

I am always here, you are always there

A Supporting Paper

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By Sarah Sampedro

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Committee:

Jane Blocker, Lynn Lukkas (advisor), Monica Moses Haller

I am curious about interpersonal relationships. What is this space between us? We have different lives, different experiences, different thoughts. The space, I suppose, is an awareness of me being different than you: of consciousness, of ego. But the space is more than individuality alone. I use the camera to make sense of my world. Information bombards my senses and I am quickly overwhelmed. When I look through my viewfinder the complexity of the world becomes ordered, simplified, and manageable. I take time to process and investigate an idea churning around in my head. The forms created in my viewfinder live in relationship with one another, layered and compressed by the camera like the layering of ideas being organized in my mind.

I often begin with an idea or a phrase. Something that catches my attention. I am less inspired by looking at the photographs of others' and more inspired by poetic language. For example, "I am always here. You are always there."¹ The simplicity and poetry of this statement inspires me to build ideas around it. Space exists between us: not only physical, but emotional and psychological space as well. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, developed the theory of the Ego: the consciousness of self-hood. Buddhism, on the other hand, teaches non-self: we are full of all things and empty of an independent "self."² I wonder about the distance between feeling isolated and being connected. To what extent am I separate from you, with different ideas, beliefs, and understanding of the world? Can an image of houses pressing up against one another, or light shining under my living room chair represent interpersonal space? The invisible interpersonal relationship takes concrete, physical form in the photograph.

¹ Yi-Fi Tuan, *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 47.

² Thich Nhat Hanh, *You are Here* (Boston: Shambala Publications, Inc, 2009), 106-110.

Space can be physical proximity: we can be near or far from the object of comparison. A friend told me the story of an exercise she gave her photography students. Stand at the end of the hall, she said, and take turns photographing one another. When it is your turn to photograph, raise your camera. When it is your turn to be photographed, lower your camera. Take a step forward, photograph. Another step, another photograph. At what point do you become uncomfortable? How close can you get before it feels too close? Be aware of your proximity and the way both you and your subject respond. Students chuckled at the assignment, saying it would be no big deal. Yet, when being photographed, every single student encountered a moment the proximity became too intimate: bodies tensed, heads turned away, and eyes darted anxiously. Humans feel one another's energy: the body has an electrical current of approximately 100 watts while at rest. Human cells sense electrical current in the environment,³ and it makes sense to feel energy from another person. *Be aware of both your own and your subject's reaction to closeness*, my friend instructed her class. Depending on family, culture, or



Figure 1

social relationship, we all have different awareness and comfort levels with proximity.

Tracing the progression of my work, I think back to an action I did: I knocked on the doors of my neighbors' houses, introducing myself and looking for a way to cross the public/private threshold between us. I did not invite myself in, rather, I spent a moment in conversation with them and asked if I could take their picture (*Figure 1*) or

³ Ken-ichi Nakajima, et al, "KCNJ15/Kir4.2 couples with polyamines to sense weak extracellular electric fields in galvanotaxis," Nature Communications 6, Article number: 8532 (2015), <https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms9532>.

photograph their back yard. The front yard is for the public, offering an idealized presentation of the home and occupants inside. It is full of boundaries to cross as a stranger moves toward an interaction: a fence marking the edge of belonging, a gate defining controlled access, the moment of transition between the city and private sidewalk, the unapproachable grass, the distance to the front door, the climb up the front steps, the reach for the doorbell, and immediate step back to make more space between visitor and door when it opens. There are many physical cues to indicate the movement into private space. The back yard, while still outside, is an extension of the inner private space and requires intimacy to access. It is lived-in, often more unkempt than the public front. I primarily did this action in a two-block range around my house. I was looking for a connection with my neighbors, to be known and belong, as social researcher Brené Brown⁴ would say.

The action I took to meet and photograph my neighbors was problematic in a few ways. First, it limited the neighbor's agency in the interaction. I controlled the way they were approached, the goal of the interaction, and the way they were photographed. A person did have the choice to not answer the door or to refuse, as most did. I was even yelled at a few times. The only people who said yes were neighbors I already knew or neighbors who were personally introduced to me. Second, the approach was not well considered. When my doorbell rings and I am not expecting a visitor, my first reaction is defense: *what do they want from me?* The person in question is usually selling something: a security system, a religion, or a fundraiser. Third, the interaction was primarily for my benefit. I wanted to be let into my neighbor's private space without offering the same in return. It was an inequitable interaction. Fourth, I didn't take my position into consideration. I am a white woman who moved into a predominantly African

⁴ Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2012).

American community. I was not considerate of the history of white study of the black body, and the extensive hurt and distrust it has caused.⁵ And fifth, I didn't take into consideration the cultural objectification embedded in the history of photography. It has been a tool for physiognomy and eugenics, as well as to exoticize and objectify cultures from around the world. In April of 2018, *National Geographic Magazine* published an apology for their 150-year history of racist representation and role in presenting an "other" to gawk at.⁶

In the portraits I made, the discomfort of the subjects is visible (*Figure 2*). Arms press tightly to the body, shoulders raise toward the ears, chins lower to hide in coats, and family clusters tightly together. In the end, I concluded making portraits in this way was little more than the objectification of my neighbors in an effort to make a typography of a diverse neighborhood, and I no longer viewed my action to be as connecting as initially imagined. If my goal was truly to be known and to belong, then I should have found a different, more equitable interaction.



Figure 2

Portrait photographers have explored various ways to correct the power imbalance implicit in the photographer/subject relationship. Some see the subject as co-creator, some let the

⁵ Henrietta A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid; The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2008).

⁶ Susan Goldberg, "For Decades, Our Coverage Was Racist. To Rise Above Our Past, We Must Acknowledge It," *National Geographic*, accessed Nov 18, 2018, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/04/from-the-editor-race-racism-history/>.

subject direct the scene and their body in it, or some let the subject click the shutter. In *The Notion of Family*, LaToya Ruby Frasier addresses the power dynamic by defining her mother as collaborator rather than subject. Frasier's mother chooses when and where photographs of her are made, and even controls the camera.⁷ However, Latoya Ruby Frasier is still the artist authoring, exhibiting, and profiting from the work. Her name is on the exhibition. I do not believe it is possible to negate the power dynamic entirely.

I continued photographing my way through the neighborhood, wondering about belonging and looking at ways our houses and lives bump up against one another. We find any number of ways to mark our territory and define the difference between "mine" and "yours." When my family moved into our house there was no fence. It was the only house on the block that did not have one. We soon noticed considerable foot traffic through our yard as a result: a head bobbing across the bedroom window, footprints in the snow all winter, or a police chase through the yard. After years of backyard traffic we came home one cold spring night to find the back door open and all the lights on. Our house had been burglarized. *That's it*, we thought, *we're building a fence*. It was a false sense of security but felt like safety nonetheless. It marked our territory. Telling passersby where they belonged and where they didn't; demonstrating to all that we were the only ones who could be there. *Are we shutting out our neighbors? We wondered. Are we telling them to keep out? Telling them we don't want them in our lives?* It felt that way. It still does.

Although it had been my home for over a decade, I was a transplant to my neighborhood, Homewood, with enough access and privilege to become a homeowner in my mid-20's. My

⁷ "LaToya Ruby Frasier Makes Moving Pictures," Art21, Feb 10, 2012. Video, 6:56, <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/latoya-ruby-frazier-makes-moving-pictures/>.

neighbors and I lived together and separately from one another, choosing connection or disengagement, sometimes based on race, socio-economic factors, religion, or politics. I moved through the neighborhood, photographing my questions about a proposed historic designation and my role in gentrification, considering ways physical and psychological space manifests between people (*Figure 3*). The photographs I made were not documentary; they



Figure 3

were not intended to record a specific moment in history. Instead, they were meant to be a visual study of place, space, distance, land ownership, home, and belonging. How do we see or feel those manifestations? Can I see it in the design of the space? Can it be felt in my photographs?

Like the way Marco Polo describes the cities he visits to Kublai Khan in *Invisible Cities*, the images I made in Homewood were bits and pieces of the whole, intended to be a poem to paint a sense of the place rather than a photograph to make it permanent.

*I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcades' curves, and what kind of zinc scales cover the roofs; but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past.*⁸

⁸ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Inc, 1974).

Stone pillars mark the two-by-seven block perimeter of Homewood. At one time I heard the pillars were to make it a gated community, but that was not true. The markers indicate the area a group of Jewish families developed and lived in the 1930s. They were the children of the first wave of Jewish immigrants who moved to Minneapolis around the turn of the century and settled near downtown. It was a time of intense anti-Semitism, and Minneapolis was known to be one of the most anti-Semitic cities in the country.⁹ Homewood and North Minneapolis became a haven for the Jewish community, a thriving part of the city with restaurants, a movie theatre, butchers, synagogues, and all kinds of business activity along Plymouth Avenue. Many of the businesses were burned in the disturbances of 1967, when black youth all over the country were protesting unjust treatment and racist power structures.¹⁰ The bulk of the Jewish community left the neighborhood at that point, taking sanctuary in the suburbs. The houses near downtown were bulldozed to make space for public housing.

Because of its origins and the unique characteristics of home construction, Homewood was deemed eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. A historic designation would set rules on the types of designs and building materials owners could use on the exterior of their homes, as well as limit the type of development possible in the neighborhood. In 2016, the City's Heritage Preservation Commission recommended a year-long study, and in 2017 they recommended confirmation of the designation, which immediately became contentious among neighbors. Proponents of the designation said it would protect the neighborhood from increased development due to three large construction projects nearby. Opponents saw it as

⁹ John Biewen and Beth Friend, "MPR documentary: No Jews Allowed," MPR News, Feb 10, 2015, https://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/02/10/mpr_news_presents.

¹⁰ Laura Yuen, "When Flames of Racial Strife Engulfed a Minneapolis Street," MPR News, Jul 19, 2017, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/07/19/minneapolis-plymouth-avenue-riots-anniversary>.

another way the City wanted to control residents' property, requiring more expensive materials, repairs, and permits. The higher costs would exclude and drive out those who could not afford expensive restoration when houses need work, bring in higher income buyers who increase property values and taxes, and stimulate gentrification. It did not help that the preservation commission representative who nominated the designation was a realtor who had recently moved into the neighborhood. The division in opinion generally fell along racial lines, with long-time resident black families against the designation, and newer, white families supporting it. After the contentious neighborhood reaction, the City Council delayed the final vote in 2017, sending the results back to the preservation commission for further research. To date, a final decision has not been made.

The images I made of Homewood observe changes to the neighborhood, as well as different expectations for personal space. There are thresholds of belonging, insides and outsides. For example, an old house with its overgrown garden spilling across chain link pushes against its new neighbor, an architect designed prefab complete with rain barrel, cedar fence, and manicured yard (*Figure 4*). A Sears shopping cart sets in the front lawn of a housing development, bringing up questions of consumerism and homelessness (*Figure 5*). I paired the Homewood images with text from a

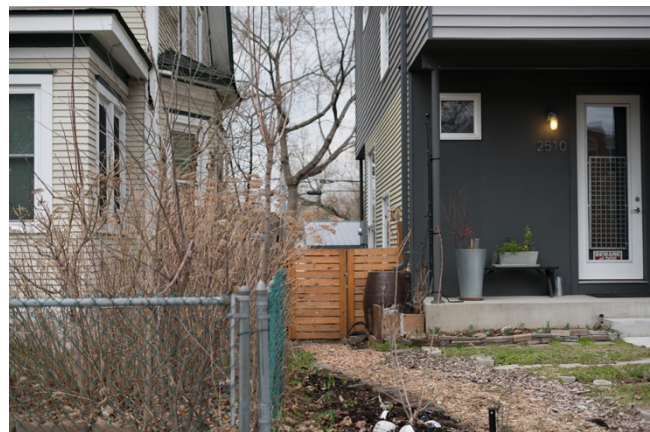


Figure 4



Figure 5

conversation in a Homewood Neighborhood Facebook group. The voices are like the gardens, pushing against one another with different opinions.

*I agree with you about the moral issues that are complicating this process,
though I suspect you and I are thinking about different ones.*

Pissing match? We didn't start this adversarial process.

Wow, that's some super BS.

The divide in the neighborhood went deeper than the historic designation. Our segregation was pronounced, and neighborhood meetings regularly became contentious. *Why?* I wondered. Why are we polite, waving at one another across the street, engaging in friendly conversation, while insecurity about our differences simmers just below the surface. Just asking “why” situates me as a white, cis-gendered person of privilege. Not understanding meant I did not experience the systematic oppression intrinsic to institutionalized violence against people of color. I was raised in a religious, heteropatriarchal nuclear family in rural, white America. Idealized life was on display in my childhood home where prints by Terry Redlin¹¹ and C. Michael Dudash adorned the walls.¹² The transition from this childhood upbringing to an urban adulthood informs my life and work. My own children are half Hispanic and I live in a predominantly African American urban neighborhood. I wonder how my children will experience

¹¹ Terry Redlin, “Above the Fruited Plain,” Terry Redlin and The Redlin Art Center, accessed Nov 18, 2018, <https://redlinart.com/collection/above-the-fruited-plain>.

¹² C. Michael Dudash, “He Shall Hear My Voice,” C. Michael Dudash, accessed April 4, 2019, https://www.cmdudash.com/faith/e901d64a-7187-4db8-bc0b-9c241925e7ef-heshall_large.jpg.

racial discrimination. I worry about it less and their father worries about it more. Our expectations come from our own life experiences. *I am always here, you are always there.* I wish I could understand. The system I grew up in was designed to protect and privilege me and I did not learn to distrust it. The United States government systematically used containment, erasure, terrorism, and removal of people of color to make the country ideal for people like me.¹³ The binary of belonging ultimately suggests someone always does not belong.

In 1910, realtors returned to Minneapolis from the national real estate convention with a plan to apply racial restriction to neighborhoods. New real estate covenants gave credence to the “one drop rule:” a single house owned by a person of color would bring property values down for everyone on the block. A covenant is a binding agreement in a legal contract. In real estate contracts, covenants usually regulate building code: I agree to put my house this far from the sidewalk, to use a specific kind of siding, to build on a cement foundation, or to build a house with a certain monetary value. Covenants were used to regulate the character and quality of a neighborhood. They are a lot like the guidelines that would be set by the Homewood historic designation, but covenants are determined by homeowners or neighborhoods rather than the City. Builders advertised racially restrictive covenants as a selling feature for properties, and neighborhoods in Minneapolis that used them the most still have the highest values today.

The party of the second part hereby agrees that the premises hereby conveyed shall not at any time be conveyed, mortgaged or leased to any person or persons of Chinese,

¹³ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, Vol. 1 (2015): 54–74.

*Japanese, Moorish, Turkish, Negro, Mongolian, Semitic or African blood or descent. Said restrictions and covenants shall run with the land and any breach of any or either thereof shall work a forfeiture of title, which may be enforced by re-entry.*¹⁴

My first encounter with the word “covenant” was as a child listening to religious stories. I learned a covenant was a pact between human and divine: it was an agreement between the Jewish God and Abraham, and then later Jesus extended the covenant to include gentiles (non-Jews) as well. Many religions observe a covenant between humans and the divine, promising reward or protection for belief. I think of a covenant like a blood-oath: a mutual promise to live a certain way and hold certain beliefs. When a covenant is applied to a real estate contract, it is a social pact for a desired way of life. Racially restrictive covenants were a blood-oath among citizens of Minneapolis to deny home-ownership based on race. Even though the US Supreme Court declared racially restrictive covenants unenforceable in 1948 and the MN Legislature prohibited their use in 1953, they were widely used until the 1968 Fair Housing Act made them explicitly illegal. Regardless of legal enforceability, they were deeply embedded (and desired) in the social contract of the community.

Racially restrictive covenants are part of the oral history of Homewood. The story told among neighbors is that covenants were used to prohibit Jewish people from buying property in the area. To get around the restriction, a non-Jewish developer bought land and then built houses for the Jewish community. Neighbors still tell the story today, though historic record has not been found. No wonder there is a deep-seated divide and distrust among my neighbors. The

¹⁴“ Real Estate Mart : Lake of the Isles Bargain,” Minneapolis Sunday Tribune, Jan 12, 1919, 10, https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/viewer.jsp?doc_id=mnh0005%2F1DFC5G5B%2F19011201&init_width=600&recoffset=0&collection_filter=1a9ae500-bb04-4cc1-b561-375dde8926af&collection_name=addabf07-f848-43e3-a488-2782562f220d&sort_col=publication%20date&CurSearchNum=-1&recOffset=0.

white folks systematically denied any person of color from buying property for most of the last century. To investigate the institutionalized racism of home ownership, I made an installation using real estate contracts as wallpaper, photographs as



Figure 6

windows, and furniture to reference domestic space (Figure 6). The photographs are not literal images of landscape to view out a window, rather, they imply a restricted, hidden, or spying gaze. The work questions the privilege of home-ownership, positioning the viewer in complicated spaces between literal/abstract, past/present, and inside/outside. The point of



Figure 7

view in many of the photographs is obscured by layers of objects and textures, layering reality and understanding. In addition, I built a sculpture of 15,000 racially restrictive real estate contracts, the approximate number of covenants identified by Mapping Prejudice, an organization working to map the use of racially restrictive covenants in Hennepin County, Minnesota (Figure 7).¹⁵ The stack of papers is the size of a human body, referring to the bodies restricted by the contracts. Depending upon the height of the viewer, it is a struggle to see the top of the pile.

¹⁵ Kevin Ehrman, "Our Map," Mapping Prejudice, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.mappingprejudice.org/index.html>.

Around our yards we build fences and around our countries we build walls. I wanted to expand my investigation of human-made barriers to belonging, so I spent the summer of 2017 visiting European countries with newly-built border fences. The barriers were meant to slow the influx of migration from political instability in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁶ On a sweltering August day in 2017, I bicycled my way toward the Hungarian/Serbian border. I filled multiple water bottles and followed the river south for 10 miles. I hoped the water would be enough in the 100° heat. A man wearing nothing but his underwear peddled past me, clothes piled neatly on his bike rack. The leaves rattled in the sunlight, the crops waved in the fields, and the land smelled like a mixture of cow manure and freshly cut hay. *The landscape looks exactly like home*, I thought. Time and space collapsed as a child of the Great Plains of Minnesota met the Great Plains of Hungary.

I could see the guard tower a mile before I reached the border. As I came closer, I saw a guard sitting in a lawn chair at the end of the bike trail, watching my approach. *I'm not even on a road*, I thought. *How many soldiers are sitting along this border, just waiting?* I tried to turn to the right, following the trail closer to the river. He waved at me, gesturing with his arms that I was not allowed to travel that direction. I tried to turn left, following the road that met the trail. This time he began yelling. I pulled over and casually began to take photos. *Look how pretty this is! Wow, that's interesting!* I pointed and clicked, trying to get as many exposures as possible before he ran over and turned me back. He talked wildly in Hungarian: I can only assume he wanted to know what I was doing. I shook my head uncomprehendingly, playing

¹⁶ Larry Kaplow, "Why are Migrants Surging into Europe Now?" NPR, Sept 2, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/09/02/436905795/why-are-migrants-surging-into-europe-now>.

the innocent fool. He spoke into his radio to call for backup, for someone to explain to the crazy tourist she was not allowed to be there.

While he waited I snapped a couple more pictures. *Wow, I think. The razor wire looks incredible.* The reflection, the movement of the line, the sharpness against the texture of the bushes. How can it be so grotesque and so beautiful at the same time? I can imagine moisture dripping off the blades like sweat drips off my body. A van pulled up, five soldiers got out with an interpreter ready to set me straight. They questioned me and assigned the youngest soldier to watch and make sure I did not take any more pictures while they processed my ID. *You can't photograph here. Why? Are you a journalist? No. Only press is allowed to photograph here. Why? Those are the rules.* Then I'm a journalist. *Do you have paperwork? No, where can I get my paperwork? Apply at the police station in town.*

I still do not know why photography is limited to the press. I can only assume the government wants a record of photographers at the border in order to allow or deny publication of the images. They made me delete the photos I made – watched as the camera worked to empty the storage card. They did not know, however, that I had already switched cards when I suspected I would not be allowed to keep the images.

An hour later I bicycled away from the soldiers, stopping for a drink a couple miles from the border. I made my way down the hill to sit under the trees on the edge of a farm. I drank more water and tried to write about the visit with the soldiers. My hand shook so hard that writing was hopeless. I did not realize how tired I was, how overheated and shaken. I relied on the privilege of my race, gender, socialization, and passport, but how far could I push these

privileges? I was a foreigner who did not speak the language and yet still relied on enough “insider” status to keep me safe.

During that summer I traveled to Hungary, France, Austria, and Germany to be present, to feel, and to photograph divisions between peoples and countries, the same way I had looked at the divisions in my neighborhood. The police also stopped me in Calais, France. *We saw you*, they said. *We have you all over the video cameras*. Eight officers jumped out of a van to surround and intimidate me, but my race, gender, and nationality were, once again, a get-out-of-jail-free card. The officers’ posture and proximity were meant to convey power over me, but my privilege was to look innocent and non-threatening. I get to move freely, from place to place, because of where and to whom I was born. I have no control or merit for my birthright, but I have the privilege to use it to interact more easily with systems of power.

How does my identity and ease of interaction with systems of power influence my work? It is easy as a white artist to feel one has the privilege to explore any idea of interest. I asked to make portraits of strangers in my neighborhood, surprised when they responded negatively. I engaged the French Police and Hungarian Military, only moderately concerned for my safety. In *White Fragility*, Robin Diangelo critiques the Western ideologies of individualism and objectivity. “Individualism holds that we are each unique and stand apart from others, even those within our social groups. Objectivity tells us that it is possible to be free of all bias.”¹⁷ Sometimes white artists trip over assumptions of individualism and objectivity when exploring

¹⁷ Robin Diangelo, *White Fragility*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 9.

work around race. Sam Durant's sculpture *Scaffold*,¹⁸ Dana Schutz' painting *Emmet Till*,¹⁹ and Kelly Walker's exhibition *Direct Drive*²⁰ all elicited public outcries for representing the history of marginalized people in their work. Protestors insisted the artists did not have the privilege to speak for individuals or collective histories they portrayed, and doing so transformed suffering into profit; white artists should not claim authority over experience they cannot understand.

Some of my work lives in the complex territory of racial and ethnic discrimination, and I wonder about ways I claim authority over experience I cannot understand. I get privilege and power with my white identity, and question my impulse to investigate the space between myself and others in relation to race. Is it possible to engage in meaningful dialogue and be sensitive to the limited scope of my authority? "To interrupt white fragility, we need to build our capacity to sustain the discomfort of not knowing, the discomfort of being racially unmoored, the discomfort of racial humility."²¹ For the sake of my children, my neighbors, and all my interpersonal relationships, I hope to better understand ways my race impacts connection and disconnection in the space between us, and to build capacity for discomfort and humility in my mistakes.

¹⁸ Liz Sawyer, "After outcry and protests, Walker Art Center will remove 'Scaffold' sculpture," Star Tribune, May 28, 2017, <http://m.startribune.com/walker-will-take-down-controversial-sculpture-after-protests/424820003/?section=local>.

¹⁹ Caitlin Gibson, "A white artist responds to the outcry over her controversial Emmett Till painting," Washington Post, March 23, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2017/03/23/dana-schutz-responds-to-outcry-over-her-controversial-emmett-till-painting/?utm_term=.c2ba7e6a3afc.

²⁰ Brian Boucher, "Artist's Depiction of Police Brutality Sparks Boycott at St. Louis Museum," ArtNet News, Sept 23, 2016, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/kelley-walker-st-louis-cam-boycott-667172>.

²¹ Robin Diangelo, *Ibid*, 14.

In my investigations into interpersonal space, I began to consider ways we are impacted by living in a state of disconnection. French anthropologist Marc Augé theorized non-place, a space of transience where humans remain anonymous. “If a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity will be a non-place.”²² Augé contends supermodernity has led to a proliferation of spaces without enough significance, purpose, or connection to be regarded as true places. Airports, highways, hotel rooms, and parking lots are some of his examples of non-place. Places are for people; they are destinations meant for connection. Non-places are built to move individuals through as efficiently as possible. I am interested in the relational disconnect implied in non-place. While inhabiting non-place, anonymity is ideal and there is no reason to connect. What is non-place as a state of being and not simply as a space to inhabit? More and more of human life seems to be moments to pass through rather than connect.

The assumption of non-place is that one has agency while in a temporary state of being. This assertion comes from a perspective of privilege. Augé qualifies the temporary-ness of non-place by saying that a non-place becomes place to a person who has reason to stay in the non-place: a shopping mall worker, for example. A person who has reason to be in non-place transforms it into place. Augé assumes agency of the part of an individual to determine whether a location is place or non-place. However, this claim comes with an implicit colonial perspective. His definition of place vs. non-place implies the participant has agency to define their surrounding as place or non-place. The option to stay or move is a privilege of the colonizer, traveler, or tourist. The choice to travel, relocate, or remain in place is reserved for

²² Marc Augé, *Non-Places, An Introduction to Supermodernity*, 2- Ed (London: Verso, 2006), 63.

those with enough money and power to do so. Systems of power set the standard for normalcy, and it is from this position Augé assumes the right to move from place to place. What about the international traveler detained for days in an airport holding room?²³ Or a homeless encampment along a highway?²⁴ Or immigrant children held indefinitely in detention centers?²⁵ The categorization of non-place is a privilege because choice of movement through space is a privilege. Freedom of movement may be on the United Nation Declaration of Human Rights,²⁶ but it is a privilege given to those whom systems of power deem worthy of that choice. The same way systems of power used racially restrictive covenants to determine who and where people were allowed to live in Minneapolis.

This support paper accompanies a thesis exhibition that investigates the relationship between waiting, agency, and power. I constructed a waiting room at the entrance to the gallery, where institutional chairs set with a coffee table and magazine rack. On the table lies a clipboard, inviting the participant-viewer to sign-in, consider what they are waiting for, and reflect on choices they have while waiting. The waiting room situates the gallery space with an inside and outside, and the participant-viewer moves between the two. An emergency exit and storage door occupy the far wall of the waiting room. Vinyl photographs stick to the doors, bringing attention to the exit, the world outside the gallery, and the artifice of the space.

²³ Benjamin Mueller and Matthew Rosenberg, "Disorder at Airports as Travelers Are Detained Without Lawyers," The New York Times, Jan 29, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/29/nyregion/airports-travelers-detained-executive-order-donald-trump.html>.

²⁴ Max Nesterak and Matt Sepic, "Minneapolis plans to close homeless camp once emergency shelter opens," MPR News, Nov 7, 2018, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2018/11/27/minneapolis-close-homeless-camp>.

²⁵ Caitlin Dickerson, "Detention of Migrant Children Has Skyrocketed to Highest Levels Ever," The New York Times, Sept 12, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/12/us/migrant-children-detention.html>

²⁶ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," The United Nations, accessed April 9, 2019, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

The images in the exhibition pair literal spaces with abstract images, creating unorthodox relationships about the complexity of waiting and its relationship with power and agency. For example, an image of empty chairs watching a board meeting on a tv screen (Figure 9) is paired with a tangled bramble of branches (Figure 8). The figures on the tv screen surround a large, elevated table, where the appointed board members make decisions for the people sitting below. The empty hall in which the watching chairs sit overlooks the vista outside the window, looking down from the place where decisions



Figure 8



Figure 9

are made. The carpet pattern formally mimics the tangle of branches in the nearby photograph, but also refers to the confusion and opaqueness of decision making. Not too far from this pair hangs the image of razor wire from the Hungarian Serbian border (Figure 10). The wire hangs in the door frame, marking the entrance into the space. At such close proximity the sharp wire



Figure 10

becomes a seductive curve, with light, color, and texture eliciting a confusing contrast to the violent, controlling intent of the form. The wire mirrors the shape of the branches and carpet on the nearby images and speaks to the seduction of letting others make

decisions, a critique of global border management and the violence of national control.

In another image pair a bench at City Hall (*Figure 11*) is paired with a view of dormant farmland (*Figure 12*). The City Hall bench, which also looks like a church pew, occupies a white marble-tiled room, with doors opening to an unknown room on the left of the frame. The light coming from the doorway is slightly more blue/green, adding an eerie glow from within the room. The space fluctuates between feeling religious and political, a sterile space waiting for moral

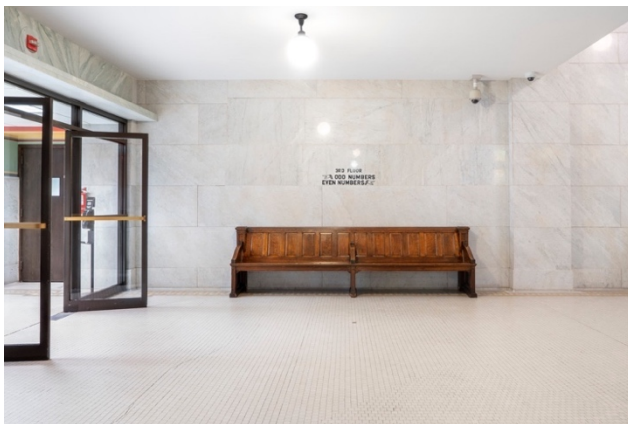


Figure 11



Figure 12

instruction, all while two small surveillance cameras watch quietly in the corner. In the image of farmland, the viewer occupies a vantage point high on a hill overlooking fields and small town in the distance below. On a clear day it is said that one can see three states from this spot. Prairie grass occupies the bottom of the image, offering the viewer a position of stable ground to enter the frame to observe and freely access the view. The land is highly organized and cultivated. Recently harvested, it is waiting to be tilled and prepared for the following year. The vantage point and organization of the fields

call to mind land ownership, colonization, and control. Dakota people roamed these prairies before my family cultivated them. The pairing of the City Hall bench with the farmland image refers to power, agency, and waiting through a conversation about manifest destiny and

American exceptionalism: the belief in laws and moral superiority to justify the European settlers' inevitable right to own and use the land.

I see the scope of this work as an investigation of interpersonal relationships. In *The Probable Trust Registry*, Adrian Piper invites participants to sign a series of contracts for ways to live in the world.²⁷ At the end of the project they receive the names of every signee; a new network for intentional living. Piper explores trust, interpersonal relationships, and individual responsibility, and I think back to the covenant: in which social contracts do we participate and why? My work asks many questions but does not offer answers because there are no simple answers. I prompt personal reflection from the viewer; a moment to question the how and why we navigate spaces of power and waiting. Is surrender a choice or necessity? What options are there for resistance? I am driven by questions about these moments that make up the psychological and constructed space that exists between all of us, and ultimately, by my own desire to belong. *I am always here, you are always there.*

²⁷ "Adrian Piper. The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game #1-3," Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, English Translation, accessed April 8, 2019, <https://www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/adrian-piper-the-probable-trust-registry-the-rules-of-the-game-1-3.html>.

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