

ARTIST STATEMENT: *TRACE*

These tracings come from various types of printed matter. The drawings generally take two forms; selective reproductions from a single source like a newspaper, or textual collages whose juxtapositions derive from multiple, unrelated sources such as junk mail, brochures and magazines. Initially, this work grew from reading the newspaper every day. I began to notice jarring oppositions as well as troubling similarities between advertising and news, and between images and text. I focused on these things by limiting the amount of information I included in the drawings. My work is often concerned with death, loss and memory. The light pencil lines, the trace itself, the large masses of blank space on the page as well as some of the choices of subject matter, all evoke emptiness or absence.

My use of text in these works is descriptive, visual and conceptual. The text describes some thing and is meant to evoke it, but with less specificity than an image. A viewer sees the image, but must also imagine their own. This work can be seen as an exercise where the activity of drawing is as much the subject of the investigation as the visual results. The drawings give the illusion of being mechanically produced. This uncertainty between the handmade and the mechanically derived demands scrutiny. The works are drawn to scale – often this involves working on a minute level. Drawing in this way is physically difficult. It hurts your hand. It hurts your eyes. In this way, the drawings recall medieval manuscripts and the origins of type-setting and of fonts.

The images are also faintly drawn, inviting the viewer to come close and to read. In the installation at the Los Angeles Center for Photographic Studies, I used a method of display that facilitated reading and was similar to a sloped vitrine for viewing manuscripts. In the piece titled *Trace 20: Community*, I traced a single page from the New York Times. I chose one paragraph from each of three unrelated articles, the rectangles formed by three photographs, and three lines used to separate articles on the page. All these elements were traced exactly where they were found. These few elements activated the larger negative space of the empty page. The drawn forms became related components within the image composition. In this case the text blocks, rectangles and lines also serve as individuals within sets, and suggest relationships, categories and types. When you read the three paragraphs, each focuses on how individuals are seen as inside, or outside of a particular community; are they part of the group? Many of these drawings follow similar strategies.

Why take the time to re-draw something that has already been mechanically produced and mass printed? In order to return it to a handmade state. And in order to look at it more closely.

Brian C. Moss, 2000