What is now is no longer | Everything has been preserved | A conversation at the Bronx Lounge

Marcy L. James

The University of Montana

2005

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What is Now is No Longer
Everything has been preserved

a conversation at the Bronx Lounge

by

Marcy James

B.A. in French, Ohio University, 1992

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Montana

May 2005

Approved by:

Chairperson

Dean, Graduate School:

5-31-05

Date
WHAT IS NOW IS NO LONGER...everything has been preserved.

c a conversation at the Brone Lounge

Chair: Elizabeth Dove 😘.

TREATMENT

This is a story about an artist’s immersion into a place via a photographic study of its land, urban infrastructure, and its inhabitants’ thoughts.

You are entering Resource...a place that exists somewhere even if only in your mind. I invite you to follow a conversation that takes place in a bar that no longer exists in Butte, Montana. The characters in the story are either real or fictional.
Contents

Title Page i
Abstract ii
Table of Contents iii
Preface iv
Screenplay 1-59
Bibliography 60-61
WHAT IS NOW IS NO LONGER...
everything has been preserved.

*a conversation at the Bronx Lounge*

by

Marcy James
INT. "BRONX LOUNGE" BAR-located on Broadway street just a few doors away from house for the Montana State Corrections pre-release center. The Italian bar and restaurant does not have any windows. There is a set of two doors at the entrance. The interior is red and black, circa mafia 1950. Faux velvet red and black wallpaper. Red/black carpeting. Red vinyl bar stools with black trim and brass. Red velvet semi circular booths in the restaurant with red vinyl table cloths. Red glass globe chandeliers. Upon entering, to the right in front of a thin window is a small dance floor 8’x7’ with a step up. Beside that is an electric piano that on Saturday nights is played by an old woman named Esther. 6 black cocktail tables.
INT: BRONX LOUNGE

Bartender is in his 40’s tall, thin, hollow cheeks from excessive drinking and smoking. dark brown hair, growing out a little, but obviously given some attention. mustache. dressed in a white dress shirt and faded black pants. A set of his keys are attached to his belt loop. his station equipped with cigarettes, a tumbler with scotch on ice, a bible, dictionary, atlas, and a sci-fi novel. He has a smooth and calm demeanor. Sam has obviously been working here for awhile.

Raymond is in his 50’s dressed in a red shirt with a tan trench coat. He wears coke bottle glasses and has thin but strong hands as well as beautiful teeth that are rather unkempt. Ray is handsome for his age but he looks tired. There is a whisky ditch in front of him and a briefcase at his feet. Raymond is sitting in 5th bar stool.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BRONX LOUNGE. DUSK

You pull up in a tan jeep cherokee from the 80’s. the jeep is covered with dust. you are wearing tan carhart jacket and brown carhart jeans with layers of shirts that are multi-colored and random. you are of a slight build with mid-length brown hair and a kind face. You have pockets full of shards of glass and other random collections. you get out of the car, looking tired but curious, pull your camera bag from the back seat, check to see how much money you have and cross the street..You enter the bar, put coat on hanger at entrance and take up second bar stool. You put your camera bag on the floor and take off your sweater.

MATCH CUT TO:

BARTENDER WALKS OVER TO YOU

BARTENDER
The usual?

YOU
Yah. Thanks. How’s it goin’?
BARTENDER
Slow but steady. Stevie’s already been here so I got my shoes shined. I’m surprised you made it back so soon. Seems like it’d be hard to get back to town without a map.

YOU
Yah, it sortof was. It was a strange place. Actually kindof scary but peaceful too. And it seemed familiar but then also completely foreign. Do you know what i mean?

BARTENDER
(laughs)
All i know is that you’re goofy.

CUT TO:
MAN AT OTHER END OF BAR LAUGHS AND LOOKS BACK INTO HIS DRINK

MATCH CUT TO:
BARTENDER REACHES FOR RAG AND BEGINS TO DRY HIS GLASSWARE

BARTENDER
You lost me...

CUT TO:
REFLECTION OF YOU IN MIRROR

YOU
I know, I know .what a beautifully (words fade as you take a sip of your drink) strange place.
LONG SILENCE. APPROXIMATELY 2 MINUTES. MAN AT THE END OF BAR PICKS UP HIS DRINK AND SITS NEXT TO YOU. LOOKS IN MIRROR AND CATCHES YOUR GLANCE.

RAYMOND
Strange place, huh?. I know of a strange place.

YOU
Oh really? strange. Well i know you.

RAYMOND
Oh you do? And how’s that?

YOU
I read your journal.

CUT TO:

CAMERA FOLLOWS YOUR EYES LOOKING AT DANCE FLOOR IN THE MIRROR, YOU TAKE A DRINK

CUT TO:

IMAGE OF RAYMOND LEANING TOWARDS BARTENDER

RAYMOND
(looking at bartender)
You’re right, she is goofy. O.K. “you” how do you know that I even keep a journal?

YOU
I found it in your office. You left alot of stuff behind. You know it was like stepping into a time warp. You left nearly two decades of journals behind. But i only have two...1950 and 1970. Alot changed between those two decades.

RAYMOND
(slightly agitated, slightly curious)
O.K. Tell me, where’s my office? What do i do?

YOU
Miners bank building. Oh god. This is ridiculous.
YOU
You know that I know you. O.K. 4th floor. Turn left when you get off the elevator. 1st, 2nd and 3rd doors on your left. Actually, the first door is the manager’s office, and the contents of your office are spilling into his. What I don’t know is did you double up as office manager and advertising executive?

CUT TO:

BARTENDER’S STATION. BARTENDERLEANING LOW ON BAR

BARTENDER
(had been half listening, lights a cigarette)
Shit, Ray. She’s got you pegged.

CUT TO:

VIEW OF RAYMOND AND YOU THROUGH BARTENDER’S EYES. BARTENDER’S EYE LEVEL.

RAYMOND
(DOWNS HIS WHISKY DITCH)
Sam, I’ll have another. And get her whatever...what are you drinking?

YOU
A scarlet o’hara. Thanks. Now do you believe me?

RAYMOND
Yah, well, you’re making me rather uneasy. How do you know these things? How do you know who I am?

YOU
Hmmm. You know what, Raymond. There’s this photographer named Minor White who wrote about confusion and allowing yourself to be immersed in it. Or I think he used the word lost or something. You should try it...

CUT TO:

VIEW OF ALL THREE CHARACTERS FROM THE CEILING THROUGH REFLECTION OF MIRROR
BARTENDER
(laughs)
Yah, Ray, Just get lost in the confusion.

RAYMOND
(pissed)
Mind yourself, Sam. You’re dead to me.

MATCH CUT TO:
CLOSE UP OF YOU
YOU

BARTENDER
(laughs)
Yah, Ray, Just get lost in the confusion.

RAYMOND
(pissed)
Mind yourself, Sam. You’re dead to me.

MATCH CUT TO:
CLOSE UP OF YOU
YOU

BARTENDER
(laughs)
Yah, Ray, Just get lost in the confusion.

RAYMOND
(pissed)
Mind yourself, Sam. You’re dead to me.

MATCH CUT TO:
CLOSE UP OF YOU
YOU

BARTENDER
(laughs)
Yah, Ray, Just get lost in the confusion.
YOU
By photographing your office, your house and by reading and restructuring your journal, you have allowed me to immerse myself into a year of someone’s life who has lived and worked here. I know that I may sound a little bit like a stalker, but first of all, you aren’t even around this place anymore and second, I am setting out to preserve history...honest history...raw history...the human element...not a chair, or sink or architectural detail, all of which I have preserved as well, but the human thought process. I even preserved your thoughts in wax and matte medium so that others can touch your process of reflection. And in the reconstruction, I was able to emphasize the time involved in that year, by adding my time. We are now connected. And you fascinate me.

CUT TO:

MIDSHOT OF RAYMOND RUBBING HIS HEAD WITH HIS HAND

RAYMOND
So what’s the story with all of the wax?

YOU
Well, I’m preserving everything.

RAYMOND
Everything?

YOU
Yah. I’m preserving artifacts. I’m preserving art. I’m preserving memories. I’m mocking the notion that anything can be preserved. Maybe instead of wax, I should have saved myself the trouble and just put everything in ziploc baggies.

RAYMOND
You remind me of my mother during the Depression. So, you have a fascination with sandwich bags, eh?

YOU
Well I did for while I was out ‘site collecting.’ For awhile i was into collecting all kinds of garbage that I referred to as societal markers from the sites that i photographed. I did one project where i photographed every house on a block...not just any block...
YOU
It’s the most exciting and precarious block in butte...a multitude of accidents waiting to happen. Those houses could host a car gone awry any day now. I guess one of the houses has been hit by cars a few times. I found myself thinking about the idea of butte representing the backyard of society. In fact, this art critic and historian, Lucy Lippard, put words to my ideas by saying that “in fact the front yards of poor neighborhoods are the back yards of society.” She was referring to pollution. I noticed in observing these people’s yards, that everyone in Butte had some kind of garbage in their yard. So, I used the ziploc bags to collect detritus from each site...mittens. cans, cigarette wrappers, toys. I even found a syringe which made my whole study feel complete.

BARTENDER
That sounds rather biased

YOU
Oh yes, I know. My work is definitely subjective. So is yours. In fact... name one historian whose work isn’t subjective.

BARTENDER
You’ve got a point.

RAYMOND
(INTERRUPTS)
So back to this everything’s been preserved..You took my journal (which I hope you don’t think is garbage..laughs..) and tore it into strips and put it back together and then adhered it onto wax paper. First of all, why do you have any interest in reading my journal and how is it art? Why are you hanging my life, my 365 days in your show?

YOU
I have preserved your thoughts. But what I have really done is preserved my experience of reading your thoughts.

CUT TO:

RAYMOND LOOKS TO BARTENDER, LOOKS AT HIS DRINK, LOOKS AT YOUR DRINK  AND HIS EYES FALL BACK ON YOU.
MATCH CUT TO:

CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON YOU AND RAYMOND. YOU ARE BOTHLEANING TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER. THE CAMERA SHOOTS FROM BEHIND YOU REVEALING YOUR PROFILES.

YOU

Hmmm. Let me try to explain. You see I came across a decade of your journals. I brought the one journal home and at the time read a few pages...I summed you up in those few pages. I even have a journal entry in my journal about your journal. I summed up that you did the same damn thing every day. You talked about how you slept and played canasta and went to the hospital. I saw the repetition and thought it was kind of ridiculous.

CUT TO:

RAYMOND READJUSTS HIMSELF IN HIS SEAT; UNEASY BUT CURIOUS

YOU

And so I kept the journal...took it with me wherever I moved, but I couldn’t sit long enough to read your repetition...wasn’t interested in the investment. I thought I had it figured out by reading a few pages...

RAYMOND

(INTERRUPTS)

Oh really?

you

Yes, but don’t be insulted. I was wrong.

RAYMOND

(ANNOYED)

You bet you were wrong...

YOU

(INTERRUPTS)

Just give me a moment to explain, Raymond. Our society is so impatient. I was impatient when I first addressed your journals and now that I have read them, I have realized that my demand for an immediate experience mirrors the ways in which many people experience towns like Butte.
YOU
They sum it up as they drive by on the freeway or take a quick tour through town. They can’t see beyond or inside the postindustrial wasteland. They whisk through town with four observations; beautiful but shamefully dilapidated buildings, strange people, mining and toxic waste and a colorful history. Then they may reflect upon their observations for a moment and..

BARTENDER
They’re back on the freeway..

RAYMOND
YOU
And you know, Raymond, that your office is now like a tomb. I knew that others would not have the same level of commitment to reading your thoughts and so I considered hanging them in a long space so that at least they would visually get the breadth of your undertaking...of your commitment...of mine.
YOU

Anyways. My writing in cursive also shows you my method to approaching a project. In butte, I focused on learning the language of the people in this town...finding their rhythm and learning the language of buildings and the landscape. Oh god, I heard an interesting thing from a psychic last week.

RAYMOND

Are we getting off subject?

YOU

Well, yes, but that's what I do. So this psychic was talking to me about psychic stuff and I told her that what I really
RAYMOND
You know my drink?

YOU
I read your journal, didn’t I?

BARTENDER
ray’s easy to read. whisky ditch, though sometimes after dinner in the restaurant, he might behave flamboyant and order a white russian. right, ray?

RAYMOND
Yes. But I get that from Helen. She doesn’t drink much. Well, you know, Sam, it’s the men that keep the bars open. Women have too much to do at home. But, Helen does like to indulge in after dinner drinks. (FOCUSES BACK ON YOU) So anyways, where do you come from? What is it that you do?

YOU
I’m an historian

RAYMOND
Did you hear that Sam? She’s an historian. Sweetheart, we’re all historians. Just living our lives and leaving our journals or ‘time capsules’ behind creates history...She’s right Sam, can we get another round? And get yourself one...So again, I will ask you...What do you do?

YOU
Take snapshots.

BARTENDER
Yah, Ray. She’s documenting our town, inside, outside. I’ve seen some of her snapshots. You’d like them. She photographs places here that I didn’t know existed.

YOU
They don’t...or maybe they don’t right now.
CUT TO:

NARRATION
"...a photographic notebook. Photography is thus brought within reach of every human being who desires to preserve a record of what he sees. Such a photographic notebook is an enduring record of many things seen only once in a lifetime and enables the fortunate possessor to go back by the light of his own fireside to scenes which would otherwise fade from memory and be lost."

RAYMOND
Indeed...a photographic notebook.
RAYMOND

Alright. I don’t save everything.
No the last camera I had was a polaroid. Now that makes the ultimate snapshot...the immediacy of it. I was the life of the party at my Knights of Columbus conventions...pictures of people performing for the camera because they could immediately see the outcome. I appreciate that about the polaroid. And besides that everyone could take home their own personal memory from the party. I have hundreds of polaroids.
I’d take pictures just to see what the pictures looked like... not the people I was photographing. I was interested in what the photographs of the people looked like.

YOU
You have something in common with a few artists. Both Uta Barth and Emmet Gowin, photographers from the time of the cell phone and laptop computer said that they were more interested not in what their world looked like but, hold on...I have a quote from Uta in my journal. (reaches for camera bag) It’s all about what you were just speaking...

RAYMOND
Uta? What a name. She must not be american.

YOU
She is. Now, Raymond..you know that’s the way with America. Anyone can be American...melting pot...we include everyone. room for us all..here let me see...

RAYMOND
Sam, will you change this music? Why not put in some Count Basie

CUT TO:

CLOSEUP OF YOUR FINGER READING TEXT FROM YOUR JOURNAL WRITING IS IN RAYMOND’S STYLE.

YOU
Here...o.k now listen to this.
"I have never been interested in making a photograph that describes what the world in which we live looks like, but I am interested in what pictures (of the world) look like..."
YOU

"...but I am interested in what pictures (of the world) look like...I want my work to function on two levels: to elicit the sense of familiarity of looking at an image that has the structures and conventions of a history of picture-making embedded in it, to make you aware of that, and at the same time to shift your attention to the very act of looking (at something) to your own visual perception in that particular moment, in that particular place that you are viewing the picture in."

BARTENDER

Who wants to make a picture of what the world looks like. We can find that in books and magazines. Millions of photographs are being taken as we speak. What’s the point...stand at a vista point snap a shot of the Grand Canyon and you have your own personal memory. Just buy the damn postcard and save yourself some money.

YOU

Exactly. But if you challenged the potential of the camera. If you looked at the camera as a starting point and made that camera your own...actively sought out a way to intimate that picture so that the documentation really was a unique interaction between you and the vista point at the Grand Canyon...

RAYMOND

(interrupts)

You mean not just pictures of people with their eyes blinking and uncle Melvin when his pants fall down at his daughter’s wedding reception?

YOU

No. Including those, but it goes deeper with the subject to another level. We all know that photographers have, in a traditional sense, perfected the way of seeing optically...in reproducing exactly or nearly so what the eye sees. But what about the inner eye? What about looking at the world from a deeper source...considering your eye as a medium through which the essence of your thoughts are free to visually communicate?

RAYMOND
The eye as a medium...that’s too much thinking for a snapshot. Snapshots are point and shoot...point and shoot. There’s no thinking. That’s the beauty of random non thinking...center of the frame sort of thing.

BARTENDER
Yah, your photographs are anything but snapshots. there’s no point and shoot to anything you do...long exposure times. You make your own cameras. Hell, with some of your cameras, you don’t even know exactly what you’re looking at.

RAYMOND
The eye as a medium...that’s too much thinking for a snapshot. Snapshots are point and shoot...point and shoot. There’s no thinking. That’s the beauty of random non thinking...center of the frame sort of thing.

BARTENDER
Yah, your photographs are anything but snapshots. there’s no point and shoot to anything you do...long exposure times. You make your own cameras. Hell, with some of your cameras, you don’t even know exactly what you’re looking at.
YOU
You two are only looking at one aspect of the idea of the ‘snapshot.’ I am looking at what the snapshot represents culturally. The definition that has resulted from what people choose to shoot when they are just snapping the shutter.

RAYMOND
Sam. Two more? (motions to drinks)

YOU
And some nuts?

RAYMOND
Continue

YOU
Well...What I guess I’m saying is that I embrace what the snapshot represents to all of you. My work doesn’t mean much if I can’t reach you with my ideas and so this is another entrance into your mind.

BARTENDER
She’s trying to trick us ray. Manipulate us.

RAYMOND
That’s just a gimmick. Are you “branding” yourself with this...I take snapshots...

YOU
No. maybe..I don’t know..that doesn’t matter... your response to what I am saying here doesn’t matter to me. You can judge me, make fun of me. I’m used to that. It’s not significant.

(YOU REALIZE THAT YOU ARE BEING DEFENSIVE)
What is significant is how you respond when you look at my story through snapshots.
You are personally involved. I have tried to reach people by making really large photographs so that the viewer could feel as if they were walking through the space itself. That worked. But they didn’t own it. They didn’t feel connected. It was an exploration but not an intimate one. With the snapshots the relationship is between you and the little world inside the white borders.

YOU
By taking that snapshot off the wall and holding it...well.. that moment of exchange between you and the snapshot is all yours. You don’t have to share the moment with some stranger who begins talking about photographic technique, composition, or their memory of their father drinking there. The world that I create on film is created for you. for me too. But that’s my experience.

CUT TO:

SHOT OF BARTENDER OPENING SCI-FI BOOK. HE LOOKS AT SOMETHING INSIDE BOOK AND SMILES. HE CLOSES BOOK AND LOOKS TO YOU.
YOU
I want you to be able to make it your own. And if you want to share the experience, read what i wrote on the wall behind the snapshot...or show it to someone else and make up a story about it. Or try to figure out its actual location....

CUT TO:

YOU REMOVE A LAYER OF CLOTHING

YOU
It doesn’t matter what you do. It’s about the connection to place. Get away from accepting what you are told. Make up your own story. Or follow the one i create. But be active.

RAYMOND
Where’s this wall? I want to check it out. Sam, let’s go see the snapshots and see if we know where she’s been?

big upset on the tv..someone scores a touchdown or a triple..knocks someone out, scores a three pointer..regardless..conversation between raymond and the bartender fades to the tv..both are “actively” watching t.v. you reach for your journal to record your day out in the land.

DISSOLVE TO:

january
awake early. continuous. continuity. something that flows-something without end. at any corner of the cemetery, when you look inwards, the tombstones look like they take up infinite space. but when you walk along the edges, it feels like a prison. something fenced off. closed away. put on the edge of town. there are only houses along the one wall of the cemetery. the other wall is across from warning signs of a toxic area. another wall is on the edge of some business/factory/processing station. the catholic cemetery rarely plows the snow. i met a woman yesterday who walks there every day. she says that if you walk the periphery 3 times it adds up to five miles. the cemetery custodians keep it plowed for her because they’re nice. **photographing the cemetery as a landscape. remove the tombstones from the images. would we still know that we are in a cemetery?
January. Day after that linear image didn’t stream. Every day has its own rhythm and pace of living. The linear image doesn’t reflect the real world. It’s a lusus naturae. I’m trying to regain my sense of my experience through this linear image. It’s just by tearing loose. I am tearing and reforming the linear image. I am almost done.
January. Day after that image didn’t come out... God it was cold out. That negates my every day for a month project. Sometimes, I get ideas that in and of themselves are fruitless, but something about them bears a lesson. I come away from the cemetery regaining my sense of devotion for this place... how do we experience events? How do we experience the past? Other options—I’m finding engagement with a daily journal from 1950. By tearing and reforming his thoughts line by line, I am able to slow down. I spend a little more time with “read, slept until almost noon then had breakfast and went...”

What will the outcome be? Should I be out photographing? I don’t know. I’m just compelled to do this and so there’s no need for questions or answers. They live in the tear and will come in due time./He burned his Christmas tree.

Breaks your reading... You look to Raymond

_Cut to:_

You

Hey Raymond? Why did you burn your Christmas tree?

Raymond

*(obviously focused on t.v. double takes towards you)*

What??

You

In 1950, you burned your Christmas tree. Were you upset about something?

Raymond

Sam, would you look at our “little historian” now? How about this sweetheart... Christmas was over and I burned the tree because it was a better idea than driving it all the way to the dump... minimize the garbage in town...

Bartender

Oh I love it... you collect garbage for photographing the land... and you, Raymond, are referring to our natural resources as garbage. So does that mean that she’s photographing garbage with garbage?

Raymond

Wait a minute. You’re losing me.
BARTENDER
Yah, yah. Tell Ray about the episode you had with your cat.

YOU
Episode? Oh you mean..

BARTENDER
(interrupts)
Yah, see, Ray here, just got himself a cat...didn’t you ray?

RAYMOND
Oh she’s just a little angel. I...

BARTENDER
(INTERRUPTS)
Yah exactly..Explain to him the big (motions knife to eye)turning point in your career.

YOU
Oh, come on sam. I had been experimenting. I didn’t know circumstances would make my investigations permanent. O.K. O.K.

CUT TO:

YOU LOOK TO RAYMOND

YOU
Raymond, I have a cat. I found her while I was doing research...just a kitten...my better half...thinks she’s supposed to be with me all the time. Well, anyways, I was documenting the town at this point, the land surrounding the town and was dissatisfied with my connection to the place. That was just it...there was no connection. At least not one that separated me from you or anyone else depicting a place. And i already told you that i came here to find a source...a point of the unseen...what exists but is unapparent to the naked eye.

RAYMOND
Darlin’, you sure talk alot. What about the cat?
YOU
Sam, set him up with another (drink). Raymond, I am leading to it.

BARTENDER
Patience, Ray. I’ve already heard this story twice and it still hurts my eye.

YOU
So anyways, let me tell you about the building exteriors.

RAYMOND
Yes, indeed, I know..the garbage and glass.. And again what did you use for my building?

YOU
I haven’t even told you about the glass and your building

RAYMOND
yes, but then how do I know about it?

BARTENDER
Remember the confusion everyone Get lost in it..

YOU
O.K. the office was a cigarette wrapper and your house, a glass shard from the Chateau.
BARTENDER
Oh yah. Just as with her snapshots and her growing desire to intimately affect her audience. The work that she has done with the building exteriors is along the same line.

RAYMOND
So what’s the story there?

BARTENDER
Well, she wanted to have a stronger connection to the locations that she was photographing. Her medium is all about ‘seeing.’ So she went to the source and began experimenting with the functional aspects of the camera. She focused on the lens. She collected eyeglass lenses from a local optometrist and tried using those. They were not specific enough. I recall seeing her come into the bar with her camera lens covered in multiple layers of people’s eyeglass prescriptions. Then she began to think about this place’s connection to water about the importance of water to our survival as a species. So she photographed through the rain, collected city water...even thought about our problems with alcohol and began photographing bars and alleys through a bottle of Nikolai vodka that she found. that brought her closer and she decided that..

YOU
(INTERRUPT)
That the apparatus...the lens should be site specific...and obviously somewhat transparent. So I began to photograph each building with a piece of transparent garbage that I found beside the building. It could be a piece of glass from one of the building’s windows, a beer bottle, a candy wrapper, a shard from a car headlight. But to make my involvement in the the experience more intimate, I decided that if i was going to focus on what I considered to be raw lenses, than the camera should be raw as well. So I began constructing pinhole cameras out of sheets of cardboard.

BARTENDER
Are they pretty spendy to make?

YOU
(LAUGH)
$8.00. pretty expensive camera, huh?
RAYMOND
Are you sure that's not why you made the camera? After all, most artists, or historians as you say, are poor.

YOU
Well, no. Not really...a benefit though. No, I wanted to have more direct involvement in my picture taking. I began my work by just snapping the shutter...just like you raymond and your snapshots. But then when I began to document this place, my approach to photography and historical interpretations began to evolve by necessity. I began inside the buildings here.

RAYMOND
Are you sure that's not why you made the camera? After all, most artists, or historians as you say, are poor.

YOU
Well, no. Not really...a benefit though. No, I wanted to have more direct involvement in my picture taking. I began my work by just snapping the shutter...just like you raymond and your snapshots. But then when I began to document this place, my approach to photography and historical interpretations began to evolve by necessity. I began inside the buildings here.
YOU
In fact that’s what made documenting this place all possible. The subject matter of documenting interiors of abandoned cities had not yet been over-documented.

BARTENDER
It has now.

YOU
Yah, actually, it was a saturated subject soon after I began my documentation, but then that’s just indicative of people making art about their ‘time’...just an historic trend. Small towns were continually being abandoned in favor of suburbs and neighborhoods surrounding places called Wallmart. But there was room for all of our interpretations. And all of our individual work began to take on a collective voice which initially was disappointing, but once I got beyond my ego, I realized that we were all exposing something that both fascinated and troubled us about our choices in developing our world. My place was not unique of any other town, except that the recorded history and oral history from my place was perhaps more colorful and saturated.

RAYMOND
I bet you found some color in my journals?

YOU
I did..and i found color by going regularly to local bars and talking to the locals...by researching the buildings histories that i had set out to photograph at the city’s archives, and by reading books both fiction and nonfiction about this specific place. I was learning how to immerse myself into a place...and into my work...photography.

BARTENDER
Is this when you began to make your own cameras?

YOU
No. That came much later. But i taught myself about light and long exposures. Most of the buildings were boarded up and without electricity. I am not a big fan of flash photography...Well, actually, I just don’t like to use a particular technique simply because it is the only one available. The technique needs to compliment the concept.
RAYMOND
You don’t seem to be someone who would like to be boxed in.

YOU
No I don’t. I really enjoyed moving through the rooms and hallways in these buildings with a flashlight as my guide and I wanted for my “viewer” to share a similar experience of ‘moving through’ when they saw my photographs. So I began to use long exposure times and photograph the spaces using a technique called light painting.

BARTENDER
CUT TO:

BARTENDER WALKS TO HIS STATION, OPENS A CABINET AND REACHES FOR A FLASHLIGHT.

BARTENDER
Show us what you mean.

YOU TAKE THE FLASHLIGHT, WALK OVER TO THE LIGHTSWITCHES IN THE BAR AND RESTAURANT AND SHUT EVERYTHING DOWN. YOU THEN BEGIN TO LIGHT THE ROOM, RAYMOND, THE BARTENDER, YOUR BARSTOOL. ROOM LIGHTS COME BACK ON.

YOU
See?

RAYMOND
So how long did those exposures take?

YOU
Anywhere from several minutes to several hours. I have since heard of a photographer that sets up cameras all over his city, pinhole cameras, I believe...yes he made these cameras and he exposes his images for weeks. what a small aperture...I can’t imagine..

RAYMOND
O.K. picture taker historian....come back down to our level..aperture and all of that. Remember, we are snapshots and have had a little too much to drink to absorb discussions on shutter speeds and apertures...

BARTENDER
Hold on, Ray. So that guy who made his cameras...were his cameras cardboard too?

YOU
I don’t think so. There’s an entire movement of people who construct pinhole cameras. People turn their cars, garages, even their back yards into cameras. I am not a part of that sector of the movement. I am into the image more than the camera and for me, I like the idea of making a camera for $8.00...a sheet of cardboard, black electrical tape, a pie tin, and a sewing needle. That’s all i need.
BARTENDER
So your involvement with the interiors was the flashlight?

YOU
Yes. In fact, many of the pictures that I made have me in them, walking through the image during the exposure... oops sorry Raymond.

RAYMOND
Quite alright, sweetheart. Quite alright.

YOU
BARTENDER
But when I look at the interior images, I don’t see you in the picture. Do you think that your intention is successful?

YOU
I think that there are degrees of success with my intentions. There is the experience that the artist has in making the work and the experience of the audience receiving and interacting with the work. In the example of the interiors, the result for you, the audience, is that you feel as if you are moving through the image.

CUT TO:

YOU PULL OUT AN IMAGE AND GIVE IT TO RAYMOND

RAYMOND
(INTERRUPTS/SURPRISED)
Look at this, Sam. She’s getting what she’s after. We don’t experience her intimacy with these rooms. We have our own.

YOU
Yes, raymond. And that’s accidental to a certain degree, although the large scale in which i chose to show you the image helped.

RAYMOND
So with the exteriors, did you find the same intimacy with the garbage lenses?

YOU
You know what...I did. All of the lenses had different visual properties whether it was the thickness of glass or surface variations..In the end, they all looked unique with different degrees of blur and distortion. The images have individual personalities, much like the people who inhabited them. And coupled with the pinhole camera, the process had an historic feel to them. They looked almost timeless, caught between eras. So in printing these images, I chose to use an historic process called Van Dyke printing to push and compliment their historic sensibility.
BARTENDER
Yah, Ray. You should see how she honored the preciousness of the photograph’s individual natures further by building a formal case to house the lenses. She did this in much the same manner as the old optometrist cases with drawers and velvet lining.

YOU
Yah. Those lenses are special to me. They have their own way of seeing.

RAYMOND
So do you have a lens case for your landscapes as well?

YOU
No that wouldn’t be right. We pull from the land to create these monuments we call buildings, societal headstones...the natural or should I say man-altered ‘natural’ landscape in this place is disregarded in many ways.

BARTENDER
Used and abused. Garbage. Look, Raymond, with your Christmas tree...to be used and tossed aside.

RAYMOND
So you two are saying that my landscape is garbage?

YOU
Well, that’s not so far off base. People used to look at the berkeley pit as toxic waste or garbage...Acid Lake and Silver Bow Creek as garbage. They were ashamed and sought to reclaim it. If they only worked with the land so that it could reclaim itself for it’s own purpose...not some golf course like they did in Anaconda...if we gave its wound a chance to heal.

RAYMOND
Indeed. A paper cut takes a few days to heal...a knife wound a month or so. What did they expect with what man did to the earth in these parts...a deep wound that reached beyond where the human eye can see..it’s a good thing that they all left.
BARTENDER
What were they thinking, extracting 25 billion dollars worth of minerals from the hill? It’s crazy to think that this place produced 1/6th of the copper supply in the world..

RAYMOND
And don’t forget our red light district—2nd largest in the country. I entertained many of my out of town guests at one of our infamous parlors.

BARTENDER
Ray, that’s before my time. You always forget the difference in our age, seeing that we are able to defy time here and all of that.

RAYMOND
Oh, yes, my friend. I just feel so present in this place. I am surprised that our lady friend, the picture taker historian could find this place.. do you think she knows?

CUT TO:

YOU IN THE MIRROR PERK UP AND GIVE A MISCHIEVOUS SMILE IN RAYMOND’S DIRECTION..

YOU
Of course I know...after all I photograph between dimensions.(ALL THREE LAUGH) I was meant to meet you for some reason, though I still don’t know what that is.

CUT TO:

YOU GET UP FROM YOUR STOOL. LOOK DOWN AT YOUR CAMERA BAG, UNCERTAIN OF WHETHER TO LEAVE IT, LOOK AT RAYMOND, WITH YOUR FOOT, YOU INCH THE BAG CLOSER TO THE BAR AND WALK TO THE BATHROOM. AS YOU WALK AWAY YOU HEAR RAYMOND’S FADED VOICE AS IF IT IS FAR AWAY SAYING..

RAYMOND
Don’t worry, sweetheart, we will watch your cameras while you are away....
YOU OPEN THE DOOR TO THE BATHROOM AND IN A FLASH BACK YOU ARE TRANSFORMED BACK TO THE LANDSCAPE LOST BETWEEN DIMENSIONS.. A POSTINDUSTRIAL MINE LANDSCAPE. DEVOID OF INHABITANTS FOR A LONG TIME. TREES AND POWER POLES GROW FROM THE HILLSIDES;

CUT TO:

YOU OPEN THE DOOR TO THE BATHROOM AND IN A FLASH BACK YOU ARE TRANSFORMED BACK TO THE LANDSCAPE LOST BETWEEN DIMENSIONS.. A POSTINDUSTRIAL MINE LANDSCAPE. DEVOID OF INHABITANTS FOR A LONG TIME. TREES AND POWER POLES GROW FROM THE HILLSIDES;

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September

There were two ways to get down to the site. One involved a well worn path. This was somewhat dangerous. You could be seen. The other route involved going around the back side of the old downtown ruins through piles of traffic lights and a room filled with the old city telephone booths and a few park benches. You had to travel on dry days, mudslides were an ongoing issue for travel in these parts. This site was unique. Its incline was driven to the back and slashed out to room width. Second and third top slices were taken from the floor until the room assumed full size. Weekly ore production could reach 192,000 tons here. In what appeared to be an employee lounge (building to the far right), I found documents.
CUT TO:

IMAGE OF YOU SITTING ON THE FLOOR OF THE BATHROOM IN THE CORNER PRESSING YOUR HAND TO YOUR RIGHT EYE IN PAIN. YOU ARE CRYING.

YOU

I can’t be there right now. I just wanted to go to the bathroom. God, Ember why did you have to scratch my eye out...I’m going to go back into the bar now.. I will photograph later.

YOU STAND UP HOLDING YOUR HAND TO YOUR EYE, OBVIOUSLY IN PAIN, REMOVE YOUR HAND AND YOUR RIGHT EYE IS RED AND MOIST. YOU WALK INTO ONE OF THE STALLS AND EMERGE IN A FEW MOMENTS, WASH YOUR HANDS AND WALK BACK TOWARDS THE BAR, LOOKING A LITTLE TIRED.

CUT TO:

LONG SHOT OF BARTENDER AND RAYMOND WATCHING YOU WALK BACK TOWARDS YOUR STOOL.

RAYMOND

Geez. What happened to you? I thought that you just went to the bathroom.

YOU

(AGITATED)

I did.

RAYMOND

Yah, but you’ve been gone for a couple of hours.

BARTENDER

I figured you took off through the back door. I checked the bathroom and didn’t see you.

YOU

Well, I was in there. Alright. What happened to my drink?

BARTENDER

Well, we thought you left. Raymond here even considered hocking your camera supplies.
RAYMOND
We went through your bag and guess what I found?

YOU
(STILL SLIGHTLY AGITATED, BUT CALMING DOWN)
What?

RAYMOND
(PULLS A STACK OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND A NOTEBOOK FROM BESIDE HIM)
Your journals...

CUT TO:

TIGHT SHOT OF THE THREE OF YOU. YOU INITIALLY LOOK ALARMED
AND THEN AMUSED SO RAYMOND CHIMES IN WITH:

RAYMOND
Well, I figured it was only fair, seeing that you have read
mine. So I deserve to even out the playing field..

YOU
You’re right. That’s cool. So did you come across anything
interesting...?

BARTENDER
We did, indeed.

RAYMOND
Yezz. We did, indeed. And since you seem to enjoy meandering
in your thoughts, why don’t you fill us in?

YOU
On what?

BARTENDER WALKS OVER WITH ANOTHER SCARLET O’HARA FOR YOU AND
SETS RAYMOND UP WITH ANOTHER WHISKY DITCH SO THAT RAYMOND NOW
HAS TWO DRINKS IN FRONT OF HIM. AND BARTENDER REACHES FOR HIS
SCOTCH..

BARTENDER
The land....tell us about the land and this whole “landscape”
thing..
YOU
INITIALLY CONFUSED BUT THEN YOU REMEMBER WHERE YOU ARE AND WHO YOU ARE TALKING TO...

Oh..yes. the land. well, I don’t know. I have this reoccurring thought...Where have all the landscapes gone?

BARTENDER
Do you mean landscapes as seen through the eyes of Ansel Adams?

RAYMOND
and timothy o’sullivan?

YOU
Oooh. I’m impressed boys. you are familiar with photo history. Well, yes...the pre-peopled landscapes which became the 'peopled landscapes’ where photographers began to photograph urban environments and referred to them as landscapes..city scapes..mindscapes...This photographer Walker Evans..I don’t know if either of you have ever heard of him..

BOTH NOD NO.

YOU
Well, he did this book called American Photographs that looked at American landscapes that referenced the human element.. He took a critical look at our culture, the American establishment. His work along with many others had an investigative nature and affected my research. Even the “New Topographies” photographers influenced my work. Many of those artists worked towards creating interest in neutral imagery. I see their work more as social documentation..focusing more on the concept behind the image.. challenging the borders of art. explorers..

BARTENDER
(INTERRUPTS)
Which is the opposite of Mr. Adams. He lived for dramatic vista points and dramatic light..

YOU
(INTERRUPT)
YOU
But don’t insult Ansel. It really was his passion. It took great effort for him to locate those vista points and I greatly respect his patient embrace of waiting for the right light.

YOU
He unabashedly embraced traditional beauty and he also furthered photographic technique especially in his research on the complex latitude of film and exposure...He called it the Zone System. He was an explorer and challenged the norm of his day.

BARTENDER
Yah, the “New Topographichs” guys and one gal were communicating what their time period needed to hear and Ansel was communicating in his time.

RAYMOND
The two of you are beginning to bore me a little...What would be interesting is who stands the test of time. Who is the true historian.

YOU
I don-know. I really see all photographers as historians...like you with your snapshots. Everyone is an historian and a critical one at that. In fact a photography critic named Deborah Bright said in regards to Landscape that “it is a historical construction that can be viewed as a record of the material facts of our social reality and what we have made of them.”

BARTENDER
Yah, I can agree with that, but what about...

RAYMOND
(INTERRUPTS)
OH come on...I’m about ready to go to another bar.

YOU
(FLIRTATIOUSLY)
Oh raymond, here. Take off that trench coat and let me take your picture...You look handsome when you’re surly.

RAYMOND, SMILES, GETS COMFORTABLE, BARTENDER WATCHES AS YOU PULL OUT ONE OF YOUR OLD DIGITAL CAMERAS.

BARTENDER

What do you make of the digital snapshots?

YOU

They're good for things like this but for society, in general, it produced holes in history. People began to stop printing their family histories.
BARTENDER
The Berkeley Pit is a great lesson. We as individuals in this society fail to take responsibility for that travesty. We are somehow unable to see our personal dependence on copper.

NARRATION
“For copper the situation is even more obscure: there is an extra intermediate step of a smelter, and you don’t even realize that you are buying some copper when you buy a car or phone. That long supply chain prevents copper and gold mining companies from counting on consumer willingness to pay for cleaner mines.”1

BARTENDER
So the E.P.A. and the mining industry need to take a fresh approach regarding the cleanup of this mess. It’s our mess. The mining companies wouldn’t be in business if the consumer didn’t buy their products. The Berkeley Pit is a perfect example of our careless interaction with the world in which we live.

YOU
Yep. It is. I believe that my research into pushing the ways in which we see our world is a lesson of sorts. Photography is one of the most easily accessible forms of art...and one of the roles of artists in society is to reflect, broaden the scope, interpret our world, our past, the future. We are the see’ers. And i guess what i have learned out here in this place is that everyone can experience any place in a multitude of ways. I use this place to convey and to challenge the experience of seeing. A camera is so simple.. As the saying goes, just press the shutter and we’ll do the rest. Well, that’s where our societies entire experience moved towards. We have power windows in our cars. Our coffee is made for us as we sleep.

YOU
We use remote controls for our t.v.s so that we don’t have to stand up to change the channel. In fact televisions made our experience of learning about the world passive. I miss books, newspapers and magazines...

BARTENDER
Yah, remember when we used to have libraries?

YOU SHAKE YOUR HEAD AND LOOK INTO YOUR DRINK. RAYMOND GETS UP AND WALKS TOWARDS THE BATHROOM. IN AN EFFORT TO GET FRESH AIR, YOU WALK TOWARDS THE DOOR BUT CAN’T QUITE SEEM TO REACH IT. YOU TURN AROUND. THE BARTENDER IS SMILING. YOU UNDERSTAND AND RETURN TO THE JUKEBOX AND THIS TIME YOU CHOOSE JOHNNY CASH, AND BY THE TIME RAYMOND RETURNS, ALONG THE WATCHTOWER IS PLAYING. YOU TAKE UP A SEAT BESIDE HIM AND MOTION TOWARDS HIS HALF EMPTY DRINK..THEN AS IF YOU ARE LASSOING A HORSE YOU MOTION FOR ANOTHER ROUND.

BARTENDER
Are you sure you don’t want some water?..another round?

YOU
You betcha.

BARTENDER
O.K. but this round’s on me.

CUT TO:

RAYMOND IS FOCUSING ON YOUR CAMERA BAG..LOOKS AT YOU..BACK AT THE BAG. LOOKS AT YOU THROUGH THE MIRROR EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE NOW SITTING RIGHT NEXT TO HIM.

RAYMOND
You know this land that you mentioned when you entered the bar. I never made it out there. I know what it looks like from afar. Sam here says that you get inside these places. So tell me again, how did you document the land?

YOU
Well, I began by looking at the water. This town is void of any clean water. Maybe that’s what happened to all of the people.

BARTENDER
I always drank bottled.

YOU
It began with my study of Silver Bow Creek...
CUT TO:

NARRATION
SCENE FLASH FORWARDS TO A FUTURISTIC BUILDING, IMAGE BLURRED BUT SLOWLY BECOMES CLEAR..THE NAME OF THIS VAST COMPLEX IS THE CENTER FOR PLANETARY HISTORY AND EVOLUTION. CAMERA MOVES THROUGH THE BUILDING’S OFFICES AND COMES UPON THE OFFICE OF AMERICAN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY. ENTER OFFICE, CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON IMAGE OF YOU SITTING ACROSS FROM A DESK OF AN OFFICIAL FIGURE. THE OFFICIAL IS NOT QUITE FULLY TOGETHER. THE BODY IS FORMED BY PARTICLES...YOUR VOICE IS DISTANT BUT QUICKLY COMES INTO CLARITY..

YOU
i spent five weeks last summer investigating a particular section of Silver Bow Creek. It is a short stretch where the surrounding walls of glossy black rock are over 14 feet high. these walls are made up of slag, which is a byproduct of the smelting process for mining operations. they say that the creek is barely alive. it is true that in the countless hours of mapping my way through its varying depths and corridors i never did see any fish. still, there was an abundance of algae growing on rocks and the stream bank was lush and green with grasses. for three days straight i did see the same pile of white worms beneath a bridge just past the slag walls. i counted 45. but i never saw a fish. i did find a variety of artifacts in the creek’s bed. with my rubber boots on, i collected many of these curious objects from the water and hid them in the brush near my entrance to the stream. i then brought these crusty, soaked tokens along with ten gallons of creek water and two large boxes of soil and rocks back to my studio and created a simulated environment of that short stretch of the creek. it was there that i made portraits of these intriguing artifacts. strangely, it was there that i also attracted an ongoing swarm of bees that day after day, died in my homemade creek. eventually, the smell from the creek water took over my studio and i dismantled the environment. i began to feel guilty about these strange bees.
on my last day with the creek, a group of five boys came down to the water’s edge and asked me what i was doing sitting in the creek with a cardboard box between my legs. i told them that i was taking a picture. “can we be in it?” they asked. they were so excited about having their pictures taken with a cardboard box that they couldn’t stay still long enough to appear on the film. but their...
RAYMOND
Bathrooms and such?

YOU
Well, no. But I had actually photographed alot of bathrooms when I was tunneling through the interiors of the buildings. I photographed where the town’s roads had been torn up to replace water mains.

RAYMOND
Bathrooms and such?

YOU
Well, no. But I had actually photographed alot of bathrooms when I was tunneling through the interiors of the buildings. I photographed where the town’s roads had been torn up to replace water mains.
RAYMOND
Looking back, I was always so busy living my day to day life playing pinochle with Helen and having lunch with Hal. Hell I worked nearly every day.

YOU
In 1950 you worked every day except for maybe two weeks...out of 365 days.

RAYMOND
Oh...hrr.h. Sam, she’s got me pegged, but just for one year.

YOU
Raymond, you know...it’s not about trying to figure you out...sum you up. It’s the exploration that matters to me. The questions and the search...the process of discovery.

CUT TO:

BARTENDER HAD BEEN DELVING INTO HIS SCIFI BOOK BUT WALKS OVER WHEN HE HEARS THE TURN IN DIALOGUE..

BARTENDER
Tell me what you make of this:

“Every possible configuration of the universe, past, present, and future, exists separately and eternally. We don’t live in a single universe that passes through time. Instead, we—or many slightly different versions of ourselves—simultaneously inhabit a multitude of static, everlasting tableaux that include everything in the universe at any given moment.”

RAYMOND
I’m shaving and showering. I’m talking with Mary. I’m at my wife’s funeral. I’m playing pinochle with my kids, I’m visiting mother at the hospital.

YOU
(INTERRUPTS)
I’m working on my thesis. I’m playing with my friend Missy in her attic. I’m tap dancing at Morgensterns. I’m on a yacht in the Persian Gulf. I’m getting married. I’m..

BARTENDER
...in my mother’s womb. I’m dead.

RAYMOND
(INTERRUPTS)
I’m doing routine matters. I’m writing several letters. I’m discussing matters with Helen. I’m shaving and showering.

YOU
(INTERRUPTS)
I’m talking with you. I’m dead.

BARTENDER
...in my mother’s womb. I’m dead.

RAYMOND
(INTERRUPTS)
I’m doing routine matters. I’m writing several letters. I’m discussing matters with Helen. I’m shaving and showering.

YOU
(INTERRUPTS)
I’m talking with you. I’m dead.

...in my mother’s womb. I’m dead.

RAYMOND
(INTERRUPTS)
I’m doing routine matters. I’m writing several letters. I’m discussing matters with Helen. I’m shaving and showering.

YOU
(INTERRUPTS)
I’m talking with you. I’m dead.

...in my mother’s womb. I’m dead.

RAYMOND
(INTERRUPTS)
I’m doing routine matters. I’m writing several letters. I’m discussing matters with Helen. I’m shaving and showering.
NARRATION
You begin to map out your location. You map your journey and the significance of the steps that brought you to this place. You sketch out roads and memories using a compass and the charred remains from a burned building. You sew the maps into being. Though they are grounded by North, South, East, West, and are traced in reality, you add your personal and esoteric experience of the place to the map. You add what you can’t photograph and what can’t be defended. It still exists in some form or another whether its existence is accepted as real by society or just in your mind.

MATCH CUT TO:

FLASH FORWARD BACK TO THE OFFICE OF AMERICAN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY. IMAGE OF YOU AND YOUR SUPERIOR LOOKING OVER A MAP OF THE PLACE. ITS URBAN CENTER.

YOU

Yes, sir...right there in that alley.

SUPERIOR

And it was snowing?

YOU

Yes...snowing and raining. We had a few breaks in the day and the sun actually came out a few times, but still an unbelievable number of people came out to hang and steal the art. It demonstrated an overwhelming level of community support. I had a feeling that it was there. The people of that town loved to celebrate. They celebrated everything. St. Patrick’s day, especially, but they had festivals that celebrated a local hero named Evel Knievel. They even had a brothel biker run which caused great debate between the conservatives and the liberals. What I remember is the color that was drawn to the town. A group of SanFrancisco prostitutes settled in for a month once and Easy Rider biker magazine covered the actual event...

SUPERIOR

I understand those events but what was the purpose of yours? You are an historian.
YOU
Yes, but an interpretive one. And that allows for a level of interactivity. I was so grateful and appreciative of all of their support for my work in their town that I wanted to give something back to them.

SUPERIOR SITS DOWN. LOOKS CONFUSED AND SKEPTICAL

YOU
I spent so much time documenting the town, immersing myself in my subject matter which is what you, yourself, recommended and it began to affect me. People came to know who I was. They became my friends. And the art community was feeling
january 25
photo has survived snowstorms, rainstorms, and 30 degrees
below zero weather. It still hangs.

march 17, st. patrick's day
at some point during the day, they came and stole the
photograph. It was in great condition for them.

YOU
I enjoyed the experience of having someone want my art so
much that they were willing to steal it that I decided to
extend the idea to the community.

SUPERIOR
And thus, the Theft Fest.

YOU
And alley exhibition. It was about sharing art, creativity,
passion and fun with the community. By hanging the
installation in a highly visible alley, I was also able to
show the local art’s presence within the community. I can’t
tell you how many people drove by mystified by the action.
And artists and thieves came out in great numbers to share
their love for art. Over 200 pieces of art were hung and
stolen between the hours of 6am and 11:59 pm. I documented
the event for your records. Chief, everyone came away happy.
Artists felt appreciated. People in the community went home
with new art for their walls. What I enjoyed most from the
day was watching young children come and hang their art on
the alley walls. It was their first exhibition and I felt
grateful to be their curator. The experience helped me to be
more of an interactive historian and I think that will add
another dimension to the goals of this office. I am not just
one who gathers information but one who creates information.
Which actually, sir, I believe is what we all do on a more
subtle level.

SUPERIOR
Yes, I see. Leave your documentations with me and I will meet
with the others on this matter...
a new effort to...

Beautify Butte
call it what you will...
ART ACTION
ALLEY EXHIBITION
‘THEFT FEST’

this is a call to all artists who have art to share, who embrace the unknown, who want to make a subtle impact on Butte’s uptown environment. you are invited to hang a piece of your art (framed or not) on the alley wall of the Silver Dollar Saloon on south main street...south side...for an until all the art is gone exhibit on Friday (tomorrow) April  . This exhibit is designed to promote awareness of the art presence in Butte. This action was inspired by having a piece of my art ‘stolen’ from an alley wall in town. It gave me such pleasure to offer my art to the unknown that I decided to do it again and share the experience with you. I hope that you can join me on this adventure.
documenting theft fest

6am
came outside with three pieces of art. poem present. oxo poster hung high unreachable. drawing burned edges, ink drawing, postcard with quote.
cold. raining. hard to tape up art.
7am
same art on wall.
snowing. cold.
8am
2 litho prints, 1 ink/wax drawing, 1 mixed media flower piece, previous 8 up.
misty weather. cold. snowing light
9am
2 litho prints, 1 mixed media flower piece, lots pf b/w photographs from high school students
dry weather. cold
10am
44 pieces up on wall
wet. no snow
11am
93 pieces up. mixed media, book, sculpture, chalk drawing, kid art, masks, pottery, photography. i saw 4 stolen. realized that some of the art work would be stolen between my documentation times. some of the art work lasted for only moments.
light snow.
12pm
76 pieces. 2 art classes came with pottery and photographs
cold. dry
1pm
110 pieces. photos, sculpture, pottery.
big snowflakes
2pm
111 pieces. bird mobile addition hanging from high metal beams. pot pipe addition, strange white figure sculptures. saw five stolen as i was counting.
more light outside. dry
3pm
66 stolen. flying fish and oxo's out of reach poster stolen by boys in pickup. theft fest at 3:40. lots stolen.
sun shining
4pm
58 pieces. photos, collage. most of the pottery and sculpture gone.
overcast
5pm
35 pieces. addition of paintings
cold. cloudy
6pm
41 pieces. new art. nudes. in between 6-7pm 7 more pieces hung. all were stolen within 5 minutes.
overcast
7pm
38 pieces. art coming and going more quickly. artist working on-site.
weather same
8pm
37 pieces. 16 are new. 2 pieces hung and stolen between the hours. artist
working on-site.
weather calm
9pm
34 pieces. 20 new. 4 fake dog paintings in guilded frames
wet outside
10pm
30 pieces. two women took a painting of little girls framed.
cold and dark
10:45pm
looked out my window—two more women walking down the alley with three
pieces of art
11pm
27 pieces.
raining. cold. dark
11-midnight
document anyone going to site.group convened with flashlight.
11.15
CUT TO:


NARRATION
(CAMERA VISUALLY FOLLOWS NARRATOR)
You open your eye and quickly shut it again. a quiet scream escapes from your mouth. You moan and reach for your patched eye. You begin to cry. The pain is worse than you could have imagined. The codeine has kept you knocked out for an undisclosed amount of time. Regardless, you no longer know what day it is..what time it is, but you can remember what happened. You remember your cat Ember scratching your eye. You remember the immediate pain it brought. You remember the conversation you had on the phone when you were told to go to sleep—that everything would be o.k. in the morning. You remember lying in bed for hours until the pain was so excruciating that you decided to call a cab to go to the emergency room..in the middle of the night. You remember the pain of turning on the light to find the phone number for the cab company. You remember going outside to wait for the cab. You remember sitting on the curb. You remember the lights of the cab and the driver’s large size. But the eye that you were not clutching was somewhat blind. you couldn’t see. You wonder how this will affect your photography. Everything is a blur. You remember the doctor’s voice when he finally numbed your eye enough to be able to open it.
The scratch was evident without the use of auxiliary lighting. The scratch was deep and made a clean swipe from 11:00-5:00. That’s how the doctor described the line. He was concerned for your sight. The numbing medication began to wear off and you remember clutching your eye again thinking that you were willing to do anything to not feel that pain. You remember filling the codeine prescription downstairs and you remember being given a ride home in the cab. You remember entering Manza’s, reaching for a bag of grapes in the refrigerator, pouring yourself a glass of water...you remember the pain coming back and taking a few too many codeines to avoid the pain...you remember taking off your coat and your pants. You remember lying down on your bed and crying when you realized that you may never see the world in the same way again...that your relationship with making your pictures had evolved into something completely foreign but still somehow familiar. You remember feeling lost. And now it is the next day or week and you have awakened to the pain you reach for the bottle of codeine. There is a knock at the door. It seems so far away. You quickly swallow a pill and make your way down the stairs. You are careful to not move your functioning eye in any direction. That would cause the other eye to move resulting in a sickening scraping sensation inside your eye lid. You put on your pants and open the door. Light floods into your building. The intensity blinds you. You hold both eyes but sense that Ember, the cat, slipped outside. You step outside, overwhelmed by the light and grab your cat. You turn back towards your building but the door has disappeared.
Bibliography


Sophie Calle. *Prestel, NY, 2003*


