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Article abstract

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L'art d'Adrian Göllner repose sur la transposition d'un contenu artistique du passé au présent et à l'avenir. Son art conceptuel est solidement fondé sur la matérialité : il construit ainsi des appareils pour rendre ses concepts visibles. Afin d'explorer ses créations, nous invoquons les concepts du diagramme, de l'index, de la trace graphique et proposons la notion de l'indexicalité spéculative. Ces concepts, d'après les théories de Joselit, Meltzer, Buchloh, Krauss et Iversen, répondent de façon ambigüe à la division entre les arts et les sciences, l'objectivité et la spéculation, les connaissances et les sensations, ce pourquoi ils sont importants dans l'analyse de l'œuvre de cet artiste qui s'intéresse à l'histoire à travers une expression abstraite et conceptuelle. Les sujets des œuvres analysées ici touchent la bombe atomique, la réparation d'horloges anciennes, la musique pop des années 1960, l'archéoacoustique, et les blessures mortelles du général Wolfe.

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1. Here the diagram and the trace are related etymologically through *grapheme* in the case of the textual and visual diagrammatic visualization that relies on information display and *graphein*, or tracing with lines in the case of the indexical drawing that conveys a presence but no deliberate meaning.

Visualization, or graphic mediation through diagrams or traces,[1] is the key to unlocking the artefact-based conceptual works of Ottawa artist Adrian Göllner. Over the years, Göllner's eclectic body of work engaged in complex scenarios: manipulating a player piano to produce graphic traces and, in the process, casting a composer as an abstract artist (*Recent Drawings by George Gershwin*, 2011); plotting winning lotto numbers to create geometric wall pieces that sparked rumours of their capacity to predict future winning combinations (*Shape of Luck*, 2007–10); reflecting on municipal bureaucracy by designing stained glass in the form of abstract charts (*Org Chart*, 2001); experimenting with territorial settlement by remotely mapping architectural plans with the help of a robot (*Greylands*, 1999). These are just some examples linked by visualization of research data, representation of information, and production of sophisticated objects. Göllner's use of what could be called a diagrammatic visual rhetoric—intellectual, graphic, non-illusory representations—in the creation of his art is directed toward manufactured artefacts. The resulting operative device at the heart of his work is what I would call speculative indexicality. And it is through the concept of speculative indexicality that Göllner's work will be elucidated. If a diagram, a sub-category of the peircean icon, represents relations between things, and an index, a non-iconic sign, according to the same semiotic classification, conveys an actual connection to its object, the indexical speculative device in Göllner's work relies on a relation-based connective index that has been manufactured and imprinted onto an artefact resulting from a hypothetical premise. If a pure index points to an object and conveys no information about it, Göllner fills that gap with a compelling, if not convincing, fiction.

Göllner has been practicing art for three decades. His work is wide-ranging in scale (from public art works in the form of illuminated skyscrapers to small-scale abstract drawings) and multi-disciplinary (painting, drawing, sculpture, installations, found objects, video, and more recently, cast explosions) but always rooted in conceptualism. The conceptual dimension of his art does not circumscribe his expression to aporia, paradox, or irony. It allows him to investigate the force of history, the human charge of objects, and the chasm between objectivity and subjectivity. These aesthetic reflections cast his work in a seeming pragmatism that stems perhaps from his own military family tradition and the negotiation with society and history such a background triggers.
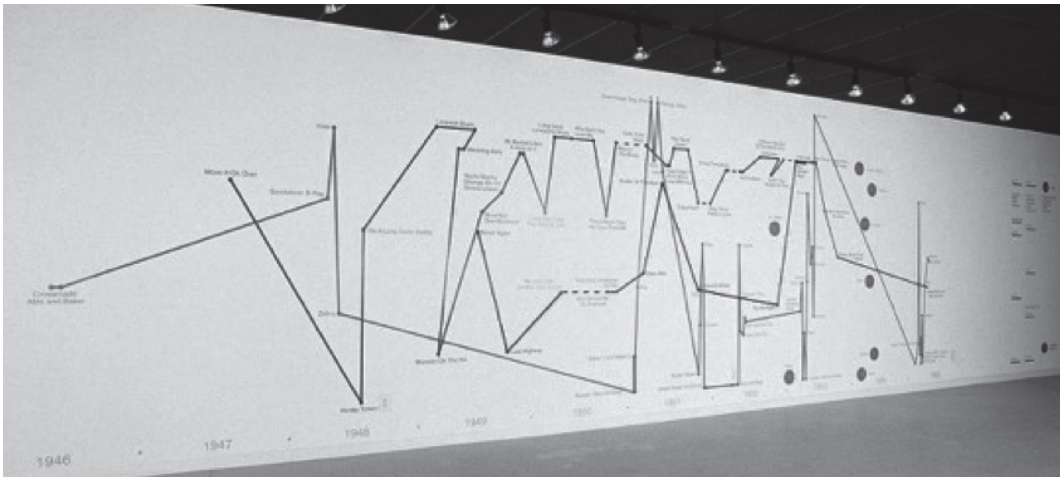
For the purpose of this paper, I will explore a limited number of works from Göllner's expansive and wide-ranging arsenal in the hope of tracing a path from works defined by visualization of information to those defined by a speculative historical orientation. First, I will focus on *No, No Joe* (2004), two wall-sized graphs explaining the relationship between Hank Williams's chart-topping hits starting in 1947 and the atomic bomb tests the US government carried out during the period Williams ruled the airwaves. *No, No Joe* exemplifies artwork as diagrammatic data visualization. But I will show, with the help of David Joselit, Eve Meltzer, and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, how the projected scientific objectivity of the diagram can easily be usurped since, as these art historians demonstrate, it is not devoid of an ideological dimension. Second, I will look at the concept of the index monumentalized by Rosalind Krauss through the linguistic theory of Roman Jakobson and C.S. Peirce, and the art of Marcel Duchamp. I will use Krauss's definition of the index to describe works by Göllner that rely on a physical trace to visualize its incorporeal cause, such as *Clock Drawings* (2009–11)—abstract line drawings made haphazardly by the unwinding mechanism of clocks—and *Norwegian Wood* (2012)—a series consisting of black-and-white seemingly minimalist drawings of concentric circles that are in fact traces left by the record grooves of Beatles songs translated onto paper. Even if the drawings of these two series consist of physical traces, they rely on the mediation of a mechanical device such as the clock's mechanism or a jerry-rigged record. The relationship between these works is surprising: they are meant to translate the essence of the person whose energy was imprinted in the original object, viz. the source of the drawing. Here we will see how the index is mediated by an artefact instead of being produced by the direct physicality of the perpetrator of the trace. Finally, I will look at two other works: *Vase Recordings* (2013–14)—pottery decorated with spiralling patterns which are actual recordings of sounds, readings, and noises—and *The Death of General Wolfe* (2015)—cast musket projectiles made to illustrate the fatal damage done to Wolfe's body famously captured by Benjamin West in a painting of the same name (1770). Here, the artist skews the

notion of the graphic trace toward a speculative device. The graphic trace, a notion developed by Margaret Iversen, refers to the process of visually documenting by diagrammatic means an indexical sign produced specifically by the presence of a body. By manufacturing, on the one hand, potentially, but not actually, audible archaeological prototypes and, on the other hand, by casting in resin the clay exploded by three musket balls possibly resembling the ones that long ago hit General Wolfe, Göllner creates speculative indexes: what if the vases really yielded sound in the future, what if the resin casts were an indexical companion piece to West's historic painting? The index is either made self-consciously in anticipation of its interpretation, as in the case of the *Vase Recordings*, or as an equivalency to an ideological object that challenges its documentary and cultural authority, as with *General Wolfe*.

In order to demonstrate the function of this specific brand of speculative indexicality, we need to look at the diagram, the index, and the graphic trace as reflected in Göllner's work; there, the manipulation of these visual categories revives an extinguished sense of history in the work through a new category of diagrammatic visualization that relies on the index and the concrete object.

To summarize at this early stage: a diagram has an objective appearance, but it can be usurped since it carries ideological baggage. The index is a sign that depends on its cause, the thing that created the indexical trace.[2] In some cases, the cause can be confirmed iconically, as is the case of a photographic index. In other cases, even though the indexical trace exists, say a shadowy silhouette, the cause can be a man or a man-shaped shrub, and therefore uncertain. The notion advanced by Iversen, the graphic trace, comes closest to describe Göllner's method: the index left by a body that is mediated through a diagrammatic objective graph. But in Göllner's case, we are not dealing with a trace left by an actual body but a manufactured trace, as for example in his *General Wolfe*. There, the cause, a musket ball, approximating the wounds to which the general succumbed, leaves a trace of cauliflowerous explosion which leads to a speculative assessment of an event itself iconographically represented in a painting fraught with conventionally typified ideological information. In what follows, I will chart the thread from diagram, to index, to graphic trace to reveal the concept of speculative indexicality.

The Ideology of the Diagram

The site-specific diagrammatic piece titled *No, No Joe* (2004) |**fig. 1**| refers to a song Hank Williams recorded in 1950 about Joseph Stalin's nuclear arsenal. It is the focal point around which elements such as the state of Tennessee, the hillbilly singer Williams, nuclear proliferation, and Göllner himself congregate. While the chart starts with the first A-bomb tests in 1946, the relationship between the place, the country star, and bomb testing kicks off in 1947. It is the year Williams was in Nashville pitching a radio show and the Doomsday Clock was activated by the scientific community in order to comment on the escalating tension between the two sides of the Iron Curtain. It also helps that the A-bomb was made near Nashville, in Oak Ridge.[3]

No, No Joe relies on coincidences: Göllner in Nashville, Williams in Nashville, the A-bomb near Nashville, Williams singing about nuclear proliferation, and the markedly symbolic implementation of the Doomsday Clock. Göllner creates

2. Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America," *October* 3 (1977), 70.

3. Adrian Göllner, "No, No Joe," *Drain Magazine* 6, 1 (2009); drainmag. com/index_col.htm?http://drain-mag.com/ContentCOLD/Artist/Gollner/Gollner.html.

a work that illustrates a part of history through an outwardly coincidental pairing. Yet Göllner makes this pairing through the conventions of diagrammatic visualization: the authority of the patterns seemingly testifies to a logical correlation between Williams and the Cold War, or country music and the A-bomb.

But, as the artist explains, the resulting graphic display serves to underscore the relationship between the personal and the global, or, more precisely, the anxiety paramount to a style of music and the anxiety of an era, both confronted to a sense of mortality albeit of a different scale.[4] The power of the ostensibly objective diagram becomes apparent when recording a personal journey of an individual in relation to greater events. But this power risks being usurped from the inside.

Joselit, Meltzer, and Buchloh have commented on the politically subversive nature of the diagrammatic display in the visual arts, especially in relation to the established world order. Joselit describes the state of contemporary art and the prevalence of an international conceptualism in which the concept of the aggregator is operative. Not that it comes without its ideological baggage (multitude, Marxism, globalization). One could see that Göllner's work functions according to this aggregating principle: even though his visual display is in line with the "pseudo-scientific" and bureaucratic techniques it seeks to emulate (that Joselit associates with Hans Haacke, Lawrence Weiner, and the art of the 1970s), it is also a functional way of making sense of disparate information and of organizing data.[5] And therefore the graphic diagram as aggregator is wholly contemporary because it is itself a way of wading into an ocean of information. Yet even the root of the artistic diagram that Joselit digs up already comprises an ideological dimension.

Joselit traces the source of the art diagram to Dada publications. He explains that artists like Francis Picabia, through the device of the diagram—a term Joselit uses to designates a representation that is part visual and part textual—were able to connect polymorphous elements reflecting the industrial zeitgeist of the early twentieth century while retaining the fragmentary aspect of experience and thus avoiding a definitive meaning. It is not necessarily the visual trope of machine-part representations Picabia is known for that achieves this diagrammatic visual paradox. *Portrait of a Young American Girl in the State of Nudity* (1915), for example, in which the American Girl is in fact a single sparkplug lifted from a trade magazine, is fragmentary but lacks the very important element of connectivity. The very joints between visual and textual elements, the paradoxically fragmentary connectivity seen between lines and letters in black and white drawings published in the pages of *391* magazine, fit the bill. Connectivity is a feature of the diagram ascribed to it by Peirce.[6] Joselit argues that at its origin, there is an instability in the connective function of the diagram "the model of polymorphous connectivity between discrete elements that these works deploy in order to capture the uneven economic and psychological transformations and the jarring disequilibrium characteristic of modernity."[7] For him, the origin of the Dada diagram is, in turn, found in cubist facets—while they are meant to be representational of time in a static medium, they are set in motion through a diagrammatic relationality: "In other words, the diagram reconnects the disconnected fragments of representation invented by cubism. This act of reconnection

4. Göllner, "No, No Joe."
5. David Joselit, "On Aggregators," *October* 146 (Fall 2013), 10.
6. C.S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs" (1902), in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York, 1955), 105, 108.
7. David Joselit, "Dada's Diagram," in *The Dada Seminar*, ed. Leah Dickerman and Matthew S. Witkovsky (Washington, 2005), 232.

does not function as a return to coherence, but rather as a free play of polymorphous linkages, which, to this day remains a central motif of modern (and postmodern) art."[8] In a similar fashion, Göllner aggregates heterogeneous elements (hit songs and atom bombs) in order to demonstrate the jarringly incommensurate relationship between these two human activities over time, all seemingly scientifically connected through the aesthetic of the graph. Joselit explains how the connection between the seemingly incompatible superimposition of a drawing of a vague machine onto a grid organizing writing—in the specific case of Dada artistic diagrams—results in a conflation of diachronous and synchronous representations: one is a (metaphorically) temporalizing representation and the other spatializes relations between written terms.[9] The incommensurability of the connection between sign and meaning through a synchronous and diachronous incompatibility is made elsewhere in the guise, for example, of a modernist-inspired postmodern allegory that favours heterogeneous multiplicity and jettisons any univocity of meaning so extremely as to fossilize signs as runes.[10] But what matters for Joselit's Dada diagram is the multiplicity of abstract layers that are glossed over through the arrangement of polymorphous information:

> The diagrammatic ... emphasizes pure relationality *between* things rather than directly assaulting their objectivity. Diagrammatic visuality produces an interstitial space—a space of the cut like the joins between pictures in a montage, or the *infrathin* boundary between a readymade and its recordings. It seeks to stabilize and visualize Dada's physical and conceptual principle of commodity fission.[11]

This resistance to the commodity is one of the politics of the Dada diagram. There is a level of suspicion arising from the flexibility and the open-endedness of the diagram and this fractured trust runs along a multidisciplinary divide.[12] Enlisting Brian Rotman—who explores the relationship between science and imagination—to guide us along the faulty ridge, Joselit explains that for scientists, diagrams are "insufficiently formalized and dangerously susceptible to subjective interpretation and, conversely (if paradoxically), for the humanist they are tainted by their association with science and its faith in universal truth."[13] The relationship of the viewer or artist to a visual device that invites subjective interpretation while claiming objective authority is fraught with tension.

In *Systems We Have Loved*, Eve Meltzer examines the same kind of tension that surrounds the notion of structure in documentation art. She describes the discomfort that comes from dealing with grids, data, and systems within a post-industrial society. The diagram, having originated in an environment of industrial alienation, resurges in a space of documents, statistics, and regulations. Meltzer explains how this type of visual rhetoric of diagrammatic structures addressing visual and textual information in a way that does not involve illusory representation creates an uneasiness often associated with structuralism's perceived antihumanist bend. But this type of visual rhetorical device also has its seductive aspect. Meltzer uses Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (1973–79) as a case in point. She explains that even though Kelly's masterpiece appears cold in its systematicity, it is nevertheless enchanting on the level of documentary obsessiveness: "[T]he appearance of so many scientific discourses and diagrammatic aesthetics seems disaffected, dry, and intellectually

8. Joselit, "Dada's Diagram," 232.
9. Ibid., 233–34.
10. Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *October* 12 (Spring 1980), 70.
11. Joselit, "Dada's Diagram," 234. Emphasis in the original.
12. Ibid., 236.
13. Ibid., 236.

distant," Meltzer writes, "especially given that the artist's son is the subject of her work." She then adds, "At the same time, what these affects ultimately reveal is the artist's profound and rather amorous attachment to those rhetorics themselves."[14] Just like the flipside suggested by Joselit, there is, according to Meltzer, an attraction to systematic annotation of personal experience. What is clear here is the affective as well as rhetorical paradox in the use of diagrams in the production of images based on information.

The rift between the trace and the diagram is a dialectical opposition stemming from cubism, according to Joselit or, as Buchloh puts it in an essay dedicated to Eva Hesse, between "the authentic corporeal trace and the externally established matrix."[15] This division is exploited to varying degrees by Göllner, Kelly, and Hesse. Buchloh continues with his categorization of types of drawings to demonstrate the yin/yang of drawing established by Joselit and Meltzer:

> The opposition between drawing as desire for another corporeality and drawing as self-critical subjection to pre-existing formal or linguistic conventions, between drawing as voluntaristic self-deception (about the availability of unfettered subjective expression, for example) and drawing as voluntary self-defeat (driven by the insurmountability of the pervasive control of even the most microscopic gesture) has determined the artistic stances towards the *grapheme*.[16]

In fact, Göllner's approach to the trace gravitates close to the body and pushes away from drawing strictly speaking. But to continue with the idea of a resistance politics of the diagram, Buchloh explains how the diagrammatic is the subversive element within the ranks of abstraction: "the diagram added a dissenting voice to the heroic chorus of abstraction, one announcing—eventually aesthetically—the disenchantment of the world and total subjection of the body and its representations to legal and administrative control."[17] This dissenting voice can be peered through the diagrammatic lines that Göllner is tracing, tongue in cheek, while comparing top-forty country music hits to atomic bomb tests in the US.

The time-line of *No, No Joe* starts in 1946 with Operation Crossroads, which took place at Bikini Atoll and consisted of two tests: *Able* in which a bomb named *Gilda* was detonated, and *Baker*, in which a bomb named *Helen of Bikini* exploded and caused large-scale underwater contamination.[18] This begins the orange line of the chart. The green line starts with *Move It On Over* released by Hank Williams in June 1947. Nuclear tests and Williams will reunite only with Williams's protest song about Stalin in 1950.[19] Then, it is up to the chart to trace the relationship between the local and the global. The work consists of two graphs. *Graph 1* | **fig. 2** | shows a flow chart of green and orange and is described thusly by Göllner: "The orange line shows the strength and occurrence of A-Bomb test between 1946 and 1955. The medium green line and dark green line show chart position of the A-side singles and B-side singles, respectively. The larger orange circles indicate H-Bomb testing."[20] *Graph 2*, | **fig. 3** | on the other wall, resembles a series of block-quotes scattered across the wall, the field punctuated by three orange clocks: "On the facing wall in orange, incidents that heightened or decreased tensions in the Cold War and caused the Doomsday Clock to be reset are shown. Set amongst this timeline are incidents in Williams' life in green text. Positive incidents in Williams' life are higher on the graph and vice versa."[21] The two elements, bombs and songs, are a speculative fusion of the time and space.

14. Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago, 2013), 12.

15. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram," in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (New York, 2006), 117.

16. Ibid., 117.

17. Ibid., 119.

18. Jonathan M. Weisgall, *Operation Crossroads: The Atomic Tests at Bikini Atoll* (Annapolis, 1994), 264–65.

19. The novelty song *No, No Joe* was recorded by Hank Williams, but under the name Luke the Drifter. In country music there was a tradition of moralistic narrations—more sermon than singing—but this differed too much from the sound that was now identified as Hank Williams, so a pseudonym was used. Note from the artist, email exchange with the author, April 18, 2017.

20. Adrian Göllner, artist website: http://adriangollner.ca/?p=131.

21. Ibid.

Figure 2. Adrian Göllner, *No, No Joe*, 2004 (*Graph 1*: wall text). Photo: courtesy of the artist.

In the case of *No, No Joe*, the diagrammatic visuals facilitates the aggregation of differing, coincidental material, but the systematic aspect of the information makes a poignant statement about historical darkness and personal demons, and seems to give quasi-scientific perceived distance to events that are closer in time than we think or feel.

Index and Essence

Another foray into the aesthetics of timekeeping is Göllner's series of *Clock Drawings* (2009–11), which bridge vast time periods with the economy of the drawn line. Consisting of time-piece experiments, these drawings are the indexical remnants of energy that has been stored in the mechanism of the clock. Even though the index and diagram—both non-illusory, non-figurative representations—belong to different semiotic categories for Peirce, here, the index operates at the etymological root of diagram, as Buchloh has mentioned, *grapheme*—the shortest unit of writing—the root of which is *graphein*—marked out by lines. In one instance, *A Recent 23.3 Hour Drawing by Someone Who Likely Died a Long Time Ago* (2009), |**fig. 4**| Göllner takes apart the mechanism of a 1934 Westclox Big Ben Chime Alarm and attaches a pencil lead to it. Noticing that at the time of its purchase at a farmhouse yard sale, the clock was already wound,[22] the artist consequently imagines that the energy stored in the spring belongs to the farmer's wife who wound it seventy years ago. He then constructs a device to record the force in the mechanism onto a page by having the clock trace a careful circle as its energy dissipates from the circular spring. In another work, *Possibly the Last of Bill Tets, Clock Repairman* (2009), |**fig. 5**| the artist bases himself on the 77-year-old signature inside an old cooper clock to attribute the energy in the mechanism to a man called Bill Tets, and releases the wound up alarm spring on carbon paper, which it nervously stabs, resulting in a drawing of scribbled abstractions. Still another drawing, *Trail of a Peg Leg American* (2009), |**fig. 6**| is made by the thumping alarm hammer of a depression-era Westclox on carbon paper, tracing two graph-like dotted lines; one zigzagging downward and the other sloping away from the first. These drawings are made to reflect the energy remaining in the mechanism of the clock, allowing the artist to create scenarios based on physical recordings through unusual artistic devices.

Peirce argued for an unconventional concept he called abduction, which functions, analogically speaking, like Göllner's clockworks releasing stored

22. Göllner points out that the clock was "over-wound" when he found it in a drawer at an estate sale. He suspects that the farmer's wife (since it was an almond-and-gold variation on the model that was marketed to the "woman of the household") over-wound the clock. Göllner explains, "Over-winding occurs when someone winds the clock spring so tightly that it will no longer run." The artist used a clock that was over-wound because it "greatly increased the chance that the kinetic energy stored in the clock springs was genuinely old." Göllner in email exchange with the author, April 18, 2017.
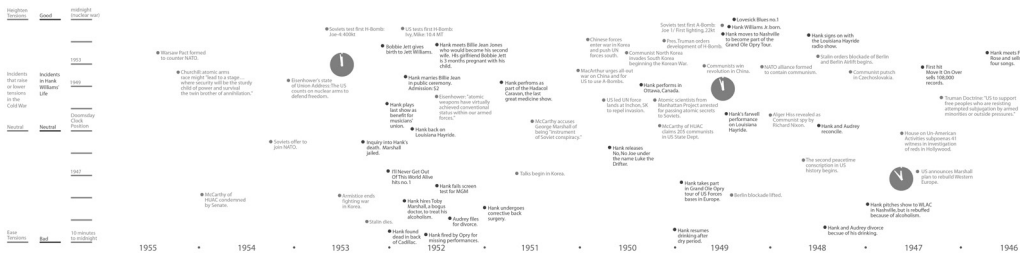
Figure 3. Adrian Göllner, *No, No Joe*, 2004 (*Graph 2*: wall text). Photo: courtesy of the artist.

energy: peircean abduction is a bringing together of elements that are part of a "conception already stored in our mind."[23] It is of course a coincidence that it originates with Peirce's own gold watch. It has been argued that Peirce's semiotics are not suitable for visual and cultural analysis: "The visuality Peirce saw as characteristic of his own mind was grounded in the graphic representation of thoughts and arguments and in diagramming relations among them. From his earliest years to his last, he developed and employed totalizing systems for visualizing ideas and their relations."[24] But beyond the fact that Peirce calls himself an "ignoramus" in the domain of aesthetics,[25] and that his semiotic categories are nevertheless important for our analysis,[26] abduction reveals itself to be more than an apocryphal concept coincidentally related to clocks: it is a source for the notion of speculation in art. The term is associated with the episode in which Peirce's watch was stolen while on a boat crossing. He asked for the crewmen to be called on the deck and to stand in line for his scrutiny. With nothing to go on, Peirce was able to point to one particular crewman.

> When I had gone through the row, I turned and walked from them, though not away, and said to myself: "Not the least scintilla of light have I got to go upon". But thereupon my other self (for our own communings are always in dialogues) said to me, "but you simply must put your finger on the man. No matter if you have no reason, you must say whom you think to be the thief". I made a little loop in my walk, which had not taken a minute, and I turned toward them, all shadow of doubt had vanished.[27]

Of course, the sailor denied it, but Peirce had him followed, found the watch in a pawnshop, and proved he had his man. The pressure bottled up at the moment of the pivot made him point to the right person. More and more the notion of abduction is associated with creative potential.[28] Göllner's *Clock Drawings* signal a type of creative invocation of an energy that has been stored within the mechanism of a perfectly tightened metaphorical device—a connection between indexicality and potentiality. And, as in Peirce's case, the results of the *Clock Drawings* depend on Göllner's agency to point to, and later fill in, the blanks of the index's cause.

The agency at work in Göllner's speculative origin stories related to the index's cause also follows a rift between objective and subjective trace similar to the tense dichotomy of the diagram. Contrary to Peirce's inclination, Göllner's concept of the index is geared toward art. It is first revised by Krauss for its shifter function, and then later by Iversen, in her analysis of semiotics through her concept of the graphic trace. I believe that the clock pieces set the

23. C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, volumes 1 to 6 ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, MA, 1931–35), volumes 7 and 8 ed. A. Burks (Cambridge, MA, 1958), vol. 2, p. 776, cited in N. Rescher, *Peirce and the Philosophy of Science* (Notre Dame, IN, 1978), 42; and in Hans Hansen, "Abduction," *The SAGE Handbook of New Approaches in Management and Organization*, ed. David Barry and Hans Hansen (London, 2008), doi: 10.4135/9781849200394.n77.

24. Michael Leja, "Peirce, Visuality, and Art," *Representations* 72 (Autumn- 2000), 98.

25. Ibid., 120n9.

26. Ibid., 100. "His description of three kinds of relations between signs and their objects (index, icon, and symbol) has been isolated from the rest of his semiotics. The later, more analytically precise and complex discriminations (rhematic iconic qualisign, dicentic indexical sinsign, and so forth) have not appealed to analysts of visual culture."

27. C.S. Peirce, quoted in Jo Reichertz, "Abduction: The Logic of Discovery of Grounded Theory," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 11, 1 (2009), [paragraph 13], http://nbnresolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1001135.

28. Reichertz, "Abduction," [15].

tone for the works by Göllner that I analyze here through some revisited, refurbished, and recast semiotics of the index, spring-loaded to be aimed toward an expanded conceptual art that depends on the physicality of the material trace.

In "Notes on the Index," Krauss traces the root of the "willful eclecticism"[29] of art in the 1970s. It stems from photography as an indexical medium and indexicality as the cornerstone of Duchamp's precedent-setting work.[30] She weaves a tight knot around two concepts: shifter and index, both located in Duchamp *Tu m'* (1918). Instead of the scatological expression after which Duchamp was reputed to have titled his last painting (*tu m'enmerdes*, you're pissing me off, aimed at Katherine Drier who commissioned a painting from
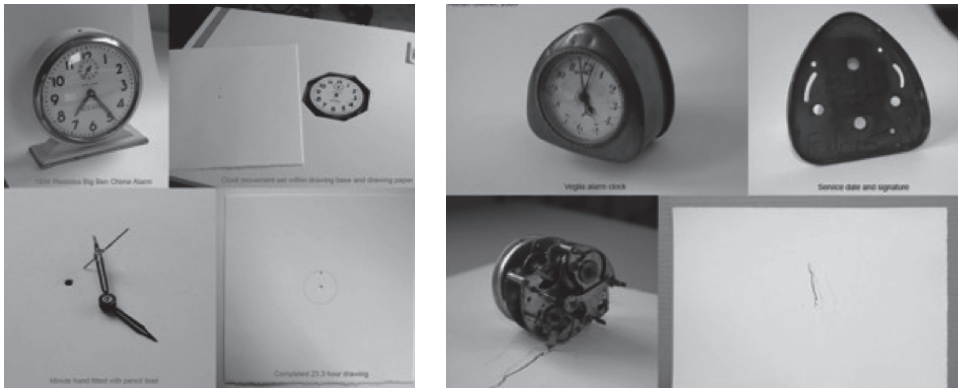
Duchamp even after he insisted he would not paint anymore, and requested specific measurements to fit over her bookcase, further constraining his artistic freedom to choose, to which he devoted the famous *Blind Man* article), Krauss reads the two pronouns of the title as "'you'/'me'"[31] and shows how it is reflective of Roman Jakobson's linguistic category of the shifter, an empty sign pregnant with signification. The shifter can mean anything and must be attached to an actual object: you point to it (like the hand in Duchamp's painting is pointing to the surface of "this" painting). Why the personal pronouns as shifters? Because their referents keep switching: "I am the referent of 'I' only when I am the one who is speaking. When it is your turn, it belongs to you."[32] And why are pronouns important shifters? Because they are indexical:

> As distinct from symbols, indexes establish their meaning along the axis of a physical relationship to their referents. They are the marks or traces of a particular cause, and that cause is the thing to which they refer, the object they signify. Into the category of the index, we would place physical traces (like footprints), medical symptoms, or the actual referents of the shifters. Cast shadows could also serve as the indexical signs of objects.[33]

That is why Krauss calls Duchamp's *Tu m'* "a panorama of the index."[34] While the painting is a collection of some of his ready-mades, they are not directly represented; rather it is their shadowy projections that are depicted. The index trace of the object and not the object itself is represented on the surface of the painting. Krauss sees in Duchamp an important display of the indexical element that will come to define the pluralistic art of the 1970s. She summarizes the issue of indexicality in art thusly: Duchamp's art "serves as a matrix for a related set of

29. Krauss, "Notes," 68.
30. Ibid., 71.
31. Ibid., 71.
32. Ibid., 69.
33. Ibid., 70.
34. Ibid., 70.

ideas which connect to one another through the axis of the index."[35] His paint-
ing is in effect a (connective) diagram of indexes. But even here, the ideological
suspicion lurking within the diagram has a resurgence: "The confusion in the
shifter couples then with another kind of breakdown, as form begins to erode
the certainty of content."[36] And if for Krauss the shifter as index is on some
level responsible for destabilizing the content of the work of art so important
to postmodernism, this corroded relationship is not emblematic of Göllner's
work. Yes, Göllner exploits the blank space of the cause in the shifter-index
duality, but his approach camouflages ambivalence with an assertiveness, even
if fictitious, grounded in his confirmed artistic research method. In fact, even if

**Figure 4 (facing page, left).
Adrian Göllner,** *A recent 23.3 hour
drawing by someone who likely died
a long time ago***, 2009. Graphite on
paper, 33 × 33 cm.** Photo: courtesy
of the artist.

**Figure 5 (facing page, right).
Adrian Göllner,** *Possible the
last of Bill Tets, clock repairman***,
2009. Carbon paper drawing,
25.4 × 33 cm.** Photo: courtesy
of the artist.

Figure 6 (right). Adrian Göllner,
*Trail of a Peg Leg American***, 2009.
Carbon paper transfer on paper,
38.1 × 55.9 cm.** Photo: courtesy
of the artist.
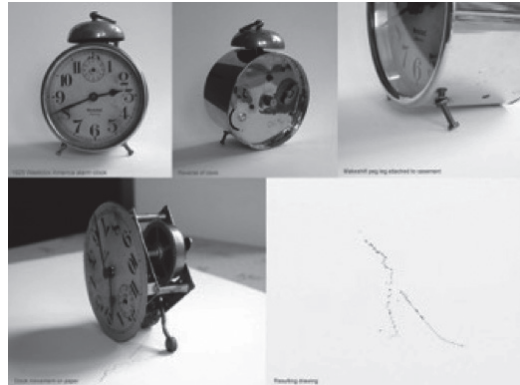
chance, accident, and the incidental are explored through the index, the appar-
atus that has created the imprimatur is clearly demonstrated, methodically
researched, and meticulously constructed by the artist (as seen, for example,
in his "how-to" videos). If Krauss's shifter locates the contentious place in an
indexical trace that leaves itself open to artful speculations, it is Iversen's con-
cept of the graphic trace that legitimizes, however contentiously, the specula-
tive cause of the indexical trace fabricated by the artist.

It is certainly coincidental that Krauss discusses the erosion of faith in the
content of diagrammatic art by relying on a particular example of Duchamp's
oeuvre: *Machine Optique* (1920), a black and white revolving disk. Or more pre-
cisely a white disk with spiralling but slightly askance concentric black cir-
cles. This pattern was used by Duchamp in his *Anémic cinéma* (1926), *Roto-Reliefs*
(1935), and *Rotary Glass Plates (Precision Optics)* (1920). A similar configuration,
with some variations, re-emerges in Göllner's vinyl-record inspired designs
that make up the *Norwegian Wood* series. Can the analogy be solidified by saying
that Duchamp envisioned his spiralling patterns to work on turntables? And
so, transitioning away from Duchamp's record-compatible designs we will
see how the concept of the index plays out in the record-deriving patterns of
Göllner's *Norwegian Wood*.

Norwegian Wood refers to a Beatles song in which a rejected John Lennon sets
fire to the room of a woman who invited him over to spend the night but put
the brakes on any activity beyond talking. The drawings play on the double
indexical nature of the word record: the analog nature of the disk and the visual

35. Ibid., 71.
36. Ibid., 72.

recording that Göllner makes. Göllner's work recreates, rescues, or conjures up past mechanized processes in order to submit them to our immediate present, or an imagined distant future—old things new again and again.

Like with his clock drawings, something of the essence of the past is exhumed through an indexical mechanism: Göllner speculates that Lennon's loneliness, palpable during the recording session, manifests itself in these drawings. In them, Göllner reconfigured a turntable in order to translate the vibrations of the needle onto velum. He explains that he did this so as to give form to Lennon's feelings etched onto the surface of his old Beatles albums. Each ink drawing consists of concentric circles resembling the grooves of a record. They are hypnotic, recalling OpArt of the 1960s as well as Jasper Johns's more ghostly *Target* paintings. Despite these references—observable in the elegant simplicity of the reoccurring shapes of the series which open themselves to speculative interpretation in the fashion of abstract art—Göllner's drawings are essentially a conceptual endeavour. A conceptual process linking precise drawings to an emotional charge scratched onto wax. One can read the cloud of blankness amid the field of concentric lines of *Across the Universe* | **fig. 7** | as a nebula reflecting back the title of the work; the staccato lines that make up half of *Come Together* seem to come into focus on the other half of the disk; even the spare and wavering lines of *Help* seem to be illustrative of the work's title. But the title did not come after the work was done. The circles and their pattern are a direct result of the pattern of sounds etched into the records containing the songs. The title does not serve as an interpretation of the visual pattern, but simply an indication of the source of the pattern.

We can also look at the works as abstractions bearing witness to the process of analogy. Here, Göllner seems to have tapped into a pure type of analogy by making his process of moving from one medium, music, to another, drawing, through such a fantastically arbitrary process. Brian Massumi's explanation of a pure analog process seems apt in the case of Göllner's works: "This is the analog in a sense close to the technical meaning, as a continuously variable impulse or momentum that can cross from one qualitatively different medium into another."[37] It is this abstract process that Göllner seems to have captured in his series. Not images about the thing but the thing itself, to paraphrase Wallace Stevens.[38] If Göllner's *Norwegian Wood* drawings articulate the poetics of the analog, they are also reflective of a mechanical process, and so these works focus on the concept of the index as explained by Peirce. Part of his semiotic triad of icon, symbol, and index, the latter sign indicates an individual occurrence, a prior presence which is manifest in its indexical signs; in this case the circular drawings demonstrate that there were grooves on a record, they themselves an index of the studio presence of musicians. But Göllner, by making his index an aesthetic object endowed with its own sense of arbitrary usefulness—especially when considering the fact that he tries to capture Lennon's lonely essence—deconstructs the chain of indexes. For Peirce, the index is necessarily involved with an order, a firstness (wind) producing a sign (a shifting weathercock).[39] Göllner scrambles the order of the index by creating his own conceptual ground for the translation of grooves into circles. The *Norwegian Wood* series is a self-reflexive play on signs and trans-mediation but it is also a haunting and expressive exploration of the translation of artistic content.

37. Brian Massumi, "On the Superiority of the Analog," in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, 2002), 135.

38. Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (London, 1955), 534.

39. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic," 109.

Speculative Indexicality

The concentric circle *idée fixe* is carried as a motif to a wholly other medium: pottery. Göllner's vases were made in anticipation of future archaeology: the concentric lines of each vase are actually very much like the grooves of a musical record—a needle engraving sounds in the hope of being deciphered in an upcoming time when they can be played back, instead of studied, by archaeologists. A chronological scrambling and semiotic playfulness is also an important part of the *Vase Recordings* (2013) which were created in collaboration with Carolynn Pynn-Trudeau. This series borrows from the record-making process: Göllner created a homemade machine with which to etch spiralling lines around each red earthenware vase. E ach line, like a groove on a record, carries sound into the surface of the vase the way Thomas Edison first experimented with his wax cylinder. The vases, however, have a certain postmodern quality despite their decidedly ancient style and form. Some vases' titles indicate the solemnity, if self-referential, of the content of the recording: *Urn with Recitation of Keats' Ode to a Grecian Urn* |**fig. 8**| or *Vase with Hebrew Wine Blessing*. Others have apparently trivial or random sounds scratched onto their surfaces like *Vase with Sound of Dog Barking* or *Vase with Sound of Coughing Man*. |**fig.9**| These sounds will presumably be elevated when they are

discovered by future archaeologists, appreciating the slice of past life contained in those lines. The concept of recording for the purposes of archaeology came to Göllner when he heard of an archaeologist explaining the possibility of listening to ancient pottery. He speculated that the sounds being made at the time ancient vases were being wrought would have transferred onto the surface much like a musical record. In fact, experiments from the 1960s made by Richard G. Woodbridge III and, more recently, Paul Åström and Mendel Kleiner have demonstrated that this process, of trying to replay vases in the hopes of reading the background sounds heard at the moment of pottery throwing, is no more than wishful thinking.[40] The possibility resides in the two-way street of intentionality: the message would have to be made intentionally in order to be heard on the other end. In Göllner's case, this idea is saturated with a Duchampian kind of ready-made quality: he made sure his vases had a specific content ready for potential discovery. These pottery works transcend the austerity of conceptual art's complexity necessarily reflected in his works and partake in the playfulness of signs of time, both past and future.

The notion of recording comes to animate yet another variation on the trace. In her "Index, Diagram, Graphic Trace," Iversen explains the hybridity of the graphic trace, a type of representation composed of both diagrammatic and indexical elements.[41] The introduction to her essay is interesting for the purposes of analyzing visual art with an inscribed audio component. She describes how the young Rainer Maria Rilke discovered "a new and infinitely delicate point in the texture of reality" when he was introduced to the principle of phonographic recording in his physics class:

Figure 8 (below, left). Adrian Göllner, *Urn with Recitation of Keats' Ode to a Grecian Urn*, 2013–14. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

Figure 9 (below, right). Adrian Göllner, *Vase with sound of Coughing Man*, 2013–14. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

The children made a funnel of cardboard that was closed at the small end with some paper through which they stuck a bristle from a brush. This receiver was then put in contact with a cylinder covered in wax that could be rotated with a handle. They spoke into the funnel, causing the paper to vibrate and the needle to incise an irregular fine line in the receptive, rotating surface of the cylinder. This wavy mark in the wax was then fixed with varnish, at which point the students were able to reverse the process, playing back the recording with the needle and listening intently to their voices through the funnel.[42]

More sophisticated but made on a less receptive surface, Göllner's recordings follow the same principle as Rilke described. Iversen, however, sees the young poet's enchantment with the process of sound recording as associated with the graphic traces he saw engraved on the surface of the cylinder. She explains how this image of the needle reading the lines and playing back the recorded voices would come back to him during another lesson, this time while he was studying anatomy. The coronal sutures on a skull reminded Rilke of the scratched cylinder from physics class. He started imagining what kind of sound these might produce since they were not caused by an audible source from the outset. In a sort of audio-visual synaesthesia, each line would have the potential of playing back some sort of "melody of things" which in turn, as Iversen says, would open up to "an audible unconscious."[43] Which brings us back to archaeoacoustics and the phenomenon of listening to the grooves in pottery—and even the sound in brush strokes on oil paintings have been scrutinized[44]—like the phonograph cylinder that so enchanted Rilke.

What Göllner is capitalizing on is the "actual contact" between the object and the trace: the object is absent and the trace, while present and observable, bears witness to the absence of the object.[45] Iversen draws the direct link to the past as she summons Mary Ann Doane, who states that, "The trace does not evaporate in the moment of its production, but remains as the witness to an anteriority."[46] It is with this opening, the potential cause of the trace as shifter, that Göllner, with his meticulous research methods, is able to create a sense of actuality from the past. This involves the speculative indexicality at the basis of Göllner's anticipatory archaeology.

Or we could call it fictitious archaeology in yet another speculative work that relies on a produced artefact. In *The Death of General Wolfe*, |**fig. 10**| Göllner is extracting, conceptually, the bullets that would have hit the titular target, and thus bear "witness to an anteriority."[47] These cast musket explosions have their own sculptural presence. Their ballistic quality captured in mid-air is preserved on long pipes attached to the gallery wall. The work puts the viewer in the midst of danger while providing the possibility of contemplating bullets in flight. The artist here shot musket rounds into a drum of clay, in controlled conditions, and cast the shape, created by the exploding shrapnel, in resin. Mounted horizontally on steel poles, the resulting sculpture gives the impression of a paused forensic visualization. Göllner's way of producing this work can be jarring not just in this context but any context. It recalls the nihilistic violence of William S. Burroughs's shotgun paintings. Yet here the process is controlled and scientific; only the result is explosive. The cast explosions contrast with the calm scene of a neo-classical painting that inspired Göllner's work and the swaggering action of gun play.

What is also revelatory is the damage that these musket rounds would have inflicted: they have been captured here in resin and their explosive trajectory

40. Richard G. Woodbridge III, "Acoustic Recordings from Antiquity," *Proceedings of the IEEE 8* (August 1969), 1465–66; Mendel Kleiner and Paul Åström, "The Brittle Sound of Ceramics—Can Vases Speak?," *Archeology and Natural Science* 1 (1993): 66–72.

41. Margaret Iversen, "Index, Diagram, Graphic Trace," *Tate Papers* 18 (Autumn 2012), www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/18/index-diagram-graphic-trace.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Woodbridge, "Acoustic," 1466; Kleiner & Åström, "Brittle Sound," 66.

45. Iversen, "Index."

46. Mary Ann Doane, "Indexicality and the Concept of Medium Specificity," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18, 1 (Spring 2007), 136, cited by Iversen, "Index."

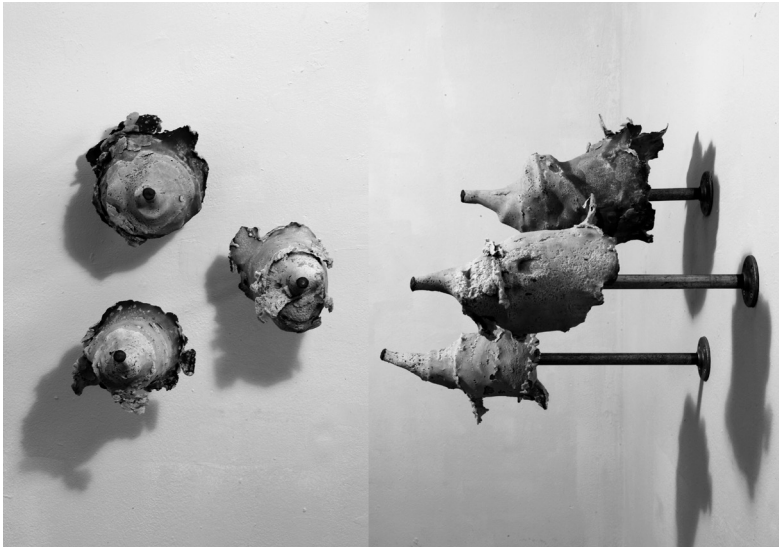47. Doane, "Indexicality," in Iversen, "Index."

needs only to be transposed analogically across time to the body of Wolfe. Of course, the damage done to flesh would have been chaotic, revising instantly Wolfe's angelically calm pietà pose in West's painting. |**fig. 11**| In an analysis of West's work, the consideration for historical accuracy and the ideological dimension the painting inevitably carries, take centre stage: "Wolfe, the promising young officer, instantly became the embodiment of a growing, triumphant imperial Britain: its emerging values of nationalism and patriotism, its mercantile and military successes, as well as its perceived unlimited potential for the future."[48] The swiftness with which this image is deflated by the ballistic indexicality of Göllner's sculpture as it tears away the sentimentality of West's measured painting is almost ironic. Several different accounts came to be recorded of the death of Wolfe: in whose arms he died, what his reaction was to the news that the French had capitulated, his possible last words, etc. Up to fourteen different accounts of the general's death have been tabulated over time.[49] The three musket balls and the ravage they would have made, as Göllner's piece demonstrates, make the deadly wounds resonate from under the tidy uniform depicted by West. Part of the success of West's painting was its naturalness and realism: the topographic layout of the landscape, for example, was accurate and served to create an effect of the real.[50] Or "enhance the picture's illusion of actuality and authenticity."[51] But the narrative of the painting traces a synchronous diagram.[52] Arguing for West's painting as a historical ideological document, Göllner undercuts this political take on its values through the diagrammatic bullet work.[53] The historical painting airbrushes the obvious odious as it calcifies into a visual cultural artefact. Göllner produces the forensic artefact that would dispute the claim of the organization of the painting. The speculative indexicality, the way that Wolfe's wounds would have looked if his body had really been ripped by musket balls, becomes a vaster comment on the evolution of art besides science.

48. Irén Annus, "The Deaths of General Wolfe," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 13, 1–2 (2007), 106.

49. Annus, "Deaths," 106, citing J. Clarence Webster, *Wolfe and the Artists: A Study of His Portraiture* (Toronto, 1930), 25.

50. Annus, "Deaths," 111. See also Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteetnth-Century Art and Society* (New York, 1989), 38 on the "reality effect" after Roland Barthes's *l'effet de réel*.

51. Annus, "Deaths," 111 citing Helmut von Erffa and Allen Stanley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven, 1986), 212.

52. Annus, "Deaths," 111–12.

53. Ibid., 117.

Conclusion

The Death of General Wolfe could be said to bear "witness to anteriority" as it speculates about the interiority of a dying Wolfe. Even if not outwardly diagrammatic, the arrangement of the exploded musket balls is a visualization of the damage done to a body, which is arranged necessarily artificially in West's painting, mapping a possible constellation of shots to the body and an interior topography of the flesh. The ideology here is laid bare by an indexical speculation. This type of speculative reflection on history, if we walk back through the present text, is turned on its head with *Vase Recordings*: only here, what is contained by the vase is not part of its interiority but paradoxically, its interiority resides on its surface. The artist reflects on the nature of art as a document that will be interpreted at a later point in time. A set of variants, however, are out of the control of the originator of the message that, on some remote level, brings us back to the tension between the subjective interpretation of the intentionally objective: how can a cough be aggrandized in the future? The interiority/exteriority duality, looking back, is a common thread in the works discussed here. It is displayed in the *Clock Drawings*, an interior *élan* traced onto the page; as well as in *Norwegian Wood*, in which the mood inside of the studio and by extension, Lennon's *for intérieur*, is extracted by a mechanical device whose aim is to force, or abduct in the peircean sense, an indexical—therefore truly objective—trace of this anterior interior space. And, as we have seen at the beginning, the juxtaposition between the personal and the global is perhaps a way of distancing oneself from interiorizing events out of one's control. With his atom bomb explosions diagrams, Göllner objectively speculates about the recesses of the personal in *No, No Joe*. A sense of urgency is elegantly hidden in plain sight. Art gives us the hopeful impression that today's global violence is already a thing of the past. ¶