

**ERRATIC: A PERSONAL LOOK AT STUDIO PRACTICE AS RESEARCH**

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## ABSTRACT

My thesis work is comprised of two components. The first component is my thesis exhibition, which will showcase the bulk of my research as an MFA candidate in studio art. The second component is this essay in which I will attempt to further illustrate the ideas that have steered my academic research, and informed my thesis exhibition. The purposes of this essay are the following: to explain the ideas, intentions, and goals that may not be noticeable when first viewing the projects in my thesis exhibition; a second goal is to emphasize the importance of the role of intuition and solitude in pursuing areas of interests in studio research.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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“So I spend the day alone, following a thread. In the evening, I hope for a simple domestic interlude so that I’m in good shape to find the thread again the next morning.”

Interview with Liz Magor, NGC Magazine

“What few people know now is that there are ways of thinking that we don’t yet know about.”

Susan Sontag, Aesthetics in Solitude

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2013 I arrived at the University of Lethbridge to take up my position as a graduate student. Not only had I never thought I would live in Alberta, but I had never lived in a place as small as Lethbridge. I would soon realize that my attempt to relocate my metropolitan practice to an environment like Lethbridge would be like trying to force a square peg through a round hole. Upon entering the university, I felt myself surrounded by concrete walls, studio walls, departmental walls, bureaucratic walls and professional walls. I felt all these walls stifling, which is why I began looking at what was readily accessible to me in Lethbridge, as a way for moving forward, beyond all those walls. I began by doing research on Southern Alberta in general, and learning about the campus I was working in, as well as other local and regional histories.

From this discombobulation that arose from trying to force my previous methods of working in to Lethbridge, I decided to focus on my experiences in this

new landscape as a new source of my artistic practice. I started by focusing on my thoughts while in the studio: what they were directed towards, what they were fighting against, and what they were longing for. I started looking at the elements around me as materials for my work: coal, racism, isolation, masculinity, connection to a landscape, the many histories layered over this geography, Pontiac Trans-Ams, open sky for long distances, tall grass, sandy soil, rattle snakes and soaring birds of prey. At the beginning of my MFA candidacy, two questions directed my studio research: Where do I find my place here? How do I connect and resolve these stories within me? Neither question required immediate answers; instead I would let the answers find me slowly, over time, through my studio work. I would later find this intention to have open-ended questions direct one's studio work echoed by Sky Glabush, a Canadian artist based in Toronto, during a studio visit in the second semester of my first year. With these questions steering me, my work started to become more personal. From this act of looking at my immediate environment, and the experiences that arose from this environment, I seemed to have opened the doors to allow for other personal stories and experiences from my past to enter my work, as they informed my present situation. Around this time, an article I had read discussing the new work of the British painter David Hockney and his ideas on the importance of returning to a more figurative and less conceptual art practice, encouraged me to take on this personal dialogue. I took his use of the term "figurative" to include works that look at the personal experiences of a figure in the landscape, as subject matter, as being figure-based. I was that figure, Lethbridge was the landscape. "The way of looking at it (the landscape) might be worn out, but

the landscape can't be. It needs re-looking at...(to) look at it afresh" (Gompertz, 2012, p. 3).

I entered the studio as a way to process my experiences and without intending it, what developed were art objects that married my ephemeral and experiential practice of storytelling with my love of physically making and creative problem solving. In my studio practice I began to notice recurring themes and processes: casting and material transformations; service marketing; rebelling against power structures (which I came to exemplify as a youth/adult dichotomy); the role of the ego and ways in which it exerts its influence; questions of labour as academic research; displacements; erratics; the colour black (as a passive, and emotionally healing force); and my own personal narrative and history. I would also begin to seek other artists who seemed to share a similar approach to studio research. As I worked, and began to better understand my value-structure during the two years of my MFA, I would begin to see some of these sentiments reflected by artists such as Liz Magor, whether through interviews, through the style and subject of her works, or all together. With the institution being another "sounding board" to my intentions, my research methods became clearer to me. I began to see that I preferred a long term, organic research process steeped in personal experiences, extending beyond discipline-based or hierarchical-based divisions. As example, I posit two books: *Born Standing up: A Comic's Life*,<sup>1</sup> by Steve Martin and *Relational*

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<sup>1</sup> Written by Steve Martin in 2008. This book is an account of the stand-up comedian's early efforts for success and personal fulfillment in his professional field.

*Aesthetics*,<sup>2</sup> by Nicholas Bourriard. The latter book being a discussion of new ideas in art theory from 2000, and can often feel like “required” reading for passing through the gates of contemporary art; the former book being a personal account of a creative individual’s journey through his field of expertise, namely: stand-up comedy. Both exert their influence on different aspects of a professional practice. Finding the balance between the institutional requirements and my research methods, and between my divergent interests, itself would play a large role in developing my thesis work.

The projects presented in my thesis exhibition were formed from a decision to pick up a “thing” and allow myself time to explore those objects or ideas, conceptually, formally, and playfully, through my studio. These *things* that would spur on the three works in my thesis are the following: 1) sacred geometry; 2) a fungo baseball bat; 3) and an IKEA coffee table. What led me to consider these three things is a long and convoluted story that may have no one answer, other than serendipity and intuition, or possibly my subconscious. These three things carried each project in my thesis exhibition to its completion, like a vehicle.

In each project, I have constructed a conceptual flow of information through a series of components, eg: India Ink, an un-turned wood baseball bat billet,<sup>3</sup> a chunk of black obsidian, and an IKEA coffee table. Taken together, these

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<sup>2</sup> Written by Nicolas Bourriard in 2002. This book discusses the theoretical framework of “new” methods in contemporary art production.

<sup>3</sup> In this case the term “billet” refers to a chunk of wood specifically selected for its qualities as professional-grade, for turning a baseball bat using a wood lathe.

components function as an aggregate that helps me to construct the physical and conceptual parameters of the works; it is the collection of these components that develops my intended meaning. In this following paper, I will attempt to explain the significance—and in some instances the origin story—of the projects in my graduate exhibition.

## 2. DRAWING

### 2.1 Intersecting Lines

The story of the *Becoming* drawing series begins with a conversation with a homeless man in Vancouver, on a bench outside of Budgie's Burritos in 2009.

Around that time, I had been asking around for good book suggestions on *ley lines*.<sup>4</sup>

The first time I had ever heard of power lines existing under the earth's surface was when someone told me the story of how Halifax ended up having one of the largest Buddhist communities in North America. As the story goes,<sup>5</sup> during a trans-Atlantic flight, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (a Buddhist monk who, at the age of 20, led a party of Tibetan monks across the Himalayas and into India during the beginning of Chinese occupation in 1959, and who would go on to establish Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado) was high above Halifax when he looked out his airplane window. He peered over Halifax and claimed that the site below was auspicious due to its location being at an intersection of the earth's power lines.

How he was able to observe this was never made apparent to me. By 1986, Trungpa

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<sup>4</sup> "In the course of their researches Watkins and his friends grew more and more convinced that there was something more behind the ley system than a network of traders' tracks. It was as if some flow of current followed the course of these man-made alignments" (Michell, 1973, p. 14).

<sup>5</sup> This story was told to me by the artist Michael Fernandes.

had moved his operation from Boulder to Halifax, bringing many of his supporters with him. With this random interest planted in my mind, sparked by a conversation that may or may not have been factual, I stood inside Budgie's Burritos during the end of the summer of 2009. I was mentioning these interests in the hopes of getting closer to my goal of finding a good resource on ley lines, when the person behind me in line, overhearing my queries, pointed out the homeless man on the bench out front. He said, "That guy there reads a lot. You should ask him, he might know." He did. Not only did he inform me to the book *The View Over Atlantis*<sup>6</sup> by John Michell, but he also informed me of the only book store in Vancouver where he last saw a copy—which happened to be right across the street.

## 2.2 Geometry

The next thread to unravel would occur in the winter of 2011, when I was inside a crystal and gemstone store in Toronto called The Rock Shop, where I happened upon a little black book called *Sacred Geometry* (Lundy, 2001), a term I first encountered in Michell's writings. Sacred geometry was fascinating to me, conjuring up sublime visions of Pythagoras and functioning as an esoteric link

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix, page 53.

between natural forces and human structures. At first, in my mind, these human structures were specifically architectural, but the more I worked with this method of geometry, I began to see how sacred geometry also functioned as a structure of *thought* and *language*, a grammar that could be a vehicle for the communication of concepts surrounding the harmonious folding of natural forces and rhythms into human work (as expressed through geometric forms). As I began to work with this language, I was further drawn to it through my interests in archetypes. From another book by Michell, *How the World is Made: The Story of Creation According to Sacred Geometry* (2009), I inferred that, as an ancient grammar, sacred geometry had the potential to provide access to concepts that have withstood thousands of years of human development.<sup>7</sup>

This archetypal quality of the geometry held, for me, a potential to provide an understanding of our environment, and our relationship with our surroundings, that may have become confused in our relationships with the bustling, modern world. This geometry provided a way to integrate the conceptual, formal, and aesthetic properties of my drawings into a system of relating components.

### **2.3 Mandalas**

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<sup>7</sup> As illustrated by the following quote: “Returning with (the ancient and traditional outlook of sacred geometry) are the long-lost secrets of the esoteric code of science that sustained all ancient civilizations throughout their legendary golden ages” (Michell & Brown, 2009, pg. 6).

Parallel to my first steps in sacred geometry, I found a connection between sacred geometry's function with that of Hindu mandalas. I observed the overlap in the formal properties of each. I began to understand mandalas as the physical embodiment of prayers or *yantras*, which in turn, are the embodiment of the "totality of the cosmos" (Khanna, 2005). The mandala is not a representation or illustration of prayer; it points to a thing while also actually being that thing it points to. This idea, of an object or thing functioning as both the sign and the signifier, would carry into my own work. Another fascinating aspect of mandalas, I learned, was the relationship between the human body and the grand narrative of the Cosmos, as alluded to in following quote: "Contact with the image of divinity in the heart of the temple is the symbolic replication of the meeting of divinity within the center of one's being" (Brereton, 2005). The ability for one thing to be both a reference and a primary source, with a design intended to activate our whole nature (for the purposes of healing rifts in our being and in our relationships) was something I wanted to pick up on and engage with in my studio, in an attempt to express my own intentions.

## **2.4 Lethbridge**

When I arrived in Lethbridge in the Fall of 2013, I set to work in my studio with Michell's book, *How the World is Made*, learning how to divide a circle by 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12, with only a straight edge and a compass. First, I constructed an adjustable compass that suited my desire to work on a large scale. Next, I learned the steps involved in constructing an enneagon, a heptagon, a pentagon, or a dodecagon; the first batch of drawings that I made at this time were very formal and decorative in their composition. Also around this time, while collecting more information on ley lines, I discovered a website ([earthaccupuncture.info](http://earthaccupuncture.info)) where it was stated that if one draws a cuboctahedron (a cube and a tetrahedron combined, also two shapes that comprise two of the *Platonic solids*, which when combined forms one of the thirteen *Archimedean solids*) and fit it within the circumference of the Earth so that the points of the cuboctahedron just touch the Earth's surface, those points of "contact" delineate centres of power on Earth. One of these best-known points is Sedona, Arizona, a location visited often by "New Agers". Another one of these points on the Earth's surface is in Southern Alberta, near Lethbridge. What was a loose thread of research had now activated my personal sphere with a larger frame of reference beyond myself, while relating directly to my research interests.

These geometry based drawings took a turn when, one evening in my studio, I grabbed an old drawing hanging on my wall and attempted to destroy its rigid structure: straight pencil lines drawn on white paper with a ruler. I felt so annoyed looking at that drawing, and impulsively I started embossing the words "Die Young,

Stay Pretty” into that white paper—taken from the movie *Died Young, Stayed Pretty* (Yaghoobian, 2009)—using the backside of my utility knife. During this fit of *ennui* those words became scratched into my paper in a very scrawly manner, with colourful blooms of messy pencil crayon appearing around each word like a cloud. The final component fell into place when, while still in this emotional state, I grabbed a brush and some India ink and started to fill in the blank spaces between my pencil lines, much like an assignment from a Grade 4 art class. My drawing became inverted: where there was once a white space with graphite lines delineating my circle, a black India ink circle with white lines crisscrossing that shape now appeared. As I stepped back and looked at the fruits of this destructive labour I was pleased with what I saw, even if I did not understand it yet. The destructive work of that evening would become the backbone of my *Becoming* drawing series.

With these elements in play, I began to vary the order of my process: will I apply the text before or after I determine the “clouds” of colour? When is the best time to emboss certain parts? When and how do I apply the India ink? Almost unavoidably, through these actions, my process became formalized, both in my understanding of what I was working with, as well as in my aesthetic. Through this formalization, I would begin to consider various fonts as another avenue to construct meaning.

## 2.5 “Review It / Look It Over / And Whatever”<sup>8</sup>

Because I viewed the overlapping geometric shapes in my drawing as making reference to physical geography - to the *total* landscape of Earth - Ed Ruscha’s early 2000s versions of his “word paintings” in which text appeared over photo-realist mountain ranges culled from photographs and commercial logos, would resonate with me. Though it was his use of landscape that brought Ruscha’s work to my mind, it was his development of his own font, known as *Boy Scout Utility Modern* that really struck a chord with me, as well as the seeming senselessness of his words. Over a period of time I experimented with a few different fonts and attempted to alter them in a way that transformed them into a signature, much like the Canadian artist Garry Neill Kennedy’s *Superstar Shadow Font* (National Gallery of Canada, 2007). In reference to my situation inside the concrete walls of an institution for higher learning, the first font I worked with was a *Varsity* font. From *Varsity*, I moved to *Collegiate*, and from *Collegiate* to *Pontiac Trans-Am*, (suggested by the two black 1979 Trans-Ams parked on my neighbour’s front lawn). By incorporating the (Pontiac) Trans-Am font into my drawings, I was able to insert a personal history into my work. This Trans-Am font (and its German-Gothic roots) encompassed many varying aspects of my childhood, from the 1980s working-class-machismo (summarized for me by the memory of one of my parents’ immigrant

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix, page 54.

friends looking like an 1980s Bollywood actor standing next to his 1989 white Pontiac Camaro), to my favourite childhood show *Knight Rider*, which seemed to reinforce the same ideals. This personal connection, to the Trans-Am and its font, and to what it exemplified in my mind, became more fascinating through hindsight and adult analysis. The son of immigrant parents growing up in the 1980s, in the blue-collar, steel capital of Canada, with the Trans-Am font I was able to connect a personal narrative to my drawings.

The more I worked with this language of geometry, the more I began to see its potential application as a way to govern the formal layout for the ideas in my drawings. Elements I added to the geometric foundation of my drawings functioned much like an aggregate, each part informing the overall reading. My choice of pencil crayon as material seemed now to have conceptual relevance, rather than a purely textural or material sensibility. This was achieved through my focus on creating something personal and reflective, rather than product-based, and by allowing the geometry to function as the vehicle that carried the other components to their end-point. Like a binder that holds the aggregate together, the geometry is the cement with which the aggregate construction of the conceptual is built, in this case with pencil crayon, India ink, German Gothic (Trans-Am) font, and text.

## **2.6 Becoming**

The formal, and formalized qualities of the *Becoming* drawing series distinguished them from any of my earlier efforts. From the reference to Ruscha's work and the influence of graphic design on his practice, I decided to formalize the layout and execution of my drawings until they achieved a quality of commodification, as a way to locate the importance of hand-wrought work in contrast to "slick" and impersonal products. By juxtaposing my drawings with the realm of commodity, I was now able to play with the concept and practice of marketing, specifically towards youth. My drawings could be perceived to function in much the same way as a sign or a showroom display: as both the sign and the signified.

On a personal, connotative level, the colour black exemplifies purifying emotions, depth beyond the Ego, and the destructive and rebellious energy of teenagers, but most importantly, black represents, for me, opposition to structures and systems of thought, whether those structures are economic, social, or educational. The drawing series *Becoming* was devised as a set of seven markers that represent the beginning of autonomy for teenagers and their independence from parental controls. Taking a cue from the seven deadly sins,<sup>9</sup> the texts in my *Becoming* drawings are intended to illustrate those moments in youth culture that hold the potential for fear in adults, but in the narrative of a comedic punchline or a

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<sup>9</sup> The seven sins deadly sins are: pride, greed, gluttony, lust, sloth, envy, anger (or wrath).

Zen koan. The seven phrases in *Becoming* are, in order from left to right: Boystuff, Psychedaelia, Student Driver, Becoming, Feels Good, Wild And Erratic, and Girlstuff.<sup>10</sup>

I am intrigued by the lack of understanding between youths and adults, as well as the cyclical nature this anxious relationship alludes to: youths rebelling against adults who become adults who fear youths. I am also interested in the contrast between the fear and the desire for control that seems to stem from this lack of understanding, and the manipulative methods in which adults attempt to set the parameters of youth-based interests through marketing tactics. From the beginning, the black circle of my drawings referenced the Earth and the moon. I have incorporated the phases of the waxing and waning moon into my black circles as a natural way to promote the *cyclical* nature of life, especially in contrast to the seven deadly sins. As the seven phases of the moon are paralleled by the seven deadly sins (each drawing in the series also represents a stage in the moon's phases), this is to suggest that all human constructions originate from natural phenomena. I named this series *Becoming*, since each individual drawing is constantly in a state of *becoming*, along with the implied subjects of these drawings.

In conjunction with my thesis exhibition, I will make available posters for each drawing in the *Becoming* series, available for purchase during the exhibition. This is to help locate the work, much like Gustave Klimt posters, within the home, as

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<sup>10</sup> See Figures pages 36 to 42 for visual documentation of the full drawing series *Becoming (I-VII)*.

well as the gallery space. It is also a way to place the work in the realm of product display, to create a conversation between my drawings and the act of commodification.

### 3. ACTIONS

The dented bat implies the impact of force; the unrefined billet emphasizes the fungo bat's elemental origin; the black obsidian signifies a passive, healing process. If the *Becoming* drawings make a reference to the moon phases, then *Erratic* is fully located on earth: as the ground we stand on, and as the ground that supports us. From its many relationships, Life—in its myriad forms—sustains itself, as exemplified by crop growth and migrating animals, and ambition and success. In *Erratic*, I attempt to discuss the interconnectedness of “things”, despite their seemingly differing outward appearances, such as: baseball, the immigrant's struggle, diasporas, and the solitary figure.

#### 3.1. The Natural

This project began for me, at least in part, while thinking about tool-making as a part of my practice, and more specifically, the ability of humans to manipulate elements in their environment to better suit their needs and wants. Through the lens of looking at the human manipulation of natural resources, I considered the

creation story of “Wonderboy”, the name of Roy Hobbs’ bat in the 1984 movie *The Natural*, starring Robert Redford as Roy Hobbs. As the story goes:

Hobbs witnesses his father's death while working under a large tree in the front of his home. Some years later, a lightning bolt strikes the tree splitting it into pieces. Hobbs takes a part of the tree and carves out a bat, using a tool to burn into the bat the name Wonderboy along with a symbol of a lightning bolt for whence it came (IMDB).

With Wonderboy in hand, Roy Hobbs goes on to dominate baseball as “The Natural”. This association led me to notice tool construction and tool manipulation as important elements of my studio practice, as I began to consider fashioning my own tools of manipulation—an idea I had already touched upon with my adjustable compass I used for my drawings. I began to look at baseball bats both physically and conceptually, specifically “fungo” bats. A fungo bat is a style of baseball bat that is used as a tool for coaching; due to its shape and dimensions, it was designed as the ideal bat for hitting self-lobbed balls to the outfielders for training purposes (as opposed to balls being pitched to the batter). This is due to the bat being thinner, longer, lighter, and more dramatically tapered than regular hitting bats.

I took the concept of the self-imposed-effort of fungo bat use and repurposed it to become a symbol of solitude. In Rodney Graham’s 1969 piece, *Lobbing Potatoes at a Gong*, Graham makes reference to a personal experience, the drummer for Pink Floyd, the idealism of the late 1960s, and the work of the artist in his or her studio (e-flux, 2010). *Lobbing Potatoes at a Gong* took the form of an “artist talk,” where in front of an audience, Graham sat in a chair on one side of the room with a gong placed at the other end. Next to his chair was a bucket of potatoes; he would lob

potatoes at the gong from his chair. Using only the potatoes that hit the gong, he then produced a limited-edition potato vodka. Of interest to me in this work is the material transformation of the “successful” potatoes, the reference to the artist-at-work-in-his-or-her-studio trying to make a hit piece, and the use of humour to subvert subjects (that I assume annoyed Graham) such as the energy of late 1960s idealism. But what I enjoy most about this piece is Graham’s use of a simple, repetitive action as a way to discuss complex and varying subject matter. It is from a similar reason that I would determine how I would work with the baseball bat. To me, the bat was a tool that represented structures of cultural competition, and I wanted to subvert it to become a tool of interconnectedness, introspection and emotional healing through solitude. Growing up in Hamilton, my friends used to play a game called “homerun derby”. The point of the game was to hit as many homeruns as you can so that you can remain at bat. Miss and it is your turn to join the outfield. As I grew up between two worlds—of the culture of my parents and the culture of Southern Ontario—I found that baseball was one of those activities that would really make me feel outside of both cultures. Indian boys played cricket and white boys played baseball. To be a little Indian boy playing baseball in the early 1990s in Hamilton would always lead to getting teased for being so “white”, and to not know how to play cricket was to be teased by the little Indian boys for not being “Indian”, making me feel like an outsider in either situation. Needless to say, for these reasons I never joined a baseball team or rarely joined my friends for a game of homerun derby. As I grew up and became more interested in hearing the stories of my parents’ experiences as immigrants in Canada in the 1970s, it was the

fork—a simple utensil—that seemed to summarize the complexity and nuance of their struggles. Having grown up in place where it was culturally acceptable to eat with your hands, both in the home and in public, once my parents had children, which coincided with their emigration to Canada, my father would place a lot of importance on teaching his children how to hold a fork at a ridiculously young age, all due to the fear of not wanting to pass along his own cultural struggles. I think about the baseball bat and how it seemed to symbolize my personal struggles as a first generation Canadian, and the antagonism I would feel from it as a cultural tool. The bat seemed to embody a certain kind of fear—perhaps of being noticed as an other, but also in general the bat (divorced from baseball) often seems to communicate fear: as a tool of destruction, with the intention to hurt others and/or destroy personal property; and as a tool of protection from the fear of being physically hurt by others. It is for these reasons, as I approached this project, that I would chose the fungo bat to repurpose as a tool of for healing this emotional pain. It was important for me to make my own bat, as a way to emphasize the work of manufacturing tools from natural materials, in order to exemplify our dependency on the environment as being the support for all human endeavours, including pain, struggle, and hurt. *Erratic* is a way for me to explore these concepts and emotions in a non-destructive manner, by finding a personal connection with my (cultural, physical and social) environment—and my past—and by understanding struggle as a natural part of life.

## **3.2. Diasporas**

My fungo bat would bring me outdoors, but before I got there I already started making connections between my cultural experiences and various forces that alter and shape landscapes and cultures. The relationship between erratics and glaciers seemed to parallel the relationship between the British Empire and the Indian diaspora, as movements and forces that carved out social, economic, cultural, political, and/or geographic landscapes.

### **3.2.1 Erratics and Glaciers, and the British Empire**

Glacial erratics are “pieces of rock that differ in size and type of rocks native to the area in which it rests” (Wikipedia, 2004). Equally important is that erratics are picked up and deposited by glaciers as they move across the landscape; as the glaciers melt they unburden their load, leaving erratics as a trace of the glacial pathways in the landscape. Two related concepts appealed to me here: that erratics are passive foreigners in a foreign land with no choice in the matter; and how slow glacial movements across the landscape alter that very landscape, as example:

During the Pleistocene (the last ice age), huge sheets of ice called continental glaciers advanced over much of the earth. The movement of these continental glaciers created many now-familiar glacial landforms. As the glaciers were expanded, due to their accumulating weight of snow and ice, they crushed and redistributed surface rocks, creating erosional landforms such as striations, cirques, and hanging valleys. Later, when the glaciers retreated leaving behind their freight of crushed rock and sand, depositional landforms were created, such as moraines, eskers, drumlins, and kames (Wikipedia, 2005).

As a child growing up in Hamilton during the 1980s and 90s, the question I was most confronted with—other than “What do you want to be when you grow up?”—was “Where are you from? West Indies?!” I was from Hamilton, born at McMaster Hospital, and yet I was constantly reminded of my identity as an other. Both my parents come from the Island of Mauritius, situated in the Indian Ocean, as did their parents, and their parents’ parents, going back five generations. Before that, my mother and father’s families came from India where they were picked up by the British Empire through the false promises of indentured labour. It always fascinated me as a teenager that I was born in Hamilton, at at McMaster Hospital, as a result of my Father having been accepted to a PhD program at McMaster University. That is how it came to be that I was constantly being confronted with “where I was from” as a child: a strange combination of economic trade and professional ambition.

As I made connections between my personal story and the story of erratics—as passive players born from unstoppable forces—I would start to consider the rocks around me as the counterpoint to my bat. If the bat is a tool for action, then the rocks around me are the passive material to be displaced by the force of my

work. I like the choice of hitting rocks because of the reference they make to erratics, but also because it minimized the amount of “choice” I would actually have to make. This is important because I am, in part, trying to explore the “randomness” in human struggle. Other than a selection process based on dimensions and weight, my choice in which rocks would be displaced were all so arbitrary and random, informed primarily by my ambition to make work, rather than a consideration for the rock itself. This is how I decided that I should be hitting rocks with my bat, rocks I find around me, which I displace into the land in front of me.

### **3.3 ERRATIC, Vol. I** <sup>11</sup>

My project *Erratic* has two components: the first is a sculptural component; the second is an ephemeral, action-based component.

The sculptural component is composed of two wood fungo baseball bat billets: one hickory, one birch. The hickory billet was turned on the wood lathe to produce my interpretation of the fungo bat silhouette; the birch billet remains unaltered from the shelves of KR3 Bats.<sup>12</sup> Both stand in proximity to each other. I chose to turn the hickory billet due to its superior strength over the birch, which I

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<sup>11</sup> See Figures pages 43 to 44 to for visual documentation of the project *Erratic*.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix, pages 55 to 57 for more information on KR3 bats.

felt was important since I would be hitting rocks with my bat. The turned billet sits on a small riser, as is, with dents and all. The unrefined billet sits directly on the ground with a chunk of black obsidian<sup>13</sup> sitting atop the billet; the obsidian was given to me at the Teotihuacan pyramids just outside of Mexico City.

The action-based component of this project happens by fulfilling the bat's destiny—to be swung. "Action" also implies "use": that to go walking implies using your legs; that swinging a hammer implies driving in a nail; that having a job implies supporting (using) your life. What happens to the "action-use" relationship when the action of your life is to make art? How does that "usefulness" become validated? What happens when the artistic activity is swinging a bat and hitting rocks into the landscape? What are the social, political and emotional implications of a life spent hitting rocks? How would one go about sustaining a life spent "hitting rocks" in our modern economic society?

In conjunction with my thesis exhibition, I will also be producing an edition of 10 ash fungo bats which I will make available for purchase.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix, pages 58 to 59 for expanded description on the properties of *black obsidian*.

## 4. SCULPTURE

### 4.1 Kali Yuga

According to Hinduism, the period of human time that we are currently in is referred to as *Kali Yuga*. “Yuga” means *age*, and “Kali”, in this case, means *demon* or *vice* (Wikipedia, 2003). Kali is also a goddess in the Hindu pantheon. In her lesser form as Kali—typified by her four arms—she carries a sword, a trident, a severed head, and a bowl or scull-cap that is catching the blood of that severed head. When referred to as *Maha Kali*, she is typified by her black colour, ten heads, ten arms, and ten legs. Each of her ten hands carries one identifying weapon or item of ritual that symbolizes the power of one of the Hindu gods. Maha Kali is considered to be the form of the goddess Durga beyond time, the “feminized variant” of the god Shiva, and is considered to be identical with Ultimate Reality, or *Brahman* (Wikipedia, 2001).

### 4.2. Mount Up

The object that gave rise to this project is an IKEA *KRAGSTA* table.<sup>14</sup> What do IKEA and Kali share? For me, it is their relationship to the ego. Kali, as a form of Durga, represents death of the ego as an illusory self-centered view of reality. In *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (1979), Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche explains that one of the first *skandhas* in the development of the ego is a sense of one's body that makes one feel awkward and separate. Trungpa goes on to describe the development of ego through a Buddhist metaphor of the monkey locked in an empty house:

[...] this inquisitive monkey has been walled in by a solid world, as if a flowing thing, a dramatic and flowing waterfall, had suddenly been frozen. This frozen house, made of frozen colours and energies, is completely still. This seems to be the point where time begins as past, future and present. The flux of things becomes solid tangible time, a solid idea of time. (129)

I should mention here that Trungpa is not “condemning or attempting to eliminate our ego-psychology “[*he is*] purely acknowledging it, seeing it as it is.” (122). The ego can then (in part) be described as: a sense of separation, a sense of the body, and a sense of time, which Tibetan Buddhism has embodied with a house. By virtue of being a household product, with its emphasis on surface-value, *KRAGSTA* becomes a vehicle for dialogue surrounding free-markets ideals, but I am most interested in *KRAGSTA* in reference to Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings on the ego; to sit in one's house, sipping one's tea or coffee, cut off from a vital, flowing life-force by solid walls. I wanted to create a tension within this work, not

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix, page 60 for image description of *KRAGSTA* product.

as a way to subvert or negate the existence of “furniture” products and the free-market baggage that seems to accompany these products, but as a way to reconnect that “baggage” with the “flowing waterfall” of existence—since all personal experiences stem from the fact of everything being part of that flowing waterfall of existence. This led me to thinking about the innocence and wonderment of childhood exploration, as a way in which reality becomes contextualized and streamlined, and the dependency of those formative experiences towards factory-manufactured objects, such as one’s childhood car, or the coffee table that supported our *Ouija* board during sleepovers.

Roy Rogers had Trigger; The Lone Ranger had Silver; Michael Knight had KITT; Durga and the Tiger; Vishnu and Garuda. These mounts, or *vahanas*, were all vehicles that carried the heroes to the ends of their journeys while representing some aspect of their persona or power: Trigger was a golden Palomino; KITT (in the original series)<sup>15</sup> was physically embodied as a modified 1982 Pontiac Trans-Am with such features as: “turbo boost”; the ability to drive ‘himself’; a front mounted scanner bar that allowed “him” to “see”; a “molecularly bonded shell” that was virtually impenetrable, and—last but not least—“stealth pursuit mode”. Durga’s Lion symbolizes the goddess’ ferocity and aggression in battle, while also indicating that Durga riding her tiger can employ a ferocity and destruction far greater than her demon-foes, without allowing the power of that aggression to consume her being (Bloomsbury Dictionary of Myth, 1996). IKEA’s Kragsta is typified by its

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<sup>15</sup> KITT’s “form” had variances from series to series.

circular top, black (or white) colour, low height, and round shape which gives one a generous table top for trays, coffee or tea services; its dimensions (diameter: 89.8cm, height: 47.9cm) make the table easy to place in the room; the legs are made of solid wood (a durable, natural material); and its plastic feet protect the floor from scratches. The tabletop is made of fiberboard and acrylic paint, and was designed by Carina Bengs.<sup>16</sup> Each of these vehicles and vahanas represent constructed ideas meant to reinforce a certain value-structure in the mind of the viewer. In approaching the third and final project in my thesis defense, *Teenage Séance*, I began by asking for whom would this (IKEA) “mount” be? For what purposes would it be used? To what end goal does this mount carry its heroes/heroines? Will a golden fleece be found? Perhaps fire from the gods? I chose KRAGSTA as the object to embody the sensibilities of *Kali Yuga* because this product, down to its “solid wood legs for durability”, are convenient supports for KRAGSTA’s surface concerns. It is for these reasons that I chose to build my project with this foundation: “value”, “ownership”, and “quality” are determined through monetary valuations; the reference to domesticated life, as existing inside four walls, further removing us from the flowing waterfall of existence; the stages of development in humans as it relates to the development of our egos; and the mass-produced object as a support for our experiences which in turn define who we are.

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<sup>16</sup> Description of KRAGSTA product comes directly from IKEA website:  
<http://www.ikea.com/ca/en/catalog/products/20286638/#/80262253>

### 4.3. Teenage Séance

*Teenage Séance* is a constructed scene using an IKEA table, multiples of the same cast crushed beer can, a perverted doodle that was originally intended to be a tattoo for a friend,<sup>17</sup> a concrete cast of a funnel cake pan I bought at the local Value Village, a stick I picked up near the mountain-source of the Old Man River which I used for hitting rocks, the ash of three packs of Pall Mall “Blue” cigarettes, a chunk of pyrite<sup>18</sup> I bought in Toronto, resin, black printer toner, and gold dust. All are arranged to reference an amateur showroom display.<sup>19</sup>

I did not start reading Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche’s teachings until I was already in my 30s. From his writings, and from my past experiences, I began to see that in order to fully invest myself in my life (and my wants and needs) for a healthier present, I needed to begin processing my thoughts and emotions beyond an ego-satisfying definition of what I thought a “successful” life was, namely: how much alcohol can you drink? How many girls have you slept with? How much drugs can you do? How fast can you run? (etc., etc.). Of course the ego is useful for our survival, but what once provided a useful outlook on the world can also lead to adults with “hindrances”. As I alluded to earlier from Trungpa’s writing, one of the first stages in the development of the ego is in having a sense of one’s body that

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix page 61 for original “doodle” tattoo.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix pages 62 to 63 for expanded definition of pyrite.

<sup>19</sup> See Figures pages 45 to 47 for visual documentation of the project *Teenage Séance*.

makes one feel awkward and separate. Everything that is either on or surrounding the IKEA table in *Teenage Séance* are methods for coping with that awkward sense of being too self-aware, whether it is the witchcraft of youth connecting us to intangible forces in our earning for more autonomy (which is what drove John, Josh, Tim and I to be in the boys washroom in the fourth grade, all of us intently focused on the candle we had lit, because John convinced us we could bend the flame with the power of our minds); the social crowd of acceptance of our late teens, plied with drinking and smoking, which would be carrying forward to help us in other stages of our lives; to the desire for “keep up with the Jones” which (in part) drives us to move through life-stages together including the purchasing of personal property such as a nice IKEA coffee table for your living room—instead of continuing to live off of another’s trash. For me it was significant that the last life-stage I discuss was embodied by a newly-purchased, pre-fabricated IKEA coffee table. Not only for being highly recognizable, but for being fully *of* our modern economic times, preoccupied with producing cheap wares quickly, with no need to regard any detriment to others or the environment, because (as mentioned earlier) in Kali Yuga value, ownership and quality are based on *monetary* valuations.

The overall aesthetics of *Teenage Séance* is that of “childishness” meet the “slickness” of showroom product design. The elements in this project have all been affected in some way to strike a balance between the impersonal quality of showroom product displays, and the investment of highly personal meaning into generic, mass-produced commodities. I believe this is achieved—at least in part—

through the presence of the personal “hand”, by being (obviously) hand-wrought. The finish and material transformations of these day-to-day objects are partially intended as a way to validate their place in the viewer’s mind, by giving a higher valuation to the objects by referencing a certain amount of personal investment. Throughout my thesis work, I attempt to tell the story of my own personal evolution as reflected through my studio work, which can be surmised by my choices in: subject matter, level of “finish”, material choice, and scale. My thesis work tells the story of my journey from an “unrefined” state (of amateur) to a “refined” one (of professional), yet not fully belong to one category, but existing in between—much like existing between two cultures (as discussed in *Erratic*). The other part in my choices for employing these techniques (of finish, scale, and material choice) are to “elevate” my ideas (as expressed through my objects) into proximity with the realm of “commodified objects”, otherwise why would I not just use actual cans of beer that I crushed? I am using the word “elevate” as a way to imply that commodified objects reflect their value through financial means—which can be surmised by their material choice and level of finish, rather than an investment of time or labour. In my thoughts while in studio, I find myself thinking about the difference between my objects and, say, a table lamp manufactured by a furniture design house, and how I could reference that relationship. For me, it seems to come down to decisions in “material choice” and “level of finish”, more so than form or subject matter.

With *Teenage Séance*, I wish to create a dialogue around the idea of commodified objects as being the platforms for many of our personal and

meaningful experiences. It is these experiences (centered around these objects) that form the basis to understand who we are as individuals, and as part of a community. I am not trying to condemn or eliminate this “basis” of our personal experiences, but am just trying to acknowledge it, and explore it as it is.

In an interview with Magor in the *National Gallery of Canada Magazine (NGC Magazine)* from 2014, the artist answers a question about how her work has evolved from past to present:

I hope that I have become stronger: more secure and able to let the art proceed, unimpeded by my needs – the need to say something, or influence people, or to be known or well regarded. Art is out there, already in the world. Artists work to clear spaces for it to emerge. It’s unfortunate when they do all that work, only to fill the space with their own obvious, strident selves. I hope I have grown out of that (Rynor, 2014).

This statement by Magor, to me, seems like a perspective gained from the lofty perch of success, which may not be a bad thing. As I proposed previously, it is with the experience of age that the sense emerges of how wrong, or false, or inexperienced, or strident one was as a “youth”. *Teenage Séance* is a representation of the ego as strident self (or selves), ultimately yearning for a meaningful connection, and something personal.

## 5. CONCLUSION

My two years of research during my MFA program in studio art can be said to have originated from my disorientation at no longer living in a major Canadian city, where everything was comparatively much easier to accomplish: access to suppliers, printers, manufacturers, and a creative community of peers—or so I thought. That is, until I stepped out of these cities, and out of their influence, finding myself with more open sky than I was accustomed to, with space to breath and stretch, to explore my new surroundings, both physically and perceptually. There is an interesting thing that happens when people change the context of something they thought they understood: it shifts. They begin to see the strengths and weaknesses for what they are: a personal voice that can be focused and developed. This played a large part in my decision to give voice to my personal stories in my work, such as: dealing with the cultural divisions of my youth, understanding the experiences from my past that defined masculinity for me, and exploring the extensions of my ego as it exerted itself throughout my life. I believe this had to do with finding myself within an institution again, especially after having been a vagrant for so long, and the rebellion and angst I felt (anew) towards the institution. This in turn led me to explore themes of youth versus adulthood in an attempt to begin healing that dichotomy within myself—to move beyond *reacting* and enter *understanding*. Despite my engagement with these themes of youth identity, I am not that youth

anymore, I am 33 at the time of writing this paper. The work is being made for that time in one's life that is between youth and old-age, neither here nor there, like being a teenager again, except now the end-goal is not about being able to legally drink.

I began this journey in my studio, focusing on my thoughts, trying to figure out what my “hang ups” with being in Lethbridge were. I tried to avoid previously-existing tropes in my practice by finding simple ways to begin working again, such as: drawing, fashioning an adjustable compass, exploring this new landscape, allowing my frustration with the institution to inform me, and experiencing solitude. Recurring themes began to emerge: tool construction and tool manipulation, the inclusion of my personal histories, natural cycles, commodity, and the youth/adult dichotomy. The unknown was how these narratives would resolve themselves within my research. I believe a turning point came for me when I decided that these structures were not rigid but flexible, that I could be creative with the way I navigated the channels of the institution and the instability (at that time) in my practice—to exercise myself within everything I do. Another influence on my research was the constant assault on the desires of my ego. It is not that anyone or anything was directly assaulting my ego, but that all the new challenges I faced when I first arrived in Lethbridge seemed to work against the egotistical goals I had before I left Vancouver, in my expectations with being a Master's candidate. These experiences are what reminded me of the story of the monkey in the house, as told by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. I felt like that monkey in the house, looking out his

window unto the flowing waterfall of existence, unable to see it for what it was, because it was framed with a false context. This too would lead to my “turning point”; it was very freeing to let go of the goals of my ego, even if temporarily, while still feeling like I was investing myself in my future, letting go of the predetermined ideas I had surrounding my relationships with others, the nature and appearance of my work, and what the goal of “success” looked like. I felt that once I accepted these changes a renewed flow of creativity, stemming from a sense of playfulness towards my surroundings and challenges, began to develop. It is from these experiences and confrontations that I found the inspiration to create the work in my thesis exhibition, as being formed by oppositions to my otherwise selfish goals.

## FIGURES



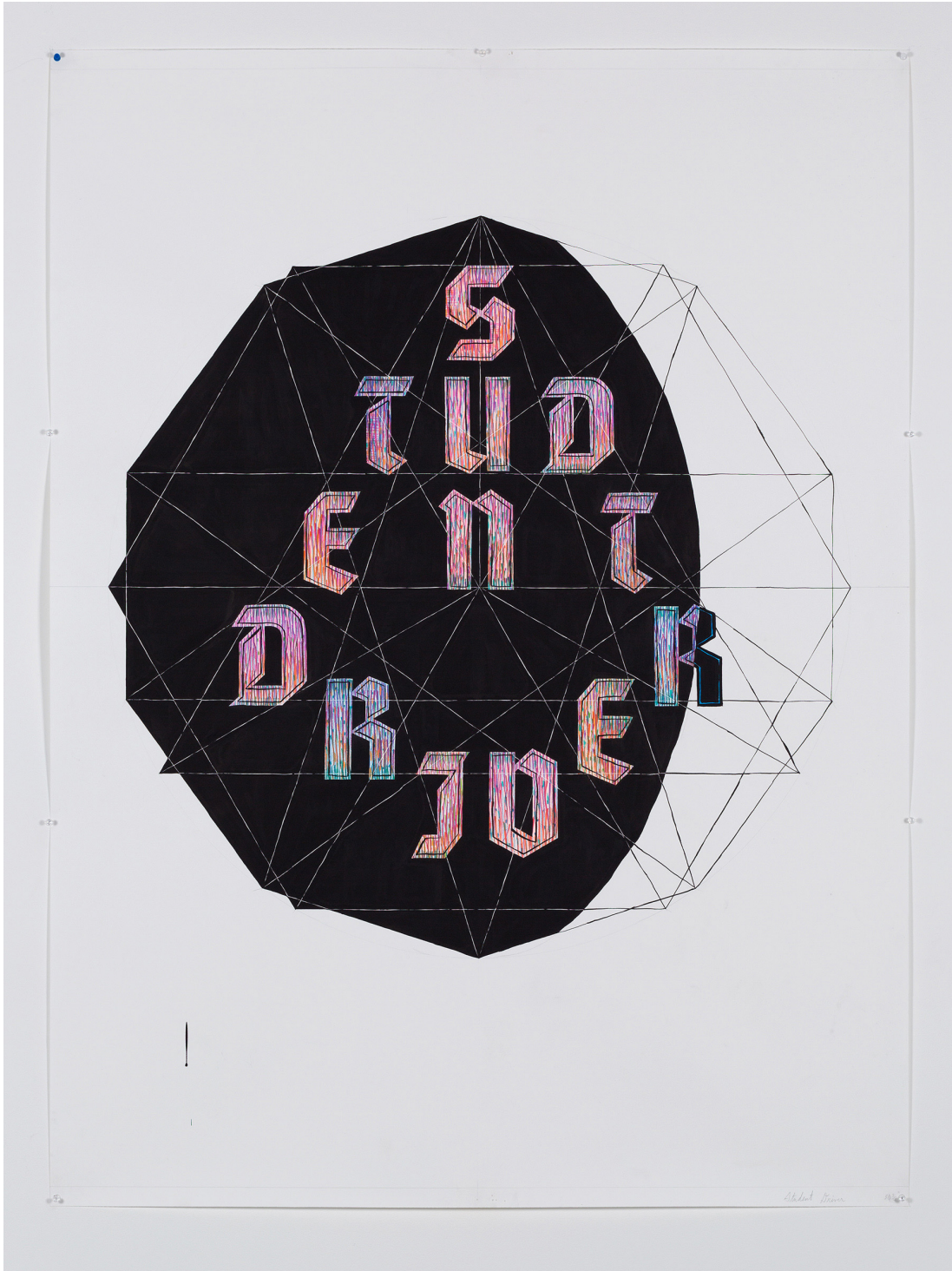
1.1. Visual documentation of the drawing *Boystuff*, as part of the drawing series *Becoming (I-VII)*, 2015. [photo credit: David Miller + Petra Mala Miller].

Materials: Pencil crayon, India ink, black gesso.

Dimensions: 111cm x 150cm.



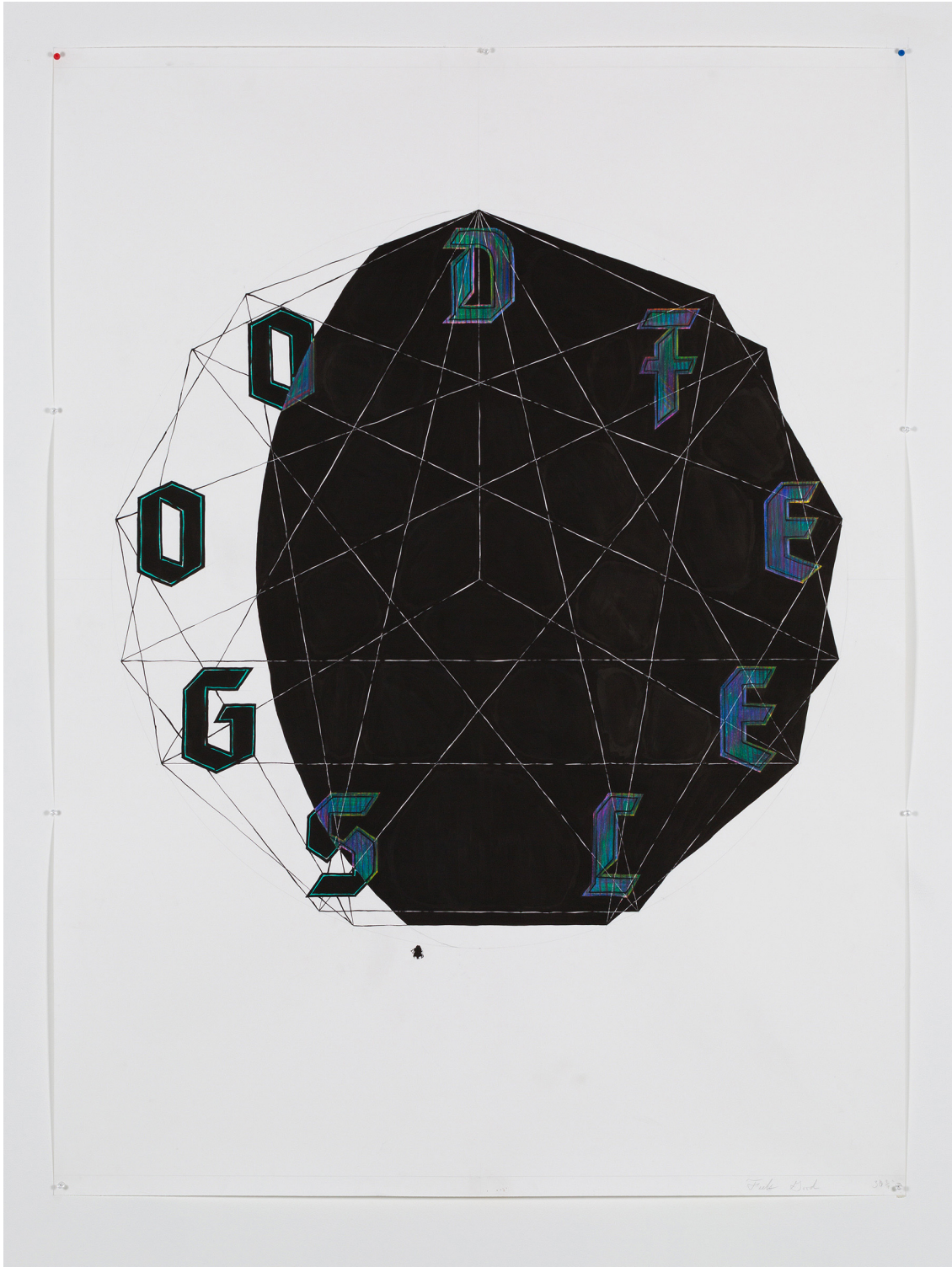
1.2. Visual documentation of the drawing *Psychedaelia*, as part of the drawing series *Becoming (I-VII)*, 2015. [photo credit: David Miller + Petra Mala Miller].  
Materials: Pencil crayon, India ink, black gesso.  
Dimensions: 111cm x 150cm.



1.3. Visual documentation of the drawing *Student Driver*, as part of the drawing series *Becoming (I-VII)*, 2015. [photo credit: David Miller + Petra Mala Miller].  
Materials: Pencil crayon, India ink, black gesso.  
Dimensions: 111cm x 150cm.



1.4. Visual documentation of the drawing *Becoming*, as part of the drawing series *Becoming (I-VII)*, 2015. [photo credit: David Miller + Petra Mala Miller].  
Materials: Pencil crayon, India ink, black gesso.  
Dimensions: 111cm x 150cm.



1.5. Visual documentation of the drawing *Feels Good*, as part of the drawing series *Becoming (I-VII)*, 2015. [photo credit: David Miller + Petra Mala Miller].

Materials: Pencil crayon, India ink, black gesso.

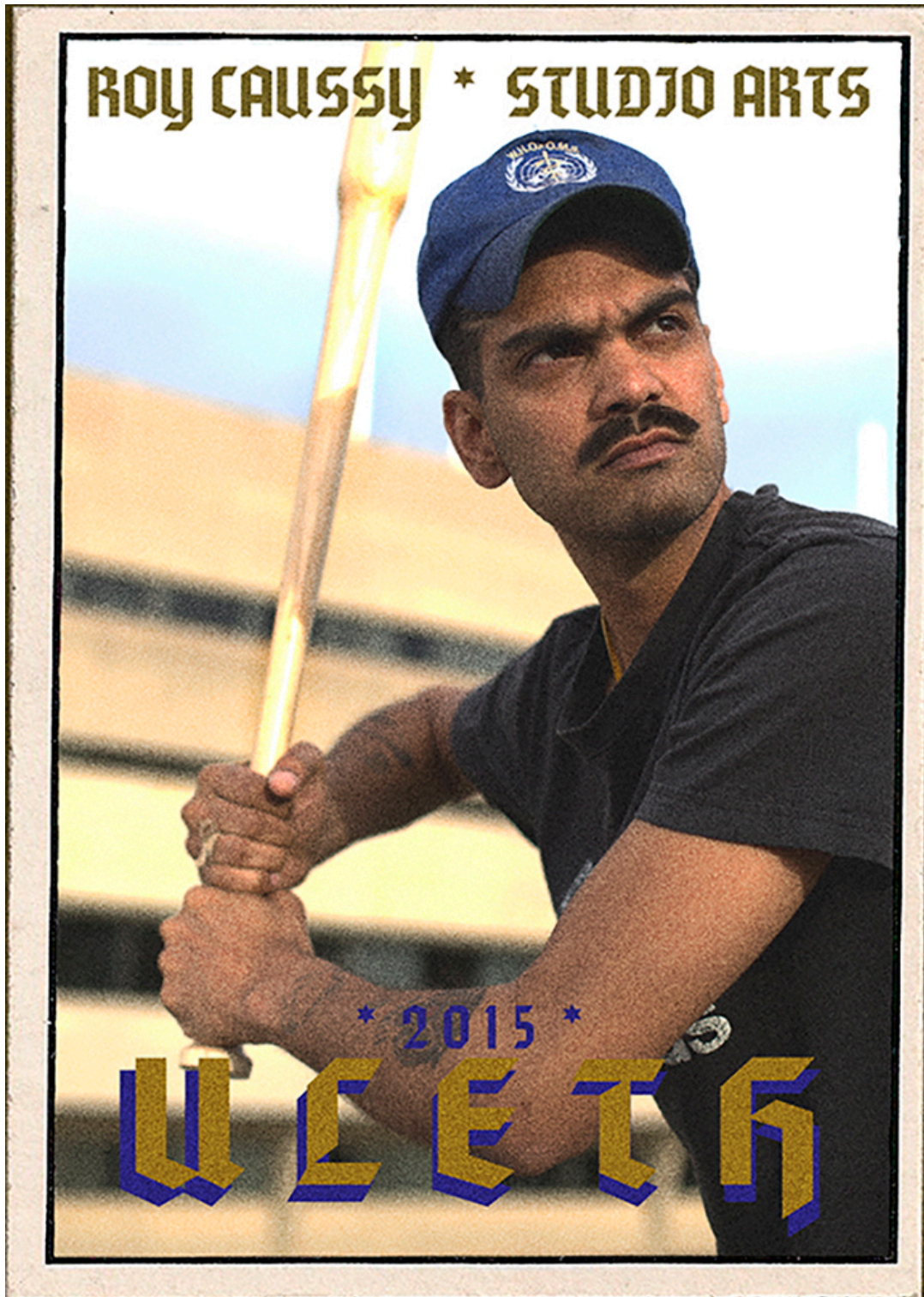
Dimensions: 111cm x 150cm.



1.6. Visual documentation of the drawing *Wild And Erratic*, as part of the drawing series *Becoming (I-VII)*, 2015. [photo credit: David Miller + Petra Mala Miller].  
Materials: Pencil crayon, India ink, black gesso.  
Dimensions: 111cm x 150cm.



1.7. Visual documentation of the drawing *Girlstuff*, as part of the drawing series *Becoming (I-VII)*, 2015. [photo credit: David Miller + Petra Mala Miller].  
Materials: Pencil crayon, India ink, black gesso.  
Dimensions: 111cm x 150cm.



2.1. Visual documentation of the project *Erratic*, 2015. [photo credit: Kjel Erickson and Roy Caussy].

Materials: photographic print.

Dimensions: 6.4cm x 8.9cm.



2.2. Visual documentation of the project *Erratic*, 2015. [photo credit: Roy Caussy].  
Materials: photographic print.  
Dimensions: 53.3cm x 35.5cm.



3.1. Visual documentation of the project *Teenage Séance*, 2015. [photo credit: David Miller + Petra Mala Miller].

Materials: IKEA coffee table, cigarette ash, resin, plaster, black toner ink, pyrite, concrete, cigarette butts, found stick.

Dimensions: 100cm x 100cm x 88cm.



3.2. Visual documentation of the project *Teenage Séance*, 2015. [photo credit: Roy Caussy].  
Materials: IKEA coffee table, cigarette ash, resin, plaster, black toner ink, pyrite,  
concrete, cigarette butts, found stick.  
Dimensions: 100cm x 100cm x 88cm.



3.3. Visual documentation of the project *Teenage Séance*, 2015. [photo credit: Roy Caussy].  
Materials: IKEA coffee table, cigarette ash, resin, plaster, black toner ink, pyrite,  
concrete, cigarette butts, found stick.  
Dimensions: 100cm x 100cm x 88cm.

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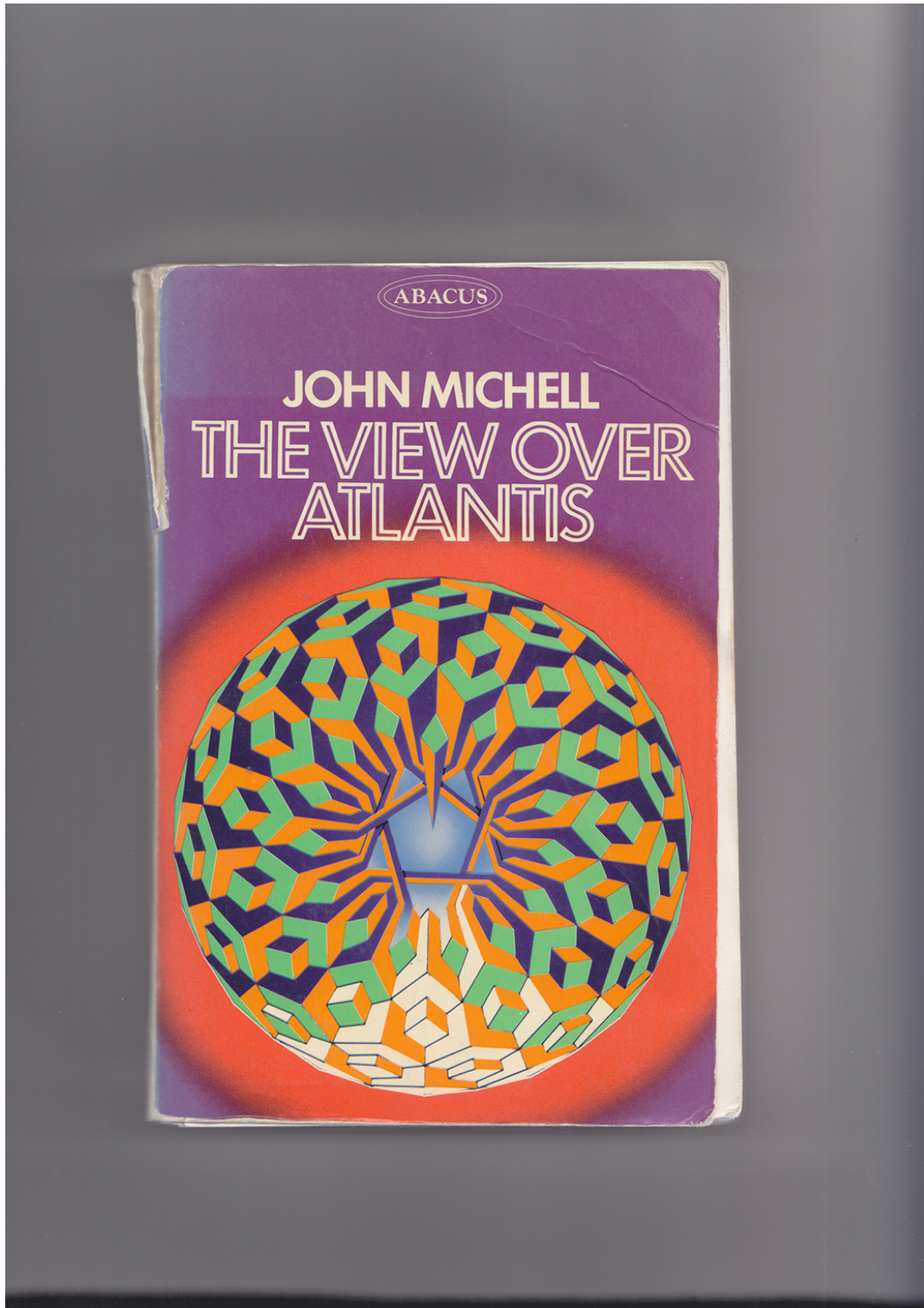
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APPENDIX



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Ed Ruscha  
REVIEW IT LOOK IT OVER AND WHATEVER  
2004.  
Acrylic, pencil and charcoal on canvas.  
151.76 x 151.76 cm.

[Image] Retrieved June 8, 2015 from:  
<http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/ed-ruscha-review-it-look-it-5335304-details.aspx>

### KR3 Bats Story.

“The town of St. Marys Ontario is located on the Thames River about 22 miles from London. It was first settled in 1839 when Thomas Ingersoll a brother of Laura Secord, built a mill at Little Falls for the Canada Company. In 1841-43 he erected a sawmill and grist mill in return for land in the vicinity. These mills formed a nucleus for a settlement called St. Marys and it was not long before other businesses including a flax mill, a blacksmith, a carriage maker, a butter and cheese maker and retail merchants became established in the area. A village was incorporated by 1854.

By the year 1868 the merchantile business was well established with Beattie’s General Store among the leading merchants. At this time one of the other large retailers decided to leave for Toronto where he could better pursue his dreams of creating a new system of retailing in Canada. His name was Timothy Eaton who eventually established Canada’s largest department store and catalogue business.

Solen Lewis Doolittle born near Aylmer Ontario in 1854 arrived in St. Marys in 1905 and by 1907 was planning to establish a handle and hockey stick factory with the Town Council considering a \$6000.00 loan bylaw. The company was incorporated on March 30, 1908 and Mr. Doolittle purchased a site from Weir and Wier on James Street just north of their flax mill. Construction on the building commenced at once and it was opened on June 25, 1908.

A disastrous fire leveled the factory on January 24, 1912 at the height of their business and production ceased over the winter into the spring and summer of 1912, when they took an option on the Weir flax mill which was located near the original plant. By August 29, 1912 they had completed their move and were planning on enlarging it to accommodate the handle, hockey stick and St. Marys baseball bat lines. By 1915 the all new St. Mary’s Wood Specialty Co. price list carried 16 models of hockey sticks and 27 models of baseball bats. The bats were made of genuine choicest selection of 1st quality, straight-grained, air-seasoned, second growth white ash filled with the best imported ball bat fillers and finished with attractive coloured transfers, sold through a network of agencies set up in Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal and St Johns New Brunswick.

Like all industries, the business felt the bite of the depression with sales tailing off into the early 1930’s. At this time, Seagrams, through their Canada Barrels and Kegs Company purchased the St. Mary’s Wood Specialty Co on July 12, 1933 and the employees and machinery were transferred to their Hespeler Wood Products plant. Some of the key employees were Russell Seaton, Tom Marquis, Bob Noble and Miss Grace Crozier who had joined St. Marys as a young girl. She spent her entire working career at these two plants and retired in 1972 as head of the baseball bat line a significant accomplishment before woman’s equality in the workplace. She was the only woman who worked in the plant for 25 years and added a significant dimension to the Hespeler operation.

Special thanks to Brian R. Logie for allowing us to quote from his book “They Shoot, They Score – The Story of a Hockey Stick Manufacturer”

The company survived the depression and the outbreak of the war did not slow down business which thrived throughout this period. Some of its principle products are hickory striking tool handles such as axe, pick, sledge and hammer, the world famous lines of Hespeler hockey sticks and St. Marys baseball and softball bats. These products are shipped all over the world.”

By 1972 the next chapter in the story was about to unfold. Jack Cooper worked in the personal

and travel leather goods department at Eatons in 1928. He bought leather goods from a “transplanted Scot” R.H. Cameron who had founded General Leather Goods in 1905. Jack Cooper had long admired the quality of General’s leather products and expressed a desire to join the company which employed 15 people. He met Mr. Cameron in June 1932 and a week later was hired for \$20/week, a dollar more than his previous salary. The company made some ski and snow shoe harness sets but were being affected by the depression. They began to make low priced hockey shin pads from \$0.39 to \$1.00 per pair, then all leather hockey gloves from \$2.00/Pr to \$4.00 for the pro models.

In 1939 Jack Cooper and Cecil Weeks (a cousin of Mr. Cameron) were running most of the business which they purchased in 1946 when Mr. Cameron was 78 years old. The company became Cooper Weeks and was later famous as Canada’s leading manufacturer of leather protective hockey equipment and baseball gloves. It became Cooper of Canada on June 15, 1971.

On July 5, 1972 Cooper purchased Hespeler-St. Mary’s Wood Specialties Ltd from the Seagram family, who still controlled the business through their Waterloo Woods Products Company. The name remained the same as Cooper operated the plant as the Hespeler -St. Mary’s Wood Specialties Division until 1979 when it became a part of Cooper Canada Ltd. Ball bat sales more than tripled over the next 10 years and a small moment in baseball history occurred in September 1985 when Tony Fernandez was the 1st Pro Player to use a Cooper Bat. Unfortunately for Cooper, the league hadn’t approved its use, so Fernandez went back to the dugout for a new bat. On March 27th, 1986 the Cooper bat was accepted by the Major League Playing Rules Committee for use in Major League baseball games. On April 11th, 1986 in a game against world-series champions, Kansas City Royals, Buck Martinez of the Toronto Blue Jays had his first hit of the season off a Cooper bat and this was the 1st Major League hit ever off a Canadian made bat. Tim Raines of the Montreal Expos won the 1986 NL Batting Championship using the newly introduced “Cooper” bat.

Paul Molitor was also slamming a Cooper bat during his 39 game hitting streak in 1987. By 1988, after 3 short years, the company had grabbed 30% of the professional bat market. Cooper limited their sales to 130 players and 8500 bats/season, which was their maximum capacity at their Cambridge (Hespeler) plant. They remained #2 behind Louisville. Year after year, more and more major league stars like Kelly Gruber, Jesse Barfield, Cecil Fielder, Joe Carter and others put their faith in Cooper to deliver. By 1995 over 70,000 major league bats had been made for over 850 major league players in the last 10 years.

According to Montreal Expos outfielder Hubie Brooks, in an article dated March 1989, “These bats (Cooper) are the best bats in the business. You know why they are so good...it’s the grain. The bats don’t break as often. People are going to be begging you for these bats soon.”

In 1996 the Cooper line was discontinued at this plant. The corporate decision to transfer production to another location led to a decline from 130 to less than 5 Pro players in just one year. The Pro ball bat machinery in Cambridge started to gather sawdust drifting gently in from the Pro stick machines still running and gone were the days of watching 12 of 18 starters in a game using Cooper bats. This created the beginning of a vacuum of silence waiting for something to happen.....

In the spring of 1999 the silence was broken when long time Cooper Plant Manager Ross Huehn decided it was time to dust off the machinery and restart the tradition. Mr. Huehn began working at Cooper on July 19th, 1973 as Shipping & Receiving Supervisor, was promoted to Production Manager in 1974 in charge of inventory control of hockey stocks and baseball bats in 2 Canadian

and 1 US warehouse along with production scheduling. He was promoted to Plant Manager in Jan of 1976.

The entire Cooper Pro Shop was purchased, lead staff such as Frank Cavanaugh - Ball Bat Lead Hand, (Cooper 1976) and Dave Mather - Maintenance & Pro Bat Smith, (Cooper 1976) and new equipment brought in to a new location in Kitchener, Ontario to begin the process of establishing the 3rd generation in Canadian bat manufacturing from St. Marys to Cooper to KR3. The new KR3 is a company that has vast experience in grading and purchasing high quality wood, turning and finishing bats using ancient hardening processes, and in ultimately making products that out-perform at the highest professional level.

As KR3 began setting up for production Mr. Huehn continued to work full time as Plant Manager at the Hespeler plant for the current owners Bauer Nike Hockey where hockey sticks have always continued to be manufactured. A special thank you will always exist to Bauer Nike for agreeing to sell the bat portion of the company to Mr. Huehn at fair market value so as to pass on the traditions to the next generation.

KR3 was approved and received their major league license on Feb 2, 2001 and spent time in 2001 and 2002 sampling and working with major league players. In 2003 we signed a deal to become the Official Bat Supplier for the Canadian Baseball League.

KR3 continued growing as more and more teams heard about the quality of bats being manufactured by KR3, until 2004 when, Bauer Nike Hockey Inc closed the hockey stick factory in Hespeler. Mr. Huehn decided to move his operation back to the Hespeler plant where another company called Heritage Wood Specialties Inc he was partnered in, was in the process of buying the hockey stick equipment that Bauer was selling. "This is an old building with a history everyone who works here is proud to be a part of" says Mr. Huehn.

Being back in the factory where it all started and having Mr. Huehn now working at KR3 full time, business tripled in 2005, its first year back in Hespeler. The silence that once was, is now filled by the roar of the machines as they are back turning 27 000 bats per year.

What hasn't changed since we opened is our business perspective. We will always offer the highest quality baseball bats at good prices and excellent service to every baseball player. A true Pro Shop for all ball players. Many nights and weekends have been consumed by our family finishing bats sometimes around the clock. "No matter how time goes by, I will always remember the many weekends when we first began, that I spent dipping bats well into the night alongside my father. He is a dedicated honest hardworking businessman and I have learned a lot about the old fashioned business values that are diminishing in today's marketplace. KR3 will always be managed by these values." says Rachel Hamel. "Our customers return every season knowing that we will always do whatever we can for them." "

[Text] Retrieved June 8, 2015 from:  
<http://www.kr3bats.com/story>

# OBSIDIAN

**O**bsidian is a glassy, silica-rich volcanic rock with a hardness of 5 to 5.5. It is an amorphous stone, meaning that its structure contains no regular geometric pattern. Because it breaks with a very sharp conchoidal fracture, it has been used for making arrowheads and other tools since Paleolithic times. The name Obsidian is derived from the name of the prominent ancient Roman, Obsius. Obsidian is most frequently black or very dark brown, but it can also be gray or green. In addition, various sheens, color variations, markings and undertones of color make for an array of different types of Obsidian used for jewelry stones, ornaments and metaphysical items. The most prominent of these are described below.

## BLACK OBSIDIAN

**KEY WORDS** Psychic protection, grounding,  
cleansing of negativity, spirit communication

**ELEMENT** Earth

**CHAKRAS** Root (1st)

Black Obsidian is a pure, glossy black color, which can appear as very dark brown when strong light is shined on thin edges.

**ROBERT SIMMONS** Black Obsidian powerfully eliminates negative energies in oneself and one's environment. It is like a 'psychic vacuum cleaner,' cleansing the auric field of disharmony, negative attachments, astral plane 'junk,' and one's own emanations of anger.

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Simmons, Robert, & Ahsian, Naisha. (2007). *The Book of Stones: Who They Are and What They Teach*. (Rev. ed.). Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books., pg. 280-281.

[Documentation] Retrieved June 8, 2015 from personal library.

greed, fear, resentment, etc. It is a strong grounding stone, stimulating the root chakra to make its connection with the Earthstar chakra below the feet, and deep into the core of the Earth.

Black Obsidian is useful for all types of scrying, including spirit communication. If one sets up a low-light environment and sits gazing into a polished Black Obsidian slab or sphere, it is quite possible that the images of loved ones who have passed over will appear in the reflected surface. At the same time, one may feel their messages as thoughts appearing in one's own mind. Black Obsidian's affinity for the world of the souls, plus its protective qualities, make it ideal for such activities.

Black Obsidian harmonizes with Jet, Black Tourmaline and Smoky Quartz for grounding. Moldavite can raise Black Obsidian's vibration and build a more active energy for self-transformation. Amber brings a healing influence. Alexandrite and Oregon Opal assist in using Black Obsidian to view past lives. High-vibration stones such as Phenacite, Solecite, Natrolite and Azeztulite activate the third-eye and crown chakras, providing enhanced psychic abilities and bringing a high spiritual focus to one's work with Black Obsidian.



**NAISHA AHSIAN** Black Obsidian's energy is that of protection. Its frequency seals the aura and removes energetic attachments, hooks and cords. Black Obsidian's energy creates a protective shield that helps one remain centered when faced with negativity.

Black Obsidian's protective energy also extends to the level of the mind, illuminating negative thoughts and mental habits so action can be taken to clear their root causes. It allows one to perceive where one is creating negativity in one's own life and guides one to change the underlying patterns that create a negative reality.

Black Obsidian helps uncover unconscious thoughts and patterns that inhibit one's spiritual and personal growth. These patterns can contribute to addiction, abusive behavior (toward oneself or others), negativity, scarcity and other undesirable traits. Black Obsidian gently yet firmly points out where one holds these patterns and assists in clearing them from the auric field and cellular memory.

**SPIRITUAL** Black Obsidian assists in recognizing where one is holding negativity and helps to illuminate and cleanse negative emotional patterns from the aura. It can assist those who are very psychically or emotionally sensitive to maintain the integrity of their energy fields.

**EMOTIONAL** Black Obsidian is a powerful emotional teacher. It leads one to an understanding and acceptance of the darker side of one's nature, so that aspect can be evolved and illuminated. It assists in breaking negative emotionally based patterns such as self-abuse, eating disorders, and addictions, when one is willing to take responsibility for one's own healing.

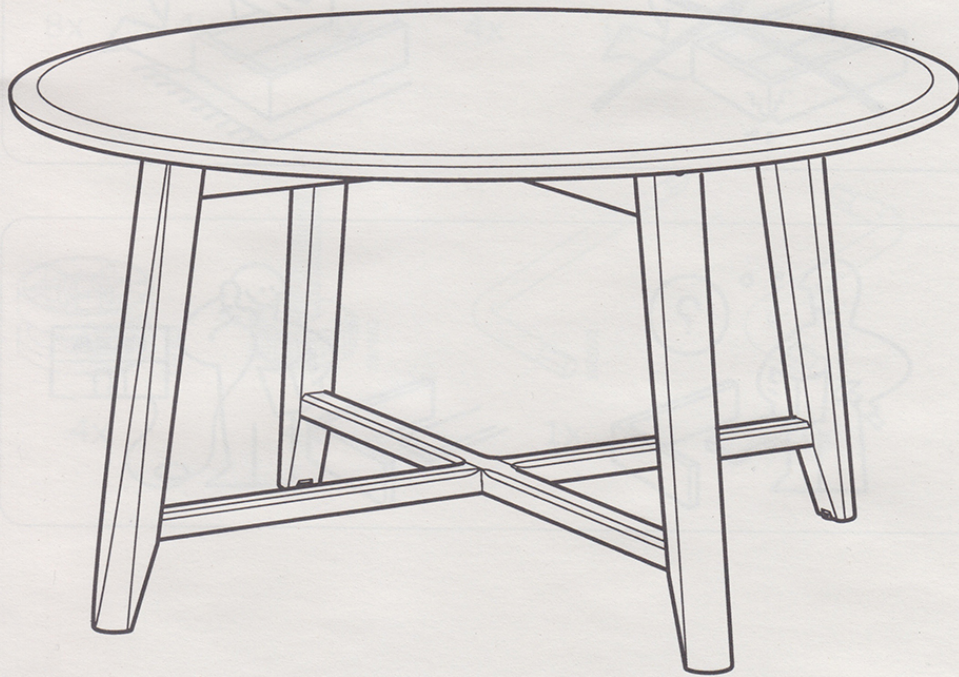
**PHYSICAL** Black Obsidian assists with removing blockages in the meridian system. Its energy is useful in clearing reproductive problems based in past abuse or current self-abuse issues. Black Obsidian opens and clears the base and second chakras.

**AFFIRMATION** I cleanse my energy field of negativity and ground myself to the Earth's heart.

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[Documentation] Retrieved June 8, 2015 from personal library.

# KRAGSTA



Design and Quality  
IKEA of Sweden

*KRAGSTA Assembly brochure.*

[Documentation] Retrieved June 8, 2015 from personal library.



*Stick 'n Poke Tattoo Doodle.*

[Documentation] Retrieved June 8, 2015 from personal library.

# PYRITE

**KEY WORDS** Masculine energy, manifestation, action, vitality, willpower, creativity, confidence

**ELEMENT** Earth

**CHAKRAS** Solar Plexus (3rd)

**P**yrite is an iron sulfide mineral with a hardness of 6 to 6.5. Its crystal patterns are cubic, pyritohedral or octahedral. Pyrite can also be massive, granular, botryoidal, stalactitic or nodular. The name Pyrite is derived from the Greek word for fire, because striking two pieces against one another can produce sparks. Pyrite's shiny yellow metallic appearance has earned it the nickname 'fool's gold.' The ancient Incas used Pyrite as mirrors. It is found all over the world, but important deposits are in Italy, Spain and Peru.

**ROBERT SIMMONS** Pyrite is excellent for increasing the power of the third chakra in both men and women. It imparts an immediate increase in vitality and gives one a boost for accomplishing challenging tasks in the physical world. It enhances will power, assisting one in

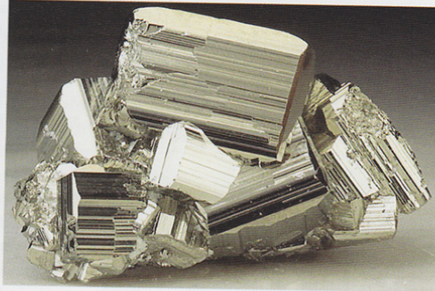
314

Simmons, Robert, & Ahsian, Naisha. (2007). *The Book of Stones: Who They Are and What They Teach*. (Rev. ed.). Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books., pg. 314-315.

[Documentation] Retrieved June 8, 2015 from personal library.

overcoming bad habits and establishing new patterns of health and positive energy. It aids one in overcoming fear and anxiety and helps one establish a 'can-do' attitude about whatever one has decided to attempt. It can screen out negative influences in one's environment and give one the courage to banish such influences from one's life.

Pyrite can be a helpful tool for balancing polarities and creating harmony within the auric field. In body layouts, it should be used on the third chakra, in the hands and at the base chakra. This will anchor one's auric field firmly in the body, in proper alignment for optimal functioning of the spiritual self in the physical world. In meditation, holding a Pyrite in each hand can bring an instant rebalancing and a refreshing burst of energy. When you can't take a nap, hold a Pyrite!



Pyrite stimulates creativity in art, mathematics, sculpture, architecture, science and many other disciplines. It feeds the qualities of ambition, commitment and persistence. It helps one to 'hang tough' and carry things through to completion. It increases mental clarity and focus, making it an ideal stone for students.

Pyrite's enhancement of male energies can benefit both men and women. It supports one in taking assertive action, protecting other humans and the Earth, and developing the inner warrior for the benefit of the community. For men, it enhances the feeling of confidence in one's masculinity and supports the sublime and enthusiastic expression of male eroticism.

Pyrite harmonizes with Zincite and Carnelian for stimulation of male sexual energies. Prehnite engages Pyrite's energies more fully with the heart chakra, making love an even greater component of sexuality. Pyrite also works synergistically with Heliodor, Libyan Gold, Tektite, Golden Labradorite and Citrine for strengthening the third-chakra energies of will and mental clarity. For grounding purposes, Pyrite's ideal companion is Hematite.

**NAISHA AHSIAN** Pyrite is one of the three stones of the Earth element triad, representing the directive, or 'male,' aspect of the Great Earth Mother (the other two are Hematite and Cuprite). It resonates with both Earth and Fire. Pyrite allows one to connect with the energy of the Earth and channel that energy through the body. It can increase stamina and enhance physical performance. It energetically supports the blood and its capacity to carry oxygen. Pyrite is excellent for use in manifestation, as it helps one take action on one's ideas or concepts. It also aids in grounding higher knowledge into action and is ideal to use at the end of a meditation to bring the energy fully into the physical realm. Though it is an Earth element stone, Pyrite carries aspects of Fire energy as well. It is warming and stimulating to the energy systems and is particularly good in treating the subtle-energy aspects of male sexual dysfunction.

**SPIRITUAL** Pyrite helps one integrate high-frequency energy into the physical body. It is an ally in assisting one in taking action to create abundance in one's life. Its frequency is useful in stimulating creative energy and promoting healthy sexual expression.

**EMOTIONAL** Pyrite encourages one to overcome fears and take action. It can be used to help bring one out of one's shell and to encourage one to be more dynamic and confident.

**PHYSICAL** The Sulfur component of Pyrite aids in purifying the body of infection and stimulating proper endocrine function. It is excellent for combatting male impotence and infertility. Its Iron component focuses the power of Pyrite into the blood and tissues, allowing it to be used to combat skin disease, fungal infection and cellular invasion by viruses.

**AFFIRMATION** My will is strong, and I use it to accomplish the manifestation of my most benevolent hopes and desires.

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