168] Douglas Huebler, "It Was A Frustrating Paradox," *The Haverhill Gazette,* November 17, 1969, 1 and 9.

anti-war involvement of academic intellectuals as 'effete snobs.' Huebler's experiences at the march resulted in *Location Piece #13, Washington, D.C. – Haverhill, Massachusetts* (November 1969) in which the artist framed a clipping of his printed article alongside more of his photographs of the protesters and his accompanying typed text. [169] The text is succinct and to the point, stating that the *Gazette's* managing editor Moran "agreed to have this artist serve as special correspondent" to report on the group's participation in the Peace March, implying that Huebler may have initially requested the assignment. Huebler's statement ends with his usual closing phrase: "these various photographs [and the *Gazette* report] join with the statement to constitute the form of this piece." This *Location Piece #13* was one of the few times that Huebler overtly expounded upon his frustration with the Vietnam War and placed it directly in his art, as the news clipping of his reproduced photograph, caption, and titled article. The newspaper article was his journalized first-person narration of events (nothwithstanding that he was one of the biased 'effete snobs' in the story), while the work itself is changed to his typical layout in the format he will use throughout his career: typed title and place, text followed with the typed month and year of production, and his typed name at the end.

The next year, for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Information* (June 30 – September 20, 1970) curated by Kynaston McShine, Huebler utilized another newspaper-mail exchange approach in his *Location Piece #6 – National* (June

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[169] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 178-179. Huebler's text for *Location Piece #13, Washington, D.C.- Haverhill, Massachusetts* (November 1969) with additional photographs appears in "The Possibility of Knowing" by John Miller in Van Leeuw and Pontégnie.

1970).[170] As part of the piece, he displayed press photographs with their captions that he had received from newspapers across the United States. The images were of activities or sites of local interest, such as a Vicksburg, Mississippi, resident in a rowboat as he picks a rose during a flood, or a 'hippie colony' on a Maui beach. Several of the photographs were of citizens going about their daily jobs, like a teenage girl lifeguarding at the pool at end of summer, or young children kissing their smiling teacher goodbye at the close of the school year—snippets of everyday life. Alongside these photographs he hung his supporting documentation, typed and framed, consisting of the following three pages:

Page 1) Letter of invitation: Huebler's signed letter of invitation to the editors, dated May 4, 1970, and mailed from his address at 6 South Park Street, Bradford, Massachusetts 01830, to randomly selected newspapers, one from each state, requesting an 8" X 10" glossy photograph with its caption and photo credit, published on a topic that Huebler called "an item of purely local interest." Then seemingly to the contrary, the letter also states that the photograph "need not be especially interesting," nor should it necessarily be a "good" picture, and "no meaning will be interpreted" by the artist. I suspect that he may have requested "local interest" items with the underlying notion that *locale* is part of the project, as locations of the newspapers were important to the project. He states his expected outcome in the letter: "What will accumulate will be a kind of 'information portrait' of a variety of locations brought together through random, rather than 'thematic'

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[170] Rorimer, 140-141. A detail of *Location Piece No.6—National* (1970) with photographs and Huebler's full supporting text appears in Rorimer, however, the reprint is too small for satisfactory reproduction in this paper.

selection." At the close of the letter, he encourages the newspaper's participation in his project stating that this exhibition will be the first of its kind at a major museum. Page 2) Listing of newspapers: An alphabetical list by state, dated June 4, 1970, and signed by the artist, of the fifty newspapers that were invited, such as from *The Nome Nugget* (Alaska), *The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Times Picayune* (New Orleans), and *The Cheyenne Eagle* (Wyoming). Thirty newspapers did not reply and several replied by return postcard that they chose not to participate. Page 3) Artist statement: The artist's typed and signed statement for the piece, dated June 4, 1970, which he heads with the title *Location Piece #6 — National* and describes his process: one newspaper from each state was "selected in a random manner to represent each state in the process that forms the piece." The final exhibited piece at the Museum of Modern Art on June 5, 1970, consisted of all the photographs contributed, a copy of the letter(s) of invitation, and his statement, joined "altogether to constitute the form of the piece."

As Anne Rorimer has observed about this piece in her *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality* (2001), "Each of the media events, captured in a single shot, are thus united in a work that ties together temporally connected, but visibly unconnected, events."[171] I note that the events are not only temporally connected by publication dates in their display side by side, but also by Huebler's overall purpose to conjoin locations from across the United States. We must not forget that he was primarily focused on location and its variables. Rorimer also states in her analysis that this piece "concerns the breadth and diversity of information

[171] Rorimer, 139-140.

processed by the news media." To the contrary, Huebler is less concerned with 'breadth and diversity of information' than with the fusing of locations into one work, even stating in the piece that the activities in the photographs are of no interest to him. As Rorimer rightly notes, "Triggered by verbal scenarios set forth by the artist, photographs bring together instances from the unstructured and ongoing continuum of people, places, and events that constitute visible reality."[172]

While the gathering of public information by mail is one part of Huebler's work, he also began to deal with other aspects of temporality beyond the combining of a geographical range of publications—the newspaper projects played into his investigations of chronology and duration using his own text and photography. He designated these as Duration Pieces, working concurrently with his other two categories Location and Variables. These three divisions are each titled by numerical and year classification, in the mode of one-thing-after-another, but they quickly become complicated—there are higher numbers than there are works. He explains the gaps: "I left spaces in the sequence of numbering in order to insert works where I have made photographs that I have not yet printed and/or not written texts."[173]

Douglas Huebler was keenly interested the effects of rearranging the chronological sequence of his photographs, placing them out of order in his Duration Pieces to skew any sense of linear progression. As early as September 1968, he photographed his young daughters Darcy and Dana playing jump rope in a sequence-scrambled series titled *Duration #4 Bradford, Massachusetts*. Three

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[172] Rorimer, 140.
[173] Paul, 129.

photographs are shot at ten second intervals, three at twenty second intervals, and three at thirty seconds, that is, at clearly specified intervals regardless of the perhaps more interesting moments in between and without any consideration of the image quality which is quite blurred. It is the intervals that he documents rather than the girls at play; there is no waiting for a "good" shot. This denial of interest in what some may consider a good photograph recalls his newspaper project earlier, that there is no need for it to be good nor even interesting. But here in *Duration #4, Bradford* as a finished work, he mixed the sequence of the photographs despite having been so precise in the intervals of producing them. This is an intriguing conundrum for which the answer lies in his statement of March 17, 1969, as a speaker at "Time: A Panel Discussion" in New York:

> I am interested in being able to take some very small piece of life, of the world, and doing something with it in terms of time, that is, by demonstrating how objects or the position of things change. I've done that by having elements, events, or materials actually change as they would normally in sequential time, documenting the changes photographically and then scrambling the photographs so that there's no priority of the linear. [174]

Huebler's ideas on duration may have evolved from photographing his mapped procedures and projects of newspaper exchange, but photography and language had become a new exclusive and complementary pairing for the Duration Pieces. He documented such mundane activities as ducks photographed every fifteen minutes as they waddled around Central Park in *Duration Piece #7 New York City* (April 1969). He purposefully skews the serial representation while documenting natural occurrences in intervals. This procedure also emphasizes that

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[174] Lippard, *Six Years*, 82.

the camera is a mechanical tool of measurement, creating a type of mechanized infrastructure that conceptually holds the piece together without the need of any linear arrangement.

Douglas Huebler dealt with measuring precise chronological intervals against claims of the 'timelessness' of classical beauty in *Duration Piece #2, Paris* (January 1970) (fig. 16). Cement mixing trucks pouring concrete near the Palais du Luxembourg appear prominently in the foreground yet he states that his subject is the 'timeless serenity' of a statue standing adjacent to the façade of the palace—a nearly hidden detail in the background. He photographs the scene first in a ten second interval, then doubling the time between each interval for over twenty minutes. Any allusion to the traditional aesthetics of a classically draped statue is nearly blocked by the trucks and any possible issue of beauty is nullified. Huebler remarks:

> A predetermined conceptual system, such as doubling the interval of time between the taking of each photograph in a series, forecloses the possibility that its subject can be regarded as just another aestheticized object of consumption...The images which result from the deconstruction of its own method of production are *time filled*, rather than *timeless* and are alive and whole at every instant of time during which they are perceived.[175]

The cement trucks are a diversion or at least a comment upon the perception of real or present time to give a sense of structure to timelessness. One may recall Robert Smithson's *Asphalt Rundown* (1969), one of his flow series, in which he arranged for a truck to pour hot asphalt down the steep cliff of an abandoned quarry near Rome and photographically documented the process of coagulation. In contrast, Huebler's

[175] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 128.

photographs are snapshots of a normal street scene that he happens to observe in Paris; nothing was pre-arranged. Huebler's cement mixers, enormous in scale compared to the statue, conduct a noisy operational process of modern everyday life. They disrupt any quietude sought by the observer just as the click of Huebler's camera documents the present action of construction and mechanically 'frames' duration in the piece. If the term *duration* implies a time span or period of time, then we simply regard the statue as ancient art, as something that 'endures' through duration; on the other hand, if duration is the full spectrum or continuation of time, the revolving mechanical turns of the cement truck conjoin with the mechanical reproduction of the photograph. This ironic juxtaposition of modern and ancient, of a raw industrial Paris constructing its future and the refined classical nude standing still on its pedestal in the background, might be seen as Huebler's metaphor for the camera's place in industrial society, one of leaving beauty behind while 'doubling intervals of time' to increase the pace.

Jeff Wall's *Landscape Manual* (1970) is comparable to Huebler's intentions in photography. Wall creates a diaristic photojournal shot from behind the dashboard of his car, with both typed and handwritten corrections about the hazards of predetermining meaning in a photograph.[176] Like Wall, Huebler's ideas are cautionary about visual assumptions, but Huebler allows the random to gain a foothold in the work. Wall was concerned with the process and composition of a professional photograph, while Huebler's photographic work revolves around other

[176] Godfrey, 306.

factors— the randomness and flow of phenomena in the everyday world and the marking of location and the passing of time.

Huebler's temporal sensibility correlates to earlier twentieth century ideas on duration. The early twentieth century philosopher Henri Bergson considered that time, when directly experienced as duration (*durée reelle)*, flows in a succession of states that meld into each other, rather than as separate units of measurement by regulating devices, such as clocks. Bergson's 'real duration' is actively perceived and ongoing. Huebler's *Variable Piece No. 20, Bradford, Massachusetts* (January 1971), (fig. 17), counterpoints two aspects of time: the flow of a Bergsonian duration against a structured chronological measurement. Here we see eight of twenty-three photographs of a casual basketball game in which the artist, as a player himself in active *durée reelle*, is blocking and shooting the ball, dressed in long slacks and hightop sneakers. The photographs were taken by an observer from the sidelines 'at exact 30 second intervals [for eleven minutes] as, at each of those instants, he [the artist] relocated himself within an extremely fluid spatial environment', according to his typed text. The proscribed duration of thirty second intervals for eleven minutes blocks the time into frames, contrary to the flow of the game and the reciprocal interaction of the players. Huebler is interested in the fluidity of the surrounding space. The game's kinetic energy is like molecules bouncing and colliding against each other inside a container, each player reacting to the motions of all the others. French curator Frédéric Paul has described this basketball game as a sporting readymade: "Huebler has done no more nor less than invent the *sporting readymade."* As to what Paul means by the sporting readymade, it may be merely a

reference to Duchamp's approach that the artist could choose any object and proclaim it to be art, or, more specifically, that Huebler's basketball game is here regarded as a found situation, basketball as readymade. Huebler's text for the basketball game directs the photographer to shoot the sequences of the artist locating himself in space. Marcel Duchamp, in his *Notes from the Green Box* of 1934, gives his specifications for the readymade and its connection to the photograph as he connects the snapshot effect and its serial delays to his requirements for readymades: "*The important thing then is just* this matter of timing, this snapshot effect, like a speech delivered on no matter what occasion but *at such and such an hour*. It is a kind of rendevous. —Naturally inscribe on the readymade that date, hour, minute, as *information*."[177] By marking the minutes, Huebler's snapshot as a readymade gets "inscribed…(with all kinds of delays)" as Duchamp had written nearly four decades earlier. Like our eyes shifting back and forth during a game, the photographs capture both the stop and flow. The game involves anticipation and random play while the camera inserts both a framing and a progression of time. Huebler directed the photographer to take a photograph every 30 seconds "as the artist relocated himself within an extremely fluid environment," alluding to the constant flow of the game. He has handed off the mechanical aspect of production to someone else, to an anonymous photographer who only needs to watch the clock, aim the camera at Huebler (as our eye is naturally drawn to him) and click.

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[177] Marcel Duchamp, "Notes from the Green Box" (1934) in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp,* eds. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989), 32. Originally as *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (Oxford University Press, 1973).

The curator Anne Pontégnie considers Huebler's basketball game, and indeed all his later work, to be more than an exercise in time and space:

> The identity of the artist himself crosses his works, he is a basket-ball player, the discreet organizer of his own experience or the inventor of a collective artistic implement. Far from being an external observer of his procedures, he links himself to them until they constitute his existence as much as his existence constitutes them. 'The fact of knowing where a thing is implies everything else,' he says. For each movement there is a new negotiation of meaning and identity.[178]

To Huebler everything is relational, particularly movement in relation to changing time and place. Certainly more performative conceptual artists of the 1960s, such as Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer**,** were experimenting with spatial actions of the physical body as sculpture and dance. The dance floor for choreographed action becomes a performance map with a type of psychogeography on how to move intuitively in relation to the environment. Morris and Rainer often took an everyday ritual as an incentive to extemporize, to be arbitrary or even whimsical in a dialogue with place. Huebler's basketball game has a similar sensibility—he takes a seemingly mundane game, one that takes place all across America in school gyms and parks everyday, as the scenario for 'relocating himself in the extremely fluid environment' and having each camera shot frame the proscribed duration. Granted, the camera locks the action, however it is his language that compels the viewer to ponder some questions: Is the measured timing described in the text a technique to distract us from the spatial flow of the game? Does it generate a feeling of pulsed order of temporality? Huebler clearly hints at both ideas, that the rote action of timing creates an immediacy of the moment while

[178] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 147.

the fluidity of movement is a continuum. His language is perfunctory but clearly articulated with precise objective parameters, in contrast to the unposed, blurred, and casual interaction of the players. For Huebler, time is physical and social. Each time that this piece is viewed or read by someone, it will be reconstituted in a different time frame, and, in another durational sense, the actions of the photographer who documented it become doubled exponentially by the viewers.

Huebler often referred to the camera as a 'dumb' recording device.[179] It has no capacity to shoot anything other than a copy of what appears through its lens when the button is clicked. This automatic and somewhat sterile function is not without its benefits when in service to an artist engaged in shifting from an authorial role to that of manual operator. The operator per se becomes a functionary machine to document change, often in ever so slight permutations or serial progressions of a preset plan. This calls to mind artists such as Sol LeWitt, who claimed that his administrative role is reduced to that of a clerk carrying out predetermined serial changes, in his statement for *Serial Project #1, 1966*: "The serial artist does not attempt to produce a beautiful or mysterious object but functions merely as a clerk cataloging the results of his premise."[180] LeWitt's thinking on the artist as clerk has some proximity to Huebler and the operation of the 'dumb' device. Both artists established preset procedures which allowed the operation to be performed almost automatically, denying any aesthetic outcome, yet Huebler diverges from LeWitt in several ways, perhaps being a bit less of a *clerk*.

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[179] Konrad Fischer and Hans Strelow, exhibition catalogue *Prospect* '69, Düsseldorf Kunsthalle (October 1969), reprinted in "Statements: Douglas Huebler," Leo Castelli Papers, Box 66.24, Getty Research Institute, 1972.

[180] Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966" in *Aspen,* nos. 5-6, ed. Brian O'Doherty, 1967, n.p.

Unlike LeWitt, Huebler overcomes some of the conditions of seriality, namely that of regulated progression, not only by purposefully scrambling the sequence of his photographs to avert the sense of linearity as discussed earlier, but also by using language as a preset before the camera shot , words spoken not to instruct the subject but to give information that might affect the outcome. For example, in his *Variable Piece #34, Bradford, Massachusetts* (December 1970), he walked up to people and took a photograph of them as he said " 'You have a beautiful face' or 'You have a remarkable face' or, as he recalled, something very much like that."[181] The forty photographs of various faces (some of whom are of his family) reveal their self-conscious reactions to his compliment, some as surprise, pleasure, or a hint of tension. Even though his adjectives 'beautiful' or 'remarkable' allow an emotive factor to affect the outcome, Huebler's intentions here are diametrically opposed to the traditional aesthetic idea of beauty in photography. So why would he choose such phrases that somehow seem reminiscent of a 1950s and 60s television show's iconic phrase 'Smile, you're on candid camera?' More than a witty photographer's diversion, his words are complimentary in order to set up an engagement with his subject that embraces a larger philosophy—his attitude toward acceptance of variation, or variables if you will, in all of humanity:

> I mean to give them a gift, not that I'm being pompous about doing it, but it's like saying 'You're okay.' And I can say that about any face because every face is. That has to do with my interest in appearance and suspending these kinds of value judgments about appearance…in humanity that I'm speaking to, and that fact that I share that humanity with you.[182]

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[181] Paul, n.p. Huebler's text for this work cited in full under Variable Piece #34.
[182] Auping, 42.

Huebler intended that his work provide access to an inclusive humanity beyond any value judgment of *beautiful* or *remarkable* regarding a person's physical appearance. I shall further consider his views about appearance later in this chapter, but, for now, the appearance of a smile was merely a means toward this notion of universality, that every face is 'okay' (a neutral description) or perhaps it simply relaxed the tension.

Early twentieth century documentary photographers had compiled various portraits of society that were embedded in language, such as Walker Evans's Alabama tenant farmer wife Allie Mae Burroughs for James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,* or August Sander's classificatory captions of German occupations to arrange his portraits in *Hommes du XX^{e} siècle* (I shall further consider Sander's portraits later in this chapter). By virtue of their photographic work as integral to a sociological narrative in the case of Evans, or a categorical ordering of society for Sander, the captions for their photographs show something similar to Huebler—the relation of the words to the resulting images is an external and somewhat preset system to exhibit the variables of people in their societies. Certainly Huebler was interested in showing the variables of people and relationships within his three categories of Location, Duration, and Variables, but his photographic strategies began to show captions in intriguing and subtle ways. In his *Duration Piece #7, Rome* (March, 1973), (fig. 18), what first appears to be the subject of the photographs, the typical Japanese tourists posing at the Fountain of Trevi, is a far cry from Huebler's accompanying text:

> Fourteen photographs were made, at exact 30 second intervals, in order to document specific changes in the relationship between two

> aspects of the water falling from the rocks in one area at the base of the Fountain of Trevi.

This brings us to the connotation of appearance, the second of the two ways he applied the term as noted at the beginning of this chapter—the photograph which only seems to appear as it looks. This text for *Fountain of Trevi* seems to be an entirely different and more complex subject than what we see, prompting us to search for something other than the tourists who seem to dominate the photograph, for something intangible in the picture itself—*relational* changes of the 'two aspects' of the streaming water behind the tourists. Time passing is the obvious relational change and his specification of its duration is articulate and particular to an otherwise unnoticed part of the photograph. As to further relational changes of the falling water, the artist places a highlighted circle on each photograph focused on a steady flow over the same rocks captured at slightly different angles. The water flow may be variable considering that it originates in ancient aqueducts, but that is not the question. Huebler asks us to study how his language plays in this work, as various tourists step in and out of the picture. Their spatial and social relationships change and are framed at exact regular intervals fourteen times during the seven minutes (only three of the fourteen photographs are presented) and shown in undesignated sequence. Bergson's *durée reelle* seems apropos again—to juxtapose different sensibilities of time. The appearance of casual poses in front of the eternal city's most famous fountain with its incessant roaring cascade is contrasted with Huebler's language to measure a different kind of duration, one more nuanced and quiet. The snapshot portraits may call for documented permanence in a travel

album but the tourists are a secondary subject here. This work could merely pose as a parody of the typical tourist photograph but Huebler's text replaces what we think we see with more complex aspects of duration—not only of the falling of water but how language affects the appearance of a photograph. He is simply telling us not to look at what we see on the surface, the image in the photograph, but instead look at the details of the text to find a different subject fabricated only by language. This approach is the same as that discussed in the drawing chapter—the drawings as dots or lines can only be understood by reading his contiguous text that is constructed to fulfill their existence in our mind.

Huebler used duration without photography in a work of strict serial documentation in his One Hundred One-Dollar Bills, entitled *Duration Piece #13, North America—Western Europe* (1969). He wrote his initials on each 'Federal Reserve note' (on each of the one hundred one-dollar bills) in the lower right corner, making a list of the serial numbers, and then spending most of this money himself, except for some sent to friends in Europe, Canada, and Mexico. He stipulates how the work is to be completed which is more complicated that it may at first seem:

> At the end of twenty-five years—whoever owns the piece—as a condition for the piece to be completed, the owner has to complete it… by putting an announcement in an international art magazine listing all of those serial numbers again, and offering to redeem those that are brought forth for a thousand dollars.[183]

Huebler discussed the work with interviewer Patricia Norvell in 1969, saying "Theoretically, there is a hundred thousand dollars' worth of documentation out on

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[183] Alberro and Norvell, 149.

that piece."[184] It is safe to say that he never intended final completion of the procedure as he talked about it, with full knowledge that such a feat is improbable due to all the stipulations required according to his highly complex rules. He extends a caveat, that if the owner does not fulfill the assigned responsibility within the duration of the scheme, at the end of twenty-five years (July 1994)[185], the piece will no longer exist.

As a tactic to subvert the entrenched art market, other conceptualists had launched procedures to expand notions of materiality and subsequently proclaim the de-valuation of their art or render them non-existent. Some European artists had been dealing with the materiality of art collecting as early as the late 1950s, most notably Yves Klein's procedures to sell his *Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility* (1957-59) for commensurate weights of gold. While the buyer burned his certified receipt (cheque) for the purchase of 'zones', Klein would perform a ritual of throwing half of the gold from the sale into the Seine. Klein's tossing of gold into the river, like Huebler's unfulfilled One Hundred One-Dollar Bills piece, satirized the art market's claims on authenticated value for investment purposes.[186] The purely theoretical possibility of the artist himself or the myriad owners of the bills or possibly a collector to knowingly retain a bill for twenty-five years in order to complete the work (or finding such a bill) and then placing the ad in order to pay out

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[184] Alberro and Norvell, 149.

[185] Paul, n.p.

[186] Leen, 65. Leen observed another link from Klein to Huebler's catalogue exhibition strategy with Seth Siegelaub in 1968 and 1969: "Douglas Huebler's catalogue/exhibition is, at least in a historical sense, the conclusion of a process that was initiated by Yves Klein exactly a decade before, when he cleared the Galerie Iris Clerk in Paris on April 28, 1958." Seth Siegelaub Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, File I.A.64.

one thousand dollars to someone who matches one of the serial numbers listed in an art magazine is unlikely, making this a work of chance purposefully bordering on the whimsically absurd. The work is now literally and unobtrusively circulating in the world, touching unknown hands as an outreach, and, at this point, with no fiscal return. Ironically, Huebler did exhibit his list of serial numbers from the One Hundred One-Dollar Bills piece in his show *Douglas Huebler: Variables, Etc.* in Limoges, France, in 1993,[187] perhaps as a quasi-legitimized machination and to play upon strict seriality as part of the duration piece, undoubtedly with a winking eye toward selling the work.

Huebler used a "Wanted by FBI: Edmund Kite McIntyre" readymade poster as the focus for his accompanying scenario offering a monetary reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a bank robber in his *Duration Piece #15, Global, 1969*, (fig. 19). The official F.B.I. documentation shows the fingerprints and three mug shots of McIntyre with his alias names and signature, along with the background information that McIntyre had been a 'commercial artist' among other jobs. Huebler would certainly have noticed this art reference; perhaps that is why he chose this particular criminal for his piece—it lent to the stereotype of a maverick neer-do-well profession. (Huebler had stated that his father had tried to steer his son away from art.[188]) Detailed data of McIntyre's physical description and criminal record were written alongside the alarmist warning 'considered dangerous' and J. Edgar Hoover's facsimile signature authorized the document. Huebler's accompanying proposal is typewritten below the poster:

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[187] Paul, n.p.

[188] Paul, 125.

> The artist guarantees he will pay a reward beginning at $1,100.00 on January 1, 1970, to the person who provides information resulting in the arrest and conviction of this perpetrator McIntyre, and, during each month thereafter that he is not brought to justice, the reward will be reduced by $100.00 until it is exhausted on January 1, 1971.[189]

To further his own financial security in this plan, Huebler stated that if the piece is purchased in the meantime, the new owner will assume payments of the reward. Huebler plays on duration by humorously reversing the usually expected increase of a reward, a disincentive about as absurd as reducing a lottery jackpot. He parodies the authority of a federal agency's signage by creating his own reward system. What appears to be an enticing proposal is brought to the stage of a parodic myth. Huebler reveals his concern with narrative art:

> I hate narrative art because it's literature…At times, I point to things that are very neutral in appearance, like points on a drawing, and at other times I point to things that are enormously loaded with apparent content. Then I strip away the association…what I'm really saying is that it [content] may be there or it may not be there. It's your responsibility at that point. It's really a concern and caring for the giving of the responsibility for inferences, for content-filling and for myth making to the percipient…I am interested in freeing nature from the imposition of language, mythology, and literature.[190]

Mythologizing is a term often used by Huebler which should be examined at this point. He is adamantly against it when discussing his dislike for modernist criticism, that critics could endow a mythic quality to art by merely investing it with certain words. (He is also well aware that America has a history of mythologizing its

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[189] Court Records, Monroe County, Florida. A judgment of conviction against one Edmund Kite McIntyre was signed on December 17, 1981, (told by telephone from Monroe County Clerk to University of Virginia Law Librarian Cathy Palombi on November 20, 2013), and his case as the appellant vs. State of Florida for 'post-conviction relief' was denied on August 10, 1990. There appears to be no record of anyone providing information leading to his arrest.
[190] Auping, 38.

outlaws into heroic proportions). We may recall Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* (1957)[191] in which myth today is culturally constructed as depoliticized speech or discourse that has become 'naturalized' or commonly absorbed into society as assumed truth when it is actually the product of the dominant power structure. As Barthes ironically phrases, "it is natural and goes without saying,"[192] —myth is so acculturated that is taken for granted and seems to have no need for analysis. Barthes theorizes his structural critique of language and ideology across a broad cultural span which cannot be narrowed to interpret Huebler's work in general, however I believe that one of Barthes' statements may have some resonance here. Barthes stated in this essay "The best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an *artificial myth*: and this reconstituted myth will in turn be a mythology."[193] Huebler's appropriation of the F.B.I. poster takes the myth, the assumption that an agency of the law has provided true and factual statements for media dissemination, and in turn produces an artificial myth by exaggerating the reward narrative for Edmund Kite McIntye as a constructed absurdist procedure.

The F.B.I. photographs of McIntyre's face allow Huebler to complicate the traditional portrait. This calls to mind Duchamp's *Wanted*: *$2,000 Reward* (1923) with two mug shots of the artist as the alias owner of the Hook, Lyon and Cinquer shop or his assisted readymade poster *L.H.O.O.Q.*, although Huebler has not altered the F.B.I. document per se except to add his procedure for executing the reward. McIntyre maintains an expressionless profile and somber frontal pose, shown in the

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[191] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, selected and translated by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 109-159. Original French by Editions du Seuil 1957.
[192] Barthes, *Mythologies*,143.
[193] Barthes, *Mythologies*,135.

conventional arrangement of criminal mug shots over the last century. This is reminiscent of those taken by such crime investigators as the French inspector Alphonse Bertillon whose typologizing techniques proposed to determine one's character by certain facial traits—that crime is within the nature of how someone looks. Even though the precise physical details about a person may or may not truly describe him, Huebler was aware that certain prejudices were naturalized myths. Whereas Duchamp was using double entendre to pun our gullibility for authority and its methods, Huebler playfully exploits our suspicions as part of his parody of authoritative documentation.

Wanted by F.B.I.: Edmund Kite McIntyre poses Huebler's rather telling rationale about purchasing and collecting conceptual works. According to art historian Robert Hobbs, this work is "actually epistemologically oriented since the intent is to examine unquestioned assumptions about art's audiences and its collectors."[194] Hobbs recognizes Huebler's intellectual ability to generate a humorous and insightful skepticism about the art market. Later in his career Huebler would become vitriolic in his criticism of art's audiences in his *Crocodile Tears* but here he is subtle in the scenario of the somewhat complicated reward procedure. He states that if the piece is purchased before the completion of his reward procedure (upon McIntyre's conviction), the new owner agrees to assume responsibility for any remaining payment to the person who provides information leading to an arrest and conviction. The project turns its completion within a certain time frame over to the collector. The poster could be easily duplicated, it

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[194] Robert Hobbs, "Affluence, Taste, and the Brokering of Knowledge: Notes on the Social Context of Early Conceptual Art" in Corris, 212.

had no aesthetic value, and the 'contract' between artist and collector was tongue-in-cheek. Perhaps he intends a more interesting question about this work: as with Duchamp's *Fountain,* Huebler is asking what is the quality or nature of art that gives it validity as an original despite the fact that it could be duplicated by anyone? Huebler's stipulation for the reward asks for participation in the public domain, but its dissemination was likely limited to a smaller circle, and the reward, in this case, is ultimately reduced to exhaustion. His idea for using an F.B.I. poster may have been because, when tacked on the post office bulletin board, it has more mass appeal than gallery appeal.

Huebler expresses his opinion on the concept of 'original' as a special consensual agreement, based not on the quality of an object but on an understanding between artist and collector:

> Anyone could reproduce an Andre or a Flavin for instance. What would he have? I believe that the sensibility behind a work of art should be broadly accessible. At the same time I believe that the collector is someone who enters into a conspiracy with the artist that is beyond the issue of accessibility, an agreement that the sensibility is an important one. This agreement may be really what the owner has that is 'original.'[195]

His term *conspiracy* leads to a particular sensibility between the artist and collector, their relationship shifting into a realm beyond the monetary into a mutually privileged bond of 'knowing' exactly where the signification or value lies. Like the One Hundred One-Dollar Bills piece with its fabricated if not inflated value of $100,000, this conspiracy or sensibility between Huebler and his collectors grants conceptual originality to something that would otherwise lack it. Yves Klein's ideas

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[195] Fischer and Strelow, *Prospect '69* exhibition catalogue, 26. Also reprinted in Burnham, *Great Salt Works,* 55-56.

on the value of immateriality and the process of devaluation had reached the United States. Robert Morris had issued his Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal in 1963 as his official right to devalue of his work since the buyer did not comply with the original agreement of sale. These issues of valuation engaged Huebler and others in various processes to examine the value of art according to a different logic. Huebler's reduction of a monetary reward in his Edmund Kite McIntyre piece is a similar method of marketing devaluation yet with more subtle satire than Morris.

Let me set aside issues of devaluation and the collector's consensual role and turn to a critic's thinking on what constitutes an original work. Lucy Lippard's understanding of the concept of originality in Huebler's work may be discerned in her recollection of seeing her 'own' Huebler piece in a gallery:

> I own a *Duration Piece* by Douglas Huebler and I saw it a couple of weeks ago at his one-man show at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, though it was hanging in my home at the same time. I didn't know it would be in the show; it wasn't listed as my possession, and some of the ten photographs that comprise the piece were different from the ones I have. Time, space, and specificity had been subtly manipulated by this so-called 'Conceptual' artist to put me in this position. One of the most impressive aspects of Huebler's work is the freedom with which it operates.[196]

Lippard quickly realized that not only did she not 'possess' the Huebler piece in her own right but the artist could continue exhibiting it elsewhere, claiming the piece belonged to him—or at least multiple copies and iterations of it, as if all variables of the work were the same as an original, which could not be possible. Lippard was not perplexed by this paradox. There *is* no original, a fact she understood when she wrote above that "time, space, and specificity had been subtly manipulated" to erase

[196] Lippard, "Douglas Huebler: Everything about Everything," 29-31.

any notion of originality, meaning the work can never be in the same place twice due to time and space and its specificity is always in flux. In addition to her comments on a new sensibility about her ownership of an 'original,' Lippard's keen observation of "the freedom with which the work operates" is exactly what sets Huebler's work apart from Klein or Morris. There is a releasing exponent in his mode of delivery, one that propels the work into indeterminate spheres in the public domain.

Despite his stated intentions to transcend the consumption of art-as-object or to devalue the originality of a work, he was always interested in selling it and wrote many letters to his dealers in Europe and New York, such as Leo Castelli, urging them to promote private or public sales.[197] That said, Huebler never changed his philosophy about the destiny of his work and the responsibility of the owner. In 1977, he is quoted in the exhibition catalogue for his show *Time* at The Philadelphia College of Art: "I have designed a work's destiny to remain 'in process' for years…in order to demand that the real production of the 'art' be the responsibility of ownership, and to suspend the consumption of art-as-object."[198] From implications in this quote, the responsibility of ownership speaks to Yves Klein while the suspension of originality from a single art object likens to Lucy Lippard's understanding. What of Huebler's freedom and responsibility within these parameters? Since he no longer controls the exact outcome by giving it to the collector, he gains a certain freedom of separation from the work, from its

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[197] His later work from the 1980s and 90s is occasionally on the market in New York, now sold by his estate through the Paula Cooper Gallery and commanding notable prices, especially the paintings from the *Crocodile Series.*

[198] Paul, 175.

authorship, while retaining responsibility for the intellectual structure, as the architect builds the structure and has responsibility for its design but the occupants determine its use.

This mutual understanding between Huebler and his collectors—to keep the work in process—may have been the impetus for his later critique of collectors who expropriated his art with neither an awareness of the artist's intentions for the work nor a recognition of their responsibilities of ownership. During his later years at CalArts, Huebler invoked a cynically strident tone about the responsibility of ownership when he overtly critiqued the art market and the commodification of his work by some collectors. As late as 1990, he reiterated his feelings about the vagaries of art collecting:

> The collector is not saying that he wants a Douglas Huebler because he respects my work; he is transforming the work into supposedly valuable objects of history. I don't like that, but I'm certainly going to accept every penny I get—I'm not nuts.[199]

Aside from this rather bitter comment from his years in Los Angeles, Huebler was never without a sharp wit more often revealed in subtle ways, somewhat like Duchamp but sometimes with more obvious playfulness, as seen with Huebler's friend Bernd Becher (fig. 20). This line-up of portraits of Becher, entitled *Variable Piece #101 West Germany* (March 1973), fulfills Huebler's assignment to the German artist to pretend that he [Becher] embodies ten different types of professions or social designations in his facial expressions—priest, criminal, lover, old man, policeman, artist, 'Bernd Becher,' philosopher, spy, and a nice guy—as the camera

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[199] Wilson, 53.

clicks. Typologies assumed a primary place in Hilla and Bernd Becher's photography in representations of such architectonic yet commonplace categories as water towers or silos with precise differentiation of detail and arranged in archive-like grids for comparison. The Bechers' seemingly banal style was an obvious attraction for Huebler, "where the encounter between the playful gratuitousness of Huebler's systems and the Bechers' taxonomy allows us to see what the Bechers would never show us: themselves."[200] Here Huebler applies typology to a human scale in Bernd's hilariously pretentious facial expressions. The work is theatrical and endearing, an obvious posturing yet revealing of Becher's humanity. A few months later, Huebler asked Becher to match the correct shots with the given phrases, as typed in the proposition for the work:

> To make it almost impossible for Becher to remember his own 'faces,' more than two months were allowed to pass before prints of the photographs were sent to him; the photographs were numbered differently from the original sequence and Becher was asked to make the 'correct' associations with the given verbal terms.

Becher could not recall the first posturings and, of course, he mismatched them, which was Huebler's original intention, to make a non-sequential arrangement and skew the stereotypes.

One cannot overlook a photographic genealogy from August Sander (1876-1964) into Huebler's portraits of Bernd Becher. In his landmark exhibition of 1927 and subsequent publication *Antlitz der Zeit (The Face of the Time)* (1929)[201], Sander categorized various occupations and social classes in Weimar Germany as a type of

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[200] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 145.

[201] Also published posthumously in Sander's seven volume abridged *People of the Twentieth Century (Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts)*, Munich: Schirmer Mosel, 1980.

photographic encyclopedia in portraiture, one which met with controversy likely because it did not always conform to the National Socialist stereotypes of ideal Aryan traits.[202] Sander's subjects in *Antlitz* ranged across such social categories as farmers, dock workers, bricklayers, aristocrats, children, writers and artists.[203] One section of this immense project portrayed the artist as intellectual, a category comprised mostly of Sander's politically left-wing friends known as the Cologne Progressives. Picturing several of them with their art or in three-quarter-length poses, Sander allowed his subjects to define themselves. In another well known Sander portrait entitled the *Konditor (Pastry Chef) (1928),* a bald portly chef in his professional white coat holds a bowl as rotund as his belly, a self-authorial pose of sober importance. Following in this lineage of casting typological attributes, Huebler's written directives to Bernd Becher tell him to pretend to look like a character type, that is, to look like someone other than himself, perhaps calling the question of truth in portraiture. In *Antlitz,* August Sander did not intend his own projects in typology to be regarded so much as evidence or pretense but instead as documents of social order that portray professions and occupations with dignity.

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[202] Leo Rubinfien,"The Mask Behind the Face" in *Art in America*, 92:6 (June-July 2004), 99,102-104. In 1936, *Antlitz* was banned by the Nazis without explanation and Sander's printing plates were destroyed at the publisher's office. Several biographers of Sander have noted his reticence amidst the turmoil of the Weimar Republic (1920-1933) and World War II, in particular, Leo Rubinfien,noting that "much roiled beneath the surface of Sander's work" although Sander "made no obvious reference to the violence that roared outside everybody's doors" (99) and "lets his subjects wear their masks" (102). Rubinfien notes that the Nazis probably tried to abolish *Antlitz* because of "the intransigent ordinariness" of the people in it in a time that demanded patriotic attention to the ideals and mission of the nation (104). In their biographical essays in *August Sander 1876-1964* (Taschen, 1999), Alfred Döblin and Suzanne Lange have given only cursory attention to the political and ideological environment in Germany affecting Sander, as is the case in the exhibition catalogue *August Sander* at the National Portrait Gallery, London, February 28 – June 8, 1997, essay by Christoph Schreier,1-6.

[203] Later, during the 1930s, Sander, influenced by personal and political developments in Germany, photographed portraits of perpetrators and victims, such as "SS Storm Trooper Chief" (1937) and "Persecuted Jew" (1938). See exhibition catalogue *August Sander*, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000.

Huebler would undertake an even broader project in 1970—'to document the existence of everyone alive,' a work to be discussed subsequently. Unlike Sander, Huebler would continue to consider the face by juxtaposing it with phrases that regard the image as something more than what we see.

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Clichés and aphorisms began to play an emphatic role in Huebler's methodology when he employed these figures of speech as part of the text to interact with his photographs— giving the photograph a vital infrastructure to carry out his procedure—in his most ambitious photoconceptual project: *Variable Piece #70 (In Process) Global, November 1971, (To Document the Existence of Everyone Alive).* He worked on variations of this project for the rest of his life, stating his intention for the work:

> Throughout the remainder of the artist's lifetime he will photographically document, to the extent of his capacity, the existence of everyone alive in order to produce the most authentic and inclusive representation of the human species that may be assembled in that manner. Editions of this work will be periodically issued in a variety of topical modes: "100,000 people," "1,000,000 people," "people personally known by the artist," "Look-alikes," "over-laps," etc.[204]

The comprehensive piece contains many sub-themes in a network of quasi-archival documentation on both a narrow focus and absurdly wide scale and, of course, it was never intended for completion. Such a project has been called *utopian*, "in the sense that it constructs something in an unpredictable future."[205] In one theme of this project, *100E/Variable Piece #70,* Huebler wrote a different cliché

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[204] Lippard, *Six Years,* 261.
[205] Paul, 33.

or aphorism (he kept a menu of such readymade descriptors[206]), on each of eighty sheets of white posterboard, to be randomly chosen one at a time, then read and held up by volunteers who agreed to be photographed with the phrases, such as 'One person who always has the last word' or 'One person who is pretty as a picture,' or 'One person who is beautiful but dumb.' For some subjects in *100E/Variable Piece #70,* the language could create such tension that they were allowed to have their faces covered "if the statement was too unbearable" to be associated with the photograph,[207] even though the participants were well aware that this is a game of chance. Somewhat like the aforementioned 'You have a pretty face', the language assumes equal if not dominate footing with the image as it challenges prejudicial assumptions about appearance. The contemporary British artist Gillian Wearing, in her *Signs that say what you want them to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say* (1992-93), has produced work in a similar but more confessional vein by asking strangers on the street to write something about themselves on white posterboard and hold it up for a photograph, resulting in such written evocations as "I'm desperate." This might make us think of a person at a street intersection holding a rough cardboard sign "Hungry Please Help" for all to see, or "Need $ 4 Beer" as I saw in Portland, Oregon. It is an apparently desperate personal appeal with sociological implications but, just as with Wearing's subjects, it may be a lie. Both Wearing and Huebler use language as variables for characteristics that are implied but often cannot be seen. Of course we might think that Huebler's "pretty as a picture" matches (or mismatches) the face of

[206] For Huebler's complete list of 121 readymade descriptors, see Paul, 134-135.
[207] Auping, 43.

the volunteer, but our opinion about beauty is less relevant than the caption's ability to affect the subject's facial expression. We are watching a variable game of chance with the application of the arbitrary cliché to create an even more unpredictable outcome on the face. As an overbearing caption that immediately captures our attention, the cliché implies something that may or may not be true by stating something that is purely subjective and often cannot be seen, for example someone who 'is beautiful but dumb' or 'always has the last word.' Here the cliché generates an infrastructure for Huebler's multi-partite system 'to photographically document the existence of everyone alive.' Earlier the British performance artist and photographer Keith Arnatt had posed holding a sign stating "I AM A REAL ARTIST" (1969) to establish not just his place in the profession as 'real' (using a purposefully ambiguous word often detested in art criticism) but to consider his own work's validation by language. Huebler's language is not as self-reflexive as Arnatt's statement or Wearing's signs yet the dominant position of the written phrases raises questions about how seemingly perfunctory description can generate assumptions about appearance.

Clichés are hackneyed phrases, words that have been so overused that they lose their impact and become trite—except when Huebler pairs them with photography and they acquire a fresh mode of operation. Huebler uses the cliché to his advantage, pushing it forward in order to challenge its relationship to appearance in a photograph. He compels us to consider first the truthfulness of the cliché and then examine its usefulness when juxtaposed with an image. Walter

Benjamin, in his landmark essay of 1934 "The Author as Producer," gave his opinion about the capacity of the caption in relation to photography:

> What we should demand from photography is the capacity of giving a print a caption which would tear it away from fashionable clichés and give it a revolutionary usevalue. [208]

Benjamin considered the technical aspect of photography to be a particular means of production that has the capacity to revolutionize not only the manner in which information is disseminated but to serve as an awakening call to the oppressed working classes. In the context of the 1930s, photographs could give revelation to the realities of German life under threat of fascism, instead of merely captioning selective Third Reich propaganda. Photographic reproduction on the covers of working class magazines and Dadaist journals, such as those by the photomontage artist John Heartfield, were a "weapon against the Nazi regime."[209] As Benjamin states in "The Author as Producer," "many aspects of this revolutionary attitude have made their way into photomontage. One only needs to think of the work of John Heartfield, whose technique made book jackets into a political instrument."[210]

Returning to the importance of the caption for Benjamin, in his essay of 1931 "A Short History of Photography," he considers the caption's critical role to redeem the authenticity of photography, that which had become tainted by the cliché in the

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[208] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" in *New Left Review* (July-August 1970), 97. Various translations of this essay slightly change "fashionable clichés" to "the ravages of modishness" (Anna Bostock in *Understanding Brecht,* 1998), or "modish commerce." The original text is in French delivered as Benjamin's address to The Institute to Study Fascism, Paris, on April 27, 1934, while he was in exile from the Nazis.

[209] John Heartfield in his letter of May 5, 1945, to his younger brother Wieland Herzfelde, the Dadaist publisher. See Heartfield chronology in Andrés Mario Zervigón, *John Heartfield and the Agitated Image* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Walter Benjamin made the acquaintance of Heartfield in 1935 and regarded him as a friend and ally.

[210] Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," 97.

type of reportage generated by those focused on retaining dominance over the working class. Moreover, Benjamin implies that the caption in photography could uncover the guilt hiding in the darkness of a fascist regime:

> This authenticity [of photography] cannot forever be circumvented by the reportage of cliché which forms only verbal associations in the reader. The camera becomes smaller and smaller, ever readier to capture transitory and secret pictures which are able to shock the associative mechanism of the observer to a standstill. At this point the caption must step in, thereby creating a photography which literarises the relationship of life and without which photographic construction would remain stuck in the approximate…Is it not the task of the photographer—descendent of the augurs and the haruspices—to uncover guilt and name the guilty in his pictures? …Will not the caption become the most important component of the shot?"[211]

So not only does the caption have 'the revolutionary usevalue' to rescue the photograph from modish commerce and the misery created by consumer goods—as 'a caption to *tear* it [the photograph] away from fashionable clichés' (*tear* is an activist's verb)—it can reveal shadows of secrecy in order to ultimately activate the worker/producer to transform and redeem society. Let me connect Benjamin's thinking on the caption by returning to Douglas Huebler. Benjamin's call to action in his essay was for the writer to become immersed into the working class during a time of violence and turmoil in Germany and for the caption to play a part in transforming society, whereas Douglas Huebler's captions have a less volatile tendency of immersing his work into the public sphere—by engaging his production with everyday social relationships that drive its procedure. Perhaps Douglas Huebler did not entirely regard his captions to be as socially powerful as those

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[211] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography" in *Screen: the Journal of the Society for Education in Film and Television* 13:1 (1972), 25. Original in *Literarische Welt* 18:9, 25:9, and 2:10 (1931).

Benjamin proscribed but he did use the cliché to disrupt our assumptions about an image, not unlike the way Heartfield utilized photomontage with captions but with less shock value.

While to most general readers the cliché may seem merely uninteresting, it does contain more important aspects of being *dis*interesting. John Cage, in his 1961 monograph *Silence,* said, "The responsibility of the artist consists in perfecting his work so that it may become attractively disinteresting."[212] Never to be construed as uninteresting, *disinteresting* can connote an impartial observation, or further, a detachment from any emotional or aesthetic affectation and instead gravitate toward a more low key but strengthened approach that requires analytical thinking about the work on the part of the reader, or, in Cage's musical context, on the part of the astute listener to hear indeterminate 'noise'. Huebler knew the power of a disinteresting cliché—it could feign a description of the image in order to allow a reconstruction of the relationship between the language and the image. Let me unpack this notion, that of Huebler giving the cliché the function of pretense as a mode of deception. The mundane cliché can 'pretend' to describe a photograph (just as a propagandistic caption can taint a photograph) when the writer intends to produce a deception, a diversion to create a different thought or idea. Used in this manner, the cliché gains enough strength to force the question about its purpose, that is, how does the artist use a nominally weak tool to produce a stronger armature for deciphering his work? Huebler's technique allows us to consider the range of variables generated when we realize that what we read in his text may not

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[212] John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and writings by John Cage* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1939), 64.

match what we see—the face may not be 'beautiful,' the person may not be 'dumb'—there is no way to determine this from the photograph alone. The paradox of the cliché is retained in its characteristics of being both weakly uninteresting and more powerfully disinteresting according to its variable contexts.

I shall further examine another paradox of the photograph and caption later in this chapter, as that seen by Roland Barthes, but, for now, let us continue with other ways of thinking about the cliché and the photograph. Huebler empowers the cliché, when partnered with his photograph, to dissolve its own empty pretentions and be reproduced for a new purpose in photography. If this paradox still seems puzzling, we may consider an earlier meaning of cliché when used in the process of printing. The term *cliché-verre* has relevance: literally a "glass print," and *cliché* used alone as a printing term also refers to the glass or metal plate as well as the sound or click when it prints; in the nineteenth century *cliché-verre* was a popular method of reproducing images by etching onto a glass plate and then photographing the drawing against a black background or allowing light to develop the image from a negative. Although the process vacillates between the domains of photography and etching, the plate or cliché itself was the base for reproduction. Douglas Huebler may have regarded his clichés as language templates for producing *disinteresting* art, that is, art that is unencumbered by preconception about what we see in the photograph. Even if Huebler thought of the word *cliché* as a simple print, its reproduction is aligned with photography. As a language template, the cliché is a readymade of 'found' phrases, a list always available for reproduction. Huebler was not the first artist to realize the readymade's linguistic potential. When Duchamp

invented *Rrose Sélavy* from the clichéd "eros, c'est la vie" or "arroser la vie" ("a toast to life") to identify himself in Man Ray's famous photographs of 1921-24, the cliché was reborn into a new use for photography.

Huebler utilizes clichés on his placards with the understanding of his participants that this is a capricious pretense, all the while letting his words describe characteristics that are impossible to verify in their faces. After all, 'beautiful but dumb' can mean different things to different people as variables for extended interpretation. His work has often been loosely described as playful and, like Duchamp, his serious art is couched in humor. Perhaps in his shrewdly understated manner, he considered humor to be a rational methodology for responding to the younger conceptualists in New York whose work he may have considered to be tediously tautological, notably Joseph Kosuth**.** Huebler was twenty years older than several of them, having been well seasoned in Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism, and he was known to steer away from any strident ideology or dogmatism, limiting operations that he perceived in Kosuth. During an interview in 1993 about his early work, Huebler remarked: "Notice that I haven't mentioned 'tautologies' or anything else that conforms with Joseph Kosuth's definition of *correct* conceptual practice."[213] Huebler's use of language was not in the Saussurean sense of *langue* as formal linguistic systems of signs, such as Kosuth's photostats of dictionary definitions. Huebler saw the potential of everyday language in art, more in the manner of Saussure's *parole* (utterances of the moment) as quotidian phrases that were carefully employed in his written procedures. As

[213] Paul, 127.

Frederic Paul describes it: "His work, in total contrast to that of Kosuth or Weiner, seems to depend on events and experience of the surrounding environment… whereas Kosuth defends *Art as Idea as Idea,* Huebler prefers *Art as Everything about Everything.* His field of research extends to all phenomena and not simply those concerned *a fortiori* with art. "[214] In 1978, Huebler described his earlier transition from simple phenomena, like photographs of ducks waddling around Central Park, to more expansive human systems of 'everything:'

> As the locating of 'everything else' increasingly occurred in 'social' space, it became clear that not only had all subject matter opened up to be used, the use of much more than simple Phenomena was positively indicated. I began to use 'human systems' as kinds of cultural readymades: Behavior, Fantasies, Attitudinal clichés. I fabricated a strategy whereby I could include 'everything.'[215]

Huebler's new strategy of expansion into 'social space' proved to be original and daring for his time, one that I will examine subsequently as a major factor in his art. For now, let us continue to consider his use of the 'attitudinal cliché' and its use as a caption.

The clichés on Huebler's placards, randomly selected and held up by his percipients in *100E/Variable Piece #70,* are a form of text as caption. Barthes in his *Rhetoric of the Image* (1964) examines how images, in particular the photograph in advertising, signify meaning in relation to the various ways that text (the signified), including captions, may be read. Barthes writes

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[214] Paul, 33.
[215] Paul, 176.

> With respect to the signifieds of the image, the text has thus a *repressive* value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of society are above all invested.[216]

The text has repressive value, that is, it both delimits and controls or enforces meaning when linked with a photograph—delimiting in that there are many possible meanings other than what we read, and controlling in that it contains culturally ideologized messages. 'Beautiful but dumb' is an acculturated cliché whose delimitations may prompt us to question what is *not* stated, what is missing. For instance, is this person honest, religious, friendly—attitudinal traits that cannot be gleaned from the face and are not included in the caption, thus rendering the clichéd caption inadequate. If the caption is read in the denotative (denominative) function, as an anchor with no properties of connotation for the image, this anchorage, according to Barthes, is a control.[217] Answering the question what is it, the denotative anchor is tautological, simply referring back to itself. But there is another function of Barthes' linguistic message: the connotative relays of thought whose context varies with each reading according to the individual. So 'beautiful but dumb' sets off a relay of possible meanings about the image despite its clichéd and literal first impression. Huebler's clichés as captions are anything but an anchorage, which I shall explore subsequently in my discussion of his use of the caption to complicate or even subvert the image.

Now we must consider the relationship of Barthes's and Benjamin's thinking on the function of the caption. Both men saw the immense potential of the caption

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[216] Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" in *Image-Music-Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 40.
[217] Barthes, "Rhetoric," 40.

yet in different ways. As cited earlier, Walter Benjamin knew that the propagandistic caption created a different truth in photography. He saw the caption as a primary player, indeed "the most important component of the picture," to reconstruct and redeem the image in what he saw as its revolutionary capacity, a more activist social function than Barthes's structuralist approach in linguistics. Barthes's *Rhetoric* essay advances to the connotative potential of a label, like a caption, as a *relay*—"Here text (most often a snatch of a dialogue) and image stand in a complementary relationship; the words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realized at a higher level."[218] The relay is a syntagmatic occurrence and serves a similar function when applied to Douglas Huebler's clichés as readymade captions—they relay or signal that the text and its photograph are fragments sending signals in a new way. In this same essay Barthes had said that the photograph in its literal state (before the relay) constitutes a "message without a code,"[219] however, when its caption generates a higher order connotation for the photograph, it becomes a coded linguistic function. Huebler codes the cliché to implicitly parody the idea of labeling.

Huebler told Michael Auping, "What I'm doing is raising the issue of the irresponsibility that these kinds of clichés or ready-mades represent."[220] Huebler allows the cliché to parody its own meaning in this context by using it excessively in multiple instances, that is, he satirizes the cliché's overuse by overusing it. What is intended is not what is meant. In other words, whatever descriptive intention the

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[218] Barthes, "Rhetoric," 41.
[219] Barthes, "Rhetoric," 36.
[220] Auping, 42.

language might have had originally no longer has meaning and now is used to expose what Huebler had called 'irresponsible' usage. In this sense, Huebler inverts the original function. Huebler is utilizing what he calls 'simple-minded' language to point out that its usage has caused unthinking people to become immune to false connotations and stereotyping, especially when associating them with a photograph.

Another deception of the cliché could be extended to an illusion of truth. Frederich Nietzsche analyzed the origin of truth in his "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense (1873)" as an invention of mankind's need to know, an arbitrary legislation of language that is an illusion of what he called pure truth. For Nietzsche, language is inadequate to express all realities.

> What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphism: in short, a sum of human relations that have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.[221]

Nietzsche does not specifically mention the cliché but his thinking on truths as worn out metaphors, rhetorically transferred and embellished, brings the cliché to mind. (I note that 'truth is illusion' is a cliché in itself). Here I use cliché as one of several sub-species of metaphor, and, without getting too involved in the figures of speech, I apply it as Douglas Huebler's metaphorical system of *transfer* from one meaning to another in relation to the photograph—from its worn out use as illusion

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[221] Frederich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense (1873)" in *The Nietzsche Reader,* edited by Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 117. Reprinted from *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s,* edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 79-91.

of truth to a different meaning within his photographic strategies. Nietzsche would, of course, still regard this process as one of illusion since all language is illusion; the metaphorical coin, for him, has forever lost its embossing and is mere metal. Cliché is not so broad a term as to equal Nietzsche's embellished truth nor the other way around. What cliché does have the ability to do, in a narrower sense, is act as a mode of transfer for Douglas Huebler, a relay in the root sense of *meta,* from worn out language to another meaning when situated with the image.

In an astutely clever mode of criticism from inside the system of production, Huebler critiques certain types of language that attempt to control or even delimit the meaning of a photograph. The viewer becomes a skeptic, questioning what is read in relation to the image when the language sets up convoluted scenarios of pretense, doubt, or absurdity. This paradoxical procedure creates a separation of appearance from the text even though photograph and language must co-exist to create the work. Huebler considered photography to be the most appropriate medium for his purpose, to separate appearance from any encumbrance of irresponsible description:

> For me, photography is the most neutral way to bring back the quality of what one would call appearance. Appearance can change according to the language, and I want to indicate the separateness of appearance, the separateness of nature.[222]

Nature, as Huebler used the term here, implies our understanding of the natural world to include everything that we see and do, everything we know. At the beginning of this chapter, I noted that Huebler's concept of appearance varies

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[222] Auping, 38.

according to his context, sometimes referring literally to what we see in the world, and other times as the appearance (what we *think* we see) in his photograph/image, a notion that now requires examination within his textual system. When Huebler told Patricia Norvell in her 1969 interview that he sets up a system to 'suspend the appearance [of what's going on in the world] at any given instant from being important,'[223] he means that his appropriation of the real world into his photographs is intended for a more important function, a snatching of it as a critical fragment for use in his system. This is not his critique to lessen what he calls 'the quality of appearance' in the above quote but to utilize it for his own purpose. What's going on in the world, in nature, is temporarily suspended as a photograph, now becoming subordinate to his system. For Huebler, appearance is not a Platonic illusion as in a drawing or a painting—it is literally what we see and hear (as in hearing the casually spoken cliché) in the world everyday. Huebler's photoconceptual strategy is to seize a small part of this ordinariness and locate it alongside his language in a symbiosis of sorts, a mutually productive coexistence.

By 1969 some of Huebler's photography diverged from candid shots when he began using found images from television or magazines and allowed his students at Bradford to select associative words to be placed 'nearby without any given verbal connection.'[224] In *Variable Piece #39, 1969***,** he printed twenty-one proofs taken from the televised movie "King Kong" and then asked six Bradford girls to each choose a word beginning with "K" that best expressed the photograph. They chose Kooky, Kittenish, Kosher, Kinky, Killjoy, and Kissable. This process aligned with pop

[223] Alberro and Norvell, 147.
[224] Paul, n.p. Huebler's text for *Variable Piece #39, Bradford, Massachusetts,* April 1969.

artists such as Warhol who appropriated film footage and allowed others to make the art. But whereas both Huebler and Warhol used everyday imagery gleaned from popular media sources, Warhol let his imagery speak for itself and did not use language as a primary tactic for diversion.

The artist who seems closest to Huebler in linguistic procedure with his photographs and captions is his colleague at CalArts, John Baldessari. As early as 1969, Baldessari had actively commissioned others to produce his work under their own name and choice of subject, such as *A Painting by Sam Jacoby* (1969) of a leaf, which he then photographed with an unidentified index finger pointing toward the leaf. This painting was technically a readymade 'found' image altered by Baldessari, similar to Duchamp's last painting *Tu 'm* (1918) with its imperative indexical finger amidst shadows of the readymade hat rack, corkscrew, and bicycle wheel. The fact that Baldessari asked 'Sam Jacoby' to produce the painting and altered it within certain highly structured parameters is in line with Huebler's sensibilities. While both artists often asked others to help produce their work, Baldessari's finished photographs assume a more composed arrangement than Huebler's whose photographs were candid and focused on the continuing social interaction of artist and subject to produce the work. Baldessari's *Blasted Allegories* (1978) of still photographs taken from television were arranged diachronically and synchronically; he allowed his assistants to place boldly printed words over the subjects' faces, such as STEELY, SPOT, STREAK, or STOIC, provoking whatever might come to mind from the associations of word, color, and image. Both Baldessari and

Huebler employ particularly assertive adjectives and nouns conjoined with their images although Baldessari's words are perhaps more purposefully confounding. Both artists frequently deny any sequential arrangement of their photographs according to the parameters of the work, here with *Blasted Allegories* and, for Huebler, within such procedures as skewing the photographs of Bernd Becher discussed earlier.

Sometimes Huebler did arrange his work in chronological order, as in *Duration Piece #14, Bradford, Mass, May 1, 1970*, a study of facial reactions of six friends photographed as a group over a consecutive seven-day period. Beginning at 6 p.m. he photographed them exactly five seconds after they had read a different flash card with one of the following six pairs of words and one 'free choice' card: NOTHING/ANYTHING, SCREWING/EATING, BIRTH/DEATH, PEACE/WAR, MONSTER/KITTEN, and HATE/LOVE.[225] Each person was instructed to 'think of nothing other than *one* of the two words printed on the sign but in no way to allow that thought to be expressed on his, or her, face.' Can a facial expression ever definitively match a word and, vice versa, can a word or phrase really dominate a facial expression? Could there be a psychoanalytical component here, perhaps to detect unconscious association? Huebler compounds the idea by having a person other than himself hold up the paired words, revealing neither the words nor their order to him as snaps the picture and later displays them in sequence. Sequencing would show how the words affect the expressions in certain degrees over the

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[225] Klaus Honnef, exhibition catalogue *Douglas Huebler,* Westfählischer Kunstverein, Münster, December 17, 1972 – January 28, 1973, co-sponsored by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1972. The seven photographs of the group in *Duration Piece #14* appear in this catalogue.

duration of the project. The result is a presentation of a postured test to expose people's feelings about certain words, some neutral and others less so, but it is also Huebler's construction of an ironically impossible task—to photograph what cannot be fully represented since feelings are exclusively in the minds of the participants.

Dan Graham's arbitrary *schema* of word systems (such as the percentage of adverbs or infinitives needed in an art essay) in 1966 may have some relevance here: Schema is function, not form. Huebler's schema is a language operation or linguistic model presented as a participatory assignment in order to make appearance become the responsibility of the viewer, as one who perhaps attempts to perceive relationships that in fact cannot be seen. Considered another way, Huebler's schema in *Duration Piece #14* has both opaque and transparent meaning—opaque in that the facial expressions cannot reveal all and transparent in that they may reveal something (if even self-control). This work is doubly self-reflective as the facial expression reflects the word while trying to hide it and the word may or may not reflect the expression.

In his essay on the development of photography as conceptual art, Jeff Wall makes an analogy between Huebler's use of the text to empty the photograph of its 'compelling social subject matter' and a similar emergence in early twentieth century painting to base formal composition on structure:

> The more [Huebler's] assignment is emptied of what could normatively be considered to be compelling social subject matter, the more visible it is simply as an instance of a structure, an order, and the more clearly it can be experienced as a model of relationships between writing and photography. By emptying subject matter from

> his practice of photography, Huebler recapitulates important aspects of the development of modernist painting.[226]

For Wall, the 'important aspects' of modernist painting is probably a reference to the broad Greenbergian history of modern painting from Cezanne to Picasso to Mondrian—as an art increasingly focused on its own terms and structure. Huebler, of course, was not concerned with formal composition of the photograph per se but instead with fabricating a linguistic strategy for his photographs. What is clear in Wall's statement is his recognition of Huebler's modeling of a relational structure of photograph to language. Roland Barthes, in his essay *The Structuralist Activity* (1963), sets forth two operations in structuralism: dissection and articulation. "Structural man takes the real, decomposes it, then recomposes it" in order to make certain functions appear in "a new language which speaks *him* in his turn."[227] Barthes continues that, as with artists such as Mondrian and others, "their present being *is* their past act" and, in what to me is his most meaningful phrase, "like the ancient soothsayer, he [the artist] speaks the locus of meaning but does not name it."[228]

Jeff Wall, like Huebler, is well aware that photography could serve as the most neutral 'anti-object' for conceptual art, thus allowing the potential for an interrogation of its own separate historical development. By the mid1960s, artists

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[226] Jeff Wall, " 'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography In, or As, Conceptual Art" in Goldstein and Rorimer, 257.
[227] Roland Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity" in *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 215 and 220.
[228] Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity," 219.

such as Wall and Huebler began to use photography as a medium to analyze its own purpose. Wall remarks on Huebler's part in this endeavor:

> Huebler's works allow us to contemplate the condition of 'depictivity' itself and imply that it is this contradiction between the unavoidable process of depicting appearances, and the equally unavoidable process of making objects, that permits photography to become a model of an art whose subject matter is the idea of art.[229]

Depictivity is an intrinsic condition of photography in conceptual art—it depicts appearances without being an object like a painting or sculpture that depicts something. Photography works somewhere between process and object. The Polaroid moment of instantaneity allowed Huebler to claim a de-skilling of the formal composition (anyone can make it), as well as a method for spontaneous social engagement to activate his text—all without the cumbersome making of an object. He does not want to add more 'things' to the world. Wall says that Huebler's work allows us to contemplate depictivy in photography when the subject matter is really the idea of art. Huebler's idea is to depict his system of negotiation between photographic appearance and its accompanying text. Often the dialectic between his succinctly written proposals and the photograph is his method of parody, giving photography a more radical lease to question traditional aesthetics. His strategy of emptying aesthetic content opened the procedure for expansion, as a kind of photographic allegory, generating ideas by questioning the textual encumbrances.

Similar to deKooning allowing Rauschenberg to erase his drawing, Huebler relinquished the authoritative hand and opened the channels for others to take part in *Location Piece #7, New York* (1971) (fig. 21), his contribution to the collaborative

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[229] Wall, 258.

Projects: Pier 18, 1971. Pier 18 was an abandoned spot in Lower Manhattan, a waterfront structure suffering from years of neglect, devoid of any notable history and scheduled for demolition—the perfect site for a collaborative art project on the concepts of vacancy. For the collaborators, there was no intention of valorizing the site's urban identity or enhancing its appearance. Curated by critic Willoughby Sharp, the project involved twenty-seven artists, including Dan Graham, Allen Ruppersberg, John Baldessari, Lawrence Weiner, Richard Serra, Gordon Matta-Clark, Douglas Huebler and others. They documented the pier's demise in various ways in 1970 and produced the 1971 MoMA photographic exhibition *Projects: Pier 18.* The entire project is examined in an insightful anthology *Mixed Use, Manhattan: Photography and Related Practices, 1970s to the Present* (2002), edited by Lynn Cooke and Douglas Crimp. The project implies a statement against urban development in this Chelsea area pier which, at the time, was a free spot for activities. Professional photographers Harry Shunk and Janos Kender were asked to document each artist's performance or process and usually there was no audience. The black and white photographs were the final product, intended for museum display and catalogue publication.[230]

Working on the rotten boards of this dilapidated pier strewn with debris**,** Huebler instructed Shunk and Kender to photograph the 'best aesthetic' views of New York from Pier 18 by shooting two long views and two short views and to mark each place where they stood with a white X in chalk:

A chalk mark 'X' will locate the place where the photographers

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[230] Lynn Cooke and Douglas Crimp, with Kristin Poor, *Mixed Use, Manhattan: Photography and Related Practices, 1970s to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 34.

> stood to make each photograph and, in turn, each such place will be photographed. Finally, I [Huebler] will visit the site, locate the 'X' marks and from the same positions photographically document the aesthetic views of Pier 18 as selected by Mr. Shunk and Mr. Kender.

For the catalogue arrangement of the work, Huebler used a bold grid arrangement of nine square photographs, giving each of the vantage points equal placement but shuffling the sequence. He tells us that he returned to the site to photographically document Shunk and Kender's aesthetic views, but he does not specify whether he used their photographs or his own in the final arrangement. He has created an authorial aporia opened by the text. Are the photos by the professionals or by Huebler himself or does it matter? Even if the shots of both parties were identical, the instructions specified that the shots be differently intended. However, it is worth noting that we are not told whether Shunk and Kender actually followed Huebler's directive to the letter or whether they chose irony in shooting 'aesthetic' views, for instance, like mocking a conventionally 'beautiful' postcard or an earlier pictorial style, for instance, Alfred Stieglitz's photography of harbors of New York City. Nonetheless, we do know that Huebler's shots are determined by Shunk and Kender's choices and his stipulations. Huebler dictates the procedure, plays a part in the decision-making about the site, and completely reconstructs any pictorial aesthetic of his two colleagues. The shuffling procedure of the photographs submerged any subjective aesthetic in favor of random placement of the photographs as locational documentation. The result may look a bit like a tic-tac-toe game in chalk but it clearly extracts his ideas on disorder and chance within an objective methodology. Huebler explains how he achieves the 'now' as a presence by using chance and disorder as a disjunctive strategy:

> The play of equivalence between photographs and the statement that accompanies them is disturbed by a disjunction which allows chance and disorder to enter the system… A present emerges from these interactions, a 'now' that comes to life because it is enmeshed in a textual and visual fabric from which it needs to be extracted at every turn.[231]

In asking professional photographers to take over part of the procedure in *Pier 18*, he emphatically distanced himself from their 'aesthetic' decisions in favor of a different interpretation—using disorder to locate the 'now' of his procedure. The collaborative project is fruitful in its temporal and spatial disorientation of the original pier site, now automatically emptied into the conceptual space of urban social action.

Location, for Huebler, is more than a retinal aspect of art, or what he called "an experience located at the ends of the eyeballs," when he stated:

> Location as a phenomenon of space and time has been transposed by most art forms into manifestations of visual equivalence: that is, an experience located at the ends of the eyeballs. I am interested in transposing location directly in 'present' time by eliminating things, the appearance of things, and appearance itself. The documents carry out that role using language, photographs and systems in time and location.[232]

Klaus Honnef, curator for Huebler's 1972 exhibition in Germany at Westfählischer Kunstverein, has noted the importance of structure in Huebler's work, calling it "structures of actuality that stand behind and so determine the phenomena. Appearances do not interest him."[233] This sounds like some of Baldessari's structural procedures as well; an interest, not in the actual appearance of the

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[231] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 140.
[232] Honnef, n.p. Huebler's catalogue statement for Westfählischer Kunstverein.
[233] Honnef, 4.

photograph, but in how the image can be transposed by the conditions of the system.

And so the nebulous concept of appearance now returns in *Pier 18*, this time as a neutral quality that nevertheless is averse to the traditional conventions of photography that gave it a quality of aesthetics. A few years earlier, Huebler was asked during an interview for the *Prospect '69* exhibition catalogue (1969) in Düsseldorf, "Aren't the photographs *appearance*?" to which he replied:

> Photographs usually are made with that in mind. I use the camera as a 'dumb' copying device that only serves to document whatever phenomena appears before it through the condition set by a system. No 'aesthetic' choices are possible. Other people often make the photographs. It makes no difference. What may be documented that has appearance in the world actually is returned to itself as only that [and] as nothing that has to do with the piece.[234]

The camera as Huebler's 'dumb' copying device has been mentioned earlier. He employs the camera as a functionary mechanism to expedite his system, to document an appearance taken from the world but attains status only as a neutral component within the context of the work. If appearance is, as he says above, 'returned to itself' this could seem an act of denotation, a kind of tautology—shifting from the real world to photography and back again, but here in a context which now demands further scrutiny. This borrowing and return of appearance consists of more than a tautological turn since, even though it 'has nothing to do with the piece,' it assumes a vital role in the structure of the work. Appearance is actually captured and temporarily 'suspended' from reality, as he has said many times, into the form of a photograph and then it goes back to its normal place, or 'returned to itself' as

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[234] Fischer and Strelow, *Prospect '69*, n.p.

everyday observation and everything in the world continues as usual. Up to this point in my discussion, what has perhaps been related as a conundrum in his work—the varying degrees of Huebler's views about appearance—is not as unstable as I first imagined. I hereby posit that appearance, in Huebler's sense of the word, is neither negative nor positive, but a neutral aspect of looking and seeing the everyday world that serves as a necessary condition for his photographic strategy. The philosopher and film critic Stanley Cavell understood photography in film as a "succession of automatic world projections"[235] which is in line with Huebler, not as much in its automatic mechanical technique as in a broader regard for the intrinsic ontological automatism of the medium—photography cannot help but depict 'the everyday' in succession.

Returning to the Pier 18 project, Huebler's personal process of distancing himself from the work is useful here: "My distance is to me a necessary posture so that I don't get in the way. I don't want to get in the way of what I assume could happen."[236] What *could* happen tosses in a wildcard of chance at Pier 18, thus opening the depictive process to its own making, aided by the percipients Shunk and Kender as co-producers in a temporal act. *Pier 18* is, since his mapping projects, a return to site specificity for Huebler—he links the site of a marginal area of Manhattan with what Shunk and Kender could have seen as an artistically pleasing skyline across the river. The short views earmarked with an X emphatically situate the procedure. They are less a view of neglected still life debris than of his system to

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[235] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1979), 72-73.
[236] Auping, 38.

mark the temporality of the site. Each X negates the surrounding aesthetics and calls attention to the immediate and literal procedure of marking. The 'aesthetic' views become unmoored. In another sense, the X-ing out can imply an act of vacating, or designating an absence of something, not as artist in absentia but as a literal reflexive crossmark to show exactly how a photograph can intersect a sense of presence with absence. Douglas Crimp, in his essay "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism" (1980), relates how the postmodernist photograph uses absence to effect presence "through its unbridgeable distance from the original, or even the possibility of an original."[237] Crimp explicates Walter Benjamin's notion of the aura of the work of art, which "withers" under the mechanical reproduction of photographic copies,[238] as anything but a lamentable situation. Instead photography performs an "emptying operation," which is "the depletion of aura" from the hand or brush of the artist, in order to attain its fulfilled presence through "the uncontrolled and uncontrollable intrusion of reality, the absolutely unique and even magical quality not of the artist but of his subject."[239] Huebler stated several times that his procedure was one of emptying, to get rid of preconceived assumptions about the content in a photograph and, through his language, restructure its relationship to the viewer. As Robert Morgan considers it, absence in Huebler's work is transformed into a significantly restructured "presence" (a word with many uneasy connotations), yet Morgan states: "The key to the Conceptualism of Huebler is the manner in which structure adheres to absence, and by adhering to

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[237] Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism" in *October* 15 (Winter, 1980), 94.
[238] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 221.
[239] Crimp, 95.

absence, eventually transforms itself into presence…meaning is reconstructed upon the ruins of former assumptions about meaning."[240]

The *Pier 18* project is an allegory of ruin—its impulse is to be redeemed as a new work, a process described by both Walter Benjamin and Craig Owens in their landmark essays on the topic. The lower Manhattan site is similar to Robert Smithson's industrial wasteland of Passaic, New Jersey, a *site* in the real world where the art originates and is produced, sometimes a place whose original function has waned, as opposed to a Smithson's *non-site* of the gallery or museum. This differentiation seems straightforward until we consider how Smithson elaborated on the non-site in a 1970 interview with *Pier 18*'s curator Willoughby Sharp in the first issue of *Avalanche:*

> There's a central focus point which is the non-site; the site is the unfocused fringe where your mind loses its boundaries and a sense of the oceanic pervades, as it were… One might even say that the place has absconded or been lost. [The non-site] is a map that will take you somewhere, but when you get there you won't really know where you are. In some sense, the non-site is the centre of the system, and the site itself is the fringe or edge.[241]

By saying 'in some sense, the non-site is the center of the system,' Smithson is referring to the art world's focus on what *they see* in the gallery with everything else at the fringe. They are regarding the objects that have been removed and displaced from the site and the photographs that document the production of the work. Smithson's *site* as the 'fringe where your mind loses its boundaries and a sense of the oceanic pervades' takes on his metaphysical even elegiac tone, and this fringe

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[240] Robert C. Morgan, "Huebler's Phenomenology" in Paul, 188.
[241] Cooke and Crimp, 41. Smithson's quote originally appeared in the first issue of *Avalanche,* (1970), 67.

(the site itself in this alternate context) now seems to be inverted into another place. The photograph, as a non-site 'fringe' is a displacement in the gallery, one which can now become a structural component for an art system. While there might be some faint analogy here between the art world system and Huebler's innate structural activity—both require critique between the photograph exhibited and the language that structures it—a narrowed focus is necessary in order to see that Huebler's non-site photographs function in his system with the capacity for variable linguistic interpretations with captions and instructions for procedure. His photographs in the *Pier 18* project show both the long and short views, the Xs giving literal displacement while the harbor skyline is a geographic and symbolic connection to the non-site, the art world. Huebler's photography is transformed by the un-doing effects of the procedure, beyond the aporia of trying to imagine who shot which photographs, toward that Smithson feeling of 'when you get there you won't really know where you are.' We know the location is Pier 18 but, as we look down at the rotten wood of the dock and out at the distant skyline, the site takes on the anonymous look of anywhere in any city with its crumbling environs waiting for renewal.

To further complicate the 'aesthetic ' views of the skyline interspersed with the dock debris and the locational X marks, Huebler's composite arrangement of the photographs is non-sequential. He had instructed Shunk and Kender to interact with his own methods of marking location and he then presented the photographs in an arrangement that begs reconstruction. This is not unlike the fragmentation of a movie in which the film editor produces flashbacks and voice-over from multiple

characters, perhaps in complete reverse sequence like the film *Memento,* to make the spectator try to piece together a confusing stream in constant flux. Anne Pontégnie writes about the effect of fluctuating multiple 'points of view' upon the viewer:

> [The spectator] is forced to constantly shift his ground until he can be sure of nothing at all, except that meaning is constantly fluctuating. The work opens itself to the spectator because it multiplies the points of view, sets the center in motion and makes it disappear. As such, it is connected with the multiple upheavals that the habits of representation and narration were going through at that time, upheavals which resulted primarily from a refusal to impose a truth, to objectify meaning.[242]

In her statement here Pontégnie mentions 'multiple upheavals' in art at the time (we may assume she means of the late 1960s and 1970s) but she does not clarify what these disturbances in representation and narration were, other than to say that now 'meaning is constantly fluctuating,' nor does she tell us what is at stake in this shifting, that is, what is at stake in the legacy of conceptual art. She does say that the upheavals 'resulted primarily from a refusal *to impose a truth.'* Here is a clue to our understanding of Huebler's operations. The effect on the viewer when confronted with his use of shifting multiple viewpoints, such as the non-authorial positioning in his *Pier 18* photographs, is not so much confusion but the realization that Huebler refuses to impose a truth upon us. I believe that the meaning at stake may be of broader import than merely the shifting viewpoints with multiple meanings. Huebler allows an openness to allow the viewer to see multiple ways of regarding 'the truth' when others such as Kosuth were touting tautological

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[242] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 142.

limitations on art. The stakes in conceptual art were high. This openness to utilizing the real world from all its viewpoints, particularly in social aspects, has given conceptual art a lasting legacy taken up by many artists in the decades after Huebler.

By 1971, Huebler's captions could subvert his imagery to the effect that they produce doubt or suspicion on the part of the viewer. In *Variable Piece #70, (In Process) Global, 1971, 90F (Blue Series)* (fig. 22), he has blurred and tinted a series of eight photographs taken from pornographic magazines. His accompanying statement could cause some discomforting assumptions: "At least one person who might feel extremely embarrassed if his, or her, mother were ever to see the whole picture." Part of the *Everyone Alive* series, these 'portraits' first show four possibly identifiable faces under the orange tinting, while the next four faces under blue tinting have been 'screened', according to his statement, and 'are not meant to be included in the context' of the piece. This is a curious stipulation. Why are the blue screened faces to be taken out of the context? Huebler requires a careful analysis of the variables of context. We might first assume that the person or persons who might feel embarrassed are those whose faces are screened, but if so, they are *in* the context, narrowly speaking. For those not meant to be included in the context, the conditions must be expanded. Huebler may be pointing to a person who is not in the photograph, which gives us more possibilities: someone who is different (another person outside the realm of his 'at least one person'), or alternately, someone not in the picture who would be embarrassed if his or her mother saw 'the whole picture' of their interest in pornography. After all, we are not told what he

means by the whole picture. So there are several scenarios and we are left to question what Huebler means by *context*, other than to realize that he has opened it.

The nearly opaque screening partially hides the blue shadowy figures in acts that are suggested but not quite discernible. By allowing the viewer only the most obscured visibility, our voyeuristic scrutiny turns into a frustrated joke, which in turn provokes the realization that Huebler intends something more meaningful. Pornography is not the issue here. Huebler could appear to be perhaps mocking the stereotypical characteristics of a clandestine sex trade—hidden sexual pleasure, the threat of exposure, banal photography—but this is a façade. Behind it lies his persistent question to the viewer: how can language reconstruct visual appearance? His is a method of making sure that the pornographic images do not become the focus, in other words, that no one mistakes their appearance for the overarching idea—the viewer is left to consider if images or text can reveal truth when the context is always variable.

Huebler left Bradford Junior College in 1973, divorced his wife Mary, and moved to Boston where he began teaching at Harvard as a visiting artist from 1974 to 1975. Despite personal and professional change in his life, this period proved to be a stimulating time for him, one that was not without a sense of humor. *Duration Piece #31, Boston* (1974) (Fig. 23) revels in capturing an amusing method of situating time's passage into the New Year. His text for the piece reads

> On December 31, 1973 a young woman was photographed at the exact instant in time determined to be exactly 1/8th of a second before midnight. Insasmuch as the aperture of the camera was set at "4", (1/4th of a second) the image on the film became "complete" 1/8th of a second past midnight: put another way, after the first 1/8th of a second had elapsed.

> As the subject of the photograph faced towards the south the left side of her body was oriented toward the west; as time "moves" from east to west, the photograph represents the young woman during an instant when approximately half of her body had entered the new year, 1974: indeed, consistent with the spirit of the season she wears the costume of the *New Year Baby.*
> One photograph joins this statement as the form of this piece.
> January, 1974

Wearing the costume of the New Year Baby and partially covered with a towel, the seated woman smokes and smiles confidently as the camera, possibly operated by the artist, records the midnight hour conceptually in f-stop fractions across her body: at exactly 1/8th of a second before midnight (the aperture of the camera was set at 4 or 1/4th of a second), so the image on the film became 'complete' 1/8th of a second past midnight. Since Huebler states that the young woman was facing south, her left (west) side is in 1973 and her right (east) side is in 1974, so we assume that her body is literally moving west in Greenwich time across zones. The woman is unidentified, the setting is undisclosed, and there is no sexual innuendo in the text. The recording of split seconds shows Huebler's keen interest in concentrating on framing a time span in relation to but separate from visual appearance. In 1972, Huebler had voiced his operation to document duration in a spatial manner: "My concern is time in space and its duration beyond the moment, its duration elsewhere, its duration simultaneously with other things."[243] Mel Bochner once stated "When forced to surrender its transparency, measurement reveals an essential nothingness… something must be added to the yardstick in order to assert anything about the length of the object. This something is a purely

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[243] Lippard, "Time: a Panel Discussion," *Art International* (November 1969), 20. Also in Seth Siegelaub Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, File I.A.38.

mental act. . . 'an assumption.'"[244] The assumption is a mental construct to put measurement into a context. Huebler mechanically documents precise duration (in 1/8th seconds) as a calendrical yardstick, neither of which we can see with the naked eye, while 'half of the body existed within the old year, half in the new.' He applies these kinds of duration to an appearance that does not depict it even though his text implies that time can be situated and located.

The text in this piece assumes a mental act of 'locating' something abstract onto corporeal material, the female nude, as the object of attention. This photo reminds one of Dürer's woodblock (1525) of a reclining woman as the model for the artist's foreshortened perspective drawing as he views and frames her feet-first through a large grid (fig. 24). The artist in Dürer's print, perhaps Dürer himself, appears to have no associative distraction other than concentration on his system, although a viewer might perceive sexual undertones of the male gaze upon this passive female. Archie Bunker would call this kind of looking an 'insinuendo' meaning half sin, half hint even though no words are spoken. And, we could assume that the measurement of seconds to record the New Year could perhaps be Huebler's sole interest but I do not believe this to be the case. In the photograph, the nude woman smiles directly at the camera and, even though the text is oblivious to any hint of sexuality, the eroticism cannot be ignored. Much has been written about the gaze in relation to gender and photography. Feminist film critic Laura Mulvey, in her *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), considers how Freud's scopophilia, the pleasure of looking as well as the pleasure of being looked at, is

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[244] Mel Bochner in "Mel Bochner," *Data II,* 2 (February 1972), 64. Also in Rorimer, 184-185.

conventionally associated in film with the active male looking at the passive female as a sexual object. Often the woman "holds the look, plays to, and signifies male desire."[245] Huebler's nude plays to the gaze, returning it to the camera with a smile as she holds the cigarette in one hand and towel in the other, body language of sexualized relaxation. Mulvey notes that "the presence of woman is an indispensable element of the spectacle in normal narrative in film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation."[246] Does Huebler's nude work *against* his text, a distraction to freeze the flow of his procedure? Not necessarily, however he makes her "the bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" as Mulvey describes "the silent image of woman still tied to her place."[247] This is not to imply that Huebler consciously controls this woman or that she is oppressed by her station in any way—what he does control is the structure of the piece, its systematic procedure in both duration and location as a photographic strategy.

Art historian and curator Juli Carson discusses Huebler's nude in *Duration Piece #31, Boston,* and how the work interacts with the mind of the viewer to conceptualize its durations:

> In Huebler's hands, the mind of the viewer becomes the converse vanishing point opposite the woman's image… facilitated by the photograph's capacity, as an indexical sign, to mark the passage of time… The 'individual object,' or the nude woman situated *looking* south, is thus mediated by the photographic of time's passage moving from east to west, subsequently presenting a perfect perspectival grid

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[245] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, edited by Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 363 and 366.
[246] Mulvey, 366.
[247] Mulvey, 362.

> that converges upon the viewing subject who looks north (occupying the symbolically privileged cardinal point for the four directional axes).[248]

As a feminist writer, Carson refers to the nude as the object whereas Huebler's text refers to the woman as the subject of the photograph, calling the question of the nude's place in relation to his text. Carson's observation of the viewer stationed at 'the symbolically privileged cardinal point' has a certain directional bias toward geographic orientation but then most maps do orient north, and she writes from the point of contemporary art informed by psychoanalysis. Her notion of a perfect perspectival grid brings back to mind Dürer's situated viewpoint of the nude. Carson further notes that *Duration #13, Boston,* is "a prime example of the dematerialist's reliance on the Cartesian ego," that the conceptualist is concerned with the private space of the mind, where the authorial ego works, as Carson says, "within a psychic plane, equally Cartesian in its illusionism, in order for a given work to signify its meaning."[249] I do not argue with her opinion since Huebler's project here does rely on the text and photograph to create the illusion in our minds, on what Carson calls a 'psychic plane,' in regard to a subconscious notion of the nude's sexuality.

Walter Benjamin in his essay "A Short History of Photography" (1931) considered an aspect of photography that he called 'the optical unconscious:'

> It is indeed a different nature that speaks to the camera from the one which addresses the eye; different above all in the sense that instead

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[248] Juli Carson, "(Re)Viewing Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document,"* in *Documents,* no.13 (Fall 1998), 44.

[249] Carson, 43. As Decartes conceived of the self in his *Meditations,* one aspect of being is that it is capable of a disembodied existence, that is, in the mind.

> of a space worked through by a human consciousness there appears one which is affected unconsciously… Photography makes aware for the first time the optical unconscious, just as psychoanalysis discloses the instinctual unconscious.[250]

Despite Huebler's statement that the camera is a dumb device, his photoconceptual strategies begin to reveal an investigation into a type of optical unconscious, not so much in a Freudian sensibility, but in raising the question of whether there is a 'different nature that speaks to the camera' by virtue of the fact that it is mediated by its companioned photographs and statements. In examples here, I shall consider how he sets up scenarios that ask the viewer to perceive relationships that cannot be seen literally when comparing one set of photographs to another but that may be inferred by his statements or, as Benjamin states above, by a nature that speaks to the camera from something which is affected unconsciously. We cannot be sure from *whom* this unconscious 'speaks,' whether from the artist, the image with text, the spectator, or the collective of them all.

When Huebler's photograph is precisely what it is not, because its companion text seems not to relate to what we see, a gap is opened making us wonder why there is such a collision and how can the gap be filled. At CalArts, both Huebler and Baldessari were interested in how the mind works when confronted with such a conundrum. Baldessari made the viewer think about what is *not* there by blocking out parts of his photographs or filing the gap with embedded subliminal messages that the eye cannot see. Writing about his *Embedded Series* (1974), Baldessari typed the following on an index card to accompany the photographs:

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[250] Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 7.

> At best, this embedded information can possibly be perceived on a subliminal level rather than a conscious one. At the least, this devise offers a method of literally wedding words with images without the dualism of text adjoining images. Another motivation was to test the idea of subliminal motivation. Can I really get one to believe the message I have hidden about imagining, dreaming, fantasies, wish, and hope?

Baldessari is testing the viewer with pluralities of possibility. In his essay entitled "What Do You Do?" Tim Griffin notes that Baldessari considers himself "an irritant" in the sense that the gap he creates between image and word is not just a disturbed distance without resolution but, to Griffin, it serves as a "liminal contingency …renewing the relevance to our mind of all the options (even the conventional ones)."[251] Douglas Huebler has not described his own photoconceptual strategies as irritants, yet he clearly creates a dissonance between image and word that may create subliminal messages in the viewer's mind, such as the perhaps unconscious sexual implications of the nude at midnight in the above *Duration Piece #31.* Even if this is not meant to be implied, both Huebler and Baldessari use what is not seen to open perception.

Occasionally the *Everyone Alive* project would include anonymous figures cropped from other photographs and placed in radically periodized time frames, as in *Variable Piece #70, 1971, 633* (fig. 25):

> At least three people alive [in] the XXth Century whom the XVIIth Century artist, Artemisia Gentileschi, very likely would choose as models for her representation of a VIth Century B.C. event—if she were to paint it today.[252]

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[251] Tim Griffin, "What Do You Do?" in *John Baldessari: Pure Beauty,* exhibition catalogue edited by Jessica Morgan and Leslie Jones (London: Tate Modern, in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009), 199.
[252] Paul, 141-142.

This statement could have been creatively used in Huebler's classroom as a Baroque art history lesson. He placed these faces alongside Gentileschi's painting *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (c.1614-1620) in his 1978 exhibition in Limoges. As related in the Apocrypha, the young Jewess Judith and her maidservant trick the enemy Assyrian general, behead him, and save the Jews from destruction. From his repository of street photographs, Huebler cropped faces into these equally sized 'portraits,' here in a grid-like arrangement of nine, some of which are quite blurred.[253] The quality of the photographs is of little concern, only that the faces are of people 'alive in the XXth Century' and that 'few are individually distinguishable,' as he has typed in the full statement. From these, Huebler designates Artemisia's possible choices within his arrangement: a Maidservant from Row A, Holofernes from Row B, and the heroine Judith from Row C. (Huebler does not designate the rows A-C as vertical or horizontal although we might assume that Holofernes could be found among the vertical three men). The phrases 'at least three people' or 'very likely' are his way to express the possibility of variable outcomes, not merely by finding look-alikes between the masterpiece and his photographs but by expanding the concept of how the viewer makes such associations about appearance. As Walter Benjamin observed, the automation of the camera and the captions for a photograph can generate what cannot be done in painting since "the most exact technique can give its products a magical value which a painted picture can no

[253] Paul, 141-142. Huebler's text in the exhibition catalogue states that fifteen one-inch portraits were selected for this piece and more than 90 photographs join with his statement, alongside the photographic reproduction of Gentileschi's *Judith Beheading Holofernes.*

longer have for us."[254] Huebler copies, crops, enlarges, and sometimes retouches his photographs—techniques which give it this 'magical value' of which Benjamin speaks—enhanced by a caption that now swells into conjectural fictional narrative (*if* she were to paint it today).

Huebler's Gentileschi text is in the absurdist genre—as mentioned earlier, he abhorred literature in art, considering it myth—so here he likely intended his language as parody on periodizing time. The overwrought and highly specific description for the scenario—hypothetically leaping back and forth across Roman numeraled centuries—is at once diachronic and synchronic. This operation of time is not unlike Huebler's drawings and map work discussed in previous chapters, in that space is simultaneously framed and unframed, constructed and deconstructed.

The thinking of philosopher Nelson Goodman, in his primary work on aesthetics *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (1968), is useful in interpreting Douglas Huebler's use of photograph and language. Goodman, throughout his book, discusses his two modes of symbol referencing: 1) *Denotation* is a "labeling" or act of designating the relationships between labels, such as words, pictures, or music notation, and what they point to or designate; I may use, for example, the words *blue vase* to denote an accompanying illustration of a vase that possesses the color blue which, at this pointing, remains within the categories of blue and vase but does not refer to something else. Here we have 'denotational symbols' as labels with their given sets, blue is a color and vase is a container.

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[254] Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 7.

2) *Exemplification* shows not only what is denoted by the label, but something which, by its very nature, possesses *more* features than the label can denote and becomes a symbol of referral in chains of reference, such as a painting or a photograph of a Chinese vase in a particular style, or a musical performance of a Bach cantata which will always have different nuances of expression. Goodman regards language's function as one of articulating in careful denotation while image has the fuel to explicate an idea about itself. Although Goodman does not specifically discuss the photograph, his notion of pictorial representation—as an image within a symbol system—is relevant to my discussion of explication as it will relate to Douglas Huebler's work. A representation could be a picture, a verbal description, or any denoted symbol within a relational system, that is, as the picture or word relates by pointing to other symbols in the given system:

> Nothing is intrinsically a representation; status as representation is relative to symbol system. A picture in one system may be a description in another; and whether a denoting symbol is representational depends not upon whether it resembles what it denotes but upon its own relationship to other symbols in a given system. A system is representational only insofar as it is dense; and a symbol is a representation only if it belongs to a system dense throughout or to a dense part of a partially dense system. Such a symbol may be a representation even if it denotes nothing at all.[255]

'A picture in one system may be a description in another' means that some of the depicted characteristics may be denotational while simultaneously exemplifying other features. That is, one image can have different functions according to the degrees of density of its system. This notion of density in symbolic representation is

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[255] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, second ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 226.

used frequently in his text. For Goodman, density means the extent of possibilities for symbolic relationships within a given system, more dense indicates more complex levels of symbolic representation in the picture's chains of referral.

Now let us see how Douglas Huebler's photographs and text for his Artemisia Gentileschi piece, entitled *Variable Piece #70, 1971, 633,* may be analyzed according to Goodman's theory of symbols. Huebler's text symbolically denotes or points to his photographs of 'people alive from the XXth century,' a proscribed set designated within his time frame and by the adjective as predicate 'alive.' These two descriptors hint at a larger reading about the people, nevertheless, they remain within his limited parameter as a contextual subset of the system. The sentence becomes explicated when we read that Gentileschi would very likely choose 'at least three of them as models for her representation of a VIth century event.' A photographic reproduction of *Judith Beheading Holefernes* 'appears' adjacent to the 'people alive' group. Using Goodman's theory, this depiction of the painting is a pictorial representation in Huebler's larger symbolic system and is ripe for explication. Nothing is mentioned about resemblances other than that Huebler arranges the rows by gender. Goodman notes that resemblance in his notion of representation is disengaged from any physical process of "mirroring" and is to be recognized as "a symbolic relationship that is relative and variable." [256] Now we begin to see Huebler's intention—to open the variables for relationships within the system, so this is what Goodman would call *density*. Goodman distinguished pictorial symbol systems as syntactically and semantically dense. Syntactically dense here

[256] Goodman, 43.

refers to representations or depictions that, when placed together or in any combination (the syntax), form connecting or relational systems of referral. A syntactic density occurs within Huebler's photographic system in the relational possibilities of XXth century faces with those in *Judith Beheading Holofernes*. For example, the faces in his photographs have syntactical intersection with the faces in Gentileschi's depiction of Holofernes creating subsets as bearded males, or Judith and her maidservant intersecting with the XXth century women who also look down. The photographs depend upon their relationship to each other as integral symbols with variable relationships, all working within the text. To consider these photographs semantically is to determine what they *mean* in relation to each other and to the text as a structural system. We already know that Douglas Huebler was concerned with issues of depictivity and how he could structure language to mediate it. So what do these denoted and explicated relationships in *Variable Piece #70, 1971, 633* mean semantically? They speak directly to Huebler's carefully arranged structure of sets with language to overlap and generate ways to think about Goodman's symbol system of interpretation—opening conceptual doors to read pictorial representation in various ways. It is unclear whether Douglas Huebler was aware of Nelson Goodman's theories but there is an academic tie between the two. Both were teaching at Harvard during 1974-75 during the time that Goodman was Consultant on the Arts for Summer School (1971-77).[257] It is entirely possible, if not likely, that they knew each other.

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[257] Charles Nussbaum, "Nelson Goodman, biography" in *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century,* edited by Chris Murray (London: Routledge, 2003), 148.

Roland Barthes, in his essay "The Photographic Message," analyzes the denotative and connotative aspects of the press photograph, using a less rigid taxonomy than Goodman yet with a particular relevancy to Huebler. For Barthes, the photograph is a "perfect analogon" of reality which, in its pure denotated form, has such fullness or plenitude that it is famously "a message without a code."[258] Indeed an unalloyed analogon needs no code; it contains a verisimilitude so close to what we actually see that visual appearance is merely reduced by film development, neither enhanced nor tarnished. Connotation occurs when the photograph is reconsidered for any type of alteration, such as describing or editing for the media with caption, headline, and article. Although Huebler considered the photograph to be the most neutral medium for appearance (in comparison with a painting or drawing, for instance), it nevertheless assumed a Barthean connotation when he created an accompanying text or caption. Regarding the photograph alone, Barthes explained what he called 'the photographic paradox:'

> In front of a photograph, the feeling of 'denotation', or, if one prefers of analogical plenitude, is so great that the description of a photograph is literally impossible; to *describe* consists precisely in joining to the denoted message a relay or second-order message derived from a code which is that of language and constituting… a connotation: to describe is thus not simply to be imprecise or incomplete, it is to change structures, to signify something different to what is shown.[259]

When held up against Barthes' designations for the press photograph, Huebler's photographs with clichéd captions or instructions for procedure attain this paradoxical quality and carry it further, often creating such a change in structure

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[258] Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *Image-Music-Text*, translated by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 17-18.
[259] Barthes, "The Photographic Message," 18-19.

that a disjuncture occurs between the image and the relay. Although Huebler did not indicate that he had read this particular Barthes's essay on the photograph, he may have known it and taken the paradox to its extension—since it is literally impossible to fully describe a photograph, why not emphasize this impossibility through a structure of captions and procedures posed to divert attention away or even subvert it?

The photographic image alone denotes appearance as an analogon of reality yet, upon our first glimpse, it is instantly transformed by connotation which Barthes regards as coding. As soon as the photograph is seen, the code begins growing upon the very backbone of description. It is true that Barthes was dealing with press photographs that often had some aesthetic intent, and, in this sense, they were different from Huebler's, but an objective application of the code as a loaded text is relevant here. Barthes describes the text employed for a press photograph as a parasitic message: "The image no longer *illustrates* the words; it is now the words which, structurally, are parasitic on the image…the text loads the image, burdening it with a culture, a moral, an imagination."[260] Barthes continues that this process is a "naturalization of the cultural."[261] This is a key to his overarching theme in the essay. When reading the text with image, the process begins an intrinsically natural operation, one in which we cannot help but absorb and relate (relay to the brain) what we see according to who we are and our place in our environment. As Barthes says the text loads the image with 'imagination,' we have seen that Huebler often employs text as a conceptual rupture that forces imagination in a different way.

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[260] Barthes, "The Photographic Message," 25-26.
[261] Barthes, "The Photographic Message," 26.

Huebler's text is a coded language to structure a *distancing* procedure, an operation telling us to step back, to see how the text loads the image in our mind for new analytical strategies. This is not so much an oppositional schemata as it is a naturalized response on our part, to attempt some sort of developmental connection even if agreement is impossible. If his words do not depict what we see, as in the documentation of the New Year upon a nude, then what is the connection between word and image, is there a need for a structure not so enmeshed in taxonomic classifications? There is an intuitive need to impose some order upon what we strive to comprehend. Simply put, we naturally edit the photograph by projecting thoughts based upon our own knowledge and referential perceptions. Just as Huebler expects, we see the work in various ways, hopefully with an open mind, according to our own cultural and social existence. Barthes ends his essay on a redemptive note (with tinges of Walter Benjamin, as I read it) in regard to the paradox of the photograph and its more appealing prospects for society:

> We can do better than to take stock directly of the ideological content of our age; by trying to reconstitute in its specific structure the code of connotation of a mode of communication as important as the press photograph we may hope to find, in their very subtlety, the forms our society uses to insure its peace of mind and to grasp thereby the magnitude, the detours and the underlying function of that activity. The prospect is the more appealing in that, as was said at the beginning, it develops with regard to the photograph in the form of a paradox—that which makes of an inert object a language and which transforms the uncultured of a 'mechanical' art into the most social of institutions.[262]

The examination of our perceptions of look-alikes, faces that may appear to have certain traits, was a motif to be probed throughout much of Huebler's work

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[262] Barthes, "The Photographic Message," 31.

when he relates the visual to the verbal. Now I turn to his perception of faces that are given ephemeral qualities when joined to his text, as he stated that the camera could capture what he called 'the essence' of persons. In *Variable Piece #506, Tower of London Series, London (May/March 1975),* (fig. 26), similar in some ways to his Artemesia Gentileschi piece using pictorial history, he posted reproductions of the oil portraits of "Some Famous Tower Prisoners" —Anne Boleyn, Sir Thomas More, Lady Jane Grey, Thomas Cromwell, Sir Walter Raleigh, and others—alongside hazy views of the crenellated Tower and greatly enlarged photographs of the thickly textured stucco or cement from the stone walls, not unlike the impasto of an abstract expressionist painting. Creating one enlargement of the Tower wall that resembles a shadowy blurred face as a point of reference, he hypothesizes that this image may resemble the 'essence' of some of the prisoners. He wrote his instructions for the piece:

> In March, 1975, indifferently selected aspects of the Tower of London were photographed in order to determine whether examination of various visual characteristics 'caught' by the camera would reveal forms indicating the eternal presence of the essence of some of the individuals once held prisoner in the place; indeed, within one photograph, enlarged for the purpose of this piece, the artist has perceived a number of faces that support the premise of such an hypothesis. For those who might not perceive in the same manner, the artist has produced his perception of several faces, which are joined with previously documented representations of 'Famous Tower Prisoners' and with this statement to constitute the form of this piece.[263]

The text implies that the camera can capture qualities that cannot be seen, a psychic method of taking human 'essences' from forms in a stone wall. This has distinct

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[263] Paul, 113-114.

resonance of Walter Benjamin's statement mentioned earlier that the photograph makes aware the optical subconscious. The greatly enlarged and blurred image taken from the tower's façade is, in my opinion, closer to a vague resemblance of the artist's own face although he might not agree, but after all, he *is* telling us to compare physical traits 'caught by the camera.' He also tells us that 'the artist has perceived a number of faces [within this one enlarged photograph] that support the premise of his hypothesis, implying there are even more images that we cannot see. His phrase 'the eternal presence of the essence of some of the individuals once held prisoner' alludes to a phenomenological feeling of a historical presence created by both the tower and the portraits. Knowing that historical figures have walked the same steps that we walk or seeing their eyes watch us from a portrait can create part of this essence. But if I may again invoke Walter Benjamin to help interpret the Tower of London piece:

> Structural qualities, cellular tissues, which form the natural business of technology and medicine are all much more closely related to the camera than to the atmospheric landscape or the expressive portrait. At the same time photography uncovers in this material physiognomic aspects of pictorial words which live in the smallest things, perceptible yet covert enough to find shelter in daydreams, but which, once enlarged and capable of formulation, show the difference between technology and magic to be entirely a matter of historical variables.[264]

Benjamin was always clear about photography's structural basis as related to the functions of the camera. Here he reveals something beyond the technical—physiognomic aspects of pictorial words, qualities that are nearly imperceptible but 'once enlarged' may be perceived to show that 'technology and magic' are merely

[264] Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 7-8.

historical variables. I do not wish to imply that Huebler was interested in magic; to the contrary, he was concerned with the notion of what functions may be captured by photography and the ways that the operations may be manipulated to create the appearance of an image. Benjamin's idea of 'words covert enough to find shelter in daydreams' may be related to Huebler's term *essence*, a slippery word but nonetheless of importance here. Essence of perception can be a feeling or experience distilled from a photograph, not in a metaphysical ghostly or spiritual way, but as a subtle unconscious transfer, something that becomes inherent upon suggestion. Duchamp, in his undated *Notes* discovered posthumously with his *Green Box* of 1934 and probably penned in 1937, referred to an acutely subtle perception that he called *infra-thin,* the nearly imperceptible but acute sensation of feeling or experiencing closely related differences in phenomena or between objects and actions. Infra-thin also connotes the *anticipation* to perceive the profound in the subtle. If essence is to be perceived, it is a type of infra-thin—a hint of the distillation of some ephemeral quality or fleeting characteristic.

In the case of the Tower piece, Huebler gives no hint as to whether he actually believes in this 'eternal presence' of beings or conversely is making a parody of myth, leaving that up to the viewer. Everything is open to conjecture, as critic Robert C. Morgan has pointed out:

> To make the connection between Huebler's photographic activity and the faces of the prisoners is purely conjectural and based on a kind of pseudo-empiricism, a projection of the imagination into the realm of myth that extends beyond that which is actually signified; whether one actually sees the resemblance that Huebler has indicated is less

> important than the possibility that these faces may hypothetically be embedded within the stone wall.[265]

Morgan's application of *hypothetical* is key, even though he does not expound on the idea. I would elaborate that things are not to be taken literally or even rationally since Huebler's entire oeuvre fits the definition of expanding the imagination in variable and sometimes absurd scenarios. Morgan continues, "Huebler's phenomenology is about the absurd—not as a metaphysical conundrum but as the natural outcome of the impossibility of textural disjuncture."[266] The variables of perception suggested by the two sets of photographs in the Tower of London piece—royalty and modern day commoners—are at once conjoined and disjoined by his text. It is only possible to discover such disjuncture as insight when we examine the ensemble of photographs as a component in the woven layers of Huebler's text, a complex fabric consisting of historical, physiological, and phenomenal substrata, sometimes hiding and other times appearing. Morgan presents us with what appears to be his own aphorism, "Like any palimpsest, Huebler's text over text resists easy access."[267] The typed text gives us phenomenological hints, such as experiencing *presence* or *essence,* that allow us to elide into variable modes of perception. Huebler has related his work to Barthes while adding an experiential aspect to it:

> My work is not easily consumed, in the Barthean sense of the word, in which the reader is engaged in the writing of the material. It happens

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[265] Morgan, 191.
[266] Morgan, 193.
[267] Morgan, 188-189.

> in your head, and you go back to experience yourself experiencing the phenomenon.[268]

Huebler told Frédéric Paul that he read the French philosopher's ideas during college, even though he admits to only partially understanding them at the time.[269] We see Barthes in much of Huebler's methodology: Huebler disavows his own authorship (Huebler's signature and date are merely what Barthes would call the 'paper-I') by stepping back from the work to allow the reader to take ownership. His text expands the common understanding of plurality beyond mere interpretations or filial connectors of a single work into what Barthes called *stereographic plurality*[270]—a crossing over into a vast weave of signifiers, or infinite variables of perception.

Some pieces under Huebler's umbrella of 'documenting the existence of everyone alive' are undated and several contain the subtitle 'in process' since the project can never be completed. I close this chapter with such a work—undated and, more importantly, with no text—from his series *Variable Piece #70 (In Process) Global,* (fig. 27). It is of particular interest due to its understated poignant imagery. We see various people walking on the street or at a park, families playing on the beach, cowboys ready to rope at a ranch—all casual activities, yet Huebler has placed a disturbingly dark image at the top right that requires close attention. Photographed from a television program and with the curved frame of the television set visible, a crowd of what appear to be Asians huddle together, their faces and heads highlighted in chiaroscuro, as if a searchlight is moving across

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[268] Wilson, 54.
[269] Paul, 126. While discussing what he liked to read, Huebler mentioned the Structuralists, Robbe-Grillet, and Barthes, confessing "I was able to divine, perhaps half of it at the time" [in college].
[270] Barthes, "From Work to Text" in *Image-Music-Text*, 159.

them at night. They comprise a cluster of humanity with women holding children, men with brimmed hats or bald heads, each surrounded by grey and black shadowing that somewhat camouflages the situation. They are disembodied faces rendered faceless by the crowd, a material physicality given an immaterial haunting presence by film. In his *Thinking Photography,* Victor Burgin considers photography with no actual writing on or around it to still contain the function of a text with a cultural and historical discourse beyond itself:

> Photographs are *texts* inscribed in terms of what we may call 'photographic discourse'; but this discourse, like any other, engages the site of a complex 'intertextuality,' an overlapping series of previous texts 'taken for granted' at a particular cultural and historical conjuncture.[271]

The textual absence in Huebler's work here is a silence louder than any words he might have given it. The specific reprint of the framed television image was probably reproduced from a media source during the late 1960s or early to mid 1970s and was possibly from his own television in his family's living room. Images from war torn southeast Asia, especially Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, were ever-present on the nightly news during this time, and, like many academics, Huebler actively opposed the Vietnam War. One cannot help but think of Martha Rosler's ongoing *Bringing the War Home* project begun in 1962. In her startlingly silent photomontages appropriated from the media, the camouflaged soldiers crouch in a 'House Beautiful' kitchen as if in a search and destroy mission in Vietnam. Huebler may have interjected what we could call 'optically unconscious essences' from the

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[271] Victor Burgin, *Thinking Photography* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), 144.

war in Vietnam, meaning we could infer a situation from what the news media had projected. The images are nearly camouflaged in blurring and they provoke a different sensibility compared to the other clearly focused scenes. One might further surmise that the focused photographs are of Americans of diverse races enjoying themselves. Huebler could be making a more subtle anti-war statement than Rosler but he leaves it up to us to produce a text. As an example of Huebler's "inclusive representation of the human species," documenting everyone alive takes on new meaning in this work. The unexpected imagery is unsettling but perhaps this piece could go beyond an anti-war statement toward one of unity in diversity or vice versa, diversity in unity. Today we all relate to news coverage by applying a priori associations according to our assumptions about the authority of the media source. During the 1960s and 70s there were few media outlets and those available were generally regarded as reporting accurate information even though a photograph or film coverage may not always have been entirely applicable to the news story. In his photograph of the TV set with its encased image, Huebler points to the medium itself, perhaps asking us to consider it a tool of surveillance or a vehicle for biased information, a mechanism for altering or suppressing appearance to fit political and social ends. Another aspect of his framing the televised image here could be to reveal otherness, the cultural otherness exacerbated by the Vietnam War or merely by race. Jennifer Gonzales, in her essay "The Face and the Public: Race, Secrecy, and Digital Art Practice," reminds us how media determines cultural and racial difference and how images are given the power to do so. Gonzales notes that display of difference seems to undermine any prospect of a

neutral or universal subject, while reducing otherness to "a question of appearance: the domain of visual signs."[272] Huebler uses visual signs in a method to expose his more expansive notion of appearance, showing us that everything we see on the television screen (the typology of Asian faces or the leisurely American lifestyle) is mediated by the domination of visual media in our culture. To expose this power of manipulation, his photography critiques its own methods of hegemony, begging the question of who is in authority within his context and answering that the viewer determines the message.

Huebler once said, "Like [how] a lot of individual splashes of paint become a 'field' in a Pollock, or trees become a 'forest', people become tribes, groups, civilizations, etc."[273] *Everyone Alive* organizes a taxonomic impossibility, an attempt to include that which can never encompass all the complexities of diversity and otherness but proposed to do so. Emmanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961) regards the face as the means to establish ethics in society. He considers the expansiveness of facial expression to be a component to overcome otherness, to reach beyond finite thought:

> The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense, it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed… The idea of infinity, the overflowing of finite thought by its content, effectuates the relation of thought with what exceeds its capacity… This is the situation we call welcome of the face.[274]

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[272] Jennifer Gonzales, "The Face and the Public: Race, Secrecy, and Digital Art Practice" in *Camera Obscura* 70, 24:1, 2009, 38.
[273] Paul, 128.
[274] Emmanuel Levinas, "Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority," translated by Alphonso Lingis from *Totaite et Infini* (1961), (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 1969), 194 and 197.

Just as Douglas Huebler's photographs and language enter into a non-binding and unpredictable co-dependency, his photographs of faces alone begin to reveal 'the relation of thought which exceeds its capacity,' as Levinas put it. Even in a seemingly void expression, the face has boundless content. Perhaps this is why Huebler utilized the image of the face over and over again in variations that he considered limitless in attempt to document *Everyone Alive.* Judith Butler, who disagreed with Levinas on several points in her essay "Precarious Life", does have a similar view about faces when she considers the importance of bringing forth diversity as a cultural cathartic: "Certain faces must be admitted into public view, must be seen and heard for some keener sense of the value of life, all life, to take hold."[275] Both Levinas and Butler open the face to a sociality that seems aligned with Huebler's thinking.

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During the decade between 1968 and 1978, the photographic processes of Location, Duration, and Variable Pieces were chronologically intermingled even though Huebler regarded them as separate topical sets. This early phase of his work forms a cohesive segment of his career and is quite distinct from his late production. During the 1980s and 1990s, his *Variable Pieces* developed exponentially in several directions, most notably in *Crocodile Tears,* until his death in 1997. He returned to painting and figure drawing by telling stories in a deceptively simple but provocative way, one that most critics either failed to understand or refused to acknowledge because it threatened their artistic sensibilities. Huebler's later work

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[275] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), xviii.

could generate a few more chapters, but, for my scope here, the early phase of his career will close my investigation.

There are general characteristics of Huebler's early documentation that set it apart as a foundational stage for later conceptual art: his procedures are to be conceptually performed by the percipient under the agency of his text which exposes and often contradicts the imagery. His language creates a slippage back and forth from the descriptive text into the photographic world of imagery where it cannot be controlled.

Early on, Huebler understood that perception is not a rational process and he used language in subversive, sometime absurd, ways to allow us to question what we see and to replace it with our own allegorical connections. His textual strategies of aphorisms and clichés would have a strong resonance into the 1980s and later with such artists as Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, or Gillian Wearing. His early phase has proven to be generative by posing ideas that are more relevant today than ever before—art in a globally oriented society which includes 'everyone alive' in vast networks of social documentation. His percipients can view his work as he viewed the world, in what he described as a 'seamless field' of art:

> …the percipient of one of my works reconstitutes its various forms of information, reading and seeing it all at once as a *seamless field*, the conceptual event that takes place occurs during a specific period of time in the mind of that person thereby making her, or him, the virtual subject of the work. It is my hope that through that event, the subject 'sees himself/herself seeing,' to paraphrase the *Upanishads.*[276]

[276] Paul, 128.

Huebler was never interested in promoting any firm ideological agenda such as Marxism[277] or any particular religious doctrine, even though he occasionally referred to eastern texts of Zen Buddhism or the Upanishads. He instead desired to work on a broad socio-political plane and succeeded in expanding the field of art perception into a more inclusive realm of humanity. For a more down to earth interpretation of the relationship between Huebler's photography and his language, as he told Michael Auping, his text does not describe appearance—what you read is absolutely not what you perceive.

[277] Wilson, 54.

Epilogue

> If the products of Conceptualist activities are regarded in terms of style, then they too may by now have a familiar 'look', but if they are accepted as organizational forms capable of processing and producing discourse concerning 'the world', then there is no limit to their potential for addressing the unfamiliar.[278]
>
> —Douglas Huebler, 1994

Huebler produced an art that was so in tune with everyday life that the casual viewer may not have considered it to be art at all. He knew that life does not burst with epiphanies every day and an artist can examine the mundane and convert it into 'tiny esthetic acts,' as Jack Burnham said of Huebler. By temperament and demeanor, Douglas Huebler was witty and amiable with an engaging and relaxed naturalness. He was an outgoing man who had an intellectual facility for probing life's quotidian experiences in a philosophical way. Huebler told interviewers over the years that he had a keen interest in Eastern and Western philosophies, in particular Existentialism and Zen Buddhism.[279] "I've been interested in Zen Buddhism for years, but I don't pretend to be one," he told Patricia Norvell in 1971. Later in his career, he commented on his philosophical outlook about being 'alive' in the world: "I'm a hard-boiled atheist, and this is not a negative position—it is a life-building, life-constructive way to be alive."[280]

Huebler's work plays with chance and disorder, the contradictory and the absurd. In conversation with Donald Burgy in 1971, Huebler remarked: "The stance

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[278] Van Leeuw and Pontégnie, 13.
[279] Paul, 126.
[280] Wilson, 52.

from which the discretionary position is taken is more important than the subject matter."[281] His stance was difficult to understand—many were mislead by his outer shell of a simplistic art and they failed to search for his complexity. Huebler never meant his work to be difficult, nor did he use language to obscure his thought. As Mike Kelley said about his teacher's work, quoted at the opening of my introduction, "what looks familiar becomes unfamiliar." Always the teacher, Huebler never veered from art as a didactic model with a message for us to analyze not only what we see but *how* we see. Huebler addressed the unfamiliar in his typical subtle manner, without the encumbrances of strident conceptual dogma. Mike Kelley described the 'dizzying' confusion of disparate elements in Huebler's art—that is, the often disjunctive text in relation to its visual representation. Huebler, in turn, asks the viewer to address the unfamiliar in his work, to figure out why there is purposeful tension between appearance and what we are told we see. This marks his stake in twentieth century art, one set apart from the other emerging conceptualists Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner, and Robert Barry who exhibited with Seth Siegelaub. Huebler's approach in the late 1960s opened doors for artists who introduce the unfamiliar, such as Mike Kelley's abject art of childhood trauma or Martha Rosler's *House Beautiful* kitchen with camouflaged soldiers stalking the enemy.

I hope that this dissertation has constructed relationships between Huebler's language and image that will allow the reader to see more than what I have analyzed here. This dissertation can open broader discussion about language and how we see. For instance, how does one evaluate appearance? How does a photograph generate

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[281] Lippard, *Six Years*, 252.

variable interpretations in relation to its caption? What part does the cliché play in our everyday lives? These are questions posed by Huebler's work and queries that can be brought to a larger arena of perception in our understanding of social processes. Not only can we, as Huebler's percipients, alter the work but we can be altered by it, not unlike Certeau's social mapping in which human movement alters the way people perceive the city. Huebler's maps were socially evocative and more interactive than other map artists of his time, an approach that would become a trend in art mapping.

Throughout the rest of his career, language remained a major focus for Huebler. It became more emphatic in his later works after 1980, those that cartooned the art critic or 'corrected' the paintings of old masters in his broadly conceived satirical series *Crocodile Tears,* a major late career corpus which is beyond the purview of this dissertation. At the end of my chapter on Huebler's photoconceptual strategies, I discussed his 'Everyone Alive' project titled *Variable Piece #70 (The Global Piece),* a work in progress with touches of irony and the absurd. Douglas Huebler had an immense capacity for irony from the beginning of his conceptual work until his death. Encompassing a broad humanity such as 'everyone alive' was a part of his art but he also liked to insert humor into his language system. One early work stands alone in its humorous parody as a procedure of procreation to take place after death. *Duration Piece #16 (Global), December 1969 and January 1970,* was designed to be activated upon "the occasion of the death of its owner and continue from that time into infinity." The procedure goes like this:

> The owner's 'spermatozoid' deposited in a sperm bank will be used to successfully inseminate 'ten willing young women' as soon as possible after 'his mortal existence ceases.' The executor of his estate's trust fund will select the mothers-to-be, each of whom will be paid $2,500 a year for twenty-one years at which time the remaining principal will be divided equally among the offspring. The owner will then enter into an immortal physical existence that will actually constitute the true form of this work.[282]

The immortality of continuing existence (meaning the offspring) has resonance with Huebler's *Everyone Alive* series—he asks the reader to evaluate the plausibility of the procedure. Huebler does the same in his propositions regarding appearance, asking should we believe what we read or see.

Today Huebler's work is still of more interest in Europe than in America, with conferences devoted solely to his work. As he iterated to art historian April Lloyd Wilson in 1990 during her interview at his studio in Fairfax, Virginia: "There has always been an intellectual understanding of and interest in conceptualism in Europe and activity there is still increasing. Yet the sensibility of my work is quite American, especially the aphorisms, and I don't think they come off quite the same in Europe."[283] I have concentrated on Huebler's linguistic approach in his drawings, maps, and photography, as systems with clichés, aphorisms, and captions that incorporate Americana, from his newspaper projects to his television pieces. I hope that my efforts, and perhaps publication, will encourage more Americans to engage with Huebler's procedural art and more readers in general to recognize his legacy—

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[282] The Panza Collection Papers, Box DH12, Getty Research Institute. Another version also in the Panza Collection DH12 increases the payments to the women and their offspring to $10,000 each year for twenty-one years.

[283] Wilson, 51.

an art mediated by language and social responsibility during the emerging days of conceptualism that has influenced second and third generation conceptual artists.

Writing Huebler's obituary in the New York Times (July 17, 1997), Roberta Smith described his work as "ephemeral and mind-teasing," a phrase appropriate for his early conceptual work. That he used brevity of construction would be an understatement. The drawings of points and lines have a visual simplicity that, upon reading the text, quickly becomes engulfed with phenomena of the possible and impossible. Excursions into his mapped landscapes explore a geography of the real mixed with the imaginary, and, like Odysseus, he took his travelers to places not found on a map. Even though Huebler's procedural art was pre-set in a system to ostensibly avoid subjectivity, the social aspect cannot help but leak through. Douglas Huebler recognized conceptual art's potential to produce an unlimited discourse by engaging with the world. As he told Michael Auping,

> For me, the issue of the social capacity of art, the quality that it may have to mediate, is something that I think is the most important thing that art may do at this point…I do want to put the burden on the viewer. That *is* what I consider to be my social desire, my social responsibility, to do in effect exactly that. To say wake up, look harder, think before you speak and watch what you're saying.[284]

[284] Auping, 41.

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