

WHERE WE ARE

by

©2008  
Bryan Park

Submitted to the graduate program in Design,  
and to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts.

Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Defended: \_\_\_\_\_

The Thesis Committee for Bryan Park certifies  
That this is the approved Version of the following thesis:

## WHERE WE ARE

Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

The meaning of place to me is one of collection and projection. I endeavor to create works that serve as centers of meaning based on personal experience of a vast network of connections. This thesis body of work draws on senses of place informed through study of geography, philosophy, and art. I use the concept of place as a starting point to engage in discussion of memory, time, travel, connection, and identity. Places provide seemingly concrete settings for my memories and my desires, analogous to my unforgotten past and un-lived future. As a maker, I take these place-feelings and form into objects that attach me to that place, memory, and idea. As a metalsmith, making enfolds me within a tradition of thoughtful objects. Each sculpture embodies a link between me and something beyond, something other. The exhibition acts as a map of my identity and my connections with the universe.

I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to everyone that has helped me throughout my time at the University of Kansas. To my thesis committee, Gina, Jon, Jon, and Matt; to Tom; to Cotter; to Pete; to my family; to my fellow students; to my friends; and to Lauren, my anchor.

## Contents

- i Title Page
  - ii Acceptance Page
  - iii Abstract
  - iv Acknowledgements
  - v Contents
  - vi Artist's Statement
- 

- I Introduction
  - 4 The Meaning of Place
  - 8 Place in Art
  - 12 The Tradition of Making
  - 14 Where we are
  - 24 Final Words
- 

- 25 Bibliography
- 26 Appendix A: Exhibition map
- 27 Appendix B: Images

## Artist's Statement

According to geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, place is, "a center of meaning constructed by experience." The meaning of place to me is one of collection and projection. My goal is to create works that serve as centers of meaning based on my personal experience. This experience is a vast web of connections; connections of people, ideas, events. Connecting these things is possible because they each "took place." Everything has occurred in a place, and that place has taken those entities and circumstances as constituent parts of its own meaning.

These places provide seemingly concrete settings for my memories and my desires. Indeed, not all of the connections I am concerned with are experiences I have had, but those for which I yearn. Analogous to my unforgotten past and un-lived future, these memories and desires reflect my view of myself, my identity. By celebrating my connection to a specific location I project myself into the history and meaning of that place. I become a part of that place, either in the collective memory of others who experienced it with me or in my own mental landscape. I also collect the meaning of the place into my identity. The essence of the place becomes a part of me.

Location in and of itself does not contain the collected meaning of a place. Meaning also resides in the inhabitants, the buildings, the view, in the decisions made, the stories told, the time gone by. Objects also gather these place-meanings. Through experience, the significance of a locality can be imparted to a building, a car, a sign, a monument, a spoon, a shard. As an object-maker, the nature of the materials and processes I use contain meaning just as their form and composition do.

My goal is to take the various meanings from places into myself, to create my own centers of meaning, and to express my identity in terms of the places to which I am connected and in turn which connect me to the various people, events, and ideas that have made me who I am.

I am an object maker. I am a metalsmith. I am a sculptor.

I am a space shaper. I am a meaning giver.

I am a place maker.

Page left intentionally blank.

## Introduction

I seek to know myself within a world of other, separated by time and space. I am who I am because a multitude of connections define me in relation to entities and circumstances outside myself. Identified by place, these connections come into focus, the convergence of a moment and a location; the intersection of an individual and the cosmos.

The forms, images, materials, and processes in this body of thesis work collect my thoughts and project them into the world by means of a gallery exhibition. I endeavor to intrigue others with wondrous, intimate objects and contemplative spaces, through which to consider my exploration of places as the moment of collection and projection. The objects are reflections on specific places from my lived experience that have played a crucial role in the formation of my identity. Each sculpture also performs a role in creating a larger environment or landscape. Together, they are the physical manifestation of time spent visualizing, making, and being.

As a maker, I strive to create objects that people can connect to in myriad ways. The pieces should be intriguing on multiple levels. Thoughtfulness and precision go into every detail. Choices in material reflect the mood and meaning, as well as the physical requirements of the piece. My materials also teach me about the

concepts with which I work throughout the process of creation. Sometimes, the materials provide the understanding necessary to derive the ultimate form of the piece. Uniting these elements of detail and material sensitivity into a whole form, it is important to me that the objects retain their individual integrity and meaning while providing the audience satisfying visual experiences. They exist as individual statements and connections as well as constituent parts of the overall body of work as an exhibition.

In addition to the individual objects, this work exists within a created place. Through the placement, lighting, and connection of the pieces, it is my intention to build a place for contemplation, reflection, and exploration. My constructions create a landscape that offers people an opportunity to consider their relationship to the location in which they are. In turn, they might then meditate on the ways that this specific relationship connects them to other places, objects, people, and ideas. Understanding these interwoven attachments ultimately may lead to a revelation of the self and personal identity within a complex world.

I forge and reflect upon my own identity through the process of making the work. From initial ideation through the de-installation of the exhibition, my role as a nexus informs my decisions. As an intersection of connections, association, and attachments, I continuously consider these bonds and how they have come to be who I am. The work becomes a reflection of some of the particular peculiarities of

my lived experience. The work also establishes new paths and associations. My process is therefore not only reflective, but also transformative.

The exhibition and subsequent discussion of this body of thesis work embodies a portion of this process. By displaying the work in a public arena, I project myself into the people who view the work, whether in a brief glance as they hurry down the hallway or in thoughtful reflection upon the entire exhibition. Discussion of the ideas and concepts that drive me to make also creates links. I collect, from those who have viewed the work, how it has related with their own experiences and, thus, the network expands.

## The Meaning of Place

We all know what place is. Or do we? I placed it over there. Things "take place." Do you know your place? Did you know it in the first place? Use this one in the place of that one? He placed last. The books are all out of place.

This is my place.

Place, as a topic of discussion, has existed from the earliest philosophical treatises.<sup>1</sup> The ancient philosophers filled all of Being with Places. The absolute void was rejected. The emptiness of the void became ever more real in the early modern period as mathematics, astronomy, and physics proposed the empty nature of almost everything. As these sciences advanced, so did the idea of place lose its hold in the mind of the philosopher. Infinite space-time has become the modern understanding of the universe. Places became locations and then, merely, sites. The void has taken over. Even the densest matter is actually composed almost entirely of empty spaces.

Geographers, as studiers of "place" and places, have had a tricky position, in describing what it is exactly that they spend so much time researching. Since the early 1970's, geographers and philosophers have come back to the importance of

---

<sup>1</sup> Casey, Edward. Getting Back Into Place. 1993. pp. ix-xvii. In his preface, Casey discusses the history of the philosophy of place, from the classical era to the late 20th century.

the idea of place, spearheaded by the publication in 1974 of Yi-Fu Tuan's Topophilia: a study of environmental perceptions, attitudes, and values. Tuan's *topophilia*, or love of place, contrasted greatly with the, then accepted view, of place existing as a set of coordinates within a giant grid.

For Tuan, place is "a center of meaning constructed by experience."<sup>2</sup> This relationship between place, meaning, and experience is a bidirectional one. Tuan observes that while experiences give meaning to specific locations, the locations in turn also give meaning to the experiences. The body is the first mechanism for the experiencing of place for Tuan. "Man is the measure of all things."<sup>3</sup> We experience everything either through our own bodies or through interactions with other people (bodies).

Edward Casey, a philosopher who focuses on the idea of place, also notes a profound relationship between the body and place. In Getting Back Into Place, he discusses the use of the body for navigating, especially in unknown landscapes, such as the barren tundra or the open sea. For Casey, "place is what takes place between body and landscape."<sup>4</sup>

Place, however, is not limited to the realm of the physical, to the body. In fact, places, as experience driven entities, are also heavily indebted to the mental realm.

---

<sup>2</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu. Topophilia. 1974. quoted in Ryden, Kent C. Mapping the Invisible Landscape. 1993. p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu. Space and Place. 1977, 2001. p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Casey. Getting Back Into Place. pp. 26-29.

"When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place."<sup>5</sup> Tuan here speaks of the profound mental action necessary for a location to become noteworthy, to have characteristics worthy of identification. As places are mental constructions, in addition to bodily experiences, they become enculturated when shared with others.

In his book Shadowed Ground, which is about places associated with violence and loss, Kenneth Foote discusses places as cultural constructions. He specifically covers the ways in which places are treated following a tragic event. "Landscape is the expressive medium, a forum for debate, within which [these] social values can be discussed actively and realized symbolically."<sup>6</sup> The idea of landscape as a medium to be used in the expression of senses of place is also discussed in Nicholas Entrikin's The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity.<sup>7</sup>

The re-emerging sense of the importance of place in the fields of geography and philosophy has also spilled into related social sciences such as ethnography, anthropology, sociology, area studies, and even art history. I believe that this renewed interest in place has occurred, in part, because of the global spread of free-market capitalism and the increased speed and capability of communications technology. People seek to remind themselves what is unique about their individual situations as places become more and more similar through the spread of chain

---

<sup>5</sup> Tuan. Space and Place. p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> Foote, Kenneth E. Shadowed Ground. 1997, 2003. p. 292.

<sup>7</sup> Entrikin, J. Nicholas. The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity. 1991. Entrikin's fourth chapter, "The Empirical-Theoretical Significance of Place and Region," is devoted to ideas concerning the materiality and manipulability of place.

stores, movie theatres, and restaurants. This loss of distinction between places is also exaggerated by instant global communication; where you are no longer has much of an effect on with whom you can immediately communicate. The dissolution of distinctive places has, in turn, led to an increased academic interest in how the particulars of place, and place-identity, have had an effect on human culture and its products.

Knowing the importance of all of the places in my own life, I have become increasingly excited about the possibilities these writers propose concerning the meaning of place. Place as the intersection of the body and the landscape (Tuan, Casey) becomes for me the meeting point of the individual and the rest of the world. Place therefore becomes a site for identifying oneself. Place also has the role of a meaning-holder, both the meaning afforded to it by experiences and the meaning assigned to it as a cultural construction; physically, mentally, and emotionally.

## Place in Art

Place is not only a topic for research and argument by academic professionals in lectures and publications. Artists have also considered the concept extensively, from place as the setting within a work to place as an integral part of the work, both physically and conceptually. Art that deals with place in both of these ways appeals to me, as if looking at both the inside and the outside of a vessel.

One such artist is the sculptor, painter, and photographer William Christenberry. Raised in rural Alabama, Christenberry has spent almost his entire career creating work that explores and attempts to reconcile the disparate feelings he has about the region in which he grew up. In his photographs, the buildings and landscapes of Alabama become both the setting and the meaning of Christenberry's work. Dilapidated buildings slowly weather in the harsh sun, against a backdrop of encroaching pine forest. A bright white chair sits alone on a collapsing porch, evidence of human activity that has since past. In this work, Christenberry deals with memory, as with place. He asks the viewer to embark with him on a journey back in time to a day when the small country store was still open, before the tires went flat and rust ate the old pickup.

Christenberry also enshrines his memories of these places in the small building sculptures that he creates and painstakingly paints to recreate the patina of time.

Many of the buildings he sculpts are the same as the ones that he returns to photograph year after year. Although these sculptures of buildings appear to be suffering the ravages of decay, they sit alone on planes of bare earth, as if sealed off from anything that could continue their decline.

For me, Christenberry is attempting to reconnect with the past of his small-town southern childhood. This past-place is not perfect, evinced by the decay so prevalent in his work, but it is what he dreams about. These buildings are not just the fallen remains of a once grander economy. They are also memory-vessels; places of personal and cultural significance.

Another contemporary American sculptor who deals with place is Richard Serra, whose works are, to me, places of their own rather than references and remembrances of pre-existing places. Serra's work over the past three decades has consisted of constructed places. Pieces such as the highly controversial public work, *Tilted Arc*, which was eventually removed from the Federal Plaza in New York City, change the spaces they are designed for in such a way as to create a new place. In his works, Serra creates extremely minimalist spaces that, through the subtle arrangement of simple forms, cause the visitor to become increasingly aware of exactly where they are, even within a sometimes disorienting space.

The subtlety Serra uses to create new spatial experiences and an understanding of both the constructed interior and altered exterior spaces is awe-inspiring. The works become symbolic in their simplicity. They can come to represent places

beyond themselves because they are so purely and absolutely what they are, as is also true for Christenberry's buildings. In simplicity, a piece like *Torqued Ellipse* becomes connected to a multitude of complex forms and spaces beyond it.

This simplicity of form and connection to things beyond the work itself is also apparent in the work of the surrealists. Painters Rene Magritte and Giorgio DeChirico used simple forms to create complex places. Confined spaces such as the place in DeChirico's *The Red Tower* become both interior and exterior. They are at once a real physical place and a dreamlike landscape with iconic versions of the various subjects arranged specifically within the space. Magritte challenges the ability of a place to exist both as the place itself and as the representation of that place. In his paintings, what appears to be a simple view through a window is revealed upon closer inspection to be a painting on an easel which blends almost seamlessly with the view of the world beyond it. The proposition Magritte makes in these paintings, that a place can exist within a representation of itself, is similar to the assertion that Christenberry makes in his photographs and sculptures of rural Alabama. In turn the artwork also exists as an extension of that place; both recreating the place, and connecting the viewer to the actual place.

Metalsmith Marilyn DaSilva creates narrative work that performs this role of representation and extension of place. Particularly in a body of work in response to the loss of her home to a fire in 1993, DaSilva creates forms that are indicative of her understanding of her place in a time of placelessness. Although her work does

not realistically represent her home, as do Christenberry's sculptures, the building-like vessels contain the collected meaning of that place and the sense of loss she feels in relationship to it. They are memorial objects, in the reference to the homeplace and in the mourning of it. In this way, they relate to the forms, at once generic and specific, in the dream-like landscapes of DeChirico.

Not only is the work of these artists, and others, interesting to me in the way that they deal with the ideas and concepts of place and space, memory and reference, it is also the artistic context in which I make my work. My efforts to create space take into account my experience of the spaces constructed by Serra and DeChirico. Marilyn DaSilva's evocative memorial objects inspire me to remember my connections to home and place through making. These links to other makers and thinkers also give meaning to act of making and extend the web of connections created through the work.

## The Tradition of Making

In addition to the conceptual and visual elements of this body of thesis work, I also strive to include an element of the importance of the well-thought, handmade object. As vessels of personal place-meaning, the objects I make could not hold the power and meaning they do without the careful hours of attention lavished upon them. As much as the ideas shape the making, the making also shapes the ideas. The materials and processes I work with are all strongly tied to a long tradition of highly skilled makers creating things by hand; smiths, joiners, masons, sculptors, artists.

I firmly believe that there is a physical, bodily knowledge of material and form only accessible to those who spend time intimately learning the materials with which they work. This knowledge allows the maker to exhibit what David Pye calls the "workmanship of risk."<sup>8</sup> The workmanship of risk calls for working in a way that at every moment there is the chance for failure. This failure is averted through applied knowledge of material, tool, body, and design. Although Pye limits such work to the use of non-powered tools, I believe that the tradition of thoughtful making that he praises can encompass a wide variety of tools and processes, including power tools,

---

<sup>8</sup> Pye, David. "The workmanship of risk, the workmanship of certainty" in The Nature and Art of Workmanship. 1968.

but only when the maker can use such tools with fluency and confidence to achieve necessary form.

The necessary form can come from a continuum of sources. At times the form comes from an idea that is imposed onto the material, and thoughtful workmanship is required to generate the form, even in spite of the material. As I create, form and meaning also come from the material and tools, from the nature of the process. Thus creation is a process sensitive to ideas, materials, and traditions.

This process of thoughtful making in conscious awareness of tools, materials, and body connects me to the multitude of makers alive today and those of centuries past. When I hammer on a piece of silver to create a form, I am continuing the tradition of metalsmiths going back to the first human discovery of working metal. I celebrate, through my continued making, the human drive to solve problems through the creation of objects.

The importance of making as a part of human creativity is not the central concept driving this thesis work. The desire to make, however, is what drives me personally and is how I participate in society. It is not what the work is about, but is a part of what the work is.

## Where we are

The exhibition of my thesis work consisted of six discrete objects, as well as a series of connections between and among them that shaped the space of the gallery and surrounding hallway.<sup>9</sup> Each of the six objects focuses on a specific place and my personal relationship to that place, but they also each perform a role within the larger construction of place through the installation of the exhibition as a whole. Three of the objects were arranged in the gallery space, and the other three engaged the hallway space beyond the gallery, mounted in display cases.

### *Here*

Although there is no starting point in the web of connections between the sculptures in the exhibition, the piece *Here* acts an introduction to the show. Its placement in the display case immediately before the gallery entrance means that it is generally the first piece encountered by a visitor to the show.

The piece consists of a machined brass plumb bob suspended on a line that extends through the point of a wire-frame pyramid and then disappears through the wall of the case. Below the plumb bob is a map of the state of Kansas, placed so that the extension line from the tip of the bob comes to Douglass county and Lawrence, the location of the exhibition. A plane of acrylic holds a vinyl map in

---

<sup>9</sup> Appendix A is a map of the installation. Images of the work and the installation are included as Appendix B.

space at an angle between the suspended bob and the map on the bottom of the case. This street map represents the neighborhood in Greenville, SC where I grew up. The map is drawn in forced perspective as if receding to a point beyond the wall at the back of the case, perhaps suggesting to the viewer that there is a continuation on the other side of the wall. The placement of the street map between the plumb bob and the much smaller map of Kansas represents to the viewer the idea that all places are viewed through the lens of personal experience; in this case my perception of Kansas is colored by my memories of South Carolina. Although I cannot expect that many of the exhibition visitors would recognize my neighborhood, I believe that the act of looking through one layer of information in order to access another is enough to suggest the idea that this piece is meant to communicate. Within the exhibition, this layering of information continues in less explicit ways.

Finally, the line from which the brass bob is suspended disappears into a hole in the wall and continues through into the gallery on the other side to begin connecting with the other work. *Here* acts as an entry point, not only physically, but also conceptually and procedurally, to the rest of the work.

### *Origin*

The string which extends from the plumb bob leads to *Origin*, also the piece nearest in proximity to *Here*. *Origin* stands closest to the entrance to the gallery; a sentry, alone within the empty northern half of the gallery. This sculpture, which

represents the idea of home, towers over six feet tall. Over a base of darkened concrete, a bright white, octagonal tower floats slightly off the surface of a small platform. Suspended on a silver chain within the space between the base and the platform is a brass plumb bob. This plumb bob, assuming the place of a pendulum in a grandfather clock, resembles a sundial or compass rose on its etched top surface, references to time and the act of orienting oneself. The suggested intersecting cones of the bob serve to concentrate the energy inherent in the map on the surface and in the form itself. This energy extends outward toward the base, up the chain into the white tower, and beyond.

The tower is a tapered octagonal prism, formally derived from lighthouses, mill smokestacks, and obelisks. Towers often symbolize the places they inhabit as distinctive features of the landscape, visible from a distance. In this case, the tower symbolizes a place of origin. Whether or not it is physically visible, the place where a person comes from always affects who they are. It is an unchangeable fact, where we come from is a part of who we are. This point of origin becomes a source for comparison with other places, a place of going out and sometimes of return. The concrete base of this piece acts as an anchor, a foundation. It holds everything down and it supports the tapered legs which, in turn, support the table.

Every part of *Origin* in some way tapers or leads the eye upward toward a small brass circle on the ceiling. From this collection point, the energy of the piece is transferred down a string and either through the wall to the plumb bob in the hall

display case or along a horizon line that begins at the intersection with the gallery wall. *Origin* also connects to the other pieces in the gallery, through a set of lines both tangible and intangible. Through a tunnel in the white tower, a shadow is seen, which in turn connects with other shadows of the tower across the gallery. There is also a path on the floor which leads across the empty central part of the gallery to the same sculpture, *Dowsing in Kansas*.

### *Dowsing in Kansas*

Following the meandering white path across the black gallery floor leads to another tower. This line echoes the route I took on my journey from my home, Greenville, SC, to my new place, Lawrence, KS. There are many structural similarities between *Dowsing in Kansas* and *Origin*. Both are tower constructions with concrete bases, long legs holding up a table, and a white tower that continues to focus the energy of the piece up toward the ceiling. Whereas the previous piece expresses the permanence of connection to one's place of beginning, this smaller tower embodies connections that are created to new places both figuratively and literally.

When I moved to Lawrence, two forms immediately captivated me, even before I began to conceive of tower-like work. These two forms, the limestone hitching posts that stand unused in front of many of the older homes in Lawrence, and the Memorial Campanile on the University of Kansas (KU) campus, came to be my mental image of Lawrence and the form of this piece. Through them I was able to

connect myself to this new place that I had found and wanted to claim. In place of the rough, massive base for *Origin*, *Dowsing* has a refined truncated and intersected cone form, which, although it weights the bottom of the piece, is not supporting the legs which hold up the platform and tower. This contrast between the two bases reflects the difference I see between the weight of a integral condition and the anchor constructed to tie myself to a new place.

But perhaps I am getting ahead of myself. In order to go about the process of attaching yourself to a new place (and attaching it to you), you first must have located that place. The dowsing rod, a forked stick, is used as a symbol for this act of seeking the right place, which is not an absolute process. There may be some hocus-pocus, mumbo-jumbo about it, but once this place has been discerned, the process of connection can begin. Some of these connections may be forced, as in the lashing between the small silver chain and the large anchored link inside the tower. Some of them may be tenuous or even temporary like the shaft of light that joins the top of the tower to the dowsing rod, which is suspended on a silver chain from a cone at the ceiling.

For me the act of creating the piece also connects me to the place. As surely as scratching my name into a tree, I am imprinting myself on the place that is Lawrence, KS, now changed because of my presence and desire to be a part of it. Whatever and however these connections are, they have become a part of both me

and Lawrence, just as the connections with Greenville will always be a part of my identity.

*Not where we thought we would have been*

As Greenville and Lawrence make up part of my identity, the places that my grandmother has lived have shaped both her identity and that of our entire family. As a pastor's wife, my grandmother participated in the lives of the upper social class in New Orleans and Charleston. These old, southern societies with their rules of propriety and gentility also carried a stigma towards things less refined. Although the pastor and his wife were included in the events, they were not a part of the high society, and my family's identity has been affected by this existence on the fringe of southern high-society. We take pride in the traditions and manners of the genteel lifestyle when we exhibit them, but, conversely, condemn when others use them in a way that erodes our sense of worth. Our goals include upward social mobility, but the reality of where we are does not always reflect these aspirations, and the places where we live have been instrumental in creating this situation.

This piece is an off-kilter plumb bob constructed from a broken silver candlestick and a discarded roof slate, both of which were given to me by my grandmother. These elements embody a sense of the refined, but slightly out of their proper context. The cardboard cone that makes the bottom of the bob is painted in the colors of a magnolia tree, present at both of the houses my grandmother has lived in during my life.

The line, from which *Not where we thought we would have been* is suspended, continues from the case into the gallery and then down the wall. On the floor it runs directly beneath *Dowsing in Kansas* and into the center of ...*and finally, that we are*. The target on the bottom of the case, which the plumb bob has missed completely, connects to a pencil line which continues through the next case, which is empty, and into a third case around the corner that contains the final piece outside of the gallery.

### *Beacon*

On the southeast corner of the gallery, a small tapered bin of rough-sawn wood displays a silver cup. This cup, *Beacon*, is my brightness shining out into the open landscape. The highly polished surface of the sterling silver cup reflects everything around it, gathering all of the color and form in the environment and then sending it back out. Chased into the surface of the cup is a line drawing of the Leo Jenkins Art and Design Building at East Carolina University (ECU) where I completed my undergraduate studies. While I was a student at ECU, the graduate students in the metalsmithing area began a tradition of making silver drinking cups for themselves. This project was inspired by a cup that professor Bob Ebendorf brought to a party, which was made for him by Gary Noffke. As a graduate student at KU, I felt a longing for the camaraderie I had with those friends from ECU and so I began to create my own "Noffke cup." The cup is a tangible reminder of my involvement with that group of people and that place. It is also however my lighthouse, my signal sent out into the world, from Greenville, NC and Lawrence, KS and wherever else I

might go, that I am a metalsmith and I know that handmade objects are an important part of being human.

From the bottom of the small bin that supports this cup, a string extends out of a copper funnel, finds its way across the display case, and enters the wall through a brass grommet in the center of a circular map of the Carolina coastline. On the inside of the gallery, this connects with a small brass circle, from which the energy passes on along a line to the last piece in the thesis work.

...and finally, that we are.

Of the six pieces in the exhibition, two specifically relate to physical locations that are also archetypes for two of the ways in which we know places, the places that we start with and the ones we find, choose, and make. One piece is primarily a didactic tool to introduce the themes of the exhibition, and two others represent places that are most important because of the people related to them. The sixth piece is about all of that; it also explores a whole lot more.

Physically *...and finally, that we are.* exists as a cone made of forty-six strings, converging into a point in the ceiling, with a larger opening through which the interior space can be entered. Within the cone a small pile of limestone blocks lifts a small brass tower/scope.

This work, however, is not contained in the physical qualities of its makeup; it is a contemplative space for quiet reflection and meditation. As such, it is the only

work within the exhibition where the visitor physically becomes a part of the piece. Because the space is separated from the gallery by a transparent wall of string, the visitor is removed from the constructed landscape of the gallery, and beyond, but is still connected, both literally and conceptually. The small tower and pile of limestone blocks connects to *Dowsing in Kansas* and, beyond it, *Not where we thought we would have been* by a string line on the floor that then runs up and through the wall. The small brass tower also becomes a scope. When a visitor chooses to engage the piece in this way they can focus their gaze to specific points in the space beyond. As a tower, this small object does not refer to a location as the others do. It is an archetypal form only, removed from the details of any specific place. My intention is for it to become any place in the mind of the visitor.

Several viewers of the show, after discussing the two larger towers with me, came to see *Origin* as a past-place and *Dowsing in Kansas* as the present-place, which led them to believe that ...*and finally, that we are.* is a future-place. While I am happy for people to create their own connections with the work, my intention is that this last piece is not about a place with any particular time-scale. As it is a space removed from the landscape, it is also removed from time.

## The Installation

In addition to the individual pieces, the body of thesis work exists as a set of connections that form a network between the pieces, and the visitors. These links

are made physically, through lines of string and tape, and visually by lines drawn on the wall in pencil and marker, as well as by the lighting.

Shadows form an important part of the landscape I created for the exhibition. They serve to establish sight line connections between the pieces, and become additional objects within the space of the gallery. As echoes of the forms that cast them, they exist as alternate versions of the same place; recurrences from a different time or space. Memories. Shadows also serve to remind visitors of their own physical presence in the space of the gallery. Once someone walks into the space, they begin almost immediately to cast a shadow on one of the walls, and then multiple shadows. These shadows also become objects in the landscape of the room.

By joining the work in the gallery to the work in the cases beyond I create associations between here and there. In addition to an awareness of immediate place, the space they occupy, I want visitors to be aware of the places they are not. Once I have been in the gallery, I cannot look at the work outside of the gallery without remembering the previous work, and vice versa. This mirrors the fact that I cannot be in Lawrence without being the person who was in Greenville.

As this work moves forward, the next installation will include some reference to the space of the Art & Design Gallery at KU. And conversely, for those of us who experienced it, my exhibition will always effect how we view the place where it was installed.

## Final Words

"Where we are – the place we occupy, however briefly – has everything to do with what and who we are (and finally, *that* we are)."

– Edward Casey

It is other; beyond; past, present, and future; here and there; before and after; personal and universal; inside and outside; new and old. It has a meaning that I have given it and a meaning created through a visitor's experience of it.

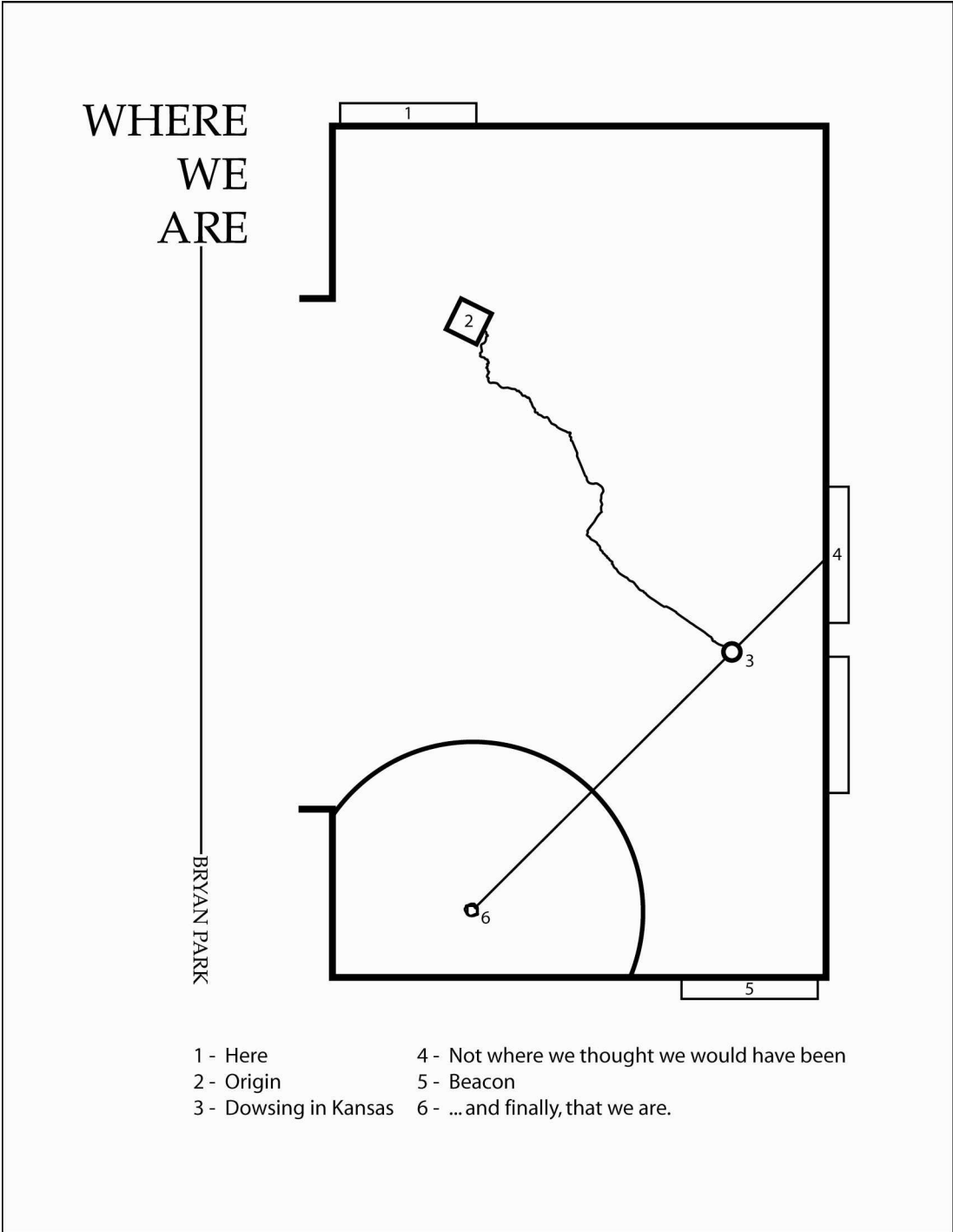
It is place.

It is a connection.

## Bibliography

- Casey, Edward S. Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World. Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Entrikin, J. Nicholas. The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity. Baltimore; The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.
- Feld, Steven and Keith H. Basso. Senses of Place. Sante Fe; School of American Research, 1996.
- Foote, Kenneth E. Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy. Austin; The University of Texas Press, 1997, 2003.
- Pye, David. The Nature and Art of Workmanship. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Ryden, Kent C. Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place. Iowa City; The University of Iowa Press, 1993.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience. Minneapolis; The University of Minnesota Press, 1977, 2001.

Appendix A: Exhibition Map

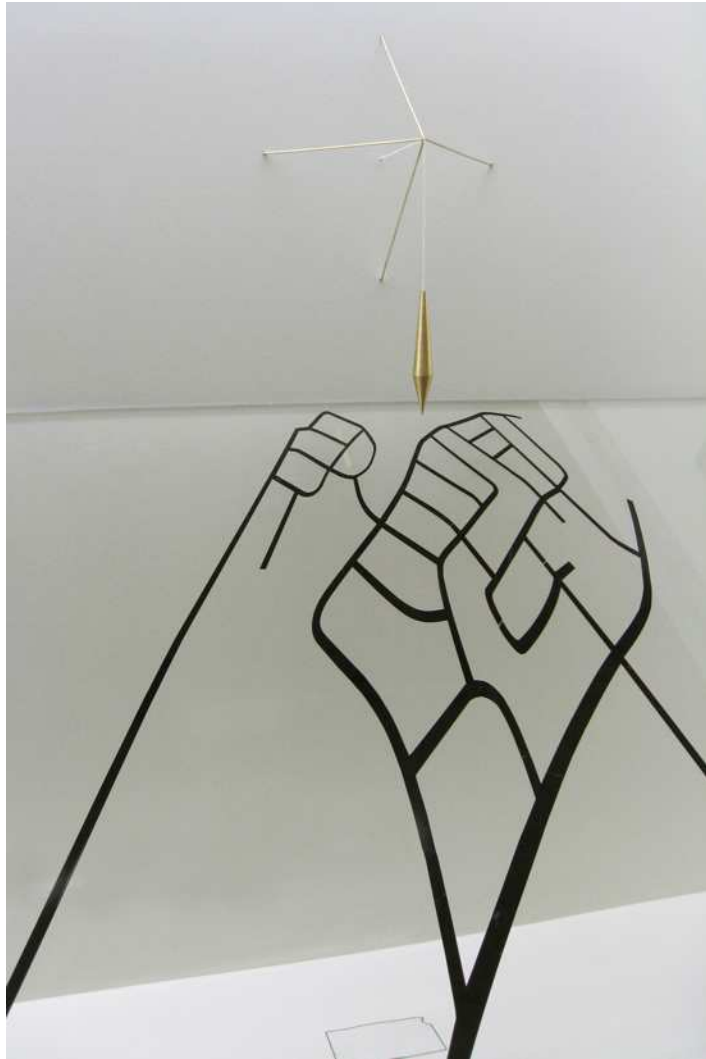


## Appendix B: Images



Interior view of gallery;  
*Origin* (foreground), *Dowsing in Kansas*,  
and ...and finally, that we are.

photo by Aaron Paden



*Here*

photo by Karla Freiheit



Detail of *Here*

photo by Aaron Paden



Line from *Here* entering gallery through wall

photo by Aaron Paden



Interior view of gallery;  
*Origin* (foreground) and *Dowsing in Kansas*

photo by Aaron Paden



Detail of *Origin* with *Dowsing in Kansas* and path in background

photo by Aaron Paden



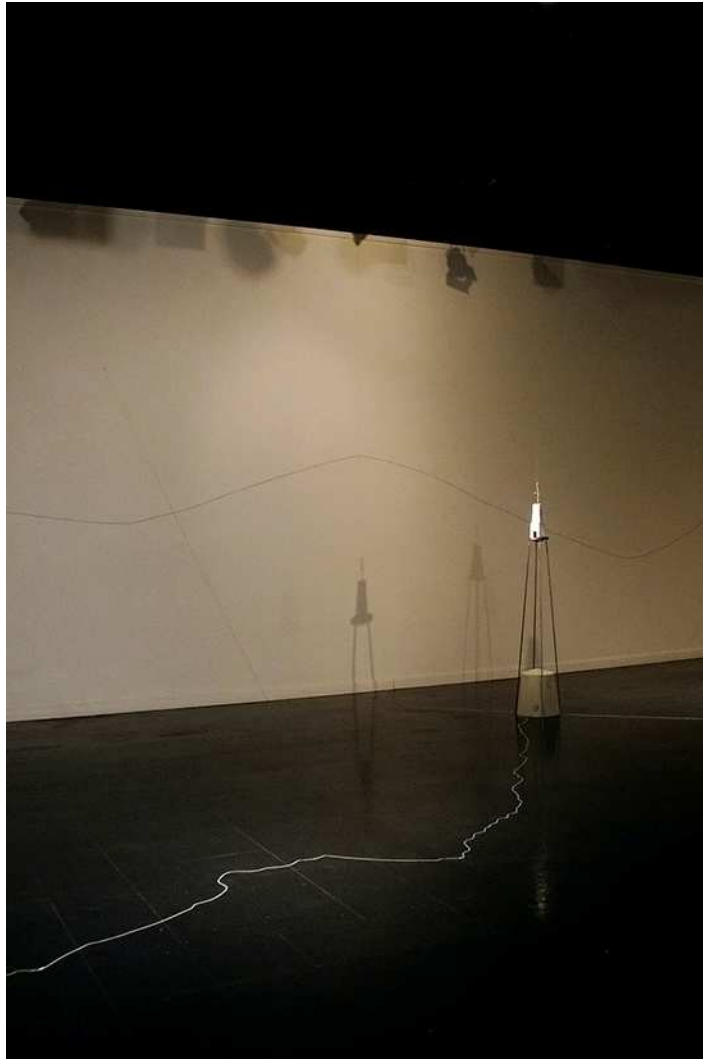
Detail of *Dowsing in Kansas* showing sightline to shadow of *Origin*

photo by Aaron Paden



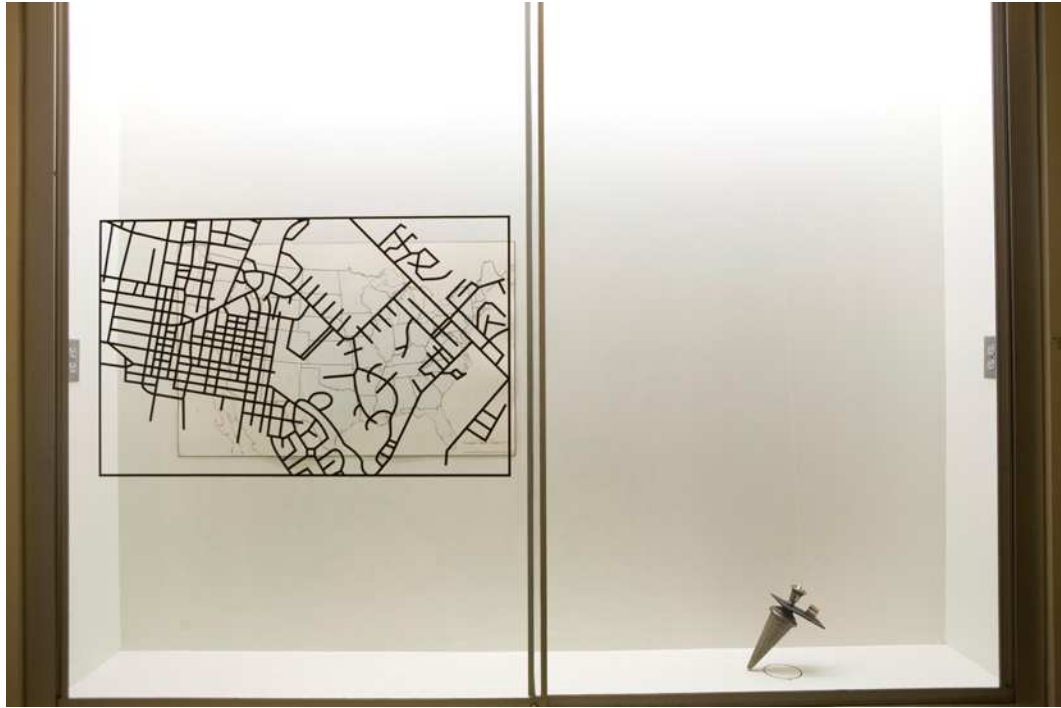
View from top of *Dowsing in Kansas*

photo by Aaron Paden



*Dowsing in Kansas* including shadows and paths

photo by artist



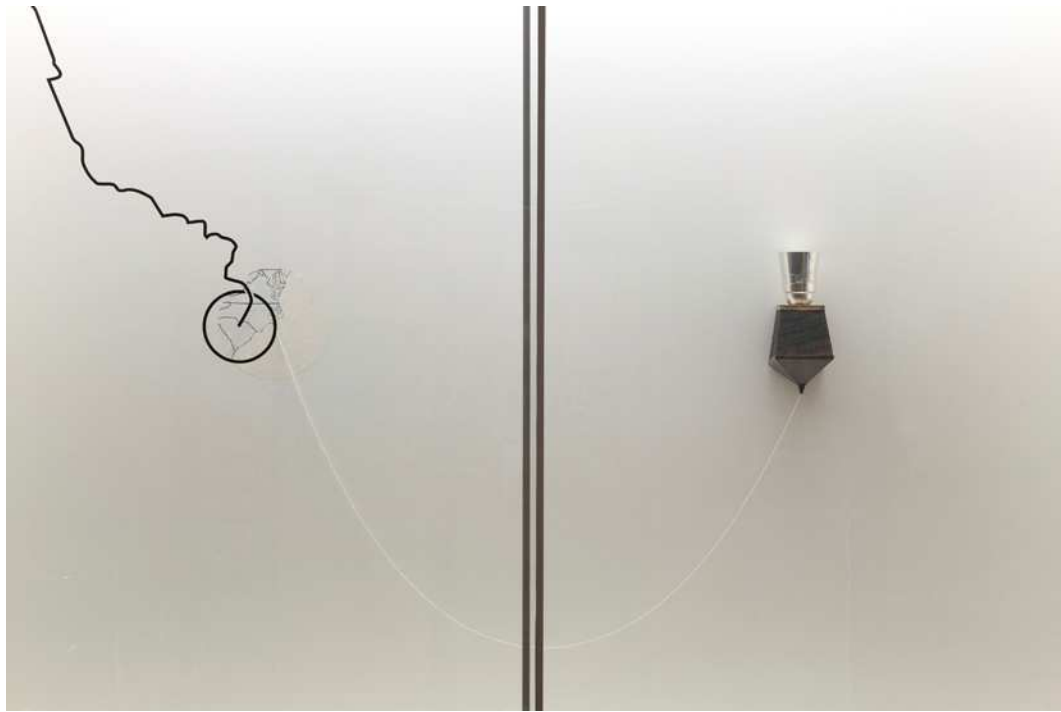
*Not where we thought we would have been*

photo by Aaron Paden



Detail of *Not where we thought we would have been*

photo by Aaron Paden



*Beacon*

photo by Aaron Paden



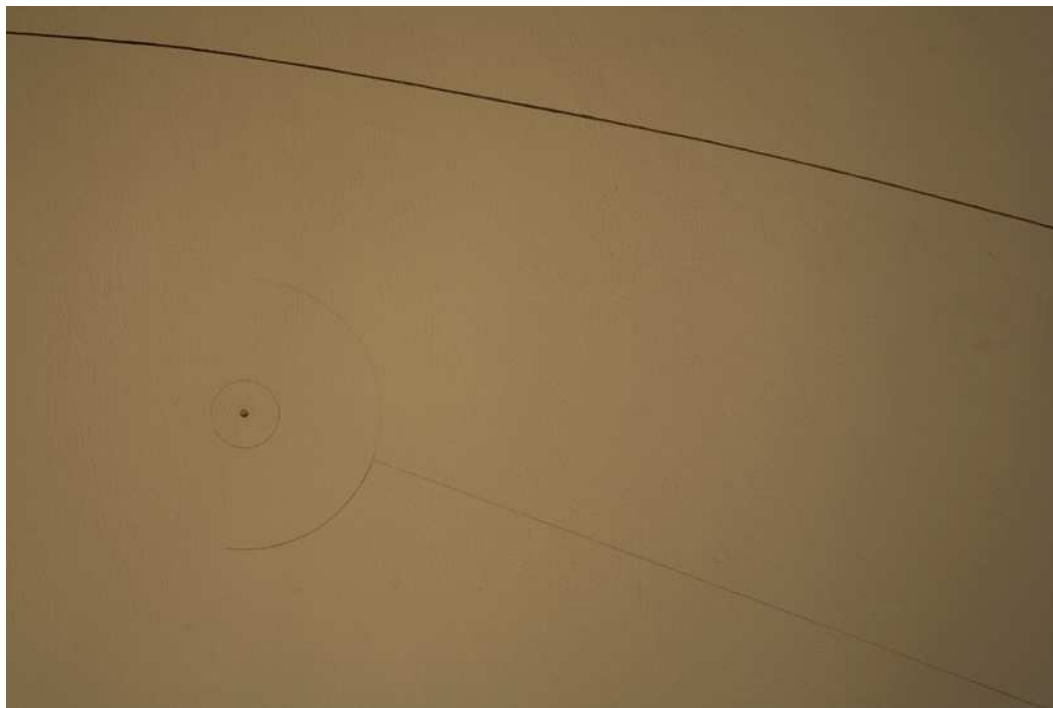
Detail of *Beacon*

photo by Aaron Paden



Detail of *Beacon*

photo by Aaron Paden



Detail of connection from display case with *Beacon* and paths inside gallery

photo by Aaron Paden



*...and finally, that we are.*

photo by Karla Freiheit



View from inside ...and finally, that we are. with *Dowsing in Kansas*,  
paths, and shadows

photo by Aaron Paden