

# ART REPORT TODAY

*A Beautiful Deep Dive into Our Worldwide Arts + Culture*

## **Q&A with HILLS SNYDER, 2024**

**With Questions by James Hart, Patrick Kikut, Chris Oglesby, Tonee Harbert, Alison Hearst, Barbara Grothus, Michael Thompson (Myskoke), Jerry Wellman, Marcia Butler, Michael Bisbee, Jeremiah Teutsch, Justin Boyd, Chris Taylor, Melynda Seaton, Chad Dawkins, Bett Williams, Barbara Purcell, Alex Gregory, Hannah Dean, Bruce Holsapple, Sara Jayne-Parsons, Nancy Zastudil, Jess Johnson, Jennifer Davy, Lynne Maphies, Scott Sherer, Jeff McMillan, Andrew Weathers, Deana Craighead, Marisa Sage, Taylor Ernst, Bryan Wheeler, Violette Bule, Karla Milosevich, Celia Álvarez Muñoz**

Art Report Today's virtual Gallery One was pleased to present 'Altered States (Part Seven),' an art work by Hills Snyder in 2020. The show comprised a series of drawings, 'Altered States', maps, time, place and our humanity over many road trip miles.

The landscape of this show was so expansive, we thought it fitting to let artists, curators, art writers, critics and gallerists ask the big questions in our Q&A, Part One.

Today we present Q&A, Part Two, 2024, on the occasion of 'Altered States' (Part Eight) opening at Phil Space, Santa Fe, NM.

~ Gordy Grundy, December 7, 2024, *Art Report Today*

“Certainties deaden the heart and shackle the imagination.”

--- Ivan Illich

“If you’re going to put your tongue in your cheek, don’t point at it with your tonsils.”

--- The Intoxicating Angel

### **James Hart, artist, Director, Phil Space, Santa Fe, NM**

Hills, living with *Altered States* in my exhibition space, as well as having you stay in my home some days in the past month has felt to me like a wild crash course on you and your art. Conversations with you, and now my interactions with visitors to the gallery are all charged with an endless train of ideas and thought-provoking responses that your drawings evoke. I could ask about your thoughts on the road trips of Lewis and Clark, Tocqueville, and Kerouac; the writings of Wallace Stegner; and the voyage of Ed Ricketts and John Steinbeck to the Sea of Cortez.

Or ask about your thoughts on Non-teleological thinking, and if you know about the Traveling Salesmen Problem, the model and make of your vehicle, and on and on and on.

The value of the ideas your drawings evoke in regards to how we stand now looking at current conditions of the American West and our life on this earth cannot be pushed aside or diminished, but for me now, I cannot ask you a question having to do with those subjects because I feel doing so would just add to a compilation of thoughts and word.

“There's something happening here, and I don't know what it is.”

My Question for you is: Taken individually, do you see your *Altered States* drawings as Descansos?

I like this question so much. Descansos proliferate like the 25<sup>th</sup> hour of scattered love rising alongside so many of the roads I am repeatedly on in New Mexico. I usually mark these moments internally when I pass by or through them. Each is so specific to the person it is about and they are so well attended to and maintained, with additions. You can feel the concern and connection.

*Eden, Utah 3* could be a Descanso for an exhausted nation, asleep at the wheel, with power towers anchored in hillsides harboring valleys deep enough for grief, with antennas as proxy crosses...

But really, this is a beautiful idea that I had not considered. Just thinking about the drawings in this way, as marking the missing, has enlarged the project.



*Eden, Utah 3*

The Traveling Salesmen Problem you mentioned is easily solved with The Wayside Ploy which posits that the shortest line between two points is in actuality the least efficient way to travel because the true purpose of the trip is always unknown. There is some relevant material in *Altered States*, Part One, Glasstire, November 1, 2016.

There was a time driving through Wyoming when a large lime green rubber ball came bouncing across the road in front of me. There was nothing but grass for miles in a wide expanse beneath a mountain range in the distance. No human indications of any kind, not even a fence. I decided to retrieve the ball and pulled over. It was a high wind, so now the energy that brought the ball into view was working against the retrieval, but after several minutes I got it when it lodged against a couple of trees. It rode in the truck the rest of that trip and

lived in the yard in San Antonio for several years before being left behind when we moved to Magdalena.

Ford Ranger.

**Patrick Kikut, artist, Co-director, No Man's Land,  
Santa Fe, NM**

I have a curiosity about how you set out for your destinations. I wonder how you map your trips.

The route is determined by the locations of American towns with evocative names which might speak to the actual or idealized state of the nation. I view the place names of the primary destinations in the project as if they are written on the walk-boards of a scaffolding erected around some larger than life something that isn't there. It is this developing scaffolding that will eventually define the contour. A case could be made that there are typologies of similarity, veins of like-ness, running through the places I've chosen to define the route, but my type is so specific, a representation of "the American character," such that similarities to other types of town names disappears. Waterloo and Donnybrook or Eden and Opportunity exist in a conversation that is different than a conversation about odd or funny town names.

Do you wander or Beeline it to get as many locations in as you have time for?

Wandering is the mode. Since I'm collecting photographs from which to draw, there are lots of lateral moves, lingers, and stops.

Do you try to bring along music or books that would be appropriate for the given locations?

I carried a copy of Mark Twain's *Life on The Mississippi* with me as I drove a line always west of that river.

An unrealized project I've thought about has to do with transposing experiences on I-35 with those on The Mississippi. 35 is an Interstate

Highway connecting Laredo, on the Texas/Mexico border with Duluth, Minnesota, 160 miles east of the headwaters.

I didn't crack the book on the trip, just had it laying there as a touchstone of Americana. It was written before the Civil War about the author's life as a steamboat captain, so as an artifact it exists before and after the historical watershed that we can only know from this side. We are still living in the wake of it.

Do you prefer to travel alone or with company?

For a project, probably alone.

What does an ideal trip look like to you?

In the project, I'm wrestling with ideal vs. real, macro vs. micro, peripheral vs. façade, etc., so the ideal trip would involve plenty that is less than ideal.

### **Chris Oglesby, artist, creator of Virtual Lubbock, Austin, TX**

I am interested in and often fascinated by an artist's method in producing a piece, as much as in the art itself. How do you transport your art materials while you are traveling? For instance, but not limited to this example, do you have a special case, bag, or box with a story?

I used a Canon digital camera that wore out from use. All the drawing happened later, by just looking at a selected photo for a few minutes. Some initial decisions create a space in the drawing that is not in the photo. I follow that.

I do have a bag that I found in Chavin, Peru. It is made of pinkish-red faux-corduroy, with a strap, odd buckles, a chrome and orange smiley face emblem, a drawstring, and a torn lining. The best features are odd black leather shapes of a hand and foot sewn onto it. What I carry in it varies.

When on the road making art, where do you sit (or stand or recline) to draw?

The rule I followed was to photograph everything that I had an impulse to shoot, without question. I only knew why sometimes.

I was tempted to recline on this random roadside mattress I came across after a particularly long couple of days trying to find Bummerville.



*Bald Mountain Road, California*

**Tonee Harbert, artist, Director, Anderson Museum, Roswell, NM**

How did you find Bummerville, California?

Like the bear in the song, I went over the mountain. In this case, the Sierra Nevada. Twice.

**Alison Hearst, Curator, Modern Art Museum of Ft. Worth, TX**

What do you listen to on these frequent road trips?

From my point of view, there is no understanding of the country possible without an ongoing appreciation of American music, but for *Altered States* I made a point of not listening to anything. I wanted the circle of influence to be within viewable reach. I made an exception and listened to Mohammed Ali's memorial for several hours as I drove through Arizona in June of 2016.

**Barbara Grothus, artist, Albuquerque, NM**

I admire the confidence of your lines. I reexamined images by some personal drawing heroes. They are often more sketchy, though their lines are sure in my mind. I'm an eraser.

the track of the train  
cuts a line through the terrain  
a line  
I drew with my own hand

Your writing has a depth and lyricism that regularly wanders, and I lose my way, though maybe I'll reach Bummerville one day.

Your process with the photos seems both lyrical and certain, perhaps like fingering the strings in the music, written and played. Is there a feeling that connects the sureness of your fingers with the pencil and the strings?

Your question makes me think of The Clovers' *Pennies from Heaven*. The piano notes are all on high end of the keyboard, conflating the plink of falling pennies with the sound of raindrops.

In the moment of the gesture, I reach for a sure hand whether I find it or not, whether I'm drawing or playing guitar.

Are there drawings that fail, that you discard?



Some are more satisfying than others, but I see this process to be one of documentation, so I don't discard them.

Do you start over? Is there a point of no return?

No. And I make a point of stopping before I think I should.

**Michael Thompson (Mvskoke), poet, teacher, rancher, Crystal, NM**

One of the aspects of your work that most intrigues me is the tension/balance in the liminal space between exteriority and interiority. Given that your wanderings are so often among literally wide-open spaces, is it fair to assume that your inner self has evolved a similar boundless sense of freedom?

Boundlessness is not something I can assume I'm feeling, but thinking about this in terms of the story being told, it feels as if "exterior" has been a random series of discoveries within a guiding aspect that is not random, a given day's specific destination within the purposes of the project. "Interior" is indeed released on the road from the parameters of daily work, such that imagination plays a role that is less linear than the highway, but I was always aware of driving at the center of circle defined by the length of my vision in any given direction.

Given the omnipresent intrusion of the man-made and industrial upon the natural world, which you so keenly note, are there ever moments in certain spaces that strike you as surprisingly pure, wholly graced?

The parallel wood that I happened onto in Oklahoma felt as though it was a place apart. I knew nothing of it prior to walking into it. It had a bit of a "Tron" feeling because you're moving through a grid of trees planted equidistantly. Each point of reference is every point of reference. Ariadne's thread came immediately to mind, but I got no sensation of Minotaur. It might be a place where the membrane gets thin—as you say, liminal.

You appear, to me at least, to use color both sparingly and yet precisely. I sense a particular palette in your pocket. Are certain hues essential to your creative language?

The appearance of color in these small drawings is intuitive and somewhat impulsive, but with restraint. I've always been partial to a blue orange brown cluster and a blue maroon yellow cluster.

**Jerry Wellman, research investigator and arts fabricator, Co-Director, Axle Contemporary, Santa Fe, NM**

How do the "amateur" investigations into philosophy shape your art work, and art working process?

The conversation we had at the opening about Timothy Morton was a highlight of the evening.

*Stairway to Heaven*, a work from 2000, featured drawings of the "smiley cross" installed from the floor toward the ceiling in stair-stepped rows. Each row of drawings was half the size of the previous row. The first three drawings, arranged like a step in a corner, were 32 inches square. These were followed by rows of drawings 16 inches, 8, 4, 2, down the final row of 48 one-inch drawings staircasing their way to one half inch from the ceiling. Zeno's Dichotomy Paradox...

Yesterday I was considering how one corner of any cardboard box is by necessity made with a seam. That seam speaks directly to an aspect of the human condition. We know there is the seam, but where is it?

**Marcia Butler, author, doc film maker, designer, musician, Santa Fe, NM**

Hills, I've seen two groupings of your drawings — those based on Magdalena at Warehouse 1-10 (in Magdalena) and your large project at Phil Space in Santa Fe. With every picture I wondered about the lines not drawn, or, the story not told. I relate to this as an author. There's the linear narrative and then the details a writer leaves out in such a way that the

reader may intuit them on their own. All of which leads me to ask: In making these pictures, did you think about what to omit on a conscious level, or was it intuitive? Also, absolutely everyone in New Mexico and maybe even Texas too, wants to know what's in your sock drawer, other than socks.

Maybe intuitive at the beginning, then conscious when something begins to appear. In addition, there is a constant readiness for the unplanned, which I also keep in my sock drawer.

I like the incomplete in fiction because life is incomplete.

### **Michael Bisbee, artist, Magdalena, NM**

Do you plan to forage through additional states if this is an ongoing project?

Yes, if opportunities arise, I'd like to complete the map west of the Mississippi, by going to Fair Play, Missouri; Mayflower, Arkansas; Arcadia, Louisiana; Culdesac, Idaho; Halfway, Oregon; and Crystal Mountain, Washington.

Your visual language seems to have been very consistent throughout. Have you encountered situations where you felt a need to expand your range or use different media (photo-collage, sound, found objects, etc.)?

The first iteration of *Altered States* was just the first fifty drawings made at Ucross shown in small grids separated by space and organized according to place: Nowhere, Lost, Happy, Opportunity, Bummerville, etc. were applied to the wall in four-inch letters, hand calligraphed with ebony pencil by my friend Jeremiah Teutsch.

The most recent version of the show, at Phil Space in Santa Fe, features some tears drawn on the wall in opposing relationships with gravity.

When the show appeared in Lubbock, it was shown with *How Big Is Your Love?* a life-scale drawing of a '59 Cadillac convertible, acknowledging the road in another way. And the online serial narrative is another media riding parallel. These are the versions that

have stepped outside the grid on this project. But anything could happen.

### **Jeremiah Teutsch, artist, San Antonio, TX**

I know you're a huge fan of film, so I can only imagine that the title of your project is a direct reference to Ken Russell's film of the same name. I guess I'd like to know if your drawings are done while you're in an "altered state" in some form or other. (Not even necessarily psychedelics; the main character of the film has some "altered state" experiences just being in an isolation tank.) Incidentally, *Altered States* is one of my favorite visual effects movies, and it really had an impact on me when I first saw it as a weirdo teenager, so I've always appreciated you calling your project *Altered States*.

I did see and like the film, but that phrase "altered states" seems almost like public domain to me, so I don't believe I was thinking of the film. I knew it first as the title of a Charles Tart book. Maybe the film and my project are both referencing some third thing. The movie is a worthy retelling of stories like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The Wolfman, Frankenstein, and other fictional inquiries into the ethics of evolution.

Just the focused fun of drawing is altered state enough. But really, no, that wouldn't be my way. Setting myself a task while tripping would be a waste of good medicine.

### **Justin Boyd, artist, musician, San Antonio, TX**

When I see the *Altered States* body of work, I feel I am experiencing both the past and present simultaneously, but through the haze of memory. Do the lines of energy and negative spaces relate in any way to multi-dimensionality?

Yeah, I like to say these drawings are quantum fantasies—quantum, because I can't see into that world; fantasy because I'm pretending I can.

There is a specific abandoned gas station on 380 in New Mexico I'm thinking of. It's a bit of a self-contained miniature apocalypse mixed with nostalgia for a time when highways, far flung gas stations, and neon motels were the new aesthetic of freedom in America.

Coming upon traces of previous human presence and decay on the road is like being present in someone else's past. Or maybe the family car stopped there for fuel when I was a kid. A *La Jette* vibe is what I'm getting thinking about it right now.

**Chris Taylor, Director, Land Arts of The American West at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX**

Reading through your *Altered States* notes and drawings I found myself thinking of one of my favorite Charles Bowden books *Blood Orchid* (Random House, 1995). Pulling it off the shelf just now it opened to a page I had marked, which also included a boarding pass of a 'frequent traveler' {that I do not know} for US Air flight 133 on 6 January {no year} from Providence, Rhode Island to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at 7:15am, seat 13F. The marked paragraph reads:

"Imagine the problem is not physical. Imagine the problem has never been physical, that it is not biodiversity, it is not the ozone layer, it is not the greenhouse effect, the whales, the old-growth forest, the loss of jobs, the crack in the ghetto, the abortions, the tongue in the mouth, the diseases stalking everywhere as love goes on unconcerned. Imagine the problem is not some syndrome of our society that can be solved by commissions or laws or a redistribution of what we call wealth. Imagine that it goes deeper, right to the core of what we call our civilization and that no one outside of ourselves can effect real change, that our civilization, our governments, are sick and that we are mentally ill and spiritually dead and that all our issues and crises are symptoms of this deeper sickness. Imagine the problem is not that we are powerless or that we are victims but that we have lost the fire and belief and courage to act. We hear whispers of the future but we slap our hands against our ears, we catch glimpses but turn our faces swiftly aside."

I'm struck by how much all this interconnects, and with this moment in the early evening of 3 November 2024. I'm impressed with your commitment to

venture out there, to look, listen, engage, and bring back whispers for others. You are not turning away. The openness of your drawings appears as opportunities for other stories, other futures (as well as other pasts) to develop. I'm curious first if you are familiar with Bowden's *Blood Orchid*, particularly his last ride with Robert Sundance from Los Angeles to Montana? And, perhaps, more importantly, how talk of these whispers, or screams, resonate with the expansive pursuits of your project?

I don't know *Blood Orchid*, but now that you've pointed me to it, I've just read a review of it that I liked. The review turned out to be by William Kittredge, a writer I got into when I lived in Montana.

The last two lines of the passage you marked are reminiscent I think of *Won't Get Fooled Again*, especially the line, "the hypnotized never lie." Townshend was always good at including himself as a target in his cultural critiques.

So, yeah, what I read of the Bowden book resonates.

Other pasts. I'm very interested in this. Drawn to the abandoned and neglected stuff that piles up along the edges of human habitat. We drive past these scenes in the present, seeing them as the dilapidated past. It's that then futuristic moment of new highways and regional motels, frequently gone to ruin as we move toward a future that will contain the relics of our present. So, the apocalypse is in the past, a visual premonition of our future. But really, I think the apocalypse is a place in the human psyche. Possibly right next to the misaligned "conspiracy theory" structure.

I don't think I'm venturing more than anyone else is, so I'm not sure what I may be bringing back that people don't already know.

**Melynda Seaton, Associate Professor of Art History & Gallery Director,  
East Texas A & M University, Commerce, TX**

I see your project as capturing the iconography of the "West" and the essence of the places you've visited. How do you define the West? Do you see your work adding to the myth or deconstructing it?

One defining characteristic of the West is that the physical region only fought in the American Civil War around the edges, with just a few of battles in the Great Plains west of a line formed by the eastern borders of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. And these three states combine for a cultural constellation that informs the rest of the West: Free State Kansas, Indian Territory Oklahoma, and Confederate State Texas. There are other prominent edges too—the Mississippi River, the Continental Divide, flows of water and music.

Film and literature are a huge part of the mythmaking and its deconstruction. To get at the Myth you need both, the ideal and the real.

BTW, I recommend a book, *Scorpio Rising* by R.G. Vliet.

Follow-up question: Thinking about iconography, your “icons” appear in a void, a departure from stereotypical American Western Art that emphasizes grand vistas of the natural landscape. Despite the imagery being derived from physical places you travel to, the “icons” are removed from their original context and the physical landscape in which they reside. Since traveling to places is central to the project, how do you see the imagery representing place when the physical landscape is missing?

Thanks to what the indigenous populations have known for centuries and seven John Ford films, Monument Valley has become important in Western iconography, yet those cinematic vistas are filled with emptiness and negative space. The open-ness of the space is no less a presence than are the Mittens and Merrick Butte.

That landscape and the high desert of eastern Oregon are different flavors of open space, and John Ford’s widescreen is tempered by the frame of pioneer women’s bonnets in Kelly Reichert’s *Meeks Cutoff*, which has a square aspect ratio, the opposite of VistaVision. Reichert’s framing is a form of myth-busting—empty space has a voice, depends on how you frame it.

Maybe the sixteen-foot grid of drawings is my widescreen, with each drawing a zoom lens. The project really hasn’t been about representing the place so much as a situation in which place names

represent something else that they are collaborating with for the possibility of telling a story.

**Chad Dawkins, curator, critic, Visiting Assistant Professor for Art and Visual Culture, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA**

West Texas boys drive a lot and think a lot while they're doing it. What's a story about Terry Allen's *Lubbock (on Everything)* album?

Love that record. I made an 8-track copy of it for my brother-in-law in the summer of '79 so he could play it in his car. When I was in High School, twelve years before that, he was racing his '57 Plymouth Fury in Stock at the Amarillo dragstrip. He was the first person to ever teach me a song on guitar.

One song on *Lubbock (on Everything)* that really takes me is *I Just Left Myself*. On one hand, kind of a pill for the new-age-inclined, but also an acknowledgment of the tendency to sometimes just check out or get derailed by ego.

What if Cervantes' Don Quixote is the potential of the blank pictorial space and Borges's version is the elements filling it? Where does that put you?

It puts me on 83 to Menard, cataloging the elements with a pencil on an envelope against the steering wheel, while not being completely convinced by what I see through the windshield and romanticizing it anyway.

Can you describe the difference between the sound of the plains and sound of the mountains?

The plains sing. The song of the mountains is more of a hum.

**Bett Williams, writer, Santa Fe, NM**

Bruce Chatwin, in his book *Songlines*, writes about how songs are inseparable from geography, how in Australian aboriginal culture, a song is a map of a topography and all that has happened there in memory. Is there a song that lives in your work? What place does it connect you to?



Song is essential. And it can locate time in a place. Where you were when you heard a song on the radio or wrote one in your head. Or if you know that driving from Santa Fe, NM to Trinidad, CO and back measured in Steely Dan albums exactly spans all of them save *Gaucha*.

But what Chatwin is writing about predates the written word, not to mention driving on a highway in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I would not hazard to say that I know that land/memory/song continuum in the same way, but I do know that song is not only essential, it is inevitable. If I was going to name a place that song connects me to, it would be Solitude, Night, Wonder at being alive.

### **Alex Gregory, Curator, Amarillo Museum of Art, Amarillo, TX**

Do you experience synesthesia while working, or drawing on, recollections of a place? Does a place's temperature, sound, smell, and flavor consciously make its way into the work?

Maybe when I'm writing, and yes, a drawn line can make a sound that is not made by the pencil. Kind of like the sound of a horse whinny in the film *U-Turn*, which happens when a key is scraped across the hood of a Ford Mustang.

Even so, the drawing process I'm employing is so mitigated—sites discovered randomly within a framework that is intentional, "documented" photographically, the resulting photographs only lightly looked at before exploring the "place" that appears on the paper.

What do you find most interesting about a place...what you find there, or what you don't find there?

People make stuff I like to look at in their yards. This is everywhere. Sometimes the components are the same across regions. People erect images, altars, setups, installations, whatever term you want to put on it, this is storytelling, no less basic than eating and breathing. This is activity embedded securely in the human psyche.

Seeing the same terrain repeatedly is where not finding comes in to play. "Same" is just a mental construct, it's never the same.

In your travels, have you most often encountered optimism and generosity or pessimism and selfishness?

I rarely meet anyone that isn't kind, whether within the travel of this project or not.

**Hannah Dean, artist, curator, part-owner and Senior Editor of Cloudcroft Reader, Cloudcroft, NM**

What's in a name? We see through your travels, place, culture, mark. What about the folks you meet along the way? Do you see predestination, for lack of a better word, at work in human monikers? (And in your own?)

The most memorable person I met was running a bar in Austin, Nevada, The Owl. It wasn't that late, so I don't think the moniker was necessarily true for her, though she did seem wise.

It was Chris Oglesby that said my name is ironic. He was probably looking at a "ski lubbock" poster when he wrote that.

**Bruce Holsapple, poet, Magdalena, NM**

You clearly have the intention to make art and a distinct way of fulfilling that intention, an approach. That you're exhibiting the work indicates you must feel you've succeeded at times, perhaps at different levels. I wondered if you can articulate what you have succeeded at? And how you know that?

Receiving an idea, making something work physically, making it add up conceptually, connecting through it to someone else --- all are measures of that. It is some kind of vibe exchange that feels like an infusion of energy that says this is what life is for, that exchange.

Same thing just thinking of something that is in the pocket. I know you know the feeling. When you feel it while you are making something that you know is going to work well.

Thinking of it in terms of others experience of it puts you in their shoes. A small room of people listening to what you're singing or witnessing a single person going into the work while they tell you about it, both give a good feeling. In fewer words, it's love. It has to be similar to what other species feel when they are with others of their kind.

**Sara Jayne-Parsons, Director/Curator, The Art Galleries at TCU School of Art**

This is a fantastic project! I loved reading the text and exploring the drawings. Also, it feels apt to read right now, on the eve of an election. Thank you for inviting me to collaborate. What happened in Seymour? Tell me about (or draw) your invisible friend.

Much the way a cat might shift blame to a dog in a cartoon, I kept the invisible friend on standby, just in case I needed to vacate whatever the situation was. You have to understand, they were trying to frame me.

**Nancy Zastudil, editor/writer, Albuquerque, NM**

What was the name of the invisible friend you had as a kid?

Not sure I should say. He might be listening.

Do you ever get lonely on the road? If so, what's your remedy (if you want one)?

I don't usually get lonely, but if I did, I'd find a canyon or some woods and walk in them, which would remind me I'm not alone.

One of my favorite books is *Exercises in Style* by Raymond Queneau -- the same story told (at least) 100 different ways. Do people and places still surprise you?

Another book I now have to read. I looked it up and discovered one of the styles that the story is told in is Spoonerism which reminded me

of my dad who told a joke about the French Reign of Terror ending with “don’t hatchet your counts before they chicken.” You know the one, or if not, the whole joke is implied in the punchline line. I didn’t see Palindrome on the list, but I think attempting a combination of that form with Spoonerism could make for an interesting contortion to try.

So, yes. Isn’t life full of surprises? And might as well surprise it back, just to keep the ball in the air.

Do your drawings tell their own stories or do they tell versions of your travels?

Honestly, I try to let them tell me.

Where are you going next?

The Pacific Northwest or the Mississippi Delta if possible.

**Jess Johnson, artist, Roswell, NM**

What have you learnt from cats?

Joy, surprise, fascination. Mysteries of animal attachment, the way they are tuned into you.

I don’t know how to articulate this question succinctly and I don’t think this phrasing gets what I’m grasping at... but when you’re making art, is knowing or not-knowing more important to you?

Not knowing feels honest. Knowing sounds like a preset limitation, though sometimes working within a frame is good.

Do you have any secret words or phrases that you repeat to yourself when you need them?

I don’t know. I picked up the Dutch word “gezellig” when I spent several weeks in Amsterdam in 2001. It’s like when things are copacetic, cozy, fun.

## **Jennifer Davy, artist & writer, in situ**

Thanks for the invitation to read and question.

Some response/reflections:

In Clayton, I believe on the main street (vs. the main drag) the boot cobbler turned down my request to repair the soles of my Chelsea pointy knock-off boots from DSW. I ended up buying a pair of used cowboy boots that were on offer because no one had come 'round to retrieve them in a long, long while. A couple doors down, some gorilla tape from the hardware store healed my worn-out Chelsea-like soles.

“What manner of men are these who wrap their legs in parentheses.” — that’s pretty funny.

Finding yourself so far north, pre & post tornado, and grass rolling...

Have you read *No Time to Look Back*?

Outside of macramé chickens, "Something close and small, that might possibly be taken for something large and far away" and its inverse, and other combinations, seems an apt metaphor for *Altered States*.

Spot-on Willa Cather quote.

To share on your chronological reading list (many and I’m sure you’d add more possibly, but for now): Allison Adelle Hedgecoke.

Heart Lenny Bruce graffiti—epic.

Given the long historical threads of our “dystopian” realities—anywhere—your drawings make somewhere there easy to love.

Questions:

Has the project altered your sensibilities, judgements, and/or discernment(s)?

The process of doing these drawings in rapid succession has had effects. After the first several drawings I veered away from some of the more whimsical marks.

Given the altered sense of country when you first started out and its now current reprise does the road look different, same, same but different?

Going to have to go with “same but different.”

Would the road find its path in the shape of a boomerang?

“You become what you resist” is a truism that comes to mind in this context.

Was/is the “country road” all that different or is it the windshield?

Sometimes, it’s the country that is cracked.

if you settled somewhere without a name, would you give it one? if so, what name?

If circumstances were just right, it could be called Pleasinointament.

Read *A Time* by Allison Adelle Hedge Coke on the Poetry Foundation website. Good stuff. Thank you!

I left *No Time to Look Back* where it lay, untouched, as a warning to other travelers tempted by entanglement.

**Lynne Maphies, artist, writer, Albuquerque, NM**

“...places are witnesses, alive with knowledge that is there to be read, if only we can learn to look. If only we can bring ourselves to listen. We should ask ourselves in every study of any aesthetic object where it is set, where it was written or created, what the deep history of that place is, what peoples, animals, and materials once occupied it (and still do)...”

You stated previously that the “land we live on binds all people together” and I thought about the above Stephen Ross quote when viewing your work. Do you see yourself as creating the conditions for complicating conventional readings of the land we occupy?

I had said it was the underlying reality of the land that binds us together, meaning that the physical fact of that is the binding, more so than any unifying cultural relationship. Your question is probably a question to be answered by the reader, but I would think the more readings the better.

You mentioned previously that you try to “listen for the unimportant things to speak.” I was reminded of a fragment I read about the boundaries between sound *listened to* and *heard*, between meaningful sound and background hums, and how sound influences how people perceive and relate to spaces and places; embodiment. I can’t help but ask about your attentiveness to sound and how that potentially manifests in these works?

Speaks to intentionality. The places I stopped to take photographs were usually unoccupied, providing a quietude or silence that added to the sense of aftermath if I was photographing a decomposing site or a sense of discovery if I was in a neighborhood. It may appear in the writing more than the drawing, but probably not exclusively.

“And there you have the most decorative landscape in the world ... a dream landscape. The great struggle of the ... landscapist is to get on with the least possible form and to suggest everything by tones of color, shades of light, drifts of air.”

John C. Van Dyke—who was quite the character, but we won’t get into that just now—penned the above lines in *The Desert* (1901). I’ve been looking for an artist who fits the bill and must admit, with rather minimal modification, you come pretty close. I guess the first question would be: do you consider yourself a landscapist?

“Desert” comes from a root meaning abandoned, so this speaks to me. I could see myself drawing landscapes composed of subversive “Botticelli lines” as Buzz Spector once called them. A series of landscape drawings void of nostalgia seems like a worthy project.

As for the Van Dyke thing, I admit I made that up about Pernel Roberts.

**Scott Sherer, art historian, Director of Galleries, UTSA, San Antonio, TX**

Hills, I very much appreciate how your work is very much engaged with a host of paradoxical explorations into the conceptual character of what underlies lived experience. Indeed, the active methods in your artistic practice seem to respect neither the normative logistics and themes of travel that inherently carry a range both of coordinates of individual dynamics of time nor the geographies that develop from histories of nature and cultural transformation. Even with direct line work and white space, how do you make choices between dreams or nightmares, or single moments of reflection or humor, and return from the collapse of norms?

I've been influenced I think by the René Daumal book *Mount Analogue*, about a mountain encircled by curved space which renders it routinely invisible, unless you're looking for it. So maybe the drawings don't represent what I'm looking at in the photograph, as much as they represent a fantasy about a world that is not only behind the photo, but is also behind what the photo is a representation of. Maybe those things you speak of, dreams, nightmares, reflection, humor, are life lines to pull yourself back with, so any one will do, given specific circumstances. Darkness in the world can leak in. Light too.

**Jeff McMillan, artist, London**

I keep seeing the drawings as road maps, (mostly) empty space with lines marking out shapes or territories, like hand-drawn directions of 'how to get there' (but I know you well enough to know the viewer needs to put some work in to arrive at the destination). Is there any mileage in this?

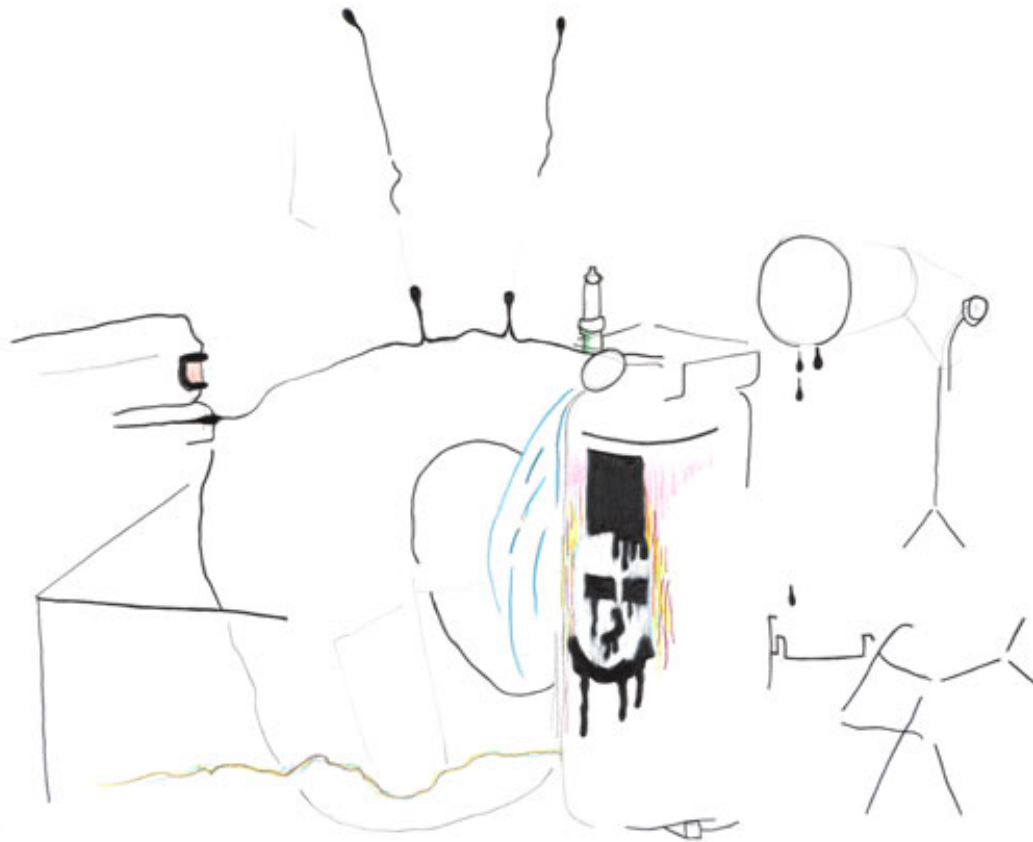
I think so. Surrender is my thing when I go to a movie or to see someone's art or whatever the medium may be, poetry, music, I want to enter what is being offered, not keep it at arm's length. So, my work does work best for those that put something forth. Even so, the destination is not specific, but it gives back generously.

I've been reading Moby Dick very recently, and in the chapter called the Whiteness of the Whale at one point Melville writes that white has 'a dumb



blankness, full of meaning' and it comes to mind looking at your drawings. What are your thoughts on color in this series and particularly the relative absence of it?

I have been deeply affected by a story titled *The Dressmaker's Dummy* by Alain Robbe-Grillet. It is in his short story book *Snapshots*. It is phenomenological description that becomes disturbing when it is revealed that a ceramic tile base under a coffee pot, formerly described as hidden or indescribable, is actually adorned with a picture of an owl with large frightening eyes. A narrative shift takes place: at first everything in the scene is described with clinical detachment, then suddenly we are told of something that cannot be seen from the point of view we've been in within the story. Yes, the owl's eyes are frightening because we've been told that they are, we imagine them that way, but the real change in the awareness of the reader takes place in that other shift, the one that is under the story, which asks, who is this that was not here before, that is suddenly describing what I cannot see?



*Bonanza, Colorado 3*

As it happens, the southernmost place in the United Kingdom is called Land's End. Is there somewhere similar in the US you have seen the name of a final destination or a furthest place you want to get to?

Yeah, you know they call Magdalena "Trail's End."

Alaska and Iceland stay in my wishes.

**Andrew Weathers, composer, intermedia artist, Littlefield, TX /  
Colorado Springs, CO**

You're often using the road and rural America as source and reference, coming from Lubbock and working as an artist in rural New Mexico, what is

your relationship and interest in the rural parts of this country and particularly the Southwest?

Living in and moving through this landscape has always been a fact of existence. Visiting family south of Clayton when I was young and since the late sixties, backpacking and hiking in Lincoln. So, re-exposure to the same road, the same trail, the same range, whatever it is, there is a lot to see and know in that repeated exposure to a landscape. There is a certain phone booth that is no longer there. There used to be a red macaw in a shop window. A certain gate-latch that I can still hear and feel. These are the scenes where stories may be found.

Lubbock was pop. 129,000 when I lived there. It was a city with a rural feel. I've lived in Miles City and Anaconda, Montana; Oskaloosa, Kansas, etc. I love cities too, especially New York, but some can be facades of homogeneity and even offer the exact same sets of distractions and obstructions. The public land I walk on every day is the same path, but it is different every time I walk it.

Is William Least Heat-Moon's *Blue Highways* a reference point for this series? I ask because the book is structured in a similar way - Heat-Moon drives across the US plotting his course on interesting and unique town names.

The list grows. I've heard of *Blue Highways*, but not got around to reading it. The town names that determined my route were not really chosen for uniqueness or oddity. Rather, they provide a construct about ideal in contrast to real, the essential contradiction.

**Taylor Ernst, Curator, Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for The Arts, Lubbock, TX**

The very first art I can remember seeing and knowing it was one of yours was *How Big is Your Love?* which is fondly known as Cadillac. I was the collections manager for the art division at the Museum of Texas Tech University and delivered this artwork to LHUCA for an exhibition, where I am now curator. We met a few months ago and ever since I often think of

this linear connection and how everything happens for a reason. Do you think that art helps connect us in more ways than just the obvious?

The best that ever came my way was through art.

Could you explain how using lines in your artworks shapes the outcomes for such large impacts?

Maybe because I meant them when I did them so that intention is in them.

**Deana Craighead, Curator of Art, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, TX**

Thank you so much for the invitation to participate in this project. I really enjoyed it and have so many questions, but will limit myself to two ideas that keep coming back to me.

The visit to your former home in Montana seems to have impacted you deeply and the corresponding drawing seems more focused in response. You also pick up a travel companion, the Immaculate Macramé Chicken, that reappears later in the work. Throughout human history, small objects that were carried close to the body tend to become intensely personal and talismanic. What drew you to the chicken? Why did you choose to bring it along for the rest of your journey? Where is the Immaculate Macramé Chicken now?

That drawing was made for my son who was with me during the time I was in Miles City on an artist-is-the-schools residency.

The debris in the house I had lived in in '86 and '87 was a foot deep in 2016, when I visited and found the place abandoned. The chicken was so intact that it seemed illuminated from within. When I opened the door of my truck to drive on, it jumped in.

The idea that we live an existence in which an object may be felt as “talismanic” is a bit of a miracle, no? Maybe it's got to do with memory and luck, two human attributes pointed in seemingly opposite directions, past and future, but through the power of the magic object,

are actually collaborators in creating the present. The tension created by the pull of past and future resolves itself in our relationship with such objects, increasing awareness of the moment.

To bring this back to the chicken, it's like I'm saying to it, "Are you with me? Let's mark this."

Right now, the chicken sits on a shelf at kind of a small array.

In Q&A Part One, Ariane Roesch asks you about how Trump-era politics influenced the project. Given Trump's recent re-election, would you like to amend your response?

No.

Ariane asked, "How much have Trump era antics shadowed this project?"

The project began in May of 2016 and the question was asked in 2020, so the frame was coincidental, just as it is now, as the physical exhibition of the project has begun again in October 2024.

The shadow has remained through the four years between the last two elections, in which he continued to spread self-serving falsehoods. That is his currency, along with exaggeration, manipulation, and evading accountability. This has not changed. His shadow still falls over the country, but the spell he spins doesn't cast one, so there is good reason to remain aware—he is the guy who failed to act while being "commander in chief," watching TV, yearning to see the chaos he created come out favorably for his desire to stay in office after losing the election. He will do what he can to make the presidency more powerful than congress—that is the essence of their project.

Ever questioning...

Indeed.

**Marisa Sage, Director, University Art Museum, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM**

After the results on Tuesday which has me emotionally befuddled (though not shocked), there are loads of questions I could ask you regarding you having visited so many of the places which led the results of this election—for instance Sierra County, NM, where Truth or Consequences is located—the people overwhelmingly voted for Trump? Economically, their grocery prices are led by the fact that they have two sources to buy their goods, Walmart (controls grocery inflation in this country) and Bullocks (effected by inflation in this country) —I wonder if they thought about this when they were voting for Trump because "he can fix the economy for them?"

Anyway, with that all said, I might go with my gut for my question and ask you something that always comes to mind when thinking about towns such as Waterloo, Kansas. "Do you think Waterloo, Kansas lives in the shadow of its counterpart in Belgium? If not the shadow, aspires to be, compares itself to, has a Napoleon complex 😊.....? Do you think all US Eponymous towns have some form of complex and/or do you see connections between their namesakes?"

Interesting. I'm unconsciously sliding my hand into my shirt to see if it helps me think about this.

Waterloo, Kansas was a post office first, with the name chosen from a list of other post offices, so maybe we have to conclude that maybe the other Waterloo is the one bearing the burden of the Napoleon Complex. Meanwhile, The Waterloo Center for The Arts in Waterloo, Kansas is said to have the most extensive collection of Haitian art in the world. So, take that, Belgium.

Anyway, to your first point, I'd say priorities for voters get defined locally, and that includes cost of living issues. The world was hamstrung by supply interruptions brought about by a pandemic which led to wide-spread inflation among nations. Incumbents all over the world have suffered losses based on a single myopic dynamic: whoever is in office when people are struggling, must go, all other considerations aside, regardless of corporate greed or any other explanation.

The truth of Trump's nature could be written clearly around the vertical edge of the American "kitchen table," but if that is where you're sitting, there is no perspective from which it may be read. But this is just a metaphor—some saw him for what he is and voted for him anyway.

**Barbara Purcell, writer, Hudson Valley, NY**

What do you suppose we've learned—or unlearned—as the United States of Altered States since this project kicked off in 2016?

It is impossible to know what this noisy, but in reality, mute, beast has learned, but the evidence before us suggests that the grift continues. Meanwhile, beneath our feet, the actual country that was here before us, doesn't really need us, and if we are not more careful, may unlearn us.

If your windshield is a wide-angle lens while out on the open road, does the depth of field bring the obvious into focus...or just the overlooked?

It is possible that this speaks to the relationship of "generic" and "obscure." When things drift to the generic, they become no longer seen, so the visual presence of the obscure becomes more pronounced. This is a contradiction, but it may just be an expression of wavering human awareness. No one has yet made a mouse trap that defies co-optation into the field of the normal. Sliced bread came close, but there were issues.

Ever been to Neversink, New York?

No, but the Neversink River is a particularly peculiar American paradox. We put in and float, hoping to spot the shore, with oars made of I do not know what, maybe just elbow grease.

Thank you for asking me to take part in the Q&A. *Altered States* is a delightful chronicle of the creeping darkness. The following passage should be on a window, much like Willa Cather's quote in Part Eight of the Glasstire narrative:

"I've visited corners of this country hoping to randomly run across found beauties, overlooked events, discarded things, back roads — anything happening outside the frame of relevance and other assumptions of importance. Along the way I met some characters, people you'd love to meet, but never will. People I'll probably never see again."

During the pandemic I had to drive from California to the tip of Cape Cod—twice—and on both trips I drove past The Thing on I-10, which became the psychic center for my musings on America. I had an opportunity to take part in a poetry reading at The Whitney not long after, and this is what I shared:

### *The Thing*

I-10 runs across the low belly of this country  
Like a c-section scar  
What is it, that they pulled from its incision?  
The billboards begin just west of El Paso:  
Mystery of the Desert. Exit 322.  
A derailed freight train mangled on the horizon  
We are getting closer to Benson, Arizona

The museum is a mausoleum in the middle of nowhere  
A mummified woman and child  
Presented in a plexiglass tomb.  
Dinosaurs and aliens and a Rolls Royce Hitler once rode in  
Welcome to The Thing: don't forget to pay the cashier  
Their bodies were bought by a lawyer from Texas  
And put on display as a way to draw tourists  
"Illegal border crossers," it reads  
"Found slaughtered by unknown cowboy bandits"

Here lies The Thing  
Alien effigy of Manifest Destiny  
Roadside attraction of radioactive mystique  
Blow it up in the desert, then bury it deep  
Geiger counters go crazy  
In the arid ocean of the American imagination.



“What is it?” says the sign above the door.  
Nothing you haven’t seen before.

### **Bryan Wheeler, artist, Lubbock, TX**

Thanks for this ...work. Bad word for it. I’ve seen some of the drawings, none of the photos, and had read none of the writing. It’s all perfect and inspiring. And familiar, it speaks to me profoundly. And it’s full of surprising metaphors and turns-of-phrase.

I did a once over of the catalog and came up with several questions/thoughts. Do what you want with them: take ‘em to dinner and tell ‘em they look nice, make them account for themselves, or dispose of them properly.

The drawings may read as schematics, how-tos, or even rebuses. Are they clues, puzzles, guides for how to live in the post-modern western US?

No reason it wouldn’t be useful to think of them in those ways. New meanings accrue.

And to that, how much can we see by looking at what’s left behind, the aftermath? By focusing on the peripheral, the detrital?

It’s humbling. Also, a place where beauty resides. Creates economies of use and movement. Contemplating the side-lined, the forgotten, the falling-apart, is just attempting to be in touch.

And to that, shouldn’t we meet people on this trip? What does it say that we don’t?

I met a few, but empty spaces were frequent. I spent an hour in Lost Springs, Wyoming and didn’t see a soul. The most memorable hang-time with people was in Austin, Nevada.

Also, the project has a self-aware degree of pretend-research, as if the researcher was unaware of his own subjectivity.

What do you think of your drawings as post-modern pictographs? Would they work as well/communicate better on cave walls?

They might have pictographic qualities, but I don't really see them on cave walls. It would be defacing an actual cave or creating some kind of meta experience, neither of which interests me.

What's the relationship between this work and archaeology/anthropology?

Archaeology finds things. I'm planting things.

What can we hope to see in the side-by-side juxtaposition of the detritus of the modern/post-modern (wagon wheel/big wheel)?

The presence of wagon wheels is ubiquitous, nostalgia leaning against walls, signifiers of pioneer will, real and imagined. Big Wheels litter yards in a different way, as items of childhood play in a world long past the wagon trains of the 19th Century and are still being made, so they embrace nostalgia and erase it at the same time.

What's the word for the discovery of spatially and contextually related, but chronologically incongruous (modern/pre-modern), things found in situ, lying side-by-side? It's not random or incidental or even adventitious...

I think that is a parathintalism.

How do you explain your shift from the baroque 1970-80s to the minimal 1990-2000s?

Friendship with Fran Colpitt and the conversation we had for two-plus decades.

Is page 31.3. true?

The Shakespeare joke told by my dad. Absolutely true.

What are the 1<sup>st</sup> three lines of Jorge Luis Borges' *Don Quixote*?

Borges' first three lines are:

The visible *oeuvre* left by this novelist can be briefly enumerated; unpardonable, therefore, are the omissions and the addition of Mme. Henri Bachelier in a deceitful catalog that a certain newspaper, whose Protestant leanings are surely no secret, has been so inconsiderate as to inflict upon that newspapers' deplorable readers—few and Calvinist (if not Masonic and circumcised) though they be. Menard's true friends have greeted that catalog with alarm, and even with a degree of sadness. One might note that only yesterday we were gathered before his marmoreal place of rest, among the dreary cypresses, and already Error is attempting to tarnish his bright Memory...Most decidedly, a brief rectification is imperative.

Menard's first three lines, which never appear in Borges' text, are the same three lines of Cervantes' Quixote:

There lived not long since, in a certain village of the Mancha, the name whereof I purposely omit, a gentleman of their calling that used to pile up in their halls, old lances, halberds, morions, and such other armours and weapons. He was, besides, master of an ancient target, a lean stallion, and a swift greyhound. His pot consisted daily of somewhat more beef than mutton: a gallimaufry each night, collops and eggs on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, and now and then a lean pigeon on Sundays, did consume three parts of his rents; the rest and remnant thereof was spent on a jerkin of fine puce, a pair of velvet hose, with pantofles of the same for the holy-days, and one suit of the finest vesture; for therewithal he honoured and set out his person on the workdays.

Is this a love letter or post-mortem?

Love letter.

## **Violette Bule, artist, Houston, TX**

Hola Hills,

Here are my questions for you. I'm not expecting answers unless you feel wanting to respond to them, some of them seem to find answers in your drawings themselves.

If you go backward, can you remember something that happened between the miles and hours, guided by the solid yellow centerline? Keeping the needle steady at the same number, listening to the sound, sounding the same, did it feel meditative or unavoidable? Were you *herenow*, or somewhere, perhaps imagining that movie, or remembering something else? Can you recall what it was like between mile 129 and mile 133? Somewhere between the sun in your eyes, and then on your nose, your mouth, and your hand as you held the starwheel. Do you remember what time it was? Was it winter? A Monday, or maybe just a dream?

Would have been pulling into Salado, TX right then, an oasis between Prairie Dell and Belton, late Spring, 2016. There is a 14% chance it was a Monday. I was on the way to Fran & Donny's house for the night. It was indeed dreamy, crossing Salado Creek on wooden wheels. This song by Garrett T. Capps was released exactly two years later. I know because the date is inscribed on the starwheel: <https://garrettcapps.bandcamp.com/track/the-interstate-35-waltz-2>

Isn't backward enough to be forward? Isn't memory an altered state? What would the future be without a rearview mirror?

This might be a candidate for "some of them seem to find answers in your drawings themselves."

Please tell me, what were the diamonds you found in Diamondville? Was there a golden ray at El Dorado? Did you get the chance to see it? Is it in Eureka, where everything began, or halfway? Did you lose something in Waterloo?

Like you said, in the drawings.

Why are these towns transparent to the eyes that see them as examples of classified misery? I think I can see beyond that in your drawings.

Misery Repair takes different forms.

As Flaneurs, isn't being lost what we need to be? Aren't we creating an altered/alternated reality?

In a word, Yep.

An invitation: I want to alter the *Altered States* through sound I'm going backward on your 15 places but reading as in Spanish sounds. Would you do it in English?

gnihtoN  
yppaH  
aznanoB  
ellivdnomaiD  
erehwoN  
sgnirpS tsoL  
esulceR  
enotseyK  
ytinutroppO  
nedE  
akeruE  
ellivremmuB  
secneuqesnoC ro hturT  
odaroD IE  
oolretaW

I recited them 19 times. Delightful. Thanks for the suggestion. I've been carrying around a sign that says "Erewhon is almost nowhere backwards" since 1969.

**Karla Milosevich, artist, community organizer, Santa Fe, NM**

*What was the best party you ever went to?*

Remember, I lived in San Antonio for a long time, so it would be impossible to narrow it down.

*Does your life imitate art or does your art imitate life?*

Walking is similar to drawing.

*Dad said your drawings are like haiku's. If you feel inspired, write a haiku about one of them.*

I was drawing with  
Don Diego on my lap  
this is the last one

*Who would you want to play you in the movie of your life? Haha*

Parker Posey



*Don Diego, 2005 – 2017. He loved to sit in my lap when I was drawing. This is the last one made that way.*

**Celia Álvarez Muñoz, artist, Arlington, TX**

“Parts of a Whole”

Upon first seeing/reading this project, it  
made me think of the time I was trying to recall the name of an actress that  
just would not surface.

I vividly saw in my mind's eye, parts of two of her movie roles.  
Into sharp focus were snippets of her mood and voice delivery, body  
language.

I tried to zero in on different aspects of her role and dialogue.  
The intonation of her lines and the facial characteristics she employed.  
Her attire clearly depicted. The other actors in those scenes. But her name  
just wouldn't surface.

Tempted to look her up, online, using the movie titles, I resisted.  
But realizing I had not employed a strategy I often resort to, to recall things  
forgotten  
which works really well for me, is a nonsense association of sorts.

Since the reality wouldn't yield me the answer,  
I relinquished the agony and googled it up.  
There!

Instantly, upon reading it, my mind automatically gave me a good  
association with obvious similarities.

Hers, and another actress's, last name.

Plus, the roles they had played.

Both pronouncedly tragic females.

One, an historical southern belle reaped of her social status by the Civil  
War.

The other a sheared horror victim, during the Cold War.

It all came together.

The names, now, indelibly in my mind.

Were clues the remnants or the remnants the clues?

Submitted by Celia Álvarez

11/13/2024

P.S.

This body of work quickly reminded me of the first of Hills' works, I saw, expressing a big shift in content & form when he was studying with Frances Colpitt.

Plexiglass and Happy Faces!

For me, having access to a scintilla of his life experiences served as connections to the work.

For him, it must have made sense because he had lived and acquired clues that referred him to this new experimentation. I rejoiced his leap.

Sense or nonsense association?

-Celia



*Altered States* (Part Eight) @ Phil Space, Santa Fe, NM, October 25, 2024 to January 31, 2025.



# **ART REPORT TODAY**

*Breaking Art News Daily Worldwide*

## **Q&A *with* HILLS SNYDER, 2020**

Asking the tough questions are: Georgeanne Deen, Annette Dimeo Carlozzi, Riley Robinson, Jeff Wheeler, Catherine DeMaria, Leigh Anne Lester, Leslie Moody Castro, Annabelle Larsen, Gordon McConnell, Kate Green, Richard Saxton, Matthew Eric Mendez, Chris Sauter, Ariane Roesch, Karen Mahaffy, Bill Nevins, Anne Wallace, Larry Bob Phillips, Sarita Talusani Keller, Heyd Fontenot, Neil Fauerso, Toby Kamps, Rainey Knudson, Jesse Amado.

*Gallery One* is pleased to present *Altered States* (Part Seven), a fine art work by Hills Snyder. A series of drawings, *Altered States*, maps time, place and our humanity over many road trip miles.

The landscape of this show is so expansive, we thought it fitting to let artists, curators, art writers, critics and gallerists ask the big questions in our Q&A.

~ Gordy Grundy, October 30, 2020, *Art Report Today*

**Annette Dimeo Carlozzi, Independent Curator, Austin, Texas**

*Do you ever use your non-dominant hand to draw with?*

I have not, but that is a great question. I'm looking at it through the lens of playing guitar, when both hands are equally involved, even though my right is considered dominant. I will give it a try too. If it's any good I will send it to you.

**Jeff F. Wheeler, artist, Creative Director, Southside Living + Maker Spaces, San Antonio, Texas**

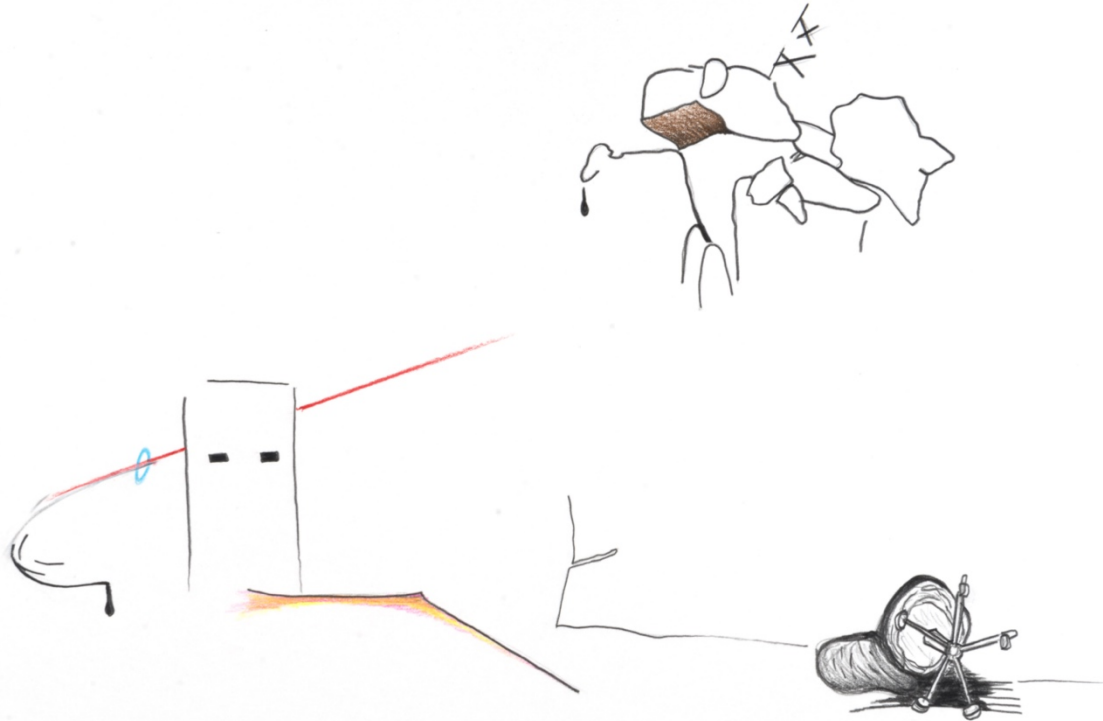
*Which of the towns that you visited for this series most matched its' name?*

I'm going to say Lost Nation simply because I visited there in 2019. Truth or Consequences comes into play because they always do. And Eldorado, well, nothing is ever what you think it's going to be, is it? But in truth, none of the towns matched their names --- they were each another version of Anywhere, USA, but as different as every face you've seen. Truth is this: if you live there the relationship of the name to place has a whole different meaning than anything I or any other visitor would assume.

In Nowhere, Oklahoma, it seemed that I arrived there just as a vortex of activity was opening up with some kids on ATVs rounding a lake that definitely felt like somewhere. In Eden, Utah, a white sweatshirt left hanging on a highway reflector pole at the edge of a bridge flapped in the breeze, signaling abandonment, if not banishment. Nothing, Arizona was mostly vacant but for a disowned office chair with casters in the air like a helpless beetle.

I drove through Arizona on the day of radio eulogies for Mohammed Ali and just the next day dozens lost their lives at Pulse in Orlando, Florida. The country happens and changes and the wheel of that movement, though larger and longer to turn, moves by the hour, even as you drive through it going sixty. So the timbre of each place was tinted generally by my own subjective states and things that were

going on in the world, while each locale had specifics that were simultaneously unique and much like things that happen everywhere.



*Nothing, Arizona 7*

**Catherine DeMaria, Director, Warehouse 1-10, Magdalena, New Mexico**

*Aside from the intriguing names of each town is there a common thread between these locations?*

Not exactly, but in contrast to how cities can sometimes seem homogenous based on the ubiquitous commercial facades that recur again and again, small town America's homogeneity is based on peculiarity. That is probably the common thread. And wagon wheels.

*You're also a musician and songwriter. Is there a connection between your drawing and the music you create?*

I think there has to be. Some of the visual events on the page dance and there are gatherings of energies that are not unlike music. There is a song, *Nate The Bandit*, which not many have heard, though I recently played it for David Longoria when he came to play on the porch at kind of a small array. In the song an un-named figure is sent by train to meet his sentence. The rider's voice speaks to what you've asked:

the track of the train  
cuts a line through the terrain  
a line  
I drew with my own hand

In the end, it's all storytelling.

*What's your method of working once you've come upon a location that calls to you?*

I try to listen for the unimportant things to speak and follow every impulse to photograph them. The photos are taken in greater numbers than are needed so that a few of them will seem likely to be up for drawing. From there it's wherever the movement on the page sends the pencil. And to reach back to your previous question, even though my hand might be musically engaged when I draw, so far I have not accidentally dropped a pencil inside my guitar.

*Did you discover your current home in Magdalena based on the name?*

To a degree, though I would love this place whatever it might be named. There is probably some destiny that came on the heels of the name Magdalena. I'm sure for some. Magdalena Mountain has the quality of a slumbering beast, something I am completely in love with.

**Leigh Anne Lester, artist, San Antonio**

*Do you do the drawings in chronological/travel order? Or is it a recall of what stood out for you.*

Not in the order of travel really, but there were three drawings from Opportunity, Montana that formed an unplanned triptych. They were done one at a time, one after the other without consciously referring to the previous one. Sometimes the drawings that were done on a given day form a kind of similarity, or at least an inclination to cross talk.

Recall might occasionally play a part, but probably in some oblique way.

*Does the previous location of a drawing determine what you edit out of your drawings in the current location?*

Not really, but the previous drawing may reveal some starting points for the next drawing.

*Does that possible repetition tune you into the special aspects of the specific place?*

Maybe.

*Does the name of the place cause you to look for synonyms in its' presence?*

Maybe so.

**Leslie Moody Castro, Independent Curator, Mexico City/Austin**

*Tell a story about Happy.*

There is a cotton gin there that is a wonder to observe. And to listen to (Happy can be windy). It is a destination to seek out. When you are there, spend some money with the local businesses. Buy some gas

or get some coffee and a sandwich. If you must, pretend you're a character in a Jim Thompson novel.

In 1972, I worked at a bookstore on Main Street across from Texas Tech in Lubbock. There was this one couple who came in every two weeks and bought a stack of very glossy, very expensive (\$25), sealed porn mags and three dozen pieces of Super Bubble bubblegum; but more to your point there was a guy I knew then that lived in that neighborhood. He was the first person I'd met that was extensively and exclusively interested in jazz. He was from Happy.

### **Annabelle Larsen, writer, New York**

*What were the origins of inspiration for this project?*

In 2010 there was a show in The Hudson Show Room at Artpace in San Antonio --- *On the Road*, the title obviously taken from the Kerouac novel. The walls of the exhibition featured fifteen artists, but scattered throughout the space were vitrines of objects gathered by the curator on a road trip through Texas and Eastern New Mexico. This collection, with accompanying tags identifying the origin of the objects, worked like a laundry list of regional stereotypes --- a photo of John Wayne, a Lone Star beer can, a Smokey the Bear comic book, a Stetson, etc. Though the texts on the tags were incisive and humorous, sometimes cutting through the conceit of their selection, I was struck by the regional profiling and proposed to Artpace that I drive the curator's route backwards, returning the objects to their original contexts, or otherwise engaging/dis-engaging the intentions of the curator. Glasstire supported the project by publishing a six-part serial narrative, written during the eleven days I was on the road, with a new piece of the story appearing every couple of days. So, the road trip accompanied by story began with that project and since I've for decades intermittently lived parts of my life in small towns, I may have had the ears to hear the call to do what this project has become.

*During your travels did you take notes or journal about your experience? If so, were the notes translated to your drawings in any way or vice versa?*

Not taking notes is a way of achieving a kind of separation that allows things to come in unforeseen. The serial narrative published by Glasstire is in dialogue with the drawing and the driving and figures to

mix recollection with whatever is happening at the moment of the writing.

*Did you have any rituals before taking the photographs or before drawing? The drawings seem meditative in quality.*

No rituals, other than those provided by sharpening pencils. If the drawings come off as meditative, that is fine. They are done slowly, with an eye toward making marks selectively, as opposed to some sort of expressive fury. The MO that I employed was to always stop drawing before the feeling for stopping was completely resolute.

*Has film influenced this journey? When viewing this collection, I found myself thinking of Wim Wenders' Paris, Texas.*

The road movie is a post WW2 genre. I was born in 1950. With the Highway act of 1956 and the years following, the US Highway system reached a stage of completion about when I got a driver's license. Given that I love movies and love solitary driving, watching a feature length film isn't that different from sitting in vehicle watching moving pictures through the windscreen. In this scenario, I'm the projector in reverse, filling my eyes with images and processing them into writing and drawing.

*"Is there a template of correspondence between the contours of reality, the lines on the page, and the truth of who we as a nation are?" Intriguing. At the end of your journey did you come away with any notions or conclusions about this?*

Conclusions no, but it's important to note that the project began in May of 2016. The quote you've pulled from Part Three of the narrative was written in Spring 2017, when it was becoming more and more apparent that the foundation ideals of the country were under assault from its president and cabinet. They've been joined by numerous members of congress. It was not possible to see that May that the line I'd be driving the next few years was a journey into a truly alternate reality, the warp of which hope demands we gather to bend into an altogether new attempt at really being the nation of our potential.

## **Gordon McConnell, artist, Billings, Montana**

*You are less a nomad than a traveler, explorer, flâneur, yet your drawings remind me of Plains Indian ledger art. Are there any consistent notational or pictographic codes embedded in these works? Would you care to offer any Rosetta stone cues?*

I don't know, eyeballs, antennas, tears, tongues...these things all seem relational. And now that I think about it, gesture and movement are with gravity relationally too. That Y-shaped antenna is an image that goes back to my earliest work. Maybe it's about receiving a signal or maybe just the act of surrender that would precede that. Try standing on a hill with your arms out in that Y --- your body will tell you what it means. The eye and the tongue probably go with consuming the road. The partially realized objects that scatter through these dozens of drawings are also scattered across America.

*Your lines are supple and kinetic, the open space unlimited. Do you feel an affinity with George Herriman?*

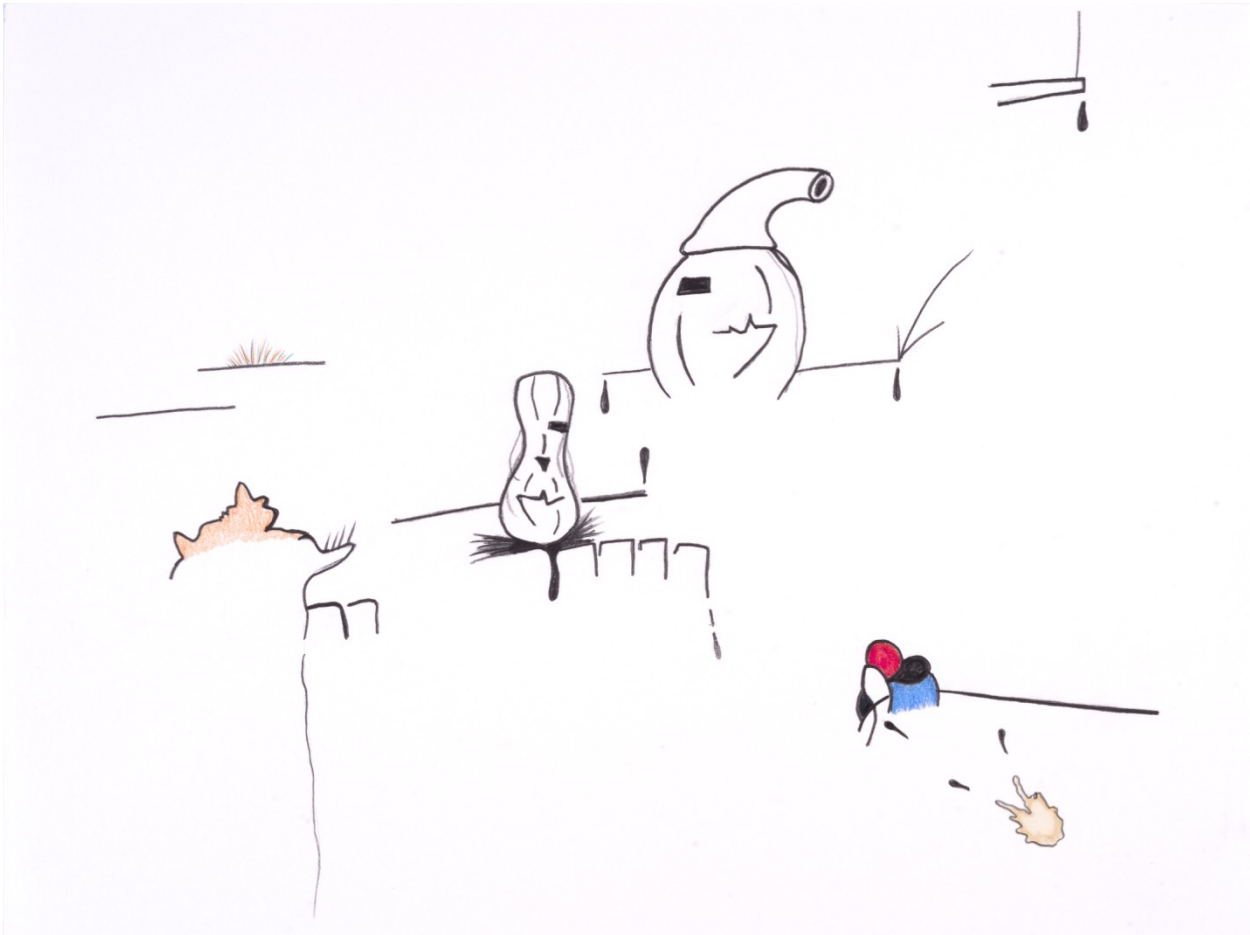
You know, that had not occurred to me, but now that you've asked, I've re-acquainted myself, really looking at a lot of his stuff for the first time, and I can feel it. He's almost the anti-John Ford --- I can't quite imagine there ever being a plaque in Monument Valley memorializing its' effect on him.

An artist I know once referred to the supple quality you mention as my "Botticelli line." I didn't study him either. Maybe there is a back door effect --- I did watch a lot of classic cartoons in the late fifties and early sixties, when all the great Looney Tunes, Merrie Melodies, Silly Symphonies, Popeye, etc. were on the TV waves.

My sons pointed out a specific episode of *Marvin the Martian* that featured an image that appeared unconsciously in a drawing I did in Miles City in 1986. I'm sure you know it, *All Alone in Romance*, in which that cartoon thing joins a Marty Robbins lyric to send an ICBM through a hole in the center of a bright red cross with a pink carnation at its base.



Now that I think about it, I recall a friend saying that a lot of my drawings feature a lone verticality in a vast space. In that conversation we attributed this to the influence of growing up in West Texas --- Lubbock in particular, so now we've come full circle to watching Saturday morning cartoons.



*Happy, Texas 2*

**Kate Green, Executive Director, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson**

*A moment in a town you visited, that matched the town's emotional state name? How did that state --- or the memory of the state --- manifest in color/line/image in a drawing?*

A neighborhood in Happy, Texas when the two-point perspective of a long length of street conspired with a typical west Texas church, right at the end of the street --- brick a certain shade of maroon, a tall,

narrow stained-glass window pointing straight up into the gable, and a three-tiered wooden steeple painted brilliant white on top. The steeple looked like an upside exclamation mark missing its dot. In the drawing a lemon-yellow circle of sun, lined with sickly green, creates a space behind the images on the page and behind the page. It was happy in some kind of fifties sitcom way, nothing actual or to do with the town or the people of that neighborhood.

**Richard Saxton, artist and founder of M12 STUDIO,  
Denver, Colorado**

*In a time of such apocalyptic resonance and massive global challenges, what role can art best play in the coming decade?*

Art is always best when playing an oblique role, as if one rail of track, which merges with the other rail in the distance. That lengthy acute triangle that leads to a vanishing point is a way to slip in, to merge with consensus reality (the other rail). But the distant merger is only an illusion --- you well know that the tracks remain parallel. It's the slipping in that matters, a kind of infiltration, which has the subtle power to nudge any linear path that comes near, toward something more lateral, more considerate of surroundings, relations and reciprocity. At least that is my hope. I don't think it works differently in urgent times than in times deemed normal. Art that comes at me head on always misses, unless it is immersive or a well-played use of materials that would otherwise end up in the oceans. But literalized images with frames of reference, that offer no ambiguity, no mystery? These always miss me. I like the stuff over there, whispering in the corner. I'm aware that I may have evaded your question --- would be a good one to ask future participants in your field school --- something that is probably already on your mind. Hopefully, sustainability will be what sustains.

**Matthew Eric Mendez, artist, San Antonio**

*How does the suspense of driving toward a new destination compare to that time between experiencing and drawing about that place? Fantasy vs. memory.*

I think I've laid a map on top of everywhere I went. The drawings delve into my subjectivity at least as much as they do the places the photographs were taken. 110,000 miles of nerve fiber brought to bear on a few thousand miles of road. It's a bit like turning a sock inside out to make sure there's a toe on both sides.

A guy I built model cars with in junior high turned out to be a really interesting engineer, a builder of intricate wooden clocks. In the seventies he was studying holography, and told me about the conjugate hologram, a single image, which when smashed with a hammer, breaks into multiple pieces, each with a duplicate of the complete image on them. So, to follow that, it's like looking for America one highway at a time, with each section of road crossed by the changing of the day, and the speed of mind that is faster than the other vehicle you're in. You might randomly pull over to stretch in Wyoming at the exact spot where someone lost a small plushy toy, a Guernsey cow with blue eyes.

*Do you consider yourself a psychedelic cartographer searching for the sublime or supreme banalities?*

I like that, but it sounds a little fancy.

*Do you think the dynamic stillness of long-distance driving can improve artistic intuition as meditation expands consciousness and awareness deepens?*

I'm thinking of a night drive past a burning slag-heap in Montana. It was like a silent, but demanding, bit of serious punctuation. A comma. A peripheral drama along the stream, indicative of ongoing events outside the interior propelling me down the line of road. A feeling of loneliness flying past work that had to be done, had been done, but, now, when I was there, no one else was, just the fire, finishing the job.

*What tensions exist when introducing your gaze as a flâneur instead of a tourist?*

Sounds like a question grounded in your own experience. I made a

point of not being intrusive or at all overt about taking photographs, diffusing that potential of tension. There are only two people that appear. One was just someone who walked into the frame as I snapped the photo. The other was a guy that was on the ground doing some work under his trailer. I wasn't going to take his picture at all, but then he began loudly and profanely yelling at his wife and then at his dog, so I thought he'd given up his right to the respect I was affording him by not including him in my viewfinder.

It's possible that the gaze of a tourist might concern itself with the known destination, say Mt. Rushmore for example, more than would a flâneur, which is an attitude more aligned with how I felt, noticing the peripheries, choosing a line of travel unrelated to monumental ideals.

*Are you making serendipitous scenery or an autobiographical portrait?*

Hopefully it rides a line.

**Chris Sauter, artist, San Antonio**

*Are the frequent drips appearing in your drawings residue? If so, residue of what?*

Well, it's a drawing, so maybe it's all residue. Marks left by a life. Someone asked me, thinking they were ink drawings, if my pen had dripped onto the page. I said, no, the drawing is dripping. But in retrospect, I think they are tears, not drips. They respond to gravity in different ways.

*How does the notion of drawing affect which photos you take/work from?*

I don't go looking at the photos for anything specific, but something will say, "try me." A movement or gesture; maybe an object; a color-flash. Something that lends itself to a point of departure. Once the drawing begins to produce its own space, I leave the photo behind.

## **Ariane Roesch, artist, Houston**

*I hate to bring in politics but since we can see the light at the end of the tunnel...somewhat: how much did trump-era antics shadow this project?*

The words he speaks obscure truth; the thoughts he hosts infect the nation; his movements block the sun; so yes, there have been shadows.

*There are several references to Trump in the texts and even though the project was conceived before his win, it seems that these off beat, homegrown American towns had a heightened effect amongst the MAGA fanaticism... or would they have the same effect under a different administration?*

People that voted Trump are everywhere, not just rural America. This idea that he represents the unheard masses, though true for some, is one of the facades of his campaign. He's the president of paranoid wealth, resolute greed, obstructionist retention of power.

*You mention that it is the land that connects us. But there's a certain wobbliness to the project - the emptiness of the drawings, the broken lines, the tears/drips... it all seems unstable. Do you think the United States will ever be stable? or non-wobbly?*

I have to hope for that stability, though that particular connection, the land, is frequently curbed by abuse. There is quite an array of examples, but I'm thinking specifically of the people at Joshua Tree during a shutdown in mid-January, 2020, seemingly celebrating the absence of park employees as a reason to trash the place, going so far as to create new roads. This was a shutdown unrelated to the Pandemic --- the cabin fever excuse doesn't apply. Not that there is any excuse. As I think of it now, that is my ideal of personal liberty, shitting out of a tree.

So, you have asked a question that probes a very vulnerable place in my story --- the wish that there is something that connects everybody. Hard to believe and sometimes you have to ask yourself, "Why do I

want to believe this?" It's a valid question. Nothing should be taken for granted. But that connection is actually my experience, so...

Maybe just accepting that democracy by nature is a vulnerable institution may bring more stability, albeit through the back door. If you get how fragile it can be, this is incentive to care.

The past few years have felt like a machine someone forgot to oil. A closed system, bound to break down. The wobble is the sound of that friction. The oil this machine needs is heightened awareness, applied from the outside in. But the exposure is helpful --- to know even a little about how dire it can get. And then to move forward.

**Georganne Deen, artist, Joshua tree, California**

*The Gina Abeles quote in Neil Fauersto's essay about some double binds being therapeutic & others malevolent: could you give examples of those?*

Trump is a convenient tool for this. His essential double bind is that he lost the election by a large margin, but is unable to accept this because losing is an experience that he has continually denied being familiar with, even though failure and mounting debt are part of his experience as a businessman. This is simultaneously his experience and the experience he cannot acknowledge, a malevolent double bind.

Any double bind always sets up a choice. The therapeutic choice that could release him from this duality is essentially bound up in the phrase, "the truth will set you free" --- the acceptance of the fact that winning and losing are both part of life and that the notion that one negates the other is essentially false. Though he's missed the opportunity, he could have acknowledged defeat and engaged the expected concession ritual, which protects the loser from despair by offering a dignified exit. Instead, he chose denial, which keeps the malevolent repetition in play, with each missed opportunity to be truthful creating more entrapment for him and more pain for the nation.

Says me, who is not a psychologist.

**Karen Mahaffy, artist, San Antonio**

*What a lovely time I have had (re)taking this trip with you and at a time of such “stayness”. Rereading the narratives of “Altered States” has been like having a full, completely entertaining conversation with you --- without ever saying a word. Just bouncing around in the passenger seat watching the landscape change.*

*I had already LOL'd and cried by “Day Two.” It likely has a lot to do with an inclination and longing to travel --- the love of seeing (traversing, driving, walking) the unknown and the well-known – that resides deeply but is also dormant, at present. But also more likely, it is that we are all suspended among your words. That we are able to infer ourselves in the spaces between the lines: the ones you drive, the ones you draw, and those you write. This led me to a lot of (re)musings about my own love of what lies outside the edge of the window; a presence implied there in the landscape, the unseen hand that arranged that bowl of fruit... There is a parallel to what is both said and inferred in the space between words. What fun exploring what is within the structure of those lines and what is beyond – and which is which. Thank you for bringing me along.*

*Question: In what state is an Altered State unvisited?*

Uh, that would be Texas. Seems.

Also, you're welcome and I can see that bowl of fruit

*What made me laugh the loudest was the line, “Just so happens I pull up next to the Parallel Wood.” It just gets me every time I read it. Parallels are a theme that runs straight through your narrative. As we lift our heads to occasionally gaze across from the row we are hoeing, it feels like we might see where we are almost headed.*

*Question: If you lose yourself in the Parallel Woods, will you ever meet again?*

Yes. As long as Yogi Berra is there. He might also bring an oilcan.

About your favorite laugh line --- I remember you also liking something I said one time about having a parenthetical experience in Bracketville...

**Bill Nevins, poet, Albuquerque, New Mexico**

*?Que pasa, raza? Not so much seeking answers as questioning seekers. What is the history of all this mystery, or what is the mystery of all this history? Where is the line going and will it bring us all along with it, and if it will, then when? OR, in other words, How NOW, Dun Cow?*

Even spilt milk is an exhaustible resource.

**Anne Wallace, artist, San Antonio**

*"Is Philip Guston an influence here?"*

I can relate to Guston on a number of fronts. A tendency toward humor and an influential high school art teacher are a couple of touch points. His sixties paintings came along just as I was being exposed to color field painting in college painting classes. I cited Disney cartoons in a class critique and another student said, "Somebody finally said it." That same day the teacher antagonistically said to someone, "Does it turn you on?"

So, the apple carts left in the wake of Guston and others, even The Beatles, were upsetting to some folks. There were also instances when faculty and students shared the same cultural reference points. At the time I was trying to do abstract paintings as if they were repositories of presence, with a sense of potential animation, as if physical reality was on the verge of a grin.

I relate to what they call Guston's "mess." I don't know how to be an artist that only pursues some vertical ideal. The peripheries of concern outside what the art establishment values are still in play, even though the tension is long past being about "abstract" and "figurative."



**Larry Bob Phillips, artist, Director of The Roswell Artist-In-Residence Program, Roswell, New Mexico**

*Hills, I know you are interested in the notion of shamanism --- a kind of DIY spirituality that allows practitioners to access other realms with the aid of substances and spirit animals. Can you talk about the role of contemporary artists in a society where shamans have been eliminated and how you situate yourself to that idea?*

I don't know anything about spirit animals. I'm wary of the word shamanism also, because I've witnessed some kinds of casual la-di-da about it that seems disrespectful, and there are obvious appropriation issues.

I do think art and music, poetry, cooking; any creative activity has the potential to produce transformative effects that can be savored and integrated into a life. Half the work belongs to the viewers, the readers, the listeners, the consumers; there is an attitude of surrender involved. Without that, you won't get it, that potential moment of transformation. The roles that artists find to play are varied --- some think everything is absurd and riff on that. And while I do think irony can be a useful tool, as a worldview it is bereft. So, what is left? --- The suggestion that an artist is someone who is willing to play because life sparks engagement with what can be called common good or just the existential joy of being alive. It's a feet-on-the-ground idea and also an all-encompassing idea.

Something I learned in my twenties is that if you follow unconscious expression with trust, the things you make will speak to you about adjustments you need to make to your being. It's as much about the inner activity as it is about the outer expression. I love what I heard Robert Fripp say from the stage once at a King Crimson concert --- "This is what we're doing when we're doing what we're doing."

*How does your move to Magdalena work with your practice, it seems like a place poised between zones. Between cow trail and railroad, a mining community and an unlikely astronomy hub?*

I'm only beginning to find out specifically, but generally it's the same -

-- ground and sky, though there is a very pleasing and prominent shift in scale. I can pretty much do my pickup truck anywhere. BTW, I don't use that word "practice." I prefer "pickup truck."

**Riley Robinson, artist, Director, Artpace, San Antonio**

*I remember seeing "How Big Is Your Love" in 1993. The single line drawing assembled over 18 frames creates a landscape, which describes culture. These recent drawings with fragmented imagery and the introduction of color also describe landscape. Can you describe the journey across landscape that brings us to these recent artworks?*

Good point. A life-sized drawing of a '59 Cadillac convertible, drawn with a single line certainly suggests a horizon, at least from fin to headlight. This reaches back to a primordial perceptual experience of being human --- a lone verticality supporting eyes staring into the distance at a horizontal expanse. The grounding of language in physical reality is in this too: here/there --- this/that.

The drawings in this project are tiny by comparison (9 X 12 inches), so there is a difference in focal point. With the Caddy you are naturally inclined to stand back from the twenty-four-foot width of the drawing, which creates the landscape effect you've mentioned, even though each framed section of the car is installed two inches from those beside, beneath, and above it, creating gaps in the flow. These gaps, by the way, are where the question in the title accrues --- the image is exponentially larger than the actual car. And since the image is a vehicle, and the drawings are installed so that the wheels are close to the floor, the viewer is probably also inclined to sense movement. It's like the vehicle of your movement and the distant horizon contradict each other, suggesting stillness, where love grows.

With the *Altered States* drawings, you are drawn in to an intimate relationship. Like maybe getting so close to a WORD that you fall through the hole in the O. You are right up close, just as I was when I drew them. But since they are installed in grids, you can also stand back and take in that gestalt. Perhaps you've led me back to the previously mentioned conjugate hologram, though each image is

different. Maybe this speaks to fragmentation, the way a single life has fallen off the edge of a single line.

**Sarita Talusani Keller, Ann Simpson Artmobile Educator,  
University of Wyoming Art Museum, Laramie, Wyoming**

*I want to know more about your artist process. Did you have any self imposed rules, criteria, or structures that guided your process.*

Just a bit --- I photographed every single time I felt the impulse. Sometimes I knew why, other times I didn't. Didn't matter --- the rule was simply to follow every impulse.

The other structures which came to be part of it were that the drawings would be done remotely, after the fact of being somewhere, and the writing would always be done right before publication in order to guarantee a mix of memory and the influence of things occurring in real time as I was writing. The point was to introduce mitigating factors --- the photo in between me and the drawing; the fractured time afforded by not writing in a journalistic way as things occurred.

This is related in a way to the large-scale drawing that Riley Robinson brought up in his question. The caddy was drawn small scale and then cut into eighteen rectangles, each about 2.75 x 3.75 inches --- then projected one at a time onto 22 x 30 inch pieces of paper. So even though the original small drawing was a single continuous line, the projection necessarily introduced fractures and mis-alignments. I think of these mitigations as ways of introducing uncontrolled elements, leaks in the process that let things in that might not otherwise show up.

*Your travelogue is a very entertaining and brings a whole new dimension to the exhibition. Was the travelogue an original component of your project? How did it come about?*

Yes, an original component and one of the ways the whole project was supported. I had no idea where the travelogue would go or how many installments there would be. Based on a mutual trust --- Glasstire would support however many installments it took to complete the arc and I would make certain to pull it off within a

vaguely agreed upon budget. The only structure has been that the publication of some of the narrative installments corresponded to the opening dates of the exhibition as it moved from venue to venue.

*Since the pandemic our museum has had to rethink how we engage with the public. Although our museum doors are open, most of our official programming is now online. How do you feel about your exhibition being a completely online experience vs the traditional museum or gallery experience?*

In that regard, this is probably just a one off. Or maybe that is hopeful. At least that's the way it looks right now. But given the curator's idea to add this Q and A, it's still an expansion rather than a pulling back. I expect Part Eight and anything further will be physically accessible experiences. But that's just conjecture --- with so many variables, anything could happen.

### **Heyd Fontenot, artist, San Antonio**

*My question is about the Psychic-Energetic components of these landscapes: Do these partial maps of the material contents of the true-life scenes reflect any value system --- how the artist would prefer we read the drawings?*

I could not prefer anyone to have a specific reading, but I do think, in a quantum world, to see the topography on offer as "unrealistic" is silly. Or, to need the photograph, in order to "get" the drawing, the same.

There is a lot of neglect, abandonment, accumulation of disorder on the peripheries everywhere one can go. It's an unfinished country, a tarnished ideal, a lot of mess, but then you come across someone who has made an immaculate Elvis shrine out of their yard.

I was photographically documenting the local in out of the way places. Sometimes I saw no one, as in Lost Springs, Wyoming, but I could tell that one site I found there was an outdoor fire gathering place for folks that lived around there. I could feel the residue of their presence; probably because hanging around outdoor fires is something I've done a lot of. So, there is a connection that can be

had, depending on what you bring. I guess that's the value system, giving and receiving.



*Bummerville, California 3*

**Patricia Ruiz-Healy, Director, Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio and New York**

*What is the name of the town that was more difficult to travel to and how long did it take?*

Bummerville, California is clearly marked on the map, but driving to it for the first time is a different story. I arrived at my campsite in the Sierra Nevada just before dark and I guessed that I was only an hour

or so from where I thought the destination was, so the morning I went looking for it, I headed out a bit late. Had to navigate Carson Pass to get close. Didn't know that once near I would spend the day making every single turn, except the right one. Wound around for several hours before giving up and heading back to camp completely discouraged. No one I spoke with knew how to find it or how it came to be called Bummerville. The following morning, I headed back and found it right away. There was something about that turn. Returning to camp, in a celebratory gesture, I left the Guernsey plushy on the grave of a young girl who died on Carson Pass in the 1850s.

**Neil Fauerso, writer, San Antonio**

*Have you ever had an encounter with a trickster spirit?*

Not sure, unless you mean Chemchuties. She whispered to me, "If you want to get to Pleasinoinktament, you've got to go Nootenoinksterwards."

**Toby Kamps, Director of External Projects, White Cube, London**

*What name did you have before you were born?*

You've asked a question far from the center of the usual art dialogue, but right at the center of the big picture. And the obvious answer: I don't know, have not remembered, but if I had, there would be more of me. Or less, depending on how you hear that.

**Rainey Knudson, former publisher, Canvas & Glasstire, Houston, Texas**

*What do you think humans will look like in 500 years?*

Like people who have seen the end of "white" as a political ideology.

*What will Earth look like?*

Depends on actions taken now.

**Jesse Amado, artist, San Antonio**

*Still blue-sky eternal, endlessly above us. What is that we see below?*

The branching of the story when our awareness isn't the best. Maybe we see it, but we don't recognize it. The moment when "it" is unobtrusively waiting for our arrival --- eye contact is possible but we are drawn to distraction. We're out on the wrong branch, the one that leads to a diminished fate. The intuitive voice is available, but we are too loud to hear it.

*What's that staring at us?*

Our better selves having a party, giving us that gaze, wondering why we forgot to show up.



*Altered States* (Part Seven) on Art Report Today, October 2020:  
<https://www.artreporttoday.com/gallery-one/Hills-Snyder.html>

