



String and Tape , 2011, installation

Jeff Kulak /“String and Tape”

Exhibition: January 7 - February 21, 2015

Opening Reception: January 9, 2015, 8:00pm - 9:00pm

Artist Talk: January 9, 2015 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Alberta Printmakers' Artist Proof Gallery
4025 4 Street SE, Calgary AB

The briefest, most glancing analysis of contemporary drawing practice reveals the obvious variety of work exhibited under the name of "drawing", making it increasingly more difficult to define the term. Drawing is traditionally seen as the basis of visual communication, existing well before the written alphabet or culturally complex language. Within all of its many forms, the act of drawing retains the most basic systematic process: to observe, understand, and record. In his work, Jeff Kulak takes on the responsibility of facilitating the understanding of complex ideas through graphic, typographic, and pictorial elements.

His unconventional works challenge the public's preconceptions about which forms a drawing can take. The experimentation with composition resembles the organization of visual data in diagrams, mind-maps, and flow charts. The playful use of such alternative materials as string, tape, and vinyl adhesive brings the drawings into a three-dimensional space in which they must respond to the parameters of their environment, while retaining the two-dimensional characteristics of the geometrically linear, canonical drawing.

These materials betray the perfection of ideal geometry and impose an ephemeral, temporary nature on the work, which inspires the artist to further capture the effects of gravity and tension on his drawings.

String and Tape consists of four silkscreened prints, a site-specific installation, and a suite of photographs that describe the artist's unusual drawing process, which was developed over the course of three years. The subsequent photographing of his installations, digital re-creation, and silkscreening all point to an interest in documenting and lengthening the tenure of these temporary compositions. Taking the images further in these mediums extends the depth of play within the artistic practice, while simultaneously capturing the changes and physical decay of the dynamic drawings. Jeff Kulak has found a working method to create large scale drawings with minimal resources that challenges and extends the traditional concepts concerning the parameters of drawing.

Q: How did you begin making these experimental drawings, and what led you to utilize the printmaking process as a form of documentation for your installations?

A: I started making the drawings on my apartment walls and usually left them up for a few weeks before trying another composition. The tension of the string against the tape led to unpredictable changes in the form of the drawing over the course of its lifespan. Initially when I returned home to find a drawing had lost some of its structure, drooping or tangled into itself, I felt a disappointment at the loss of the precision of the original alignment. At some point I recognized this feeling of disappointment as something compelling and inherent to this method of playing with point and line.

The prints serve to document this transition from an initial, intentional composition towards a less controlled state. Using screen prints allowed me to overlay several states of the drawing very precisely, mapping the trajectory of form as it surrendered to gravity or more deliberate cutting and pulling. In turn, seeing the overlaid stages in the prints helped me understand the ways in which I could create the initial drawings with their eventual disintegration in mind.

Q: Your background in digital illustration and graphic design seems far removed from the tangible, material nature of this type of drawing. Do you believe these two fields to be disparate?

A: Finding a balance between the ability to rapidly experiment with alternatives on a computer and a more focused engagement with drawing and physical media is central to the way I approach my work. I think the string drawings tap into the desire to be exceedingly precise and are in many ways a lot like drawing with vectors on a computer. You can create long, straight lines and very accurate angles.

In a very concrete way, most of the images I produce digitally are born of a process identical to the way I would approach a silkscreen. In a print I have to be more economical in terms of layering, but when working digitally I often end up with images with a few hundred layers.

Scott Baird is a Canadian emerging artist working with socio-political themes in the fields of drawing and printmaking. While currently in his final year of BFA studies, he is employed as the Studio Director at Alberta Printmakers and has recently begun exhibiting his work in Canada, the United States, and abroad.

Jeff Kulak Bio

By trade and training Jeff Kulak is a graphic designer and illustrator. His responsibility in both roles is to facilitate understandings of complex ideas through the use of graphic, typographic and pictorial elements. Underlying his practice is an exploration of drawing as the basis for visual communication. What is a drawing? Where is its place today? How can it exist in the world in new ways?

He pursues responses to these questions through a process that incorporates chance, change, and a playful manipulation of common materials. Tape, string, adhesive vinyl, found paper and ink converge with digital and analogue printmaking techniques to create works that are mutable, impermanent and responsive to the physical parameters of their environment.



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