

MISSED ENCOUNTER:

Disavowal, apophenia, obscenity and reenactment in contemporary art

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Abstract

The September 11 attacks were designed as a series of actions that would symbolise the fall of American capitalist icons with the intention that the images would be globally disseminated and repeated sensationally (Bramwell 2012, 32-33) (Dumbadze 2011, 180) (Eleey 2011, 39) (Graham-Dixon, 2011) (Mitchell 2011, 180). Despite the visibility of the attacks in mainstream media and the subsequent use of paradigmatic phrases such as ‘post-9/11 art and aesthetics’, there is a distinct lack of visual artworks that openly respond to the events (Bennett 2012) (Bramwell 2012, 34) (Dumbadze 2011, 124) (Eleey 2011, 45) (Kakutani 2011). This was in part because artists who created artworks that directly represented the attacks were met with a fiercely negative public reception (Fitzpatrick 2007, 99-100) (Junod 2004, 218-219). This project investigates the complex factors that have resulted in the sensational dissemination and yet subsequent disavowal of the September 11 attacks in mainstream media and visual art. The aim of this practice-led research project is to examine this phenomenon of disavowal and its role in discovering apophenia, thus enriching my creative practice. Utilising a practice-led research methodology, the project consists of artworks that visually ‘disavow’ the September 11 attacks to create a viewing space where diverse ‘apophenic’ responses are facilitated. The primary method of both the theoretical and practical investigations of this project is Jill Bennett’s definition of *practical aesthetics*, which I use as a tool to navigate the subject matter and give objecthood to subtle experiences with images surrounding the event. While the project initially aimed to represent the September 11 attacks directly, to become ‘September 11 art’, the complex factors that it sought to address led to the project evolving into a study of the effects of suggestion and elision. This process of disavowal, consisting of abstracting text and images until they become simulacral fragments that do not immediately conjure the events, facilitates an unexpected and irrational connectivity known as *apophenia*, a key discovery in the project. Apophenia may be used and developed by other creative practitioners as a method to create a more generative studio practice.

Statement of Originality

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, except for this paragraph the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: QUT Verified Signature

Date: 25/08/2017

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Aaron Butt, 2017

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“Young people relax during their lunch break along the East River while a huge plume of smoke rises from Lower Manhattan after the attack on the World Trade Center ”

Thomas Hoepker

2001

Introduction

[E]ven as he or she may mourn the victims, even identify with them masochistically, he or she may also be thrilled, sadistically, that there *are* victims of whom he or she is *not* one. (There is a triumphalism of the survivor that the trauma of the witness does not cancel out).

This statement written by art historian Hal Foster (1996a, 53-55) in his article *Death in America* signified the conceptual beginning of my series *Missed Encounter*. This statement was affective for me not only due to the explicit and ethically challenging description of witnessing horror, which is epitomised visually in Thomas Hoepker's (2001) photograph reproduced above¹, but also because it was written shortly before the September 11 attacks (or 9/11). The September 11 attacks are arguably the most visual, symbolic and witnessed event in history (Bramwell 2012, 32). Carried out shortly after the turn of the millennium and thus exploiting the new methods of distribution associated with digital revolution, the September 11 attacks were seemingly not designed to maximise casualties². Instead, they produced dramatic and sensational images that symbolised the fall of American capitalist icons and would be endlessly repeated and disseminated by global media (Bramwell 2012, 32-33) (Dumbadze 2011, 180) (Eeley 2011, 39) (Graham-Dixon, 2011) (Mitchell 2011, 180). The attacks resulted in approximately 3000 casualties³ and immeasurable economic, social and political effects. Most significantly it was the beginning of the retaliatory U.S-led, so-called 'War on Terror' (Hind 2011) (Ray 2005, 135).

Despite the scale of the attacks, and the use of paradigmatic phases such as 'post-9/11 art and aesthetics', there is a distinct lack of visual artworks that openly respond to this event (Bennett 2012) (Bramwell 2012, 34) (Dumbadze 2011, 124) (Eeley 2011, 45) (Kakutani 2011). Artists such as Hans Haacke, Ellsworth Kelly, Carolee Schneemann and Eric Fischl created artworks that directly represented the attacks. However, the majority of artists who have represented the events made only one work shortly afterwards and these works have rarely become notable additions to the artists' oeuvre. Many of the works were met with a fiercely negative public reception, particularly Eric Fischl's (2002) *Tumbling Woman* and Carolee Schneemann's (2001) *Terminal Velocity* (see Appendix) (Fitzpatrick 2007, 99-100) (Junod 2004, 218-219). I am interested in exploring the complex social, political, ethical and psychological dimensions of these events and the subsequent 'disavowal' of its imagery by artists, institutions and the 'mass subject', the audience of mass media represented by figural projections (Bramwell 2012, 34) (Eeley 2011, 40) (Foster 1996a, 53-55) (Gibbs 2012, 40) (Hirschhorn n.d) (Leonard 2011). Therefore, the aim of this practice-led research project is to examine this phenomenon of disavowal and use it to enrich my creative practice, particularly its ability to induce 'apophenia'. The creative practice represents 60% of the project and the thesis accounts for 40%.

1 Thomas Hoepker's photograph was not published until 2006 due to his fear of negative responses (Jones 2011).

2 While they attacked one of the most heavily populated areas in the world, there would have been more casualties if they had attacked a sports arena for example; however, this would have been less visible. Visibility and witnessing was therefore a priority over casualties (Bennett 2012) (Bramwell 2012, 34) (Dumbadze 2011, 124) (Eeley 2011, 45) (Kakutani 2011).

3 While a current exact number of casualties exist, this is increased as survivors die from health problems they received from the attacks, particularly from inhalation of the dust and smoke (Walters 2016).

This research question stems from the unease with my ethical position as a voyeur and witness of the attacks, and a creative practitioner that uses the remains of these events to my personal advantage. What I have decided to call 'disavowal' consists of consciously abstracting text and images that relate to the attacks with the intention of privileging 'disinterested' aesthetic readings of the objects. This requires avoiding ethical and historical readings of the works at all cost, due to the tendency of viewers to fixate on their experiences of the September 11 attacks and not the objects in the gallery. In this project, disavowal is a politicised form of allegory that responds to the discomfort of and resistance to the subject matter by disassociating with it, while acknowledging and working with the fact that the practice is deeply embedded in a complex socio-political and institutional context (Eleey 2011). It is important to note that 'disavowal' in the project is a conscious process, differing from constructions of disavowal as involuntary and unconscious by psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan (Iversen 2007). The aim of disavowal in this project is to create works and exhibitions that destabilise and break the relationship between the 'original' subject matter, and the potential experiences and readings of the final forms, particularly to facilitate a 'missed encounter' with the works (Blackson 2007, 40) (Ray 2005, 10).

This process of suggestion and allusion that I call disavowal is at the core of Kantian aesthetics (Cashell 2009, 5) (Ray 2005, 149). However, disavowal goes a step further as it seeks to avoid and deny responsibility for complex and irresolvable issues relating to the polar opposite, the *obscene*. Hal Foster (1996b, 113) defines the *obscene* psychoanalytically, as "an attack on the scene of representation" by artists representing taboo subject matter as if "without a screen for protection", referring specifically to politically-engaged *object* art prominent in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It is important to note that the *obscene* is rarely employed in this project visually or directly, although the subject matter often has *obscene* qualities. Instead, obscenity exists at the opposite end the spectrum of visibility that I have defined the project against. The *obscene* in this project, more specifically than Hal Foster's (1996b, 113) definition, refers to representing victims of the events in creative works, imbued with ethical issues of exploitation, voyeurism and spectacularisation. Unlike *object* art, for example, I have subsequently sought to avoid these complexities in order to exist in, rather than challenge, the complex socio-political context that the attacks have generated (Dumbadze 2011, 121-123) (Hirschhorn n.d) (Leonard 2011) (Ray 2005, 65).

The creative outputs of this project are predominantly object-based works created in a range of media. Visually, the works range from highly realistic figurative oil paintings to monochromatic found objects. These objects are deliberately ambiguous, and aim to encourage one to stay and consider how the objects may be connected, or 'miss' these often subtle and slowly emerging moments. The majority of the objects are less than one metre in height and width so as to not appear 'autonomous' like museum paintings, instead displayed and compared with objects of similar sizes. These often small, solid objects are 'souvenirs' of my subtle affective experiences with the material that led to their creation. As discussed at length in my Honours project *Rudy nein! mortality and the punctum in contemporary art*, the act of creating artworks that represent tragic historical events, regardless of how empathic they

may be, implicitly renders the author 'triumphant'. The very existence of an artwork in the absence of the victims it represents positions the work as a souvenir of survival, as exemplified, in my opinion, by On Kawara's (2001) *Sept. 13, 2001* (see Appendix) (Woo 2010, 72). Despite being painted only two days after the attacks while bodies were being recovered and fires being extinguished, Kawara records the day as usual and asserts his presence in a cold, systematic and unaffected way, making it all the more vulgar. On the other hand, to disavow recent historical tragic events as if they did not happen has its own set of ethical complexities, such as being unwilling to face the reality or cause of the event (Ray 2005, 56-58). It is precisely these complex yet irresolvable ethical concerns that I wish to explore and navigate yet disavow in this project. I will use the notion of the *missed encounter* developed by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan as a key reference point to explore the factors that have influenced my own decision to reveal and repeat (obscenely) or not reveal and disassociate (disavow) September 11's images.

In this section I will make explicit the theoretical framework that I have developed for my creative practice. *Missed Encounter with the real* is a term developed by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to describe a psychological event that disrupts the 'symbolic order', which is the system of meaning entered into when a child acquires language through which they (begin to) understand the world (Foster 1996b, 115) (Iversen 2007, 123-125). The 'real' consists of the objects and desires expelled (abjected) in the 'mirror stage' of infancy where a child enters the symbolic order. The real can only be reaccessed upon death or if returned somehow to a pre-symbolic state (Iversen 2007, 7). Therefore, access to the real is sacrificed, traumatically, by entering the symbolic order (Iversen 2007, 123). According to Lacan's precursor Sigmund Freud, human psychology crudely consists of the competing 'Thanatos' (death drive) and the 'Eros' (life drive). This duality creates a traumatic tension; a persistent desire to return to the real (for example, infantile regression and self destruction) that is prevented by the 'Eros' (i.e. self importance and self preservation) (Iversen 2007, 5). An unlikely metaphor for this duality is bungee jumping. The thrill of bungee jumping is the suggestion and possibility of coming in contact with the ground (the real) and thereby dying, yet this is prevented by the bungee cord (the ego) which parabolically returns the subject to safety. A missed encounter with the real is traumatic due to the close proximity of the subject to the (desired) real, yet one can only approach the real as due to its very nature outside of the symbolic order, the encounter must be missed to maintain access to the symbolic (Foster 1996a, 36/46) (Iversen 2007, 125). This traumatic experience must be repressed entirely or repeated psychically in order to be assimilated and integrated into the symbolic order (Foster 1996a, 42) (Iversen 2007, 5).

The September 11 attacks may be contextualised in this Lacanian framework, with the attacks on the World Trade Centres as, for those who survived, a collective missed encounter with the real and the subsequent selective repression and repetition of the attacks' images as the predictable struggle to integrate them into the symbolic order or expel them completely (Iversen 2007, 120) (Retort 2011, 212). The problem of revealing that my works respond to images of the September 11 attacks and discussing them in terms of psychoanalysis is the ease with which the works may be designated into

categories of mourning, trauma and therapy. This past designation of my work into themes of trauma is untrue as my relationship with the subject matter is ambivalent and disinterested. The designation of my work into categories of trauma is also undesirable due to widespread yet largely unacknowledged stigma towards the use of art as therapy in professional practice which I am complacent with. Nevertheless, it is this psychoanalytic framework that will be both developed and implied in the forthcoming methodology, contextual review and creative practice sections. The highly theoretical nature of both the contextual and creative practice sections has been essential to addressing problems faced in the studio. In other words, to address the problems I have faced in the studio, I have had to work *through* complex theoretical ideas. The theoretical investigations are therefore not ‘illustrated’ in the creative works but illustrate the various conceptual struggles which have nonetheless been essential to addressing the research question of enriching my creative practice with September 11 imagery.

The first contextual review will explore why Richard Drew’s (2001) *Falling Man* (see Appendix) has evoked such affective responses and how they may be contextualised in Roland Barthes’s theory of the *punctum* and Hal Foster’s discussion of witnessing in *Death in America*. The *punctum* is the subject of cultural theorist Roland Barthes’s influential book *Camera Lucida: reflections on photography*, where he attempts to name and describe the types of unexpected affect that some photographic images generate for him (Foster 1996a, 43). Hal Foster’s (1996a) *Death in America* is a reworked extract of his influential book *The Return of the Real: the avant-garde at the end of the twentieth century*, which surveys trends in visual art approaching the turn of the millennium. I will discuss how *Death in America* and the *punctum* act as theoretical precursors to Richard Drew’s *Falling Man*, a photograph of a person who fell or jumped from the North Tower of the World Trade Centres on September 11, 2001.

The second contextual review will examine two exhibitions that relate directly and indirectly to the attacks. The exhibition *September 11* at MOMA PS1 consciously employed a type of paranoia (known as *apophenia*) as the method. This was achieved by using works made before the attacks as tests for how the event and its images still affect viewers (Biesenbach 2011, 15). This section will explore what the consequences of contextualising art as directly concerned with September 11 are and how art that evokes the attacks can be integrated into broader discussions and curatorial projects that extend beyond the events. This exhibition will be compared and contrasted to the exhibition *Transverse* at The Block, QUT, and in particular Stephen Danzig and David Sudmalis’s (2008) *Un_Place* (see Appendix). Based on the analysis of these two exhibitions and the nature of the scholarship that they have generated, this section will explore what might be the most effective context for works that are concerned with, or at least generate suggestions of, the September 11 attacks.

In the first creative practice section I will discuss how the concept of apophenia operates in my work. Developed by psychiatrist Klaus Conrad, apophenia is the neurological ability of humans to find apparently meaningful patterns in meaningless data (Mishara 2010, 10) (Ploog 2002, 353) (Poulsen 2012). Employing the languages and motifs of conceptual art, the outputs of my practice are exhibited in a systematic way to facilitate apophenic responses. This section will describe and analyse my creative works *Missed Encounter (New City)*, *Missed Encounter (Jets)*, *Missed Encounter (Waterfalls)*,

Missed Encounter (101.1%ers) (see Appendix) and the collection of works titled *Rebus*, to illustrate how apophenia influences the creative process. This section directly correlates to the contextual review section ‘Critical Paranoia: *September 11* at MOMA PS1 and *Transverse* at The Block, QUT’, exhibitions that are generated by, and which facilitate an apophenic, paranoid state. I will argue that apophenia is a natural medium in visual art, and that I use my work as a space where subjective apophenic responses are generated, identified and reflected on.

In the second creative practice section I will discuss how the reenactment of images has functioned as a generative tool for practice. Reenactment in my practice consists of responding to source material in a different context. Reenactment is often confused with reproduction, repetition and simulation. However, according to Robert Blackson (2007, 29), reenacting images and acknowledging the failure of being able to copy something exactly “invites transformation”, creating a space for unique and pseudo-fictional results. In this section I will describe and analyse two of my projects, *Missed Encounter (Leap II)*, *Missed Encounter (Atta_Hand)* and *Missed Encounter (Privacy Exchange)* (see Appendix) that illustrate the different ways that reenactment and being receptive to the agency of materials operates in my practice. This section directly correlates to the contextual review section ‘Before the Fall: Barthes’s *Punctum*, Hal Foster’s *Death in America* and Richard Drew’s *Falling Man*’, and extends on how Foster’s (1996a, 53-55) discussion of the complex masochistic identification with victims in photographs such as *Falling Man* can be extended into practice and used as a creative strategy.

Methodology

This practice-led research project is concerned with how the phenomenon of disavowal can inform and enrich my creative practice. In particular, I will examine disavowal in relation to the imagery of the September 11 attacks. I will identify a range of artworks that both represent and disavow the attacks, and will discuss their virtues and shortcomings in terms of my own creative practice. I have employed psychoanalytic and psychiatric concepts to explore artworks made by contemporary artists and to enrich my own creative work. However, only a fraction of these fields have been utilised, excluding the project from an interdisciplinary status while simultaneously privileging aesthetic rather than scientific concerns. Similarly, I will explore the ethical dimension of particular images, artworks and exhibitions as this tension is generative in my work. However, unlike Kieran Cashell’s *Aftershock* (2009) this project will not be a conclusive or authoritative ethical study, only a discussion of the issues that have already been raised or that have occurred in my practice. Clear distinctions between what the project is and is not have been necessary to avoid designatory assumptions of what engaging with the September 11 attacks means for my practice.

The research methodology of this project is practice-led. The project will consist of artworks that visually disavow the September 11 attacks to varying degrees in an attempt to create a viewing space where a variety of subjective, affective and apophenic responses are facilitated. As a result, the primary

methods of the project are disavowal and Jill Bennett's *practical aesthetics*. *Practical aesthetics* is the "study of (art as a) means of apprehending the world via sense-based and affective processes - processes that touch bodies intimately and directly but that also underpin the emotions, sentiments and passions of public life" (Bennett 2012, 3). I employ *practical aesthetics*, which I use as an umbrella term to group and develop subjectivity-based concepts such as Barthes's *punctum*, Lacan's *missed encounter* and Conrad's *apophenia*, as a vehicle to navigate and select subject matter and artworks for installation based on my subjective and affective experiences. These experiences are often difficult to fully articulate, if they can be articulated at all. The value of *practical aesthetics* to my practice is that it reorients the study of art from rational and cognitive to irrational and affective and foregrounds a critical space for these ideas to be explored and negotiated (Bennett 2012).

The second method, disavowal, has a range of psychoanalytic meanings and applications; however, in this project it involves the conscious abstraction of text and images in order to detach the works from the attacks completely. Where September 11's imagery overtly refers to a specific moment in time, the repression of this source material untethers the imagery and allows for fluid apophenic relations to emerge. Due to the explicit, often shocking nature of the source material, the less I restrict the information and images, the more 'obscene' the work is in danger of becoming. Obscenity here refers not simply to the graphic content of the imagery, but also the 'aestheticised' conversion of the imagery to manipulable studio material. Thus, according to this model of practice, disavowal and obscenity are inversely related. The more I restrict this palette of imagery, the more 'disavowed' it becomes. The value of disavowal to my creative practice was first identified when in *Art and Obscenity*, Kerstin Mey (2007, 68) stated, to my surprise, that:

It could be argued that such dramatised graphic depictions of bloodshed, human torment and exitus are by far not as unsettling and effective as those images that operate with an 'absent' death through the power of elision and the effects of suggestion.

Art historian W.J.T. Mitchell (2011, 178) reinforces this position, stating:

Prohibit something from being shown, hide it away from view and its power as a concealed image outstrips anything that could have been achieved by being shown.

In other words, explicit images like those of the planes crashing into the World Trade Centres provide an overload of sensory information requiring psychological distance eventually resulting in iconism and indifference, whereas the reductive process of disavowal presents a lack of meaning which tends to promote elision and suggestion. This method of disavowal is heavily influenced by my understanding of the symbolic order and the real as defined by Lacan. To be obscene is to approach an overload of meaning that exceeds the symbolic order into the iconic, whereas to disavow and disassociate from obscene images and information banishes them to the real, which is repressed by the conservative, paternal laws of the symbolic order (Foster 1996b, 115) (Mitchell 2011, 173-176). In other words, the works will oscillate in distance from (though could never touch) Lacan's traumatic real. I view my creative practice, the theoretical research and the final exhibition as primarily a series of decisions of

what to include and not include (disavow) in the face of the obscene. Every creative practice involves restriction and thus disavowal in some way. But it is the nature of this process and its effects on the viewing experience as well as the psychological, political, ethical and social factors that underpin these decision-making processes that are the focus of the project.

Disavowal is a motivating factor that emerges when many contemporary artists discuss their methodology. They use concealment as a tool to reflect feelings of uncertainty, to avoid being didactic and to approach 'truth'. Bruce Nauman states that "the importance in any artwork is what it reveals and what it hides and the tension between the two" (Institut für Kunstdokumentation 2009). Ellsworth Kelly, discussing one of his early abstract paintings based on windows (now called *Window, Museum of Modern Art, Paris* (1949)) (see appendix) states that "I didn't want to tell anyone what it was, I felt it wasn't really *couché* to do something like that" (SFMOMA n.d). Contemporary artist Grant Stevens adopts editing as a method, although he states "[w]hether economically or ideologically driven, and whether on a mass or inter-personal scale, choices about what, how and when to communicate are never neutral" (Stevens 2007, 5). In other words, while it is true that all visual art requires concealment, it is this unwillingness of artists to reveal information about their practice when dealing with sensitive subject matter due to both internal and external factors that is at the core of disavowal. As part of this methodology of disavowal I have developed a set of rules, an 'off-limits' zone, for both my creative practice and this thesis. The purpose of these rules is to scope the creative works and to avoid issues that I have encountered while creating and analysing works that originate from images of the September 11 attacks. Therefore, the rules are designed to assist with exploring how the disavowal of the September 11 attacks can *enrich*, as opposed to hinder, my creative practice. For example, if I included the World Trade Centres in my work, the subsequent discussion about the work would be attacks, resulting in a one dimensional viewing experience. The act of disavowing these loaded images seems to invite a space for speculation and affect, and this is only achieved by loosening the connections between the works and the events. By foregoing recognisable and familiar signifiers, and therefore their connotations, the multiple and speculative connections may broaden the range of experiences with the work and therefore their malleability and transferability in the future. The rules that I have set for my practice are as follows:

1. The creative works are not to contain identifiable images of the World Trade Centres. As Eley (2011, 47) states "the proliferation of images of the attacks and their inescapable repetition were part of the violence". The timing, visibility and symbolism of the attacks were designed to maximise the amount of witnesses (Retort 2011, 213). Therefore, to reproduce or create further representations of the Towers being attacked would be complicit with not only the aims of the attacks but also the ascension of these images by mainstream media to 'icon' status; "neatly packaged" symbols claimed to be fully understood, to the point of being a visual cliché (Bramwell 2012, 33) (Hirschhorn n.d). An exception to this rule is to create works that include objects, shapes, patterns or textures that may or may not suggest the towers as opposed to representing them, inducing apophenia, which will be discussed in the second contextual review.

2. The creative works are not to be exhibited publicly in the month of September in any year. Works that reference the September 11 attacks are too often exhibited on anniversaries of the events. This presents them as ‘artefacts’, locating them too immediately in the context of the attacks (Bennett 2012, 75). This may not allow alternative (and perhaps more generative) readings to emerge. It is for this reason that ‘September 11’ does not appear in the title of this project. Despite the fifteenth anniversary of the attacks bisecting this project, public emotions remain elevated. This may result in negative responses to the works either by individuals or the media that may or may not occur at other times of the year where public emotions may be lower (Bramwell 2012, 34).
3. The creative works are not to contain images of national flags, particularly American flags. Following the attacks was a higher than usual level of reactionary right-wing, patriotic American sentiment, perhaps a collective attempt to rebuild and reinforce the symbolic order after a collective close encounter with the real (Dumbadze 2011, 124) (Kakutani 2011) (Little 2014, 184). National flags assist to induce patriotism, which in the case of the September 11 attacks reduced the events to the two binary political camps of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Eleey 2011, 57).
4. The thesis is not to contain the words ‘us’, ‘we’, ‘them’ or ‘they’. In post-September 11 discourse there is a distinct overreliance on these words, without specifying who the words refer to, with the exception of Gene Ray (2005, 3) who admits to using ‘we’ to refer to “the global heirs of the European Enlightenment”. This remains problematic, due to the Enlightenment project’s emphasis on the value of critique and therefore diversity of values and opinions (Markus 1994, 16). I will sparingly use the term ‘mass subject’ to refer to the audience of mass media, ‘the viewer’ as a mind and body in proximity to a creative work and will only use ‘I’ or ‘me’ when referring to my aims, the creative works or subjective responses to source material.

As I have now defined what the project will not be as per my rules, *ex negativo*, I can now define what the project will consist of. The works will draw on images related in some way to the attacks. This pool of images is expansive in nature. For example, Auguste Rodin’s (1886) *The Three Shades* (see Appendix) could be included because a version of it was destroyed in the attacks. The creative works will extend across all visual art media; painting, drawing, sculpture, performance, sound, video and installation. The creative works, consisting of approximately 100 objects (over 300 made in total, many destroyed) will be exhibited in galleries and public spaces, individually and collectively, and images of the works will be uploaded to my website www.aaronbutt.com and selected works posted on Instagram (@aaron.butt). From October 2 -5, 2017 an exhibition of selected works titled *Missed Encounter II* will be displayed in Frank Moran Gallery, QUT Kelvin Grove campus, and signify the completion of the project. This exhibition will consist of selected works arranged in a ‘salon-style’ hang. The choice of a salon hang is to increase the amount of objects in the exhibition, ensuring that the various strands of the project are well represented and therefore that the exhibition does not become tokenistic. Furthermore, it reflects the arrangement of the source material in their original environment as a salon of often unrelated images on internet search engines such as Google. Arranging the objects thematically instead

of apophenically would be against the nature of the project as the experience would be dictated by my intentions, as would including the objects relating to only one strand of the project (for example, the bungee works). Instead, the individual objects will be arranged according to their average tonality across the room (determined using tools in Adobe Photoshop), with larger works in the centre and smaller works progressively towards the top and bottom of the wall to create a visual representation of a parabola (the shape of a missed encounter with the real). The same principle will be applied to a long and low display of three dimensional works on a white and flat 'plinth'. The exhibition will begin with the lightest white works, progressively becoming greyer and darker until finishing with black objects. Arranging the works objectively will facilitate an apophenic space as the system is designed to be largely independent of my intentions. In an act of disavowal, no mention of September 11 subject matter will be made in written or verbal form as part of the exhibition. The contextual section of this thesis will now begin with an examination of Hal Foster's *Death in America*, Barthes's *punctum* and Richard Drew's photograph *Falling Man*.

Chapter 1: Contextual Frameworks

Before the fall: Barthes's *Punctum*, Hal Foster's *Death in America* and Richard Drew's *Falling Man*

This contextual review is concerned with why the photograph *Falling Man* by Richard Drew elicits such affective responses from its viewers and commentators, and how this can be articulated using Roland Barthes's (1981) theory of the *punctum* and Hal Foster's (1996a) speculative discussion in *Death in America*. The *punctum* is a proposition concerned with the affective power of photography developed by cultural theorist Roland Barthes in his 1981 book *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. This book was written after Barthes discovered a particular photograph of his recently deceased mother, which had a powerful, affective quality that he sought to articulate. Barthes attempts to define what it is about certain photographs that generate personal affective responses. Strongly influenced by Jacques Lacan, Barthes developed the term *punctum*, a detail (or details) of a photograph that affect(s) him and intensifies his interest in an image (Iverson 2007, 5). The *punctum* is a detail of a photograph "which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me". The *punctum* causes the image to repeat in the mind, yet escapes elaboration and analysis (Barthes 1981, 26). Barthes (quoted in Fried, 2005, 539) uses terms with unpleasant connotation such as "pricks", "wounds" and "bruises" to describe the affect of the *punctum*, yet for Barthes the *punctum* is both traumatic and fascinating. The *punctum* has been discussed by scholars such as Foster (1996a, 46) and Iversen (2007 14-15) who contextualised it as a type of missed encounter with the real, where the *punctum* operates as a metaphorical void through which the real threatens to touch and 'injure' the viewer.

Barthes describes the conditions under which a *punctum* may arise, and its different types. For example, he describes it as a subjective and private experience, and states that a *punctum* may only be present if it does not appear to be the photographer's immediate intention to capture it. It must appear

to have been captured accidentally, by chance or as if by chance. Similar to Freud and Lacan, Barthes views unexpectedness as traumas defining quality (Barthes 1981, 26-27). One version of the *punctum* that Barthes discusses is the *noeme*, the *punctum* of time, the “[t]hat-has-been” (Barthes 1981, 77). For Barthes, an image of a person who is now dead may function as a *punctum* as “at the end of this first death, my own death is inscribed” (Barthes 1981, 93). A subject who is known to be deceased is the *punctum* as he is aware that they are simultaneously dead and are going to die (Barthes 1981, 96). Barthes positions photography’s indexicality as an extension of the Dutch still life tradition of *memento mori* (Latin: ‘remember that you will die’) and therefore, according to Iversen (2007, 15) “the privileged site of the return of the real”. Barthes’s *punctum* continues to provide a lens to navigate the affect that photographs can generate but that remains difficult to describe.

One photograph that evokes Barthes discussion of the *punctum*, and yet has not been addressed at length, is Richard Drew’s *Falling Man*. Taken at 9:41am on the morning of September 11, 2001, the photograph titled *Falling Man* depicts a formally unidentified man falling from the North Tower of the World Trade Centre (Junod 2004, 212). The image is coincidentally divided vertically into two sections; the left side is the North Tower, the right side is the South Tower. The individual is inverted and has his arms by his side and knee slightly bent. Similar to Barthes’ *punctum* which he states “shoots out of the image and pierces me”, *Falling Man* shoots out of the picture plane “as though he were a missile, a spear” (Junod 2004, 212). *Falling Man* appeared in global newspapers on September 12, but the image provoked a negative reaction as many readers deemed it to be voyeuristic, exploitative and a violation of the rights of the deceased (Fitzpatrick 2007, 91) (Goodwin 2015, 7) (Junod 2004, 217). Subsequent representations of people falling from the World Trade Centres in artists work, such as Eric Fischl’s *Tumbling Woman* (2002) and Carolee Schneemann’s (2001) *Terminal Velocity* (see Appendix) were also highly controversial. *Falling Man* is often referred to, even by radical, left-wing scholars, as one of the most horrifying images captured on September 11, 2001 (Grahame-Dixon 2011) (Leonard 2011) (Retort 2011, 212). The photograph affected and continues to affect viewers in a manner and intensity unparalleled by any other image from the attacks, and yet this is insufficiently articulated in the scholarly sources that acknowledge the image. Barthes’s theory of the *punctum* and Hal Foster’s *Death in America*, both written before the attacks, are the only scholarly sources that seem to examine and describe the affective force generated by *Falling Man*.

One of the most unsettling things about *Falling Man* seems to be its quietness and stillness (Junod 2006). Despite all of the horror, chaos and noise on September 11, 2001, the *Falling Man* figure and the photographs composition seems too composed (Gibbs 2012, 40). The subject seems calm and appears, although inverted, in a posture of reservation, even defiance (Junod 2004, 212). The composition is bisected by the edge of each building. The position of the figure obeys the rule of thirds and the lines formed by the levels of the buildings obey Gutenbergian compositional guidelines. It is important to note that Richard Drew took a series of images of the *Falling Man* before selecting this particular frame for publication. He has stated “[y]ou learn in photo editing to look for the frame...[t]hat picture just jumped off the screen because of its verticality and symmetry. It just had that look” (Drew quoted in Junod 2004, 213). Furthermore, although *Falling Man* appears to be calmly falling headfirst, he was in

fact spinning out of control and his arms were waving. By omitting and disavowing the other images in the series, Drew has selected the image based on aesthetic and affective considerations, stating that the unexpected calmness and composure of the image was “like a punch in the stomach” (Drew quoted in Junod 2006). The implication of this is that the Falling Man photograph is not a true record of the man falling but an aestheticised version of reality selected by the author (Grundberg 2012, 68) (Sentilles 2014, 47).

Retrospectively discovering such a resolved frame in those chaotic shooting circumstances may have functioned for Drew as the *punctum*, just as discovering the photograph of Barthes’s mother was for him. For viewers, most of whom have not have seen the other frames, the *punctum* of this image may be more strongly linked to the *noeme*, the ‘that has been’. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes (1981, 96) uses Alexander Gardner’s (1865) photograph of Lewis Payne who assassinated American President Abraham Lincoln (see Appendix) as an example of the *noeme*. Payne is photographed handcuffed and sitting on a chair in his cell, while he calmly and defiantly stares directly at the camera shortly before he was executed for his involvement in the killing (Fried 2005, 558). For Barthes, the *punctum* related to the fact that “he is going to die” (Barthes 1981, 96). In terms of the Falling Man, one knows the figure is alive in the image and yet is seconds away not only from death but obliteration. The image is therefore an allusive artefact of his death, though it is only suggested and can only be imagined. Barthes’s statement that the *punctum* may be an image of a person that reminds him of his own mortality suggests a complex masochistic identification between the subject and the viewer of the image that I will now discuss in terms of Hal Foster’s *Death in America*.

Death in America is an elaboration of ideas he discussed in *The return of the real* exploring Andy Warhol’s work in terms of what Foster calls *Traumatic Realism*. In particular, he offers a psychoanalytic interpretation of Warhol’s *Death and Disaster* series. Foster (1996a, 41) believes that the repetition in Warhol’s images is the product of a shocked subjectivity. He claims that for him the slippages from the screen printing process resulting in openings where the background is exposed are *punctum* through which the traumatic real that the repetition aimed to suppress threatens to return (1996a, 43). Due to the source material of the *Death and Disaster* series being photojournalistic, he speculates about their effect on the mass subject, the audience of mass media. Hal Foster agrees with social theorist and literary critic Michael Warner that figures in photojournalistic photographs such as Falling Man act as surrogates for the audience as “the mass subject cannot have a body...except the body it witnesses” (Warner quoted in Foster 1996a, 51). He also disagrees with Barthes that the *punctum* is strictly a private experience, and suggests that photographs may contain a collective, cultural *punctum* (Foster 1996a, 46). This mass witnessing of one body (Falling Man) generates a situation where one may identify with Falling Man (masochistically), mourn him, and yet feel a sense of relief that they, or one of their friends and family, are not him (Foster 1996a, 53-55). Witnessing the Falling Man may be traumatic, yet few would trade places. Warner and Foster’s speculations are strengthened by the fact that Falling Man has no official identity - he is a surrogate for someone anyone could know (Bennett 2012, 22). It is this masochistic triumphalism identified by Foster (1996a, 53-55) and also Woo (2010, 72) that may have contributed to this particular image being deemed voyeuristic.

They seem to claim that there is a certain pleasure derived from the identification and objectification between the viewer and the subject, as well as the formal qualities of the image that complicates straightforward responses of shock and mourning. These complex and competing affective forces may function as the Falling Man's *punctum*, but the image is also subject to dominant cultural values and beliefs, particularly in relation to its disavowal.

The disavowal of the Falling Man and all of the jumpers points to the psychological and social issues that continue to surround the events. From the moment that victims began jumping from the World Trade Centres, there has been a documented effort by mainstream media and the public to remove the images from public view (Junod 2004, 212). At the *National September 11 Memorial & Museum* for example, the jumpers are hidden in a small alcove away from the flow of visitors (Leonard 2011). The online archive *Here is New York* collects thousands of images of the events organised by subtitles. However, one image of the jumpers exists, taken from a distance (Junod 2004, 217). The jumpers were the only bodies of victims that were seen on September 11, and yet none of the approximately 200 jumpers have been formally identified by friends or family (Leonard 2011). This is complicated by the irresolvable ambiguity of which jumpers 'jumped' and which 'fell', as the latter may have been disorientated by dust and smoke (Leonard 2011). I reproduce these ambiguities not to ignite debate but to acknowledge the irresolvable and deeply complex moral and ethical backdrop on which an exploration of the jumpers exists (Fitzpatrick 2007, 85). The disavowal and invisibility of the jumpers points to the understandable discomfort that they generate, as Retort (2011, 215) states, "silence in popular culture is deafening" (Hirschhorn n.d).

In terms of the Lacanian context established in the introduction, a missed encounter with the real must either be repeated in order to be assimilated into the symbolic order or repressed entirely (Foster 1996a, 42) (Iversen 2007, 5). The fierce effort to disavow images such as Falling Man make clear the types of psychological, social and political factors that govern their dissemination and reception. This contextual review has informed my creative practice as it has made me intensely conscious of the types of responses that different types of content can generate and that the suppression of content has been more generative for the practice than content that has been sensationally repeated. It is for this reason that Falling Man has been central to the *Missed Encounter* series and combined with discourse from before the attacks such as Roland Barthes's *punctum* and Hal Foster's *Death in America*, continues to shape my understanding of obscenity and disavowal. I will now examine two exhibitions that engage with the September 11 attacks, and in which disavowal is a key feature of the curatorial premise.

Critical paranoia: *September 11*, at MOMA PS1 and *Transverse* at The Block, QUT

In this section I will explore the potential benefits of disavowal when exhibiting works that contain references to September 11, such as my own. The purpose of this exploration is to assess the critical reception of these exhibitions, and their subsequent influence on decisions made in my practice. There have been numerous exhibitions about the attacks that are imbued with sensitivity and mourning. They

have been focused on the artists' immediate, affective responses and all writing concerned with personal experiences of the day. The exhibitions, such as Arthur Danto's (2005) *The Art of 9/11* have often opened on September 11, have the event in the title and rarely move beyond the events to contain reputable or rigorous art. This is due to the fact that the exhibitions are too closely related to the attacks; the works included have been explicitly contextualised as artefacts of the events at the expense of formal and conceptual enquiry. The works have subsequently been designated as less highly regarded '9/11 art' or 'trauma art', important for assimilating the events but not reputable or rigorous art. This becomes obvious in Danto's (2005) exhibition essay stating "I felt that such a show would itself be understood not as an ordinary art exhibition, but as what Wittgenstein calls an act of piety". Two exhibitions that move beyond the events and illustrate the malleability and continuing relevance of historical artworks that engage with specific events are *September 11* at MOMA PS1 and *Transverse* at The Block, QUT.

The exhibition *September 11* was held at MOMA PS1 and opened on the 10th anniversary of the attacks. It was the first major institutional survey of the events, yet perhaps surprisingly, contained many works from before the attacks, some as early as 1956 and as late as 2009. In the preface and acknowledgements section of the exhibition catalogue, curator Peter Eleey discloses the factors that led to this curatorial decision. Eleey (2011, 45) states that other than Ellsworth Kelly's (2003) *Ground Zero* (see Appendix), he had not come across any memorable works 'about' September 11. Furthermore, Eleey (2011, 39) states that the attacks were designed to be seen, and therefore feels that to exhibit direct representations of the event would be to repeat the spectacle, even despite the critical nature of the gallery venue. Instead, he selected works made pre-September 11 that, for him, evoke the attacks. Curiously, although disavowing works made after the attacks, Eleey has included a range of essays written in response to the events, as if to reinforce that only scholarly text, not art, is capable of navigating the complexities of the events. This decision seems to point to a concern for the effects of the allusive and ambiguous nature of visual art in relation to such a painful event. Even though the visual signifiers of works have been destabilised in the exhibition, they are reoriented in a specific way, with a specific intended reading. The works in the exhibition vary from vulgar inclusions such as John Baldessari and Gordon Matta-Clark's works that predict and depict the fall of the World Trade Centres, to less direct works such as Thomas Hirschhorn's (1997) *Mondrian Altar* and Diane Arbus's (1956) *Newspaper blowing at a crossroads, NYC* (see Appendix). The aim of collecting these works is, according to Eleey (2011, 57), designed to test "[t]en years on, how much does 9/11 continue to weigh upon us, to shape the way that we picture the world and experience it?".

By presenting the exhibition as an expensive and unpredictable psychological test, rather than a reductive and tightly bound collection of works reorients MOMA PS1 from a powerful, all-knowing institution to an uncertain group of individuals struggling with their ethical stance and subject to the same psychological effects as their audience (Bennett 2012, 19). Foster (2012, 211) believes that Eleey seems to be conflicted, stating that on "the one hand, he aims to assist the "sublimation into the grief of national tragedy," to assimilate 9/11 symbolically; on the other, he wants to stage a "cultural test" regarding the persistence of 9/11 "in the mind," to hold it open traumatically". Similar to my practice,

September 11 at MOMA PS1 aims to forge a difficult conceptual and ethical position and is laced with many of the issues that I have faced in the *Missed Encounter* series. On the one hand, I feel compelled to respond to images of the September 11 attacks, especially ones that have been forgotten or omitted from various archives and public awareness. On the other hand, I wish to disavow the images and purge the works of their references in order to generate works that reflect my broader palette of interests, such as apophenia. By examining the decisions made in this large scale exhibition, a greater insight into how to navigate these complexities has emerged in my practice. Any survey of the September 11 attacks was bound to be problematic, and I will now discuss some of the issues the show raises.

As stated, Eleey (2011, 57-58) claims that by presenting works from before the attacks (which cannot possibly address the events directly) the exhibition despectacularises the event and thus creates a neutralised space for solemn and sensitive contemplation. This could have been possible; however, by naming the exhibition *September 11* and opening in Manhattan on the 10th anniversary overwhelmingly primes viewers to connect the works to the events in a highly emotional time for many of them⁴.

One could argue that the exhibition does not avoid the spectacle of violence, but rather reorients it beyond immediate shock to mourning. This strategy designates any negative responses to the objects as symptomatic of the individuals' subjective experiences. Put another way, the artworks have an 'innocence' in this context, as they were made before the events, the artists could not have possibly exploited the attacks for creative purposes. Any connections made by individuals are positioned as symptoms of one's trauma, outside of the Museums control (Foster 2012, 210) (Bramwell 2012, 34).

Another key ethical issue generated by this choice of artworks is the degree to which recontextualising historical works is acceptable. Hal Foster uses as an example Felix Gonzalez-Torres's (1990) "*Untitled*" (*The End*) (see Appendix) which consists of a stack of large white pages with a black border, resembling a front page of newspaper with no text. Viewers are invited to take a page and write their own headlines on it. This work, however, originally responded to the AIDS crisis and therefore, Foster (2012, 210) believes that the connection to September 11 is "simply false". This is perhaps unfair, as Gonzalez-Torres did not title the work and had already foregone much of his creative agency by leaving the newspaper page blank and inviting viewers to fill the page with headlines that relate to their own experiences. If "*Untitled*" (*The End*) was exclusively concerned with the artist's personal experiences of the world, perhaps he may have written the headlines himself, exhibited them behind glass, and rendered the viewer a passive receiver.

Hal Foster's (2012, 210) criticism in his review of the exhibition raises questions of how far a work's context can be extended beyond the artist's intentions in a museum setting. However, as per curator Peter Eleey's desire to stage a "cultural test" of how September 11's images "continue to weigh upon us", I continue to encounter works that I think of in terms of this exhibition. Ross Bleckner's (1985) painting *Fallen Sky* evokes the height, facade and collapse of the World Trade Centres, and Martin

4 20% of American residents at the time knew someone who was hurt or killed in the attacks (New York Magazine 2014).

Creed's (1999) *Work No. 203*, (see Appendix) a neon sign stating 'EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT' reminds me of Mohammed Atta's final words to passengers ("Stay quiet and you'll be OK") (CNN 2004). To a similar and more obscene effect is Roger Brown's (1972) *World's Tallest Disaster* depicts a burning building with people, and Robert Gober's (1990) *Untitled (Leg)* reminds me (unwillingly) of Falling Man's extended leg and images of severed body parts on the ground (see Appendix). To join the small number of works made after the attacks could be Martin Creed's (2013) *Work No. 1638* (see Appendix), a pile of iron girdles that decrease in height, width and length as the pile ascends. The exhibition *September 11* is for me is not only a collection of works in a physical space, but the beginning of an enquiry from which possible additions to the exhibition form an expanded pool of works reveal themselves to me over time. *September 11* at MOMA PS1 approaches the attacks highly consciously through indirection, highlighting the creative potential of disavowal and allusion (Eleey 2011).

The second exhibition in this investigation, *Transverse* was curated by IDA projects in 2009. It was held at The Block, QUT. The exhibition brought together screen-based works from a culturally and geographically diverse selection of artists to explore how "technology poses new questions about the way artists are exploring the landscape" (IDA Projects 2009, 2). One of the works in this exhibition was Eduard Salier's (2005) *Flesh* (see Appendix), an animation designed to resemble a film or video game trailer that depicts planes crashing into the World Trade Centres. Another work in the exhibition that implicitly evokes the September 11 attacks is Steven Danzig and David Sudmalis's (2008) *Un_Place* (see Appendix). *Un_Place* consists of four video projections facing the middle of a dark room. The projections contain a range of dreamlike images; smoke or clouds emit from the top of the projection and images of people falling flash on the screen accompanied by a loud droning sound. The work creates the sensation of being inside a building looking out of the windows at a great height, and the title *Un_Place* suggests a place that has never existed or that has been destroyed. Despite the ease of drawing connections to the attacks, neither the review, nor any descriptions of the work identify connections to the events of September 11 (IDA Projects 2009) (Lort 2009, 86). There seems to be a conscious effort by commentators and the artist not to make that connection and it is important to note that Stephen Danzig is also the director of the curatorial team, IDA projects, and therefore may have more agency and control in terms of the information made available about the work than other participating artists.

This curatorial control raises the issue, similar to *September 11* at MOMA PS1 of how much agency an artist has in how their work is contextualised and therefore how the work is ultimately read. The presentation of a work that represents the attacks (obscenely) alongside works that only allude to or suggest the attacks places every other work into question. Without the specific contextual information of each work in *Transverse*, suggestion and allusion is privileged over logic, promoting a more ambiguous, malleable and engaging experience of the works. This includes Kira Kim's (2005) *Co-ordinated - it's your round* (see Appendix), a video in which the artist is shown tumbling nude toward the camera (a possible reference to and parody of Eric Fischl's *Tumbling Woman*), Leonora Hamill's (2008) *I was too far out all my life* (see Appendix) where a figure is shown floating in a body of blue

water from above and appears to be falling and Pink Twins' (2006) *Pulse* (see Appendix) which contains large explosions. By exhibiting a work that directly responds to the attacks alongside works that explore how "technology poses new questions about the way artists are exploring the landscape" generates a conceptual plurality in which connections to September 11 are possible but not imminent (IDA Projects 2009, 2). Depending on their experiences, viewers may establish connections to the events as I have but also may not, leading to a more open, broad and generative engagement with the works. This contextual review has informed my creative practice as it has made me more conscious of the ways that obscenity and disavowal have been used to expand the ways in which works are viewed and read. The benefit of this is that these exhibitions illustrate how I can navigate historical subject matter without affecting the conceptual and affective integrity of the works produced. It has enabled me to make works that relate to a multitude of curatorial projects, thus increasing the different types of readings and extending the context of my own works.

Chapter 2: Creative Outcomes

Faces in the smoke: apophenia as a method of collecting and exhibiting images

While my creative works engage with a range of concepts, one of the most generative concepts to emerge from this practice-led research is *apophenia*, the ability meaningful patterns in apparently meaningless data. While perceiving patterns in meaningless data has implicitly been a tool for making art at least since Leonardo Da Vinci, this practice-led project is the first scholarly document to explicitly and thoroughly use the term apophenia as a method of production and engagement with contemporary art (Tate 2011). Apophenia is central to each stage of my creative process, from the selection and combination of found images to the juxtaposition of works in an exhibition. The term apophenia was created by psychiatrist Klaus Conrad who used it to describe the paranoia exhibited by early stage schizophrenic patients (Waldman 2014). He uses the term *trema* to describe the stage before apophenia when the subject's environment gains a strangeness and hostility, later resulting in increasing levels of paranoia (Ploog 2002, 353). Apophenia was perhaps first explored extensively in art by the Surrealists, and Conrad wrote an article on Surrealism in 1953 (Ploog 2002, 350). Salvador Dali's critical paranoid method consisted of hiding various objects in surrealist landscapes. However, an interest in apophenia also dates back to the works of Leonard da Vinci and the students he influenced such as Giuseppe Arcimboldo. Da Vinci (quoted in Tate 2011) told struggling students that:

If you look upon an old wall covered with dirt, or the odd appearance of some streaked stones, you may discover several things like landscapes, battles, clouds, uncommon attitudes, humorous faces, draperies, etc. Out of this confused mass of objects, the mind will be furnished with an abundance of designs and subjects perfectly new.

Jacques Lacan, a contemporary of the Surrealists, explored the nature of paranoia in relation to the gaze alongside the experiments of the Surrealist group (Iversen 2007, 39). Barthes's *punctum*, with his emphasis on the irrationality and uninterpretable nature of it, can also be proposed as representing a moment of apophenia. Other implicit explorations of apophenia include Hermann Rorschach's inkblot tests, Sigmund Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* where he first explores what is now referred to as a *Freudian slip* and more recent explorations such as Michael Shermer's *patternicity* where he critiques apophenia as belief-forming process (TED 2010) (Tate 2011).

The *symbolic order* is defined as "a universal structure encompassing the entire field of human action and existence. It involves the function of speech and language, and more precisely that of the signifier. It appears as an essentially unconscious, latent apparatus" (Gale 2005). Therefore, humans co-created the symbolic order to establish rules and conventions enabling communication and order, in opposition to and at the expense of the real (Iversen 2007, 7) (Gale 2005). While Conrad discussed apophenia strictly in terms of mental illness, it is now accepted that establishing patterns in random data is a normal and necessary function of the human mind and the resulting civilisation as we know it (TED 2010) (McNamara 2004, 135). Providing scientific evidence of apophenia, Jennifer Whitson at the University of Texas conducted a study where participants were asked to find the concept connecting two images on a screen. The first group of participants were acknowledged correctly for right and wrong answers. The next group of participant's computers were programmed to give erratic feedback, regardless of whether their answer was correct or not. When shown images of static afterwards and asked if there were images present in the static, the participants with the erratic programming of the machine (who as a result felt frustrated and that they lacked control in the situation) perceived images in the static despite no intended images being present, whereas the first group did not. Feelings as though one lacks control in a situation releases dopamine, which results in an increased search for meaning. These findings establish a concrete case for the relationship between chaos and apophenic meaning creation processes (Andreae et al. 2011).

Apophenia is also essential to survival. Andrew McNamara (2004, 135) uses the example that if a group was sitting around a fire and one heard sticks breaking and thought that they heard a bear but did not investigate, they would mostly likely be eaten. Furthermore, a loud noise may have just been a door slamming, or it could have been a nearby explosion, and to continue without investigating may be fatal. 'Over' creating meaning even if false (known as a *Type I* error) is a normal method of engaging with the world because it is the safest. The consequences of a *Type I* error (i.e. being paranoid about danger) in terms of survival are far less than those of being careless and not detecting a threat (known as a *Type II* error) (TED 2010). Since the September 11 attacks, there have been an overwhelming number and variety of apophenic responses to the events and images of the events, particularly on the internet due to the ability for users to upload unregulated content (Hirschhorn n.d). As per the examples of apophenia above, the over-creation of meaning is arguably the result of feeling out of control and these narratives give the creator an illusion of mastery over the chaos of the events (Andreae et al. 2011). Discovering this area of apophenia and the exhibition *September 11* which utilised apophenia as a method of curation, I became interested in how it may function as a method of collecting source

material, giving it form and arranging creative works in my own practice. The richest device I have discovered for inducing apophenia outside of the attacks are the language and motifs of conceptual art, which are present in the majority of the works produced. I will now discuss how the reenactment of the language of conceptual art acts as an effective vehicle to produce apophenia.

While conceptual art is overwhelmingly discussed in terms of seriality and rationality, some of its practitioners were implicitly if not equally interested in irrationality and apophenia. This was made explicit in Sol LeWitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art* where he states "Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot" (LeWitt 1969). The formally reductive and decidedly inexpressive nature of conceptual art makes this mode of practice a rich space for apophenic associations to emerge. Similar to Barthes's *punctum*, the apophenic affect of conceptual art seems to be generated from what Michael Shermer (TED 2010) calls *agentivity*, "the tendency to infuse patterns with meaning, intention and agency". The perceived formal and conceptual neutrality of conceptual artworks (reinforced by seriality, which often allowed a degree of chance) shifted the perception of the artist's 'intentions' from visual expression to documenting and recording information, creating 'data' (Marzona 2007, 19-22). This visual lack or irresolvability of intention which is pervasive in conceptual art deemphasises the goals of the artist and whether they were achieved in the work. This seems to create a strongly apophenic space allowing ones subjectivities to be more readily explored.

When intentionality, the appearance of meaning, is reduced it is more difficult to measure art against a success and failure dichotomy. With this in mind, the key to creating an apophenic space is reducing intentionality (moving towards 'meaningless data' as per Conrad's definition of *apophenia*), and instead managing the connotations of the subject matter with strategic disavowal. The works can only be read based on what I choose to include, and then interpreted apophenically. In other words, while apophenic responses are subjective and irrational, they are still anchored in what I choose to include in the gallery space, and the perception of my intentions. This rejection of intentionality and therefore definitive readings of the work in my practice, similar to historical conceptual art, seems to make the work more difficult to engage with. I do not view this as a problem, as the more time that is spent with the works, the more likely it is that apophenic connections will emerge. Patience is 'rewarded' with apophenic connections, whereas impatience goes 'unrewarded', and the encounter with the quiet complexities of the works will remain missed. It is an appreciation for slow astute viewing and the value of disavowing intentions that I have gained from my interest in and exploration of historical conceptual art.

Extending on the original definition of apophenia, my work draws new connections between unrelated objects, narratives and concepts, not as the symptom of mental illness as per Conrad's original definition but as a natural way of engaging with art. Visual art is constantly imbued with different purposes, such as its relation to history and its social function. In other words, it is constantly given a logical purpose in order to justify its existence in the world. The benefit of apophenic as opposed to logical connection is that it is irrelevant whether the 'apophany' is real or imagined. The primary difference between the original definition of apophenia and my work is that apophenia is the patterns in

truly random data, whereas art, even if exploring chance, is of course still highly constructed. Disavowal, the intentional withholding of images and information, positions the work closer to random data as the less information provided about a work, the more it reduces the appearance of the artist's intentions, which is more likely to invite apophenic responses and more speculative engagement. Other strategies that I use to invite connections rather than attempting to predetermine them include the hanging of works with equal spacing (so that no connection between objects seems more intentional than another) and making the works as visibly neutral and reductive as possible. In many ways the *Missed Encounter* series unknowingly stemmed from my own apophenic truncation of source material, such as my work (2013) *Missed Encounter (Leap into the void)* which replaced artist Yves Klein in Klein's (1960) photograph *Leap into the Void* with *Falling Man* (see Appendix). Since this important early work in the *Missed Encounter* series, apophenia has continued to shape the forms, materials and media of my practice.

The examples provided in this document have resulted in the greatest shifts and advances of understanding my practice. As this document was written in the first half of candidature, the examples are earlier, formative works. My work (2016) *Missed Encounter (New City)* (see Appendix) is a text-based work created using computer cut vinyl and aluminium composite panel. The text says "Earth-shaking flames from the world's center roar / And make the earth around a 'New City' quiver" (Nostradamus quoted in Radford 2011). This quatrain was written by Michel de Nostradamus in the sixteenth century, which I discovered while reading about apophenia. 'Nostradamus' was the most searched term on Google following the attacks, and many sites bare fake Nostradamus prophecies that profess to relate to the attacks (Radford 2011). My interest in this narrative is the speed that the paragraph was sought out by the mass subject as well as the creation of fake quatrains, pointing to a desire to uncover (or create) information that might have been missed, which naïvely, could have prevented the attacks from happening (known as a *hindsight bias*) (TED 2010). Furthermore, I am also interested in the slippage between the translation of the paragraph from French to English. Contention surrounds the choice of 'New' as opposed to 'young' or 'modern' as a confirmation bias (where 'New' relates to 'New York', which is crucial to the reception and directness of the phrase) (Radford 2011). While highly unlikely, there is also the possibility that the quatrain did in fact directly relate to the attacks, blurring one's certainty of what is real and what is not real.

A work of mine that explores my own apophenic response to source material is *Missed Encounter (Jets)* (2016) (see Appendix). The text in this work is made from routed celuka, a common sign making material. The phrase was taken from the front page of the *New York Post* (2011) (see Appendix) where it featured as an unrelated headline alongside an image of a father who just discovered his son's name on the September 11 memorial waterfalls. Below this image was a sport update stating that 'Jets win comeback thriller'. While conscious that it was a sports update and that it did not relate to the image, the proximity and juxtaposition of the two unwillingly altered the connotations of the words (jets = planes, win = goal achieved, comeback = revenge, thriller = spectacle). This was further intensified by the seemingly unnoticed relation between the image and text by the newspaper's editorial team, which heightened my awareness of the close proximity between

horror and leisure and ethical unawareness in mainstream media through the juxtaposition of serious and non-serious articles. The phrase was reproduced in the original font, scaled to the standard size of a sheet of celuka (2400mm) and installed to occupy as much of a room as possible. This is the first work that was both generated by apophenic methods, and also attempted, naïvely to transfer and perpetuate my own subjective experience. The text was too referential to the source material and therefore too embedded in the context of the events.

Missed Encounter (Waterfalls) (2016) (see Appendix) consists of Arabic text in the centre of twelve pieces of aluminium composite panel formerly used as a bench in a sign making factory. The sentences are lines from the chorus of TLC's 1994 hit *Waterfalls*. Throughout the project I have researched the life of Mohammed Atta, the ringleader of the group who carried out the attacks, and could not help but apophenically connect various details of his life to the lyrics of the song (heard by chance), the waterfalls of the National September 11 Memorial, while also having autobiographical resonance. I translated the chorus of the song into Arabic (Atta's first language) and applied it to the bench surface that I had leaned against while employed as a sign maker. To make signs is to constantly reinforce the symbolic order, as the aim is to use pre-established conventions of meaning in a logical way, whereas apophenia is a destabilisation of meaning as it is unclear whether the meaning derived is real or not. This was the first work that I produced that related to the attacks, had personal resonances and significance and had also the ability to engage with particular social and political affects that have resulted from the attacks. The strategic reorientation of Middle Eastern signifiers by mainstream media has reoriented Arabic characters as a source of suspicion and fear in western culture (Arana 2015). To reproduce a popular western song in poorly translated Google Arabic both invites and also destabilises negative apophenic connections between the Arabic language and terrorism. This work operates similar to Jens Haaning's (2006) *Arabic joke* (see Appendix). This work illustrates how disavowal can enrich creative practice as the original source material, my subjective experience of Atta's biography and the song *Waterfalls* creates a haven for apophenic responses to various signifiers. This work speaks more broadly of the social and political ramifications of the attacks, and therefore relevant to the current political climate. Along with the subject matter, the ways in which these works are installed also generate and are generated by apophenic connections.

I insert numerous 'red herrings' into my work; elements that are completely unrelated to my exploration of the events juxtaposed with elements that are, in order to induce apophenia and disrupt (at least for me) straightforward readings of the installations. For example, my work (2016) *Missed Encounter (101.1%)* (see Appendix) consists of two grey paintings in which I aimed to achieve 50% grey. One was made in a black room and one in a white room. The differently toned rooms made the tones in each painting appear lighter and darker respectively. I calculated exactly what tone of grey each painting was on a scale of 0-100% and painted the value on each canvas in neutral grey oil paint. As suspected, the tone of the room influenced the tone of grey in the paintings to a similar degree (approximately 3.5%). Despite being a simple experiment in visual perception, the works signifiers become imbued with meaning in the context of the practice and the events, such as the colour, use of statistics and symbolism of two canvases.

As mentioned in the methodology, works are selected and installed on a formal and apophenic basis and are photographed and uploaded to my artist website. This process generates a space where works can be organised on a momentary apophenic basis, as opposed to the generally didactic and rigid formal and conceptual strategies of institutional curation, such as chronology and using art as social and historical documents. Far from comprehensive or absolute, this fluidity also acknowledges and invites the possibility of new interpretive connections emerging from the proximity of works. An example of this is in the arrangement of works *Rebus* (2016) (see Appendix). *Rebus* consisted of five works arranged in a gallery space. *Missed Encounter (Diagram)* is a digital print on aluminium composite panel that depicts a vertical gradient from RGB light grey to dark grey, truncated by a 1 inch strip of CMYK grey. *Missed Encounter (Contributors)* is a digital print depicting the September 11 attacks arranged as if they were authors in an art magazine. *Missed Encounter (Monument)* is a stretched canvas facing the floor with the reverse painted dark grey, with a small cardboard box placed in the centre. *Missed Encounter (6.72%ers)* is an aluminium composite panel text work with “6.72%ers” in silver vinyl. *Missed Encounter (Return of the Real)* consists of two monochromatic paintings, one grey and one black which seem to be concealing an image. Finally, *Missed Encounter (for Richard Drew)* reproduces the lines generated by the different floors of the World Trade Centres in the Falling Man image. After installing the works, new and genuinely unexpected connections between works continued to emerge, destabilising the original context of the objects and suggesting that further connections will emerge from recombination and reinstallation. Particularly pronounced was the pervasiveness of grey, black and white in my practice, the doubling of objects, the significance of surface and the conceptual opacity of the collection, some of which were not immediately apparent to me when I made the individual items. These aspects of the work can be identified and used to develop new works. As demonstrated, apophenia has had a positive influence on both the selection of source material and installation of works. Another creative strategy that has emerged from the project is reenactment.

Once more...with feeling: reenactment as a method of approaching and making images

In this creative practice section, I will discuss the second creative strategy that has emerged in my practice-led research. This includes the use of reenactment as a generative tool for practice.

Reenactment has a range of creative possibilities and ethical complexities. The Old Masters, through necessity, used models to reenact historic religious scenes (Schama 2006). As my practice aims to create an apophenic space of disavowal, clear narratives are of no interest in this project. The lack of contextual information involved in disavowal shifts the focus of reenactment narrative to the very act of reenacting.

Reenactment consists of responding to source material by recreating it in a different context, and reenacting the processes and formal qualities of selected examples of conceptual art. In *The Return of the Real*, Hal Foster (1996c, 138) defines his formulation of *Traumatic Illusionism* in terms of Photorealist artists, who he believes were anxious to suppress the traumatic real. Foster (1996c, 141-

145) viewed the ability of paint to conceal a surface, and the Photorealists' emphasis on controlling the paint to represent the symbolic order, as a deliberate 'screening' of the real. Inversely, Foster views works like Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series, where the paint is allowed to behave more autonomously as synonymous with allowing the pure desires of the real to exist on the picture plane. While this screening of the real via representational painting was once the case in my practice, reenactment has caused me to loosen this screening of the real, allowing a greater degree of chance and thus allowing the real to reveal itself more frequently. As discussed by Robert Blackson (2007, 29), reenactment is often confused with reproduction, repetition and simulation, and the distinction between these terms was also important in psychoanalysis, with Lacan stating, in terms of reliving traumatic experiences involuntarily, that "repetition is not reproduction" (Lacan quoted in Foster 1996a, 42). According to (Blackson 2007, 29) reenactment as a methodology differs from these other strategies, however, as rather than reproducing the material (creating a new copy of the original) repeating it (representing the original exactly) or simulating it (reenacting the original artificially), reenactment "invites transformation", creating a space for unique and pseudo-fictional results. Using reenactment I aim to make works that detach from the referent, creating new and 'original' objects. I think of originality in my practice as the result of a failure or accident. In other words, originality is the by-product of not being able to translate an existing image or object exactly, resulting in a *simulacrum*, an "unsatisfactory imitation or substitution" of the source material (Oxford Dictionaries n.d). Parker Phillips (2016, 22) summarises a renewed interest in the act of translating historical source material, stating that:

These artists surrender themselves to mnemonic cartography - weaving historical references, found images and pastiche into complex narratives that meander through emotional terrain (however camouflaged). Their interest in history and the archive is not tinged by nostalgia but is driven by curiosity and an understanding of the generative potential implicit in acts of translation and transmutation.

Using reenactment as a creative strategy, I can engage with the material (obscenely) while also disavowing it. This creates slippages and friction between the source material and the reenactment that has assisted to extend the works beyond the event. This is important in my practice as the identification of the attacks as subject matter orients discussions of my work overwhelmingly in terms of experiences of the events, and neglects discussions of other prominent aspects of the actual works and the way in which they are displayed.

In terms of the attacks, there are three main crude positions; victims, perpetrators and witnesses, and at least two of these positions shift in accordance with one's own political views of the events. Part of reenactment in my practice is placing myself in position of others to attempt to understand their experience. To reenact the physical experience of victims generates a complex identification process that extends beyond Foster's (1996a, 53-55) comments about witnessing. That is to say, one cannot fully understand what it feels like to fall until one has fallen. To reenact the physical experience of the perpetrators generates an even more complex identification, as to attempt to bodily understand the actions of 'evil' individuals other than in the service of a formal investigation is suspicious and morally

questionable. Reenactment in my practice disregards (or at least avoids) ethical debates in order to be as objective as possible, and attempts to understand the actions of others (whether forced or by choice) in a truly corporeal way. Two projects that illustrate the different ways that reenactment operates in my practice are *Missed Encounter (Atta_Hand)* and *Missed Encounter (Leap)*.

Missed Encounter (Leap) (2016) (see Appendix) is a project that has taken many forms but was inspired by the first bungee jump I took on February 7th, 2016 which was recorded by video. The first action I took with the material was to convert the video to still images and isolate the event from just before leaving the platform to full extension of the bungee cord. I also heavily cropped the image to make the figure larger. Using the clone tool in Photoshop, I removed the bungee cord from each frame and created a video from the frames. Resembling a GIF, the approximately four second clip is a choppy, degraded account of the jump. The figure is followed by a blurry, oscillating cloud where the cord was as a result of my lack of expertise with the clone tool. I created different versions of the video; leaving the footage uncropped, removing the figure, and looping the footage so that the figure appeared to bounce endlessly. However, these results were not as generative as the first video, as the absence of the figure, small scale of the figure and looping of the video in each instance all lacked the most affective aspects of the original; the prominence of the figure, the shuddering of the individual frames and the violent replaying of the action.

Discouraged by the limitations of displaying the video on a digital device, I became interested in the possibilities of presenting the images as objects, so I printed the photographs at 4 x 6 inches and arranged them into grids in poster frames. Unexpectedly, the images formed an unusual, wave-like pattern, with each frame unique due to the change in the tone of the sky on descent. Acknowledging the distinct religiosity of this arrangement on the wall (i.e. the history of the triptych in religious art), the frames were exhibited propped against the wall in a row, as they would be in the studio (or sign factory). *Missed Encounter (Leap II)* (2016) (see Appendix) was a milestone in the series as the *Missed Encounter* series began with an image of Falling Man edited onto Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void*. *Missed Encounter (Leap II)* represented a full cycle in the series, which was completed by reenacting, in part, Klein's performance and a short section of Falling Man's fall. Reenacting these events created empathy for how it feels to fall on which my future depictions and understanding of falling depended. Reenactment allowed me to explore the obscene image of the Falling Man, while also disavowing it. The differences between the original image and my image (such as the background and the head cam) truncate straightforward interpretations of the work as it also explores themes such as risk in extreme sports, which are not related to Falling Man. Furthermore, any connection between the work and Falling Man, due to the disavowal of the work's contextual information, is apophenic as without my confirmation one could not be sure what led to the image's creation. Unlike the original source material of the attacks and Falling Man, the images that form *Missed Encounter (Leap II)* continue to lend themselves to new forms and methods of display, positioning reenactment as a highly generative strategy in my practice.

Another strand of my creative works that employs reenactment as a creative strategy is (2016) *Missed Encounter (Atta_Hand)* (see Appendix). *Missed Encounter (Atta_Hand)* initially consisted of a

TrueType font created using the characters from the anthrax laced letters received by politicians in the days following September 11 and resulted in five deaths (The New York Times 2010). The letters were originally believed to have been sent by September 11 ringleader Mohammed Atta. Various comparisons have been made between the written characters in the letters and characters on Atta's official documents. The conclusion was reached that the anthrax attacks were carried out by Army Biodefence Expert Bruce E. Ivins (Shane 2010). Unexpectedly, the *Missed Encounter (Atta_Hand)* project became a reenactment of a reenactment of Atta's handwriting. I used this font to write and paint phrases such as 'PRIVACY EXCHANGE WITH A (COLLECTION SPACE FOR THE) PEEPING TOM' onto card in my work (2016) *Missed Encounter (Privacy Exchange)* (see Appendix). This phrases was derived from Gordon Matta-Clark's (1973) *Letter from Gordon Matta-Clark to Carol Goodden / The Meeting* (see Appendix) which proposed the destruction of the World Trade Centre's written on airmail paper. By writing Matta-Clark's text in what I thought was Mohammed Atta's handwriting established an apophenic link between subversive artists and terrorists, which, similar to bungy jumping in an exploration of the September 11 attacks, has an implicit vulgarity that is avoided via disavowal. There is also the possibility that Atta did in fact write the letters, and therefore my work also draws attention to the general lack of certainty that surrounds the attacks to this day.

Creating a typeface that reenacts material based on apophenia, and using it to explore and perpetuate apophenia, the practice-led enquiry moves further towards complete fiction, which, combined with liberating the practice from the source events and imagery of September 11 also radically increases the amount of source material available to the practice. By reenacting rather than reproducing, repeating or simulating, the original source material is treated as the beginning of an enquiry that is bigger, more generative and more complex than that which it came from. The new motifs and languages that emerge from reenactment are more likely to engage with other unexpected areas, diversifying experiences of the works and extending the possible number of iterations, with these two particular projects continuing to find new forms.

Conclusion

In summary, this project began with a desire to create works that addressed the September 11 attacks directly. A complex mix of political, ethical, aesthetic and social factors that are impossible to prove has suppressed the open exploration of the September 11 attacks in visual art. However, through the unpredictable dead-ends, epiphanies, 'apophanies', discoveries and slowly emerging knowledge that give practice-led research it's unique qualities, the project had to adapt to these external influences. To its own benefit, the project evolved into a study of the effects of suggestion and elision (which I have identified as apophenia), as a result of a particular type of abstraction (which I have called disavowal). This process of disavowal, consisting of abstracting and withholding images in my practice, invites unexpected and irrational connections between my creative works, known as apophenia. Apophenia and disavowal have proven to be key discoveries in this project, yet they were only made possible through the critical exploration and analysis of the attacks and their scholarship, which I both aligned

my practice with and began to define my practice against. Shifting my work from the definitive to the suggestive has provided a generative studio environment, more sophisticated outputs and material for further investigation (*The Encounter: apophenia in visual art*, Proposed PhD, 2019). My creative practice has used the imagery of the September 11 attacks as a point of orientation which has evolved into a continually expanding area of investigation beyond and separate to these events, therefore expanding and enriching my creative practice. Disavowal and apophenia are not new findings; these ideas have always been deeply even if unknowingly embedded in the *Missed Encounter* series and in the history of visual art and aesthetics. However, analysing these ideas in depth has resulted in a sustainable and replicable studio methodology.

By naming and articulating these studio processes and approaching the attacks indirectly through disavowal, the works have shifted from representations of the attacks (which tended to be designated into trauma discourse) to ambiguous artworks which can exist in a range of curatorial contexts. This project began as an attempt to explore the disavowal of the attacks and the perception of art that is concerned with September 11. Slowly the practice adapted to these complex factors; instead, utilising a single, shocking event to explore the mechanics of my own subjectivities, and broader notions of looking and witnessing. I look forward to discovering where these developments will lead in the future.

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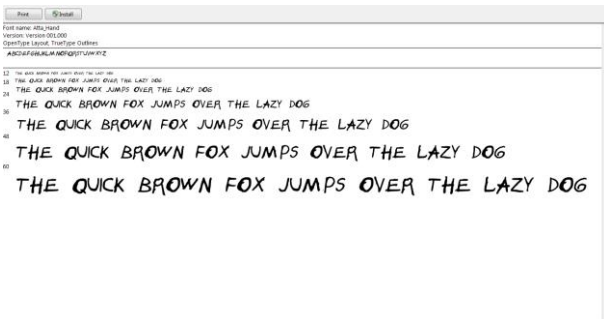
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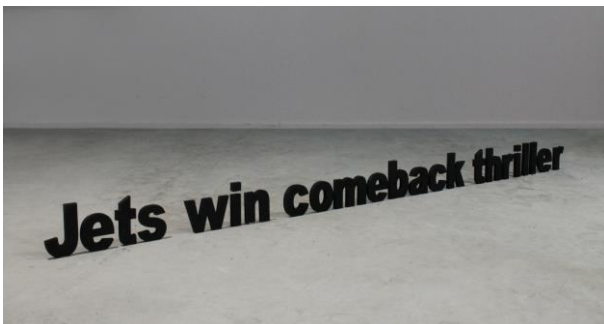
Appendix



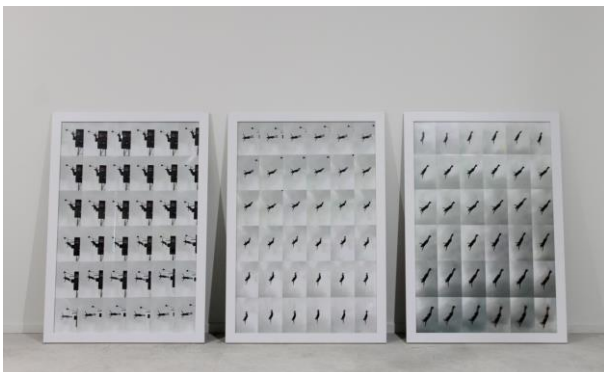
Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (101.1%)*, 2016, oil and acrylic on canvas, two parts



Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (Atta_Hand)*, 2016, TrueType font



Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (Jets)*, 2016, celuka



Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (Leap II)*, 2016, photographs in frames, three parts

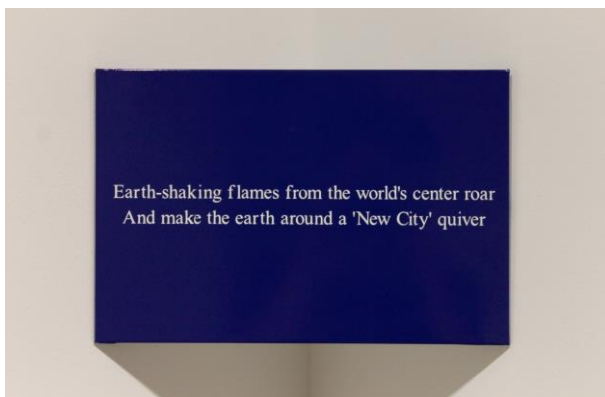


Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (Leap)*, 2016, digital video

<https://vimeo.com/164885670>



Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (Leap into the void)*, 2013, digital image



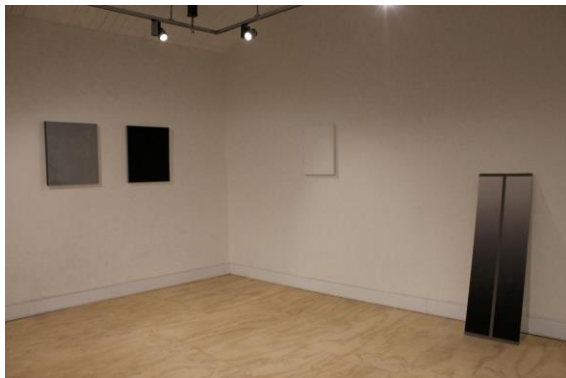
Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (New City)*, 2016, vinyl on aluminium composite panel



Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (Privacy Exchange)*, 2016, acrylic on card, 65 x 90cm

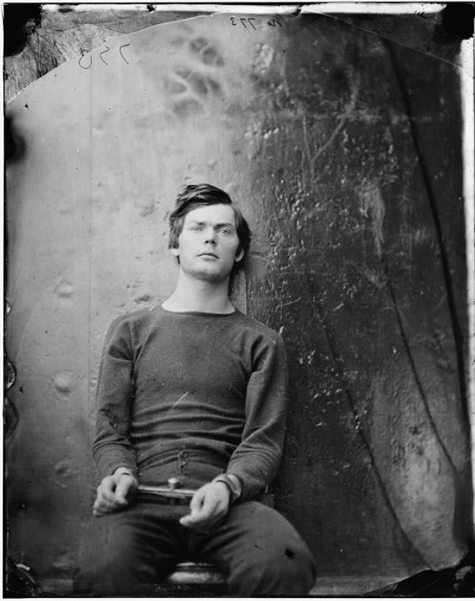


Aaron Butt, *Missed Encounter (Waterfalls)*, 2016, marker on aluminium composite panel, 12 parts



Aaron Butt, *Rebus*, 2016, installation





Alexander Gardner, *Portrait of Lewis Payne*, 1865, albumen photograph



Auguste Rodin, *The Three Shades*, 1886, bronze (similar to destroyed version)



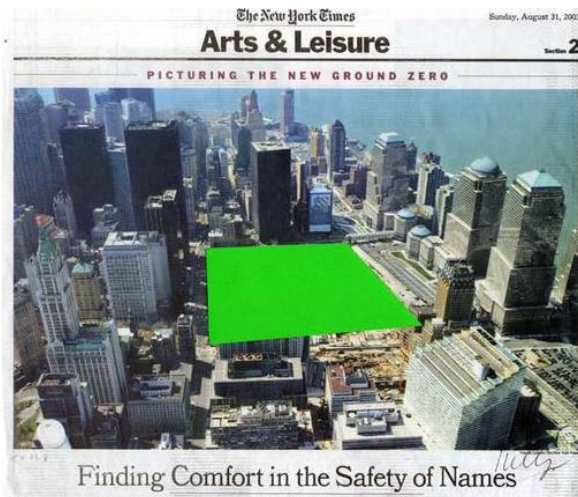
Carolee Schneemann, *Terminal Velocity*, 2001, inkjet on paper



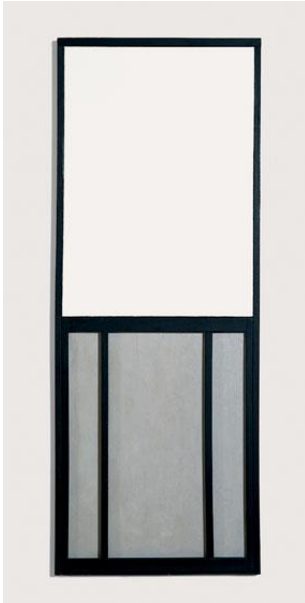
Diane Arbus, *Blowing newspaper at a crossroad, N.Y.C, 1956*, gelatin silver print



Edouard Salier, *Flesh*, 2005, animation



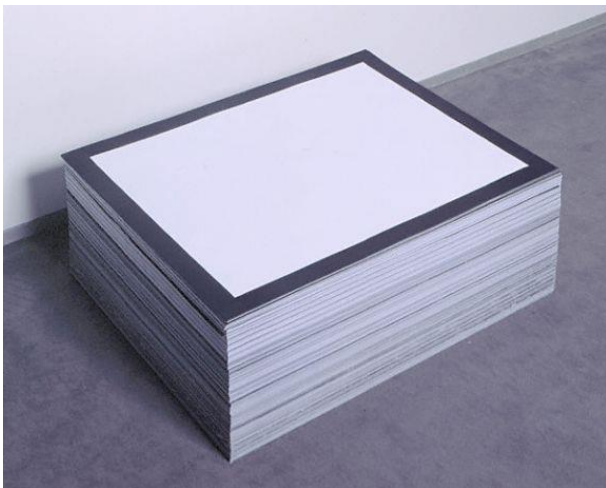
Ellsworth Kelly, *Ground Zero*, 2003, collage



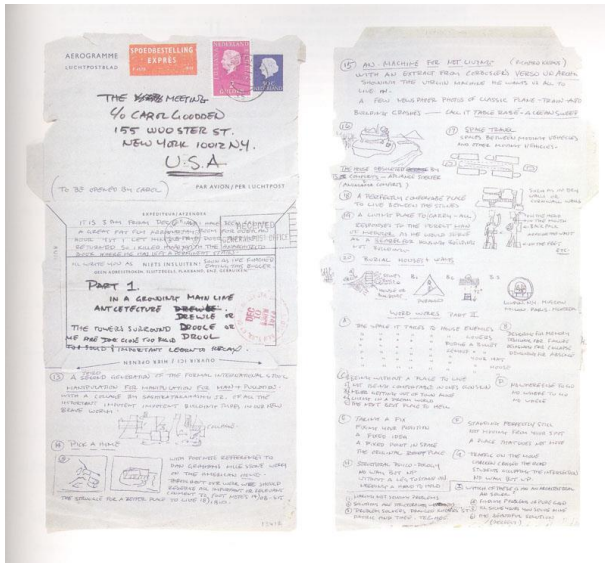
Ellsworth Kelly, *Window*, *Museum of Modern Art, Paris*, 1949, oil on wood



Eric Fischl, *Tumbling Woman*, 2002, bronze



Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (The End)*, 1990, print on paper, endless copies



Gordon Matta-Clark, *Letter from Gordon Matta-Clark to Carol Goodden / The Meeting*, 1973, pen and marker on blue airmail paper with stamps



Jens Hanning, *Arabic Joke*, 2006, poster



Kira Kim, *Co-ordinated - it's your around*, 2005. Single channel DVD



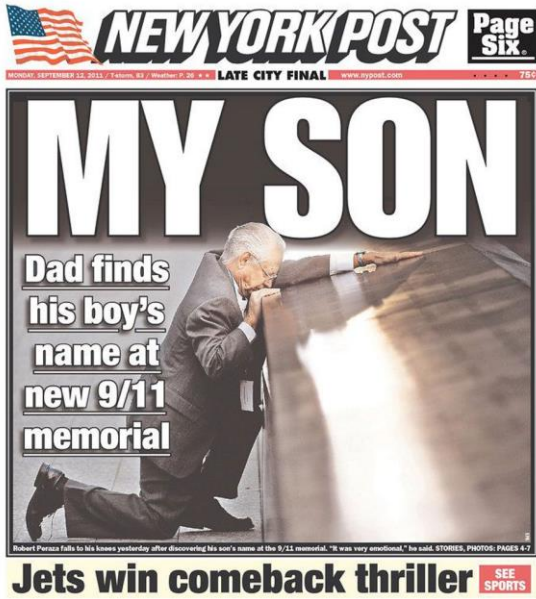
Leonora Hamill, *I was much too far out all my life*, 2008. Single channel DVD



Martin Creed, *Work No. 1638*, 2013, iron beams



Martin Creed, *Work No. 203*, 1999, neon



New York Post, "My Son: Dad finds his boy's name at new 9/11 memorial", 2011



On Kawara, *Sept. 13, 2001* from the *Today* series, 2001, Liquitex on canvas



Pink Twins, *Pulse*, 2006



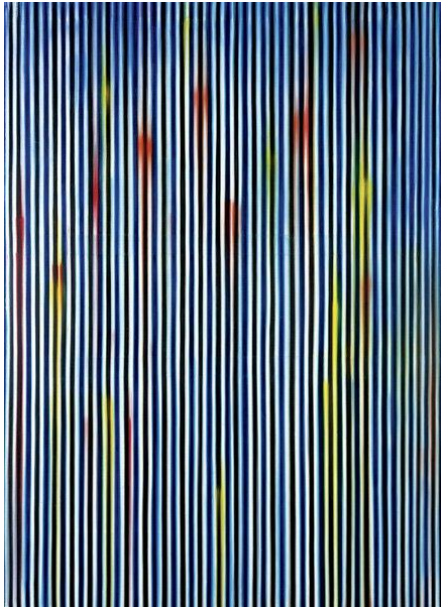
Robert Gober, *Untitled*, 1990, beeswax, cotton, wood



Richard Drew, *Falling Man*, 2001, digital image



Roger Brown, *World's Tallest Disaster*, 1972, oil and magma on canvas



Ross Bleckner, *Fallen Sky*, 1985, oil on canvas



Stephen Danzig and David Sudmalis, *Un_Place*, 2008, video installation



Thomas Hirschhorn, *Mondrian Altar*, 1997, mixed mediums



Thomas Hoepker, *“Young people relax during their lunch break along the East River while a huge plume of smoke rises from Lower Manhattan after the attack on the World Trade Center”*, 2001, photograph



Yves Klein, *Leap into the void*, 1960, gelatin silver print