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Senior Thesis

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The American education system has become a goal based society, invested in structures which create channels to achieving those goals. This can be identified by the word *success*, which humans believe to be a path to achieving a self-identified standard. We learn about goals, then personalize a singular or few to provide purpose and will to live. In this case, can we truly believe that goals are self-identified? Or does the influence of institutional education skew our view of the "light at the end of the tunnel"?

In hopes of achieving goals within the time span of a lifetime, humans have become heavily invested in survival. More hostile habitats cost more reproduction, meaning that the human has to constantly invest in survival and spend less time on mating and parenting. If the habitat is favorable, the human spends more time finding purpose, or other reasons to live (raising children being a key example). Humans are, for some reason, wired to connect. This unspoken understanding, became the foundation of commercial places, and connecting to others became the key to survival - purpose.

More people feel comfortable connecting to others who share similarities with them. Often, therefore, bigger groups provide one with a feeling of association. A tool for self preservation - just as some animals travel in packs. Sometimes individuals have to adjust, or may not feel comfortable in certain situations. This brought about a system of taught practices, which

act as a catalyst for human interaction. Lessons about how to learn and share information from others in somewhat of a competitive environment made way for situational conformance to practice, in order to connect with others - a strong basis of the education system.

Compression Tunnel is about surroundings forcing the body to contract. For this piece, a performer lowers to their hands and knees, then proceeds to climb through an abstraction of art school - a tapered tunnel, symbolizing a passing-of-time to funneling information ratio. Simultaneously, the audience receives chunks of calcium carbonate (chalk) to throw at the performer. This visualization of movement between architectural boundaries, adds a feeling of unsettlement to both the audience and the performer. A single 24 by 48 inch window, acting as a second tunnel, bridges the viewers' anxiousness about the performer's exit and the performer's stress about public display of personal struggles.

In *DIY Landscape* surroundings guide viewers to a meeting place. A board of poorly hung, four by eight foot, drywall looms over one corner of the room, while a distorted soundtrack beams Do-it-Yourself landscape painting instructions on the opposite wall. An eight by six foot wall forbids the viewer from stepping toward the opposite side of the room as two (four by six inch) beams hang in a discomposing manner. The beams are

paralleled by lines taped to the floor - acting as orthogonal lines. The viewers are funneled toward the source of the sound shortly after their entrance. In conjunction, these elements abstracted the gallery space, and intrusively pushed the audience to consider how educational architecture may begin to shape personal views.

Big Windows (of Opportunistic Perspectives?) provides a representation of architecture with windows and missing walls acting as streams of sight. Cement-soaked gauze composes a generic building structure. Looking out a living room window in relation to looking out a banquet hall window; changed interpretation of the outside world based on a different perspective. Viewers are drawn closer to the piece by its scale. Intricate architecture peaks interest when seen from afar, and upon closer investigation, that interest becomes directed, when missing walls begin to frame the viewer's perspective.

In *BrickLine* a row of six ceramic plates form the illusion of laid bricks. When resting on the floor, the form acts as an orthogonal line, drawing the eye left to right, forward and back.

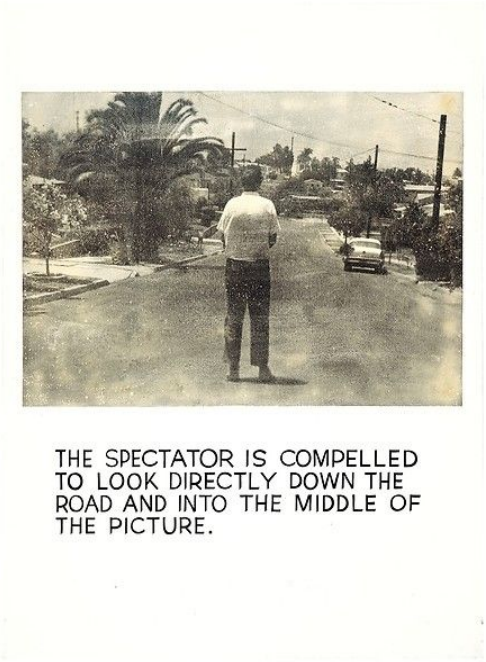
These are representations of specific building blocks that act as visual guidance. The actions of the viewer are reminiscent of walking with the head down.

In a similar instance in my work, *Stuck Here*, viewers engage, as bypassers, with a digitized version of myself, by looking down at the walkway. Shifting eyes are led directly to me, if they were to look just ahead of the feet.

A historical and public point of reference for my practice, is exhibited in the Richard Serra *Tilted Arc* controversy. The massive piece of steel intruded upon the Federal Plaza, creating an obstacle for government employees and other people who navigate through the space. Arthur Danto's essay shed light on the views of the public, on public art. In relation to Serra's *Tilted Arc*, Danto believed that - while it was a "successful sculpture" - the Arc dissatisfied the public, which was the sculpture's intended audience. To Danto, and commuters in the Federal Plaza, *Tilted Arc* was an obstacle for workers navigating the plaza. Post-petition, the sculpture had been removed by the General Services Administration. While a conversation about the practicality of public artwork seems most obvious, there are underlying emotions that provoke

'Tilted Arc' To Be Moved From Plaza At Foley Sq.

such a response. Feeling uncomfortable with intruding structures, often rises from the thought of being held back from success, or your purpose. It could be said that one foundation of purpose has become an urge to succeed in one's career, and in the case of *Tilted Arc*, government workers felt it a serious impediment to their work-travel routine.



In relation to architectural lines and visual guidance, the viewer is forced to direct their gaze in a particular order. This is an effect called spatial hierarchy. While Brunelleschi first brought linear perspective to fruition, John Baldessari sums up the concept in a more poignant manner. The viewer follows the contour lines of the street, and focuses in on a central destination. This fixed point becomes a destination for the viewer's eye. In fine art, this is called a vanishing point; in a lifetime, this is called death. With reference to the concept of purpose, the success in Baldessari's intentionally framed image, arises from the viewer understanding that their eye has, and was encouraged to ground itself at a fixed area in space.

What about when the vanishing point becomes blocked by the architecture itself? The vastness of space becomes irrelative to human connection. It births a fantasy of movement

between architectural boundaries. In Vito Acconci's *Seedbed*, he presented a low wooden ramp as barrier between personal pleasure and public space. Fantasizing about the movements of gallery visitors, Acconci projected his voice establishing intimate connection between himself and his audience. The audience assumes Acconci is lying below the ramp, but it is the lack of visual confirmation that seems intimidating.

In *Thesis: Untitled*, I work to convey the structural and sociological struggle students face in a specific institution - the State University of New York at Purchase. Specifically, I have reproduced the original architectural drawings of the visual arts building. The drawings are attached to a pedestal, which supports a laptop computer and projector. Transparent acetate hangs on the wall across from the projector, displaying contour outlines of specific visual arts studios at Purchase College. Taken directly from the architectural drawings, these shapes represent the rooms where the majority of my visual arts education has taken place. While this represents the orthogonal lines that shaped my educational career, it also alters the audience's view of my thought-process video loop. In turn, there is a relationship between any viewer of this piece and myself, as well as an understanding that institutional education has become an obstacle between human connection.

In addition to this work, an installation has been positioned just outside the room as visual guidance between works. *Web of Li(n)es* is a two hundred fifty foot paracord woven between the walls of a hallway. The web itself blocks the audience from continuing down the hallway, gestures toward the work *Thesis: Untitled*, and supports the hanging of images - related to color theory and Purchase College architecture. The paracord remaining from the web, falls off the center of the piece and - parallel to the molding where the hallway walls and floor meet - come back to end towards the viewer. The feeling of being unable to push the body beyond the net, but also having the ability to see the end of the cord, is in direct relation to the obstacle narrative understood in *Thesis: Untitled*.

Much like the pieces in this essay, architectural aspects of educational and institutional space impose socially identified standards on various aspects of living. Every human enters the world following a direction that is set up from those that come before. Its an endless cycle that evolves into determining the *meaning* and steps they take in life to reach a level of success. Individuals make their marks with these as they create every little detail around them. The walls that surround each, the images they take an interest in, and the sights that they perceive everyday. All of this structured with their identity of prosperity. This achieved by the followers of life's stereotypical pathway of sitting through a decade of classrooms.

Citations -

Colin Taylor *Compression Tunnel* 2016

Colin Taylor *DIY Landscape* 2018

Colin Taylor *Big Windows (of Opportunistic Perspectives?)* 2019

Colin Taylor *Brickline* 2019

Colin Taylor *Stuck Here* 2019

Richard Serra *Tilted Arc* 1981

John Baldessari *Spectator is Compelled* 1967

Vito Acconci *Seedbed* 1972

Colin Taylor *Thesis: Untitled* 2019

Colin Taylor *Web of Li(n)es* 2019

Literary -

Arthur Danto “Tilted Arc and Public Art” 1989