

MAPPING

Brian Snapp



Figure 1: Brian Snapp, *Nearly South*, clay, nautical maps, rock salt, Finch Lane Gallery, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2001 (photographer Fred Wright).

"And what is space anyway if not the body's absence at every given point?" (Joseph Brodsky)¹

Moving from one point to another involves traversing space. Once you move closer to your destination you find yourself occupying another space, nearly there. And for now, that is as close as you get. In order to make this new space a place you give it a name. To fill the void created by leaving the familiar to live in the distance you consume the space, you fill yourself with it and you expand yourself into it, still, nearly there. Looking back to points of origin and away to other locations you see your absence. The map documents more of where you are not than of where you are. I am the space where I am. Stop, sit, take a moment.



Figure 2: Brian Snapp, *Untitled*, clay, coloured slip, 2001.

A chair When I look back and forth for the meaning to this series my mind drifts
 A place through images resembling the throne of Catul Hyuk, a Sam Malloof
 A position rocker and Joseph Kosuth's *Three Chairs*. The view, the comfort, the
 A ranking idea, the practicality, the elevation from the ground; all of these concepts
 Support cohere to the back, the neck, the legs, the feet and the butt. A room with a
 Dignity view, an angle of repose, the news of a loved one's death creates the need
 Solace for contemplation, a transfer of weight, focus towards transcendence.
 Power The quickest way from point A to point B is with your tray table secured
 Authority and your seat in its upright position. When I reminisce and project about
 Relax meaning for these objects I realise I'm just tired and need a place to sit.



Figure 3: *Curing*, installation with clay, coloured slip, chairs, rock salt, cable, meat hooks, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2006.

"When we recall the hours we have spent in our corners, we remember above all silence, the silence of our thoughts."(Gaston Bachelard)²

As we expand into new spaces we create corners. These corners form an oasis that Bachelard calls "havens for immobility."³ They create a focal point that narrows in and expands outward. When you step into your corner you begin to delineate space between inside and outside. As artists, we create within and traverse these boundaries, inviting others to participate in another new space. Mary Jane Jacob writes: "This space is located in between. It is a middle ground, a transition space, a place of pause, a place to wait, to test and then to move beyond."⁴ In this space we present ideas and ask the viewer questions like, what if, is this the way it is, is war the only viable option, can we live a more compassionate life? In order

to make larger shifts of consciousness in larger spaces, smaller shifts must take place. Before these smaller shifts can take place, curing must begin. Curing is a process of healing and refining. It is a process that takes time and is generally achieved through aging. The aging process can be taken to a point of refinement just short of decay. These ideas, peace, compassion, tolerance, have been curing for a long time but not beyond their usefulness. By building within corners, creating a space for contemplation, embellishing it with hanging signs, symbols and directives, corners disappear, the inside becomes the outside, smaller shifts begin and we find an "intimate immensity"⁵ to breathe in.

"If I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace."(Gaston Bachelard) ⁶

The corners have become a place of sanctuary, a home where space is divided into rooms. One room, the library, is used as a quiet place for research, contemplation and the formulation of ideas. The library is stocked with books, maps and other curiosities to expand understanding and to allow us to dream of new concepts and applications. These ideas, when presented by an artist through images and taken to the public, move the artist into the role of "public intellectual."⁷ Edward Said writes "that intellectuals are individuals with a vocation for the art of representing."⁸ To be present to the needs of others, to show a different way, to make gifts or resources available to



Figure 4: *Curing* (detail), installation with clay, coloured slip, chairs, rock salt, cable, meat hooks, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2006.

the individual or group without them having been consciously sought after is a way of representing ourselves. Presenting images, signs or symbols on clay for the public to take and use is my attempt to create a ripple that moves across space closer and closer to there, presenting possibilities for action in the present and the future; nearly there.



Figure 5: Brian Snapp, *Present*, installation with clay, coloured slips, wood, rock salt, Burien Art Gallery, Washington, 2007.

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- 1 Joseph Brodsky, *To Urania* (New York, Noonday Press, 1996).
- 2 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (New York, Orion Press, 1964), 137.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Mary Jane Jacobs, "The Space Of Art", in *Buddha Mind In Contemporary Art* (Los Angeles: Berkeley & London, University of California Press, 2004).
- 5 *The Poetics of Space*, 183
- 6 Ibid., 6.
- 7 Carol Becker, "The Artist as Public Intellectual", in *The Politics Of Culture: Policy Perspectives for Individuals, Institutions and Communities* (New York: The New Press, 2000).
- 8 Edward W Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, as cited by Becker in "The Artist as Public Intellectual", 241.