Maps to Non-Existent Places

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

In my artistic practice, I have used photographic communication as a means to explore isolation and lack of emotional connection. Photography is a tool to confront my disconnection and loneliness by frequently depicting it in my photos. Photography as practice, can enable me to delve into past history and dimensions of personality – a therapeutic healing tool for the exploration of my personal joy and pain. Through my personal exploration in *Maps to Non-Existent Places*, it enables the viewer to contemplate his or her own history and personality.

*Maps to Non-Existent Places* uses photography to examine the urban environment - its streets, buildings, shops, homes, and people. It is intended to provide a critical look at: social isolation in urbanity; how nature is utilized within urban spaces; the symmetrical and functional nature of the built environment; the way in which window reflections look back at us; the vacant and empty nature that can be found in cities; and a look at human interaction in the urban environment. The title of this work references my long-term interest in maps as collections of data, as well as the theory of the *non-place* as developed by French Anthropologist Marc Augé.

In my examination of the urban environment, my interest was in exploring emotional dimensions of loneliness, abandonment, and social isolation. Sociologists have theorized that city life is prone to weakening social bonds, producing superficial
relationships that result in feelings of loneliness and isolation. *Maps to Non-Existent Places* uses photography to explore these social themes.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to Janis Mars Wunderlich, for her loving support and artistic inspiration.
Acknowledgments

I’d like to sincerely thank my thesis committee of Robert Derr, Aspen Mays, and Maurice Stevens – each of whom brought with them unique insight and expertise. Many thanks also to Assistant Professor Jessica Mallios and emeritus professors Tony Mendoza and Ardine Nelson who were with me at the beginning of this journey.
Vita

Paul Scott Page was born in Salt Lake City, Utah. After completing his schoolwork at Highland High School in Salt Lake in 1978, Scott attended the University of Utah and Weber State University where he completed extensive course work in the physiological, biological, and computer sciences. In subsequent years, Scott spent 17 years as an environmental consultant to industry before starting an online retail business in 2003.

Scott returned to school at Utah State University where he received a bachelor of fine art degree with an emphasis in photography in May of 2012. He also minored in art history.

Scott entered the Master of Fine Art program at The Ohio State University as a Graduate Teaching Associate in August of 2012.

Fields of Study

Major Field: Art
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout my life, I’ve felt a certain lack of connection to others. This lack of connection has created a level of social isolation that has led to long-term feelings of loneliness – loneliness that has been felt even when surrounded by a large family. The Dutch researcher Jenny de Jong-Gierveld defined loneliness as:

“A situation experienced by the individual as one where there is an unpleasant or inadmissible lack of (quality of) certain relationships. This includes situations in which a number of existing relationships is smaller than considered desirable or admissible or situations where the intimacy one wishes for has not been realized. Thus, loneliness is seen to involve the manner in which a person experiences and evaluates his or her isolation and lack of communication with other people.”

I have experienced both types of loneliness as defined by Jong-Gierveld. I have usually had a very small circle of friends and other personal relationships. Additionally, these relationships have often felt somewhat superficial with a lack of significant emotional intimacy. These experiences have led to feelings of isolation and loneliness, absent deep emotional connections.

In my artistic practice, I have used the photographic medium as a means to explore this isolation and lack of emotional connection. Photography is a tool that I use to confront my feelings of disconnection and loneliness by frequently depicting human absence and isolation. Photography is a subtractive medium of isolation as opposed to

additive mediums such as painting. The photographer’s goal is to select out or isolate what is important in the resulting photograph from what is not important in the scene. I find photography’s method of isolation useful in my own personal journey. As practice it enables me to delve into my history and personality – photography is a useful therapeutic tool for the exploration of my personal joy and pain.

Judy Weiser, R.Psych., A.T.R, Founder and Directory of the PhotoTherapy Centre says:

“Photographs are footprints of our minds, mirrors of our lives, reflections from our hearts, frozen memories that we can hold in silent stillness in our hands – forever if we wish. They document not only where we have been, but also point the way to where we might perhaps be heading, whether or not we realize this yet ourselves…”

The way in which an artist approaches photography also is a mirror or reflection of the experiences of the artist’s life. Federico Fellini said “All art is autobiographical; the pearl is the oyster’s autobiography.” My own work is autobiographical in that I am drawn to subjects and points of view that emphasize or explore this sense of loneliness and social isolation that I have felt. My artistic work is a document or map of where I have been and it may also point to where I might be heading.

My thesis title derives from my interest in maps as well as non-places as described by French Anthropologist Marc Augé in his essay and book of the same title,

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Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity (1995). What are maps and how do they function? The Oxford English Dictionary defines maps as a “collection of data showing the spatial distribution of something or the relative positions of its components.”

I liken the photograph to a map in that pictures are also collections of the data of reflected light, which show spatial arrangements or the distribution of objects in space and time. Professor Cynthia Lanius of Rice University indicates that maps are used “to discover relationships between different phenomena…” Collections of pictures also can serve to reveal or highlight relationships between humanity and the natural or man-made environment.

If photographs can be maps of the environment that reveal relationships between phenomena, how do they point to non-existent places and what is a non-existent place? Marc Augé coined the phrase “non-place” to refer to spaces of transience that do not hold enough significance to be regarded as “places.” Examples of a non-place would be a hotel room, an airport, a highway or a supermarket. These places tend to be essentially the same worldwide. Another way of considering a photograph as depicting a non-place is my belief that photographs of places are significantly removed in time and space and experience from actual places, that they can be thought of as non-places. Despite our belief in the veracity of the photographic record, a photograph shows a mediated reality, a reality that does not exist as depicted. The picture as record is only an approximation of


the experience of being in a specific place and time. The referent in the picture is out of context, selected from the world and demarcated by the frame, flattened by the process, and translated and mediated by the artist’s equipment and many conscious and unconscious choices. Photographs are things unto themselves – separate and apart from that which existed at the time the photographs were made. Susan Sontag writes in her essay *In Plato’s Cave*, “although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are.” I agree with Sontag. Photographs are indexical to their referents but they are mediated representations that have been changed by the photography process. The idea that photographs are accurate and truthful is hard for viewers to give up even in the age of easily manipulated digital photography.

Lewis Hine said, "The average person believes implicitly that the photograph cannot falsify. Of course, you and I know that this unbounded faith in the integrity of the photograph is often rudely shaken, for, while photographs may not lie, liars may photograph." In my opinion, photography lies. Photography is the best at lying. Of all the arts, photography has the ability to tell the most nuanced and believable deliberate untruths, white lies, misrepresentations, fibbing, falsities, and fabrications. Photography is so skilled at deception because it appears to be so reliable, straightforward, honest and sincere. This deception is aided by our innate desire to believe what we see.

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We want to believe. We want to believe even in an age of digital manipulation. We accept the deceit of painting, sculpture, and the other visual arts of mimesis. We suspect that perhaps the subject of Michelangelo’s *David* did not really have that oh-so-perfect body. We know that Van Gogh never saw a night sky that actually looked like *Starry Night*. As wonderfully gruesome as Goya’s *Saturn Devouring His Sons* is, we recognize this work as emanating from the fanciful nightmares of an artistic genius. We accept these artistic liberties with the truth. However, photography seems to be held to a different moral standard.

The visual richness, fine detail, and indexicality of photographs, fosters the prevalent belief that photographs accurately depict reality. This relationship between the corporeal and the photograph, taps into the human desire to find meaning in the world through the use of classification, categories, models, and indexes. As Susan Sontag said, “Photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure.” Photographs are not only accepted as real and truthful; they are often spoken about as if they were the thing itself that they represent.

Film critic André Bazin argued that the photographic image “shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is a reproduction; it *is* the model.” Since photography’s beginnings, gentleman-scientists sought ways to automatically record and preserve the images projected by the camera obscura. The

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photograph was understood to be an optical-chemical process of recording in silver salts, an image generated by light. William Henry Fox Talbot described his photographs in The Pencil of Nature (1844) as the result of “nature’s painting.”8 The photographic image is in some ways considered to be an automatic trace of its referent. The straight photograph seems to embody its referent as its twin or doppelganger. This idea of nature being the photographic artist has continued to persist in some form since photography’s inception. However, many art critics (and artists) object to this view of the photograph as a copy of reality.

Susie Linfield writes “Filmmaker Errol Morris has argued that photographs contain no truth value - no reality at all. In this view, nothing real exists outside of language:

‘The issue of the truth or falsity of a photograph is only meaningful with respect to statements about the photograph. Truth or falsity "adheres" not to the photograph itself but to the statements we make about a photograph… All alone– shorn of context, without captions– a photograph is neither true nor false… For truth, properly considered, is about the relationship between language and the world, not about photographs and the world. [NYT Morris blogs]”9

This is an interesting view that there is no truth or falsity directly connected to a photograph, but only to the statements or language we use in discussing the photograph. However, while I find this idea intriguing, I cannot accept this argument. This statement holds the premise that truth or falsity is only connected to spoken language and not visual signs. In semiotics, a sign is something interpreted as having meaning and signs can work

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8 Ibid, 19.
through any of the senses including visual system. The idea is however interesting and I believe there is merit to the idea that truth or falsity is a function of sign interpretation rather than inherent in the object itself. Photographs in particular seem to be viewed as inherently true or false. However, accuracy may depend to a significant extent upon our interpretation of meaning.

Art historian, author, and art critic Craig Owens said that photography reveals the truth about the classical system of artistic representation, namely that it is “but a human construction determined by convention up to the point of conviction.”

The shape or format of most photographs owe more the classic shape of paintings than they do to an optical reality. Optical images are of course round. Jeff Wall’s picture 8056 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, 9 a.m., 24 September 1996 strips away the format framing of conventional art presentation, to reveal the true shape of optically based pictures. In considering this work, authors Helde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest state:

“...the artist [Wall] has indicated in a visually tangible way how the rectangular or square structure of the early nineteenth-century camera obscura’s ground glass conformed to a conventional notion of space, which was determined long before the invention of photography. “All images produced by lenses are circular,” the artist writes, “but cameras normally combine a lens with a film format that excludes the peripheral area of the image, thereby making it seem that images are rectangular.”

Despite the sly deception of the photographic artifact, I find truth in picture making. In analyzing a scene and sorting through the numerous decisions that must be made to make a fully realized and finely crafted picture, I experience the subject in an

10 Gelder and Westgeest, 20.
11 Ibid, 21.
exponentially more intimate way than is possible through a camera-less casual observation. In my process, I take considerable time to analyze a scene before I employ the camera. I walk around a subject, considering it from various angles and elevations. Once I am fairly satisfied as to the location and height from which to make my picture, I then setup my tripod and camera. After considering the subject on the ground glass or viewfinder, I then make further small location refinements before beginning analog or digital recording. Picture making allows, indeed requires, me to more fully experience the world. This intimate experience is where I find photographic truth. The photograph can transcend the referent object or scene, elevating it into something frequently more beautiful that the referent. Personally, I find that beauty often exists in the most mundane and unlikely of places with careful observation.

City streets, building facades, corner markets, parking lots, single-family homes and other banal, disregarded, forgotten, and overlooked objects frequently provide a rich visual experience for me. In making my photographs, I ask the viewer to consider these subjects – to recontextualize the visual experience of the common place, finding pleasure in relationships of color, texture, and form. Photographs have a way of elevating subjects. The way I photograph a subject is to stake a claim, to make a statement that this is important. In depicting scenes of the banal that we are all familiar with, I strive to isolate or highlight textures, forms, and colors in order to create a visual harmony where, to quote Aristotle, “the whole is more than the sum of its parts.”12 Extending from this visual harmony, I strive for my work in *Maps to Non-Existent Places*, to reveal other

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12 Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 10f-1045a
hidden truths to the human condition experienced in urbanity, raising questions about society, culture, and public policy. Examples of this questioning will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

In Chapter 2: Edward Hopper Was Here, I will compare and contrast my work with works by painter Edward Hopper. The theme that connects my work with Mr. Hopper is the depiction of social isolation. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the greater density of humans in urban settings, social isolation is a significant factor in health and well-being. The urban landscape is dominated by structures of concrete, steel, glass, asphalt and other man-made materials. Man-scaped plantings are also fixtures of the urban landscape. Chapter 3: Urban Trees explores how nature is utilized within urban spaces. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the symmetrical and functional nature of constructed spaces and the way in which photographed window reflections look back at us. Chapters 6 and 7 explore the vacant and empty nature that can be found in cities as well as discusses photographs that provide a look at human interaction in the urban environment. Chapter 8 will discuss my exhibition show, followed by a conclusion to this thesis in Chapter 9.
Chapter 2: Edward Hopper Was Here

Edward Hopper Was Here (Figure 1) depicts two metal-framed windows in the side of a cream-colored brick commercial building. A raised exterior column of brick is visible on the right side of the picture and serves to add visual interest to the brick as well as balance to the two windows on the left. The window shades are pulled revealing an empty, vacant interior space. White streaks of paint have dripped down on the glass along the metal window framing. A window blind leaning up against an interior wall is visible through the left window. Through the right window, small unidentifiable white objects can be seen, strewn about the floor. A paint can is beneath a sink at the rear of the interior space. A bright square-shaped beam of light from the low setting sun is streaming through the right window and is illuminating an austere white porcelain sink as well as the three metal faucet knobs and the exposed sink drainage pipe. The warm of the entering sunlight is in marked contrast to the cool and somber tones of the shadowed interior. The square of sunlight also highlights and reveals the emptiness of the interior space.

Figure 1 - Paul Scott Page. Edward Hopper Was Here, 2014.
For me, the contrast between the cool greenish-blue tones of the unlit interior on the left, and the sunlit portion on the right, subtly connotes a social alienation that can be manifested along class, age, educational, ethnicity, or racial dimensions. The camera position, outside and looking into the windows of this empty space, heightens this sense of alienation, as we become voyeurs to the scene and yet are ourselves isolated from the interior by the closed window glass. There is a poignant beauty to the warm light illuminating this empty space. The warm tone of the light seems inviting and yet the stark emptiness of the space hints at lives that have moved on, taking family relationships with their joy and laughter and leaving behind cool-toned shadows that reach into the stillness of the vacant apartment.

_Illuminated Parking Garage, Columbus, OH_ (Figure 2), utilizes a somewhat similar lighting strategy to connote an empty state of being. In this picture, a large parking garage is seen from a relatively removed and higher vantage point. Numerous large window-like openings reveal the interior of the structure, which is lit from within by yellowish-toned lighting. The majority of the openings show an empty floor indicating that the parking garage is mostly vacant. Only a few of the
openings show the presence of an automobile. Additionally, the right side of the picture shows the sliver of an adjacent street and sidewalk. The street and sidewalk appear to be empty of both cars and people.

Like the photograph *Edward Hopper Was Here*, this picture also features cooler tones seen in the rooftop, background building, and lower street level, contrasted with the warm tones of the lit interior. The tonal differences in both photos also increase the illusion of three-dimensional space within the two-dimensional photograph. Cool tones visually recede while warm tones visually advance toward the viewer. Both pictures have a kinship with many of the works by American painter Edward Hopper who utilized strong geometries and the frequent presence of low-angled and high contrast lighting within his compositions.

In Edward Hopper’s painting, *A Woman in the Sun*, 1961 (Figure 3), a solitary nude female is standing in a bright band of sunlight that is streaming into her living space through a window. Her room is very sparsely furnished and decorated with only a bed and two paintings on the wall. The woman’s nakedness illuminated by the harsh light, suggests vulnerability. She has no protecting clothes in evidence except a pair of high-heeled shoes. She is exposed to the stark light. While the sunlight seems to provide warmth to the room, the golden light is narrow in its spread, suggesting that the experience of light and warmth will be short-lived.

Figure 3. Edward Hopper. *A Woman in the Sun*, 1961.
The Whitney Museum of American Art curator Barbara Haskell said of Edward Hopper, “By reducing all elements in his composition to their essential geometries and treating light as a palpable presence, Edward Hopper imbued his images of everyday life with what the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson called an “alienated majesty.” Hopper’s work frequently depicts the solitary figure. Even when he paints groupings of people, each figure seems alone and isolated. My works, Edward Hopper Was Here and Illuminated Parking Garage, Columbus, OH both subtly suggest human isolation through the lighting that points to references of humanity despite lacking an actual visible presence.

This chapter is about how light on the urban landscape, either man-made or natural, acts as a character or presence in my photographs. Light gives form to space as well as influences our understanding or perception of time and weather and notions of nostalgia. The quality of light can raise romantic feelings, cause us to consider the past, make us sleepy with warm, or shiver with perceived cold. In the works considered above, the quality of light and the contrast with shadowed areas, suggests a physical or emotional alienation or isolation is keeping with the theme of Maps to Non-Existent Places.

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Chapter 3: Urban Trees

Trees and other plantings are fixtures of the urban landscape. They provide visual relief from manmade forms, heat-absorbing black asphalt, grey concrete sidewalks, and other unnatural forms within the built environment. In most cases, vegetation is completely cleared from land under development during the construction phase. Then, as the project nears completion, acceptably tidy “engineered” trees and other plants are carefully placed back into the urban spaces. Nature is deliberately controlled and regulated into small islands of soil surrounded by a sea of aggregate materials. Weeds and volunteer trees that might disrupt the designed landscape are usually eliminated as soon as they appear. The carefully designed program for nature is ensured through engineering and human intervention.

We appreciate the beauty, cooling effect, and shade provided by trees and other urban plantings. Unfortunately, such plantings seem to be an afterthought of the building process or so highly regulated that monoculture-like conditions seems to predominate where the same dozen “approved” tree species are planted at every building. I believe that we can and should more fully integrate nature into our urban spaces. One of the sub-themes to Maps to Non-Existent Places is looking at the natural environment (or installed nature) in urban settings in our to provoke questions about our success or failure in including green space within the gray of the city.
Trees and other plantings can also present isolating barriers that demarcate property into what is public from what is private. These barriers may be physical, such as presented by hedgerows, or visual barriers, resulting from fully mature and leafed trees and shrubs. Trees may also visually stand in for the absent human figure. Trees in winter, in particular, may visually heighten the feelings of loneliness that are a major theme of *Maps to Non-Existent Places.*

*Property #1 (Urban Grasslands Project)* (Figure 4) shows a single-family house in which the front yard vegetation has gown so tall as to obscure the pathway to the front door. The grass has gone to seed and is nearly three feet tall in places. This photograph was composed with a symmetrical single-point perspective, placing the house at the horizontal center yet high in the frame. A solitary curb-strip tree was also centered lower in the frame and serves to completely obscure the door of the house. This foreground tree provides a counter point to the background trees that are visible behind the house at both left and right. The central tree also provides a strong vertical element to the foreground, which emphasizes the symmetry of the strongly centered composition. The height and dark foliage of the tree also provides a contrast to the shorter height and light green tones of the foreground grass.

The unkempt nature of the landscaping connotes that this property is vacant. This sense is also reinforced by the shade-covered window at left and the dark empty void on

![Figure 4. Paul Scott Page. Property #1 (Urban Grasslands Project), 2013.](image)
the right side of the building. The central foreground tree also suggests a blocking or isolation of the property from the social public organization in evidence by the foreground street. The tall grass in this picture exhibits a rich beauty of varied greens and yellow-tawny hues.

I was drawn to this type of photograph because of the skyrocketing rates of foreclosure due to the economic crisis of 2008 and the resulting global recession. I lost my own home to foreclosure before beginning graduate school when my online business income dropped by over 80%. I owned a large house in the country on an acre of land that bordered a beautiful state park and lake, surrounded by mountains. Following the downturn in my business, I moved from this natural-setting home to a small rental property located within the carefully controlled landscapes of suburbia.

*Property #1 (Urban Grasslands Project)* subtly asks questions about public policies and our economic system that recently resulted in historically high foreclosure rates and the associated increase in displaced families. The financial crises resulted in high home vacancy rates in many lower-income neighborhoods. A high home vacancy rate is also associated with increased crime rates. Home values in low-income neighborhoods may take many years to recover from the blighted conditions created by so many vacant homes. It can be depressing to consider the numerous lives changed by foreclosure and forced eviction. Our capitalist economic system offers great potential for those able to profit from it. However, there is also a relatively poor public safety net compared with many other industrialized nations. *Maps to Non-Existent Places* offers no answers to these conditions but my hope is that this work will continue to provoke
questions about our urban policies. For me, the vibrant natural-life present in Property #1 suggests a hope that family-life will return to this property with improved economic growth.

In House with Tree, Yellow Springs, OH (Figure 5) a different kind of isolation is suggested. In this picture, a single family home occupies the center of the frame. The placement of the home is very similar to that in Property #1. The home is painted a bright white with vibrant red shutters. Patio furniture visible on the right side of the picture shows signs of occupation. Like Property #1, this house has been deliberately photographed so as to place the large foreground shade tree in a blocking position in the center of the frame. The leafless branches of this large tree nearly fill the frame. Fencing on the property separates the public street from the private yard.

The patio furniture and vibrant red shutters seem to provide a subtle invitation – this is an active space of gathering and social family activity. However the fencing provides a barrier to this space. The blocking tree also strongly reinforces the proper place of the stranger in contrast with inviting space welcoming to the social member. The tree is seems slightly menacing in its austerity. It is easy to imagine that during the active growing season, the tree vegetation may serve to block most of the view of the home from the street.
A deadpan single-point depiction of single-family homes is a motif Stephen Shore explored in his photographs of America. In *West Avenue, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, July 12, 1974* (Figure 6), Shore photographed a home painted white with red shutters. In this picture, there is no large blocking tree, however, like both of the photos discussed above, foliage is utilized as a barrier to control visual if not physical trespass. Two-foot tall shrubbery seemingly completely surrounds the front of the property, creating a virtual moat to intrusion. In Shore’s photograph, the house becomes a kind of character with two eyes, a nose, and a mouth. The landscaping surrounding this home is perhaps better maintained than that in my two pictures discussed above. There is also a certain welcome-ness connoted by the open window shades. However the barrier of the shrubbery still provides a subtle reminder of public versus private space – one side is where connected social interaction takes place and one side connotes the more disconnected public sphere.

Both *Property #1 (Urban Grasslands Project)* and *House with Tree, Yellow Springs, OH* were photographed with a symmetrical style similar to the objective photography of the German industrial landscape by Bernd and Hilla Becher. The subjects in my pictures are presented matter-of-factly. This deadpan style creates a somewhat unemotional viewpoint. The symmetry also furthers the sense of isolation created by the visual barriers of the centrally placed trees. The symmetry centered on the centrally-
placed trees in these two images, also creates a strong focal point on nature's use in urbanity. The use of nature is considered and questioned. Symmetry in my work is also the theme of the thesis chapter that follows.
A fascinating subject for me to photograph is the rear entrance of commercial properties. The backsides of commercial buildings are not designed for public consumption but rather as functional locations for the inflow and outflow of commodities, products, and services. The public uses the carefully designed front entrance while employees and delivery drivers generally use the rear entrances. The rear side of commercial buildings is also generally where the in-flow and out-flow of communication systems, power, and other utilities takes place. The metal conduit lines that protect these utilities are often visibly exposed on the backside of commercial buildings and are generally installed in the most efficient and practical configuration with no thought of aesthetics.

There is the sense to me that the rear entrance is somehow more honest, more real, than the highly polished and carefully designed front entrance. I appreciate the unvarnished and gritty non-esthetic truth of these rear exteriors. There is no marketing-department sales-pitch taking place on this side of the building. There are no fancy fonts or graphic arts designed logos, signs, or marquees. Like photography itself, the backside of these buildings is “the document of the real.”\textsuperscript{14} Photographs are indexical and contain a trace or imprint of the real objects that they depict (even if abstracted by the

\textsuperscript{14} Linfield.
photographic process). The rear side of commercial buildings are also in a way indexical of capitalist enterprise at it’s core (Perhaps non-profit organizations may be an exception.). Regardless of a purpose to entertain or provide food, or clothing, or jewelry, or books, each enterprise has the same basic systems at the rear entrances. These rear sides embody Auge’s concept of a non-place. They are all the same, and yet for me, there is honesty inherent in this simplicity and sameness of the rear entrance that is lacking in the refined and marketed front entrance. To be sure, the front entrances of a Target or Walmart or McDonald’s restaurant are also all non-places in the sense of the term. And yet for me, the hyper-polished and designed front entrances leave me cold, and are less pictorially interesting to photograph.

Photography has been called the most democratic medium due to its populist character and easy accessibility. Photography seems to be the appropriate medium for these subjects. The rear side of commercial buildings is the workers entrance, the democratic entrance. There seems to me to be a feeling of social equality about these rear entrances. The main entrance of commercial buildings can frequently feel like isolating and exclusionary barriers. This feeling may be somewhat illusionary but even the retail prices at a typical department store may be outside of the budget of the segment of the population defined as the poor or working-poor.

In *Miller Lite Umbrellas* (Figure 7), the rear of a single-story block building is depicted. Like previously discussed photographs, a feeling of social isolation and disconnection is explored visually in this picture. Various utility poles, communication equipment, roof vents, and security lighting that have been installed on the exterior of the
building’s rear block wall are visible in the picture. In the foreground of this photograph, a brown wooden fence bi-sects the picture, providing a barrier between the public asphalt area and a private area. Two large metal poles also stand like sentinels guarding the path to the fence. Just above and behind the fence, three blue and white table umbrellas are visible, marked with the logo for Miller Lite beer. Christmas tree lights are also visible, having been strung from a pole on the wall to the umbrellas and other foreground structures. The wooden fence prevents any further peek at the space occupied by the umbrellas, but it seems safe to assume that this area is a place of social interaction, perhaps a break or lunch area or party space. This photograph was carefully constructed by my camera placement to suggest that the brown fence is an insurmountable barrier that completely surrounds the social space. There is no visual escape from the fence. The viewer, who is isolated on the public side of the space, must confront the barrier.

The camera position was also selected to create contrasting bands of texture and color: starting with the sky, moving to the block wall, the umbrellas, then the brown fence, and lastly the dark grey of the wet asphalt. This banding lends a feeling of three-dimensional space to the photograph at the same time that the single-point perspective and symmetry creates a flattening effect. This causes a subtle visual push and pull while looking at the photograph.

Figure 7. Paul Scott Page. Miller Lite Umbrellas, 2012.
The metal pole of the building in the rear, and the two metal poles in the foreground were carefully positioned to create symmetry in the picture. This symmetry creates a formal feeling to the picture – a formality that is broken by the slightly unsymmetrical position of the party umbrellas. In *Miller Lite Umbrellas*, the formality of the structural elements, in contrast to the informality of the party umbrellas, helps to reinforce the feeling of social isolation. As previously discussed, the objective, single point perspective creates an emotional distancing in keeping with the major theme of this body of work.

Other photographs in *Maps to Non-Existent Places* with rear entrance business views and similar structures and themes to *Miller Lite Umbrellas* include *A/C Units, Columbus, Ohio*, and *Bifurcation*. I also utilize symmetry and single point perspective in the design of these other photographs. The making of these images has been influenced by the urban photography of Walker Evans.

Walker Evans frequently photographed businesses in his Farm and Security Administration work as well as in his personal photography. His compositions were frequently centered and of single-point perspective. While I did not identify any specific instances of Evans photographing the rear of business, I suspect that if he was alive today, he would be drawn to this grittier backside of modern day commerce. Evans’ commonplace urban subject matter and his attention to photographic design has been a major influence on my practice. Many of his photographs such as *Sidewalk and Shopfront, New Orleans, 1935*, and *Houses and Billboards in Atlanta, 1936*, use a similar perspective, symmetry, and feeling of flatness that I have in much of my own work.
One particular photograph by Evans of significance that my work refers to is *Garage in Southern City Outskirts, 1936* (Figure 8). In this photograph Evans presents the Cherokee Parts Store and garage. The small wooden garage building is centered within the frame. Several apparent patrons of the business are standing near or just within the building, perhaps waiting for their car repairs to be completed. The garage building is “decorated” with tires, hubcaps and other auto parts or perhaps, rather than decoration, the exterior wall is being used for an overflow of needed parts. These auto parts serve to break the symmetry of the scene, providing visual interest with their circular forms. A car is seen in the foreground in front of the garage, perhaps either complete or waiting for repairs. The car adds to an illusion of space in a photograph that would otherwise feel quite flattened by the composition.

A Metropolitan Museum of Art article on Walker Evans states: “His photographs of roadside architecture, rural churches, small-town barbers, and cemeteries reveal a deep respect for the neglected traditions of the common man and secured his reputation as America's preeminent documentarian.”

I am also attracted to similar vernacular subject matter, as was Evans. Such non-spectacular subjects are part of our everyday experience. Photography has an ability to elevate the commonplace – to portray the mundane in a

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way we may not have seen before. Eminent geographer Yi-Fu Tuan said “what begins as
undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with
value.”\(^\text{16}\) The photograph is a pause in the flow of time. The pause of the photograph
gives us the time to contemplate space – to give it value and a place in our consciousness.

The act of *making* photographs in particular, allows for this contemplation of
space and place. I find that after spending time creating photographs at a location, I feel
more connected to the land and the subject before my camera. I feel more invested in the
social structures and systems that create the urban environment. For me, the act of
photographing the city creates a feeling within me of community and a feeling of
investment in society. As a photographer of urban subjects, I look deeply at the city, and I
see the reflection of humanity looking back at me. Another type of reflection, pervasive
in urban spaces, is the reflection seen in the glass and metal building facades common in
the city. This is the subject of the next chapter.

\(^\text{16}\) Yi-Fu Tuan. *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.
Chapter 5: Reflections of Us

The French photographer Eugene Atget was noted for his photographs documenting the streets of Paris. Atget frequently photographed business storefronts in such a way that reflections from the surrounding area were visible in the window glass.

Lori Oden, writing on Atget for The International Photography Hall of Fame said:

“Claims have been made that Atget did not really know what he was doing, that reflections in his shop front windows were accidents which he did not even see. I believe the photographer’s eye develops to a more intense awareness than other peoples, as a dancer develops his muscles and limbs, and a musician his ear. The photographer’s act is to see the outside world precisely, with intelligence as well as sensuous insight. The act of seeing sharpens the eye to an unprecedented acuteness. He often sees swiftly an entire scene that most people would pass unnoticed.” 17

I have to agree with Oden regarding the development of Atget’s artistic eye. In looking at much of the Atget’s oeuvre, it appears clear to me that Atget certainly knew what he was doing. The reflections in his shop front windows seem purposefully intended to simultaneously show both the interior of the shop as well as the reflection of the adjacent street.

In the 1925 black and white photograph *Magasin, avenue des Gobelins* (Figure 9), Atget photographed a men’s clothier. A row of men’s pants is visible in the foreground. Several dressed mannequins are seen in the background. In the top half of the frame, reflections show the scene behind the photographer: a wide street, several trees, and a large building. Such reflections show us two points of view in a single photograph. This double image creates a kind of single-photo diptych, while calling into question the singular perspective offered by the lens.

In my photograph, *Gas Station for Sale* (Figure 10), reflections are an important element of the photograph. This picture shows a gas station bay garage door. The building is constructed of white painted brick and blue metal siding and fascia. The left side column of white brick and the upper and right side blue metal, create a frame within the picture frame. The shape of the grey metal garage door creates another frame within the photograph. The metal door is divided up into panels of mirrored glass in effect creating more frames. Five of the mirrored panels have been broken and boarded.
up with plywood. The warm orange tones of the plywood contrast nicely with the cooler
tones of the white brick, blue siding, and somber grey sky and scene reflected in the
mirrored glass. The plywood verses mirrored-glass creates a diagonal stair-step pattern
throughout the composition. Several of the glass panels are fractured creating more
interesting diagonal shapes to a photograph that otherwise is composed of mostly vertical
and horizontal elements. The center plywood covered panel also prevents the reflection
of the photographer who would have been visible if the mirrored glass was in place. What
is visible in the mirrored glass is a grey sky, several trees, the street, and several cars and
a yellow travel trailer. The bit of yellow provides a small but nice color complement to
the surround blue metal of the building.

The single-point perspective and centered composition creates a flattening effect
to the scene. The feeling of flattening is in spite of the additional space visible in the
reflection of the street that is behind the camera position. The plywood panels reinforce
that we are seeing reflections in the mirrors rather than looking through a window. These
panels stop our feeling of depth at the plane of the building. The only real sense of depth
is manifested by the short distance between the bottom left and right corners, along the
curving concrete curbing that runs to the plane of the building.

This flattening negates our feelings of depth just as the glass replaced with
plywood negates our ability to see more of the street scene behind the camera position.
The photographer himself is negated by the central plywood panel, which prevents our
seeing his reflection in the mirrored panels.
Atget was heralded by Man Ray and the Surrealists for his photographs of storefronts and reflections. Surrealist photography sought to challenge the idea of direct observation by creating imaginary, dream-like, and fantastic images that would seem surreal. Mirrors and windows interfere with the normal process of vision by redirecting or interrupting the direct gaze. Mirrors and windows allow us to see forward, backward, or both at the same time, creating un-real or sur-real imagery. These multiple views are unsettling – they unbalance us. For me, this surreal view of the city is analogous to the feelings of social isolation that many people experience in urbanity. The city can be an alienating landscape. The large numbers of people present in cities can make it more difficult to form personal connections and emotional bonds with others. Encounters with others in the city are most often fleeting and superficial. The speed of life in the city may contribute to the difficulty of forming personal connections. These experiences may increase our feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Perhaps it is appropriate in this chapter to revisit the quote from Chapter 1 by Judy Weiser of the PhotoTherapy Centre who said:

“Photographs are footprints of our minds, mirrors of our lives, reflections from our hearts, frozen memories that we can hold in silent stillness in our hands – forever if we wish. They document not only where we have been, but also point the way to where we might perhaps be heading, whether or not we realize this yet ourselves…” 18

The many reflections observed in the urban setting may literally reflect where we have been as well as where we might be going. Urban environments are pregnant with

reflections. When you walk down any city street you continuously encounter semi-
reflective glass, glass that allows you to see in to storefronts but to also see yourself and
the street behind you reflected in the glass. We normally only see ourselves for brief
moments during the day, generally associated with bathroom visits. However due to the
many reflections in the city, we often become a visible subject of our environment. These
reflections include us as well as the action of the city. We become an actor on the stage of
the world in an unfolding play that we are witness to. Our reflection is a constant
companion as we move through the urban environment. The self-scrutiny referenced by
these types of photographs is important in my work. As I stated in the introduction, I
have used photography as a tool to explore and confront aspects of my personality and
past history. Reflections are relevant subject matter for an inner-focused personal
exploration.
Chapter 6: The Vacancy of the City

Cities are usually vibrant social spheres, humming with human activity. And yet, even in the largest cities, there are places and times of day when time seems to stand still - times when all the people seem to have disappeared from the planet. Photographs of these times and places may allude to social isolation within the city. In *Alone in the City? An Intellectual History of Social Isolation*, Eric Klinenberg of Northwestern University writes:

Louis Wirth’s *The Ghetto* (first published in 1928) and “Urbanism as a Way of Life” (first published in 1938), advanced a general theory of urbanism that gave special attention to the isolation influences of city life… “Urbanism as a Way of Life” is the classic formulation of the thesis that the structure and culture of cities weaken social bonds, producing relationships that are “impersonal, superficial, transitory and segmental,” “characterized by secondary rather than primary contacts,” and forming a profane social universe that “gives rise to loneliness.”

I agree with Louis Wirth. In my own life, I have sometimes felt the most alone at a party, surrounded by dozens of people. The close proximity of many people, coupled with a feeling that the relationships are superficial or impersonal or transitory, can create a heightened sense of despair. Loneliness can feel most pronounced in a crowd.

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Plaza Motel, Dayton, OH (Figure 11), alludes to the loneliness of the traveling salesman. This photograph also references the themes of urban isolation and related barriers to human interaction. Just a single car occupies the parking lot of this small roadside motel. The photograph was made from an adjacent lot, behind a chain link fence. A green vine grows along the fence, partially obscuring the motel. The distance of the view and these barriers between the viewer’s vantage point and the car and motel help to create an emotional distance, fostering a feeling of isolation. Three signs facing in two different directions, repeat the name of the motel making it hard to miss from the highway. The orange and red colors of the motel signs complement the light azure sky that they are set against. Summer clouds dot the sky in white, gray, and blue tones. The solitary car suggests a singular presence at the motel.

The overlapping and repeating signs in Plaza Motel, Dayton, OH, one sign having a backwards orientation, allude to the negative social relationships fostered by the culture of cities as theorized by Worth. The duality of the signs is similar to the duality of social structures in cities. While the larger population of cities allows for a greater number of personal contacts, such contacts are often characterized as superficial and impersonal. The word “plaza” itself refers to a social gathering place. The singular car in the parking lot belies the notion of community suggested by the name of the motel.
In Asphalt Lot, Columbus, OH (Figure 12), a similar cloudy sky is depicted. However, in this photograph the focus is not on a building but rather an empty parking lot. The road and double yellow lines bisects the scene near the bottom of the frame. The direction of the yellow lines is mimicked in the top one-third of the frame by utility lines attached to a wooden pole. The urban landscape depicted by this picture also contains a chain link fence. Weeds and bushes grow along and through the fencing. The lot itself has rows of weeds growing along cracks running through the lot. The lot is empty and appears to have been abandoned years ago. The lot seems to be neglected and forgotten – no longer used for its intended purpose. There are no people or cars visible in the photo. The city is standing still, quiet, and seemingly at rest, and I feel there is anxiety in the stillness and a feeling of disquiet because of the emptiness. The photograph forever freezes this empty and lonely moment allowing its contemplation. Photography interrupts the flow of time by preserving a singular moment. The city may be busy and bustling just before or after the photograph was made – but unless we are present, we do not know the pre- and post-state of the scene before the camera. We only have the recorded moment of time.

Physics theory says that the black holes of space distort space-time and prevent even the escape of light. The photograph is somewhat like a black hole (but much more friendly) in that time cannot escape the singularity of the preserved moment. The past and
the future only exist conceptually. We only have the “now” in which to live our lives. The photograph records the now, transforming it into “past-now” – a record of a previous now that is contemplated in the current now. *Asphalt Lot, Columbus, OH* preserves a quiet and still moment in the city, using this time-effect of photography to highlight the loneliness and emptiness of the city.

For me, both of the above discussed photographs, point to the impersonal, superficial, and transitory nature of relationships that can be a characteristic of an urban setting. The fast-paced nature of urban life, the individual anonymity in a larger concentration of people, and the drive to earn and consume, can all contribute to looser ties and a feeling of isolation in the urban community. In our efforts to create highly complex and rich social environments, society has created cities that may alienate the individual, creating a population of the mostly anonymous.

The Walker Evans’ picture, *Highway Corner, Reedsville, West Virginia*, 1935 Figure 13, operates in a slightly different way than my two pictures discussed above. This picture is one of my favorites from Walker Evans and has been an important influence for me. Like the above photographs, this picture also alludes to the presence of humanity while showing none of its members. Like my *Plaza Motel* photo, this

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Figure 11. Walker Evans. *Highway Corner, Reedsville, West Virginia*, 1935.

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photograph contains multiple signs and wires along with a small commercial building. This picture is of the Gibson Motor Company gas station and includes a large foreground telephone pole with accompanying sign and wires. There is a great deal of depth of field in this photo with sharp focus occurring from the pole near the camera position, and extending out to the farthest points of the building. However, despite the great depth of field and objects from near foreground to the distance, this picture does not create a feeling of three-dimensional space. The photo seems flattened – it seems more like a photomontage than a single photograph. This effect may be due to the overlapping forms and the effect caused by tonal differences between objects. For example, the telephone pole is much darker in tone that the light-gray asphalt of the street. The pole is also much darker than the gray backside of the attached aluminum sign as well as the middle gray sky. The Gibson Motor Co. building is also much darker than the sky or street and also somewhat darker than the pole that it visually bisects. The patchwork of overlapping elements, building, street, sky, signs, wires, and poles, all contribute to this feeling of a flat and montaged surface. There are no people or cars in the picture, lending a feeling of vacancy to our observations. The J. Paul Getty Museum (no listed author) said of this photograph: “Despite all the evidence of devices to keep people connected, the image projects an ironic sense of emptiness and desolation.”

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Stephen Shore’s *Marland Street, Hobbs, New Mexico, February 19, 1975* (Figure 14), has a similar vacant feeling as the Walker Evans photograph discussed above. This Shore picture shows a view of the LampLighter Motel’s outdoor pool and motel sign. Behind the motel, several other Hobbs businesses are visible. The motel however, occupies the lower half of the picture frame and unlike the business in shadow across the street; the LampLighter pool is fully lit by the sun. The dirty blue trim around the pool mimics the somewhat hazy blue sky. A sign at the gate pronounces that the pool is closed. Which is perhaps good considering the murky dirty-green color of the pool water. The pool is an unwelcoming and neglected facility, closed to the motel guests. The street beyond the pool also seems uninviting. A few cars are parked on the street but no people are visible. It seems to be a light industrial area, not given to casual shopping or walking.

The overall impression of this area of Hobbs, New Mexico is of simple utility. There seems to be nothing charming or inviting about the LampLighter Motel. Perhaps this motel is just a place to sleep for the traveling salesman. Hobbs and the LampLighter seem to be lonely and forgettable places of the American Southwest.

Like much of my work in *Maps to Non-Existent Places*, there are no people present in these photographs by Evans and Shore. There is an oppressive silence. They seem almost post-apocalyptic, as if all the people left these places, perhaps even left the planet. The artifacts of humanity are left behind as testament to their past presence.
However, there is no one to read the signs, use the gas or the pool, or to communicate on the telephone wires. This is a feeling that I often try to communicate in my own work, a feeling that the emptiness and loneliness is a palpable presence.

However, I am beginning to include people in my compositions of the urban landscape. With careful selection and placement, the singular person or small group of people can add to the conversation that I intend with my photographs. The human presence in *Maps to Non-Existent Places* is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 7: The Human Presence

Frequently, I exclude people from my photographs. I have done this to allow the built environment to reference mankind as well as our social institutions and policies, without the direct presence of humans. When humans are depicted, they tend to dominate the viewer’s interest. However, people are beginning to find their way into my work. I am beginning to wait for people to populate or enter into the urban environments that draw my attention. I am finding that the presence of the singular person or small group can in some ways better communicate the themes of social isolation or marginalization. One such photograph where the presence of people can further the conversation about loneliness and social isolation is *Lunch Special*.

*Lunch Special* (Figure 15), shows the front façade of a Chinese restaurant on the right and an adjacent red brick building on the left. At the bottom of the frame, a sidewalk bisects the frame on a diagonal. The sidewalk also runs in the opposite diagonal, along an alleyway between the two buildings. Two women have just exited the restaurant, perhaps having enjoyed the “Lunch Special” which is listed on a

Figure 13. Paul Scott Page. *Lunch Special*. 2014
sign beneath a red and blue neon “open” sign. The women are moving to the right and are slightly blurred by the slow shutter employed when the photograph was made. This slight blurring of the two figures, contrasts their active motion with the stillness of another figure in the picture. To the left, a man in a wheelchair sits motionless just inside the alleyway. He is confined visually by the left and right alley walls, as well as by the large and heavy looking air conditioning units, which are slightly menacing in their suspension above his head. The man is looking to his left, in the opposite direction of the two women. He is also looking slightly upward and seems to be contemplating either the large air conditioning units or perhaps the interesting shadow and light patterns cast onto the brick just beneath the units.

The two women appear to have just engaged in the social ritual of a shared meal. This socialization seems in contrast to the suggested confinement and isolation of the solitary man in the wheelchair. When I made this photograph, I was initially drawn to the complex textures of the smooth and rough sides of the brick building, in contrast to the reflective surfaces of the adjacent glass-sided building. As I setup my tripod, I noticed the man in the wheel chair slowly making his way down the sidewalk. I grew up with wheel chairs because of my dad’s life-long paralysis from polio. So I was interested in including the man within my composition. As I began a series of photographs, I was very pleased when the man moved into the alleyway and began studying the patterns of light on the wall. He was there for sometime so I adjusted my shutter so as to blur patrons exiting the restaurant. This was done to prevent recognition, as I wanted the viewers attention to not stay too long upon the restaurant patrons. I wanted the point of interest to rest upon the
still figure of the wheel chair bound man. The blurred figures also lend a feeling of spontaneity to the photo (despite the careful composition), which is different than my other thesis work. While there is implied energy in the photograph due to the movement of the woman, there remains a feeling of stillness because of the striking contrast of the women in motion to the still man in the wheel chair. There also remains a feeling of isolation or separateness in part due to the strategy of capturing the motion as well as the architectural divisions within the frame.

Stephen Shore’s oeuvre has been very influential in my development as an artist. I appreciate the way people are depicting in urban spaces within his photographs. Shore’s _West Fifteenth Street and Vine Street, Cincinnati, Ohio_ (Figure 16), depicts the intersection of two urban streets in the Over-the-Rhine area of Cincinnati. This is one of the oldest parts of Cincinnati and an area of high racial tensions, poverty, crime, and a rapidly shrinking population (at least those were the conditions in 1974 if not still today). At the center of the photograph, a painted brick wall advertises Will’s Pawn Shop. Other nearby businesses includes bars, a paint store, and a chili restaurant. Numerous people are walking down the sidewalks in various directions or are exiting a car. Four men are prominent in the picture, being relatively close to the camera location. Each of the men are heading in different directions: one towards the camera, one to scene
left, one to scene right, and the nearest person, an elderly man, moving away from the camera.

Most of the people also appear to be looking in different directions. Despite the presence of these people, no socialization is evident. The individuals appear solitary and isolated from each other in space, and perhaps as well by social self-categories such as race, class, and age. Shore’s photograph seems to further Louis Wirth’s general theory of urbanism (referenced on page 39), which states that urbanism creates isolating influences that weaken social bonds.

I will continue to make photographs without a direct human presence - photographs that allow the human-built environment to speak about contemporary social issues. However, I have found during the production of Maps to Non-Existent Places that the inclusion of the singular figure or small groups of people can add to the conversation about the social dynamics of the city. Feelings of isolation, emptiness, and loneliness may be made more poignant with the presence of these people.
Phase Shift: Department of Art, Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition took place at Urban Arts Space, Columbus, Ohio. The exhibition ran from February 17 through March 21, 2015 and included work from fourteen artists working in a variety of mediums. A reception was held on Saturday, February 21.

In my exhibition, Maps to Non-Existent Places, consisted of twelve photographs printed twenty-four inches by thirty inches, matted and framed. Nine pictures where hung on a long gallery wall and three where hung on a shorter attached wall. These twelve were selected as the most representative of the entire body of work, from an on-going series that currently consists of twenty pictures. The twelve pictures were arranged with an attention to be color harmonies and the visual flow from one image to the next regardless of the direction of entering the installation. Beginning on the left, my Plaza Motel picture was selected as the opening photograph because the motel sign conveniently contains a bright yellow right-pointing arrow, which beckons the viewer to continue moving right to the next picture in the exhibition. In similar fashion, Untitled (Construction Project) was selected on the far right side as the steel girders create an arrow-like shape pointing to the left and the next picture, which invites viewers to continue moving right to left through the photographs. Both of these photographs also contain manmade objects overlapping vivid blue skies and white clouds. The content of
these pictures create bookends to the presented body of work. Property #1 (Urban Grasslands Project) is a highly symmetrical picture; therefore, this photograph was hung prominently in the center of the short wall of three pictures. The other pictures were sequenced intuitively based on subject and color harmonies.

Overall, I feel that the shape and allotted space for the installation worked very well with the number and framed size of the presented photographs. I feel that the order of the individual photographs complemented each other well. Given unlimited space and budget, I may have preferred the work to be presented somewhat larger than shown in this exhibition. However, the current size works well to showcase both the entire picture as well as the details present in the photographs, at a relatively intimate viewing distance. The optimum viewing space seems to be a one to four foot range, that seems to work well within a small to medium-sized gallery space.

Exhibition List
Title 1 - Plaza Motel, Dayton, Ohio
Title 2 - Senior Citizen's Center, Upper Arlington, Ohio
Title 3 - Acme Taxi, 5th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio
Title 4 - John W. Bricker Federal Building, Columbus, Ohio
Title 5 - Edward Hopper Was Here
Title 6 - Illuminated Parking Garage, Columbus, Ohio
Title 7 - Working at the Car Wash
Title 8 - South Drive-In Theatre, Columbus, Ohio
Title 9 - Lunch Special
Title 10 - Bifurcation
Title 11 - Property #1 (Urban Grasslands Project)
Title 12 - Untitled (Construction Project)
Chapter 9: Conclusion

*Maps to Non-Existent Places* uses photography to examine the urban environment - its streets, buildings, shops, homes, and people. The title of this work references my long-term interest in maps as collections of data, and my ideas of the data continued within a picture as also being a map of a location. These locations are considered *non-places* in keeping with theories developed by French Anthropologist Marc Augé. The term *non-place* is also a reference to my understanding of the mediated reality that is the photograph. While photographs appear to be very factual and real, they are representations of places, people, and things, and are subject to the transformation process inherent in lens-based two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional space.

In my examination of the urban environment, my interest was in exploring emotional dimensions of loneliness, abandonment, and social isolation. These themes are personally important to me and seem particularly relevant in urban locations. Sociologists have theorized that city life is prone to weakening social bonds, producing superficial relationships that result in feelings of loneliness and isolation. *Maps to Non-Existent Places* uses photography to explore these social themes.

This document discussed the way in which the light can be utilized to showcase the various themes present in *Maps to Non-Existent Places*. I have compared and
contrasted my work with Edward Hopper whose paintings of everyday life have been described as containing an “alienated majesty.”

I have also discussed the presence and use of nature within urban settings. In the urban environment, trees and other plantings are typically planted, attended, and controlled by humans. The way in which nature is used in the environment references humanity’s natural origins and need for nature, set against the often completing needs of commerce. Trees and other plantings may also present isolating barriers that demarcate property into what is public from what is private. Trees may also visually stand in for the absent human figure. Trees in winter, in particular, may visually heighten the feelings of loneliness that are a major theme of Maps to Non-Existent Places.

Functional symmetry in the urban landscape has been discussed with the discussion centered on the rear side of commercial buildings or the entrance used by workers for the flow of products to and from businesses. Building entrances are a form of barrier that may act directly or indirectly as economic or class filter, restricting or limiting access to certain businesses and institutions.

Reflections are pervasive in the metallic and glassed facades of the built environment. This document has described how these reflections show where we have been and may show where we are going. These reflections offer a surreal view of the city and may reflect our singularity or isolation within urban spaces. Reflections also return our gaze, perhaps redirecting our attention inward.

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The vacancy or emptiness often found within the city is a theme covered in this thesis. Cities are busy, active places and yet even in the largest urban areas, there are times and places of quiet and stillness which can allude to loneliness and social isolation.

In contrast to the human vacancy that occurs in the city, I have also described how the human presence is depicted in Maps to Non-Existent Places. This human presence can be alluded to through the signs of human activity: roads, business, homes, etc., or this presence can take the form of actual people present in the photographs. Both approaches have been utilized in my work and discussed in this document.

The production of Maps to Non-Existent Places has taught me a great deal about my own personality and history. I feel that this work has been a successful exploration of my past and present. I believe that I better understand my feelings of social isolation and loneliness and this work has enabled me to increase my awareness of the dynamics that result in these emotions. Maps to Non-Existent Places has helped to provide me with a context for understanding the emotions surrounding my interpersonal relationships. I plan to continue building upon the solid foundation developed in this body of work by adding to it and refining it.
References

Aristotle, Metaphysica 10f-1045a


