2013

Corporeal Thresholds

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CORPOREAL THRESHOLDS

A Thesis Presented

By

CAROLINE VALITES

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS
May 2013
Department of Art, Art History, and Architecture
CORPOREAL THRESHOLDS

A Thesis Presented

By

CAROLINE VALITES

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ABSTRACT

CORPOREAL THRESHOLDS

MAY 2013

CAROLINE VALITES, B.F.A., UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN
M.F.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
Directed by: Susan Jahoda, Shona Macdonald, and Benjamin Jones

This text is a written articulation of my MFA thesis show entitled *Corporeal Thresholds*. It aims to share the poignant moments that inspired the work and contextualizes my practice within the framework of metaphysics and the phenomenology of perception. Specific topics include the body and the visceral, doubt and certainty, love and loss, and the defining spaces that influence our lives.
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I was lying in bed one morning next to my partner. I could feel his hand on my shoulder. Two different areas of flesh from different sections of the body touched. In that moment, as I thought about those two separate areas of skin touching, I recognized that the experiences of this exchange could be different for each of us. Although we were in proximity, the distance between us seemed to be magnified. I thought about not what his hand felt like on my skin, but where the point of connection began. Where it ends a different space emerges; one that is neither his nor mine or both. It became a space experienced in tangent to the other.

*Corporeal Thresholds* is an installation that seeks to explore human relationships through logical demonstrations of the basic laws of physics. The idea for this body of work originated from an inquiry into what happens across corporeal space. Originally I was interested in the simple notion that as separate bodies we experience life differently and that the nature of these differences produces uncertainty between a self and other. However, it became clear that what primarily mediates our relationships is language and, if the goal is to understand one another, our task is then to decode one another. Language is a system originating from thought, and manifests as a non-material — we understand language as a tool to communicate yet it is intangible. For this language is analogous to systems of matter such as light and sound. Similarly language has the potential to both interfere with itself and produce uncertainty.

Language is the vehicle for transferring knowledge from one person to another and also
exists within our own bodies. For example in *The intertwining - the Chiasm*, Maurice Merleau Ponty discusses the crossover of touch and sight.

But for my two hands to open upon one sole world, it does not suffice that they be given to one sole consciousness-or if that were the case the difficulty before us would disappear: since other bodies would be known by me in the same way as would be my own, they and I would still be dealing with the same world. No, my two hands touch the same things because they are the hands of one same body. And yet each of them has its’ own tactile experience. If nonetheless they have to do with one sole tangible, it is because there exists a very peculiar relation from one to the other, across the corporeal space-like that holding between my two eyes-making of my hands one sole organ of experience, as it makes my two eyes the channels of one sole cyclopean vision.¹

In this passage Ponty describes moments where information is transferred within the mind and body proving a relationship between the two. Just as an interaction with another individual can lead to a disconnection or misunderstanding, the same can happen internally between the mind and the body. There are many factors other than language and thought, which complicate our relationships. *Corporeal Thresholds* touches on the precarious connections we make with one another. The installation sets up a scenario where the viewer has the opportunity to test the boundaries of connectivity between two magnets. This scenario is a metaphor for the threshold between life and death or love and loss. It speaks to the core of what makes us human. Tools such as photography are emblematic of our difficulties with loss. The photograph is symbolic of our longing to make a moment permanent. Science and religion attempt to answer many of our difficult existential questions but both are inadequate. As a society we have designed

technologies such as the Internet that attempt to bridge the distance between us metaphorically and physically. Ironically, the internet and its devices become both a conduit and a barrier. The Internet allows us to passively communicate, but lessens our evolvement and affect on one another.

Where there are connections there are possibilities for gaps. Many of the ideas discussed in this paper and the installation express anxieties associated with uncertainty. Whether it is love and loss, science and religion, language and empathy, or technology and communication as humans we ebb and flow through moments of clarity where we ask questions that lead back to moments of entropic confusion.
CHAPTER 2

THE SPACE BETWEEN TWO ABSOLUTES

I can say in truth that we are all separate entities. However, I can also say in truth that we make up a part of a greater whole — separate and connected. I often think of these two opposing theories as concrete philosophies in separate moments of my life. When I’m feeling nihilistic I imagine us all as separate entities, wandering around the earth until we die, and that is it. At other moments when I feel a deep connection and optimism about life, I turn that theory around and imagine we are all a part of a greater whole. Even when we disintegrate our bodies dissolve, and become an element of the soil, an element of the universe.

The materials I use in my work: light and sound, are emblematic of the fragility and precarious nature of life. We can eat right, exercise, and drive cautiously, but in a split second whether it’s a slip and fall, or some other unforeseen accident, a loved one could disappear from ones life.

In Corporeal Thresholds, magnets are placed near each other, but do not fully touch. They are floating objects tethered to a floor and ceiling. Each magnet depends on the other in order to remain in place. The floor is made from found wood in different phases of decomposition. There are spacers placed under each plank of wood so as to make it feel unstable. When a viewer steps on a board it bends and the floor moves under their feet. Wooden boards that have magnets tethered to them are not fully secured to the floor. When a viewer steps on that board, the magnets separate further. The viewer experiences an implied threshold — if the magnets are separated enough, one will fall. The magnets are a metaphor for touch, but also for the tenuous connections we make with
each other in our lives.

The concept of loss is present within many of my works. When we speak of losing a loved one it can mean many different things. I classify loss in three different ways. First, the loss of an intimate relationship; the connection between two, in the way that it was, is gone. It can feel like a death has occurred.

My second example relates to a change due to a physical or mental injury. It’s a little less straightforward because there is a fine line between loss and change. If you have ever had to take care of someone with Alzheimer's disease or any other form of brain injury, the person is still present, but they are different. My stepmother, about twenty years ago, slipped on some ice and fell onto the back of her head. After that slip, both her
life and my father’s life changed radically. My stepmother, Pam, will always be Pam, but there indeed is a pre and post injury Pam. I remember recently having a discussion with her about this, and when I heard her remorse over feeling that the Pam before the injury was gone, I understood some truth in it. Throughout the years she has had several near death experiences, and has had to relearn how to read and walk. Injury and recovery, or loss and gain, have became a pattern, and it is something I have had to accept as part of her life. It has made me aware of the space between life and death. In her case I imagine an edge that she moves towards. She gets very close, and then pulls herself back to wherever “back” is. I fear the day when she cannot recover.

The third idea of loss is death. The loss of a life is perhaps the most difficult to deal with.

Figure 2 Caroline Valites, Once Removed 2011

Life has been lost, and the idea of never again being in the presence of that person or connecting with them is impossible to imagine. I made a relatively small work entitled,
Once Removed, at the end of my first year in graduate school. This piece was one of my first pertaining to death and family. It engaged photography, light and its relationship to time. As one approached the piece the only thing observed was a light and a glowing box that resembles a frozen block of ice. The front of this box had a peephole. When the viewer leaned down to peer into the box they saw an image of my grandmother that my grandfather took when she was about my age. I printed a positive Ambrotype on glass from my Pappap’s negative. It is a black and white image but with all of the tell tale marks of the wet plate process. Viewing the photograph through the peephole appears to be much smaller and further away than it actually is. Perhaps in the end, this piece is more a memorial to both my grandparents, but it speaks to death, time, distance, and loss.

My fascination with photography began when I was an undergraduate biology major at the University of New Haven in Connecticut. My father had given me his old Yashika 35 mm SLR so I decided to take a photography I class as a way to learn how to use it. It didn’t take very much to seduce me. The very process of making a photograph became an entry point to a whole new unseen world. Seeing an image form right before my eyes on photographic paper in the developer was an astonishing experience. Fifteen years later I still feel the same wonder and near disbelief when I develop an image.

Simply put, photography symbolizes loss. It is our attempt to capture a moment in time that we know we are losing. Hiroshi Sugimoto once said, something to the effect that the very idea of time brings awareness to death. This is what photography does for me.

There are several components that make up a photograph — the lens, the camera, and film (or any light sensitive material). Each of the components represents different

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2 PBS Series Art21 “Hiroshi Sugimoto”
concepts about an image. The optics of the lens symbolizes, to me, a distortion of light. If an image hasn’t been recorded onto film, the lens is simply a tool that shapes and distorts light and thus our perception of the scene emitting the light. The camera obscura, (a room sized camera) like the ones Aristotle or Al Hazen observed provide a phenomenological experience much different from the experience of holding a physical photograph in one’s hand. Within a camera obscura one experiences light in real time as it is manipulated through a lens or pinhole. This experience allows us to observe light and time as a non-material. On the contrary, while one holds a photograph one experiences a representation of the past—a record of light from a past event. When a light recording material such as film is introduced to any camera (camera obscura, pinhole camera, slr, etc.), light is captured onto the film and all of a sudden the mortality of the subject is both acknowledged and recorded. Maurice Blanchot writes about this resemblance in *Two Versions of the Imaginary*:

> At first sight, the image does not resemble the cadaver, but it could be that the strangeness of a cadaver is also the strangeness of the image. What we call the mortal remains evades the usual categories: something is there before us that is neither the living person himself nor any sort of reality, neither the same as the one who was alive, nor another thing.⁴

Photography is a powerful tool because it attempts to satisfy our anxieties about time and death. In order to remember a moment we record it, otherwise it could be gone forever. If our memory fails us, the photograph can become a stand in. The lag in time between when an image is captured and then developed is considered a “latent memory.” Analog

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photography produces a latent memory, an extended period of time that can’t be illustrated. I cannot have a latent memory; I either remember, or I don’t, or I haven’t lived it yet.
CHAPTER 3

INVISIBLE/VISIBLE

The ways in which the mind and body function together is, and has been, an important concept in my work. My personal understanding of a mind body disconnect emerged at age fifteen when I had an eating disorder. This was a time in my personal development where a very strong and complicated relationship began with my mind and body.

Anorexia Nervosa is an example of an illness where there is a disjuncture between what the mind sees and what it believes. In the mirror there was an actual reflection, but also an imagined or “fictional” reflection. There was a disjuncture between what I saw and what was really there. This was a crucial moment in my personal development where the relationship between my mind and body began a conscious conversation. I was able to understand and reason with thoughts that were seemingly irrational to others who observed me.

We have all lived separate experiences in our bodies. There is a distinct relationship between the body and mind. Maurice Merleau Ponty talks about this in The Primacy of Perception, he states,

The perceiving mind is an incarnated body. I have tried...to re-establish the roots of the mind in its body and in its world, going against the doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of external things on our body as well as against those which insist on the autonomy of consciousness. These philosophies commonly forget - in favor of a pure exteriority or of a pure interiority - the insertion of the mind in corporeality, the ambiguous relation with our body, and correlativelly, with perceived things... And it is equally clear that one does not account for the facts by superimposing a pure contemplative consciousness on a thin-like body...Perceptual behavior emerges...from relations to a situation and to an
environment which are not merely the working of a pure, knowing subject... 

The mind and body work in tangent with each other, but there is also a clear separation between the two. Other illnesses such as, agnosia, phantom limb, and aphasia create a physical disruption in the brain. Agnosia, for example, is a physical disturbance that occurs in the actual wiring of the brain, and prevents the individual’s ability to recognize everyday objects. There is a disjuncture between what they see and what they know. As we move through our daily lives moments build into meaning. The play between bodily experience and thought intermingle to weave a private perception of the world. 

Corporeal Thresholds is constructed to create a full sensorial experience. The gallery and all of the elements of the work (the floor, lighting, and magnets) activate sight, touch, sound and even smell. Elizabeth Grosz discusses Maurice Merleau Ponty’s writing as a way to demonstrate “that our experiences are organized not by real objects and relations but by the expectations and meanings objects have for the body’s movements and capacities. They indicate a “fictional” or fantasmatic construction of the body outside of or beyond its neurological structure...”

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Figure 3 Caroline Valites *Corporeal Thresholds*, 2013
CHAPTER 4

SPOOKY ACTION AT A DISTANCE

Up until the age of eight I attended Catholic school in Bridgeport CT. I recall being in the hallway on my way back to the classroom when Father Palacino, who I remember being a very sweet and soft spoken man, came up to me and asked if I had any questions for him that he could answer. I did, I was having a really hard time wrapping my head around the idea of God, and the idea that he has an infinite past and future. So I asked “How can God have always been and always will be?” This idea confused me, because everything must have a beginning. I don't think he really knew how to answer my question but he attempted by saying “Well, God has been Allah and has been many different names throughout history.” I asked “but... what about the very beginning?” He said it was like a circle, that there was no beginning. I apply this explanation to the recycling of material — to the idea of death, and to the body becoming an element of earth etc. But, I don't accept it as a valid explanation for the origin of life. At age eight I understood that Father Palacino didn’t really know the answer either.

Experiences such as this influenced my interest in science because it was a way to systematically prove theories true or false. The scientific method may not be a foolproof system, however it is one that uses logic instead of faith. Isaac Newton once used the phrase “I frame no hypotheses” to explain his inability to understand gravity. He stated, “Gravity really exists” however, he also called it “absurdity”.6 Scientists still don’t know what gravity is. They can describe gravity in Laws as Newton did; however Einstein’s Theory of Relativity is still a Theory.

Quantum entanglement is even more mysterious than gravity. It is interesting because not only is it difficult to define, but scientists argue over whether it exists. Albert Einstein spent a portion of his studies trying to disprove the entanglement theory. He called it “spooky action at a distance” as a way to poke fun at other scientists who were trying to prove their theories. He thought if something could be so bizarre, it was probably not true. Quantum entanglement can be understood by comparing it to a relationship:

Imagine Alice and Bob, two happily married people. While Alice is away on a business trip, Bob meets Carol, who is married to Dave. Dave is also away at that time, on the other side of the world and nowhere near any of the other three. Bob and Carol become entangled with each other; they forget their respective spouses and now strongly feel that they are meant to stay a couple forever. Mysteriously, Alice and Dave—who have never met—are now also entangled with each other. They suddenly share things that married people do, without ever having met. If you substitute for the people in this story particles labeled A, B, C and D, then the above actually occurs.

The floor in the gallery is constructed so that it never meets the wall. This gesture allows the viewer to become aware of the actual floor underneath, referencing the outside world. Upon entering the room the upper floor appears to be sturdy. After talking a step or two the viewer realizes they are walking on an unstable surface, reinforcing the sense of uncertainty.

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8 ibid Pg 21
Figure 4 Caroline Valites Corporeal Thresholds 2013 (Installation detail), 2013
CHAPTER 5
WAVE PROPAGATION

With the camera obscura, Alhazen proved that light traveled in a straight line.\(^9\) Newton adopted this theory on light and it was understood that light has always traveled in a straight line, or a stream attracted or repulsed by matter. In the early nineteenth century Thomas Young began to look at light not as a straight line, but as a wave. With this shift in perspective he was able to change our basic understanding of light. This now meant that light could bend around corners. This observation in the behavior of light is called diffraction.\(^{10}\)

\[\text{Figure 5 Caroline Valites Destructive Interference, 2013}\]

\(^{9}\) Beeson, Steven, and James W. Mayer. Patterns of Light: Chasing the Spectrum from Aristotle to LEDs. New York: Springer, 2008. Print. pg. 91
\(^{10}\) ibid pg. 93
The aforementioned double slit experiment was the inspiration for a work entitled
Destructive Interference, a component of Corporeal Thresholds. Destructive Interference is a freestanding wall with a small window at the end. The three-inch by six-inch window has two pieces of hair sewn vertically within millimeters of one another. A single beam of light shines directly in the middle of the two pieces of hair.

![Image of Destructive Interference](image)

Figure 6 Caroline Valites Destructive Interference (Installation detail), 2013

After a beam of light passes though both strands of hair it shines on the adjacent wall, and an interference pattern emerges. The original double slit experiment either uses tiny slits in a lightproof material, or wire (I have used hair) to demonstrate constructive and deconstructive interference. Constructive interference is when one wave combines with another to increase or average out the amplitude of the wave, as seen in figure 7.
Destructive interference is when one wave is out of phase with another, and the combination will cause a complete negation of the wave, as seen in figure 8. They both disappear.
When diffraction occurs a pattern can emerge. It is typically striped, with no gradation. In physics terms, the pattern would be: destructive, constructive, destructive, constructive, destructive, constructive... and so on.\textsuperscript{11}

![Interference pattern during double slit experiment](image)

It would seem impossible that light could simply disappear, but it appears to be the case. The fact that light can interact in a way that either strengthens or negates the waves, is not only an incredible phenomenon but a poetic representation of human behavior. It seems as though we spend most of our lives in a pattern similar to a diffraction pattern. Most of our lives we desire to fully communicate without knowing if we have been heard. Language, either spoken or physical, exists between two people; it is a site where information is transferred. We are receptacles for cues, signals, and words coming from the other individual. Most of our experiences with other people are through the interpretation of information that they have transmitted. In Noam Chomsky's \textit{Language and Nature} he discusses the idea that thoughts can be simplified as a system of matter.

\textsuperscript{11} Beeson, Steven, and James W. Mayer. \textit{Patterns of Light: Chasing the Spectrum from Aristotle to LEDs}. New York: Springer, 2008. Print. Pg. 93
He explains a theory by Priestley:

“Matter 'is possessed of powers of attraction and repulsion'... matter 'ought to rise in our esteem, as making a nearer approach to the nature of spiritual and immaterial beings'... Matter is no more 'incompatible with sensation and thought' than with attraction and repulsion. 'The powers of sensation or perception and thought; are properties of 'a certain organized system of matter'”

Thought can be looked at as a “system of matter”, similar to sound — sound is a system that vibrates particles of air. In Destructive Interference I have combined the double slit phenomenon with Preistley’s ideas on thought and matter, referencing a system that interferes with itself. Relationships rely on systems of physical and spoken language. In many relationships, in spite of the level of intimacy, we often experience moments where the system of communication is not working. Information transferred between us is misunderstood, unheard or unseen.

CHAPTER 6

THE ART OF EMOTIONAL TELEPATHY

I cannot move without it. I cannot leave it there where it is, so that I, myself, may go elsewhere. I can go to the other end of the world; I can hide in the morning under the covers, make myself as small as possible. I can even let myself melt under the sun at the beach-it will always be there. Where I am.\textsuperscript{13}

-Michel Foucault  \textit{Utopian Body}

Foucault describes the body as something that can never be separate from the self. The body limits us from being somewhere other than where we are. With that said, consciousness is contained inside the body. Space is where we attempt to unify. Even when two individuals are in the same room together they are separated. What exists between them are light, air and sound.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Bruce Nauman \textit{A Cast of the Space Under My Chair}, 1965-68}
\end{figure}

Bruce Nauman explores ideas relating to unoccupied spaces. In *a cast of the space under my chair*, he literally made a concrete block of the space under his chair. In the early 1960's Nauman’s studio became a space somewhere between a laboratory and a theater.\(^\text{14}\) Everyday he would make a video exploring any sort of spatial aspect of the studio; such as the space between the ceiling and the floor.

![Figure 11 Bruce Nauman, *Mapping the Studio (Fat Chance John Cage)* 2000](image)

In 2000 in a piece called *Mapping the studio (Fat chance John Cage)* he began to experiment with infrared technology setting up video cameras in his studio at night when

he was not there to witness what was being recorded.\textsuperscript{15}

I am particularly interested in the space that is created when two people are in relation to one another. The body is a site sealed by flesh, and bones; we perceive on both conscious and unconscious levels where we end and another begins.

How can the word 'I' be put in to the plural, how can a general idea of the I be formed, how can I speak of an I other than my own, how can I know that there are other I’s, how can consciousness which, by its nature, and as self-knowledge, is in the mode of the I, be grasped in the mode of the Thou, and through this the world of the 'one'?\textsuperscript{16}

It is, generally speaking, human nature to empathize but, in the attempt to do so, we can never be sure of it’s effects on the other. Milan Kundera wrote that compassion, not when referring to pity, but when referring to a “co-feeling,” or being able to feel any emotion with another -- joy, pain or happiness -- is the “maximal capacity of affective imagination, the art of emotional telepathy. In the hierarchy of sentiments, then, it is supreme.”\textsuperscript{17} Kundera’s and Merleau Ponty's quotes are striking because they touch on the desires and curiosities we have for one another. It is also challenging to fully understand another person's pain. Doctors have this problem. Their best solution is a pain chart shown in figure 12. I always question the accuracy of this scale when I see it in the doctor's office. What is “horrible” for one person may be “unbearable” to another. Stephanie Smith and Edward Stewart are two artists who collaborate and work with ideas of relationships and dependency.

One of their videos entitled *Mouth to Mouth* depicts Stewart submerged in tub of water. The only access to breath is from Stephanie, who swoops into the frame to give him breath when he needs it. The two minute black and white video loop depicts Smith and Stewart in a cycle of dependency and responsibility. The fact that the video is a loop, suggests the cycle is never ending and inconclusive.

*Mouth to Mouth* and much of my own work incorporates inconclusive cycles. When my stepmother suffered a blood clot in her lung she was hooked up to a breathing machine. I desperately wanted the ability to give her some of my breath. At the time it felt like a simple concept; I have working lungs...why can't I share them with her? For obvious

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reasons, all I could do was sit there and hold her hand.

Figure 13 Stephanie Smith *Mouth to Mouth*, 1995
CHAPTER 7
A BETRAYAL OF THE SOLIPSIST ILLUSION

Merleau Ponty describes what I understand as the underlying way that we can attempt to have empathy for one another, and as he also puts it, the beginning of “the paradox of expression.” In his writing, *The Intertwining- the Chiasm*, he discusses the idea that our senses are each one part of an experience —how we perceive the world in parts.\(^19\) For example one eye has a perspective different than the other, and a vision is then created from a coupling of the two eyes. The same exists with touch. My right hand can experience touching my left hand, and vice versa. There is a perceived splitting and intertwining of experiences. As I begin to comprehend this I can also say each finger feels something different. Each neuron in my body receives and inputs a different sensation. The bottoms of my feet are more sensitive than the tops of my feet. These feelings are internal sensations, existing within one’s own world.

The analogy of a tangential experience — where one part of a “whole” experiences something that can be differentiated, can be applied to how self and other experience the world simultaneously. Merleau Ponty writes:

> As soon as we see other seers, we no longer have before us only the look without a pupil...that phantom of ourselves they evoke by designating a place among themselves whence we see them: henceforth through our eyes we are for ourselves fully visible...” He writes later “In being realized they therefore bring out the limits of our factual vision, they betray the solipsis illusion that consists in thinking...\(^20\)


\(^{20}\) ibid Pg. 403
Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues that the very idea we can see and recognize another seer — and other seers see us — speaks to how we know another mind exists. After that point, “the body is lost outside of the world and its goals, fascinated by the unique occupation of floating in being with another life, of making itself the outside of its inside and the inside of its outside...” He beautifully states, that our own experiences are returned to us “and, in the patient and silent labor of desire, begin the paradox of expression.”

This very desire and mirroring of thoughts, feelings, and senses is something I experience on many different levels. It may be felt during a simple conversation where the only way I might be able to understand another is by way of projecting myself onto them. What is interesting about this reading is that Merleau Ponty is denying any notion that senses are felt in parts and then combined. He is questioning the center of their unity, or “how there is a center, and what the unity consists of...”. I often think about this, even when another person is in the room. For me, it is a moment of intersection. If two people are in a room, they both exist in their own minds separately. Even when two individuals touch there is a “center” at the unity of skins. In *Corporeal Thresholds* one magnet is tethered to the ceiling and its partner is tethered to the floor. The top magnet attracts and suspends the bottom magnet. Each magnet shares a moment of attraction with its partner. While the magnets are connected, and held in an extended moment of attraction, they do not physically touch. There is a shared invisible force holding them together.

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Figure 14 Caroline Valites *Corporeal Thresholds*, 2013
In her essay titled *Ether*, Caroline Jones investigates the connection between ether and disembodiment. She discusses ether in terms of its duality in both a philosophical and a chemical term. “My argument that ether ‘stands for’ the place of disembodiment is a philosophical and linguistic claim, not precisely a historical one. There is a grand history of scientific theories of the ether, in which anxieties over its impalpability, immeasurability, and disembodiment periodically require a near eradication of the term.”\(^{22}\) The term ether was historically used to explain an invisible space between two objects. Whether the space was filled with gas, spirits, or light waves, ether was used to describe a space that gave an illusion of emptiness. Jones later writes about the interesting link between a description of disembodiment and our contemporary connection to the ether as it relates to an Ethernet. “We are ever more comfortable with this kind of ether which propagates our thoughts and desires at the planetary scale. Our bodies learn to trust temporary disembodiment when it brings the pulse of a friend’s communication through space to the Palm of our hands.”\(^{23}\)

Caroline Jones’ essay celebrates the Internet for bridging the gap between space and people. The development of the Internet is an extraordinary accomplishment. However, it has initiated a restructuring of our culture. Media and its devices are redefining time and space and we increasingly experience each other through objects, such as our phones and computers. I am able to engage with someone on Facebook in such a passive way,

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\(^{23}\) ibid Pg. 141
and potentially never talk to him or her in person. Thus, individual thought is constantly being redefined through media, and personal devices are dodging the consequence of presence.24

YES is a term defined by Olifur Eliasson, meaning Your Engagement Sequence. He writes about this being the fifth dimension in an article called Your Engagement has Consequence. If we exist in a world of three-dimensional objects, with the fourth dimension commonly thought of as time, then Eliasson would argue that the fifth dimension is an engagement with time. In other words time is only present when someone is there to experience it.25 The way that we encounter another object, or more importantly how we encounter one another is a convergence of the past, the present and the future. It is something that happens in real time, and perhaps may not be something that is self-conscious.

Corporeal Thresholds attempts to place the viewer in a position of the third person. The amplification of personal awareness and the body’s affect in space is an important component of the work. Today’s world is formulated for the individual. Apple provides its customers with the illusion of individuality, when in reality the customer is targeted, studied, and stereotyped. As Foucault discusses in The Subject and Power, as a part of society we offer ourselves to a power which “makes individuals subjects” He writes “this form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of

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25 ibid. Pg.66
power that makes individuals subjects. Facebook allows our identities to be viewed within our own control. My friends are the only people who can view my profile and can only see me how I want to be seen. This is a good example of a sort of binary opposition or paradigm, which we have been subjected to. Foucault describes it as:

...struggles that question the status of the individual. On the one hand, they assert the right to be different and underline everything that makes individuals truly individual, on the other hand, they attack everything that separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way.

I can shape my identity, and communicate with people from a safe and convenient place. The corporeal world does not function the same as Facebook. The Internet is a removed space where we are able to create an individual superficial image of ourselves. On Facebook or Youtube, I am removed from accountability. Through the conditionings of our culture, consequence has been left out.

*Corporeal Thresholds* attempts to bring about self-reflexivity. The viewer’s body becomes a part of a scenario where their body has the potential to affect the objects in the room. The sound of the floor creaking and the subsequent movement of the magnets, produces, for the viewer, a profound awareness that their presence has set these things in motion. There are no written signs that suggest the viewer is not allowed to touch the magnets. The magnets are a metaphor for touch, but also imply tactility; many viewers have the impulse to touch and test them. Along with that impulse however, is a sense of

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27 ibid Pg. 330
responsibility. The viewer has a choice as to whether or not they want to disrupt the balance and fragility in the space. In a sense I am setting up a scenario of accountability for the viewer.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION
A SUBTLE WAY OF SAYING GOODBYE

The written articulation of *Corporeal Thresholds* aims to share the poignant moments that inspired the work itself. In addition the project enabled me to contextualize my practice within the framework of metaphysics and the phenomenology of perception. Most of the themes in the work — doubt and certainty, love and loss, and the defining spaces that influence our lives, are elements of existence we all encounter and have to come to terms with.

Our actions and thoughts are negotiated within the privacy of our minds. This isolation is one of the greatest and most difficult elements of being. Language, spoken or physical, is our only conduit for relaying thoughts to one another, and is just as complex and fragile a system as light or sound. As we continue to participate in a technologically driven culture of connectivity and distance our relationship to the corporeal becomes more and more significant and at stake. In this way a full sensorial experience of *Corporeal Thresholds* is crucial. When a viewer enters the space their very presence disrupts the installation. This is a reminder of the impact caused by simply sharing a space with someone. It is a reminder of our inherent and inevitable consequence of being.
Upon entry stood a 20-foot wall that was 2-feet wide 8-feet tall made from drywall wooden studs and OSB board. At the end of the wall was a recreation of the double slit experiment using hair and a laser light. I made a panel at the end of the wall removable so that I could store things in the wall, and change the batteries of a light hidden on the inside.

The floor was constructed from found pallets and processed so that each board was of similar width and height. Each board was a different length and placed at an 80 degree angle. Under the ends of each board was a 1-inch by 2-inch piece of wood. Both tab and board were screwed into a 4-foot by 4-foot OSB board that was painted flat black. The magnets where hung from wax coated thread and hooks that were screwed into existing holes or hardware in the ceiling.
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PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ARTIST AT WORK