NOTES BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW: QUEERING PERCEPTIONS TOWARD HOMOTOPIA

A thesis submitted to the Kent State University Honors College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for General Honors

by

Nicholas Joyce

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Thesis written by
Nicholas Joyce

Approved by
Isabel Farnsworth, M.F.A.____________________________________________, Advisor
Christine Havice, Ph.D.__________________________________, Director, School of Art

Accepted by
Don Williams, Ph.D._____________________________________, Dean, Honors College
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This thesis would not have been realized without the invaluable commitment of Kevin Floyd – professor of English at Kent State University and well-published author whose work includes: *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism*. This book became the keystone of my thought within the writing of this thesis.

Dr. Natasha Levinson's sincere thoughts towards my own cultivated unrealized meaning that was necessary to the success of my writing and her interest in my work became a truly motivating factor toward its completion.

The dedicated friendship of Sean Delaney and his desire to gain an ever-expanding perception of his historic and cultural placement challenges my own and deserves recognition as essential to this thesis.

Chelsey Swilik, Brenna McNamara, Jamie Ziemba, my brother – Luke, my mother – Rita and my father - Tom provided suggestions that are interwoven throughout my writing. I would have risked exposing any narrowsness of my thought without their well-spoken advice.
For John,

Your love of life
And understanding of time
Have never meant more.
Thursday, March 31, 2011 at 4:15pm:

The photographs below illustrate the state of my present thought. I would like to explore this mind state and begin with these snapshots. I have just finished precariously stacking a tower of wooden, alphabet blocks [Figure 1].

With my right hand steadying its seemingly inevitable collapse, I pose in front of the camera and smile. My attention, however, shifts before the second picture is taken. My focus is no longer between myself and my mother, the tower and the camera, or even within the embracement of my accomplishment. There is a deep sense of pleasure in my expression as I kick down the skinny tower of blocks, each thrown in a scattered path onto the floor. [Figure 2]. It is within this moment that
something happens; it is something which I cannot yet describe. This unknown
is, however, something I must investigate for my own curiosity. I want to return to
those disparate building blocks of language in order to reconstruct some version of
that childhood tower.
As I am searching for the words to write here I must first tell you that this thesis is an interwoven other within my senior show. This is my final statement before graduation; thus, I believe that it implies the beginning of something else.

My work in the time-based arts investigates the relationship between perception and that which is perceived. By using video and sound to draw attention to sight and hearing I am attempting to re-inform some notion of our self-awareness. Under the traditional notion of perception, our placement in space is acutely informed by the interactions of visual image and sound: evoking emotional responses when experienced, or, we could say, when they are re-experienced through the act of remembering.

My work responds to the ever-elaborated question: what now? This question is short but complex. Significant aspects of the complexities between subjectivity and time are brought into question. This essay does not seek resolution but rather keeps open the interplay of possibilities within my thought in an attempt to understand reason. I am intrigued by the perception of the unknown. It is my intent within this thesis and within my show to expose and question factors of perception that elaborate upon our notions of identity. This project is something that I regard as inconclusive because I am considering that the ever-present unknown always looms directly ahead of discovery. Therefore, the present is suggested in the future. Under this thought, perhaps it is most fitting to call my method of working “misplacement,” as it continuously unsettles my conclusions.
Saturday, March 26, 2011 at 6:02pm:

What follows is a written account of my reaction to a fluid style of research within a pointedly documented, temporal structure of my thought. Each entry has been stamped with the date and time it was originally written and is arranged to best present my thoughts. Another version of this thesis is structured from the first entry to the last one: abiding by the temporal structure. Throughout each, I will continually develop my position on – and my understanding of – my content. This study of time explores the relationship between the emergence of my thought and the translation of my thought in a desire to point out a structural aspect of this liminality.

Friday, April 1, 2011 at 2:25pm:

This process of logging my writing defines itself. The sectioning of my thought can be seen through different days. The information is introduced in spurts – one day’s entries are cut up and inserted amidst others, some thoughts complete themselves on different days and the logical – or illogical – order of my thought is exposed. It is not my intention to hide this account of my writing from the reader; this is an exposure of my thought process that should be seen as directly as possible in order to provoke constructive questioning, and my goal is to perceive actuality, or at least question the perception of actuality. It will be evident that my line of thought exists with some curiosity and therefore remains flexible. I am not trying to set any illusion in place; rather, I am trying to disillusion my very own perception of this writing by exposing the constraints of time.
WRITING, MYSELF

Saturday, March 26, 2011 at 6:02pm:

Time is perceived as a dictating construct of our lives, and it can only be experienced spatially. What will be examined herein is the possibility that time, and therefore space, can be re-identified in the expression of our present desire, and, though I wish to speak of a conclusion now, I think we must arrive at that together. I will address what guides our conscious perception of identity. That is, how we define ourselves and who we think we are in this historical time and cultural space – what we intend when we place ourselves according to each other within our relationship to a communal desire.

My video work brings together clips from childhood home videos and footage shot within the last year. Playing with the implications of growing up I want to attempt to disrupt my linear concepts of experience and investigate what informs my identity by exposing this gap in time. By studying video documentation of my childhood along with recent video footage of myself, there is a suggestion of a possible other, a temporal immediacy found within the present. Queering our rational perception in an attempt to embrace our possible irrational identity will prove necessary in understanding the enactment of our desire found in the present. This notion of queering finds its roots in queer theory and sets out to skew notions of normality as seen through the lens of commonly practiced perceptions.

I want to suggest that before our perception enacts itself, there is an intangible element the self must address: the desire for reason. Perception contextualizes a growing understanding of experience. I am questioning perception and its intent. This is connected to my interest in home videos: a way of reaching back into the past: a desire to recontextualize my present thought. I want my writing and my work to express something that I myself
cannot yet communicate. There is a reason for doing this; I believe it is in our moments of exploration that we discover possibility. I must call on the words of Theodor Adorno in considering my thoughts:

“The injunction to practice intellectual honesty usually amounts to sabotage of thought. The writer is urged to show explicitly all the steps that have led him to his conclusion, so enabling every reader to follow the process through and, where possible – in the academic industry – to duplicate it. This demand not only invokes the liberal fiction of the universal communicability of each and every thought and so inhibits their objectively appropriate expression, but it is also wrong in itself as a principle of representation.”

Possibilities of any kind that evidence a desire to unsettle assumptions of our identity are to be sought herein. The écriturial aspects (both readerly and writerly) of this text's temporal style sets out to suggest a simultaneously possible other within my presentation. I would consider this project to be a success if its structure allows for a variety of interpretations and questions. In the writing of any text, a well-posed conclusion expresses possibility.

1 Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia (London: Verso, 2005), 86.
From my observation, my thoughts have always had an innovative architectural influence. As a child I naturally engaged with the practice. I repeatedly drew houses with the gable roof finding its pitch perfectly centered above the front door and glimpses of the inside visible through the curtains that were drawn in each window. I built floor plans with Legos, finding pleasure in my ability to move walls at will. To create a home, imagine a story within that home and then rearrange the entire system allowed for narcissistic and honest humor as a child. I stacked elaborate card towers on the dining room table wondering why, without fail, the collapse always came - despite the rearrangement and the numerous attempts. I felt the deepest sense of possibility outside of my house: finding enjoyment in anything from placing a few sticks in the mud to inventing an entirely different world, one found deep within the imagination of a child amidst nature. All of this was my role as an architect of my own perception.

Architecture constantly finds distinction from its past by exploring new approaches to the identified needs of the present. That is, it is focusing on the present’s concern for the future. This presents a type of design that inevitably defines continuous production as “progress.” This approach to an environment or place as a child, however, is grounded in a more purely immediate thought process.

In her book, Architecture from the Outside, Elizabeth Grosz suggests that, “to be outside (something) is to afford oneself the possibility of a perspective, to look upon this inside, which is made difficult, if not impossible, from the inside.”¹ She continues this idea

¹ Elizabeth Grosz, Architecture from the Outside (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), xv.
by introducing something outside of both architecture and philosophy (not found in the dialectic!) calling upon a yet to be known “third space” from which it is possible to address a commonality found outside of both practices. This must dismiss an architectural philosophy as well as a philosophical architecture and propose a view from a new form of perspective. This is her idea of the “third space” as the “most perilous, experimental, and risky of tests and practices.” In this thought, one must step outside of the specificity of any subject to be able to fully examine its context: its internal subjectivity. This suggests that the space of our subjectivity and objectivity overlap.

_Sunday, March 27, 2011 at 3:01am:_

I am drawing a relation between this new space and queer theory as both are a significant factor in my research: my current thought. I was first introduced to queer theory in Kevin Floyd’s rather ostentatious take on the subject as juxtaposition to Marxist notions: *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism*. In the concepts found here, I began to question not only my cultural identity and the possibilities therein, but also my placement within the communal identity of a homonormative desire.

_Wednesday, March 23, 2011 at 1:59am:_

The logic of architecture shares a sense of perception with queer theory as each exists within a framework that is openly and constantly addressing its identifying factors. These factors are structurally internal to each practice. In both cases, the internal subject is the individual: the perceiving structural element of identity. In observing the individual as internal to each of these practices, what is outside must be some communal identity that is in flux. I am not questioning individual desire so much as I am emphasizing a communal desire found within each individual. Herein lies the importance of perspective; the

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2 Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, xvi.
contingencies of our identity become the source of our present enactments and expressions situated within an individually defined communal perspective.³

In observing and questioning identity from various viewpoints, I now propose a third space for this thesis – it is empty, yet to be filled. It is void of specificity and also filled with possibility. It is contingent upon the identifying factors of its interior: the communal qualities of each individual. I do not consider this space – this perception – limited to volume, boundary, content or conclusion. This opens notions of how space is perceived and implies that time is of the essence.

Sunday, March 27, 2011 at 10:01pm:

The attention of my thought is drawn to the ever-expanding experience of time and space as an inevitable construction of our identity. Within my work, the juxtaposition of footage from my childhood against current footage of myself expresses this notion further.

The majority of this content captures me at different moments in my childhood as a four, six and seven year old. I am the third of four children. These images of my past flash before my eyes and I relate to the child I see, however, I know that in this recollection I am missing countless hours of my childhood, years of my life and even memories from yesterday. This is not to suggest that I am begging the question, “Who am I?” Rather, I am thinking through myself in order to insist that I am in relation to a primarily communal notion of identity that has impacted the way in which I have come to know myself; it is addressing the composition of my life.

Simply put, I am curious as to why I can define myself within the linguistic, memoric and relational definitions of my perceptions. There is something unknown even within our most honest memories, and it is in these seemingly abandoned territories that I find

a possible space to bring into question. It is the possibility found in the non-existent, the unremembered development of my self that suggests the possible other within any perception I currently hold of my identity: be it historical, cultural, emotional or rational – potentially anything. Allow me to briefly explore the above as I move forward with my thoughts:

**Wednesday, March 23, 2011 at 1:59am:**

I have only recently realized that my attraction to space and inevitably time (what I once considered architecture) have very little to do with designing buildings, improving communities, or even meeting the needs of individual people. It may, in fact, have very little to do with anything outside of the inner workings of my perception. This perception must be located within communal understandings. This exploration requires an understanding of the subject of identity that needs to be introduced with the following:

Andrea Neufert, writer and art historian, said in a conversation with artist, Robert Linsley, that Wolfgang Paalen’s non-settling identity as a not-painter, not-editor, etc, “has something of the proclamation of someone without real identification, someone with qualities which he does not own, does not dominate, which don’t take real shape in the world, a shape which could lead to an ordered life through this identification, as a profession perhaps should do.”

The structure of this approach intrigues me as it suggests new claims for identity that seem less determinate on already established definitions of Western society. The “proclamation” of “someone without” this definition abandons “real identification” as limited to repetition and as a result ignores a “profession” of finite definition.

This is not something I used to desire for my own future. For years I was determined to practice architecture. That is, I wanted to design solutions for the problems that I found

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necessary to address. I now must acknowledge my use of metaphoric perception within this professional identity. I cannot predict my identity-to-come. I am aware that this is quite impossible. Rather than attempting to define my future identity, I will simply question the present without intent placed elsewhere. The mind, of which I do not understand enough, holds the perception of self in its relationship to its physical and emotional surrounding environments and relationships. This is something that I must analyze. This seems rather open to a possible other time and space that can be accessed by some form of internal innovation toward a communal expression.
IDENTIFYING IDENTITY

Sunday, March 27, 2011 at 1:08am:

To begin a discussion of time and space suggests our placement within a communal definition of identity. To continue thinking through this subject, the work of Natasha Levinson on the contingency of our identity becomes particularly relevant. In a telling article, “Unsettling Identities: Reconceptualizing Contingency,” she points out an important aspect of the work characteristic of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and William Connolly, writing that to dislodge identity is to show that it is first produced in social and cultural contexts and only subsequently does it produce our identity.

“[This] enables us to reflect critically on taken for granted cultural understandings. It opens a space within which we can reflect on the ways in which we have been made and challenges us to reflect on the cultural conditions within which new self and social understandings might emerge.”

There is something of a delicate disaster in the word *unsettling* in this context; it expresses a tectonic shifting of our identity. This brings into consideration contingencies of varying sorts.

Time and its perception within an assumed linear history is a necessary contingency to discuss in this thesis. This linear claim is odd, *queer* if I may, when we acknowledge that we deliberately define time by its others: its eras and decades of identifying attributes (from prehistory to the emergence of Western civilization to the unknowns of the future) existing simultaneously yet still claiming independence through the occupation of different spaces. Time can be considered as a progression that is somewhat linked to the past and inevitably

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1 Levinson, “Unsettling Identities: Reconceptualizing Contingency,” 62.
tied to the future, however, I think we are misunderstanding ourselves here. Eve Sedgwick emphasized that cultural definitions “are structured, not by the supersession of one model and the consequent withering away of another, but instead by the relations enabled by the unrationlized coexistence of different models during the times they do coexist.”

It is important to notice that this coexistence of difference, and therefore sameness, exists in a present identity that is defined by its place in time.

Our identity is always compared statistically – bringing into question such traits as the sex of a person, sexual preference, nationality, political standpoint, as well as location in history as a claim to knowledge, cultural image, etc. In this blissful ignorance of a seemingly possible experience of time, there is actually a potential for a hopeful change. It is imperative that we acknowledge not only our misunderstandings of our history and our concerns for the future, but also our ever-shifting, present identity that is contingent upon the awareness of our communal identity now. This is to challenge our perception as linear. To assume an understanding of our intentions is to miss the delicate existence of our presently shifting self-identity and this, I think, is the illusion of our conscious will. It is a false identity. This assumption exposes some notion of time as linear, but this analysis also brings space into consideration - the approach to space as a model – reproductively mimicked instead of a possibility seen in the present time. I think there is, within the misunderstanding of our present perception, a notion of the real that must be examined and questioned before continuing:

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REALIZING VIRTUAL REALITY

Thursday, March 24, 2011 at 2:50am:

I spent the last one hour, fourteen minutes and fifty-two seconds watching a documentary: Žižek: The Reality of the Virtual. The line of thought that follows is owed to Slavoj Žižek and his defining characteristics of reality. He expresses that there are virtual and real aspects of reality that must be considered in order to define our current identity. His suggestion is that virtuality is a conscious but skewed mimicking of reality and that reality is something unknown to perception.

I want to consider virtual reality for a moment. Žižek introduces himself in this documentary by asking us to be honest with him - we do not really believe in a virtual reality; we know what is real. I will look closer at the defining qualities of the virtual and the real to begin to clarify any issues in my interpretation.

Within the virtual, there are three models of perception according to Žižek: imaginary virtuality, symbolic virtuality and real virtuality. First, imaginary virtuality and symbolic virtuality will be considered. To present the case of imaginary virtuality, I will reiterate his rather coarse example. He says that we are humans and, as such, we sweat. We produce excrement and we constantly enact unpleasant bodily functions. This is part of our reality. With this in mind, say you meet someone in person. You shake their hand. You exchange names. Your image of this person – and vice versa, their image of you – does not include the entirety of the other’s reality. That is, the image each individual sees of the other is quite literally masked by a virtual representation found in the enactment of perception. It follows that each person is not fully aware of the other. In this sense, the real is virtualized

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1 Žižek: The Reality of the Virtual, directed by Ben Wright (2004; United Kingdom: Olive Films Opus, 2006), DVD.
(the perception of the actual, the real, is becoming quite complex). To imagine reality is to enact belief in something that is outside of our present consciousness. It is an imaginary relation to an unknown expression only found in the real. The imagination forms through something that is only known or internal to perception and therefore it escapes reality.

Secondly, symbolic virtuality depicts that symbols carry the meaning of something but do not actually identify that something, or actualize that something. Take threat, for example. A threat is not really a threat because it is only a symbol. It is the symbol of the threat that holds meaning by never being actualized. To enact the symbol held within, the threat would actually destroy any meaning of the symbol itself. Let us look at parenting for example. Parental authority must remain a threat. If the threat, moreover, the symbol of the threat is to be actualized, the symbolic expression looses its meaning. The symbol only works when it is not realized. Authority is undermined unless the symbol of the threat remains real to the child.

Another example of symbolic virtuality is belief. Žižek explains that it is virtual insofar as it finds its attributes in presupposition. This means that beliefs are not effective singularly within the believer’s self. Rather they are attributed to the assumed ideology of others. In other words, the believer believes “x” because (s)he has invested that belief in the ideology of another’s belief in “x”. This belief does not identify the individual, but rather identifies itself within the individual.

It is here that Žižek points out that he is opposed to the description of this current portion of Western history as the “cynical era”. I agree with him. By way of his explanation of symbolic virtuality there cannot exist selfishness in a belief that is found only in the belief of an other person or thing. He claims that we ignore this because we do not want to disappoint the virtual – this other. In other words, we subscribe to belief – we adopt into the very essence of our self-image something that is not our own. It seems as though these thoughts begin to describe a type of reaction to our surroundings. In some sense this is a
false acting of the self by surrounding our identity with belief. The third virtuality: real virtuality is still to be addressed, but first, an examination of the categories of the real is to be considered.

Similarly to virtuality, consider the imaginary real, the symbolic real and the real real. The imaginary real can be seen, for example, in a picture of mass devastation or in the child’s fear of a monster. These are real threats in the perception of the individual; they could actually take place. Within imagination they are never fully realized of course – we only pretend to know them as real – we imagine our perception of our surroundings. The imagination imitates aspects of real virtuality as it calls upon our current understandings of perception.

The symbolic real is simply the metaphor. Žižek, in calling on quantum physics, explains that, in terms of language, our communication here must be metaphorical because the symbol is a very non-real thing within communication. Even the expert cannot talk about quantum physics as some real thing, but must rely on the metaphor.

Before defining the real real, real virtuality should be introduced with this image: scatter iron into a magnetic field and watch it formally construct around this field that is magnetizing it. This magnetic field is real, however, all that is real to perception and understanding is the, as Žižek puts it, “structural disposition of actually existing elements around it.” The observer knows the magnetic field is there but cannot realize it other than through the use of another, visible, observable thing. This real virtuality depends on an interpretation of reality by the individual: an enactment of perception. It can also be seen in the concrete, social dynamic. It literally happens. This system at large is real, but it is only

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2 I am wondering now if capitalism is not a similar idea. Consider that our language and our communication act as a deeply sophisticated metaphor that has become so common and so known that we cannot notice it. We do not know it as if it is some unknown, known – not like quantum physics in which we acknowledge our inability to comprehend the subject fully, but of something ingrained in our perception of reality that cannot, therefore, be known.
actualized in a virtual sense – only as much as it is enacted by you and by me.

Now, the real real can be examined. Žižek describes it beautifully by calling it a “structural gap.” He says, “it is the pure difference which, paradoxically is prior to what it is the difference between.” The real is, by definition, only seen as an interpretation of itself by any conscious act: opinion, assumption, decision, imagination, belief, etc. It cannot remain real in our perception of it. It is unknown to us because it can never be realized within perception. This is the support that Sedgwick would appreciate when she described time as “irrational” – to rationalize this reality would be impossible and this should not be regarded as progress.

This is quite a bit of analysis to obtain an insight into the real, however, I will argue that it is vital to describe the relationship between the body’s physical placement in space and its mental perception of being; identity lies in this realm. This expresses a possible architecture that desires perception and experience to interplay between our conscious awareness and our subconscious, emotional memory.
Sunday, May 1, 2011 at 10:38pm:

This is my interest in art. Art’s constantly growing desire to identify itself can be seen weaving back and forth through these varying realities, attempting to always push the finite qualities of each, often proving its limits. To regard the viewer’s perception as something known is to regard constrictions of perception as rational and informative. For art to identify itself, it must acknowledge the structural gaps of our continuously virtualized understanding of the real. It must suggest something in relation to unknown possibilities. In this thought, art does not know itself; it expresses what is not yet known to perception. It’s most “perilous, experimental, and risky of tests and practices”\(^1\) is found in that which is known too well: the mundane. It is in this approach to space that art can truly address perception.

\(^1\) Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, xvi.
The above notions of intent are expressed in my work. The following is taken from a paper that accompanied my senior show:

Our desire to find identity through varying degrees of difference and sameness with other individuals suggests a stronger focus on the past and the future than it does on enacting the present.

Michel Foucault regards that utopia possesses no real space, and defines “heterotopia” as a very real space that calls upon multiple real events in one non-real time. The imagery of video becomes one such non-space. Within my video work, imagery draws from such notions as the perspective of travel, the question of place and the suggestion of identity within common and known aspects of our perception. It is here that I find I can question perception without guise.

Video realizes itself though a visual-audio relationship within the constructs of image, sound, time and space. The viewer’s perception of this real virtuality associates with notions of self–identity expressed in the viewer’s relation to the imagery shown in the video. This experience points out a very intimate notion of self-awareness that is known only to each individual viewer but is, however, suggestive of a communal reaction of many viewers. The individual must consider his/her identity within a communal expression.

A performance takes place every half-hour beginning at 5:00pm and ending at 9:00pm. Two fake projectors point toward two screens at the far end of the gallery in a suggestion of questioning perception. I have constructed these screens to hold the performance itself. Each performance is the rewriting of my thesis and is in no particular order or logic. I am mapping my selection of subjects found in my thesis as I skim through and choose paragraphs to rewrite.

Three videos are projected along each of the three east-facing walls in the gallery. Closest to the screens is a video of sparrows flying in a blue sky. It is an ambiguous gesture
of imagery aimed to find relation to something already known or perceived by the viewer.

The next wall over shows various animals in the environments they occupied at the time that I discovered them and sets out to question the perception of space. A spider builds a web on a bridge, ducks linger by a river lit with the backdrop of a city skyline and two bulls graze near a road. A goldfish and two crayfish interact in a fish tank, blue herons nest in the tallest heights of trees and, again, sparrows fly in a blue sky. Animals find a comparable relation to our own behaviors and actions and in the projection they act as a visual translation toward our own notions of placement.

The third video finds its location in the gallery closet. The location of the closet within the gallery physically resonates a space that is very separate from the gallery itself. This installation sets out to include and point out this distinction in an attempt to question spatial experience. Footage from my childhood home videos is mixed with current video of myself walking. This is projected into a mirror on one wall of the closet, reflecting the projection onto the opposing wall. The mirror reflects bits of colored light that illuminate the closet. This is in an attempt to explore comparisons between myself at different times and in different spaces.

A new ceiling has been installed in the gallery as well as in the gallery closet with the aim of compressing the vertical movement within the space in order to create a more intimate viewing experience with the large-scale projections. In this act, the gallery itself retracts inward and begins to align more physically with the closet. This enables the viewer to compare the similarity of the space within the closet to that which is within the gallery, as separated only by the threshold of the closet.

The mirror within the closet brings notions of self-reflection into consideration by addressing the structured nature of perception itself. The mirror is a place where individuals examine aspects of their own identity. Within this installation, the mirror illuminates the closet itself in a tongue-in-cheek gesture.
The research for this thesis has repeatedly presented notions of utopia and I want to clarify what I consider to be a utopia of the present. My own thoughts on the subject have been in flux for some time now and I feel as though I am in some small moment of discovery. I will explain this in some necessary detail in order to support further discussions on both utopia as well as the subject of queer theory insofar as I have come to understand it.

Yesterday I had to walk away from my work. I have spent the nearing of five years on this final summation of my thought, yet I find it almost natural that I am simply approaching a beginning. I have realized something through this: there is an inevitability of time as it maps the spasmodic evolution of identity, NOT its linear history. My personal experience of time suggests that the past continually narrows its identifying factors by grouping my experiences into categories of memory. At the same time, an emphasis is placed in my present environment that attempts to suggest movement toward continuing in the vein of the future. This becomes the enactment of the present for the sake of the future. With time expanding toward both the past and the future, the present becomes a moment of desire, not an expression of the future.

In thinking about the present, I remember a conversation a friend and I once had about the act of showering and its ability to alter our state of mind. It is a way to allow us to embrace the present as this moment of identifying with ourselves. There is a comfort – a rather freeing placement of our identity – found in the shower. Perhaps the water transforms our perceptions and, in some sense, removes our stagnant placement in both time and space. This is an experience where one can find the self-empowering notion of a renewed
perception as an available possibility; it is an escape from time itself. Let me explain what this possibility means to me:

In walking into the shower, taking a break from my work, something new came into my perception. In all of my reading about utopia I wondered if I had indeed just stepped very close to it. Every plastic container of shampoo, body wash, face wash and shaving cream promised me something – something I perhaps desired to place into my identity. I believe these promises and my connection with them has influenced me or defined my will. I think that in my choice to buy these products I became part of or defined by whatever these products might offer.¹ I wondered if my roommate really wanted the BIGSEXYHAIR her deeply red-toned shampoo bottle was offering her, or, if indeed, she more simply and poetically desired the …SEX. I picked up my body wash labeled AFTER HOURS and felt a sense of masculinity in the very act of holding the container: its grip mimicking that of a football. The vast array of commercials advertising this body wash and other similar products flooded my mind. Somewhere in my choosing of this product was my desire (in some form or another) of the half-naked man in the locker room posed suggestively with his perfectly toned body delicately revealed from within his towel - his strong, controlled hand gripping, not simply the container of body wash that was now in my hand, but rather his own self-confidence. This, I think, was my purchase: my search for claiming some part of my identity. This image of the half-naked man suggests, in the focus of a sexual subjectivity, two things: either, as a heterosexual, I should strive towards this self-image, or as a homosexual, I should hope the towel glides off of his body. Both of these insist that my identification is found within my desire to place identify within future possibilities. This scene advertises more than an active and healthy lifestyle within a luxurious culture. This deeply suggests a sexual existence and I would venture to say it is a hetero/homoerotic

¹ A study of Marxist notions and capitalist theory plays a significant role in defining our identity, but the research of this thesis finds its focus elsewhere.
desire. I flipped the lid of my body wash open and the seductive scent flooded my shower. This has assumingly fulfilled some culturally influenced definition of *my* desire.

This idea of identity in the context of my current readings on architecture, queer theory, utopia and *the system at large* is suddenly finding a newly-forming perspective. Perhaps now is the proper moment to include Foucault’s position on a certain utopia. It is one that is quite significant in any handling of utopian subjectivity. In 1967, Foucault lectured from his text, “Of Other Spaces,” in which he, through defining a concept that is in contrast to utopias, termed “heterotopias.” He pointed out that utopias are not real spaces at all, but rather, they exist by having a “general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society.” To paraphrase, heterotopias are real sites that can simultaneously represent, contest, and invert all other real sites within the given culture. The composition of one site – be it a site of crisis (that of the adolescent) or perhaps the more evolved sites of deviation (the psychiatric hospital), the cemetery, the theater, the garden as “the totality of the world”, the rug as a pictorial representation that can literally move through space or even the regulated life of the good old colony – actually holds within it a variety of known or experienced *other* spaces from within the same culture. It is many spaces in one. Foucault goes on to say, “heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time” and calls these slices (for the sake of symmetry) “heterochronies” – different types of temporalities. The spaces of the museum, library, festival, vacation and even the shower are all possible temporalities that actually abolish time; “yet the experience is just as much the rediscovery of time, it is as if the entire history of humanity reaching back to its origin were accessible in a sort of immediate knowledge.”

This provides us with a rather open perspective on our current historical and cultural conceptions of time. There is, however, something more to say here.

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2 Abbreviated from the text, “Des Espace Autres” - published by the French journal *Architecture/ Mouvement/ Continuité* in October 1984 after the death of Michel Foucault and is not within the official corpus of his work. The text was the basis of a lecture he presented in 1967.
There is an acute attention to identity suggested within this context of heterotopia.

Again, I am thinking of Grosz and her “third space” when I say that I want to argue – for the distinction of a temporal, tangential other – a possible identity, not of many spaces, but, of one. Foucault suggests that there can exist something that “abolish[es] time” and yet, within some sameness, also becomes a “discovery of time.” If time can go against itself, it is in line with the idea of a tangent, possible, other temporality as opposed to the notion of many different temporalities. I think it is worth placing a third space within the timing of Foucault’s heterotopian notion (any of them - the festival to the grave). This is to wonder: is there a utopian heterotopia? I dare to say that unlike heterotopias, it does not reference any actualized real space, yet it is potentially real and must be considered a utopian desire in our inability to fully experience it in the present.

In light of the above thoughts on Žižek’s definitions of the virtual and the real there is some homogenous expression for a present, virtual utopia. By way of contrast to utopias or heterotopias, I will call these expressions homotopias. These homotopias are something known or familiar to each of us. They are personally identified and homogenous of our unique perception of time. To enact homotopia is to constantly address a possible other even within the idealized – utopia itself. It is found in the unknowns of communal progress. I will regard Adorno and acknowledge that an, “abstract utopia is all too compatible with the most insidious tendencies of society.”3 I must suggest that a notion of homotopia is itself outside of a singular, finite time. It is always almost realized yet never within the grasp of reality. Rather, it suggests the present unknown itself in a desire to enact that which yields possibility. This presents the future.

Sunday, March 27, 2011 at 3:01am:

The third space I was discovering from Grosz was beginning to find a certain placement in a rather open subject: queer theory. In my initial introduction to the subject, I was outside of anything that would present itself herein and I found this to be a poetic discovery. I respect queer theory as it observes sexuality within culture – as well as culture within sexuality – while questioning the search for identity within time.

Saturday, April 30, 2011 at 10:23pm:

Within my work I am thinking about my identity as an accumulation of memory. This memory, we know, is only ever remembering. The old notion that memory is stored like files is false. Proteins in our brain repeatedly form and reform memory. These same proteins bridge themselves anew in each act of remembering. This construction or deconstruction of a structural gap is constantly re-identified. Working with this idea in the gallery, I want to call upon the viewer’s self-identity. Further, by introducing communally understood imagery, I am providing each individual’s proteins a chance to remember, addressing this gap within the individual’s perception. To re-identify the experience of the individual’s perception of memory as they become aware of the present aims to generate an echo of each individual’s identity. This genre of sound - the individual’s echoed memory - is the most appropriate when considering one’s identity. It is the most evocative toward the individual and the most radical regarding possibilities in the present.
“QUEER” THEORY

Wednesday March 23, 2011 at 7:13pm:

In a 2007 issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* (SAQ), the topic, “After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory,” was discussed. Notably, Jonathan Goldberg’s essay entitled, “After Thoughts” responds to the very thing queer theory suggests through its subjectivity by turning the question on itself: “So, it may be that queer theory is less over than continuing under other rubrics and in other venues. Indeed, to perceive that future possibility in the present might mean that our sense of the past needs to be rethought. What was queer theory?”

So, I have found my introduction to queer theory in quite an odd place: the suggestion of its ending. Perhaps his claim is valid. Regardless, I do not think I depend on the defining category of “queer theory” to address my thought. I am reassured that my method of questioning provides the possibility of “continuing under other rubrics and in other venues.” In Goldberg’s question, he is opening a discussion about how to rethink identity in the progression of the present. I think the best response calls upon another article published three years later:

Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at 12:39am:

In a 2010 issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Jason Schneiderman’s essay, “In Defense of Queer Theory” presents objections to Larry Kramer’s 2009 *GLQ* essay, “Queer Theory’s Heist of Our History.” Kramer’s argument states that “homosexuality has been pretty much the same since the beginning of history,” and he continues to suggest that a strong gay past has yielded a strong gay present. The concept of time within this argument
is limited in its immensely linear structure. Schneiderman argues,

“that queer theory has not robbed us of our history [I would add, by some form of repetition]. Rather, queer theory has complicated the ways in which we think about sexual desire and created a space in which we can think about ourselves and our history in nuanced and difficult ways.”

In the comparison of these journal articles, the delicate attention to the past-present-future notion of time is worth analyzing. I am suggesting that the time of the before and after seem to blur. Queer theory desires the present. The identity of this desire is constantly in question and the question is complicated within historical and cultural constraints. A point would be missed if I did not further explain my notions of homotopia. Schneiderman’s view on queer theory as a new perspective with “nuanced and difficult ways” to think about our history suggests that new spaces will be required to hold these accounts and will thereby resonate into our present identity. It is an identity that will strive to express our homotopian, possible, other present. This is not addressing futurity. This is the present!

*Friday, March 25, 2011 at 1:50am:*

I do not want to under-emphasize the complex and difficult temporal structure found in the gaps of perception as it strives to identify both time and place. The nothing it suggests is irrational; it is never settled because its identity does not seek to identify itself. It is something else. I do not know what it is. I will explain what I can by way of saying that something will always come after the before; and similarly, a before will always be seen after. What I want to suggest is that time itself can be both before as well as after. When we address our linear understanding of time as in flux with itself, it appears as a possible space of varying difference and sameness that yields new possible experiences of time. Time begins to fold on itself and our present is not constricted to the past or defined by an aim toward the future. The gap that the folding closes in on is simply a desire for homotopia. It is a virtualized identity that is possible in the present: a making of the future.
Thursday, March 31, 2011 at 8:42pm:

This is my interest in sound; this is the expression of the present. I want viewers to walk into the dark gallery, lit by the light from the projections as each individual hears his/her own memoric reaction. This is encouraged, not by the introduction of a new sound, but through an emphasis on the white noise of the projectors and the viewers themselves. Images of animals within a precise environment mixed with imagery of a child – even a grown child – are meant to form a relationship with the viewer. The similarity of our differences is encouraged, which, I think is a worthwhile investigation.

Friday, March 25, 2011 at 1:50am:

We are constantly enacting homotopia. I think it is, however, acted within a present identity crisis that is somewhat ungrounded in its unknown context: our known identity is dizzyingly complex to the point that it can be considered unknown. It seems that our current Western identity strives to acknowledge the real real, which is of course completely out of its grasp. I want to think back to Žižek’s real virtuality and argue that it is the reality of our immediate shadow. It always precedes the present. That is, the reality of the virtual, as it were, is the ever-immediate shortcoming of homotopia. I think we should identify the seemingly futile attempt of Western progress in our search for a truly communal identity as an expression of our present desire. I would argue that this desire is currently concerned with the future and this is at odds with homotopia. Our homotopian existence in the present must be considered. Our possibility of thereby enacting a homo-futurity acknowledges a futurity of one: a future free of conclusion and therefore void of exclusion. This is how to
rethink cultural space. It is not comprised of insides and therefore outsides, but rather it is made up of varying identities that coexist. This is a quality of homotopia. This is concerned with the individual as a communal expression.

*Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at 11:45am:*

I want to think more about a future void of exclusion. Coming out of The Closet classified me as inside of a homosexual identity. This identity, however, was already placed within a mostly heteronormative culture; I was already *outside* through this inclusion. This points out the confusion of the individual within the community. To acknowledge this social gap is to give attention to the construct of what lies between The Closet and its *other:* that which designed the closet itself. I think perception is at odds with itself and this is queer to me. I am a *queer* in a culture at odds: in a culture that selectively identifies its parts but has little to say for the whole – and this is my interest in queer theory. This is beginning to reveal a structural thought process that is made up of gaps and that has yet to know itself. Perhaps it will never know itself; this is the irrational rationality of it all.

*Friday, March 25, 2011 at 4:16am:*

My sculptural practice emerges as a response to an observation - some kind of reenactment of my perception. What my exploration in video and sound offer my thoughts is some attempt to find a virtual view that is outside of my own mind. Each is a sensorially-responsive medium that is able to immediately express its temporality: its difference and sameness compared to my own current homotopian desire towards *being.* I can find a new perception that is outside of my own through the view of the camera. The camera records its own internal structure. Its own identity is something in *real* time – paused, silent. It is as if its memory can be isolated as it is realized. This of course is the memoric identity of the camera and not myself. It is something I do not know. Whether the camera is on the tripod,
in my hands, or in the reader’s, it is, in some manner, its own self. It can be described as having a distinguishable personality to which we ourselves do not directly relate. Or, perhaps in light homotopia, the camera offers a personality allowing us to perceive things that we do not know that we know.

The camera listens, observes and records within a frame - within given proportional and spatial limitations. It is an honest, present experience of its own limitations. It presents unprocessed information through some other – a cameraman, a still position or a system. It is in some way abused.

Video exists in flux as it can crisply frame a situation or blur its environment; its spasmodic identity can be studied. This is the investigation of my work – addressing the perception of the virtual as an extension of the real and not as an attempt to discover the real itself or posit anything real at all.

Friday, April 1, 2011 at 3:01pm:

It is for these various reasons that the camera intrigues me. My interest is not only in its qualities that I can exploit, but also in those that I cannot understand. I am enchanted as I watch myself as a child: documentation of what is now my memory. As I watch this footage, I myself am remembering my childhood – bridging proteins in an act of constructing that which I remember. Yet, at the same moment, I am in front of my own childhood self. I am indeed perceiving some actuality at the same time I am remembering it. This perception is some real thing that I cannot know; it is something that I can only recall. But there I am, right in front of myself! Within my desire to somehow explain my notions of homotopia, I am using imagery of my own self in the past and placing it in my present thought. To place myself in the gallery and expose this delicate temporality is intended to place an emphasis on the viewer’s present by regarding an abstraction of the past – my childhood. I am attempting to bridge some gap that exists in our perception of experience. Using the imagery
and the white noise that has been installed, each viewer will have the opportunity to make memoric relations and identify with thoughts related to his/her individual perception. This is the past's collision with the possibility of the present. This is my desire toward homotopia: to express unknown possibilities identified by each individual toward a communal expression that defines the present.
WORKS CITED


READING LIST


