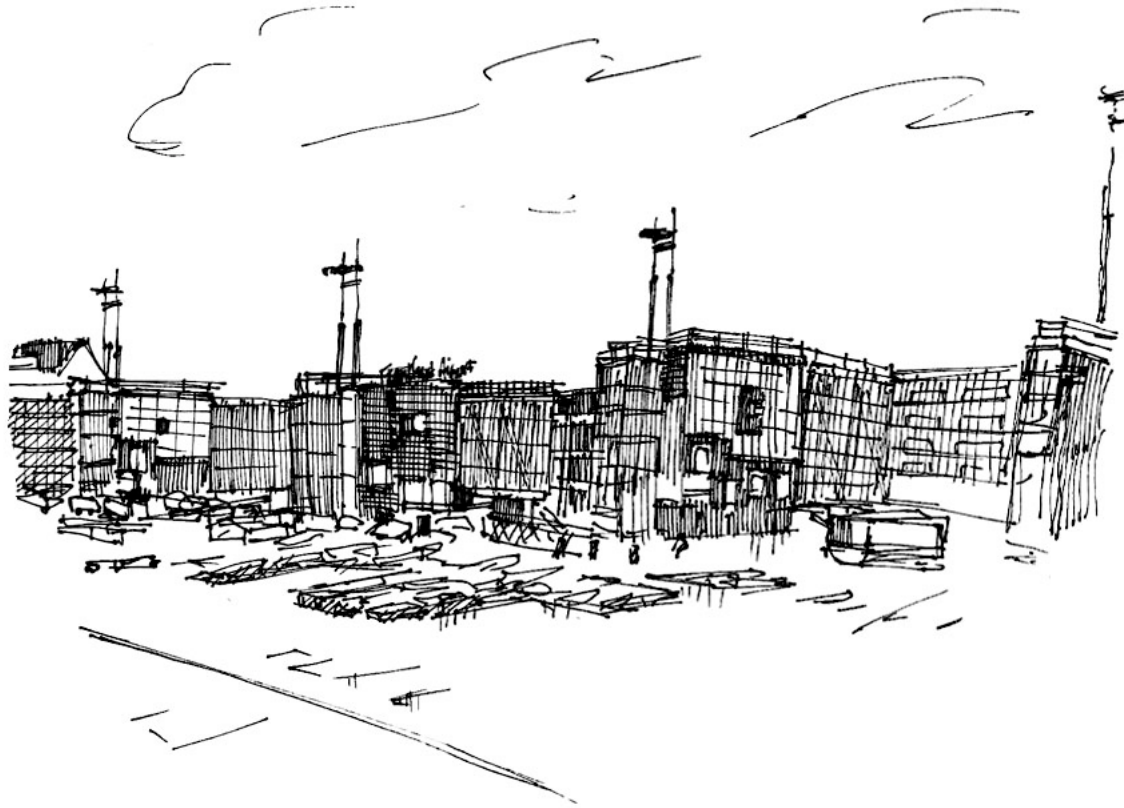


Daryl Alexsy
Domestic Tourist
Introduction



*ich wollte den traurigsten Moment
meines Lebens zeichnen.*

Frankfurt Airport, July 20th, 2011

drawn waiting for my flight from Germany to the US

written in bottom right corner: "ich wollte den traurigsten Moment meines Lebens zeichnen."

Translation: I wanted to draw the saddest moment of my life.

July 20th 2011
Berlin, Germany

We stood in front of my gate at Tegel, the four of us. I can honestly say that I felt nothing as Joel and Rosie, the girl whom I had come to regard as a sister during our time together in the city, hugged me goodbye, and she, with glassy eyes, saying, "I guess this is it, huh?"

"Yep."

I felt nothing as Chris, who had put up my sustained indifference because he was in love with me, kissed me goodbye. (He still won't admit this is why he was there. I don't need him to.)

“Gute Reise.”

“Danke.”

It wasn't until after passing through the gate and out of their eyesight, the complete reality of the situation washed over my consciousness. I navigated myself to an empty row of chairs and settled myself in one, and there was nothing more I could do than blurrily stare at my plane ticket for the tears in my eyes.

I managed to regain my composure until my connecting flight to Frankfurt finally circled over and away from Alexanderplatz and the Fernsehturm, slipped from my vision for the last time because as long as I could see the Fernsehturm, I always knew where I was.

6000 kilometers later, I was sitting on the couch in my mom's front room. The conversation quickly ran out, and my family eventually filtered out of the room. At this point, there was nothing I could do but climb the stairs to my room and begin the jetlagged cycle that would last weeks of falling asleep and waking up at three or four in the morning to find that I was in the wrong place.

The word remaining at the forefront of my consciousness regarding these events is trauma, even months after my departure. I still grapple to come to terms with my leaving, but the only thing that remains clear to me is that it was traumatic.

Moving to Berlin meant starting over, from the beginning, and I was, in many ways, reduced to a child. Very much like a grade-schooler, I simply wanted to play with the other Germans and be liked in return. This meant dropping my accent and other blatantly American affectations that would mark me as an outsider. I was essentially learning to speak, this time without the aid of a parent. I was instead using every interaction with professors at the universities, every encounter in a club, every overheard conversation on a subway platform and echoing back what I had heard.

My new learning method fed into my burgeoning and increasingly overwhelming curiosity about the new world I was living in. I cannot emphasize enough how childlike and pure this wonderment was and as such, I found my emotions and reactions to life concentrated into a childlike simplicity.

This has been key to my attempted rationalization of this feeling of trauma. My mentality at my time of leaving was so simple:

Here, in Berlin, I am happy. I have never felt this inspired before. I am creating more work than I ever have. I have a life here.

There, in the United States, there's nothing. I'd left my boyfriend of five years before leaving, who had largely constituted my social life and with whom I had no desire towards reconciliation, so now there's nothing.

There's nothing.

This project was intended in many ways to find if there really was something back home. My idea of home in the United States has always been concentrated around the city of Detroit. I wanted to see if I could essentially begin once again anew in an old place and recapture what I had left behind in Berlin.

The resulting attempt is a series of monotypes of Detroit.

Creative Work

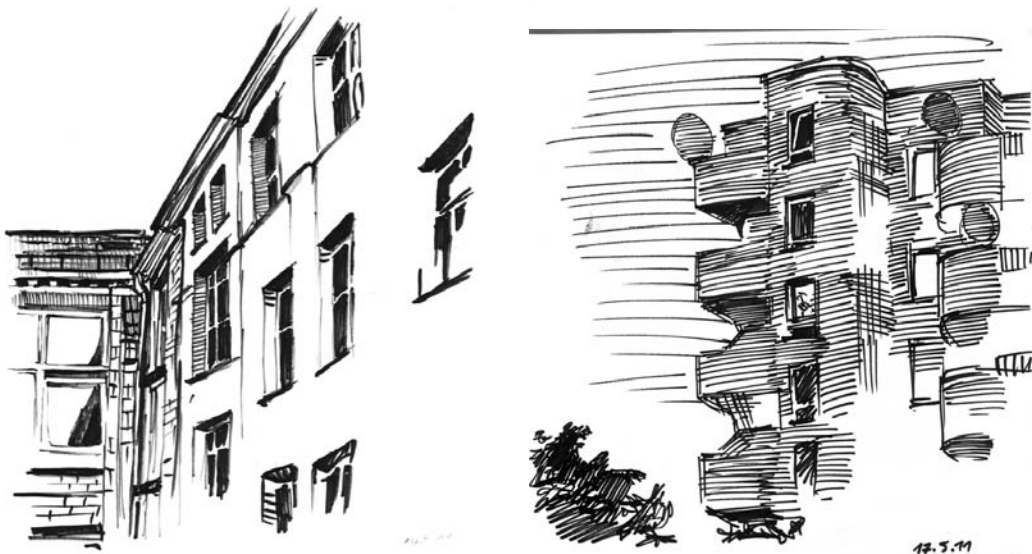
My initial approach to tackling the city was based on previous work I had done in Berlin. I completed a number of geographically guided projects in order to produce a series of illustrations.

The first of these series is pictured below.

das Rosie-Projekt - Werke zum Thema Übersehen
Translation: the Rosie Project – works about the importance of looking up
Kreuzberg/Neukölln, Berlin, late May- early June 2011



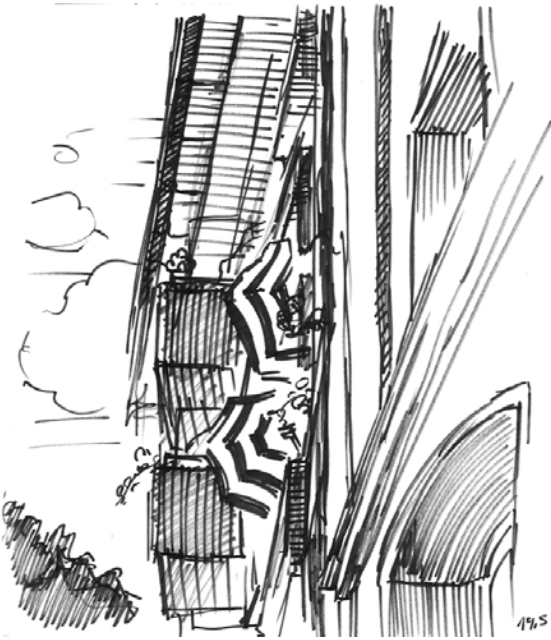
This project came into being after a conversation with the project's namesake about how beautiful the buildings were in her neighborhood of Neukölln, although neither of us had never really stopped to notice. The drawings began with the two images above, both completed from her kitchen as we were having coffee one afternoon.



I then began exploring my own neighborhood, drawing largely at night after class.



17.5.77



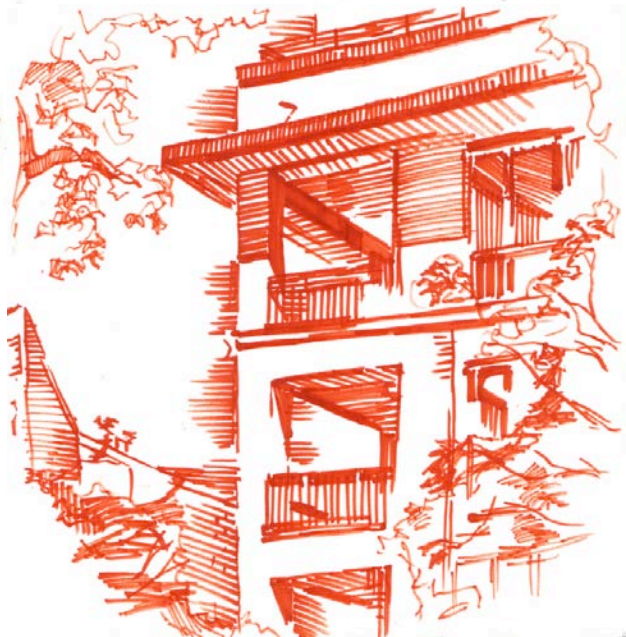
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2.6.77



I shared the previous drawings with Joachim Seifert, my mentor and a professor at the Kunsthochschule Berlin Weißensee, who then told me to explore the Berlin landscape at a larger scale and in a more substantial manner. He encouraged me to follow the Spree River that runs throughout the city and further into the neighboring state of Brandenburg. Had I more time, I would have completed its trek outside of Berlin.

I did manage the following series of pictures by riding my bike along its banks over a time period of two days.

SpreEmotionen
Spree River, Berlin, May 29-30th, 2011



My final act in Berlin was a series entitled 36, taken from Kreuzberg's historical postal code "Berlin Südost 36" and the local term for the area in which I lived.

36
Kreuzberg, Berlin, late June - July 2011



Planufer

It was at this time that I had recognized my own mortality, as it would seem in my final month. Drawing had become a completely solitary activity, and the project began as a means of capturing the experience of being there in the purest way I knew how.



Admiralstraße



Wrangelbrunnen

I began to only draw at night. It seemed fitting.



Kottbusser Tor



Sankt-Thomas-Kirche



Görlizer Park

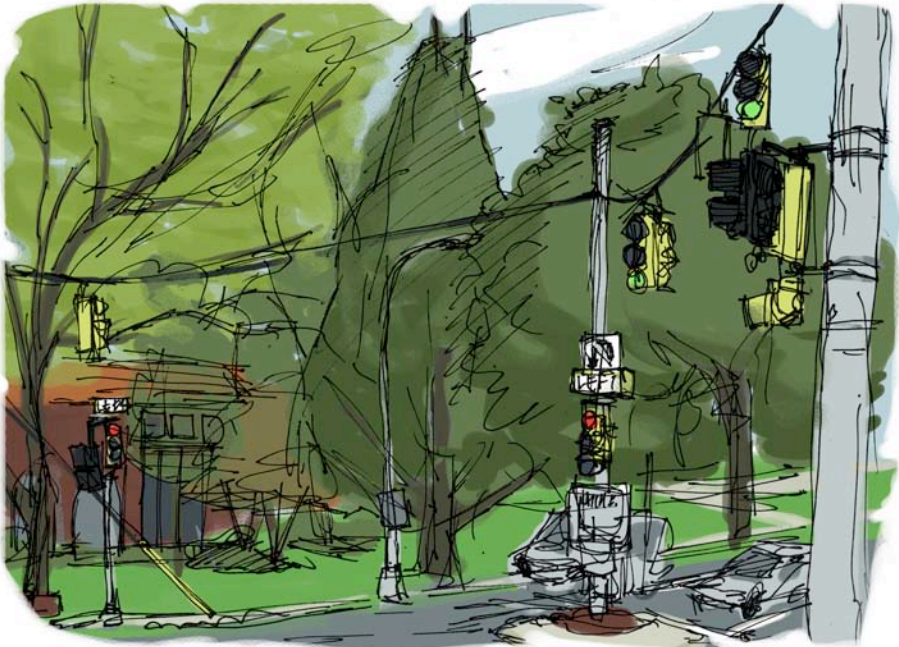


Blick vom Spreewaldplatz



Künstlerspielplatz

The day after I got back to the US, I attempted another project following 8 Mile Road starting from Jefferson Avenue in Grosse Pointe. The distance was too great to walk or bike, so the project was completed from the passenger's seat of my ex-boyfriend's car. I regard the project as a failure. It felt terrible, but I didn't know what to do with myself.





So, the next day I stopped drawing, took up running and began working fulltime.

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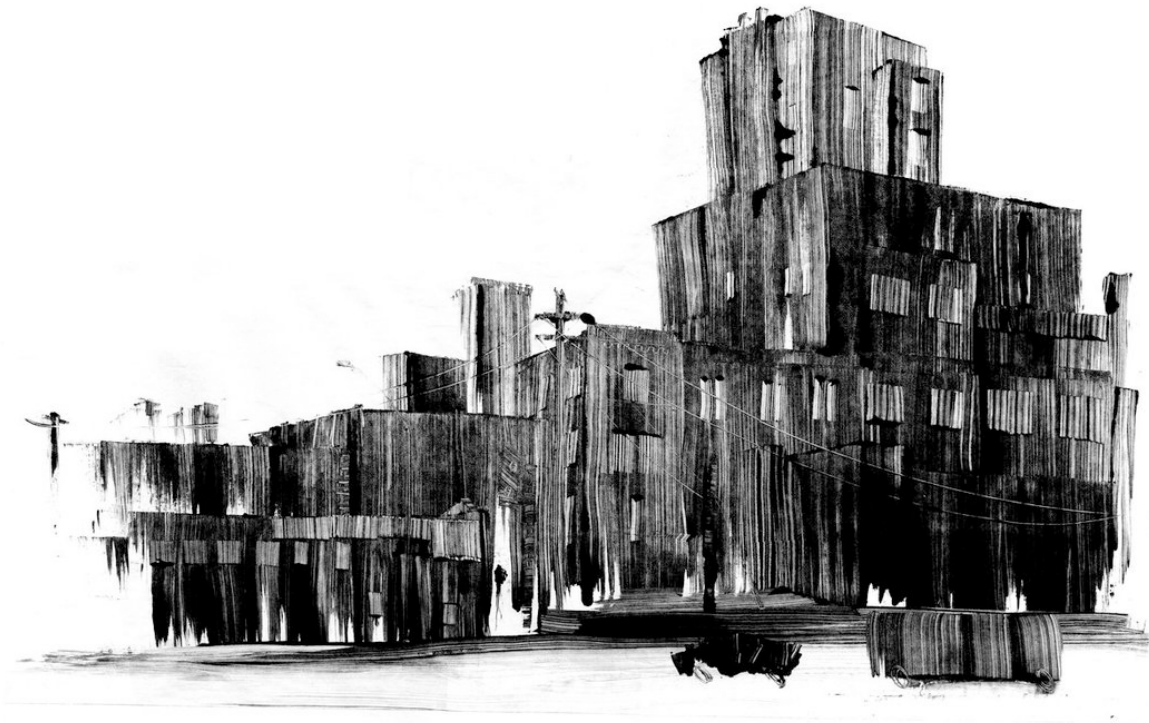
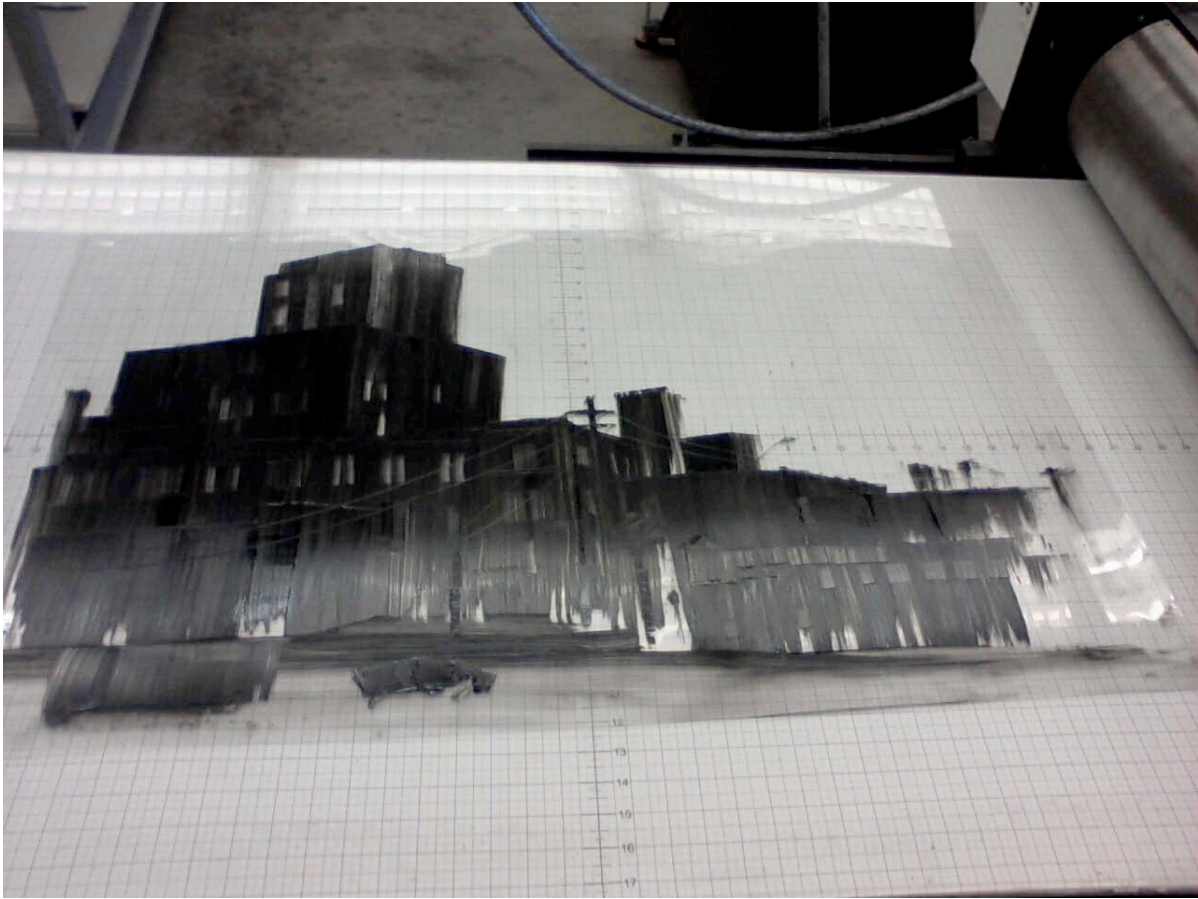
I found the medium in which I was previously working now inappropriate at some internal level, and so I approach this project with a completely new medium, monotyping.



Detroit Central Station – first monotype

Barry & Sons II work in progress



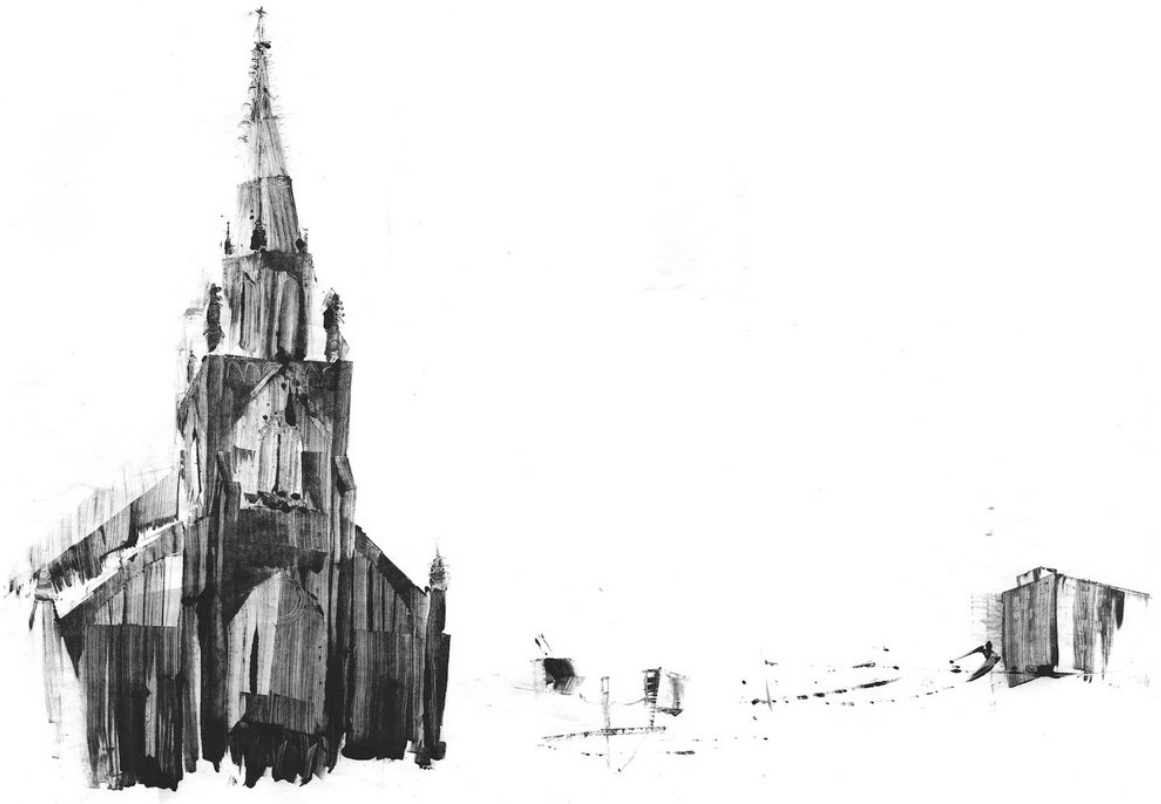
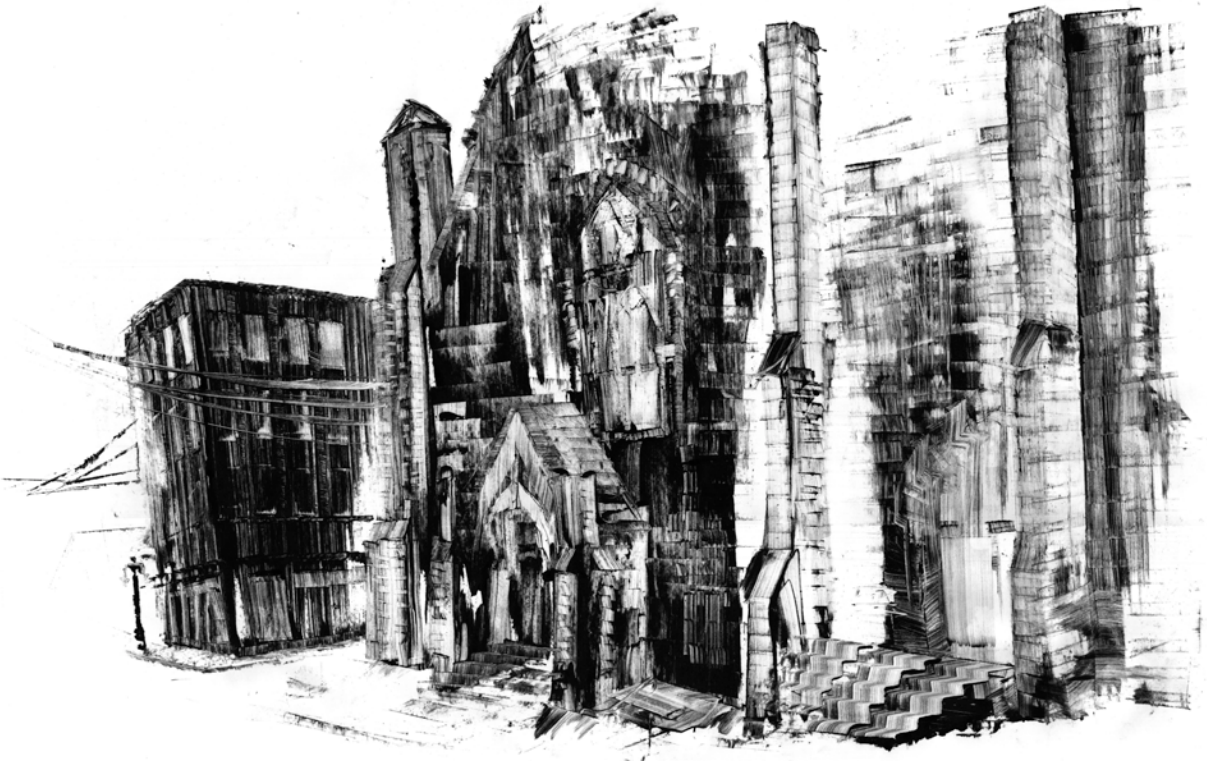


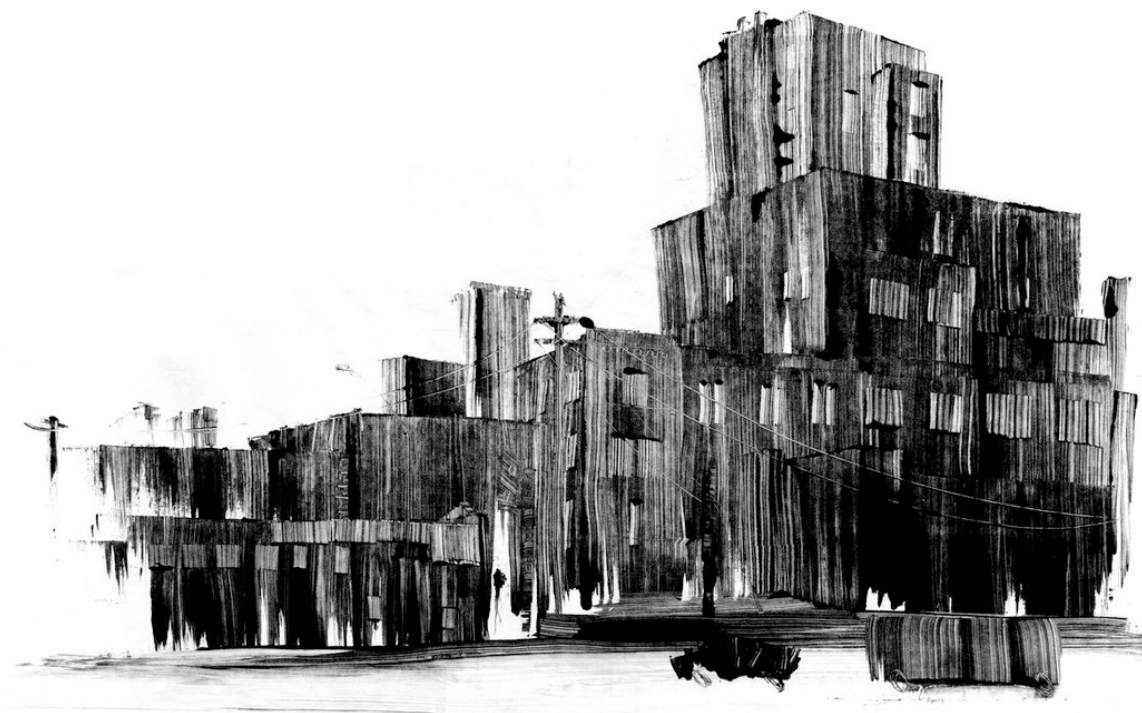
Barry & Sons II (40 x 26 inches)
Gratiot Avenue

I devised a series of fieldtrips downtown along the avenues of Gratiot, Woodward, Michigan, Grand River and Jefferson. This has given me the opportunity to explore the city more intimately than I had previously been able to. My new medium satisfies whatever part of my mind that was rejecting the colorful illustrative style I had prior been using.

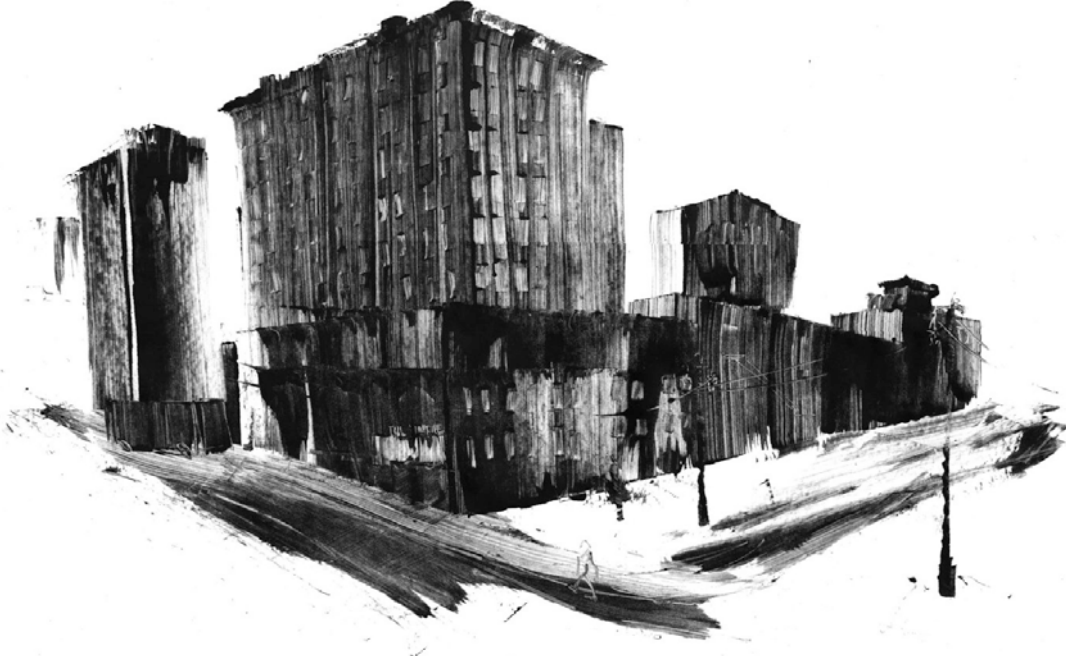
Gratiot Avenue

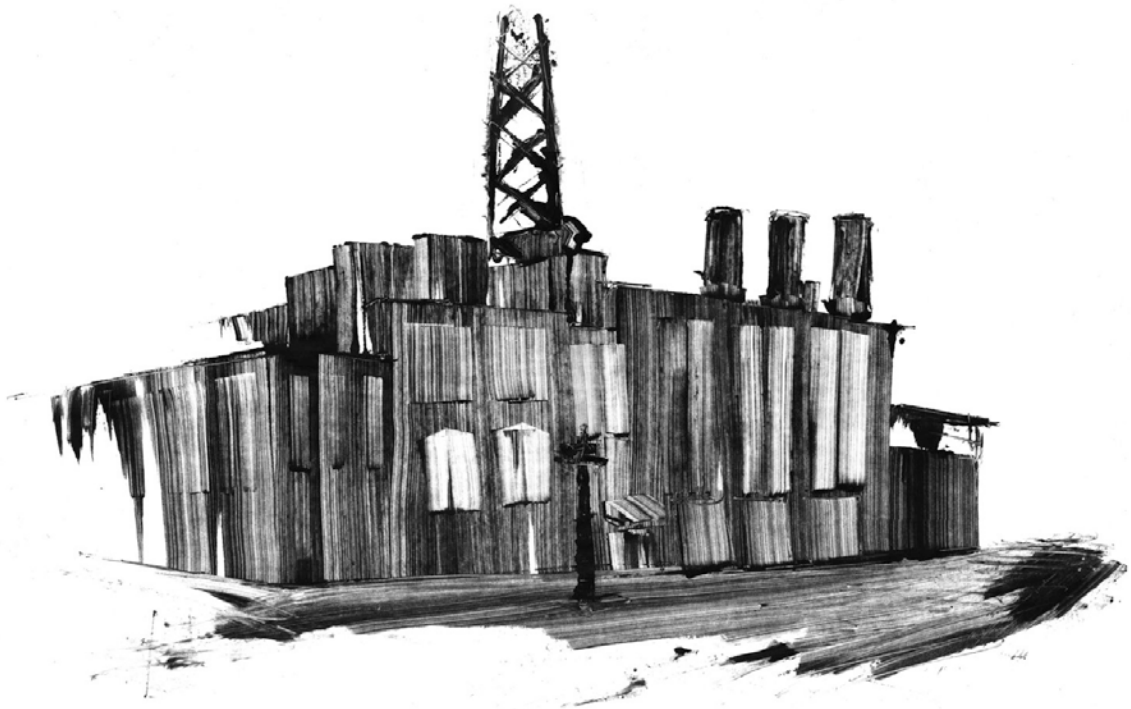
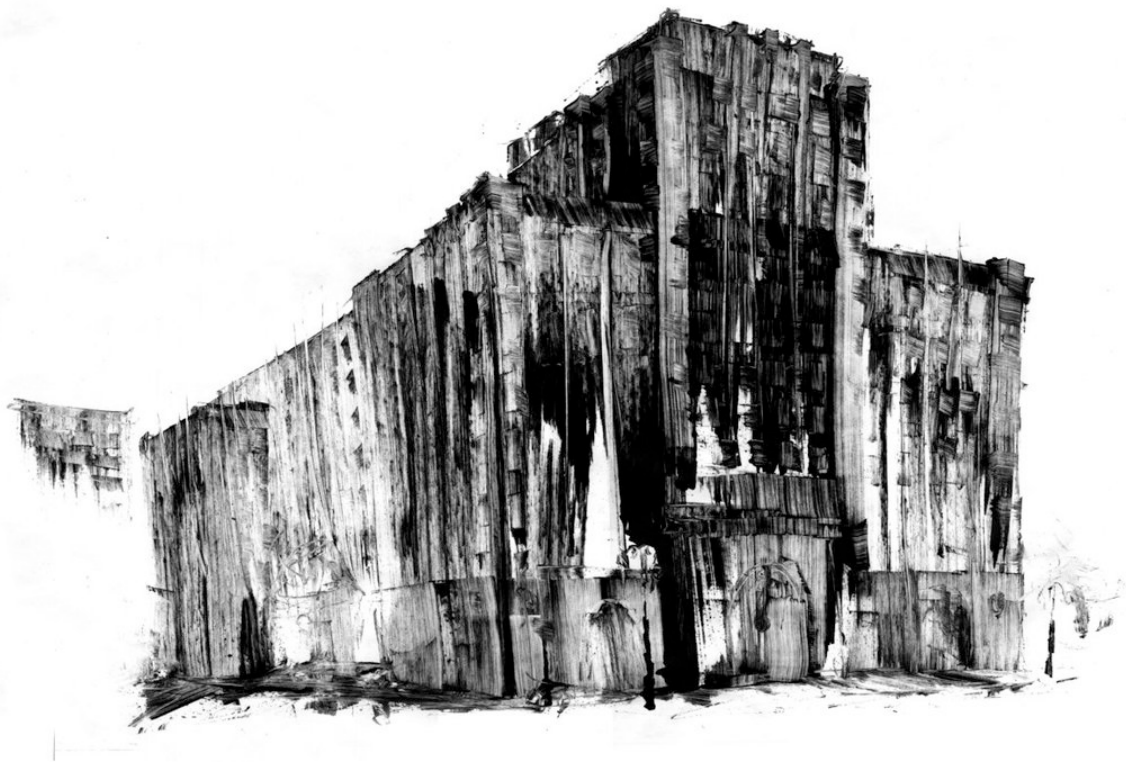


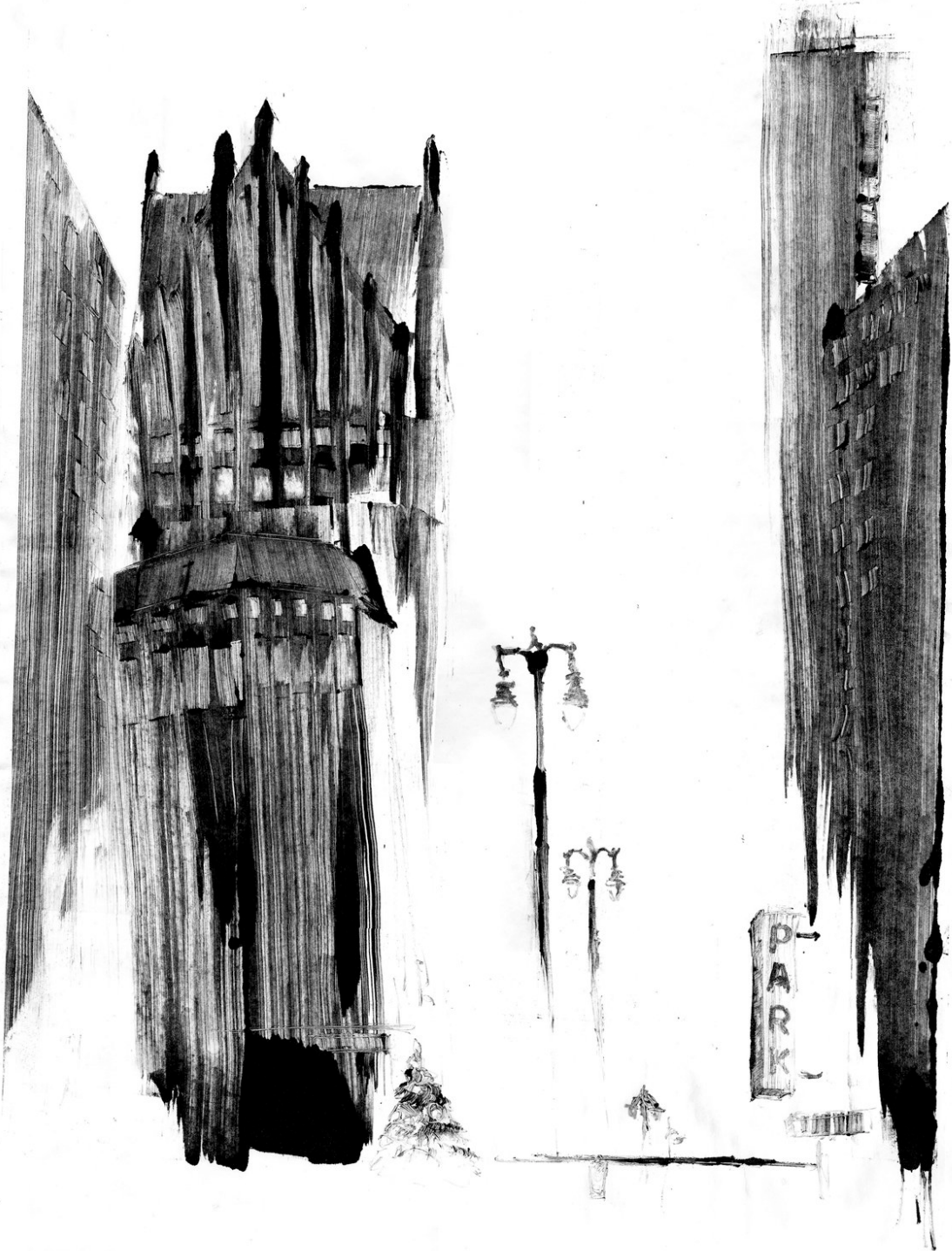




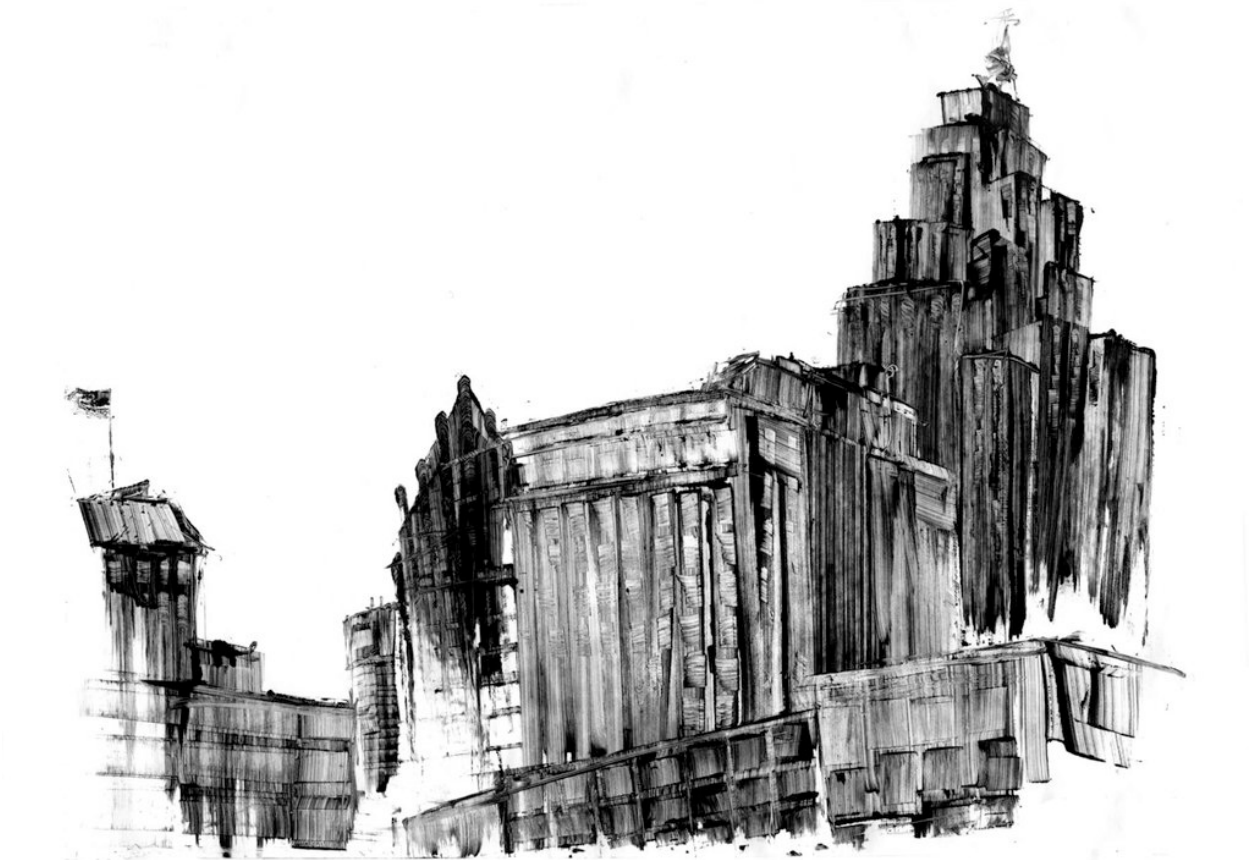
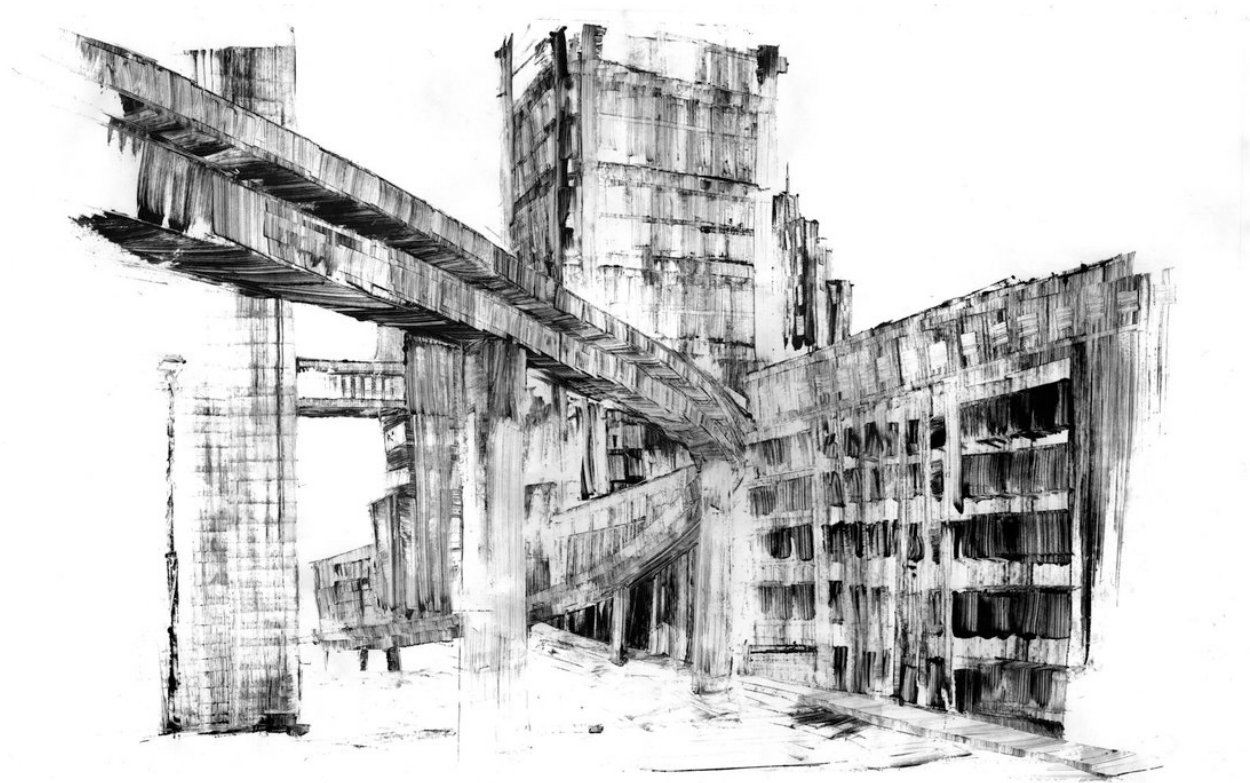
Woodward Avenue







Michigan Avenue



Contextual Discussion

To put my project into some sort of historical context, I began studying the works of the artist group Brücke (coincidentally under Joachim Seifert, mentioned above), and was greatly inspired by both their approach to the human form through woodcut and their collective working style. The group was formed by four students in their 20s at the beginning of the 20th century, all of whom had trained as architects before turning to the abstractions through African art brought to Germany during this time period.

I was especially intrigued by their shift away from their architectural drawing style and towards the abstract. This was appealing to me because I had always had an extremely realistic drawing style that quite frankly lacked character. I began mimicking the strong lines of their woodcuts in my own marker drawings, and this bold simplification of form is later seen as shown previously in the Rosie-Projekt.

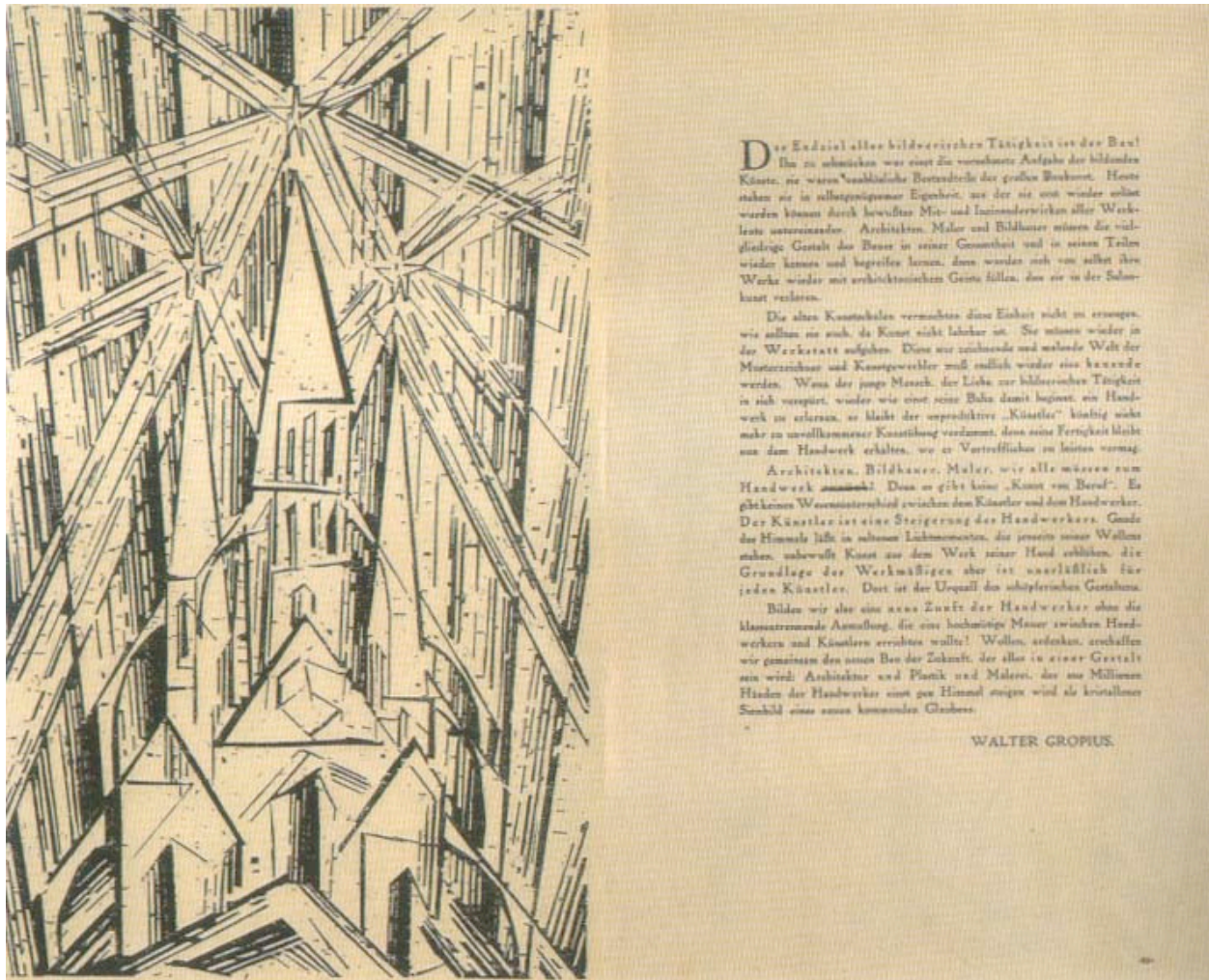
The group worked in the first half of its existence in Dresden, its members and models taking daytrips to the outer fields of Dresden to complete nude portraiture in the open air. The group worked so closely together that a unified style was developed, to the extent that the paintings completed in their Dresden time are virtually indistinguishable from one another. What I found admirable the sheer volume of work the artists completed together despite their young ages.



The history of the group also leads to Berlin, where tensions between the group's members would ultimately result in its breakup.

Lyonel Feiniger (July 17, 1871 – January 13, 1956)

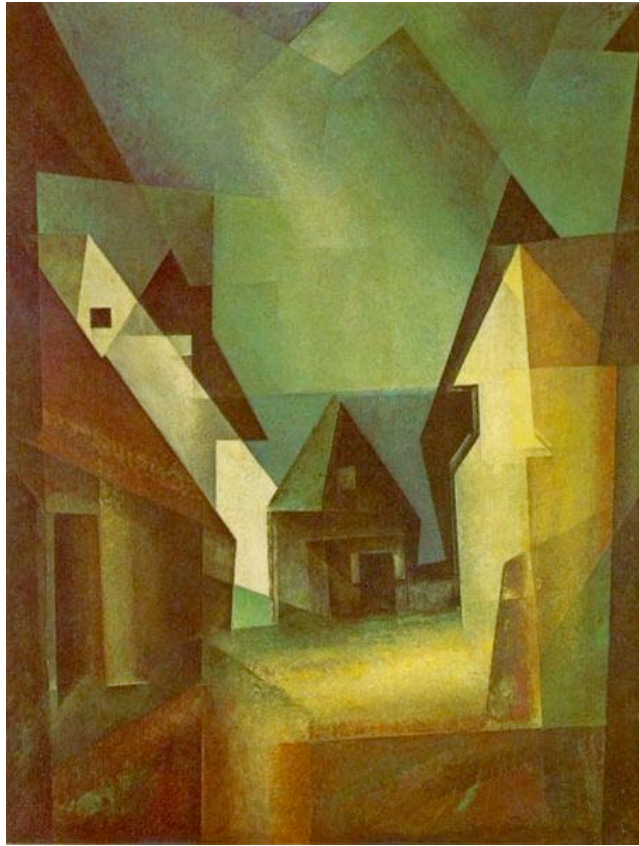
Feiniger grew up in New York City before moving to Berlin at 16 to study. He was a cartoonist turned fine artist. He connected with the Brücke as well as the Blaue Reiter. He ultimately landed at the Bauhaus and received the first faculty appointment at the school.



He created the cathedral woodcut shown above for the school's manifesto in 1919.

I like his abstraction of the buildings' boundaries all while maintaining a sense of perspective. I find especially interesting his previous employment as a cartoonist before breaking into the fine arts world at 36. I wish I could apply more of his playfulness with color and form to my own work.

His paintings turned architectural later in his life.



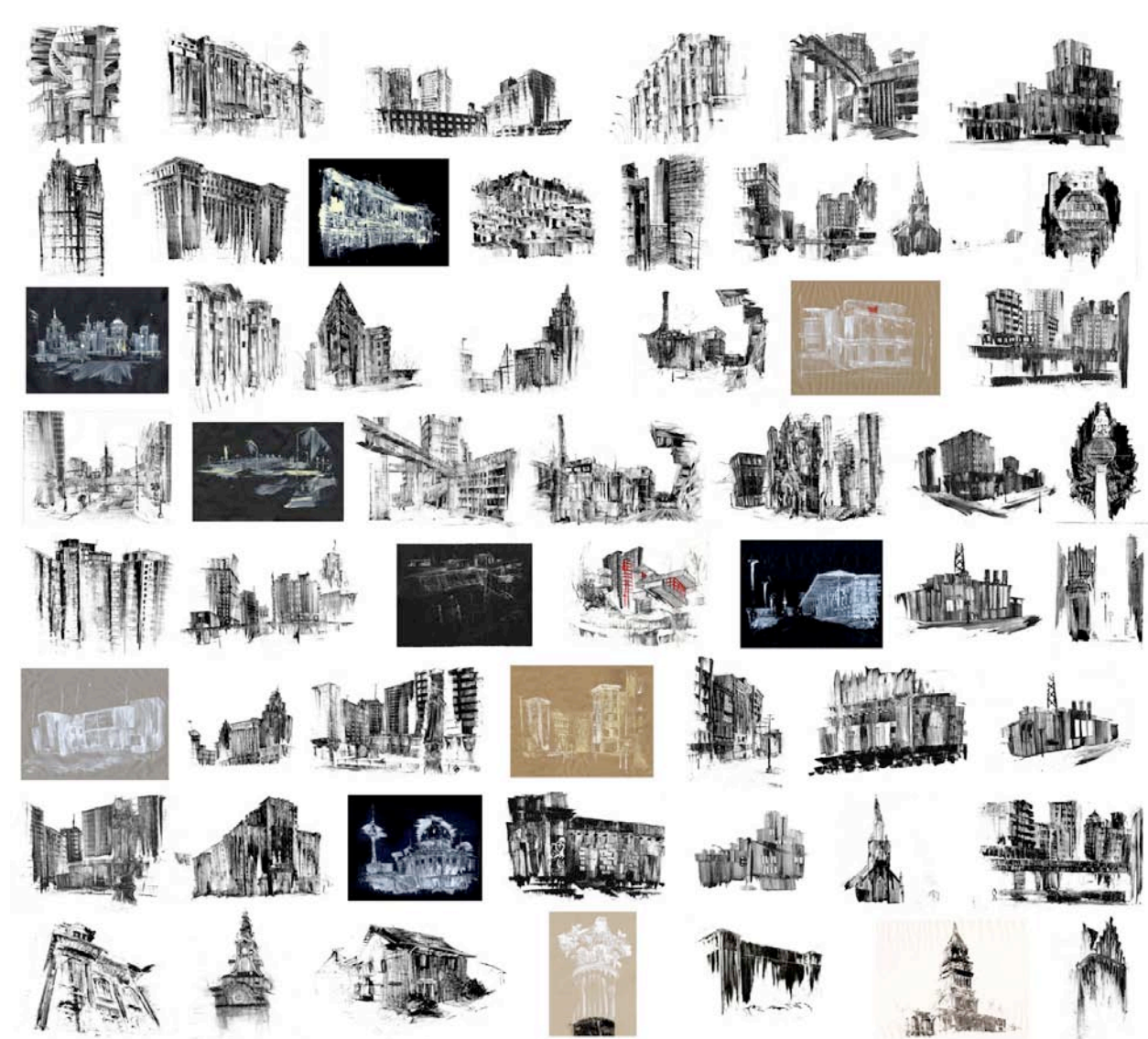
Gaberndorf II
1924



Gelmoroda IX
1926

Conclusion

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant."
– Robert Louis Stevenson



At the end of this project, the empty and haunting quality of my prints is now apparent to me, although this was not always the case. I had begun working in a very disconnected manner; I would only spend a few hours in Detroit and was often unable to begin working on the final prints until days after my trips due to work and class. Even if I was lucky enough to begin printing relatively soon, I was still creating images of a city 35 miles away from my studio. I was concentrated on controlling a new medium, and as such, I was not concerning myself consciously with what effect the monotyping process was having on my pictures' aesthetic.

It was this disconnect that made the difficult realization that even after almost a year back, the happiness I was hoping to rediscover in Michigan has exposed itself as bitterness. Alongside my prints' hollow aesthetic, it is worth mentioning the sheer quantity of work I have produced since September. I found myself drawn to Stevenson's quote above. While its inherent meaning refers to the patience required before success' arrival, I find it has relevance to the mentality I have developed towards my art at this project's conclusion: Every print I make validates the time I have been obligated to spend in Michigan.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude towards my parents, Mary-Ellen, my earliest collector, and Steve, without whom I would have been unable to study.

To my thesis advisors, Michael Rodemer, for his continuous support during my undergraduate career, and Sherri Smith, for her innate ability to state the obvious.

To Ana Fernandez and Katherine Luchs for sharing their fantastic printmaking knowledge with me.

And finally to my optimist, Christopher Mielke, for teaching me about investing in the big jar of Nutella.

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