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by
Georgia Elizabeth Carter
2015

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Warp/Weft

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Report

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Dedication

For S.K.F

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Abstract

Warp/Weft

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

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This report will give an account of the materials, processes and content of the three projects made in the course of three years at The University of Texas at Austin. I will chronologically describe how the found photo has been employed as a source for my work, and manifested through a variety of processes. In detail I will describe my most recent body of drawing and digital prints.

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Introduction

Fashion magazines are compilations of staged photos of people in manufactured garments set in environments, printed on paper with pigment. Each image or scenario and each garment depicted contains complicated systems of light and shadow, carrying with it, the intricacies of textures and the material object photographed, as well as the complex technical processes in which it is filtered and printed. I think of my process as a game of telephone where an image or fragment of an image is filtered through my hand and a digital printing process to produce large drawings and digital prints as final objects. I look to the fashion magazine to participate in and understand popularly conceived of rarified beauty as it meets consumerist pleasure. Rather than disenchantment with capitalist/consumerist notions of prescribed beauty of fashion magazines and women's interests, I seek to amplify through another layer of fetishizing the extreme range of textures and materials from the industry. Liberating and decontextualizing an image fragment from its pictorial environment, making it visible as both a process and image, then using it to create yet another product only enjoyed by an elitist audience, creates a kind of pleasurable/ critical hypocrisy.

All bodies of work that I will discuss in this paper utilize fragmented images, and are transformed using different materials. Chronologically, I will briefly detail processes and intent of a series of linen canvas pieces as well as a drawing series.

In the final chapter I will discuss the work I made in the past year, and how through researching my source material and the development of a systematic process of labor became very important conceptual components in my work. This body of work explores both technical and physical modes of digesting visual content through large-scale drawings and digital prints shown with 3-D printed models of erasers. I feel this body of work speaks to an acceptance of digital interference in daily experience and the life of the mind, not resignation. Technological abundance has promoted a return to the tangible

object, with new purposes. My work ultimately champions mind and body to understand this facet of contemporary culture.

Linen Canvas Series

This body of work (figures 1 and 2) was pivotal in the development of my work. My work prior to this body entailed working from personal photographs of spaces and places with the idea that my connection to them would produce some sort of gravitas after being reconsidered using my hands and time. This body was made by reproducing carefully chosen fragmented images found in fashion magazines on a much larger scale on linen canvas. The photographic source was drained of naturalistic color and floated or neutralized in the center of the large painting surface. Each source was a form however in my paintings I only slightly suggested illusionistic qualities.

The process for this group of works began with looking through magazines, cutting out images where clothing altered the form of the body and created amorphous shapes that were both suggestive of the body and useful to me formally or abstractly. By dislocating the image from its original context, the shape of, for example in the piece *Hump* (figure 1), I used an image of a woman wearing a heavy wool coat. My removal of several objects, the background, body parts, other garments, the image became a singular object fusing qualities of body and fabric. I was interested in how much information I could remove and still suggest photography and human presence. These images were then scanned and altered chromatically and structurally on my computer. Using the new compositions as template for my paintings, I projected each of the isolated forms many times their original size onto linen canvas. The area surrounding the form I kept untouched to isolate the collage structures and allow for each to function as a central figure of sorts with body language or posture with close attention to interaction/ tension with the stability of the rectangle. The central forms were painted with a mixture of graphite powder, oil and pigment, making an allusion of depth with layers of paint,

countered by graphite's reflective qualities. In the process of working oil slightly saturated the edges of the shapes creating halos around dark forms. The similar surface proportion of central subject and ground forced a kind of either or way of viewing. Analogous to this was the relationship of form to shape where at moments the central form would suggest three dimensions at times flatten. My aim was to create tension between the painted fragments while exposing the materiality of the painting structure.

What I became aware of through this project was that the physical distance between physical objects I was isolating, and myself, and the mechanisms of reproduction that created that distance. Materially, I ran into many issues. Preserving the cleanliness of the linen was extremely problematic. I also felt that masking the entire shape in dark pigment lost all of the active engagement with manipulation in the earlier stages my creating process. This led me to simplify my materials, and take a more literal translation of my source material, exposing its components, rather than concealing.

Fragmented Drawing Series

In this body of work (figures 3,4,5 and 6), I strove to essentialize and simplify my materials as a way to engage more directly with my source in a tactile way. I made a series graphite drawings, 22 x 30 in. These drawings began with fragmented and recombined images from mass-produced fashion magazines as my previous body of work did. The process of scanning, printing and alteration in Photoshop as methods of abstraction became more important as a conceptual step in my work. I began to look at how images, printed or on a computer screen, offered a different experience from direct observation, and how that experience reflected the current cultural landscape. The circulation of mass produced images suggests closeness to objects while keeping the viewer as distant from its subjects. With direct physical observation, the viewer can touch what it sees.

As before I was isolating each redrawn collage on a neutral field. They became the fractured specimens, isolated and enlarged on a rectangular page. As a group each appeared to be in a state of disintegration. The monochromatic forms took on a more anonymous, sometimes androgynous appearance than my previous body of paintings. The methodical application of marks in the drawings left proof of the artists' touch, of purpose and alteration that is absent in mass production. Paper in the drawings recalled the material of the magazine and connotes a more direct and simple mode of production. Through the act of drawing, I was able to intimately absorb the essential structure underlying images and discover what held them together and how digital/mechanical interference affects content. I discovered humble materials and the pleasures and difficulties of manual labor.

Reduction and simplification of materials in this body of work became a way to open things up, to think more directly about my initial source. I began to question the popularity of fashion magazines and how their manipulation reflects a culture that may passively accept an impossible beauty and perfection or whether the public is all well aware of the fiction. I wanted to create new associations and identities for these images, and become more active in my understanding of the media I find pleasure in and am in conflict about. In these drawings and collages, I used beautiful forms, fabrics and textures to perplex the viewer with their obvious incompleteness. As direct as my materials were, each drawing demanded more rigorous and lengthy amount of time and effort, unlike simply printing an image. Time, effort, demanding labor became integral. This led me to enlarge my drawings to reflect the scale of an average viewer's body.

The anomalous drawing, *Capsule* (figure 7) was my first attempt drawing on a large scale. This piece was a turning point for me, not only in my approach to my source material but also in the way in which I produced my work. The collage I used as a reference came from a fashion magazine, but was not an image that I typically used at the time, fabric textures. This image was of two types of nuts that I fused together. The collage and resulting drawing still had the qualities of landscape, body, texture, photographic and digital interference of my previous works, despite the deviation from

images of fabric. Rendering with very small pencil marks, this drawing was very time consuming with much more space to cover. With paper 40 x 53 in, opposed to the previous 22 x 30 in, I could no longer work on any given section because my hand would smudge completed areas. This was incredibly frustrating, to have to spend so much time on a minute detail only to have to erase and start over again. I had to come up with a more efficient way to make drawings, and looked to the inkjet printer (how the magazine was made, the printout of my scanned collage I used) as a logical technique to imitate. By blowing up the picture to a much larger scale, I found that I became more interested in formal qualities that composed the whole image, and how each pixel disintegrated. The title “capsule” was to indicate a single container, and I wanted to open the container to investigate the contents. In some ways I could take sections of this drawing and blow it up to make other drawings, and did not need to isolate the fragments as I had in previous stages of my process. In my next works, I utilized the white space of the page with marked areas and employed a system of drawing similar to the printer.

Drawings and Prints

In the book, *The Problem with Pleasure: Modernism and its Discontents*, author Laura Frost illustrates how modernists writers reacted to advancements in technology, mass production and the discrepancies in culture of people who partook in these new developments. Following the Great War, silent film and radio were posited as examples of leisurely activities that threatened more cerebral pursuits. Some of the strategies to eradicate passive consumption lead to the creation the fragmentation of established writing structures and to the device of open-ended and unstable subjectivity. The resulting works were not only difficult to create they are difficult to digest. High and low culture became defined as groups of people who enjoyed, “...passive and corporeal pleasures—often associated with femininity and with the new sensorium...inferior to the deliberately chosen, cerebral, and difficult pleasures of modernism” (Frost 19). These

strict distinctions between pleasure as acceptable or not are limiting and often antagonistic. I am sympathetic to the notion that the proliferation of mass media can indeed yield a homogeneous culture, but modernism's issue with accessibility dismisses the possibility of individualized relationships between subject and the accessible object. My work utilizes modernist strategies such as fragmentation and labor-intensive processes in tandem with the mass-produced fashion magazine associated with female interests and passive digestion.

In our current culture, the high fashion image juxtaposed with the low mass produced magazine also introduces many compelling contradictions. As digital media becomes more sophisticated, the relationship with media and everyday life becomes more seamless. Interestingly, digital media has not wiped out the hand made, or tangible experience. Not only are people invested in individualized expression through hand made and time demanding objects such as the craft beer or artisan textile production, but the digital world has become more personalized through blogs, social media and the like. Re-invigorating these modern strategies but tailoring them to my own era, my most recent body of work takes form in drawings and prints, in conjunction rather than opposition, to reflect the current climate of aesthetic consumption. I look into how we conflate images or objects of serious/high art and felicitous/low magazine culture. This work reveals the cogs of production of these images and the filters the way in which they pass from person to person. The fragmented image addresses the cross-pollination of characteristics of fabric, nature and screen, revealing the processes and mimicry between them. My process creates an individualized experience with an image with the aim to transform generalized connotations implicit in mass-produced media.

In the past year I have developed a systematic approach to creating the drawings, one that mimics the operation of an inkjet printer. Starting in the top left corner of the page, I would copy the image projected onto a sheet of paper, meticulously reproducing visual data with mechanical pencils (see Addendum I). During this process, blemishes and form flaws occur. Despite my attempts to replicate a precise system, I find these glitches important to what makes the image interesting and autonomous. The size of each

drawing is 60 x 40 in, and in the process of making would have to adjust my body to the area I was working on. Physically, my mark would change, the top portion would contain a series of marks where my shoulder was raised, or sitting in a chair more comfortably in the middle section, I was able to execute more quickly (see Addendum II). This process explores issues of instant gratification, ambiguity and recognition, and the efficacy of the handmade.

My drawings (figures 8, 9, 10 and 11) fuse modes of visual consumption and production with marks that mimic digital rendering and direct physical observation. By removing the significance of the images original packaging in the magazine, the use of humble materials, that of paper and pencil make the making and viewing of the reproduced image a more honest experience. Discussing the differences between imitation and transformation, Marcus Boom, author of the novel, *In Praise of copying*, writes that, "...transformation involves the changing and becoming of the totality of all that constitutes a particular entity of form –in human terms, the mind and the body" (Boom 91). In my drawings, I look at the magazine as a print of something photographed. The photograph captures things that naturally occur (landscape/nature/humans) manufactured objects (clothing/ fabrics) through light and shadow. That is the a priori, and after what happens is through my authorship, with mechanical and natural tools, leading to the drawing. All histories exist in the drawing, yet each work is transformed to a singular object. Repetition and copying, as Boom suggests, "...are a crucial factor in our ability to make sense of ourselves and the world...only through recognizing this we can understand the world that we find ourselves in, the world that to some degree we have chosen make"(Boom 10). I use the process of copying as a way to investigate, and essentialize the structure underlying images, what holds them together and how digital/mechanical interference abstracts content. Acting as an interface between the digital and tangible, I slow the image down; I slow myself down.

As a compliment to the drawings, I have made prints, two-dimensional and three-dimensional, referencing my source material as well as the tools used in making the

drawings. The prints are the same size as the drawings, black and white with exaggerated pixilation and overexposure. Erasers, smudged with graphite and misshapen from use were scanned, rendered and printed. The prints look as if they could be drawings, the erasers so life-like yet useless. All versions of the work, drawings and prints, respond and inform one another.

Addendum:

Drawing Processes Part I:

Finding the Image

- Purchase magazines
- Review magazines for data
- Cut out sections that provide interest
- Review again

Preparing the image

- Scan in black and white
- Go through all images, not just one at a time
- Individually adjust each image

Projecting the image

- Fitting the scan to the page
 - Zooming in and out, further abstraction
 - Focus, exposure, contrast
 - Consider the screens adaptability to the mark
 - The “data” or image adaptability to the page
 - Settle on image, keeping in mind the potential for others
- (Focus on one or two images over a long time, being certain or committed to a whole that may reveal itself as not what it was)

Pre-Drawing

- Properly mounted paper: taped on board, workable heights from top to bottom
(responding to capability to access or draw areas)
- Material organization: pencils sharpened and ordered, for a more intuitive flow
- Sections identified for proper pacing.

- Newsprint paper taped horizontally on top section
- One vertical newsprint sheet of paper under hand. To be moved left to right in the completion of horizontal section

Necessities

- Isolation
- Time
- Pleasure, or extraneous stimulation. - Audio books

OR

Some characteristics of images that are used as references:

(These subjects are often intertwined or referencing one another)

Textiles: can describe form or absence of form, on the body, patina from use or time, or flat on the wall or floor. Organic or synthetic materials. Warp and weft similar to pixel grid of the screen. Line, or thread, blocks, filters or reveals light. Textiles that replicate patterns or motifs found in nature. The fabrication of textiles has manual and technical applications. Texture of materials used in fabric in high contrast mimicking light and shadow.

Landscape: Images of water (oceans, pools) that have formless qualities. Light reflects off surface yet below is seemingly infinite. Dense foliage, patterns of light and shadows between branches and brush. Images of nature that look like digital static or pixels.

The Process:

1. Sort through racks of magazines at bookstore, generally in the women's interests, fashion, and art and design sections.
2. Flip through magazines, one at a time, tearing out pages that have characteristics of images you are looking for. (See characteristics of images I use). Go through all purchased magazines and make stacks of torn pages, according to which magazine it was taken from.
3. With scissors, remove areas with text, buildings, and recognizable figures and isolate an area of interest. Repeat with all stacks of pages
4. Organize cut paper fragments in clusters that have similar qualities: sparkly images, water-like images, computer/TV screen static looking images, tree images ECT.
5. Trim fragments with scissors, removing undesirable information. (At this stage, I usually begin to imagine the fragment in black and white, and enlarged). Select roughly 10-20 fragments that show promise, and will be suitable for reproduction.
6. Scan fragments to computer with my dual print/scan/copy machine in black and white. Create folder of scans, each referencing the time of the magazine's publication
7. Crop, zoom, adjust exposure and contrast of images. At this stage, the pixels holding detail start to separate, and the image is usually "blown out."
8. Print all images in black and white

9. Mount a sheet 40 x 60 in sheet of Lanaquarelle hot press watercolor paper to gator board. Tack to wall.
10. Project images in a dark/dim room onto paper. At this stage, the images are abstracted even farther. (This stage relies on chance, I am never certain which images will translate well to a page when projected, and is an exciting part of the process)
11. I go through all the new scans projected on the paper. Usually two or three stand out with one being absolutely imperative to begin immediately.
12. I download an audio book, usually mindless fiction to play in the background and engage myself during hours long sessions of drawing.
13. Organize mechanical pencils on worktable in lead strength: 4h, 2h, h, hb, b, 2b, and 4b.
14. Tape together large sheets of newsprint, horizontally. Usually 1.5 - 2 inch horizontal sections are worked on at a time from top to bottom. On the left end of sheet of paper, tape a piece of newsprint vertically to be moved section by section across the page.
15. Set timer for 52 minutes, break 17 minutes, and repeat for give or take 6 sessions a day.

Once this system has been set into place, I use my digression to interpret and reproduce. The image has been embedded to memory in these earlier stages, and mechanically abstracted through its transfers to various screens and paper.

Addendum: Drawing Processes Part II:

The “standing on a chair or stool” portion of the drawing

The “just standing” portion of the drawing

The “I finally get to sit in a chair” portion of the drawing

The “ If I stack enough pillows on the floor I can reach while sitting” portion of the drawing

The “just sitting on the floor” portion of the drawing

The “lying on my stomach, this is awkward” portion of the drawing

The “I made it to the bottom right side, I’m done” portion of the drawing

The “ok, I have to fix everything and all those sections I made myself cover up!?” portion of the drawing

The drawing



Figure 1: Hump, graphite powder and oil on linen, 72 x 60 in, 2013.



Figure 2: Coat, graphite powder and oil on linen, 72 x 60 in, 2013.



Figure 3: Stack, graphite on paper, 30 x 22 in, 2014.

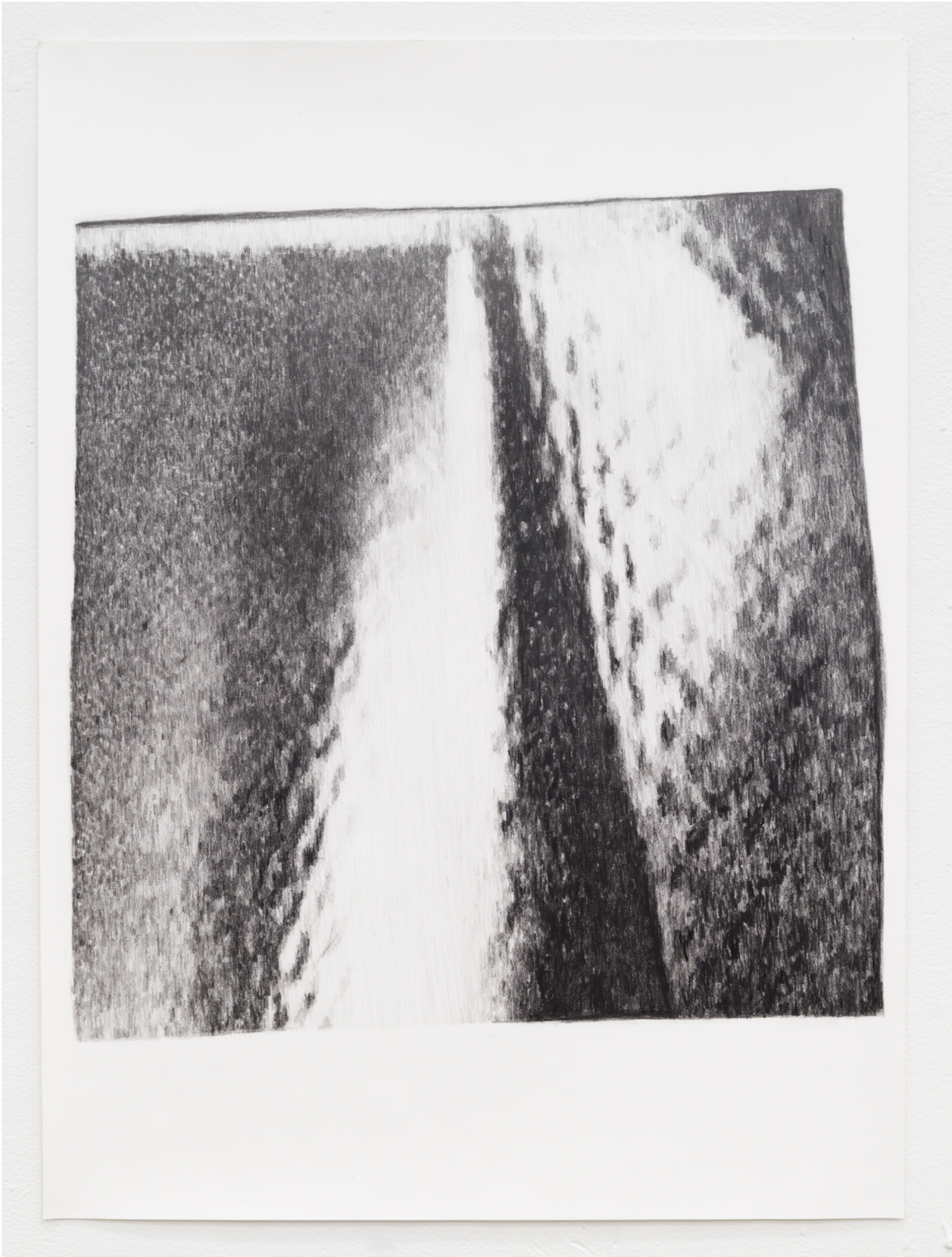


Figure 4: Pleat, graphite on paper, 30 x 22 in, 2014.



Figure 5: Suit, graphite on paper, 30 x 22 in, 2014.



Figure 6: Pose, graphite on paper, 30 x 22 in, 2014.



Figure 7: Capsule, graphite on paper, 50 x 38 in, 2014.



Figure 8: Reverb, graphite on paper, 60 x 40 in. 2014.



Figure 9: Panorama, graphite on paper, 60 x 40 in, 2014.



Figure 10: Networks, graphite on paper, 60 x 40 in., 2015.



Figure 11: Touch Screen, graphite on paper, 60 x 40 in, 2015.

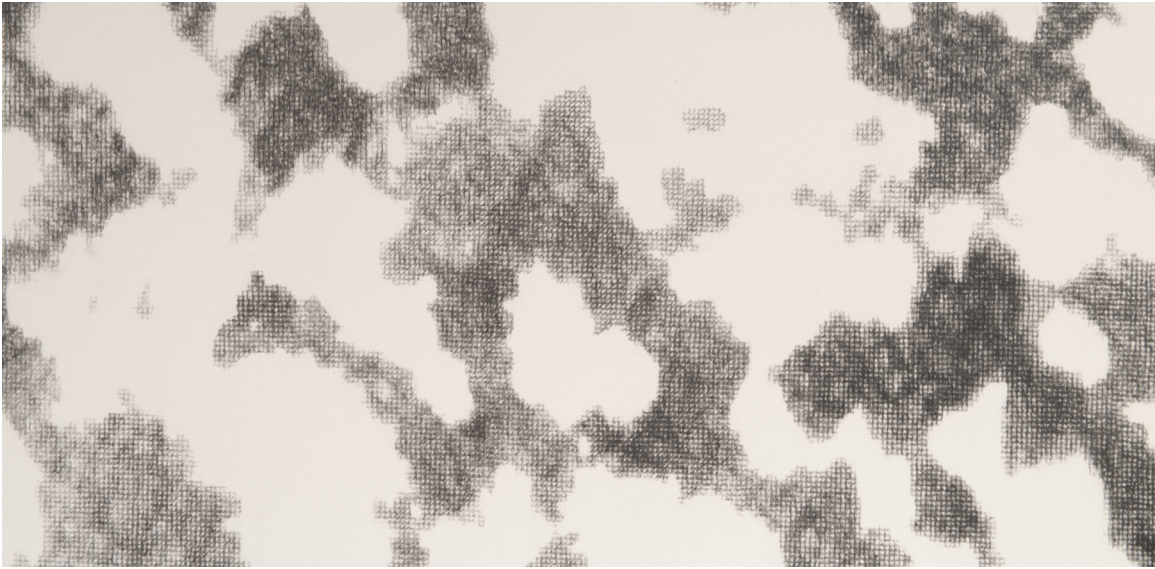


Figure 12: Detail of Networks, 2015.



Figure 13: Detail of Touch Screen, 2015.



Figure 14: Installation shot of Weft, Warp, and Static, all 60 x 40 in, inkjet print, 2015.



Figure 15: Erase (kneaded, jumbo), gypsum and pigment, 1/2 x 1 x 1 3/4 in, 1 x 1 x 1 in, 2015.



Figure 16: Agree to Disagree: MFA Thesis installation shot, 2015.

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