THE HISTORY OF THE GRID

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THE HISTORY OF THE GRID

In 1984, philosopher, author, and art critic Arthur Danto published an essay entitled “The End of Art”. In this work, Danto stated that a certain history of western art had come to an end. He suggested that the defining moment of the death of Modernism was initiated by Andy Warhol’s Brillo Box (figure 1), dated 1964. “Art had raised, from within and in its definitive form, the question of the philosophical nature of art.”1 Brillo Box asked the questions: What is art? Why is this art and not simply an object found in the grocery store? Danto believed that art had asked the last and ultimate question about itself, pondering its own existence. If art was an imitation of reality as the Modernists believed, then Brillo Box was the last place left for art to go.

No longer imitating reality, art had become reality, indistinguishable from any common found object. Danto may have marked this as the end of Modernism but for many theorists it signaled the beginning of Postmodernism.2

If accepting Danto’s philosophy, Brillo Box marks the definitive line between Modernism and Postmodernism. I was born in 1965, the year after Brillo Box was

Figure 1
Andy Warhol, Brillo Box, 1964, mixed media on silkscreen ink on synthetic polymer paint on wood, 17 x 17 x 14 inches
created. Much of my art was influenced by *Brillo Box* and the art movements of the Conceptualists, Commodity Critics and Anti-Aesthetes that followed. I was born during a time when the very nature of visual art was being questioned. Having been born at the apex of the philosophical debate of the meaning of art, it is not surprising that my artwork finds its roots in Modernist theory yet is firmly planted within Postmodern ideology.

My work examines the grid and its relevance in Modernism and Postmodernism. Modernism made claim to the form and function of the grid in art and architecture. However, the grid system existed well before the 20th century, its earliest manifestations evident in brickwork dating back to 9000 BCE. As discussed in *The Grid Book* by Hannah B. Higgins, grids that changed the world include the brick, the tablet, the gridiron city plan, the map, musical notation, the ledger, the screen, moveable type, the manufactured box and most recently, the Internet. These are the grids that influence my work. Inspired by the ancient, modern and contemporary, my work investigates the concept of order, disorder and the reorder of the grid system. Through my artwork, it is my intention to examine each of these grids. There are 10 grid components in total, and I anticipate devoting a decade to complete this series. I work both 2- and 3-dimensionally and my exhibitions take form as installations. In its entirety, my research is entitled *The History of the Grid*, and individual pieces of art within the series assume subtitles. This essay will investigate my variations of the grid and their position within Modern and Postmodern art theory.

The Modern avant-garde artists of the mid-20th century believed in the
freedom of individuality and the necessity of originality. Art was created to satisfy only the artist and the art critic. The need to satisfy the public or to conform to the rules of traditional academic art was abandoned. Modern art eventually relied entirely upon itself, no longer governed by any outside social, religious or political phenomena. By the 1960s, Modern art had lost much of its realistic narrative content, was considered primarily in formal terms and aspired to achieve the universality of forms. Modern art was still in search for its foremost goal - the truth - attainable through individual expression. Artists believed that by eliminating subject matter, only the purest and most elemental properties of art would prevail. Modern art was protected within its own self-referential sphere and thereby could not be penetrated by issues from the "real" world: Art for Art's Sake. "More than a rejection or dissolution of the past, avant-garde originality is conceived as a literal origin, a beginning from ground zero, a birth".5

According to art theorist Rosalind Krauss, it is the grid that Modern artists believed was the beginning and the origin of art. The grid has been likened to Modern artists themselves in that both operate within "the self-imposed code of silence, exile and cunning".6 The grid is a system that operates outside of language and nature. Unlike language, it is immovable, lacks hierarchy and center and is hostile to narrative. The grid is unsusceptible to sociological or historical factors which can change language over time. It resists both time and incident and "will not permit the projection of language into the domain of the visual".7 Nor can the grid (in its physical form) mimic nature because its spatial reference is self-imposed and
absolute. This protection against the infiltration of nature and speech results in what Krauss believes is “silence”. It is this silence that Modern artists believed to be the origin of art.

The resistance of the grid to speech and nature is of particular interest to me in my own work, especially within the map component of my grid series. When examining gridded maps it becomes apparent that they seem to lie outside Krauss’ theory. My gridded map work is not silent, it represents nature and is a human-made translation of the environment. It refers to real spaces in the real world. Cities and countries and natural elements such as rivers and mountains are carefully and meticulously identified, so that they are readily recognizable. With the grid’s proscription to speech and nature, where do maps, with their inclusion of type and allusion to space, fit into the so-called “self-referential” grid system?

Art historian Kim Levine believes that the grid is an emblem of Modernism, as Krauss suggested, but goes on to state that the map is a marker of Postmodernism. Modernism’s grid had attributes of the “formal, abstract, repetitive, flat, orderly, and literal”. The gridded map lies within Postmodernism because it suggests areas beyond the flat surface. The map suggests that human-made grid systems are merely copies or reflections of nature’s formations. The map is not self-referential, it represents the real world and that of nature, although it is an interpretation made by humans and sometimes does not accurately depict the objects it represents. Sometimes the map can be the trickster, symbolizing objects that were never there or were altered or removed. The map contains subject matter. Not just any subject,
but that of nature, the very content the Modern artists of the 20th century were
eagerly trying to eradicate.

I am fascinated by these differences and ways in which the grid functions
within Modernism and Postmodernism. Being intuitively aware of the grid systems in
the urban environment and in nature, I like to combine and manipulate the
human-made and the organic, resulting in unexpected configurations. Irregularity and
abnormality of form become as important as the organized grid format. I alter maps
by removing some areas and adding to others. I achieve this, in part, by
experimenting with materials. I have always been attracted to tactility and using
different materials enables the construction of thick and unusual textures. These
surfaces are combinations of the opaque, translucent and transparent; the visible
and hidden. Working in layers establishes an interactive dialogue with the viewer and
encourages use of memory and imagination to complete that which is concealed and
indiscernible. What is seen and unseen in my work furthers the Postmodern notion
that reality, as the viewer perceives it, can be deceitful and that what lies beneath the
surface is often misleading.

Figure 2 illustrates four of my works from the map component of The History
of the Grid. Conceptually, they represent an important part of the grid series because
the map was instrumental, during its inception in the Renaissance, in enabling world
exploration. These pieces are made of a variety of materials including real maps,
acrylic gel medium, hot glue, resin, acetate, Letraset and acrylic paint, mounted on
Plexiglass. It seemed quite natural to work within the preexisting gridded lines of
each map, following its autonomous system to hide certain areas and leaving others for the viewer to see. The areas that are covered by gel or those that are cut out and absent reinforce the flatness of the support surface, reminiscent of the methodologies of the late Modernists. However, unlike the Modernists who believed
that art must be self-referential, the maps contain subject matter and suggest elements of the natural world such as rivers and mountains and those of the human-made such as cites, roads and imaginary land borders. This is another way in which I have married the Modern with the Postmodern within the map component. It is noteworthy that some of the areas that echo the flatness of the picture plane are physically raised and sculpted whereas the map areas that denote elevated or depressed natural formations are flat.

I alter all of my maps, blocking out certain areas and changing others. These maps, on one hand, are narcissistic and self-serving, in that they originate from my

Figure 3
History of the Grid: Map II
Left to right, top to bottom: Exploration 2, Blue Ridge 3, ISU, MyMap, New City Hall, Waterways, Etobicoke, SMWC, Indianapolis, Chicago, 2010, mixed media on acrylic, 6 x 6 inches/each
own memory and imagination and speak of my experiences. On the other hand, I believe the maps to be universal, in that they allow communication with the viewer and speak of the human condition. When working on a piece, I try to leave just enough information for interpretation. Sometimes the viewer can decipher the original intention of the map. Other times, the viewer re-interprets the map according to his/her own understanding and background.

Figure 3 depicts a series of 10 maps, in an installation view. From this series, MyMap (figures 4 & 5) was created to illustrate the ambidextrous nature of maps and how easily they can
be manipulated. This work is a map of Terre Haute, the city I lived in while writing this paper, and plots all the places that were of importance to me, such as where I worked, where I went to school and where friends and acquaintances lived. I recreated an existing map of Terre Haute in Illustrator and then approximated the locations mentioned above.

While I was redrawing the pre-existing map, I realized that the map was quite dated and that some of the areas of the city had changed since this map was printed. This, coupled with the fact that I had merely estimated the locations that were personally pertinent makes MyMap deceptive and delusory.

Another piece dealing with the distortion of reality is a sculpture from the Brick segment of The History of the Grid. Entitled Asada (figures 6 & 7), this object is built component-style and consists of 266 American sized bricks. The brick was a revolutionary grid system in that it enabled housing which led to the construction of villages and ultimately, cities. The brick was the earliest manifestation
of the grid, its beginnings traced to about 9000 BCE, just before the last ice age. At this early stage, bricks were made by hand with sun-dried mud.11 Asada, the title of this sculpture, makes reference to the next development of the brick which was fired in clay. In about 3000 BCE, fired brick appeared in what is now known as Mesopotamia. When the ancient builders began construction with bricks they would often use mud bricks on the interior and clay bricks on the exterior because kiln firing demanded expensive supplies such as wood fuel which was scarce in the region. To initiate the construction of public buildings, the king would create and lay the first kiln-fired clay brick. This brick was called the Asada which, when translated, means "invincible one".12

The bricks which compose my sculpture create a structure, an enclosure of sorts, and relate to the safely, security and invincibility of traditional brick dwellings. However, they are made of clear Plexiglass, hardly a material that evokes feelings of impregnability and privacy. These transparent bricks echo some of the identity
challenges that face contemporary postmodern society. With the advancement of the internet and technologies such as the Global Tracking System and the Global Positioning System, individuals can rarely escape the "Big Brother" system if they wish to maintain a comfortable and legitimate life standard, often conforming to the wishes and demands of powerful entities such as government.

Clearly, Asada also makes reference to Conceptualism. This movement began in the late 1960s and continued into the 1970s, and has been accepted as one of the first revolts against Modernism and the beginnings of Postmodernism. Conceptualism describes a range of types of art that no longer took the form of the conventional art object, such as Performance (Action) art, Land (Earth) art and Installation art. Artists working under the umbrella of Conceptualism concentrated on the idea or the concept of the project, the outcome being of less importance than the process and the manipulation of materials. They questioned the assumption that the role of the artist was to create special kinds of material objects. They thought beyond the limits of the Modern artists who used traditional media and methods. They deliberately produced work that was difficult to classify according to the systems of Modernism.

Sol LeWitt, a central figure in Conceptual art, introduced innovative ways of making art and new ways of thinking about art. LeWitt's art focused on the conception of idea, rather than the final product. Unlike the Modernists, LeWitt's art lacked the personal touch of the artist. Often his installations came with manuals containing precise and straightforward instructions which explained how the work
was to be executed, essentially allowing anyone to create his work. LeWitt claimed authorship of the idea, the execution was of less concern.¹⁵

Figures 8 & 9 illustrate two of LeWitt’s sculptures of the 1970s. Like Asada, they were built using the grid system. In figure 9, LeWitt’s sculpture entitled 1 2 3 4 5 6, “predetermined mathematical equations dictate the sequence and composition. From top to bottom, the equations 1 x 1, 2 x 2, 3 x 3, 4 x 4, 5 x 5, and 6 x 6 establish the number of cubes for each tier.”¹⁶ Favorable criticism of LeWitt’s work by leading theorists¹⁷ claimed that his art reflected the powers of human reason and that it was a visual metaphor for philosophical statements, or more simply put, his art successfully and ingeniously depicted pure intellect and rationality.¹⁸ Unfavorable reviews by critics, including Rosalind Krauss, criticized LeWitt’s work as “obsessive
and too mathematically simple”, his practices “inelegant” and his formal conditions “too scattered”. Krauss went so far to state that LeWitt’s art was born out of mad obstinacy.\textsuperscript{10}

There is no question that Asada and the map component of my series reflect the Conceptualists’ obsession with the logic and reason that the grid provides. Over the years I have considered my own preoccupation with the grid, and have decided that it reflects the organized and systematic way in which I think. However, there are distinct differences between my work and that of the Conceptualists. LeWitt’s work is predetermined and rigid, his sculptures designed to be built in only one specific way. Asada is more organic and I conceived the sculpture to be able to conform to any space in which it is displayed. I try to leave the mark of the artist’s hand in my work, more of a Modernist sensibility than one of a Conceptualist. In addition, I do not believe in the immovable Conceptualist pretense that art reflects the ultimate abstraction of pure logic and would rather have it assume a more flexible and Postmodern interpretation where there is no absolute truth and where irony or delusion may lurk beneath the surface.

This then, leads to another question. How should my work be interpreted? It is apparent that my work, in a larger context, deals with the history of the grid. I like having an epic-scaled concept to work with because it guides and provides me with a concrete direction. As I work on each individual piece within my body of work, I allow some freedom for the work to assume what I call a “subnarrative”. I will not pretend that these subnarratives are always present and pre-determined before I
begin each piece. Instead, I regard the subnarratives as serendipitous events that sometimes unfold out of the creative process. Part of this ideology also reflects the rather Modernist notion that at some point the work takes on a life of its own and that I merely play the role of executor.\textsuperscript{20}

For example, in a work entitled \textit{Ur} (figure 10), the larger concept explores the brick component of my installation but certain subnarratives become evident. On a larger scale, \textit{Ur} relates directly to \textit{Asada} in that it deals with the brick; the same proportionally shaped rectangle is used to compose each house. The title refers to Ur, a powerful city-state between 4000 and 3000 BCE, located in ancient Sumer (present day Iraq). The first brick arch arch was built in Ur, where the famous Ziggurat of Ur was originally constructed. Sumer was the cradle of civilization, where “villages first grew into cities, cities into kingdoms and kingdoms into empires.”\textsuperscript{21} In this particular work, I wanted to depict how the invention of a single brick led to the construction of entire self-contained cities. The houses are neatly constructed in

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{History of the Grid: Brick II, Ur, 2010, mixed media on acrylic, 34 x 48 inches}
\end{figure}
alternating rows, mimicking the traditional methods of brick-laying.

The sub-narrative of this work explores the concept of community. The houses, trees and public buildings are all enclosed within the acrylic support of the physical structure. Depicted is a self-contained community with a church, hospital, and residential housing. Concerning community, I believe that artists, especially those working in the visual arts, need a strong support system. Visual artists are often solitary beings, working alone in the studio, in isolation from one another. There is a desperate need for artists' co-operatives, alternative gallery spaces, shared studios and other experimental venues that encourage communication and interaction between visual artists and the public. A sense of community, of belonging and inclusion, is necessary for artists to continue working.

Of course, each viewer relies on his/her own history, experiences and belief systems when interpreting a work of art. For example, a student by the name of Jenna contacted me to answer a few questions about Ur. She was writing a short essay about one piece of art for an Art Appreciation class and chose Ur for this
project. Here are some of her remarks about Ur and its ability to convey the concept of community:

This piece reminded me of the development of the suburbs after World War II. The houses in each suburb looked pretty much identical to each other. These housing developments symbolized the middle-class family and conformist attitudes of the people during that time period. In Nyendick’s piece, she created the houses to look almost identical and perfectly placed. However, she added a popping element to the piece by cutting out different shapes in some of the houses. This made them stand out from the other houses, which contrasts the idea of the “perfect” house that the middle-class family strived for after World War II. The piece also had more of a community feel with the various trees and a church. Those elements helped to break up the piece and make it less cookie cutter. Overall, there were two very specific elements of art in “Ur” by Petra Nyendick that I noticed. The colors present in her piece were not very bold, but they caught my eye more than any other piece. Also, the use of line in her piece made it more significant to me, since I am a very precise person. In the end, I took away an even bigger meaning to her piece. I was able to take historic events that have happened in the United States and relate them back to her work of art.

I was thrilled that the subnarrative of community was apparent to a student who was unfamiliar with my oeuvre. She brought her own memory and imagination to the piece by interpreting the structures as post-WWII housing. Her observations about line and color were also quite interesting and pertinent. Use of line and color and other formal elements within my art have changed over the years.

Having studied graphic design as an undergraduate and subsequently having worked professionally in the field for about 10 years, my work has been influenced by graphic design and contains moments of precision and balance and often incorporates typography. The basic elements of design such as line, shape, texture, value, color and space are important considerations within my art. Within the last 20
years, it is perhaps my use of color that has evolved most significantly. For many years, I enjoyed pure colors, often straight from the tube, resulting in bright and vivid paintings. Slowly, my use of color became more sophisticated by incorporating earth tones and mixing colors. Currently, I often use only pastel colors, or color tints, resulting in colors that are quite subtle in relation to each other. I also use metallic and interference paint. The interference color, which reflects its complimentary when viewing it from different angles, creates an element of mystery and surprise. I like the fact that my work is active, changing color when the viewer moves around it.

Figure 12, entitled **Ethos, Pathos, Logos** is a metal and acrylic sculpture which explores the tablet component of *The History of the Grid* series. The acrylic inserts are decorated with metallic and interference colors and incorporate several of the design elements mentioned above. While researching the history of the tablet, I was inspired by ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. I was considering the importance of Egyptian symbols such as the eye of Horus, the crescent moon and the lotus flower. Hieroglyphs possess a magical, mysterious quality - pharaohs and priests used
these symbols to adorn their pyramids and appease the gods. I thought about contemporary Western society and the kinds of symbols that are currently relevant and recognizable to us.

Corporate logos instantly came to mind. I appropriated these logos from well-known companies to use as a "modern-day hieroglyphic tablet". The incorporation of the silver lines (see figures 14 & 15) is crucial in these tablets as they instruct the viewer on how to read them directionally. Egyptian tablets were read either horizontally or vertically, depending on the incorporation of line.

In my sculpture, the viewer's eye is led to read the logo tablets according to the placement of the horizontal or vertical lines. The use of line on the reverse of the sculpture
(figure 13) relates directly to the front. The arrows correspond to the way in which the columns on the front of each tablet are to be read.

The logos were made using interference color, and it is impossible to capture the effect photographically. The logos in figure 14 are red interference color, which reflect green when viewed from different angles. The logos in figure 15 are made with green interference color, reflecting red. The logos of both tablets are set within a textured metallic silver ground made from gel medium. This silver background is meant to echo the metallic structures that encase the tablets and to unify the inserts with the shells. I appreciated that Jenna took note of my usage of color in her essay. It has taken years to develop my color sense and I feel secure in using a palette that does not need to be loud or over-indulgent. It is my intention that viewers notice a shimmer or glitter while walking past my artworks, and that they will take the time to have a closer look.

Conceptually, Ethos, Pathos, Logos refers to contemporary Western
consumer culture. The logos I used are instantly recognizable by most viewers. I avoided appropriating logos that use text, to further demonstrate the visually powerful nature of the symbols used by these multi-billion dollar companies. The ease in which the logos are recognized reflect the preoccupations of our culture, a society consumed by acquiring materialistic goods and obsessed with the possession of expensive objects. Jewelry, expensive cars, designer clothing and objects that carry commercial brand names are perceived status symbols. Similar in concept to my sculpture, the Adbusters Flag (figure 16), is an example of a visual work that deals with consumer culture. I was influenced by this Flag before I knew it even existed. Adbusters is an on-line magazine based in Vancouver, British Columbia, “concerned about the erosion of our physical and cultural environments by commercial forces”. The flag on the website is described as, “...a beautiful, edgy work of art. Hang it in your office or wave it at a protest – it absolutely captures the spirit of the omnipotent control of corporate America.”
In an article from 2002 entitled “Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding”, Douglas B. Holt discusses consumer culture and the current Postmodern revolt against major brands. He believes that the unchecked allowance of major companies to develop their brands has led to the degradation of the environment, human rights and culture. As an example, he lists companies including Nike, Coke, Microsoft and Starbucks as among the largest offenders. The marketing departments within these large companies are “cultural engineers, organizing how people think and feel through branded commercial products....and specify the identities and pleasures that can only be accessed through their brands.”

Holt optimistically believes that the postmodern consumer is becoming conscious of the strategies of these mega-companies and their crass commercial techniques. A counter-culture is forming around the idea that the brands established by global companies have produced a “societally destructive consumer culture”. Adbusters is listed as an example of a grassroots organization that is trying to create awareness of problems associated with branding. As an artist, I regard myself as part of a grassroots movement and believe in the power of the individual voice. It is within this ideology that I created Ethos, Pathos, Logos. It is meant to illustrate how easily viewers can identify brands, representing companies that influence our purchasing decisions, and sometimes determine our identities such as aspirations concerning our families, our place in society and our masculinity or femininity.

The title of the sculpture, Ethos, Pathos, Logos addresses the methods of
persuasion that companies employ to sell their products. Ethos, pathos and logos are Aristotle's theories on the art of persuasive rhetoric, written in the 4th century BCE. Traditionally, the three terms are used to describe oral discourse, but I thought it could easily apply to my sculpture, since advertising and marketing rely on both the visual and the oral. Ethos is appeal based on the character of the speaker. An ethos-driven document relies on the reputation of the author. Logos is appeal based on logic or reason. Documents distributed by companies or corporations are logos-driven. Scholarly documents are also often logos-driven. Pathos is appeal based on emotion. Advertisements tend to be pathos-driven.32

All three methods of persuasion are used by current companies. Some rely on ethos, or their reputation to sell quality products. Apple computer has a reputation as serving the arts and designer community. Consumers are led to believe that in order to be considered a professional and "serious artist" one must own a Macintosh (admittedly, I have succumbed to this belief and refuse to own a PC). Many companies rely on logic to sell their product. Volvo automobile promises a "safe car" to their consumers, a logical choice for families who value safety and security and place "family first". Finally, pathos is employed by most companies, appealing to the emotion of the consumer. Nike's pervasive theme of "success in sport" is an example of a brand that focuses on emotional advertising.

Artists have been responding to consumer culture and common objects for almost a century, since the advent of the industrial revolution. Duchamp's Ready-mades were ordinary, everyday objects, placed in a gallery and labeled as
art. Oldenburg's 1961 exhibition, *The Store*, displayed plaster versions of various edible goods set-up in a mock dime store display case. Pop art incorporated iconography of consumer items. *Brillo Box* appeared to follow the tradition of Duchamp's ready-mades, challenging the questions of originality, authorship, and the definition of art itself. The Ready-mades suggested that anyone could take an ordinary found object, place it in a gallery and present it as art, "denying its intended function, and transforming its context rather than its form, thereby presenting it as a purely aesthetic item." Of course, *Brillo Box* was slightly different in that it was a hand-made object, an exact replication of the original. The boxes were made of wood, not cardboard; they were silk-screened, not printed; and are slightly larger than the actual supermarket boxes. This, in turn raised the questions: Can mere replication be art? Does a handcrafted object immediately assume the status of art? These questions subsequently led artists to explore different philosophies within art and led to several Postmodern movements. Two questions remain: why is *Brillo Box* important to me and how has it influenced my work? The conclusion of this paper will examine how Warhol's sculpture influenced my work, as it demonstrates the significance of *Brillo Box* within art theory.

My acrylic brick sculpture, *Asada*, was influenced by *Brillo Box*. "Warhol's ideas concerning irreducible three-dimensional forms, repetition, and semi-mechanical fabrication influenced the thinking of Minimalist sculptors including Sol Lewitt and Donald Judd". After Warhol's exhibitions of the 1964 *Brillo Box* installation at the Stable Gallery in New York, it became common for sculptors in the
late 1960 and into the ‘70s to have their work industrially fabricated, manufactured in multiples with the handcrafted nature concealed as much as possible.\textsuperscript{36} Like the work of the Minimalists; \textit{Asada} is constructed in a component format and relies on repetition to stress the importance of the multiple grid system. Akin to Warhol’s hand-made objects, the bricks in Asada have small flaws and upon inspection, it is clear that they were not produced mechanically. Like Warhol’s \textit{Brillo Boxes}, Asada can assume different configurations in its final form.

\textit{Brillo Box} also influenced the group of artists known as the Anti-Aesthetes, working in the 1970s and ‘80s. Influenced by the Conceptual movement, they were interested in the idea or the process of creating art as opposed to the final outcome. They incorporated text within their works of art, often combining random words and phrases which had no apparent relationship. This arbitrary, incoherent combination of meanings allowed an anonymous authorship, because such works refused to express the beliefs of the artist.\textsuperscript{37} The final interpretation was given to the viewer who used his/her own subjective set of devices to decipher meanings. The Anti-Aesthetes questioned the concept of origin, and found photography and film to be successful
mediums to conceal authorship. This was taken to the extreme when artists, such as Sherrie Levine, simply appropriated images from the past, applied a signature, and claimed it as their own work of art. The photographic process appealed to Postmodern artists for several reasons. Infinite numbers of prints could be made from the traditional single photographic negative. Originals were indistinguishable from reproductions since replication resulted in exact duplication. This reaffirmed the Postmodern belief that the Modern ideologies of uniqueness and originality were no longer attainable. Photography was also the vehicle for advertising and the mass media, shaping the consciousness of society. As the final attack against Modernism, photography completely eradicated the individuality of the artist. Photography is based on visual reality; it is always a reproduction of something from the real world even if manipulated. This was in complete contradiction with the late Modernist (Greenbergian) belief that all external references be removed from art.  

The ultimate comment on authorship came in the 1980s when Sherrie Levine "borrowed" unretouched photographs by photographers such as Edward Weston and Walker Evans. Criticism labeled this use of images plagiaristic. Considered in Postmodern terms, her use of art historical photographs in their original state was the purest form of plagiarism and was termed "appropriation".  

Today, appropriation is a style that is commonly used. Artists borrow images from sources including art history, mass media and consumer culture. My sculpture Ethos, Pathos, Logos appropriates logos, directly taken from consumer culture. These logos are not created mechanically but made by my own hand and I feel more of an influence from
Warhol's hand-made objects than those of the Anti-Aesthetes. Warhol influenced the Anti-Aesthetes by using the silkscreening process as a vehicle for mass-producing works of art such as Brillo Box. Photographs could be used in the silkscreening process although in Warhol's work, as in mine, the artist's hand was often still visible when using this process.

When examining the grid and its relevance to originality and appropriation, Krauss offers an interesting idea. To discuss this idea, the theory of Postmodern Structuralism must be briefly addressed. Saussure's theories on Structuralism focused on linguistics and how society is guided by interpreting language. He believed that language is a complex system of relationships between sign, signifier and signified. Although the grid is an autonomous and self-referential system, as a signifier, it is laden with references to other systems including perspective, cartoon cells, and mechanical transfer devices. For example, artists using one or two point perspective are using the grid to signify distance and recession of space. I use the grid in my mapwork to signify natural and human-made spaces, territories beyond the surface of the artwork. Krauss believes that the grid, in an example of complete paradox, is both original and repetitive and must be imitated time and time again by artists wishing to explore the system. Artists have been condemned to repeating the original grid, and their work becomes a parody of itself.

Abstract artists, such as Mondrian, Albers and Agnes Martin have searched for the origins of art by "peeling back layer after layer of representation to come at last to this schemized reduction and finding in it an act of originality." I too went
through this process before starting my History of the Grid series. I was a figurative painter and, within a period of about 10 years, slowly began to reduce the forms I was working with until they became completely abstracted. I “discovered” the elemental system of the grid. Is it possible that I found within this process some origin of art? I am uncertain. What is clear, is that I reduced my forms to their most elemental structure until I felt I could not reduce them any further. Only then, once I had found the grid’s system, was I satisfied and confident enough to allow representation to once again enter my work.

Brillo Box also influenced the 1980s Postmodern group known as the Commodity Critics who concluded that society is based on a capitalist system which values commodities, items that are essentially meaningless and empty. They were suspicious of the mass media and the ways in which it influenced consumer culture. Mass media and advertising had taken over the consciousness of society and promised individuality and happiness through the purchasing of materialistic goods.42

Jeff Koons, like Andy Warhol used everyday objects in his art. However, unlike Warhol, Koons’ objects were not reproduced by hand, he took the new object directly from the manufacturing belt and labeled it as art, following the Duchampian tradition. Figure 6 is an example of Koons’ earlier work. Koons paid careful attention to economic codings within each object, such as color, product number and model type. He wanted to convey that the objects were strategically marketed products. A key to the work is the newness of the object. Advertising presents newness as desirable and Koons’ objects were preserved, sealed and encased in acrylic boxes, forever
shiny and new. The irony in the work is that the objects are encased and unable to be acquired by the viewer. This presents a dichotomy, one on hand the viewer desired the object, and on the other, it was unattainable. It also reflected the denial which lay at the heart of the consumer's desire once an object was purchased. Not wanting to break the seal of newness and at the same time wanting to use and manipulate the object, the viewer/consumer was filled with both the emotions of attraction and frustration. My sculpture Ethos, Pathos, Logos is a direct descendent of the Commodity Critics. Although not a found object, my sculpture conceptually addresses the same concerns of artists such as Jeff Koons, commenting on current consumer culture and the value society places on materialistic objects.

Finally, Brillo Box has influenced my work by its combination of graphic design and art. The formal structures of most graphic design rely on the grid. Warhol was a designer and illustrator before his transition to the fine arts. He brought this design
background into his fine art work and after his success, it became acceptable for artists to incorporate elements such as illustration and typography within works of art. As an artist with a graphic design background, I have always felt an affinity to Warhol. My work incorporates typography and I often use printed materials appropriated from graphic design such as logos or printed maps.

In conclusion, the following quote by Kim Levine suggests the following about gridding and mapping:

If the grid is an emblem of modernism, as Rosalind Krauss has proposed, a symbol of the modernist preoccupation with form and style, then perhaps the map should serve as a preliminary emblem of post-modernism: indicating territories beyond the surface of the artwork and surfaces outside of art; implying that boundaries are arbitrary and flexible, and man-made systems such as grids are superimpositions on natural formations; bringing art back to nature and into the world, assuming all the moral responsibilities of life. Perhaps the last of the modernists will someday be separated from the first post-modernists by whether their structure depended on gridding or mapping.44

"Mapping" is usually defined as a 2-dimensional representation of a region of 3-dimensional space. I interpret Levine's definition of "mapping" less literally. Dictionary.com defines "mapping" as, "a representation, or reflection of anything". This gives the word a rather open-ended but more comprehensive meaning. I think of mapping as a sort of charting, a record-keeping of human experience. As a larger concept, my research represents how grid systems revolutionized the world. On a smaller scale, the sub-narratives that become evident throughout The History of the Grid include the perception and distortion of reality (Map component), the isolation
and fragmentation of contemporary society (Brick component), and contemporary consumer culture (Tablet component). My work is a reflection of current society in which reality, as we perceive it, is often deceptive and misleading and demands investigation.
NOTES


2. Ibid., 208-9.


4. Conceptually, the work of some Modern artists was based on real events from the real world but abstractly represented within their art. For example, Motherwell's *Elegies*, were his responses to the Spanish Civil War and these paintings commented on life and death. Although some viewers felt moved when seeing the paintings, the likelihood of identifying the art as a comment on the Spanish War was unlikely.


6. Ibid., 1061.

7. Ibid.


9. Ibid.

10. How do maps reflect the human condition? In our Postmodern age, we have continued to disassociate ourselves from nature. We once lived as part of nature, but now exist outside of “it” and have created boundaries to keep “it” out. Maps reflect our relationship with nature in that nature has become an abstract entity, an “other”. We continue to try to control our environment by plotting, charting, mapping and creating imaginary borders and manipulating nature to suit our needs.


12. Ibid., 16.


17. These art critics are Donald Kuspit, Suzi Gablik and Lucy Lippard. Rosalind Krauss discusses their views on LeWitt's work in her article from 1978 entitled "LeWitt in Progress".


19. Ibid., 53.

20. Jackson Pollock is famous for his quote, “The painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through.” I do find this notion somewhat cliché and outdated but I firmly believe in truly magical studio moments and cannot explain them in any other way. Of course, the late Modernists were not new to the belief that artwork already existed before its execution, the concept originating in the Renaissance with artists including Michelangelo and continuing through the Baroque with Bernini.


22. I realize this is an opinionated statement. When considering theatre, music and dance, activities which usually involve team efforts, visual art remains a discipline where the artist often works alone.

23. I am not suggesting that artists who use pure or bright colors are less sophisticated. I am speaking about my own history and development.

24. As Founder and Director of a commercial gallery, I've had six years to observe viewers and their responses to works of art. Most people spend about 5 seconds looking at a piece of art. It is becoming more difficult to capture the attention of the audience.

25. Every so often, my friends e-mail links to me. “Petra, you won't believe the
work of this artist, it reminds me so much of what you do!" Each time I get a knot in my stomach but after seeing the work, am usually relieved that, although similar, the artist in question works differently than I do. The Adbusters Flag was such a case. Ethos, Pathos, Logos is so similar to the Flag in concept and even in appearance. I cannot help but feel that I was influenced by it, although I saw it only after my sculpture was finished.


27. Ibid.


29. Ibid., 71

30. Ibid., 70

31. Ibid., 79


34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 186-87.

36. Ibid., 187.

37. Heartney, 28.

38. Ibid., 33.

39. Ibid., 36

41. Ibid., 1062

42. Heartney, 42.


44. Levine, 6.
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