

THESIS

DRAWING INTERVENTIONS

Submitted by

Amy Reckley

Department of Art

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2009

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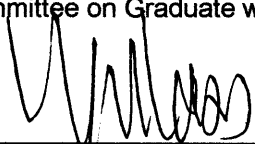
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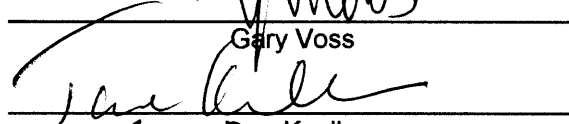
April 7, 2009

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY AMY RECKLEY ENTITLED DRAWING INTERVENTIONS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS.

Committee on Graduate work



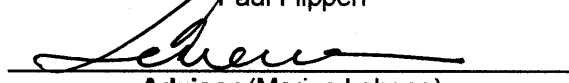
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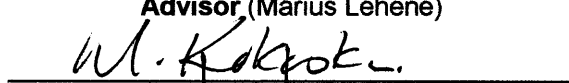
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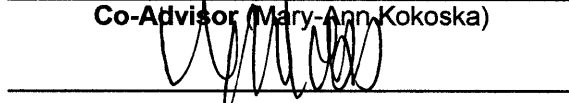
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS
DRAWING INTERVENTIONS

I make drawings. Even if I use color and three-dimensional elements in my work, I think of my practice to be that of drawing. The questions I attempt to explore in my work are grounded in the contemporary art discourse that combines two and three dimensional practices into an elastic definition of drawing. My works play off of flat surfaces and into space serving as a confrontation that questions the definitions that separate two dimensional (painting/drawing) and three dimensional (sculpture/installation) practices. In response to specific locations and architectural structures, I fluctuate between perspective and physical presence. I reflect upon a particular set of structural conditions set forth by existing spaces (corners, rafters, stairs, ceilings, walls), and engage possibilities within those spaces with specific materials, gestures and divisions.

All of the elements in my work converge to suggest singular situations or moments that are between flux and stasis. My works play upon the notion that psychological spaces are comprised of experience, perception and memory. As architectural interventions on the familiarity of spaces and perspective, drawings play out in sequences of destruction and reinvention. Preexisting perceptions of structures and spaces are broken down to create the illusion of something more fluid, vulnerable and impermanent. My work presents the possibility that the real, the actual and the illusion that one element may or may not signify a particular reality can exist within a singular space.

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By incorporating aspects of installation, sculpture, video, performance and digital manipulations, I explore all stages in the life of a particular work. Using a variety of methods in conjunction with traditional and non-traditional media, my processes serve to communicate drawing as a practice that is both noun and verb, object and action, formal and conceptual. My studio research is primarily based in temporary three dimensional and location-sensitive drawings. These works maintain a conversation with a secondary practice in sculpture, two dimensional drawing and various forms of documentation.

Borrowing fragments from the natural and the constructed world, my drawings are never completely non-representational. I am unable to comprehensively and concretely depict what is not there -- a sense of movement, potential energy in a stationary situation, an implicit meaning -- yet I attempt to explore that very possibility. I generate meaning abstractly by eliciting recognition within the viewer. Densely layered imagery describes a relationship to space without precisely identifying individual experiences or particular ideas. Viewers can choose to navigate the work and accumulate a unique understanding experientially, rather than be confronted by a singular set of signs. For example, specific materials and surfaces are meant to function as suggestions in the work *Yellow Wall/Paper* (fig. 1). The color of the wall, a sick blue-green, may remind the viewer of a room in their grandmother's house, a swimming pool or even toothpaste.

The yellow drafting paper that cascades down the wall might resemble peeling paint, paper patterns, or moss. These associations are ambiguously left to the viewer to decide, allowing the dialogue to continue as they grow more numerous and complex.

Throughout a work, a sedimentary record reveals the process. Visual mapping and systems are spliced together in a single image or in the development of my work from one piece to the next to allow for a greater grasp of the historical information. In one way, it is the history of the labor that I am interested in – work made over time with meaning being altered by every new addition. This can happen in a singular work where each layer (material, surface, articulated information) responds to the history of prior layers, and relates to the subsequent ones. Or, further including the less physical remnants of memory, age and change, I create a generation of works that exchange a commonality both formally and conceptually.

DRAWING AS VERB / DRAWING AS ACTION

By working in stages and with a variety of processes, my work is reincarnated exponentially. The unconventional use of materials in unlikely spaces is just as important and exciting to me as the process of reflecting back upon previous works in the appropriate situation. My work is strategically situated within the contemporary art world to question how we define art - what form it takes, where it takes place, how long it lasts - and the process of making.

I believe that we are inundated by so much information that we lose our ability to see things clearly. Often we seek out even more media and material to heighten our awareness of what is not clearly understood. Yet, it seems as if there are moments when too much information fogs our visual perception and clutters our awareness. One of the goals in my work is to direct the amount of stimuli so that the viewer's awareness of the a space is more fully realized, experienced and understood. This happens during my working process as a form of self editing and is present in the final works where pieces may seem open or minimal. I am creating obsessive situations that lead to a process of simplification, elimination and clarity.

Drawings become records of physical action through an accumulation of materials and methods used in the process of making. By revealing multiple truths of an experience, and allowing layered strata to exist simultaneously, I construct a space that describes realities across time and points of view. Changes in linear perspective and movements from line to physical form engage the viewer in perceptual shifts between two and three dimensions. These works suggest a continuing conversation that pushes beyond a physically flat illusion of space toward an awareness and possibility of what that space entails. In approaching my work this way, I take drawing to be a verb.

For me, drawing is the most immediate visual method of inventing, expanding and articulating simultaneous realities. Simultaneous realities can simply coexist as two perspectives, or as several incarnations or expressions of the same space. In *Yellow Wall/Paper* (fig. 2), the entire piece can be taken as both an interior and exterior space. Even beyond looking into or looking out from within the piece, the space changes in character as one section of the floor physically slants and the wallpaper patterns on the wall undulate above like an encompassing atmosphere.

My intellectual processes, and the action of making, reveal a momentary understanding that holds the possibility of instantaneous change. The availability of this change comes with the fluctuation of perception, the sense that a structure may fall apart, walk away or morph in shape. These possibilities become present within the work by emphasizing the tenuous nature of how things are made or how they hint at a relationship to previously existing pieces. I am interested in proposing an instance where space, location, and time teeter between reality and imagination. This potential within instantaneous spaces is intensified by posing situations where energy, history and future possibilities are suggested by malleable structures.

Often, drawing is more literally realized as a verb through the means of my process. One work will be transformed fluidly into another by recollecting and reusing elements of previous drawings, becoming newly autonomous in its reformed state. These pieces have a sense of spontaneous construction or formation, and feed off each other individually to construct a more complete body of work. Action, in the physical making plays out as one drawing takes shape or

when one particular work leads to another. To consider drawing as an action is important in the sense that it creates a situation where the viewer is more visually aware of how construction, deconstruction and reconstruction are a core part of my process.

This way of working is most drastically evident in the drawing situation *and/or* (fig. 3), where the work was completed in three phases. The first phase consisted of a structural division of the gallery location into two separate spaces; one physically accessible, allowing the viewer to peek through a large incision in the wall (crammed with plywood forms) that breached the two spaces; the other space only available to the viewer through a three sided glass encasement. The viewer's ability to physically access the entire work is very limited, requiring imagination to supplement a less satisfying physical reality. Essentially, *and/or (phase one)* is a frustratingly contained diorama and an illusion of scale. It resembles a sort of cross-section, one that illustrates the division and relationship between levels of one space, moving from a refined outside crust to a more complicated microscopic view of a hidden inside layer (fig. 4). One section seems outwardly protective of the other; one part forms a more complicated and hidden inner support.

The second phase, performative and filmed, is the violent destruction of these two spaces. The sections become one and then nothing as the separating wall comes down and the piece is destroyed. Several stills in the video demonstrate how the process of drawing can be spontaneous in action and very physical in nature (fig. 5). The entire space changes as layers are revealed and opened up to one another.

Out of the destruction and debris of the second phase, the work becomes a three dimensional drawing employing all of the previously used materials by reconfiguring them into a sled and parachute like structure - a gift to Joseph Beuys (fig. 6).¹ The forms are slightly familiar and look purposeful. *and/or (phase three)* exists as a resolution to the previous two phases through its reorganized form and its redemptive recycled materials.

SCAFFOLD/SCAFFOLDING

As a reoccurring element in my work, the scaffold signifies a changing space or structure, thematically, conceptually and psychologically (fig. 7). Architectural forms that are in a process of change, renovation or in need of support tend to exist with scaffolding. The actual forms that I use in my work are based loosely on the rudimentary and crude structures that I have witnessed travelling in developing countries. Contrary to their strength, these particular types of scaffolding look shoddy, fragile and dangerous. The measurable qualities of these materials (bamboo, found wood, bricks and tree branches) dictate the dimensions and shape of the structure. The length, shape and size of the materials have a direct relationship to the angles and slopes of what is meant to be a geometrically strong and physically supportive construction.

I have adopted the scaffold (essentially an outer or interior support, made to be both temporary and structurally sound) as a metaphor for my inner intellectual process and outer physical production. The scaffold is supportive, facilitating, responsive and protective of a more permanent inner structure (previously existing or in the process of development). The scaffold is the exoskeleton to an existing or developing inner system. Nearing permanence it outlines and mimics an architectural structure, but a scaffold never becomes the true building.

¹ Here, I am making a humorous comment on the relationship this piece has with Beuys, both formally and conceptually. The destruction and reconstruction that went into the making of the piece harkens back to details within Beuys' personal myth. More specifically, the parachute and the "sled" are forms and ideas that Beuys has used in his work and his mythical background. Simply, I am acknowledging the fact that works often remind us of other historical works both visually and intellectually.

Used as a foil to what is considered stable or strong, my scaffolding initiates psychological content. In the present, the scaffold functions as a supportive structure that has a relationship to an interior construction or system. Alone or existing as an unconditional structure, the scaffold can suggest the potential of what is not represented. In this way, it suggests an opportunity both in the present and the future. Finally, and by default, an implied scaffold set signifies a preexisting structure that is familiar in both function and form. By tying the past, present and future together the scaffold is no longer stoic, but suspended in a state between fluctuation and permanence.

The temporary drawings that I make could be considered a type of scaffold that envelops and brings attention to a previously unstructured space. They are built and taken down, reconfigured and reconstituted. Where a scaffold might follow the contours of an existing location, my drawings respond to and are informed by architectural details. The drawings do not necessarily alter particular locations, but like scaffolding they respond, frame and bring attention to those spaces (fig. 8).

The relationship of balance or imbalance between adjacent forms and spaces is formally and conceptually very important to my work. Solid more physical structures or forms represent one state, where other elements will show another facet of the same spatial experience. For example, *scaffold + iceberg* combines an intentionally spindly but supportive wooden structure with a seemingly heavy form that comes from the ceiling (fig. 9). The tension is latent in the opposing structures, the materials used, and the sensation that the entire structure could crumble instantly. A similar tension is present in the restorative construction *and/or (phase three)* where remnants are organized into a form that anchors or is anchored by a lighter three dimensional masking tape and monofilament drawing. Not knowing what is anchored or anchoring, shifts between the two halves of the piece and perpetuates the potential movement and tension of their combined state (fig. 10).

SECONDARY PRACTICE

My secondary practice manifests itself in drawings, photographs and small scale sculptures. Working from observation, I mesh materials used in the larger constructions with traditional drawing materials. I first use them as a form of documentation, then make alterations or take steps beyond the recorded moment to describe a space or location that is less real and even further removed from the initial moment of work (fig. 11). Certain departures act as breaks from a primary practice and remind me of what is necessary for what I want to convey. Secondary works illuminate a clarity that is sometimes lost in the throws of making larger pieces. *Colony (uncontrollable growth 2)*, originally a three dimensional piece comprised of small cardboard forms, is the subject of a series of two dimensional drawings on paper made directly from observation (fig. 12 and 13).

I hold onto a secondary practice as another way of reflecting back upon the work, generating new thoughts on particular pieces, and incorporating different elements to demonstrate other perspectives or dimensions. Materials and details are reintroduced, reincarnated, recycled from past projects, and come together as regenerated work. For example, during my research in wedges and wedge-like shapes, I created a series of wedge molds and plaster casts (fig. 14 and 15) as a way of exploring the three dimensional form. *Miniature Monumental*, includes two of these plaster casts as three dimensional elements that bridge the wall and floor drawing and pull the two dimensional drawing out into space, intensifying its physical tangibility (fig. 16). The plaster casts rise out of the line as if designed by the drawing. Alternatively, the linear elements echo the physical forms as if they might be tracings of cast shadows or other impressions.

As a simple machine, the wedge concurrently applies pressure and exists in a place where pressure is applied. I utilize the wedge in situations where I want to evoke feelings of disorientation, dysfunction and change. The wedges in my work push, pry and are a source of pressure. Just as a two dimensional linear drawing of a wedge demonstrates illusionary perspective, the three dimensional wedge is situated in a shared space with the viewer to suggest a planar shift. This physical and perceptual contradiction affects the mental space of the viewer.

An interest in three dimensional architectural structures and spaces compels me to construct objects and reactionary drawings as a secondary practice in the studio. These exercises are important to other works in how they are simulations, much in the same way that architectural models are built and pondered before the foundation is laid. The secondary practice is an important series of valuable experiments, explorations, conclusions, and extensions, not only on a significant level spatially but also in employing specific materials and surfaces.

PHYSICAL SPACE / PSYCHOLOGICAL SPACE

Formally, considering the drawing as an object (a noun), I negotiate both two dimensional surfaces and three-dimensional situations as illusionary visual exercises, honestly aware that these spaces and moments are never realistically attainable. Architectural and spatial depictions represent a structured reality. These renderings are wedged between constructed (fully realized) environments and areas that demarcate less physically and conceptually distinct zones. Together these elements communicate the intentional incompleteness of any experience. Here, drawing is the result of an action or series of decisions; drawing is a noun.

I am interested in creating a speculative situation for the viewer that calls upon their own experience and conjures memories of personal space. My attempt is not to dictate a singular and one-sided moment, but to provide the possibility for avenues of thought to connect and lead toward a simultaneous and multi-faceted set of realities (fig. 17). By using nostalgic color, recognizable everyday materials, and ways of constructing that are not hidden or tricky, the viewer is lured into a space that feels as familiar as it does foreign.

I deliberately choose to use everyday materials that are associated with drawing, building and structure. These materials are easily grasped and directly linked to an experience of familiar physical spaces, both domestic and industrial. Cardboard, wood and plaster are meshed with faux surfaces (paint, plastics and wood grain or patterned adhesive papers) to set the work and the viewer in motion toward a fluctuation between made and manufactured (fig. 18). Though common, these materials have a significant beauty, and I attempt to emphasize it with less attractive combinations that propose unfamiliar edges and contradictions.

Everyday materials like cardboard and drywall function as neutral surfaces. They make up the containers in our daily lives; contain what we can hold and form the spaces that contain us. The spaces in between, inside and around my reinvented and modified physical forms become more pronounced simply because the material is so familiar. When viewing an entire work, the qualities of the materials, the reinventions beyond an everyday usage are appreciated as quickly as they are surpassed (fig. 19 and 20).

Drywall, lumber and other building and construction related materials hold a purposeful significance as structural necessities but also remain mundane as surfaces. When these materials are assembled, reused and abused, particular elements of the works articulate a difference between the raw materials or surfaces and their perceived histories as pieces of a certain location (fig. 21). Self-consciously combined materials, cracks and dents, orphan nails, peeled paint and weathered wood suggest spaces that once existed or are currently in flux. Even the aging process of surfaces cannot clearly be determined. One salvaged material is combined with an altered or modified new one. Reconfigured, the elements that remind us of past spaces teeter on the edge of becoming a new structure.

Questioning our relationships to false illusions of surfaces and the attraction or repulsion of faux materials, my work plays with nostalgic relationships to haute-kitsch and draws upon the tension between the natural and synthetic. Faux surfaces suggest the actual physicality of the real or natural materials with which they are combined (fig. 22). These materials act as vehicles for the emotional and psychological effects of memory and engagement that I hope to gain from the viewer. Space and time are lost and found, perspectives literally change and the viewer is provoked to navigate these situations.

By shifting between a tangible real locale that is experienced by the viewer and setting forth the illusionary imaginative and less physical suggestion of space, I am drawing into space. These three dimensional drawings are simultaneous and accumulated experiences, perspectives, and perceptions that make mental, imaginary and sensory shifts among the intellectual, emotional and psychological realities of the viewer. The drawings exist on the wall, behind the wall and in front of the wall.²

By contrasting or pairing the presence and permanence of three dimensional form with the temporal qualities in a drawing on the wall, I attempt to depict simultaneous experiences within a common locale. Perspectives literally and visually change from elevation to floor plan or bird's eye view. Small spaces are visually occupied and even if it is physically impossible, they desire to be walked into and through. They require the viewer to acknowledge and perambulate the work and space around them.

I believe that when my work physically provokes or shares a particular space with the viewer, it enters into the current dialogue that addresses contemporary drawing as a fluid and changing discipline within the visual arts. These drawings become fluid in the sense that they move off the wall, floor or other two dimensional surfaces, to flood the three dimensional space occupied and shared by the viewer.

My interests lie in the contrast between expensive modern materials for exterior and interior and their cheaply produced counterparts and how, when combined, these visual elements begin to aesthetically shape our ideal mental spaces. I am hesitant to suggest that these drawings fall under the classification of installation. I prefer to call them location-sensitive. They utilize and respond to elements found within a space - corners, ceilings, rafters - but they are not bound to a specific site, nor do they totally transform a space. Common qualities or attributes of rooms, corners and hallways are the framework and niches for my explosions of line and shape. The drawings are meant to speak about other spaces, alternative perceptions of a space.

² Ernst Van Alphen, *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 83.

All of the elements in my work converge to suggest singular situations or moments that are between flux and stasis. These opposing states are conceptually reinforced through a contradiction (the wedge) or foil (the scaffold) to preconceived notions of stability or the absolute. My works play upon the notion that psychological spaces are comprised of experience, perception and memory. As architectural interventions on the familiarity of spaces and perspective, drawings play out in sequences of destruction and reinvention. Preexisting perceptions of structures and spaces are broken down to create the illusion of something more fluid, vulnerable and impermanent. My work presents the possibility that the real, the actual and the illusion that one element may or may not signify a particular reality can exist within a singular space.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Van Alphen, Ernst. *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.



fig. 1, Amy Reckley, *Yellow Wall/Paper*, 2009, drywall, wood, faux wood contact paper, graphite, house paint, chalk line, hand-cut drafting paper, and salvaged molding, studio installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.



fig. 2, Amy Reckley, *Yellow Wall/Paper* (detail), 2009, drywall, wood, faux wood contact paper, graphite, house paint, chalk line, hand-cut drafting paper, and salvaged molding, studio installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.



fig. 3, Amy Reckley, *and/or (phase one)*, 2007, drywall, wood, masking tape, various drawing media, thread, and black drinking straws, Glass Box Gallery installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.



fig. 4, Amy Reckley, *and/or (phase one)*, 2007, drywall, wood, masking tape, various drawing media, thread, and black drinking straws, Glass Box Gallery installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.



fig. 5, Amy Reckley, video still, *and/or (phase two)*, 2007, Glass Box Gallery installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.



fig. 6, Amy Reckley, *and/or (phase three)*, 2007, drywall, wood, masking tape, various drawing media, thread, black drinking straws, and monofilament, Glass Box Gallery installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

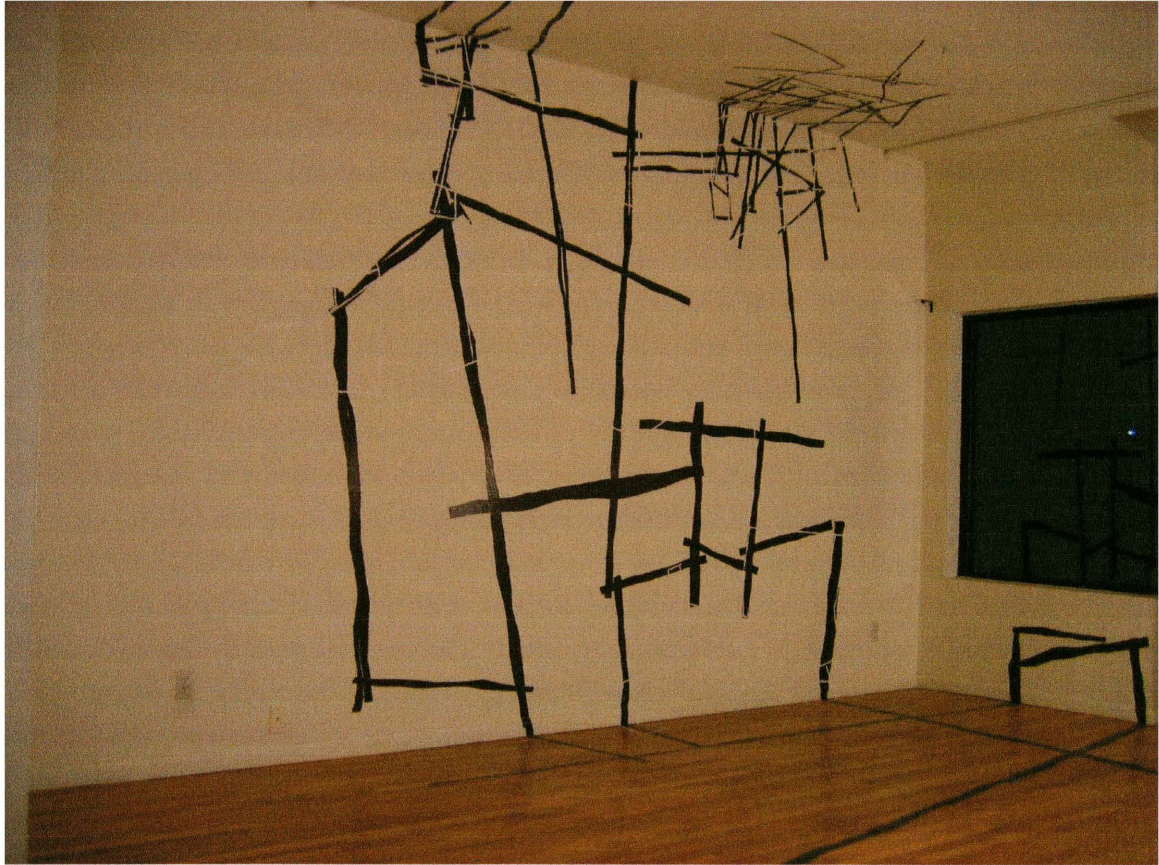


fig. 7, Amy Reckley, *Freeform Scaffold* (installation view, right side, detail), 2008, cut faux black walnut contact paper and ripped white artist's tape, approximately 14' x 35' x 7', Eaton Village Arts Center installation, Eaton, Colorado.



fig. 8, Amy Reckley, *Freeform Scaffold* (installation view, left side, detail), 2008, cut faux black walnut contact paper and ripped white artist's tape, approximately 14' x 35' x 7', Eaton Village Arts Center installation, Eaton, Colorado.

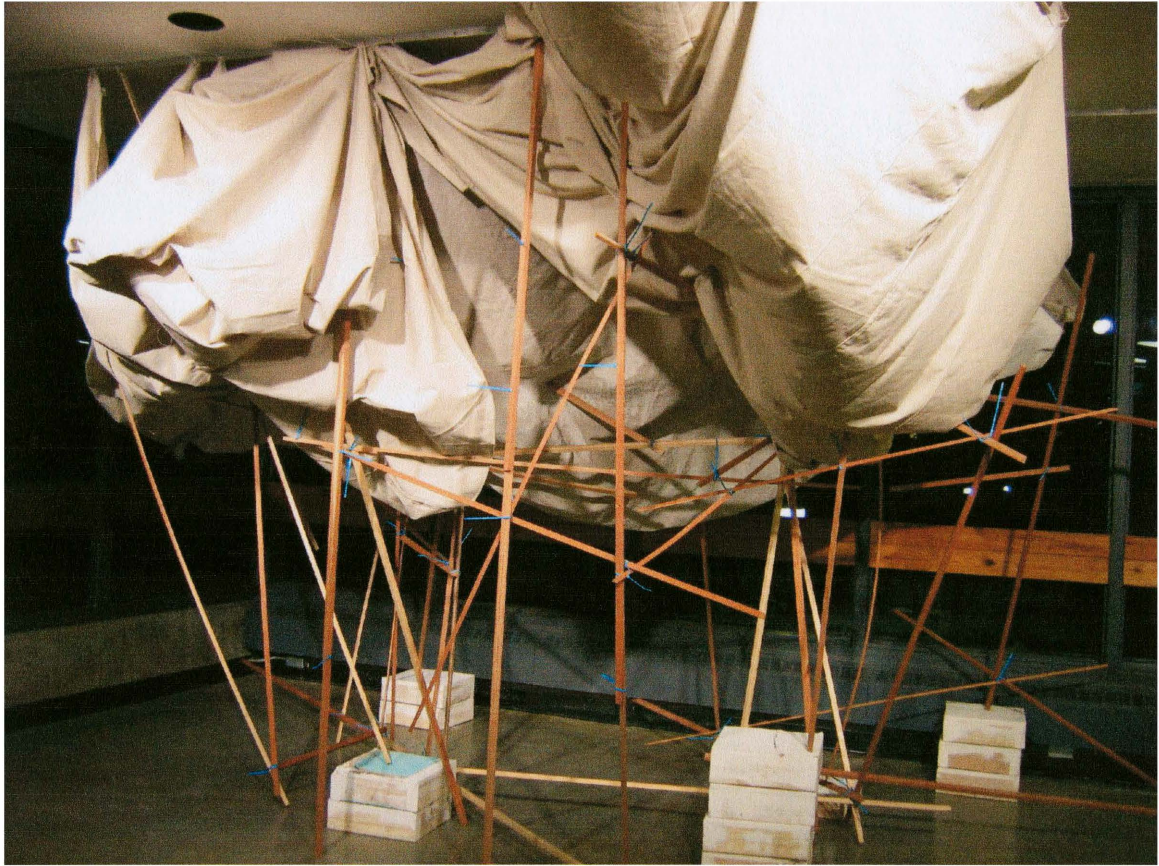


fig. 9, Amy Reckley, *scaffolding + iceberg*, 2009, cotton tarps, paint, drywall, salvaged wood, and zip ties, Glass Box Gallery installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.



fig. 10, Amy Reckley, *and/or (phase three)*, 2007, drywall, wood, masking tape, various drawing media, thread, black drinking straws, and monofilament, Glass Box Gallery installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

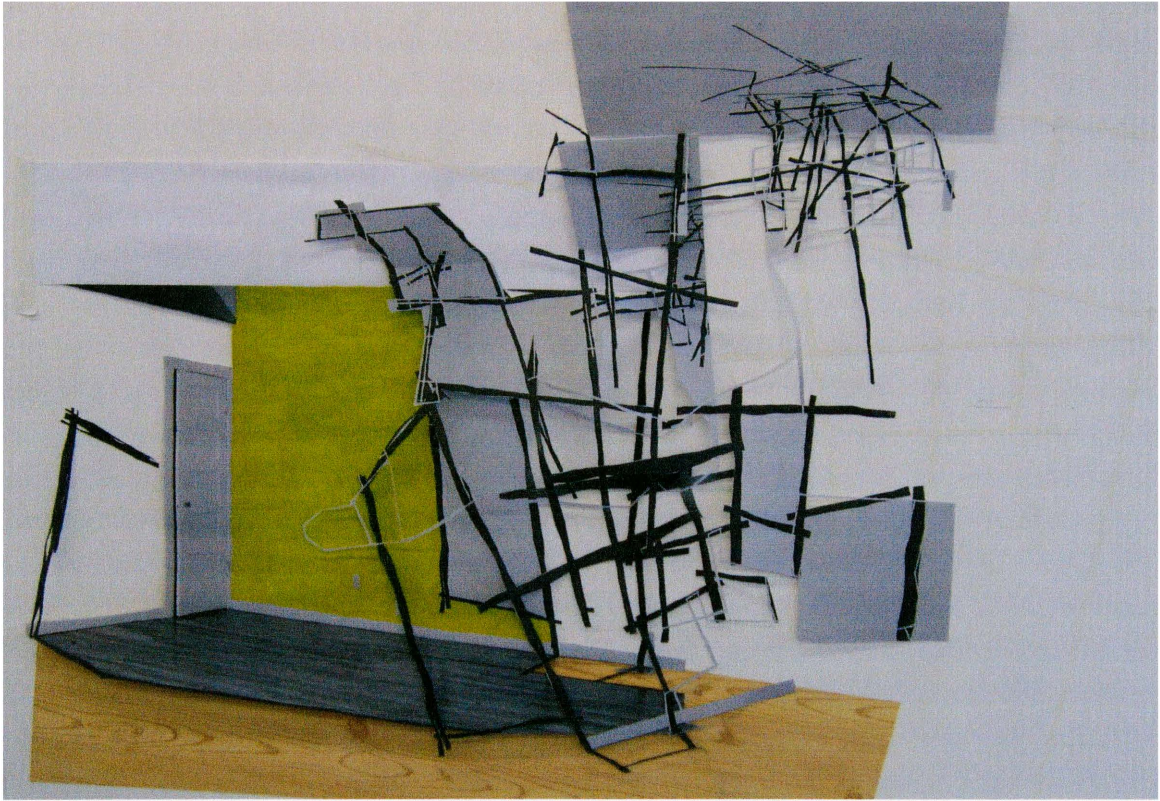


fig. 11, Amy Reckley, *Freeform Scaffolding Drawing 1*, 2009, hand-cut Xerox copies, paint, faux wood contact paper, and tape on paper, 30" x 42", collection of the artist.



fig. 12, Amy Reckley, *Colony (uncontrollable growth 2)* (detail), 2008, salvaged corrugated cardboard, and hot glue, Eaton Village Arts Center installation, Eaton, Colorado.

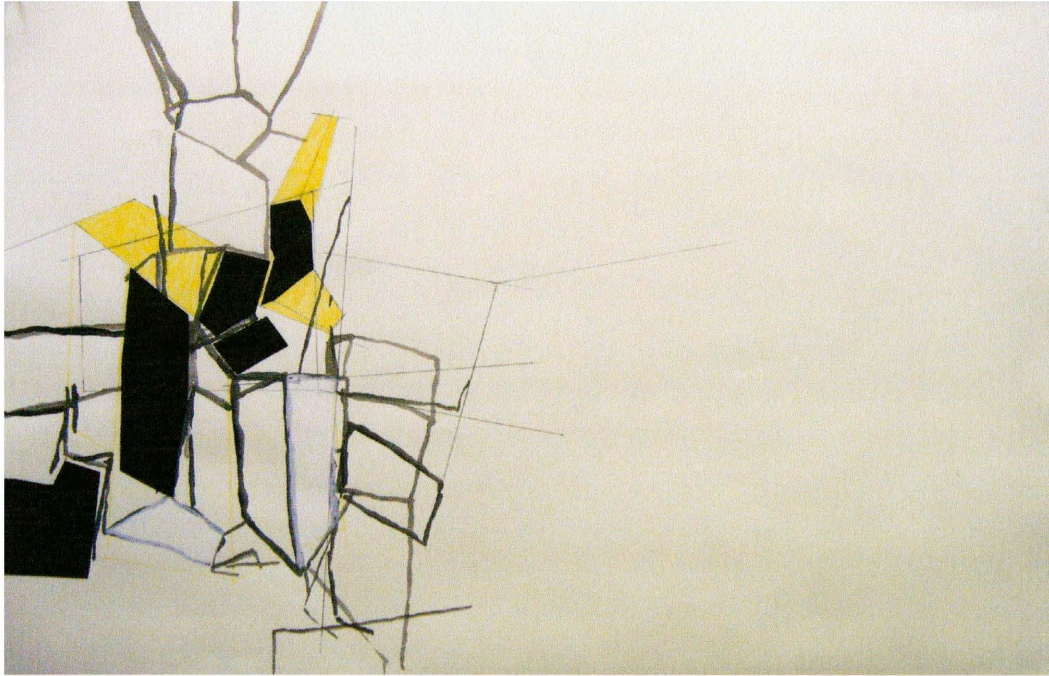


fig. 13, Amy Reckley, untitled drawing from *Colony (uncontrollable growth 1)*, 2008, ink, graphite, white chalk, yellow pencil and faux black walnut contact paper on paper, 28" x 36", collection of the artist.

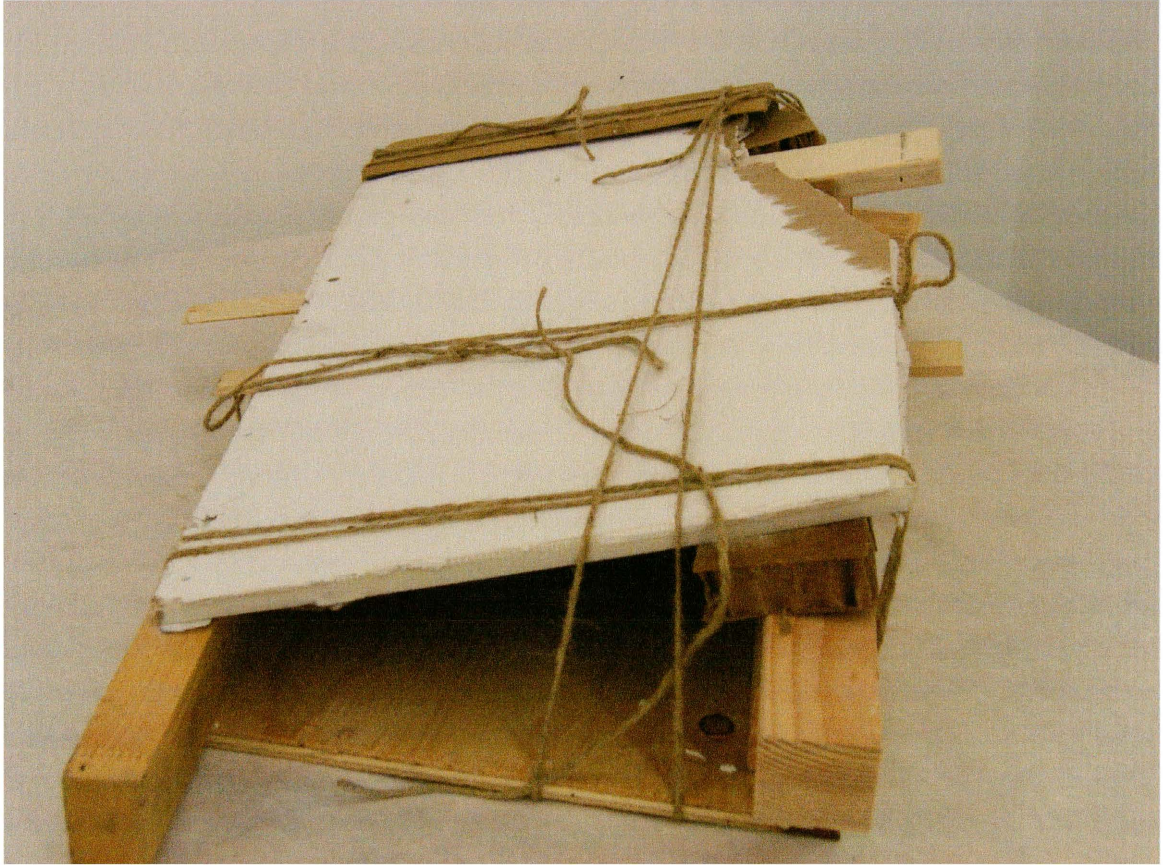


fig. 14, Amy Reckley, wedge mold preparation for plaster cast, 2008, destroyed.

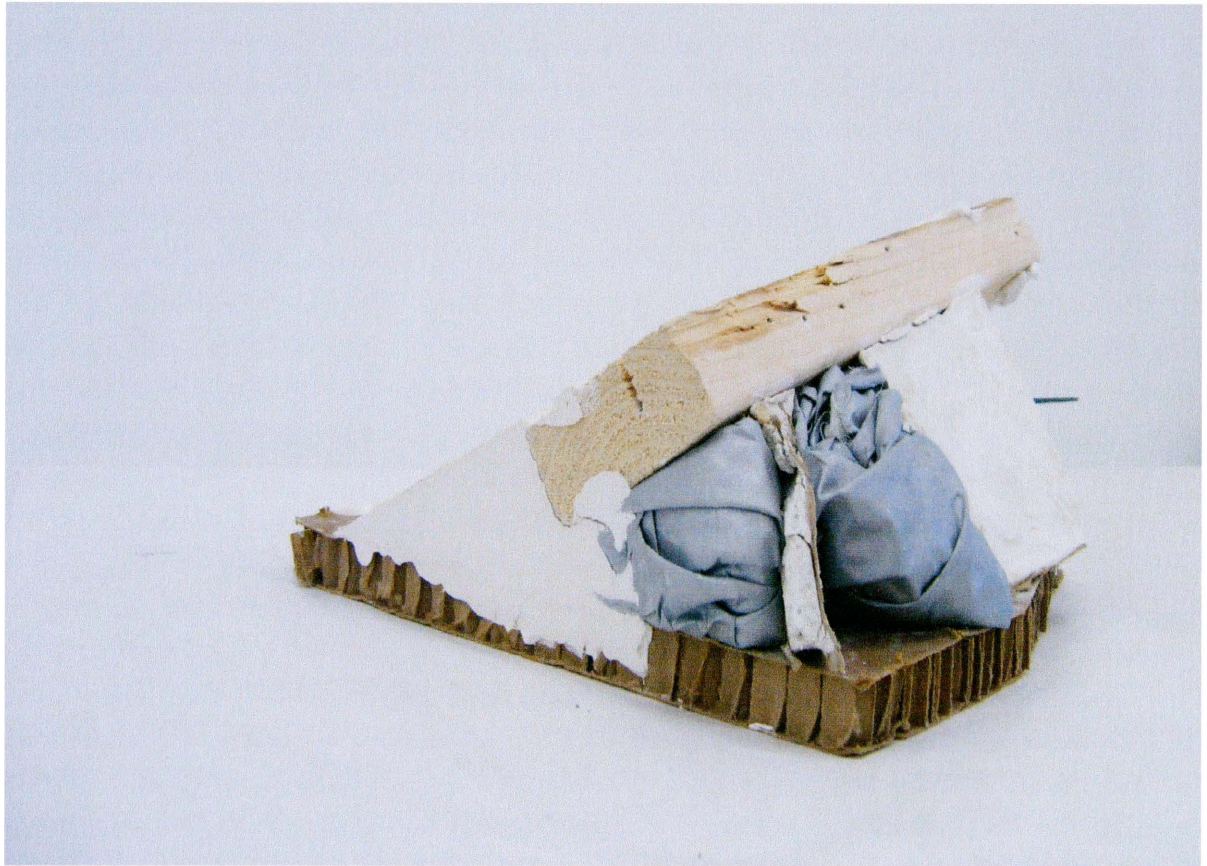


fig. 15, Amy Reckley, *wedge 5*, 2008, hollow core cardboard, wood, plaster, drywall, and silver fabric, 5" x 14" x 14", collection of the artist.

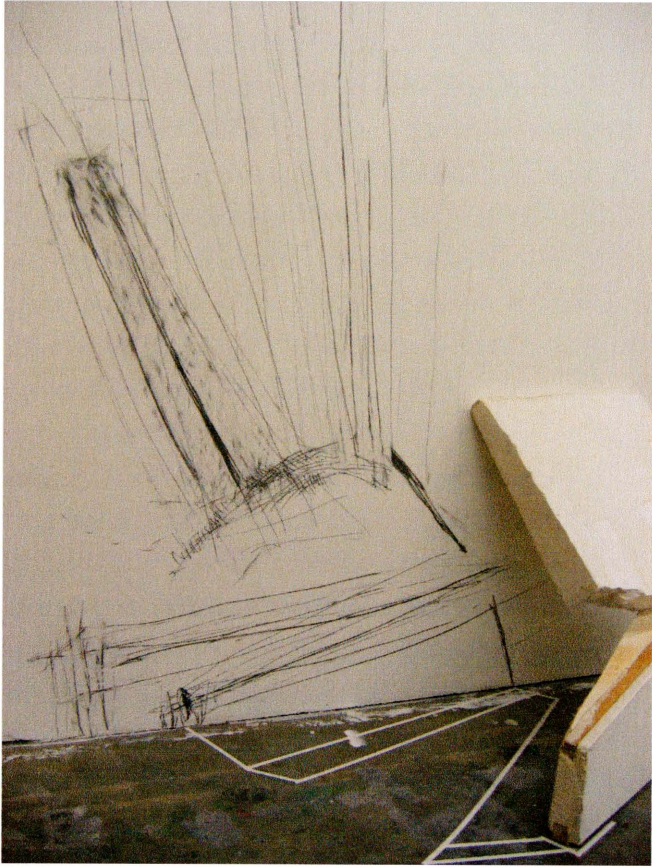


fig. 16, Amy Reckley, *Miniature Monumental* (detail), 2008, plaster cast wedges, white tape, and graphite, 4' x 3' x 2.5', studio installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

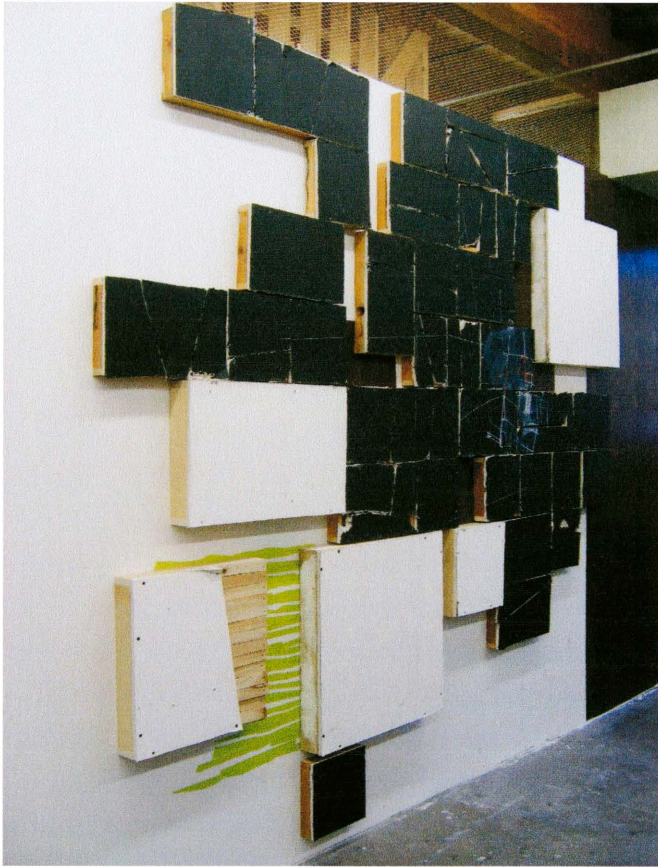


fig. 17, Amy Reckley, *Icebreaker* (installation view from left side), 2009, wood, salvaged drywall, drywall screws, chalkboard paint, various drawing materials, masking tape, faux black walnut contact paper, and LED lights, approximately 8' x 12' x 3", studio installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

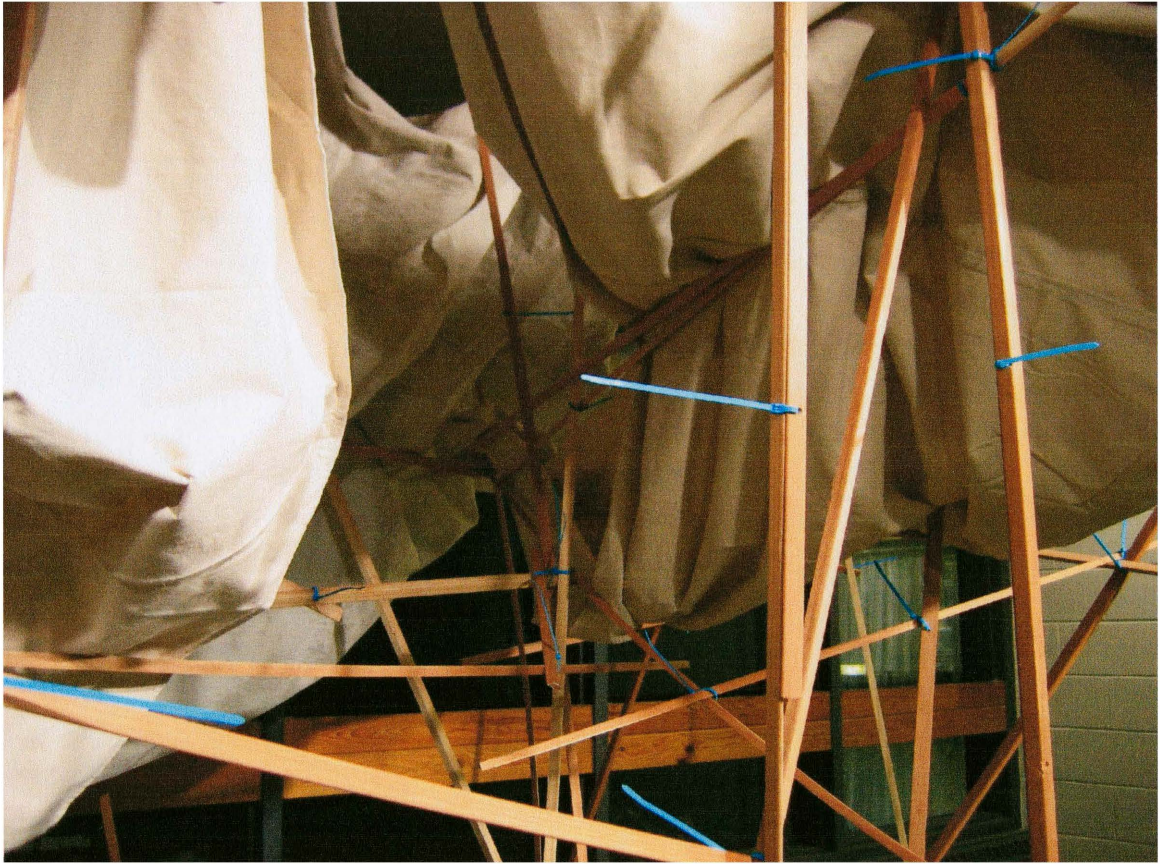


fig. 18, Amy Reckley, *scaffolding + iceberg* (detail), 2009, cotton tarps, paint, drywall, salvaged wood, and zip ties, Glass Box Gallery installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.



fig. 19, Amy Reckley, *Wedge (suck in, explode out)*, 2008, salvaged corrugated cardboard, paint, black tape, and white mason line, approximately 14' x 45' x 5', Eaton Village Arts Center installation, Eaton, Colorado.

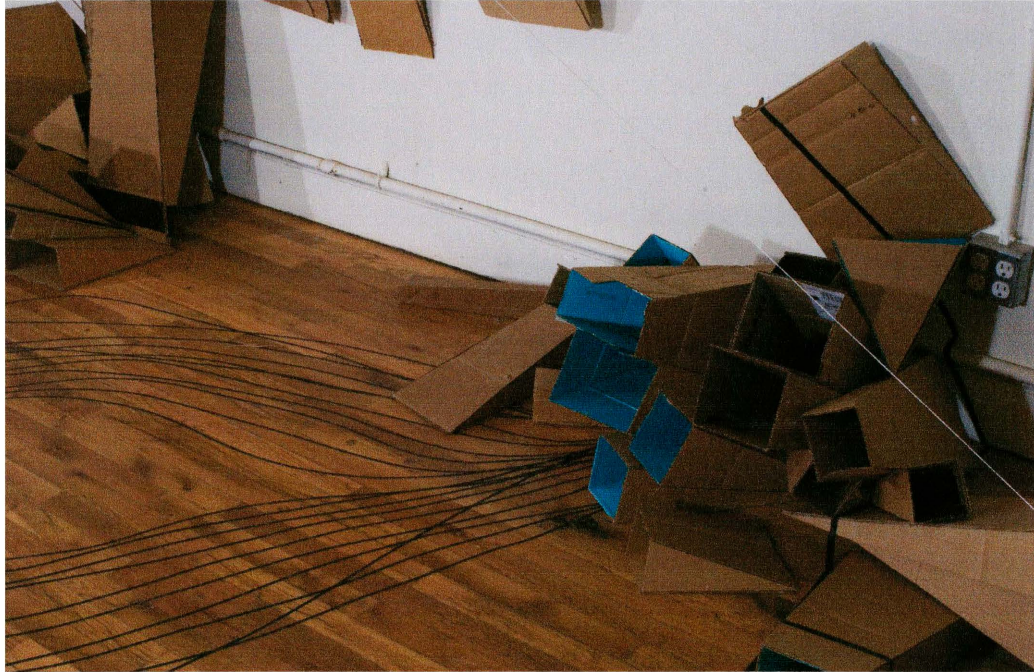


fig. 20, Amy Reckley, *Wedge (suck in, explode out)* (detail), 2008, salvaged corrugated cardboard, paint, black tape, and white mason line, approximately 14' x 45' x 5', Eaton Village Arts Center installation, Eaton, Colorado.

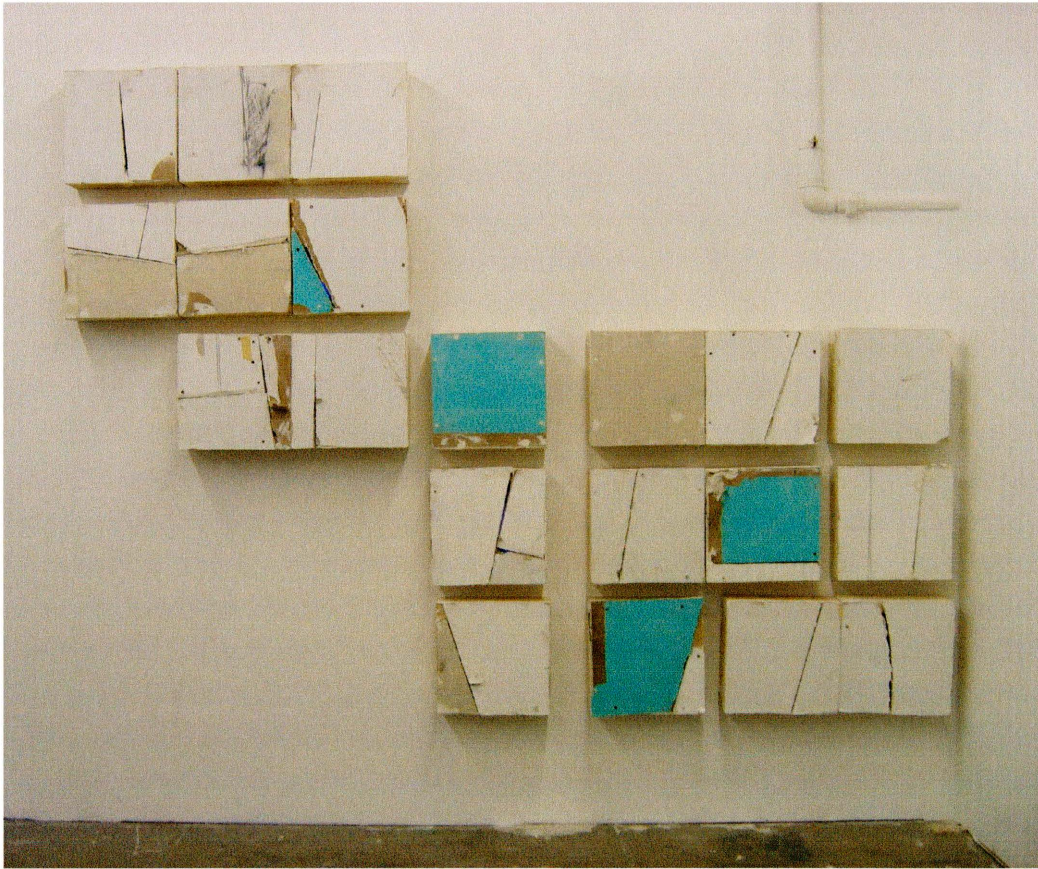


fig. 21, Amy Reckley, *Nice Crack*, 2009, wood, salvaged drywall, drywall screws, drywall mud, paint, graphite, masking tape, and LED lights, approximately 8' x 7' x 4", studio installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.



fig. 22, Amy Reckley, *Autumn of Décor* (detail), 2009, wood, salvaged drywall, drywall screws, hand-cut contact paper, graphite, and high-gloss paint, approximately 8' x 7' x 2', studio installation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.