

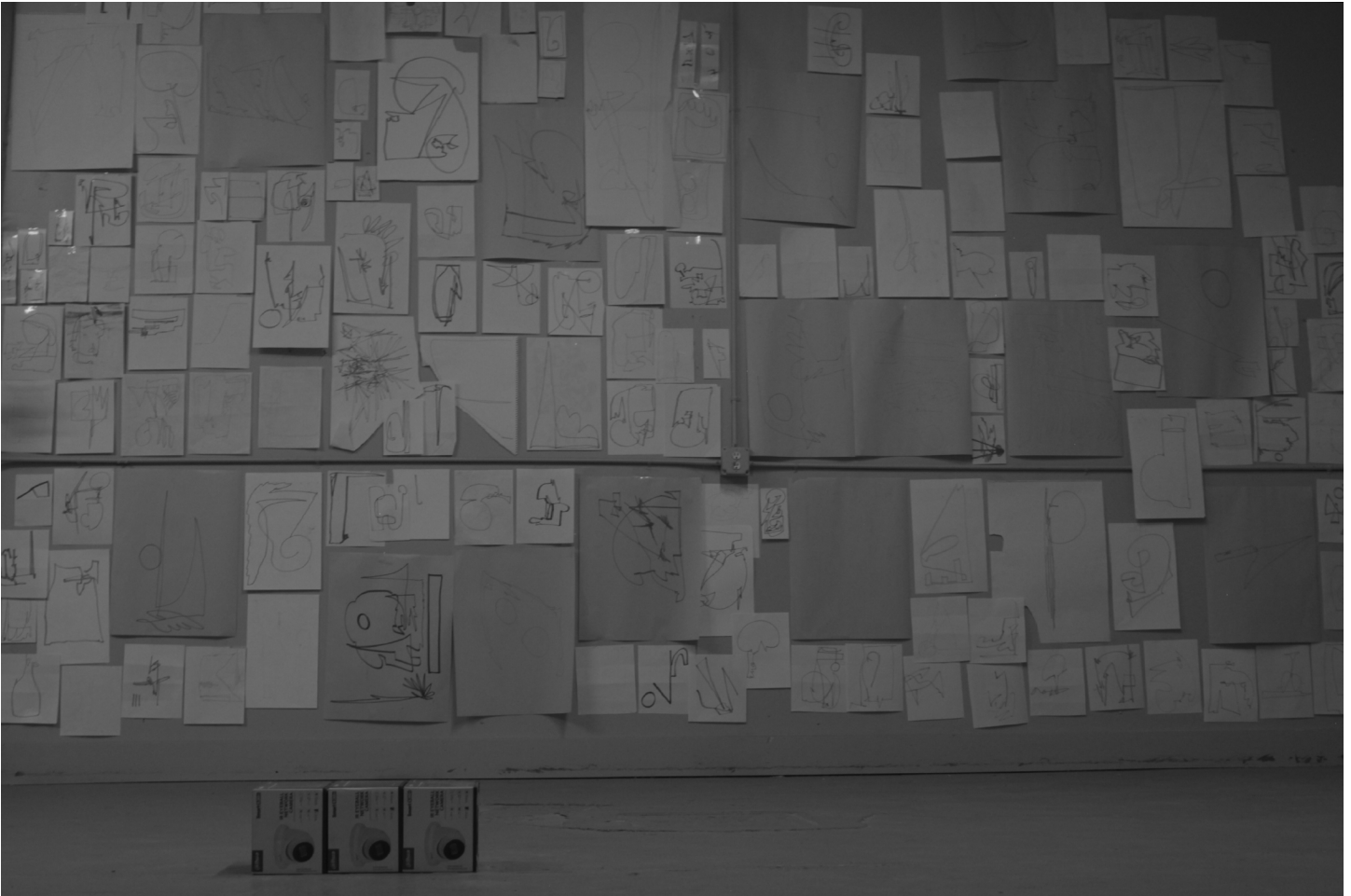
***Finality Could Be Seen As Settling:*  
Wyatt Thiry & Nolan Young at the Russell Industrial Center**

Jackson Gifford

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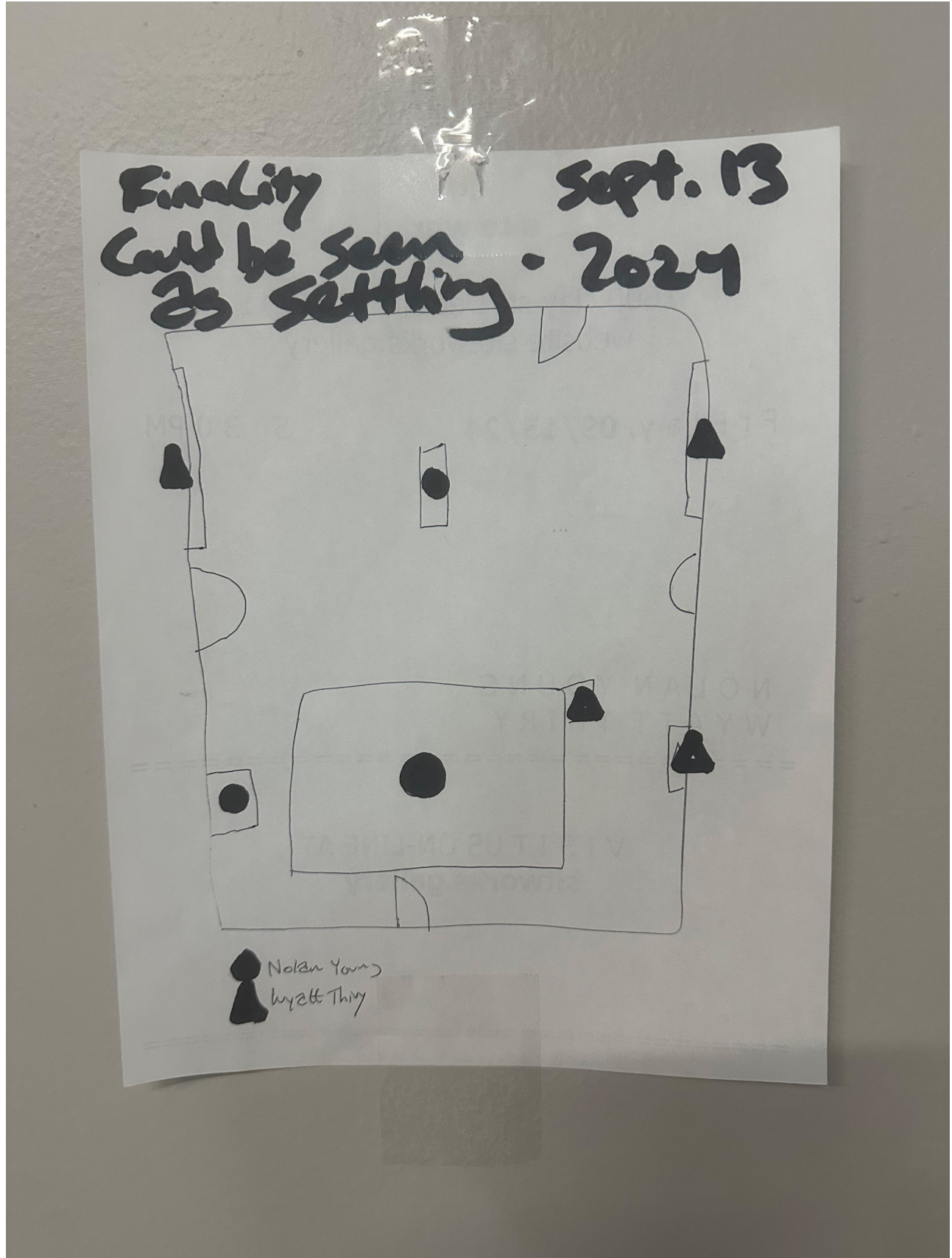


For the third show hosted by the recently-formed Site Works collective, Wyatt Thiry and Nolan Young conjure up a variety of structures which feel loosely related, yet intensely connected. Methods of sculpting, drawing, painting, and digitization are used to amalgamate a concoction of materials which become trapped together inside stoic gray walls. Rather than yearning to escape themselves, however, the works seem more motivated to push others away. From Thiry's science experiment in a bag concealing its own surface area, to Young's enormous plywood structure enclosing a space that cannot be entered, it appears as though the pieces are in a state where they would rather not interact with outsiders.



It is fitting, then, that the show is titled *Finality Could Be Seen As Settling*. The ere of an isolated closure surrounds what objects occupy the space, like they have come to their respective conclusions but aren't inclined to share. The swath of drawings that Thiry presents collectively reach up to the ceiling, but simultaneously separate themselves from each other, each piece of paper containing its own intuitively-scrawled line abstraction which secludes itself from the whole. Accompanied by wall mountings of the artist's personal clothing, the pieces are filled with pockets of emptiness but do not allow the viewer an obvious point of entry. Pushing this sentiment further, the duo ditches the traditional works list in favor of a diagram that simply represents Thiry's pieces as triangles and Young's as squares. In this way, the works become demoted below (or transcend above) the need for any kind of name. This replacement too acts as a kind of settling, or taking the path of least resistance, which is intriguing when the works themselves resist so much.

By way of a slightly different approach, Young's sculptures also play into this 'surface-level' kind of posture. On one side of his giant structure which virtually blocks the room's entrance, a TV is bordered by Pink Panther-branded insulation. Echoing his affinity to crumbs of evidence which detail our inescapably monetary existence, Young's other works also contain remnants of corporate signaling. In the sight line of Pink Panther are clamped cardboard boxes sporting the Breeze logo, and behind it are smaller ones on the ground used for security cameras. Is this the reflection of a collective resignation to an accursed ruling class? Through these small bursts of advertisement-minded messaging, the show itself begins settling into a finality which is uniquely inescapable, breaking its own fourth wall while keeping as many up as possible.





On September 13th, I talked to Young and Thiry about *Finality Could Be Seen As Settling* amongst the chatter of its opening (and only) night:

**Jackson Gifford:** So like, the title, *Finality Could Be Seen as Settling*. I feel like there's a lot of closed system stuff going on, like a lot of [Thiry's] drawings feel like they're self contained; a lot of them close into some type of shape. And then [Young's plywood structure] is a closed space that you can't enter, but you can look within it. I thought that was interesting in how it connects to the idea of finality, and the idea of it being a moment that's a stoppage in time. It's kind of like you're inviting people in but also pushing them out.

**Wyatt Thiry:** It's paraphrased from an excerpt of a book by Maurice Merlot-Ponty, and it struck me as I was reading it because this work started as a search for absolution. You're definitely right in that they're very... designed as an enclosed system, and it started out as a desire to have finality through that. Like, I'm building towards this thing, and I'll do this one line drawing, and I won't have to do any more. The search for the past, or peace, might be a way to describe it. And then realizing that it's not a sustainable way to practice? Or that there's something more this work can be that I just have to find.

**Nolan Young:** I think that it's also a reflection of how I interacted with these drawings. There's multiplicity in the mass of them. There's something simple but also very complex about the notion of a line... the title was all Wyatt. I was like 'you should name it, and then I'll fill in'. I mean, I thought originally it was Finality Could Be Considered Setting.

**WT:** Mm, yeah I'm going with that.

**NY:** And I mean, yeah, I don't really know why that was interesting but...

**Later in the conversation:**

**NY:** There's something about finality and then also surveillance, and then the finality of... there's something to that. It goes hand-in-hand with these control mechanisms.

**JG:** You mention security, I mean those are literally security cameras, but also [the plywood structure] is blocked off from other people, which can kind of feel like safety.

**NY:** The bulletproof glass,

**JG:** Okay, it's bulletproof glass? Sick.

**NY:** When you go into a liquor store, or a gas station, you're separated. Actually for time studio (an undergraduate course at Wayne State University) I made the bulletproof Coney Island because you're separated, and that feeling of separation felt relevant. People watching on camera. That's where the [plywood structure] and the video... it's supposed to act as the end of the circuit, of the surveillance.

**[in response to someone else]** I was really interested in when we look at the glass from different vantage points of the light, our reflections are in there, so then you're implicated as the viewer but also inside of the space.

**JG:** It also carries over to the digital aspect of the show, being surveilled all of the time. You're in all of these hard drives and you can see yourself in them, but you're not there.

**WT:** Does that capture you as a person, or just a representation of you as a person? This wall piece, it's a collection of clothing from past partners. Is that representative of me, somebody else, or is it a collaboration? And that's a piece that came up while we were actively putting the show together. It was just being in the room with [the plywood structure], it brought things out. Something that Nolan and I consider a lot is our place historically. I think we both make a point to be conscious of what has been done before us and what we're aware of.

**NY:** I think the idea of being digitally-minded but not using digital [tools] is also something I was thinking about with this work. Surveillance represents that. The amount of drawings, and the ease in which that information is imposed on those surfaces...



**JG:** I mean obviously [Young is] really engaged with the tradition of the readymade, so the ‘ease of creation’ becomes an interesting question. That wasn’t really a question... I wanted to ask [Thiry] about these drawings because you mentioned wanting to know what comes before you (or maybe playing into Western art history), but intuitive drawings aren’t new, so how does this feel like a departure to you?

**WT:** Hmm.. I think it’s partly a departure in that I’m revisiting these concepts in a time where I think they’re highly relevant. Growing up in the internet age with the access to technology at my fingertips feels like something I have to do, in a way. I think it’s a departure in that it’s something that I’ve always done. Nolan mentioned something the other day, sometimes to be creative you can’t be thinking about what came before you all the time. Sometimes you have to tune it out and just take action.

**JG:** I feel that in the show, there’s a whole element of improvisation that feels very central to what’s happening here. I think it’s pretty easy to argue that improvisation isn’t something that’s on a linear path, it’s a very intimate, singular experience for everybody. So this was basically an improvisatory installation even though some of the work was pre-fabricated?

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**NY:** Yeah. Even the way that Wyatt put up the drawings, he'd never seen them all up. So I think that's kind of how Wyatt was improvising, all of these line drawings being improvisatory. For me, there were no drawings of the structure, [the Breeze box sculpture] was boxes that were literally in the hallway, left by the neighbors. If I were to have had this premade thing, I think that interaction wouldn't have existed because it would've made both of our works fight in an unproductive way.

**JG:** To go back to the title, I think this notion of improvisation in a meaningful way feels like a rejection of the idea that improvisation itself is settling.

**WT:** At the end of the day, so much of how we interact with everything is based on our opinions. Through these drawings I've been able to realize aesthetic habits that have formed, and also life habits that have formed- metaphysical habits that have formed. I mean to each their own, definitely.



**[in response to someone else]** You can think about it as much as you want, but at some point you just have to take the wheel.

**JG:** I did have one more question about the tradition of the readymade and [Young's] work. I feel like the readymade is often very interested in the materials that it uses, and how that plays into the conceptual idea of the work. However, you guys don't have a works list here. You're not saying "OSB, bulletproof glass, TV screen, etc. ". What does that mean for what you're doing?

**NY:** I think there's something to the materials list in that all three of the structures are boxes, including the TV- which are containment vessels, they hold things. There's a mystery to boxes. I haven't necessarily fleshed out the security camera boxes up against the bulletproof OSB box, to the TV box, to the stacked clamped boxes. Even the clamped boxes, which would probably be my favorite, traditionally speaking... it's almost out of place. I can live with it because I like it, but I guess my relationship with readymade comes from understanding the tradition of Detroit-centered sculpture (whether that's from the Cass Corridor, or Scott Hocking, or Michael E. Smith). It's these steel, old automobile-reminiscent things. My dad, who's an artist, his sculptures are rusted steel and industrial processes and I think these things are my reaction to understanding that. When you grow up seeing something a certain way, it's hard to break out of that. I think if my dad was to come to the show he would be appalled, and that's a good thing! My dad comes from a deep practitioner/craft [tradition] and it's all traditional steel object stuff. My love for this building... As soon as the Russell becomes lofts or something, I would be so sad (\*author's note: I love that he said this because the show takes place in what is virtually the Russell equivalent of a loft\*). The reason I love OSB is because...I mean all of this OSB is recycled materials. I think there's two or three sheets that aren't. My dad had taken these up to his barn and brought them back down before the show, so I was surrounded by these raw OSB structures. OSB is the cheapest sheet good, and it keeps someone out of a space, like on a construction site it's just slapped up.

**JG:** I think that notion of keeping someone out I also see in the "painting"?

**WT:** I probably know least about this, just because it was gone for so long. I started it months ago and it started smelling really bad, so I taped it up and opened it just before the show. But I think that's indicative of the surveillance we're talking about, and improvisation. It's this piece of life that's contained in space... and I didn't really have a say in its creation, it just kind of was made and now it's here. And then once it's done it's just gonna be thrown out, in theory. You can make parallels to that with anything. It was Nolan's idea to have it in that particular spot. I don't think there's a better spot for it in this room.

**JG:** It feels right there.

**Conversation continues.**



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