

CLASSROOM PLACARDS SOUTHSIDE HUB of PRODUCTION JORGE R. LUCERO

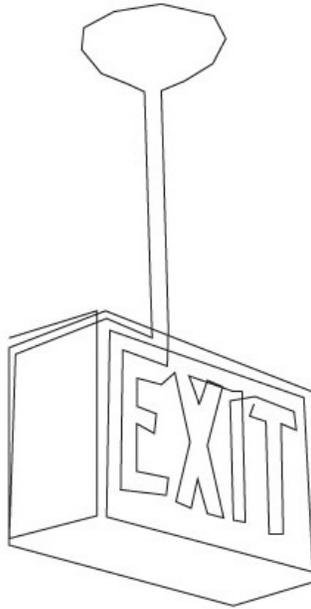
Introduction

For the final show that Southside Hub of Production (SHoP) was meant to have at their Woodlawn Ave. location, participating artists were given the choice of a room in the historic Fenn House wherein to install their work. I chose the room designated as “the classroom” on the second floor of the three-story mansion. Classrooms have become a ubiquitous staple of the community art center and the SHoP classroom carried the evidence of numerous events, workshops, activities and even open studio times.

The classroom (whether actual or virtual) has become a mainstay in socially leaning art projects because of its almost automatic promise of democracy, criticality, and service to the public good. Education—a desperately clingy “common good”—seems to always need a present teacher though to get started and I wanted to situate the space in a manner that it could function as a learning space, but more autonomously.

My contribution to the exhibit *On Making Things Matter*, consisted of a series of placards for the everyday things in the SHoP classroom. The placards consisted of a quick digital illustration of the object I found in the room (e.g. a staple gun, an unused canvas, a box of nails) and two pieces of text: An “imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative” and “directives for a potential assignment”. The first piece of text--the “imagined” text--was meant to situate the object either in history, craft, or personal memories. The second text--the directive--is meant to promote the use of that thing in a new way within the SHoP classroom. The directives are usually open ended and intended to encourage generativity and making.

The objects that received placards in the room were: Exit sign, flag, glue bottle, handmade guitar, handheld mirror, handwriting practice paper, cardboard helmet, solvent spray bottle, laundry basket, marker, mask, jar full of wine corks, bathroom mirror, paint container, pedestal, owl mask, pegboard, stack of wood pieces that look like books, pencil on string, radiator, spool of ribbon, cityscape, tape, rope, math tables, safety goggles, drawing of the word “faith”, can of shaving cream embroidery rings, shower door, pile of old newspapers, 8 1/2 x 11 paper, staple gun, styrofoam form, sunglasses, tabletop, toilet paper tube, toilet, towel rod, garbage can, drawing made with tape, xylophone, air conditioner, armature, bathtub as storage, chalkboard, blank canvas, boba fett cutout, box of nails, brayer, broom, cassette organizer, chair, clamp light, scrap wood closet, coat hook, crate, and decorative element.



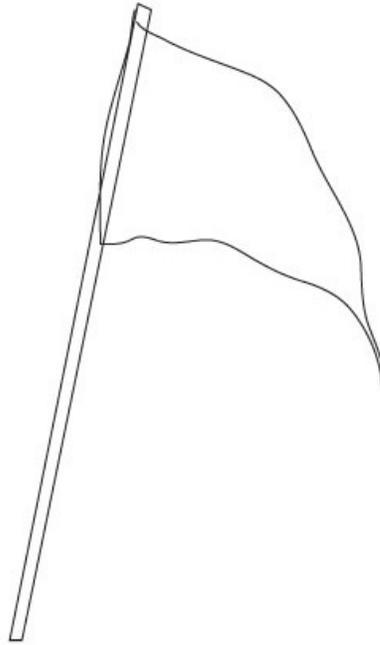
EXIT SIGN

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

It is possible that the exit sign was developed after some type of tragedy. It seems, when sitting in a darkened theatre, that the comforting light of the exit sign indicates that there should be minimum panic if there were to be a fire in the theatre. It is an ignored phenomenon mostly. Sometimes it comes into play in places where you find yourself thinking, “how do I get out of here”. This happens to me in shopping malls or certain department stores (e.g. JC Penny, Khol’s, etc.). I know that it’s protocol, but I always get kind of nervous on a plane when I’m asked if I will be able to help people get out of a burning, sinking, or otherwise distressed aircraft. I’ve never said that I couldn’t do it, although I have a feeling that I actually wouldn’t be able to perform in those circumstances.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Think of a manner in which exiting happens. Find spaces in this house to perform some derivative of those ideas in and out of doorways. Play it as a game or take it seriously, either way it will be both.



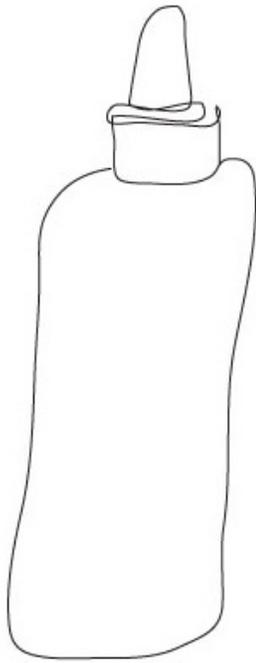
F L A G

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Allegiances, I imagine were the origins of this classroom mainstay. An indicator that one could belong, fight for something, feel honor in martyrdom. I get a feeling of pride when I watch the Olympic parade of nations, both when I see the American flag and the Mexican flag. It becomes very difficult for me to root for a team when I watch Mexico and the U.S. compete in soccer games. It's crazy.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Imagine a land that you've brought to fruition with your friends and other kin. Give yourself time to become emotionally attached to the ideals of your imagined homeland. Attempt to live your life according to the tenets of your new world. Sit down and write down a one paragraph constitution. Defend it blindly.



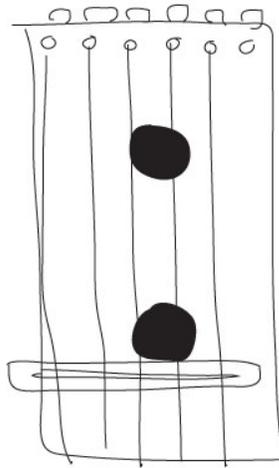
GLUE BOTTLE

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

I never ate paste. I did however cover my entire hand with glue when the teacher wasn't looking. I used to watch a show when I was in fifth grade called "V, The Final Battle". It was a show about aliens who disguised themselves as humans. In the revealing moments of any given plot they would peel off their human disguises and reveal themselves as the foreigners that they so sneakily were. It was horrifying. When the glue dried on my hand, I would peel it off like an extra layer of skin. Even now, whenever I do this, I can hear the announcer's voice in my head, "V...The final battle". It's pretty awesome.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Put glue in cracks. Try not to let it look like vandalism. Think of it as repair; even if no one else sees you doing it, or sees what you've done after you've done it.



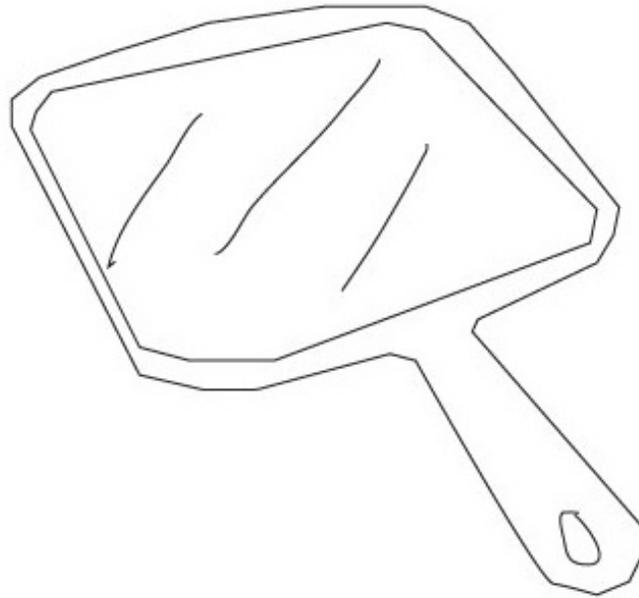
HANDMADE GUITAR

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

I don't remember it accurately, but there is a funny Jack Handy proverb that speaks to those homemade guitars that kids make with shoeboxes and rubber bands. Jack Handy admonishes the parent of said child not to allow this golden opportunity to go to waste. Handy advises that instead of letting the kid just fiddle around with the box guitar for an afternoon, that the parent should force the child to practice on it every evening for several hours. He concludes the proverb with, "when they grow up, they'll thank you". It's funnier the way he says it.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Determine that you will make everything in this room percussive, after all everything is. Find a manner to bang—in and out of rhythm—on every surface in the room. Don't worry, your memory will catalogue the sounds and you will find that you are more attuned to the noise in the room than you thought you were. Remember that John Cage's teacher once told him that he wasn't that good. Percussion made John Cage.



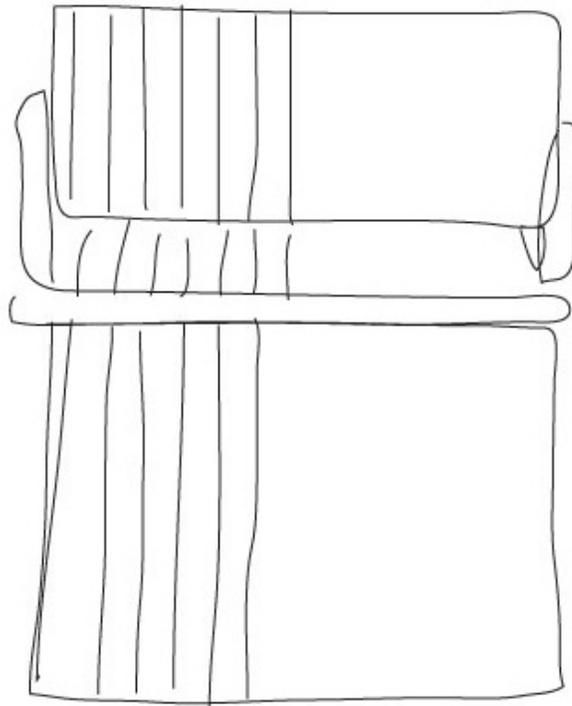
H A N D H E L D M I R R O R

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

My mom used to curl her eyelashes using one of these bad boys. I used to play with it attempting to reflect light off it. I'm sure sometime during school I was taught about reflected and refracted light, but since I didn't really pay attention in school I never put two and two together. I've always been interested in learning things through watching them play out. To me learning is often about experiencing, even in the most minimal ways. Interestingly though, school tends to be a place where the only actual experience a student has is the one of traversing through school. We get really good (or really bad) at experiencing school. Ivan Illich once said that a good school should be nothing more than a roof with materials under it (e.g. clay, a record player). What does a school lesson where you give all the kids mirrors for a day look like? Especially if you tell them they have to incorporate the mirror into at least twenty other (non-mirror) tasks.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Use the reflective surfaces in this space as a means through which you can perform an understanding of yourself, outside of yourself. Place the mirror in a place where you can see the reflection and then do for it, what you would like to see in it—as if it were a television. Entertain yourself without embarrassment.



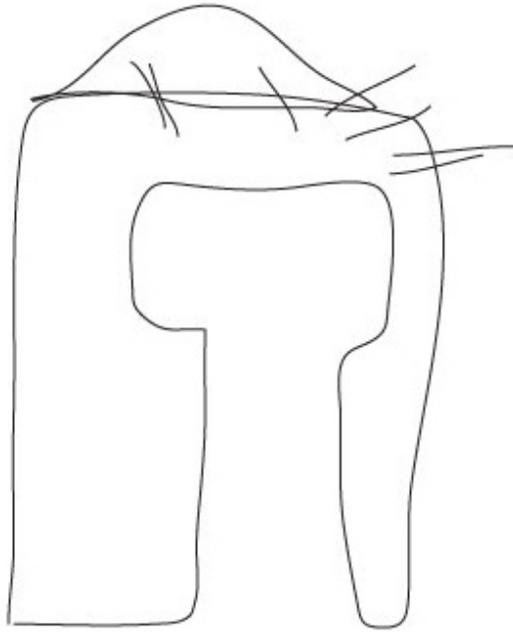
HANDWRITING PRACTICE PAPER

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Spools of paper can produce nice long drawings, no? When I worked at K-Mart we always had to pull out the spool of paper from the cash-register at the end of the day. It was a document that no one ever examined. Miles and miles of transactions. A document of a day's worth of work.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Using this role of paper to write a short story about a lost document (i.e. photograph, email, video, memory, etc.). Write it as one line, on an extraordinarily long piece of paper.



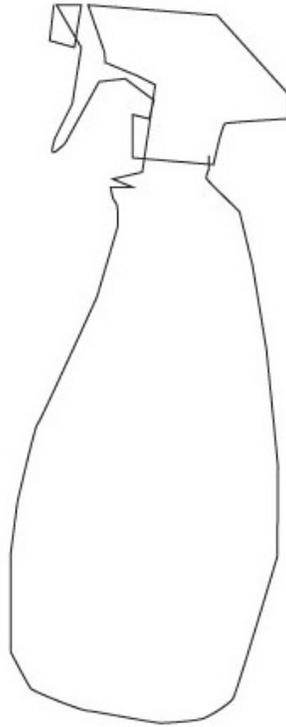
C A R D B O A R D H E L M E T

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

I've always been bored in the arms and armor galleries of The Art Institute of Chicago. At the same time, I've watched countless young children ecstatically rejoicing in the metallic glory of all that weaponry. I guess it's something. One thing I do really like though, is the fight scenes in movies with lots of clanking armor. I particularly like how they're doing that nowadays, slo-mo and all. My friend Christopher Santiago once had a butt-load of his students make full-blown cardboard suits and weapons for an all school battle. Then, behind the school the kids had it out. It was amazing. I could see the appeal of this kind of thing since I my favorite American Gladiator's event was the one where the two gladiators tried to knock each other off the beam with those oversized Q-tips. I'd still like to try that if I had the chance.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Think about something that causes hurt. How do you defend yourself against that? If you could devise a suit that protected you from that kind of pain, what would it look like? Without making any preliminary drawings or plans, construct your protective gear from found materials. If you are not prone to make things or just don't have the time, find an item of clothing that fits you well and designate it your protective gear. Don't alter it in anyway, other than with your mind.



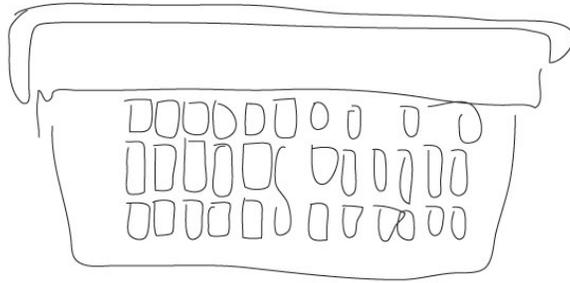
SOLVENT SPRAY BOTTLE

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

*When I was a high school teacher a writing student of mine introduced me to Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town*. It's a book about how to be a poet, but really about how to own your creative production. Hugo speaks about "triggers" as these instances that produce other ends. Something that is experience in one realm and consequently allows an artist—if they're brave enough—to make new things in the world. These triggers are in everything and one only need look for them. Matthew Goulish would have called them "moments of wonder" and recommends that when thinking and looking critically, that we look for these moments rather than the moments that one would consider faulty. I try—as much as possible—to work from these moments of wonder into a perpetual generativity.*

Directives for a potential assignment:

Take a piece of paper and spray it using this thing. Write an encouraging message on it for someone you don't know. Sometimes the best way to do this is by thinking about someone you do know and tentatively addressing it to them. Place this drawing somewhere else during your day in hopes that you will make someone else's day.



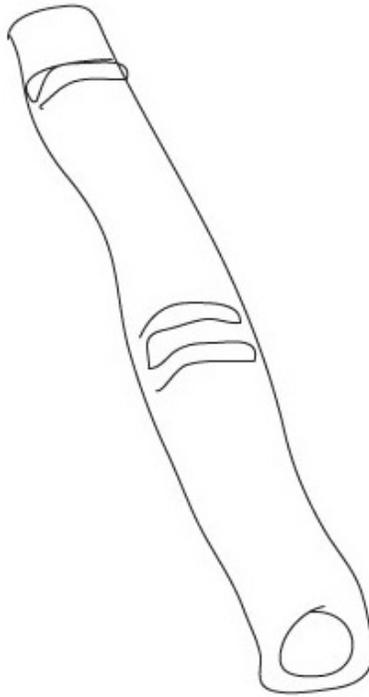
LAUNDRY BASKET

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Laundry baskets were vehicles. Getting inside a laundry basket for me was the initial step towards wanting to decorate my office, my living room, my locker, and many other contained spaces. Here I was in this porous piece of architecture, ready to take off. I imagined the buttons, levers, and screens that would propel me into space. I would shake the plastic precariousness of this spacecraft. It was a turbulent passage into space, but I made it. Recently I took a flight to Denver and on approach the aircraft hit a tremendous amount of turbulence. It was so scary. My mouth went dry and my hands started to shake. I was this close to screaming as I was slightly elevated from my seat. I looked at a woman who was sitting behind me for some sympathy. She never looked up from the game of solitaire she was playing on her iPad.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Use the laundry basket as getaway device. It's a time machine, a spaceship, a hammock, or a tree-house. Make drawings that you can put on the inside of it. If you are too big for the basket, invert it and wear it over your head for the same purpose. If there is an art opening or other type of event occurring near by, proceed to attend that event wearing your "transporter". Don't worry, people won't ask.



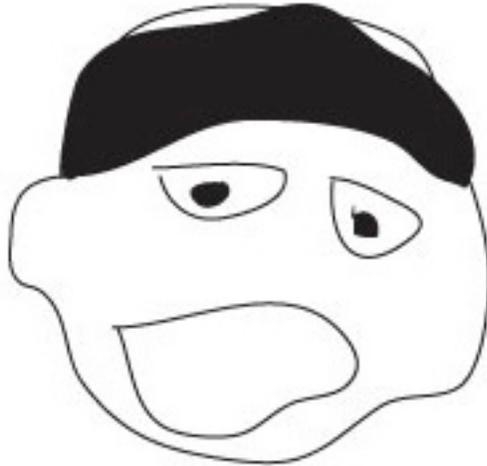
M A R K E R

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

This drawing of a Crayola marker looks more like a finger. I chose not to redraw it since the relationship between the drawing utensil and the finger reminded me of a very famous Bible story. It is essentially a story that is easy to forget because we can be quicker to judge than we think. The story goes that a woman being accused of breaking the law was going to be stoned to death by the self-righteous religious authorities. They brought her to Jesus and asked him what they should do, thinking that they would trap him either in agreement or disagreement. Jesus—strangely, but true to form—knelt down and drew in the sand with his finger. He then uttered the very famous dictum, “let he without sin, cast the first stone”. All her accusers left one at a time. Mercy triumphed over judgment.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Find a hundred sheets of paper or surfaces in this house. Using your finger or a marker with the cap still on it; make invisible drawings that don't actually leave a mark. You can take this opportunity to be confessional with your drawings or writing, but you can also be coy and draw banal things that no one would even care to look at. Just to be clear, you are not actually making marks. You are only making the drawing gestures. After you are done place all the paper back where you found it, so some one else can try it.



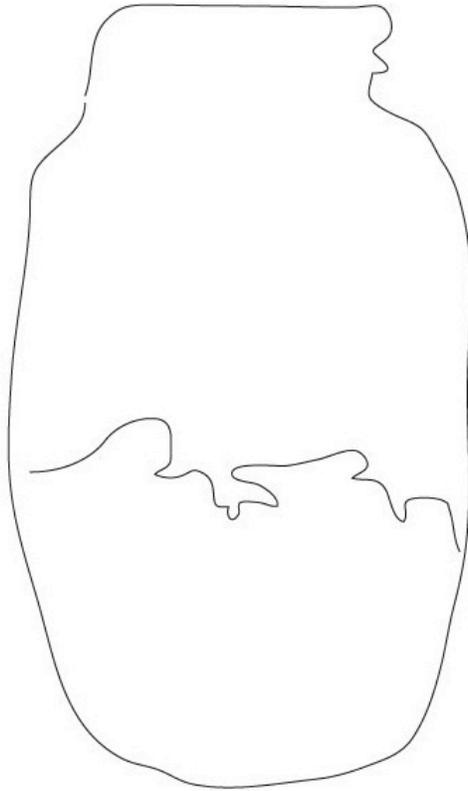
M A S K

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

n. 1534, borrowed from Middle French **masque** covering to hide or protect the face, through Italian **maschera**, and perhaps als directly from Medieval Latin **masca** mask, specter, nightmare, of uncertain origin, possibly shortened from Arabic **maskhara** buffoon, from **sakhira** to ridicule. A striking parallel to Medieval Latin **masca** is Latin **larva**, also meaning ghost, specter, mask. *-v.* cover (the face) with a mask. 1560, take part in a masquerade; later, to disguise (1579); either from the noun or borrowed from Middle French **masque** (1550), from *masque*, *n.*

Directives for a potential assignment:

From this moment on—if you haven't before—recognize that your face is a type of mask. Only you know what lies behind your expression. We—that is, everyone who is not you—thank you for graciously always “putting on” your best face. You've made us feel that things are going to be okay. There is one thing though, if we ever see you on the bus and you are doing everything you can to not cry in public, remember that we are sitting directly across from you. When we ask you “if everything if okay?” don't shut us out. Yes, it's true, we don't know you, but we want to. Maybe we can help.



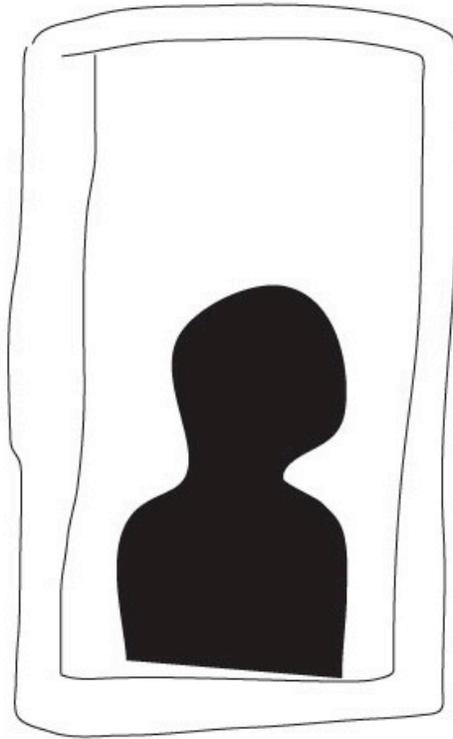
JAR FULL OF WINE CORKS

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Jar Full of Wine Corks sounds like the name of an improv-troupe. It's a group that starts off thinking that they will change the world through their politics of generosity. They're optimistic, but know how to temper their enthusiasm. Mostly everyone get's along, but there's a conflict of leadership. Eventually romance, money, and "artistic vision" cause the group to break up. The group is made up completely of first generation Mexican-Americans; sons and daughters of immigrant laborers who lived and died in the States as illegals (I mean, undocumented persons). Every member of Jar Full of Wine Corks had to drop out of college for one reason or another.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Find a container that is full of many little things. Empty it and arrange all of its contents in a manner that feels counter-intuitive. Take several pictures from different angles. Put everything back in the container and place it back where you found it.



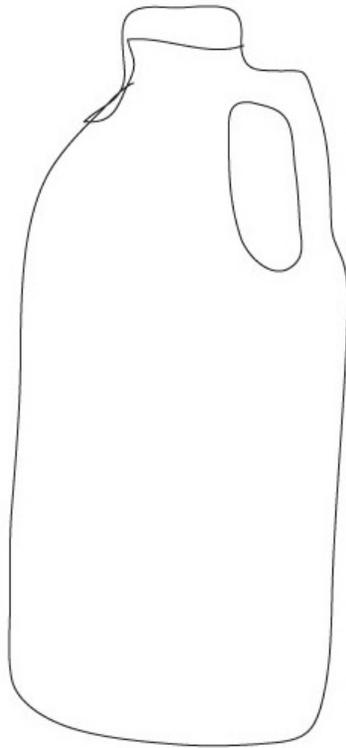
BATHROOM MIRROR

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

For generations kids have conjured up stories using the mythical potency of one's own reflection. From Narcissus to Snow White's Wicked Witch and Bloody Mary, the mirror holds a strange power to illicit thoughts about the self and other worlds. The metaphors about reflection and "mirror as portal" are rich and ultimately allow us to think about what is seen in the mirror through a multiplicity of interpretations. It's interesting that this piece of glass that—for many—purports to communicate something true; actually is as subjective as the eyes that peer into it. The image of the "glass darkly" has fascinated me for sometime because of its promise. The certainty that all that is uncertain will become clearer once we pass from this world to the next.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Close the door behind you and then perform for yourself in front of this mirror. Do it until it is no longer you who you are watching.



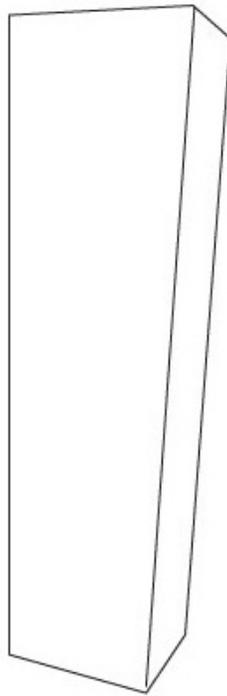
P A I N T C O N T A I N E R

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

It's funny how these containers look like gallons of milk. Is this the perfect pouring configuration? It really does work for milk. I've never really felt like I was leaving milk at the bottom or on the side of the container. Paint has a different viscosity, no? Frequently when telling students how to mix their colors, I compare the amount of liquid in their mediums to different foods; mustard, soup, sour cream, peanut butter, cooking oil, pesto. Not too many things compare to the feeling of moving a brush across a surface, however that feelings mostly emerges from confidence not from the inherent qualities of the materials. People who claim they can't paint, have no problem spreading mayonnaise on a sandwich, lathering their faces up with soap, or squeegeeing their car window's clean. Same thing.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Using the film canisters that are in this room, along with the acrylic paints in these containers, mix a color made of three different colors. The lids of those canisters are relatively airtight so you can store your colors. Once you've mixed that initial color, use some of that color to mix another color in a different canister. Repeat this until you've mixed one color for every year of your age. Label them and leave them in the room with directions for someone so that they can use your colors to make a painting.



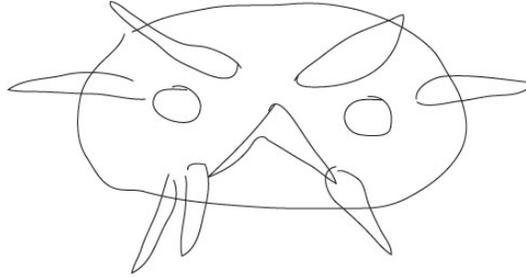
P E D E S T A L

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

What are the things that we elevate? The expression about “putting something on a pedestal” is a curious one because it insinuates that elevating something is like making it into an artwork. Some would argue that art has escaped this cliché by moving toward the phenomenon of the “white cube”; that is artworks that are on the floors, the walls, and other nooks usually not designated for exhibiting art.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Think about things in this, or the immediate space that you wouldn't normally see on a pedestal. Put it on the pedestal. Think very hard about why this thing is actually art now. I mean, be serious and—with your mind—convert it. This is called “art without hands”.



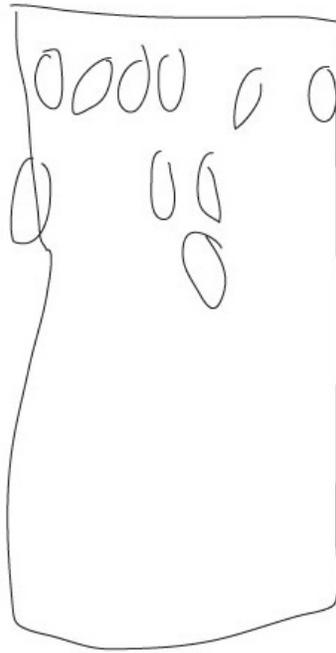
O W L M A S K

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Is it important to be smart? I'd have to say that it depends. Smartness can often come off as arrogance because it's not actually smart. It knows things. It says smart sounding things but in the end, is actually saying very little. Is saying very little, dumb? Some people say very little, but say it in such a manner that it is captivating. Do we want to hear more, or do we just want them to keep talking? These are not easy questions, since in fact talking about them brings us to nothing new. It's important though to continue asking these questions because the type of friction that is created in the universe through insistent asking, can sometimes produce a fire. Fires—as we all know—can be grandiosely destructive and warmly comforting. It's not paradoxical, its profound wisdom. It really is.

Directives for a potential assignment:

The owl is frequently portrayed as wise, as seer of realities beyond the present. How did the owl become the mascot of intelligence? Think of animals that can be stand-ins for other characteristics that you are striving to be. Make a paper mask and leave it in this room. You could also wear it to work for a whole week, posting pictures of you at work on Facebook. Always keep a straight face.



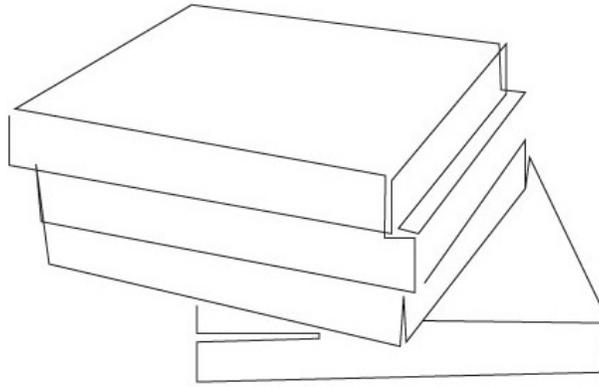
P E G B O A R D

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

The pegboard is typical fair in a workshop. Is this classroom a workshop? Is the classroom-as-workshop an actual workshop or just a pretend workshop? This particular pegboard holds scissors and a staple gun, arguably the most dangerous tools in this classroom. Is the code of the pegboard lending itself to another layer of seriousness for these tools? It's possible. The Wikipedia entry for "perforated hardboard" says that, "It is commonly used in retail settings along with steel rods sticking out to hold peggable products such as bagged potato chips, printer ink, and action figures". No citation was given for this claim, but I've seen it in action. It's true.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Make packages that you think would either hold chips, printer ink, or action figures. Place this on this pegboard and price them accordingly. Even though the thrift store is next door, this is art baby!



STACK OF WOOD PIECES THAT LOOK LIKE BOOKS

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

When I was an undergraduate painter I had a teacher who taught me how to prepare a piece of wood so that painting on it, felt like I was painting on glass. This was an arduous process that I quickly replaced by painting on Plexiglas. The kinds of paintings I made in those years were tedious to make, but that led to a certain kind of refinement that only occasionally pops up when I make a painting nowadays. This is okay, but the tension between the two types of applications has become a third type of language, one that is not as readily identifiable, partially because it still appears to be in flux. This type of painting—although I only do it sparingly—has proven to be a lot like many of my other practices: open and wanting to be defined, less by internal intentions, and more by external interruptions and interpretations.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Take a surface that is not normally considered a painting surface, prepare it in a special way and then create a painting on it. The painting need not be representational, just enough for you to get a sense of how it works. Try to translate this sensibility to other types of making and thinking.



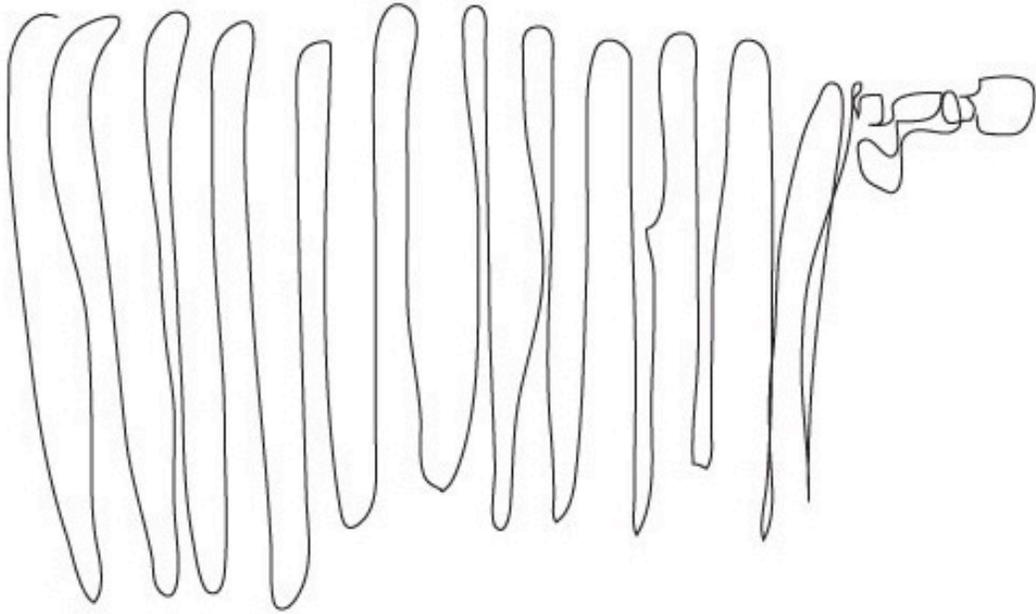
PENCIL ON A STRING

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

You'd think we'd always be finding pens and pencils. This pencil is on a string, because unattached writing utensils tend to disappear. Where do they go though? No pen or pencil ever gets used completely. I rarely ever see anyone writing with a one-inch pencil that got that size because it was sharpened down. One thing I do remember is getting up in fifth grade to sharpen my pencil continuously. I would purposefully sharpen them down because I couldn't stand sitting in that desk for too long. It was the equivalent of walking to the water cooler, just to disengage from the spreadsheet or slew of unanswered email. Pencils on strings look more interesting than alone pencils.

Directives for a potential assignment:

There are these pictures of Matisse drawing with a very long stick. The drawings produced by this intermediary device look different because to some degree Matisse was surrendering a certain degree of control in those works. Find a way to put an interruption between you and the marking tools. Make figure drawings.



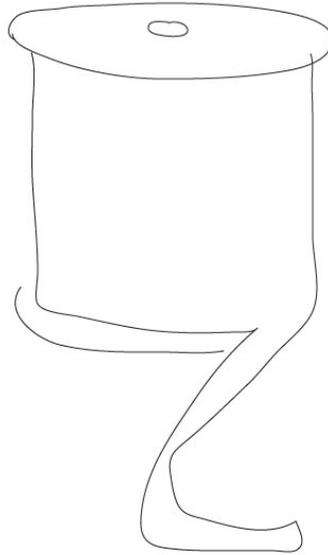
RADIATOR

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Radiators can be monsters. They make noise in the night: whistling, rattling, sighing. What do they want? Is the radiator unsatisfied? Does it long? The radiator is like a hippopotamus. It's sluggish, wading in place, waiting to be fed. It blinks its side eye, slightly above the water line. That blink says a lot, admitting that he just took a dump in the water. He twirls his tail and crumbles the turds in the water. The water get's yellow and the fish swim up to the bits and pieces of poo to nibble, on what I imagine is corn.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Find an object in this space that looks like something else. Give it those properties, not based on what it looks like exactly, but rather on some memory that arises in your mind once you start writing or drawing about it. Send your results via email to two of your friends.



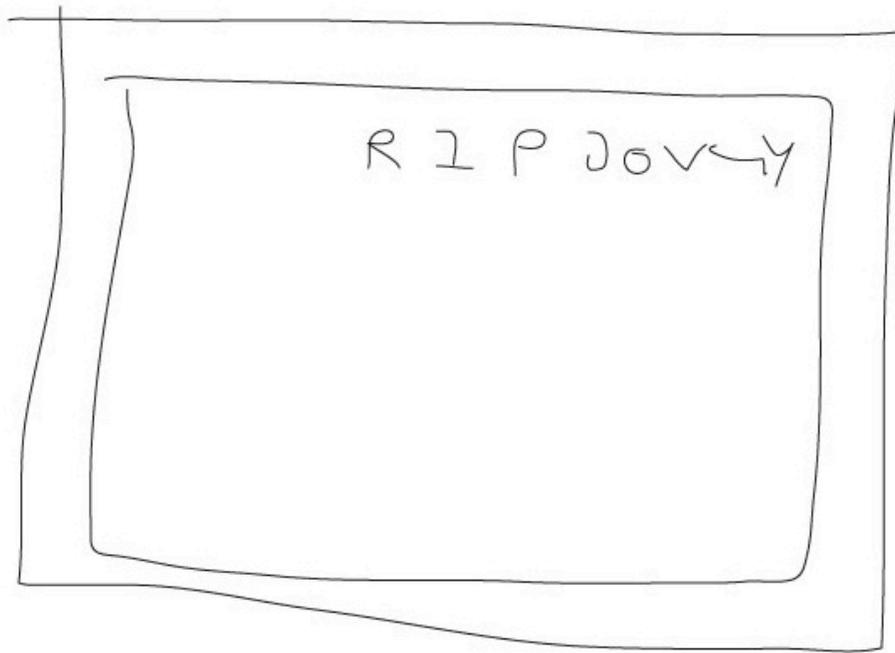
S P O O L O F R I B B O N

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

JKM Ribbon offers an assortment of styles and formats. Americana. Mesh, Safari. Assortment. Metallic. Satin. Awareness. Moire. Sheers. Wired. Baby and Children. Novelty. Silk. Check. Ombre. Solid. Curling. Organdy. Themed. Dot. Pet. Striped. Ruffle. Bark. Plaid. Tullie. Grosgrain. Polypropylene. Velvet. Jacquards. Prints. Reflective. Wired. Ribbon is glorified rope.

Directives for a potential assignment:

In an attempt to make sculptural forms, bundle various things together and secure everything with rope, ribbon, string, or tape. Aim for bulkiness. Place your sculptures on the floor.



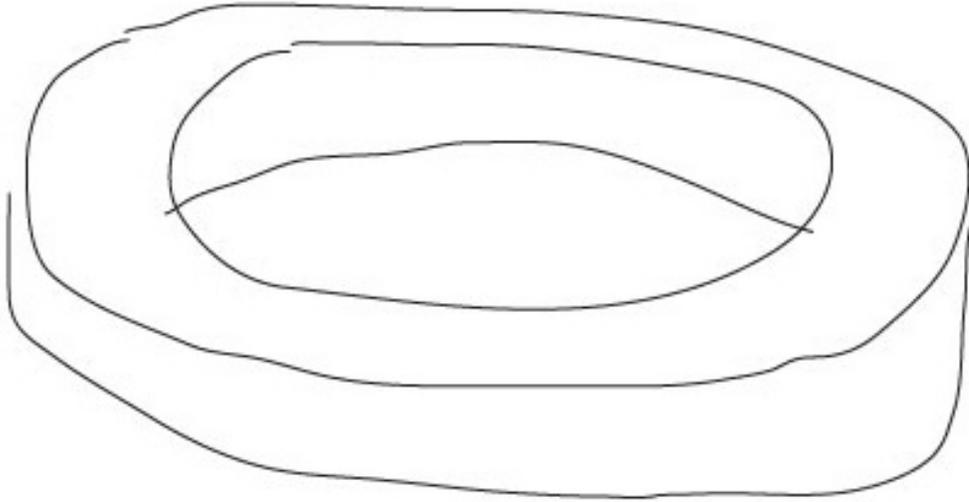
CITYSCAPE

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

When I was a high school art teacher I taught a special course called, "Why won't Mr. Lucero teach me observational drawing?" The title of the course was a riff on the way I didn't mandate observational drawing as part of the curriculum. If students needed to improve their observational drawing skills in order to make something that was part of their projects or in line with their research, then I would give them tutorials, advice, and periphery assignments. It was never part of my core curriculum because I wanted to emphasize that those skill sets were particular to a certain type of art and that the students—particularly the one's that felt incompetent in that area—didn't need to master drawing in order to make successful artworks. Later, when one of my high school students went to college, he returned to thank me for concentrating on concepts over form in my classroom. He said, he began to pick up form very fast during his first college year, but that his teacher's would constantly remark at how much more ahead of his peers he was when it came to his thoughts about art.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Give yourself the task of making the drawings you want to make. Learn only the skills needed to accomplish your goals. Ignore this assignment.



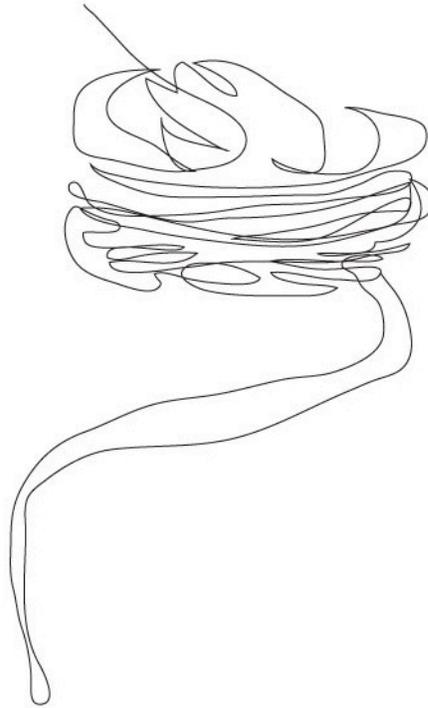
T A P E

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

I took all of my dad's Earth, Wind and Fire cassettes, covered up the little whole at the top and recorded Billy Ocean song's off the radio. To do this, I would have to sit next to the radio for hours waiting for the right songs to come on. My tape deck didn't have a face on it, so sometimes I would have to hold the tape in, so that it would record. Recently we bought a van that has a tape deck. We thought that this was unusual. It doesn't work.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Think of the old tape lines that used to demarcate the spaces in your school's gymnasium. The way the lines crossed each other gave the gym an enormous drawing that told everyone where to stand for games and other activities requiring order. Imagine that you are designing a new game for which the floor diagram is of vital importance. Establish plans for this game and find a space—maybe even the ballroom in SHoP—to lay this game out and play it.



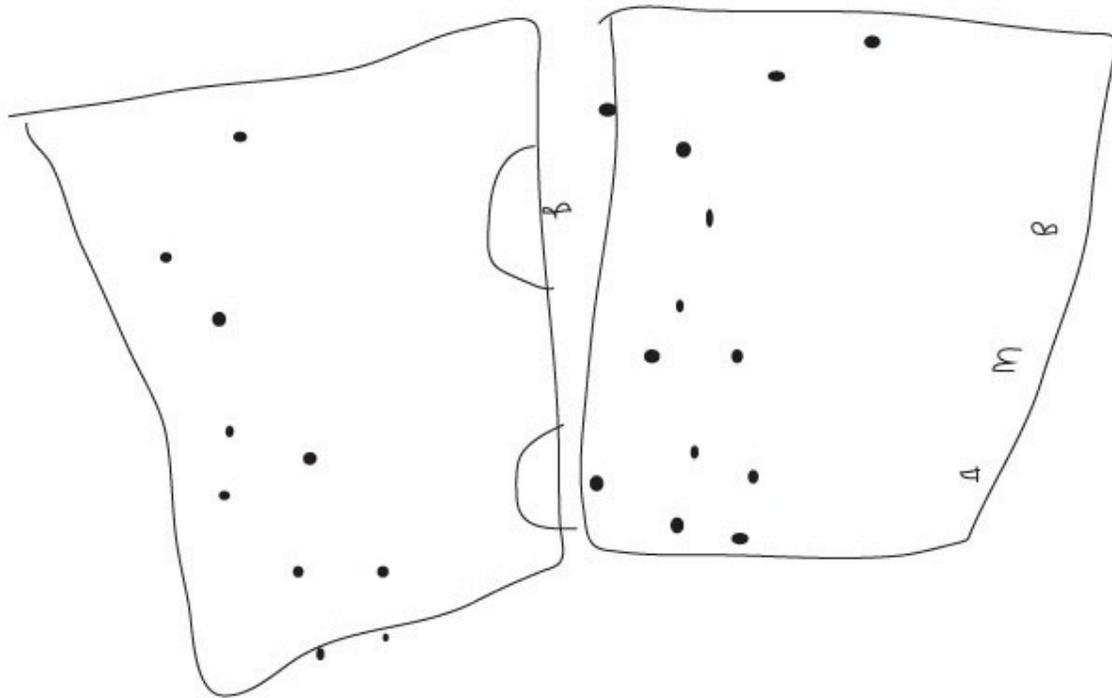
R O P E

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Bound. The term is incredibly loaded. In one iteration the term is involved in some type of sequester, that is a holding against someone's will. On the other hand it also refers to a commitment, something that individuals' choose to be tied to and happily at that. It is also a limit, as in "out of bounds" and to complete the multiple layers, a type of preparation or put forth as in "bound to fail" or "leaps and bounds". The ties that bind are strong and they force us to take sides and make agreements. This, some would call devotion.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Wait until this room is empty. Take out your cell phone. Go through your contacts and look at the names, wait until you see someone's name who you think might need some goodness at the moment. Call them and tell them something that makes you feel vulnerable. Don't be phony and don't laugh. Tell them something sincere and good. Tell them they mean a lot to you and possibly how much they've impacted your life.



MATH TABLES

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

To be honest, I don't know what these things are. They have numbers on them and protractors. I've labeled them Math Tables, thinking that they are specific to some type of math activity. The math tables, or as they are more commonly known, multiplication tables remind me of cheating. Much of this is due to how ease is presented and seen in American schools. Anything that gives you a shortcut or a so-called un-rigorous path to an outcome is seen as suspicious. As such, we see repeated instances of kids doing—what has been labeled—“busywork”, in order to maintain the appearance of “hard work”. Anything else is construed as “cheating”. In painting, tracing and cutting & pasting, carry this stigma.

Directives for a potential assignment:

The Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn once stated that his enjoyment with collage came from its “suspicious” appearance as easy and seemingly talent deficient. Make the simplest collage you can possibly make by simply pairing two separate entities with each other. Try to be minimal in your manipulation of your components.



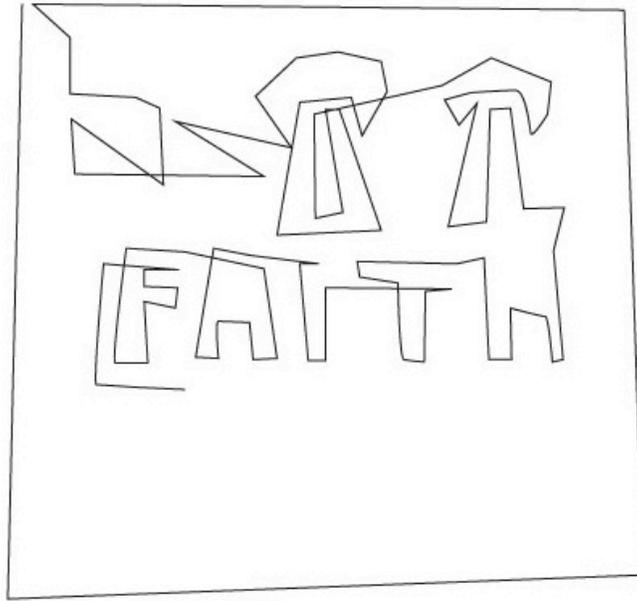
S A F E T Y G O G G L E S

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

At the date of this placard's publication, Google was a fourteen year-old company. Its official birthday is September 4, 1998. Google shares its birthday with super diva Beyonce; legendary Major League Baseball catcher, Mike Piazza; the hilarious, Damon Wayans; and Jason David Frank, the actor who played the role of the original Green Ranger on the kids television show Mighty Morphin Power Rangers. John Tyler Hammons, also of September 4 birth, shares the title with several other young men of being the second youngest mayor to be elected over a city. He was elected because, unlike his opponent who kept touting his "mature" age and experience, Hammons presented issues and made concrete campaign promises. The citizens of Muskogee, OK preferred issues over credentials. Just in case you are wondering, the youngest Mayor of a U.S. city was eleven-year old Brian Zimmerman who was elected mayor of Crabb, TX in 1983. He died of a heart attack in 1996, at the age of twenty-four.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Never let anyone diminish your youth. After all you might be the next Brian Zimmerman or Google. Think of something that is normally considered "adult" because it requires a certain amount of maturity to execute. Attempt it. I know that you are capable. If you must, wear safety goggles while doing it.



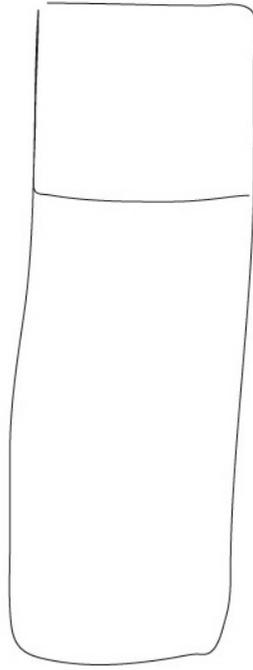
DRAWING OF THE WORD FAITH

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Faith is frequently conflated with religion. Faith, however, is essentially trust—that is—allowing oneself to have confidence in something that is not clearly evident. I'm not so sure though, that faith is always blind. Allow me to explain. It has been my experience—in my relatively short life—that my faith has mostly grown through encounters. I've come to trust certain things that are unseen will manifest themselves or play out in a specific way, because that is logically, the only consistent progression of events. So, on some level, faith is knowledge. It knows that past manifestations are indicators of prognosticated occurrences.

Directives for a potential assignment:

In this image we see eyes projecting some type of light-beams into the world. This is an interesting reversal of the typical diagram, which shows light being beamed into the eye. This reversal of function allows us to imagine other parts of our bodies which function in “unnatural” ways. Select three parts of your body and imagine them doing what is not intuitive to those parts. Although it may be impossible, attempt a movement with that body part that processes this “impossible move”. Repeat each move for thirty seconds and then sequence your moves to create a minute and half dance. Perform it the most logical space in this room or its adjacent hallway.



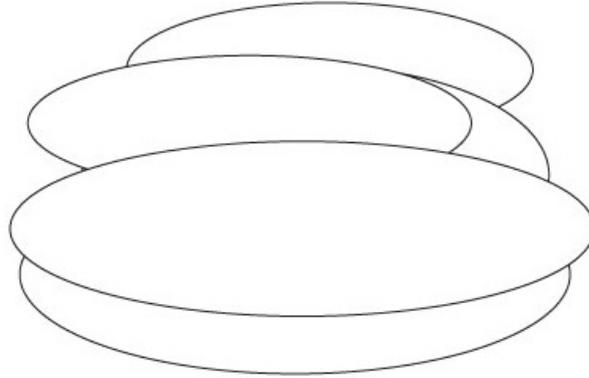
CAN OF SHAVING CREAM

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Up until I moved out of my parents' house I prepared my face for shaving by lathering up my face with soap. My father never taught me how to use shaving cream. The first time I shaved with shaving cream was mind-blowing. The ease with which the razor cleaned up my face was incredible. On a now defunct webpage about the history of shaving operated by the Gillette Company, it is explained that records of shaving go as far back as 3000 BC, Sumer or what is now known as the Middle Eastern country of Kuwait. The application for smoother shaves was a combination of animal fat and other materials.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Joseph Beuys frequently taught—or lectured—making large chalk board diagrams to illustrate his point. Many art institutions have kept and preserved those chalkboards and now display them in the same way that paintings are displayed. These chalkboards represent the difficulty and reality of holding on to objects and experiences that are actually fleeing. Produce a series of works in this room that only exist in the room, while you are in the room. Make three.



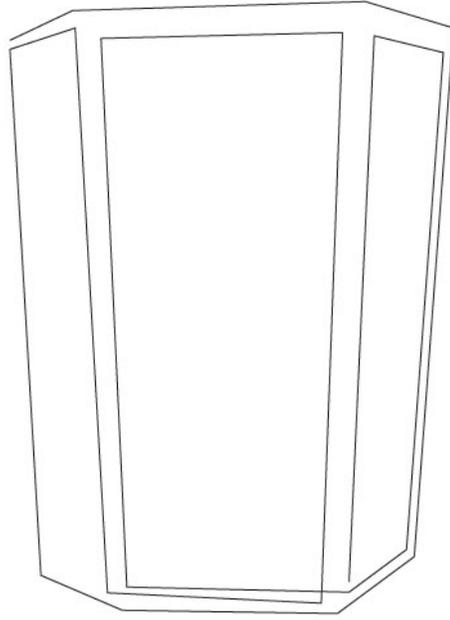
EMBROIDERY RINGS

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

For a short stint back in the early 2000s I embroidered swatches of color on canvas. It was laborious work and produce, nothing more than what could have been done with a paintbrush. Was this activity useless? Except for an embroidered piece that I made with Alexandra Schmidt, I would have to say yes. Alex is a tremendous artist and creative thinker, so I guess it wasn't a total waste. Although she came to most of that on her own.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Separate several hours for making. Spend them in this room constructing a work that takes up those hours fully, but in the end produces nothing that you are happy with. This may require you to work in a manner that is counter-intuitive to—either—your training, or your nicely honed sensibilities.



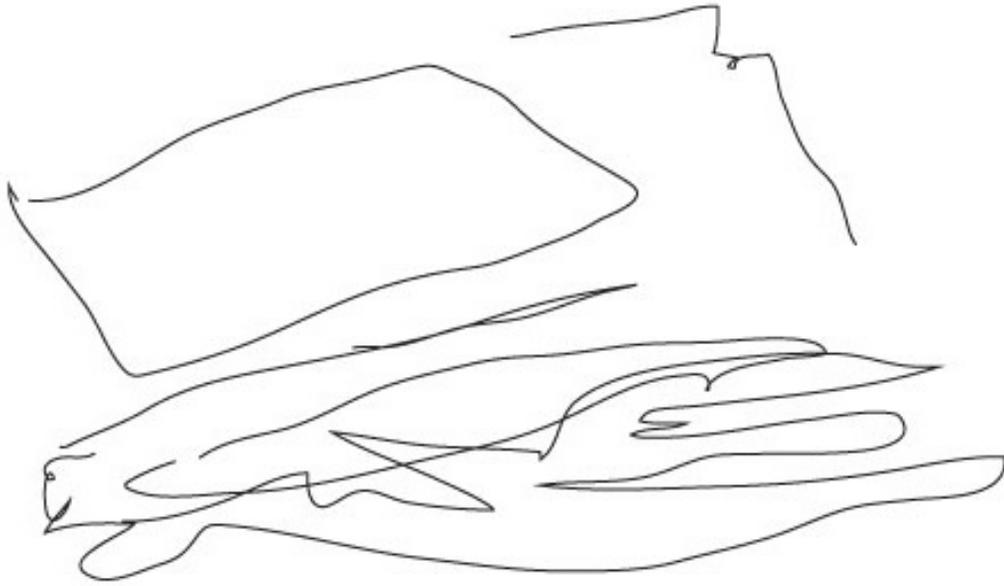
SHOWER DOOR

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

This shower door is so portal-esque that its resemblance to a time machine cannot be ignored. H.G. Wells, the author credited with the conceptualization of the “time machine”, besides being recognized as one of the so-called “fathers of science fiction” was also a famed teacher, whose pupils included A.A. Milne. Milne, of course, is the author of the beloved children’s stories Winnie the Pooh. What the connection is between time travel and Winnie the Pooh is far too pregnant a proposal for me to ruin by ruminating open it in this wall text. So I’ll just leave those connections for you to make.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Think of something you read when you were a kid and something you saw on television. Try to find a way that both of those disparate sources intersect. Write a short story using both of those sources as your beginning.



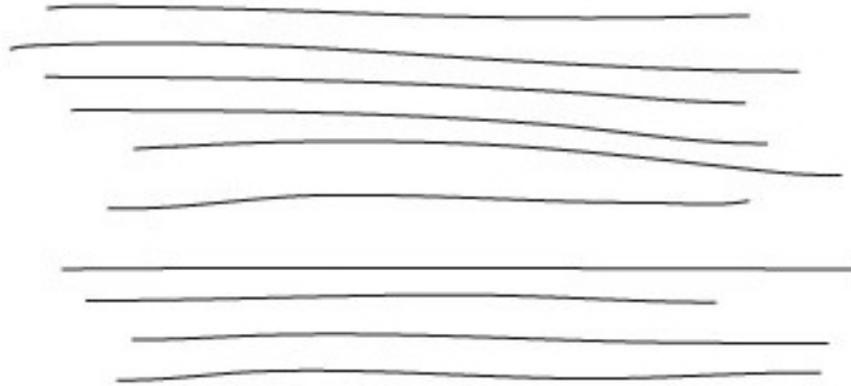
PILE OF OLD NEWSPAPERS

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

What will Papier-mâché projects become when print newspapers go extinct? Sturdier I suppose, because the kind of paper that will be used to make these sculptural projects will be better quality. Whenever my students are working with either newspapers or magazine's and they start reading the articles instead of tearing up those periodicals to make their work, I let them. I think it's so funny how there is such an emphasis for "reading" in the schools, but when art students read—while they are supposed to be being "creative"—they get accused of being unproductive. It's ironic and I want to celebrate that.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Find an old newspaper or magazine in this room and read it from cover to cover. Put it back where you found it.



8 ½ X 11 PAPER

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

“The 8.5" x 11" size stems from the original size of a vat that was used to make paper. At the time, paper was made from passing a fiber and water slurry through a screen at the bottom of a box. The box was 17" deep and 44" wide. That sheet, folded in half in the long direction, then twice in the opposite direction, made a sheet of paper that was exactly 8.5" x 11" (From Answers.yahoo.com, retrieved on May 17, 2012).

Directives for a potential assignment:

Hand fold and cut a sheet of 8 ½ by 11 piece of paper until the original reference size becomes undetectable. Write short letters to friends on them and mail or hand deliver this correspondence to your buddies. Keep all the language in the same abbreviated formats that has become so popular with Twitter and texting. Write it all in your nicest cursive.



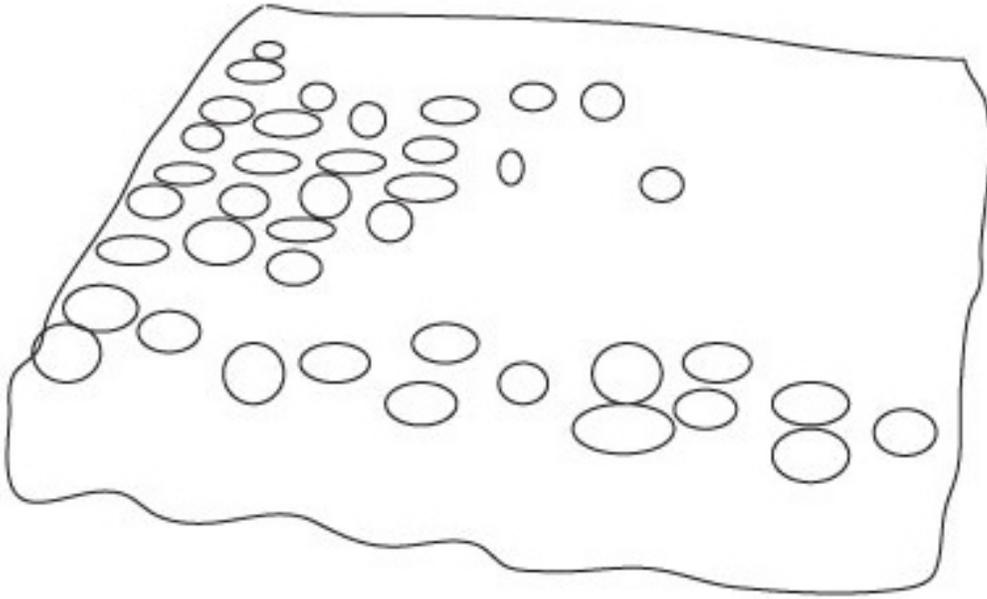
STAPLE GUN

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

The staple gun is one of those tools for which its previous incarnations would be hard to imagine. Yes, it was probably something that involved a hammer, but what I'm trying to say here is that the staple gun is so intuitive, so natural feeling that it just gives off that impression—that nothing else that anticipated it, had as much cache.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Make warning labels for many of the things in this room whether they need them or not. Place your warnings either on the objects or next to them. Be serious.



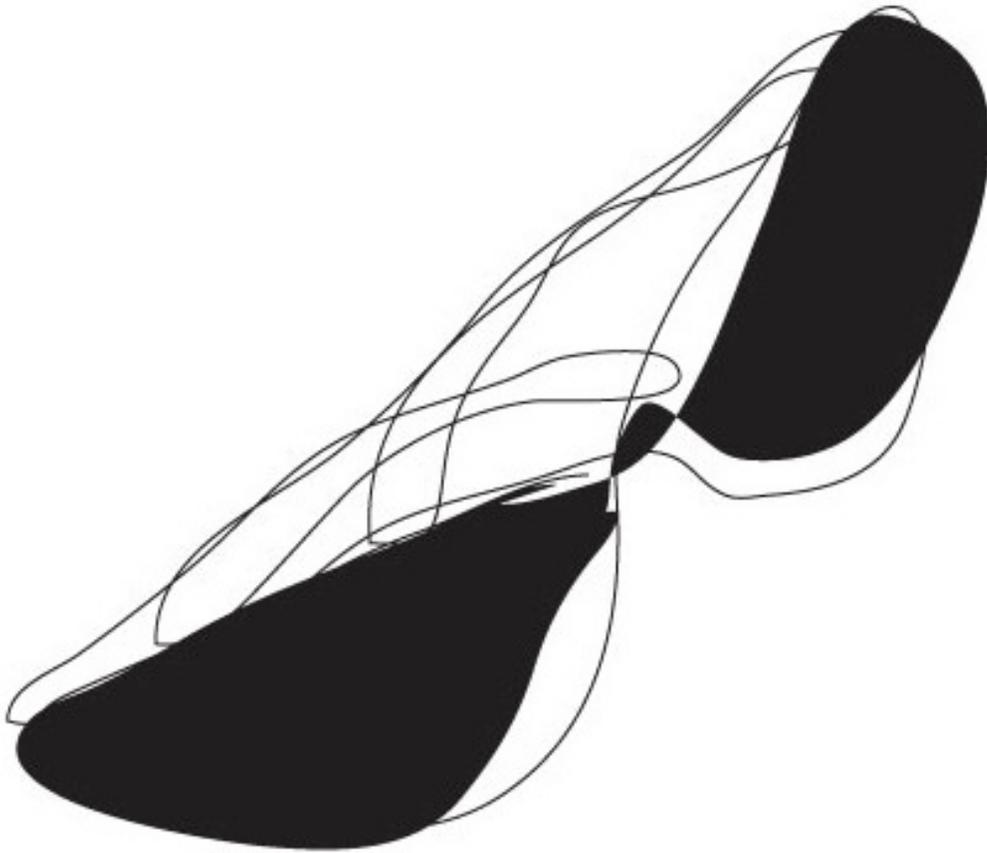
STYROFOAM FORM

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Styrofoam is one of those inventions whose prevalence in the society turned it from a trademarked name to a generic name. DOW chemical invented and patented the material, but now we call all that white, resistant to water, floatable, material: Styrofoam. Other things that have moved from specific to generic are: Kleenex, Super glue, Aspirin, Escalator, Laundromat, Thermos, Yo-Yo, Videotape, ChapStick and depending on who you are talking to, "Coke".

Directives for a potential assignment:

Find things in this space that have specific names, see if you can get others to call all iterations of this sort of thing by the name you are giving it. For example, determine what the name of the faucet spout is and then start calling it that all the time. The faucet now becomes the Kohler. "Hey, don't leave the Kohler running! What do you think, water grows on trees?!"



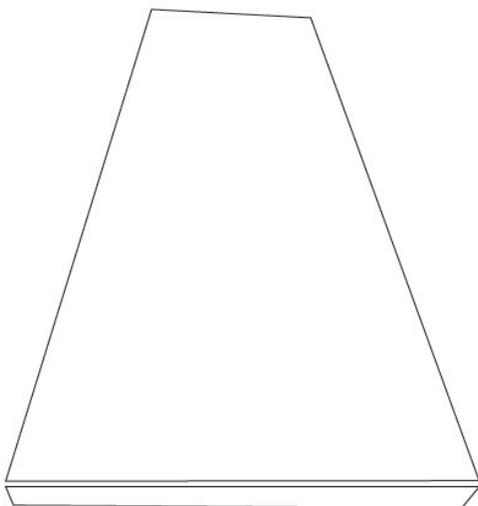
SUNGLASSES

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Lots of people tell me that they are not “hat people”. This is something I can’t imagine since I consider myself a hat lover, baseball caps in particular. Now, when I think about my sunglass wearing habits, I begin to understand how some things are just not made for certain folks. I’ve never been able to find a pair of good sunglasses so mostly—when it’s absolutely necessary—I wear my wives glasses.

Directives for a potential assignment:

What is something that you are not that interested in? What causes this type of disconnect? Can it be overcome? Is that even necessary? Engage with these questions only to the extent where it doesn’t become too boring. You are done.



T A B L E T O P

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

At some point during all my classes I invite my students over for a meal. This appears to be a mere event or celebration, but in truth, I would really like to present this gesture to my students as a pedagogical gesture. I want them to understand what it means to be generous as a means to produce moments of learning. These instances of affect also present the possibility of relational and not easily catalogue learning moments. This is just the beginning gesture of something that—even I—am unsure of when it comes to worth. I'm having to trust that it will be okay.

Directives for a potential assignment:

At some point during the next week, split your lunch with someone else. Allow this move to be an artwork.



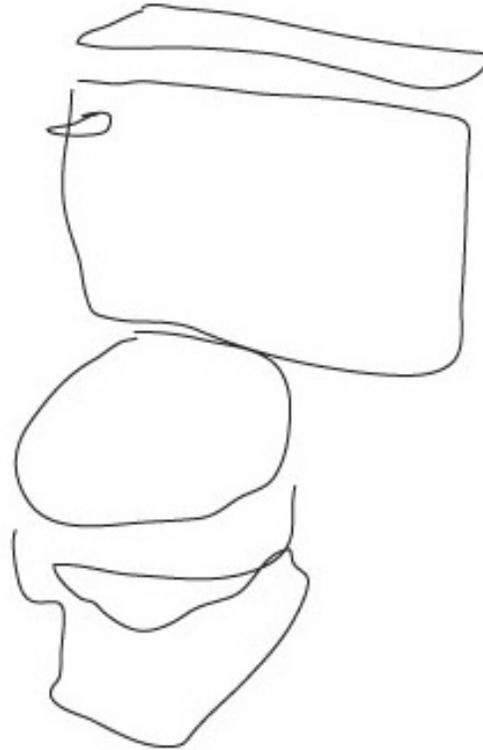
TOILETPAPER TUBE

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

The quintessential art supply, the toilet paper tube encapsulates why art education is sometimes ignored as “for kids” or not contemporary. There is always a manner to problematize this assumption, if we are willing to put in the effort. Tom Friedman is an artist who complicates the use of these types of materials by injecting their use with his own philosophical preoccupations, while at the same time allowing something like toilet paper tubes, Play-Doh, and construction paper to enter into a larger discourse with works of art that are not considering many of the materials with which we were first “taught” to make art with.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Make a telescope out of a toilet paper roll. Make a megaphone out of a toilet paper roll. Have a campout and look at the stars. Protest the NATO summit with your toilet paper mega phone. Don't worry if you are shy, this tool will amplify everything.



T O I L E T

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

I have a reading chair in my office. I found it on the curb in front of my sister-in-law's house. I transported it from a suburb of Chicago to the University of Illinois where I work. It reclines. When I sit down on it to read, I frequently fall asleep. I should stop reading boring stuff.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Read something you can't understand. Write a paper, where you cite it.



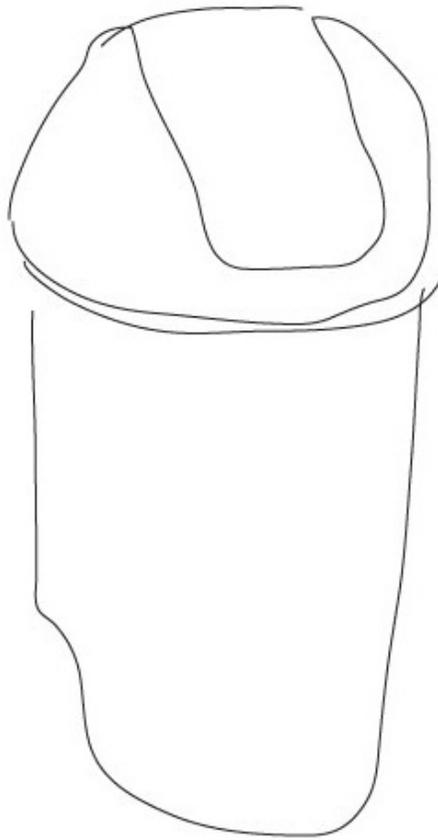
T O W E L R O D

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Some of the funniest diarrhea jokes involve a towel rod.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Come up with three jokes that have to do with bodily functions. Try not to be dirty, but aim to tell all three jokes at the next big family gathering. Don't tell them that it is part of an art project.



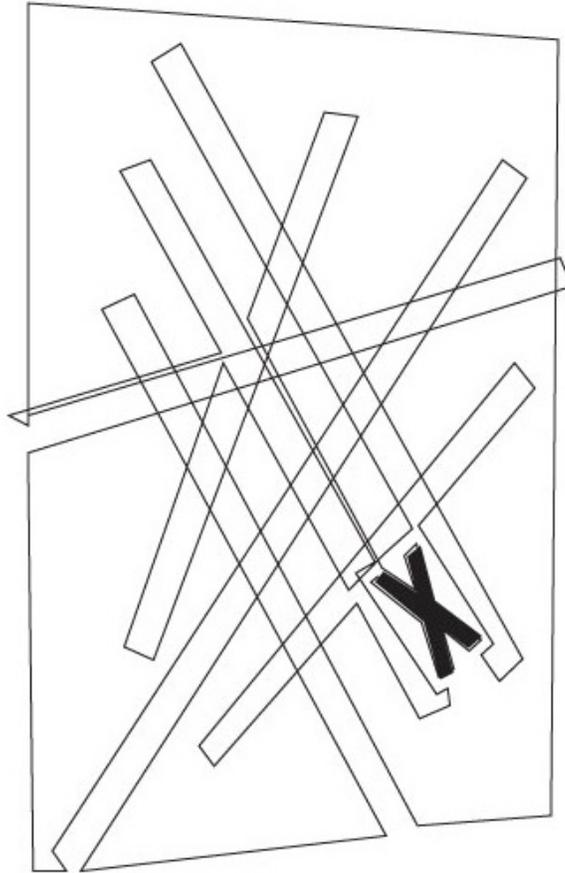
G A R B A G E C A N

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Rest assured, there is not a small man living in this trashcan.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Pick up all the trash in this room. Fold it as best you can and place in this receptacle. Take a series of pictures of it and display, either in this room or on your Facebook page.



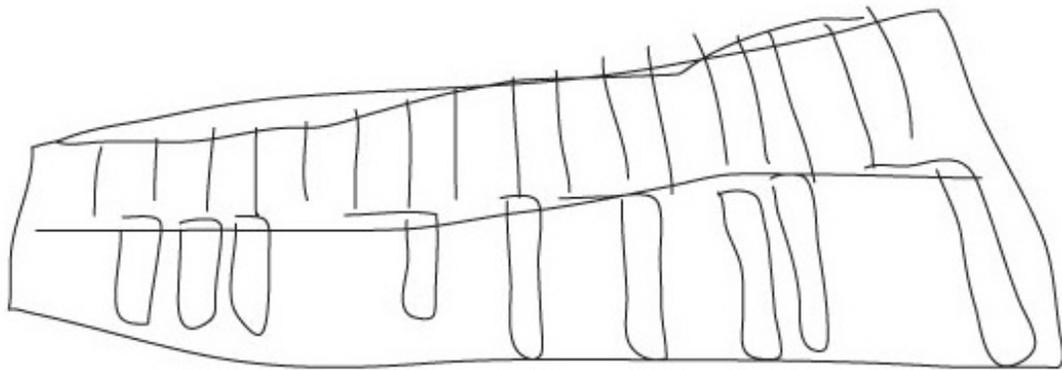
D R A W I N G M A D E W I T H T A P E

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

What can be said this thing that it doesn't already say for itself. It is a tremendous work of art that will never get the attention it deserves. Most of the reason it will be ignored is because of rigor and because whoever made it probably doesn't know the right people. Ultimately the reason it will be ignored is because whoever made it doesn't care enough about it. Oh well.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Go home and start making a series of artworks that no one will ever see until you die and they come to clean your apartment out. When you start to have doubts about it, remember that this "hiding" gesture, makes you as good as Marcel Duchamp and Tehching Hsieh. Don't know who those people are? Look them up.



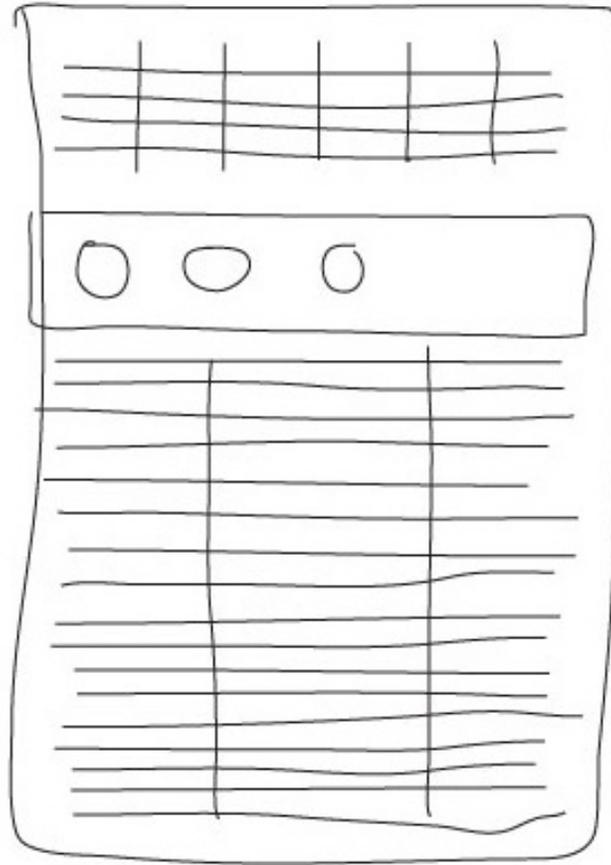
X Y L O P H O N E

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

I've seen xylophones in museums from Africa, Latin America, and other parts of the world. I've never seen a displayed modern looking xylophone. The xylophone is an incredible instrument that frees novice musicians, such as myself, to consider themselves actual artists. Be empowered by the xylophone.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Put on a concert. Record it on your phone. Send it to others.



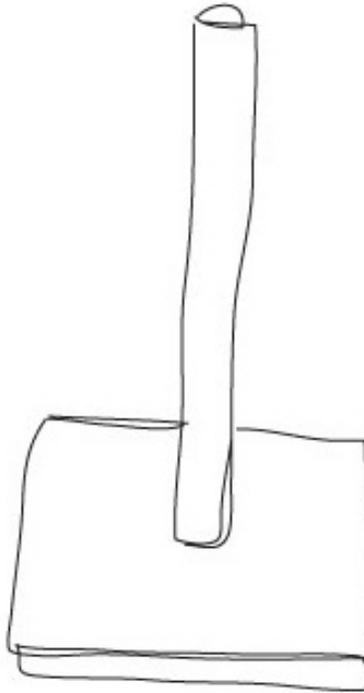
AIR CONDITIONER

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Blue means cold, red means warm. The same vents control the flow of these different temperatures; one to tone down the heat of the summer, the other to take the bite away of the winter's cold. What a specific luxury to—at the flick of a switch—be able to regulate how the air around us touches our skin! This under-theorized apparatus of learning—the skin—is constantly registering information, helping us to navigate—through varying degrees of pressure—our way through the world. Is it our eyes that are getting in the way of our seeing what our skin is showing us?

Directives for a potential assignment:

Find a way to pay closer attention to the information your touch is leading you to. Make a list of fifty things that you become conscious of through this process. Use this list as the starting point to execute the “directives” of one of the other placards in this room.



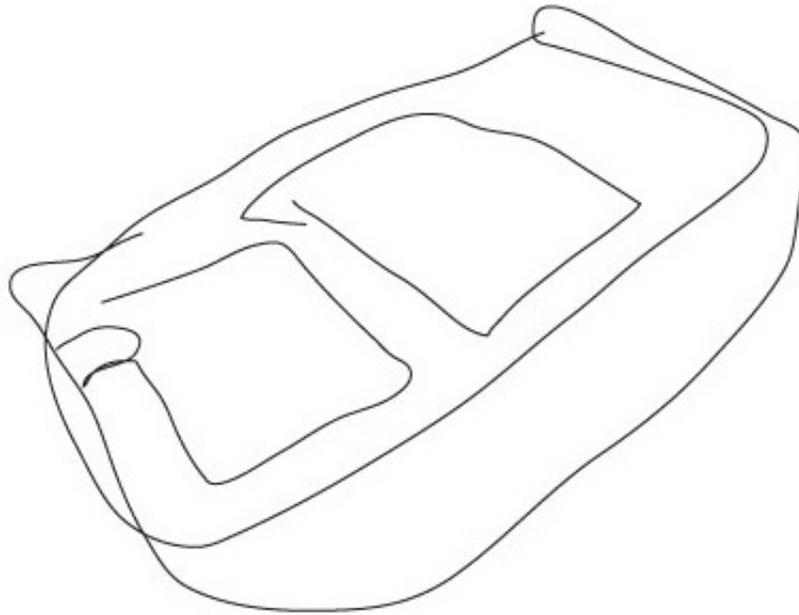
A R M A T U R E

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

When I think of Moses, I always imagine him with his arms in the air, holding his staff. When Moses hit the rock with his staff it sprung water for the thirsty Israelites. When he lifted it above his head (at least in the movie) the sea parted and the people crossed safely. Moses held up his staff with a serpent coiled around it, and when the sick people looked to it, they were made well. He threw it on the floor in front of the pharaoh and the staff turned into a snake. What is believed to be Moses's staff currently resides in the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Is there some thing that that you would like to own, which belonged to someone who you deem important? The person may or may have not been well known, but still they had certain possessions that carry great significance in your recognition of their character. Aim to acquire those that object, document your search (successful or otherwise) in a short documentary (Audio or Video).



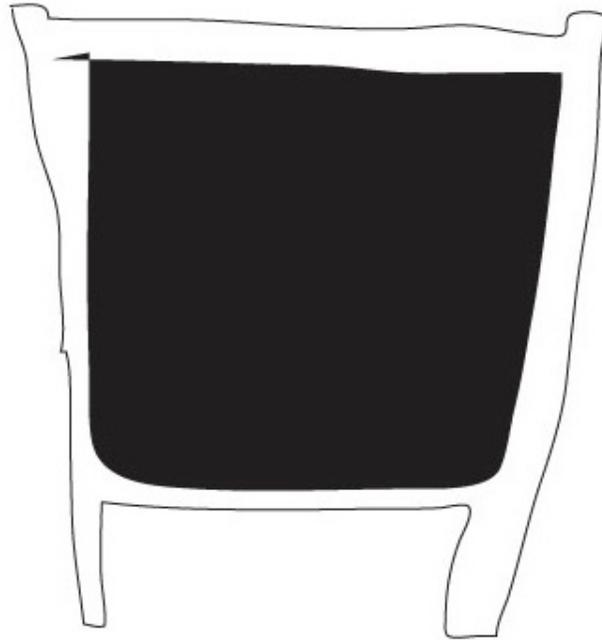
BATH TUB AS STORAGE

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

*The first work of art that I heard explained conceptually was *The death of Marat* by Jacques-Louis David. The story, the context, the significance of this work in the trajectory of Western art history was all laid out in a darkened auditorium filled with sleepy first-year students. Frankly, that image and its explanation lay diluted in my memory for years. I don't ever think about it. But there is something from my engagement with that painting that is left over and that I use every day: I understood works of art (and later images in general) as part of a vocabulary. Engaging the form and content of occurrences became a means through which I learned to develop my own language. These things become permissions for behavior.*

Directives for a potential assignment:

Go through SHoP and look at all the works on display. Ask yourself: How is this thing made? and What is this thing about? The answers you gather will help you to understand the formal and conceptual motivations found in these contemporary expressions. Make a list of your findings. These findings are gateways towards new ways of practicing. Mix and match them at will, forever. Repeat in front of other things you find fascinating.



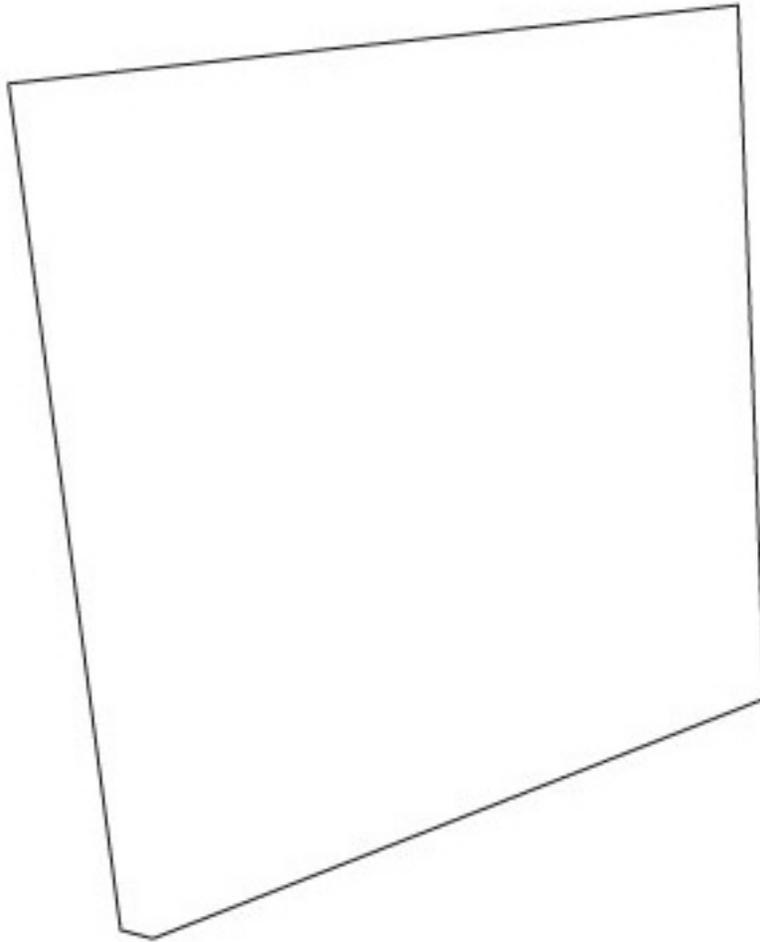
CHALKBOARD

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

The palimpsest is a ghost record. Markings and notations all still reside on that surface, even though they may now be invisible. They may be in the background, only evidenced by some ephemeral pushing of a finger, a piece of chalk, an erasable writing tool, the delete key on my computer. Always correcting ourselves even in an attempt to be ecological, the palimpsest continues to assert its presence by capturing, holding, and even re-presenting the past to us, even in whispers.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Find something that already has marks in this room, attempt to either erase them completely or cover them up until they're not perceptible. Frame this work, hang it in a nice part of your house and when you look at it, think about William de Kooning.



BLANK CANVAS

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

The most exciting and scariest part might be the beginning. The end is often given a lot of attention, primarily because many have come to recognize that the end is an indicator of something new coming. Either way, it is this passage from close to open, from nothing to something, that both thrills and petrifies most. But the beginning also promotes an act of courage. A sudden gesture—even if it had been well considered—that propels an individual into a tenure of reconciliation; that is a constant back and forth in order to remedy that initial leap and bring things back to a beginning.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Don't do anything. Turn around and walk out of this room.



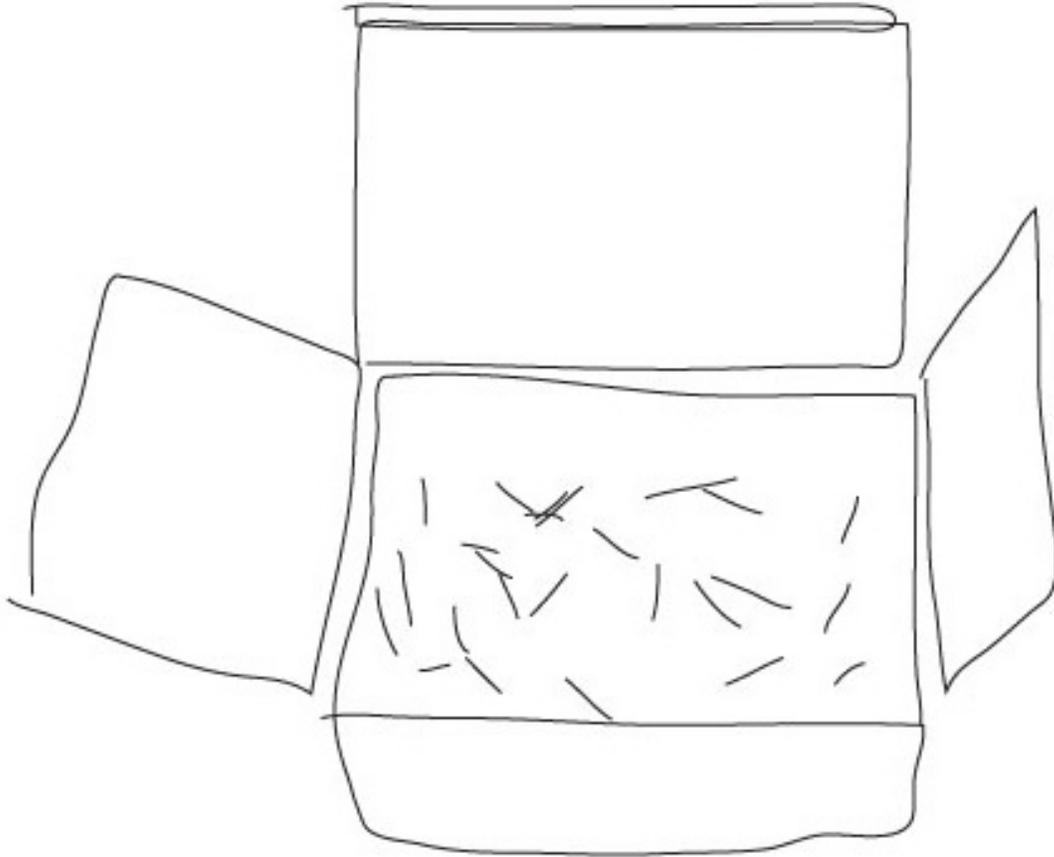
BOBA FETT

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

*Is there anything to the fact that when I was a young Star Wars fan, my favorite character was Boba Fett and now that my boys are that age, they all love Jango Fett? Jango Fett, the father of Boba—although birth from the literary preexistence of Boba—is a bounty hunter from whom all the clones of the galactic empire are bred. Boba was a special request to the cloners from Jango for an unaccelerated clone who he could call his son. The movies never explain why this request was made, although it is indicated that something shady is going on there. If you ever get a chance, watch or read the movie (2010) /book (2005) *Never let me go*. The story is sad but touching.*

Directives for a potential assignment:

Do a little research about the kinds of plants that grow in your neighborhood and develop a plan of action for starting a small garden. Many will tell you that you are planting—nothing more than a garden and that you are not an artist—that's okay, it is exactly that misunderstanding that you puts in an artistic light.



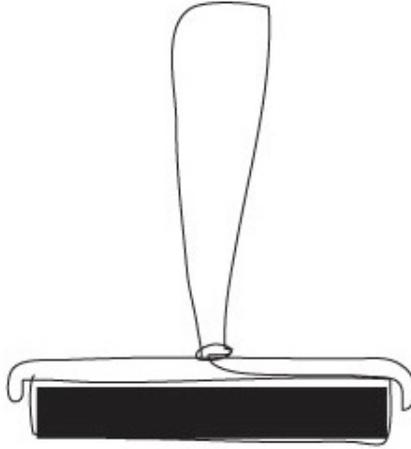
BOX OF NAILS

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Box of nails, like Jug full of wine corks, strikes me as the name of either a comedy troupe or a band that takes itself too seriously. It turns out that this band actually exists. They are a psychedelic-rock outfit from New Hampshire, claiming the Grateful Dead, Allman Bros. and Pearl Jam as their influences. If you want to book them, “just call Dave (since its his phone number)...603-856-0453.

Directives for a potential assignment:

If someone has a means to listen to music (MP3 player, etc.) put on some Grateful Dead or Pink Floyd and make tedious, labor-intensive works out of clay, plaster, or wood. Remember to make the work inconsequential. Just kidding, be serious.



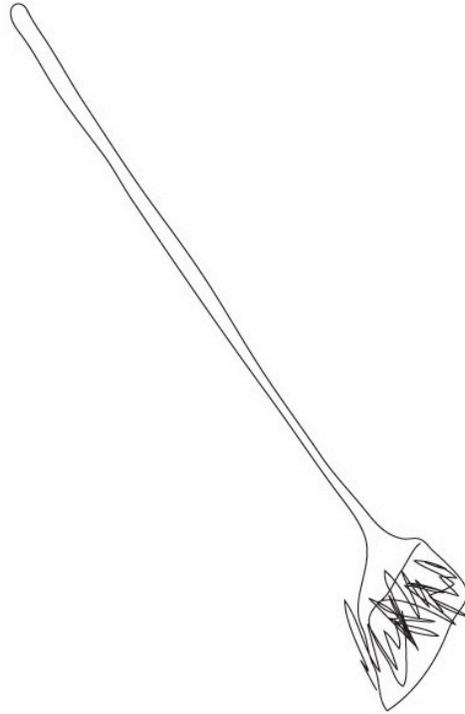
B R A Y E R

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

At first I thought—when looking at my library—that the book spine color that was most prominent was yellow. But then after I looked a little bit longer, I realized it was white. It must be cheaper to use white covers. This is a list of ten books with white spines from my book collection: John Stezaker; Wordlessness; Out of my later years; The best surprise is not surprise; Weapons of the weak; The absorbent child; Occupied America; What is philosophy; Logical conclusions: 40 years of rule-based art; Laura Owens.

Directives for a potential assignment:

On the table in the middle of this room, organize objects that share a similar property (i.e. color, approximate size, weight, use, etc.). Take several pictures from different angles. Return everything except one object to where you found it and begin again from a different property of that one object.



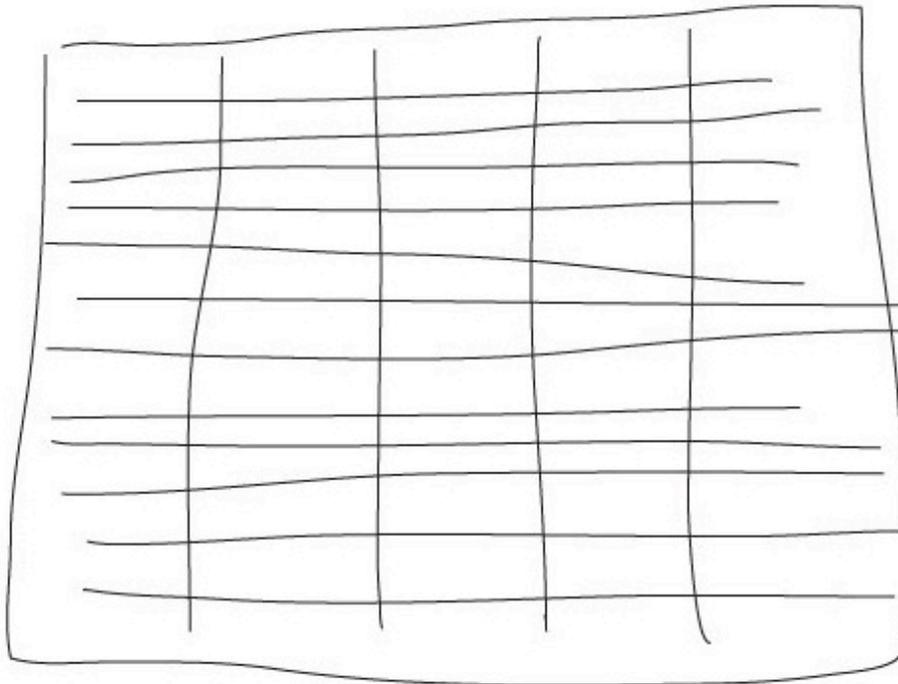
B R O O M

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

I recently read in a book by Jonah Lehrer a short narrative about the invention of the Swiffer, a sleeker, cleaner, easier to use, version of the old-school rag mop. Lehrer recounts the narrative about how that gadget came about, including how difficult it was to conceptualize and convince people to use. Lehrer presents it as a triumph of the imagination. The funny thing is that last week when our first floor toilet was overflowing onto the floor with urine and feces tainted water; I was imagining myself attempting to stop the deluge with a Johnson & Johnson Swiffer. Good times...good times.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Is there something in this house that is perfect, meaning its form and function are perfectly married and need not be improved upon? Well, don't let that stop you. Take it upon yourself to make improvements—even if they're just slight—to various things in and around the house.



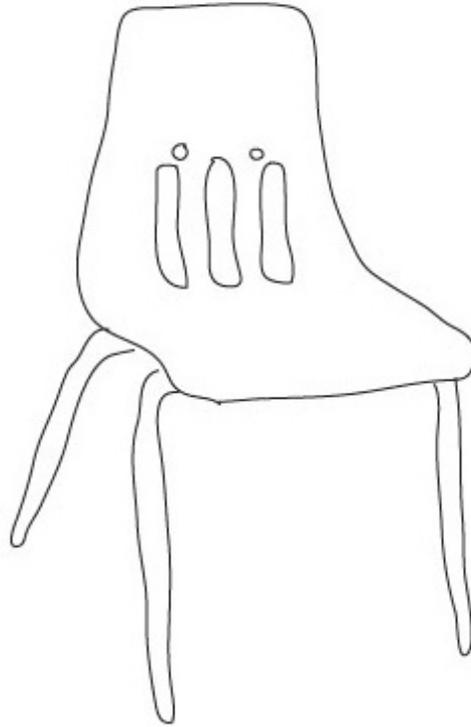
CASSETTE ORGANIZER

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Cassettes were the way we got recorded music when I was a teen. The first two cassette I bought with my own money were DJ Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince's He's the DJ, I'm the rapper and Robert Palmer's Heavy Nova. I bought those two tapes at a Kmart with a twenty-dollar bill that someone had given me for my birthday. An average album on iTunes cost \$9.99. How is it that music, which at this point has no physical properties (an mp3 file) costs the same as the cassettes I first bought back in 1988. By the way, that year, He's the DJ I'm the rapper became the "first double album in hip-hop music" history. Funny, huh?

Directives for a potential assignment:

Compose a short (two verses and a chorus) rap about how your day went today. When it is completed, wait in this room for someone else to enter the room and then perform it for them. If you can't think of a melody do it to the theme from your favorite (or at least most watched) television show.



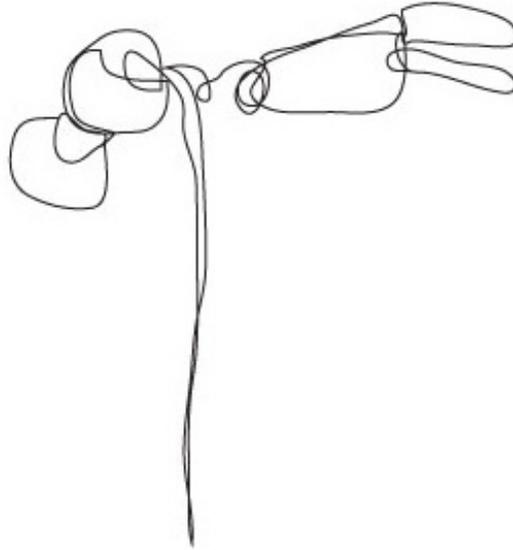
CHAIR

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

The stackable chair was invented by Robin Day, a British designer. Like Charles and Ray Eames in the States, Day and his wife Lucienne transformed the texture of postwar Modernism by bracketing abstraction, color, the machine, and minimalistic arrangements in a manner that captured the essence and growth of that time. Chair's like Day's are commonly seen in classrooms throughout America; allowing for the inhabitants of a particular space to reconfigure the room or clearing it out by condensing the area of the furniture through its stackable properties.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Have you ever played Tetris? Take an object from this room or from the Thrift Store next door and place it a perfect hollow somewhere else in this house. Let me explain, take an object. Walk around the house with it in your hand. Look everywhere. Find a place where that object would fit just right (e.g. a square peg in a square opening), put it in there. Leave it there. Go about your life.



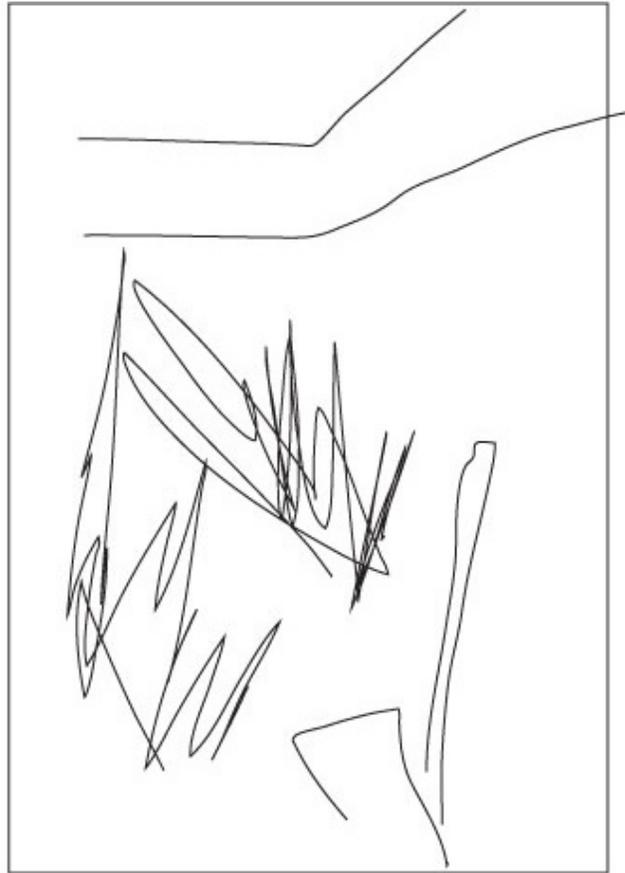
CLAMP LIGHT

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

William James (1950): We all know this latter state [distraction], even in its extreme degree. Most people probably fall several times a day into a fit of something like this: The eyes are fixed on vacancy, the sounds of the world melt into confused unity, the attention is dispersed so that the whole body is felt, as it were, at once, and the foreground of consciousness is filled, if by anything, by a sort of solemn sense of surrender to the empty passing of time. In the dim background of our mind we know meanwhile what we ought to be doing: getting up, dressing ourselves, answering the person who has spoken to us, trying to make the next step in our reasoning. But somehow we cannot start...(p. 403).

Directives for a potential assignment:

Move this spot-clamp light to another part of the room, a part that you think needs more attention.



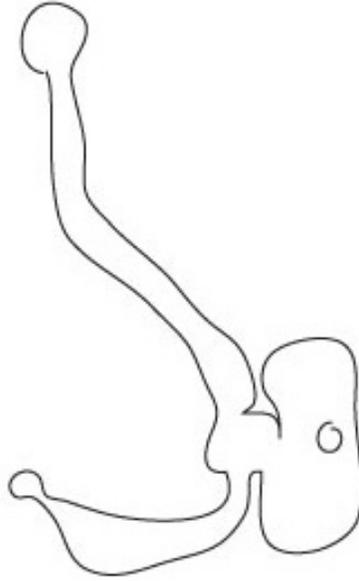
SCRAP WOOD CLOSET

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

The second incarnation of Kurt Schwitter's Merz without even trying.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Put more stuff in this closet.



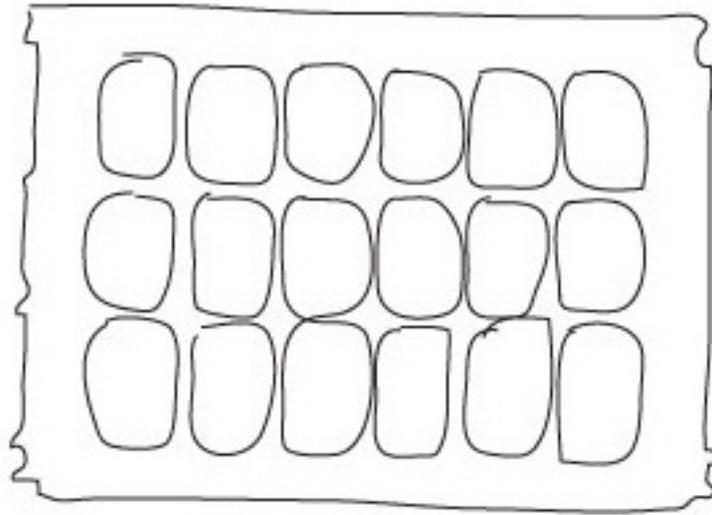
COAT HOOK

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

This particular coat hook looks like an upside down question mark. The upside question mark is a punctuation that you put at the beginning of a question written in Spanish. “¿”, this symbol is created on a Mac by pressing the shift and option keys, along with the question mark. English speakers on the website Answers.yahoo.com ask the question “what does an upside down question mark mean and when is it used?” The answer is always “the Spanish language”, but no one ever speaks of this redundancy’s use and its motivation. The example in the “best answer” on the site is: ¿Por que es el mundo como es? (Translation: Why is the world how it is?” ¡Wow! ¡Que pregunta! (Translation:What a question!)

Directives for a potential assignment:

With some of the nails in this room, hang up ten objects that are not coats, as if they were.



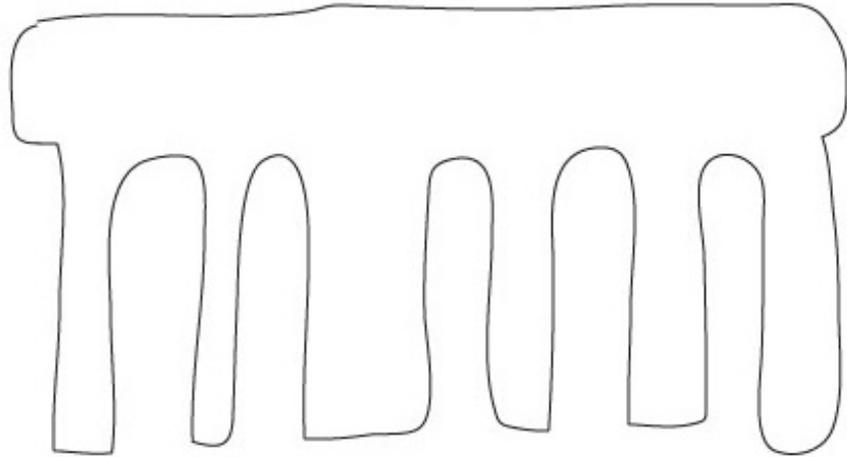
C R A T E

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

Egg is considered a naturally occurring bio-derived plastic, an “organic-polymer” if you will. An early painting teacher of mine encouraged me to use egg as the medium for my watercolor paintings. This ended up having a similar texture to acrylic paint. Through this faux egg-tempera lesson I learned that paint is composed of two parts, the pigment and vehicle. I then understood that although the pigment pretty much stayed the same for most paints, the vehicle (or what “carries” the pigment) could be anything from water in watercolor to wax in encaustic. Understanding the vehicle has made all the difference in my painting practice. Understanding the “carrier’s” nuance, points of resistance, and rules to be broken is a point of agency in the painting process.

Directives for a potential assignment:

There is box of sand in this classroom/studio. By mixing this material with painting, you will find that you have created an interruption in the logic of that paint’s vehicle/pigment relationship. What are the potentials of doing something like? For one, a more frustrating painting process; but also an under-explored opportunity. Make three different paintings, wherein you interrupt the vehicle/pigment relationship in order to open up the process.



DECORATIVE ELEMENT

Imagined origin, purpose, or related narrative:

This little moment is a relic. It has been left over from something that this room used to be. This house is filled with those moments. I guess on some level that is why we make art: to pay attention, to not forget, to allow things to emerge (either from obscurity or over exposure). It's a research method and deserves research money.

Directives for a potential assignment:

Find the remnants around the house that you are drawn to. Write them down without saying exactly what they are. Make a list of ten and leave the list in this room as a type of scavenger hunt for others. In order to open up the experience for other's interpretations, phrase your clues something like this: Find something that has multiple prongs and appears to be supportive. This prompt was derived from this decorative element.