



A DEPARTURE

Aluminum
Commission: City of Lethbridge. Marking the Centenary of the
Alberta CPR High Level Bridge. Installation October 2009

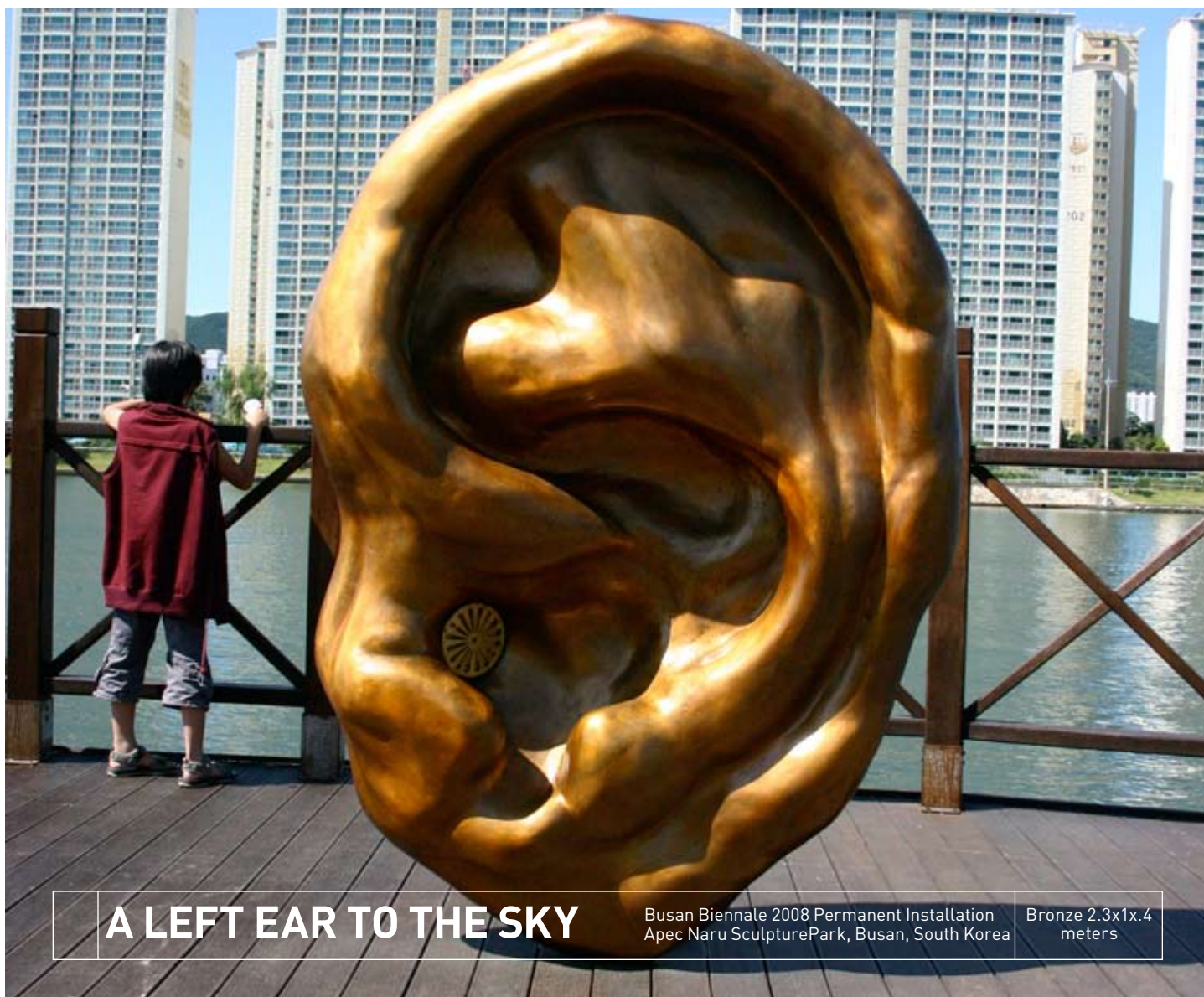
► A Departure is based on three types of driver train wheels that have crossed the Alberta CPR High Level Bridge over the past hundred years. The largest sculptural element in the installation is a train wheel emerging from the ground, acting here as a bridge connecting the first era of steam locomotion, in its golden age when the bridge was built, with the current era of diesel electric trains. The largest wheel is based on the last class of Mikado steam engines, which the CPR kept in service until the early 1950s. The two smaller wheels are drawn from the beginning and end of the centenary period, the earliest based on Switcher trains built at the turn of the century. The sculptural components have been installed in relation to one another, designed so that they work together as a set of objects that frame views of the bridge, the river valley, the Galt museum, the seniors' home, and the University of Lethbridge. When facing the bridge, you can peer through the spokes of the large wheel to see its older counterpart, as if looking back in time. When standing between the bridge and the two steam engine wheels, you can see a late twentieth century wheel appearing

to roll into the future.

While the bridge has remained constant in form and structure, its rails are a timeline marking milestones in rail technology, most notably the radical shifts in the second quarter of the twentieth century when innovations in diesel technology spell the gradual obsolescence of the steam engine. By installing the three wheels on different inclined angles, they enter into a visual interplay depicting dramatic changes in train wheel design since the bridge's completion. With their enlarged scale and monumentalized form, the wheels themselves become lenses, bringing into focus the pivotal periods of political, cultural and technological change that have occurred over the last hundred years. Although based on careful research, the sculptures are not exact historical replicas of wheels from specific models; instead, each is a composite, bringing together subtle design elements from its respective time period.

—Ilán Sandler 2009





A LEFT EAR TO THE SKY

Busan Biennale 2008 Permanent Installation
Apec Naru SculpturePark, Busan, South Korea

Bronze 2.3x1x.4
meters

- *An Ear to the Sky* developed out of my fascination with sensory perception and an exploration of human biology's apparent limits within our terrestrial and temporal forms. In my solo exhibition, *Three Senses*, I installed sculptures of human sense organs that are free from the constraints of the body and have their own corporeal mobility. The projects were placed in public areas to allow viewers to encounter the surveillance and sensory aspects of the work in unexpected contexts. Through my research on the senses I have translated various physical sensations into sound, video and sculptural installations. I decided to design a sculpture of an ear that could be both a passive surveillance device and an aquatic object that was easily visible from the shore.

When anchored on the eastern seaboard of North America, *An Ear to the Sky* appeared as a sensory organ 'listening' to the water's ambient sounds. It was like an island passively absorbing all the audio waves in its vicinity. As an aural surveillance object in the water, it transmitted the sounds of the harbour to the head-

set on shore. In the APEC Naru Park in Busan, South Korea the left Ear's function has been inverted: rather than a listener it has become a speaker, patiently channeling unexpected sounds that were recorded by the right Ear in North America. In function it remains a passive object broadcasting sound from another continent yet its muscular form and bronzed colour evoke its visual power.

-Ilan Sandler 2008

Precursors

Over the past ten years Ilan Sandler has produced site-specific public sculptures and media installations to inhabit an array of unconventional sites in North America. The works explore relationships among biology, paleontology, language and sculpture in order to challenge the limits of what is understood about human perception. The series of installations that includes *An Ear to the Sky* emboldens enlarged sense-receptors to act as independent agents in the physical landscape. Pieces in this series integrate conceptual art with

sculptural traditions that date back to antiquity, representing sense organs that “resemble updated parts of the ancient colossal statue of the emperor, Hadrian, whose fragments (a foot, a nose, etc) are still visible in Rome...The thing contained in each of Sandler’s giant body parts is the concentrated power of sensory reception...One effect of the gigantism of Sandler’s installations is to drag the mechanisms of surveillance back across our threshold of perception, demanding that we give them our attention.”¹

The sensory sculptures developed alongside works such as the enormous lawn chair *Double Storey* and *The Book*, which are both exaggerated companions to the body and guides to introspection. For his deeply personal work, *Arrest*, which expresses his family’s grief after the murder of his sister, he created fragile gates of steel text and audio recordings of heartbeats for the cells of Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. The piece “used economical means to bend the weight of this prison environment into new meanings: piles of brick dust suggest the inert remains of a life, dust returning to dust. Sandler is exquisitely sensitive to point of view, here and in other works. And his conceptual layering is as subtle and effective as his choice of materials. On the most overt level, we look inside cells closed off by words. The survivors of a horrific crime are imprisoned, in this sense, by their thoughts. They are stuck with their own suffering, deprived of closure.”²

- Alice Brittan 2008

¹Robin Metcalfe, *Three Senses and Table Talk*, St Mary’s University Art Gallery 2005.

²Miriam Seidel, *Arrest at Eastern State Penitentiary*, 2002.





THE VESSEL

Commissioned by the City of Toronto, Department of Parks
Taddle Creek Park Toronto, ON Canada
Installation date Fall 2010.

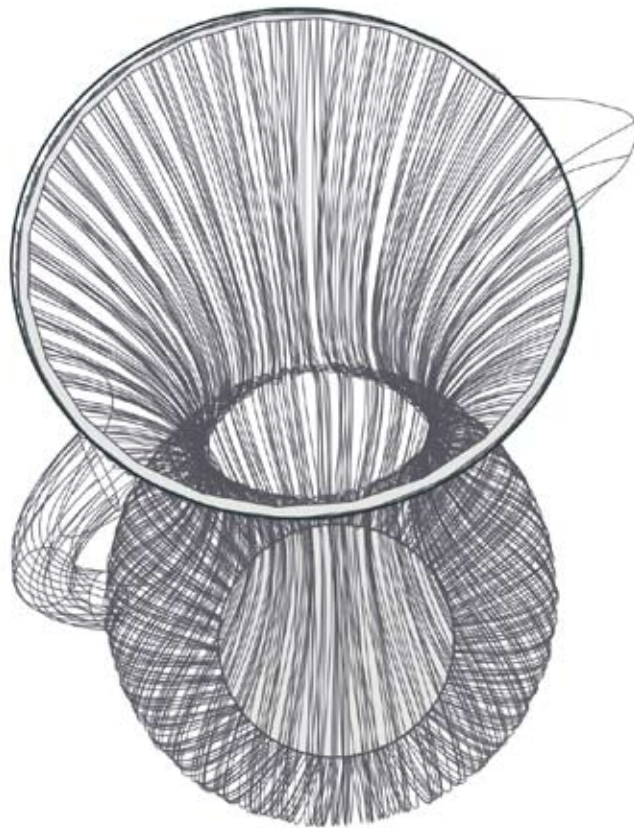
► The Vessel

5.7m high Stainless Steel Sculpture with
Water Feature.

I have created a large sculpture of a water-carrying vessel made from 4 kilometers of stainless steel rod. The length of the rod is the approximate distance that Taddle Creek ran from Taddle Creek Park through downtown to Lake Ontario. I have reconstituted a memory of the buried creek by referencing its length and bending the steel rod into water-carrying arteries that form a vessel. The sculpture's surface is porous, allowing one to see glimpses of the light that slices through the stainless steel rods that create its volume. Water will flow from the top of the rim of the vessel over its surface and then cascade onto the ground

plane, creating sound that drowns out the noise of traffic. The piece will create the impression of an over flowing pitcher, evoking the creek's long history as a source of sustenance. Water flowing from the Vessel is stored in an underground cistern to irrigate the park.

Ilan Sandler 2009





THE BOOK

Commissioned by Art Stage 2006
Pearson International Airport

Painted steel

4 × 4.9 × 3
meters

► *The Book* is a steel sculpture with two pages torn away from its spine. The spine is perpendicular to the ground, the covers are open, and the pages appear to blow in the wind. From the highway viewers see a book that looks as if it were lifted by the wind and oriented towards a sheet that has already escaped its binding. Because the scale of the book is enlarged, the sculpture becomes anthropomorphized and appears to be performing a choreographed dance with the escaping page. The rigid steel plates look animated because of the pages' articulation as rolling forms suggesting a drama between pages and books, readers and words, languages and alphabets, as well as writers and ideas. From the vantage point of the highway, one can see the sculpture as a representation of a literary struggle: despite the attempt to bind ideas together, a page of thoughts escapes.

Although most books tend to be read from front to back, *The Book's* gesture can be absorbed by viewers in an instant as they drive by the installation. However, viewers who have an opportunity to get closer to the site will recognize that the holes in the steel pages form clusters of words. The clustered texts link the letters of

the Latin alphabet to its predecessors, which include the Phoenician alphabet that emerged from Egyptian hieroglyphs. The Phoenician letters that developed from Egyptian hieroglyphs were used to represent syllabic sounds of Semitic languages dating to approximately 2000 B.C. Carvings of a twenty-two character Phoenician alphabet from 1000 B.C. have been linked to earlier carvings from approximately 1750 B.C. (known as the Wadi el-Hol script) that have been inspired by particular Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Each cluster of letters on the page ripping out of the book are symbols that were developed from architectural and technological innovations. The letters on the freed page were derived from parts of the human body. As light passes through the outlines of the characters in the book their projections continue to change and the letters and symbols shift into forms that are less familiar. The future imprints of text on a page are dependent on their ancestral roots as well as the symbolic languages, codes, and alphabets that are evolving out of our contemporary society. The steel book is a monument poised between eras in the evolution of thought.

NOTES ON THE ORIGINS OF THE LATIN ALPHABET

It is surmised that members of a Semitic tribe, possibly working as mercenaries or scribes within the Egyptian army, developed a notation for purely utilitarian purposes: in order for the mercenaries to communicate amongst themselves and keep track of the names and other information pertaining to captured troops, they developed a kind of shorthand notation that was syllabic in structure. Since the hieroglyphic system contained over three thousand characters and was therefore difficult for outsiders to learn, the idea of simplifying the writing system into a syllabic system allowed language to be more simply expressed phonetically. An example of the evolution of a letter can be seen in the Latin letter B. In order to make it easy for someone to remember that a certain symbol represented a 'B' sound, a shape was used that originated from a hieroglyph that began with 'B'. In ancient Hebrew for example the word BAYT means house, and thus from an Egyptian hieroglyph of a floor plan of a reed shelter a symbol was derived that over a thousand years came to look like a Phoenician character of a triangular domicile with a pillar attached to it. The modern day form of the letter B evolved through a number of civilizations that included Greek and Etruscan writing systems.

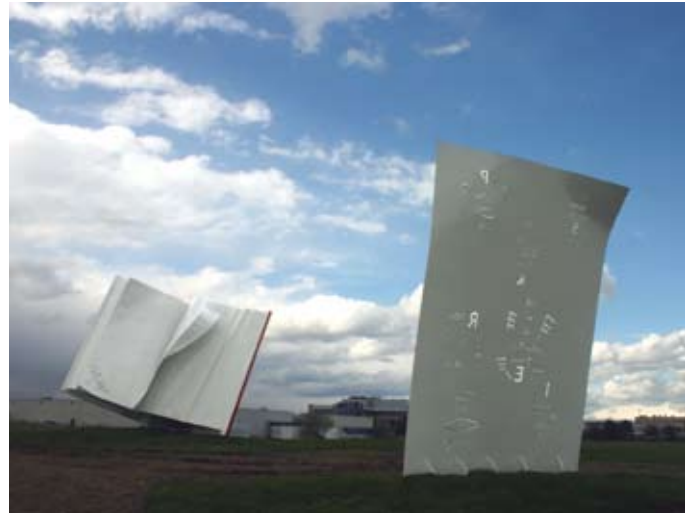
—Ilan Sandler, 2006

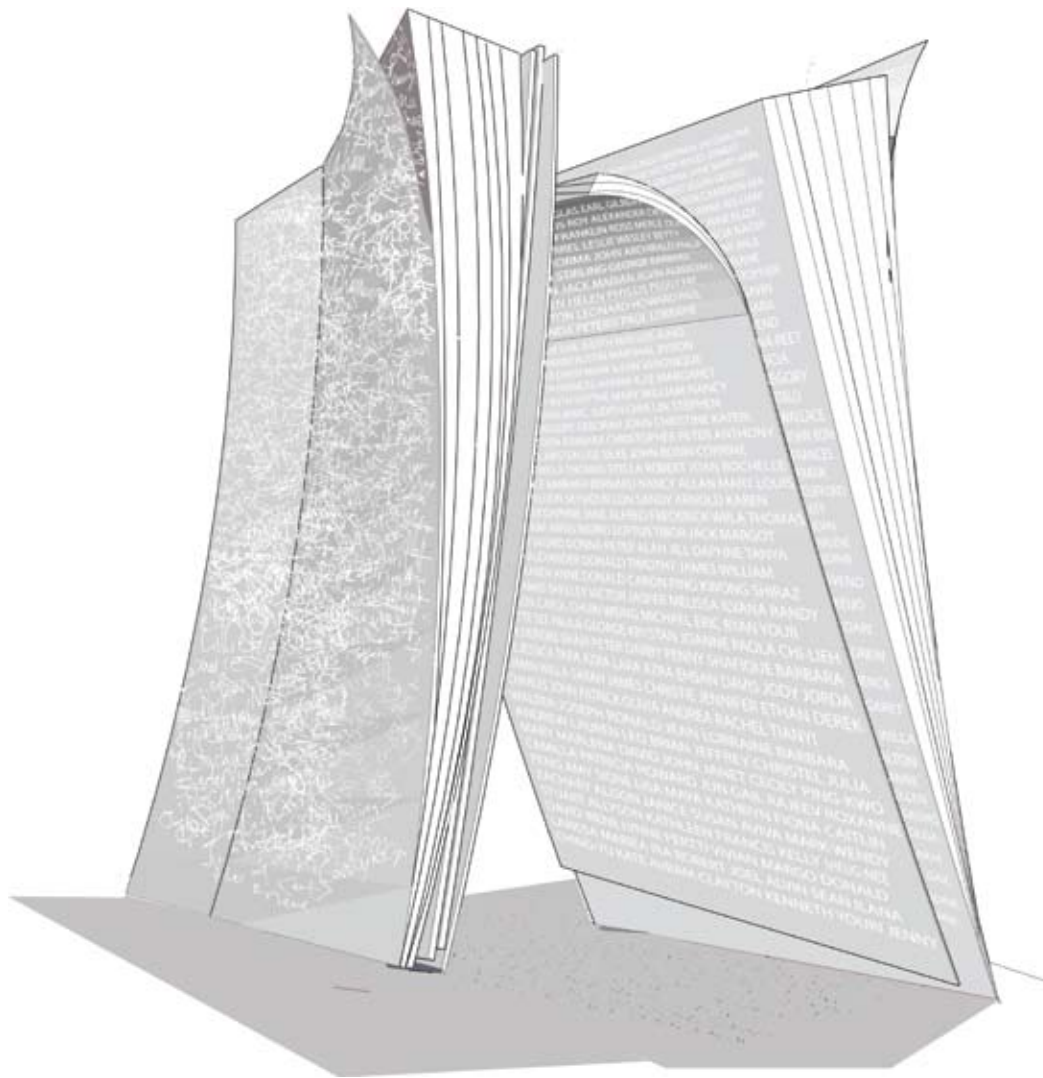
SOURCES FOR FURTHER READING:

Sacks, David. *Letter Perfect: The Marvelous History of Our Alphabet from A to Z*. Broadway Books. Random House Inc. USA. 2004

Albright, William Foxwell., *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and their Decipherment*. Harvard University Press. USA. 1966

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Bronze_Age_alphabets





	WHAT'S YOUR NAME?	Commissioned by Tridel and North Toronto Collegiate Institute Installation: 2011	Stainless steel	3.6 x 3 x 2.7 meters
--	--------------------------	---	-----------------	----------------------

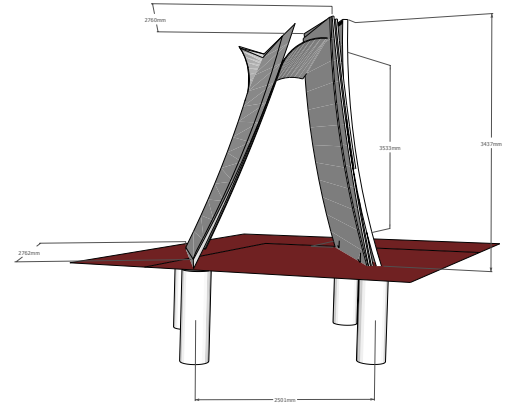
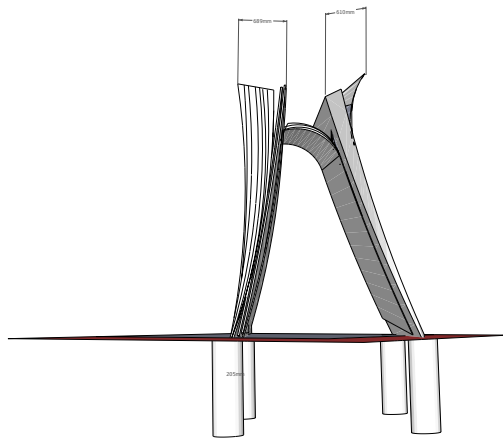
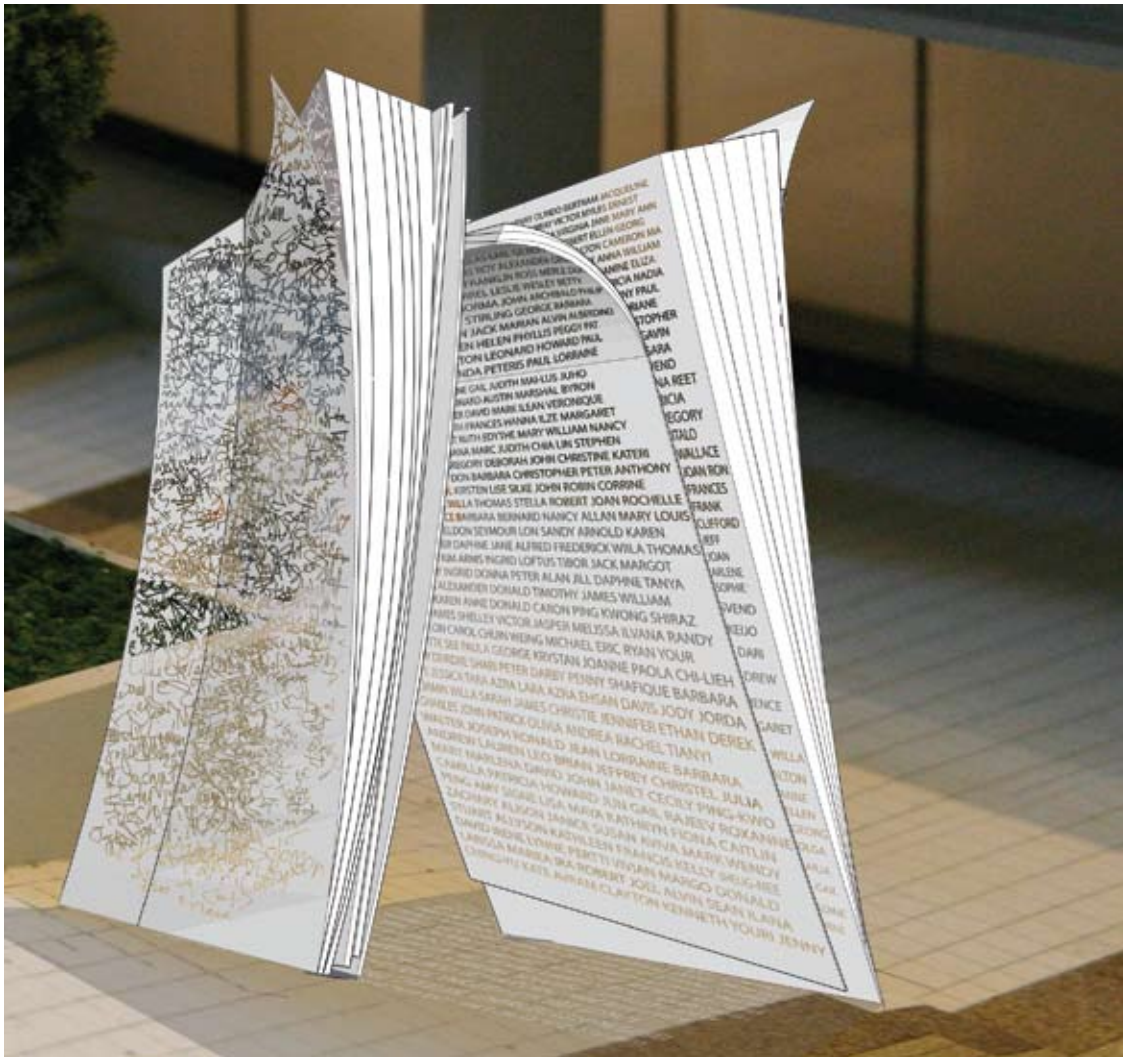
► “What’s Your Name?” is the first question we ask someone; by answering, we announce ourselves to each other and to the world. From childhood, students are taught to introduce themselves, to write their proper names on all of their schoolwork, and to respond when their names are called. But in adolescence, our relationship to those proper names often changes because a name is no longer something given but something made, crafted and personalized by the deliberate art of the signature and of the nickname. Schools, and particularly high schools, are where the proper name and the signature intersect: here adolescents begin to learn the intellectual and moral requirements of the social world that has been created for them, while at the same time they are learning to create themselves.

I am creating a stainless steel sculpture that identifies North Toronto’s students, past and present, by reproducing their proper names and their handwritten signatures on large plates of steel shaped like pieces of paper. A stainless steel sculpture depicting two sheaves of paper leaning against one another will show first names of stu-

dents who have attended the school since 1912. Their given names will be cut out of the steel, allowing light to pass through the surface of one sheaf and on the other sheaf signatures used by current and past students will be cut into the steel. The sculpture is made of stainless steel, it is dynamic and porous rather than monolithic and opaque.

Paper and print, which are the core tools of education, become dynamic sculptural forms on which an imprint of students’ public and private identities is inscribed.

—Ilan Sandler, 2008





► Recording *My Data Set* is an ongoing project in which I am accumulating my biometric data using a range of analogue and digital technologies including: finger-printing; physical measurements; optical, thermal, and Voltaic imaging techniques. I am most interested in the variations detected in my physiology from moment to moment as these techniques capture slices of my identity. In contrast to forensic and other systems of biometric analysis that are looking for consistency within a data set, I am taking the captured data and emphasizing the morphological differences. The video projection in the alcove is a set of 30 fingerprints from my left index finger captured in rapid succession, analyzed and then digitally edited. As the video fades from print to print one can see the variation in the enlarged impressions created by the same finger. The fingerprints have been projected to the size of my head leaving a trace of my identity as a virtual imprint on paper.

I have begun the Recording of My Data Set with my fingerprints because they are common markers of identity

that can be presented as a series of enigmatic portraits. The subtle differences among each impression of the fingerprints show the vitality of individuality being processed by a homogenous technology. I became interested in the analysis of fingerprints because the technology is undergoing a revolution as digital techniques-- including Volta Potential Mapping using the Scanning Kelvin Probe (SKP)-- are replacing direct dusting. Materials Science Researchers Geraint Williams and Neil McMurray have recently shown “that the SKP technique is able to visualise fingermarks obscured beneath optically opaque soot films and retrieve ridge detail in instances where fingermarks have been physically removed (e.g. by rubbing with a tissue) from a metal surface. Fingerprints have been admissible in court as identifying markers of individuals for over one hundred years; and only recently the technologies have accelerated in their development to improve the image quality of the captured impression. I continue to wonder about the unexpected results that are produced by the elusive and ever changing aspects of our identities as these indirect surveillance techniques continue

to propagate.

I am archiving written descriptions of the biometric techniques used to capture the information onto the accompanying Aluminum hard disk. The sculpture of a data-storage device allows viewers to act as a stylus, able to both optically read the inscribed texts and touch the surface, thereby leaving a trace of themselves.

Ilan Sandler 2008

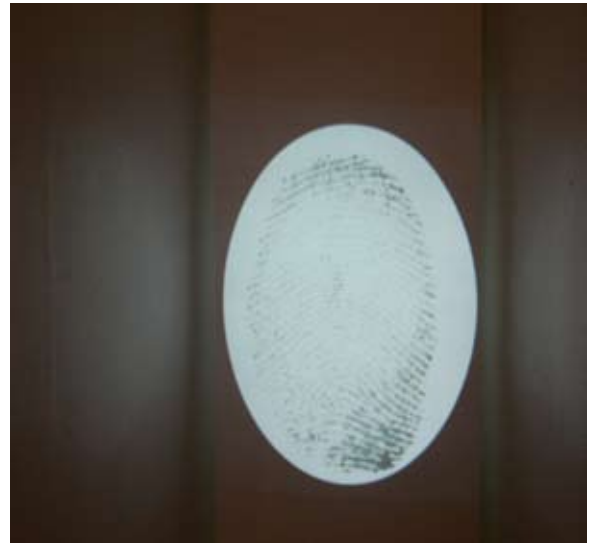




TABLE TALK

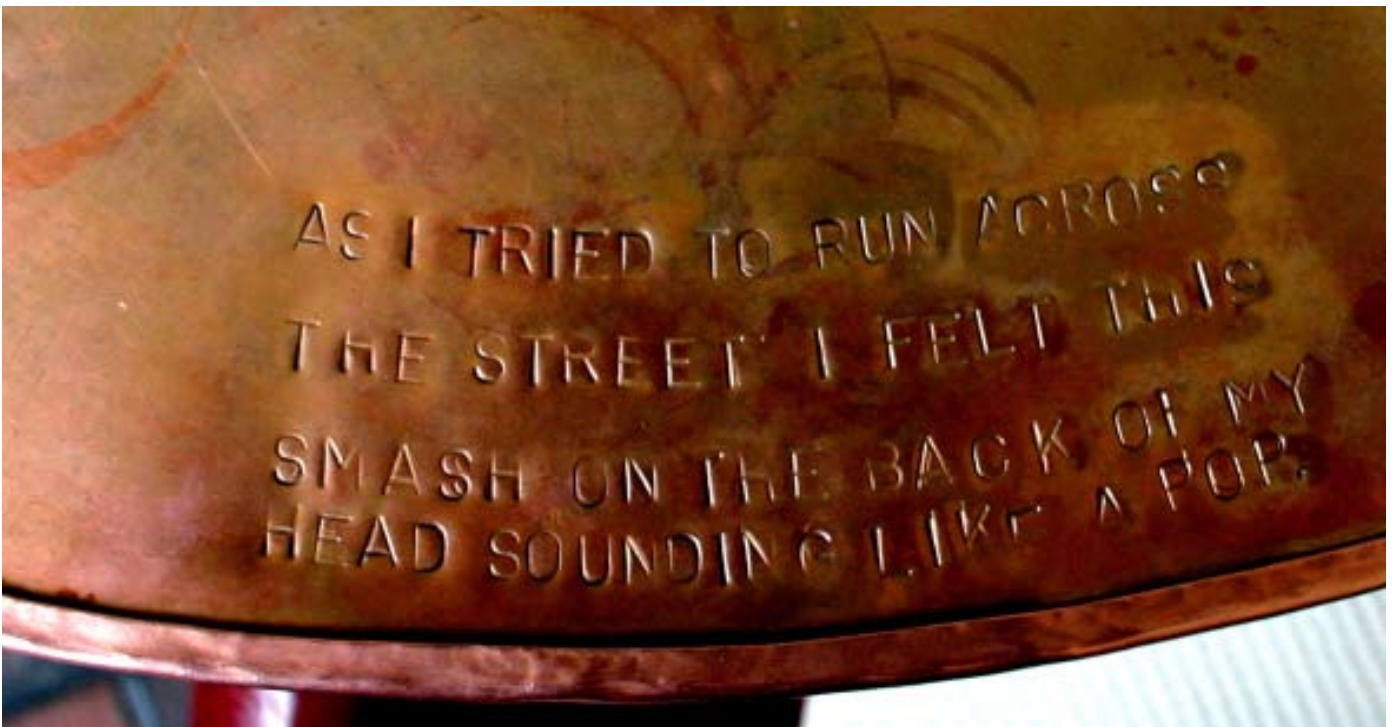
Solo Exhibition: Three Senses and Table Talk,
St Mary's University Art Gallery, Halifax NS, 2005.

Diameter 1 m
Copper

► TABLE TALK

Table Talk is a set of three circular copper table tops with text stamped around the circumference. The text is made up of excerpts from interviews with victims of or witnesses to violent crimes. The tables have been installed in the food court around the corner from the St Mary's University Art Gallery. The text stamped around their perimeters are from conversations with Ryan Suter, an artist living in Halifax; and Nino Richards, who was a high school student in Philadelphia at the time of our conversations in 2002. The third text has been left blank. In order to complete the project I have coordinated interviews with members of the St. Mary's community who wish to talk about violent incidents in their lives.

Halifax NS, Philadelphia PA, Copper
St. Mary's University Art Gallery
Table Talk, Diameter: 1m
2002 – 2005





THE ROAMING EYEBALL

Solo Exhibition: Three Senses and Table Talk,
St Mary's University Art Gallery, Halifax NS, 2005.

Diameter: 3
meters
Steel

- The Roaming Eyeball was designed to possess a functional role in a live performance that explored aspects of a human sense dislocated from the body. The sculpture possesses visual media components that eventually reveal characteristics of sensory perception to viewers in the exhibition space. However the initial impact of the work is in the experimental phase when placed in public spaces recording sensory information.

PERFORMANCE

The large steel sphere was rolled around the streets while the internally mounted video camera documents its path. As it rolls, the camera records a sequence of asphalt, streetscape and sky, and in this cycle of imagery a pattern of the panoramic emerges.

VIDEO

The projection merges the terrestrial and the celestial and exposes the absurdity of having a part of the body freed from its whole. The video is re-edited each time the Eyeball is rolled through a new place. The final video is 30 minutes long and is comprised of footage

from four cities: Philadelphia, New London, Kitchener and Halifax

I am interested in seeing what an "eye" can see when it is dislocated from a body. Instead of a sensory organ tracking objects from an eye socket, it is released from the constraints of the head. It becomes an object whose vision is dependent on the surface it is rolling over.

In the development of all my projects I gather information about my subject from a wide range of sources. In the case of the Eyeball my research went beyond medical physiology and was influenced both by experimentation with surveillance systems in installation contexts, the work of Michael Snow and by immersing myself in a range of literary and philosophical sources, from Sophocles to John Sayles' Film: "Brother From Another Planet".

In the words of Emerson: "I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God."

While we were rolling the eyeball around I couldn't help but feel at times like Sisyphus and wonder what did I do to deserve this punishment.

Ilan Sandler 2002.





TACTILITY

Permanent Installation: Prospect, Nova Scotia 2008
Solo Exhibition: Three Senses and Table Talk, St Mary's University Art Gallery, Halifax NS, 2005. Steel, High density Foam, Digital Audio.

3.3 x 1.7 x 1.15
meters

- In my research on the senses and specifically touch I have translated various tactile sensations into sound, video, and sculptural installations. Through the use of digital media I have explored whether the personal experience of being physically touched can be transformed into sculptural objects that lead to a deeper understanding of the subjective sensation.

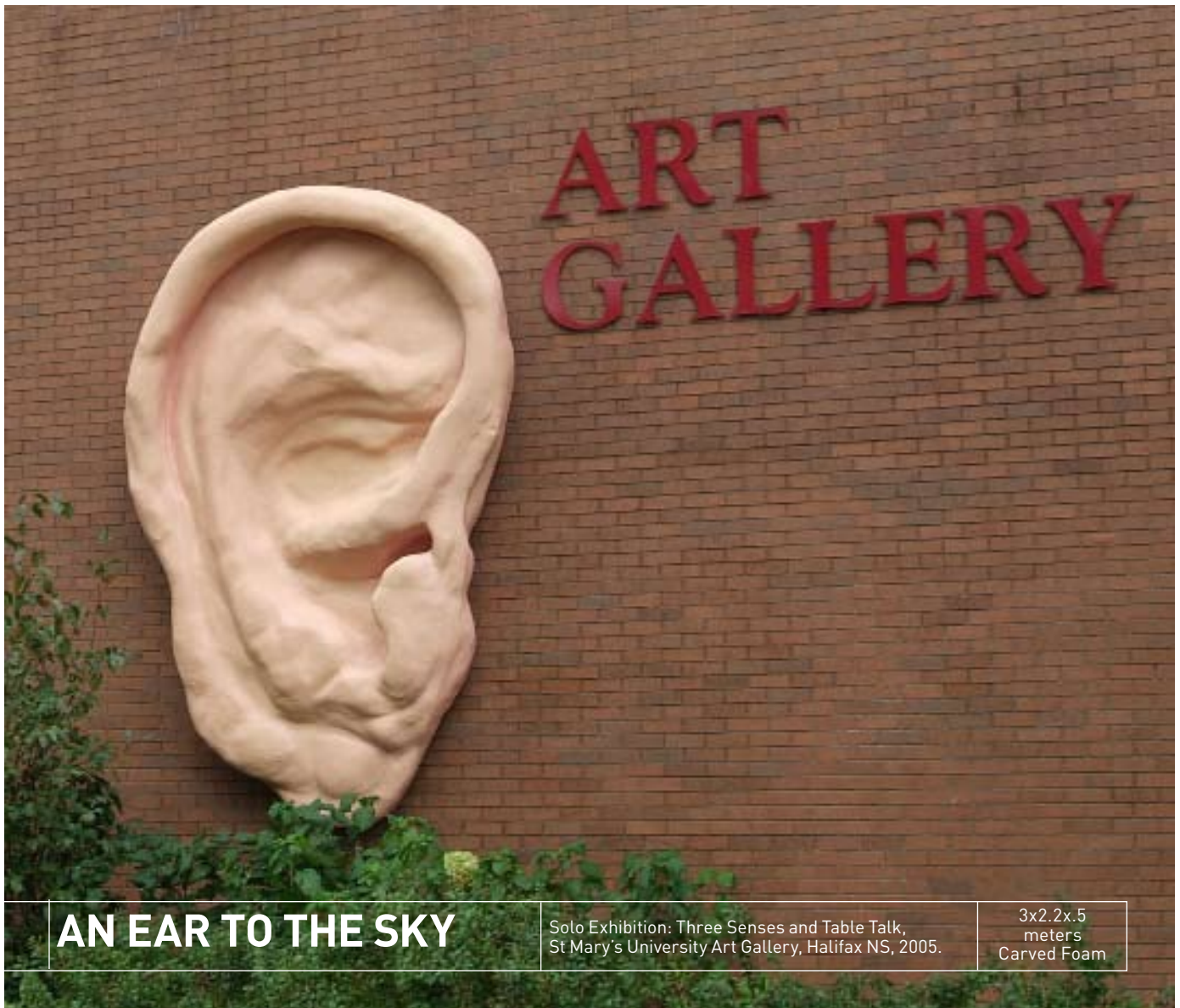
My sculpture of a 12-foot hand called *Tactility* reverberates with the sounds of touch receptors firing, it depicts the less tangible notions of touch through sound and vibration. When I began to turn my attention to the more subjective and deeply internal sense of touch I researched touch in various forms of representation. I came across the work of two researchers: Dr Mandayam Srinivassan of MIT and Dr Robert H Lamotte of the Yale School of Medicine who in the late eighties had managed to convert the signals sent by touch receptors in a monkey's hand into an audio signal. Hence creating a real time analogue of the experience of touch. As the monkey ran its fingers across different surfaces the intensity and frequency of the

signals fired by the receptor's varied. The researchers were able to show that the hundred or so receptors in our finger pads actually sent a different signal to the brain depending on the properties of the surface being touched.

The exaggerated size of *Tactility* magnifies its ability to meet and intercede in the world, reflecting what I believe to be the true scale the hands' role as the carrier of sensory messages and an agent of human will. In the case of the hand I decided to carve the object's fingers but encase the palm, wrist and back of the hand in soft malleable materials that would allow vibrations and sound to permeate its membrane. In its final form I edited the various sound recordings into a drone that could be heard through the hand and also felt as one touched the object. I wanted to contrast the objects' size with activity that is occurring on the scale of nerves.

Ilan Sandler 2005





- While anchored *An Ear to the Sky* appears as a sensory organ 'listening' to the water's ambient sounds. It is an island passively absorbing all the audio waves in its vicinity.

As an aural surveillance object it transmits the sounds of the harbour to the headset on the pier. The Ear floats like a boat, and has been on diurnal surveillance missions in Harbours New York City, Halifax NS, and New London CT.

Once it was installed at St Mary's for my exhibition *Three Senses* it became a conspicuous object that was recording sounds within a 10meter radius. People within the gallery could listen to edited excerpts of the ear's recordings. When on water it is an object that has mobility in terms of its bouancy, on land it was restored to a position similar to that of the head: vertical, attached and listening.

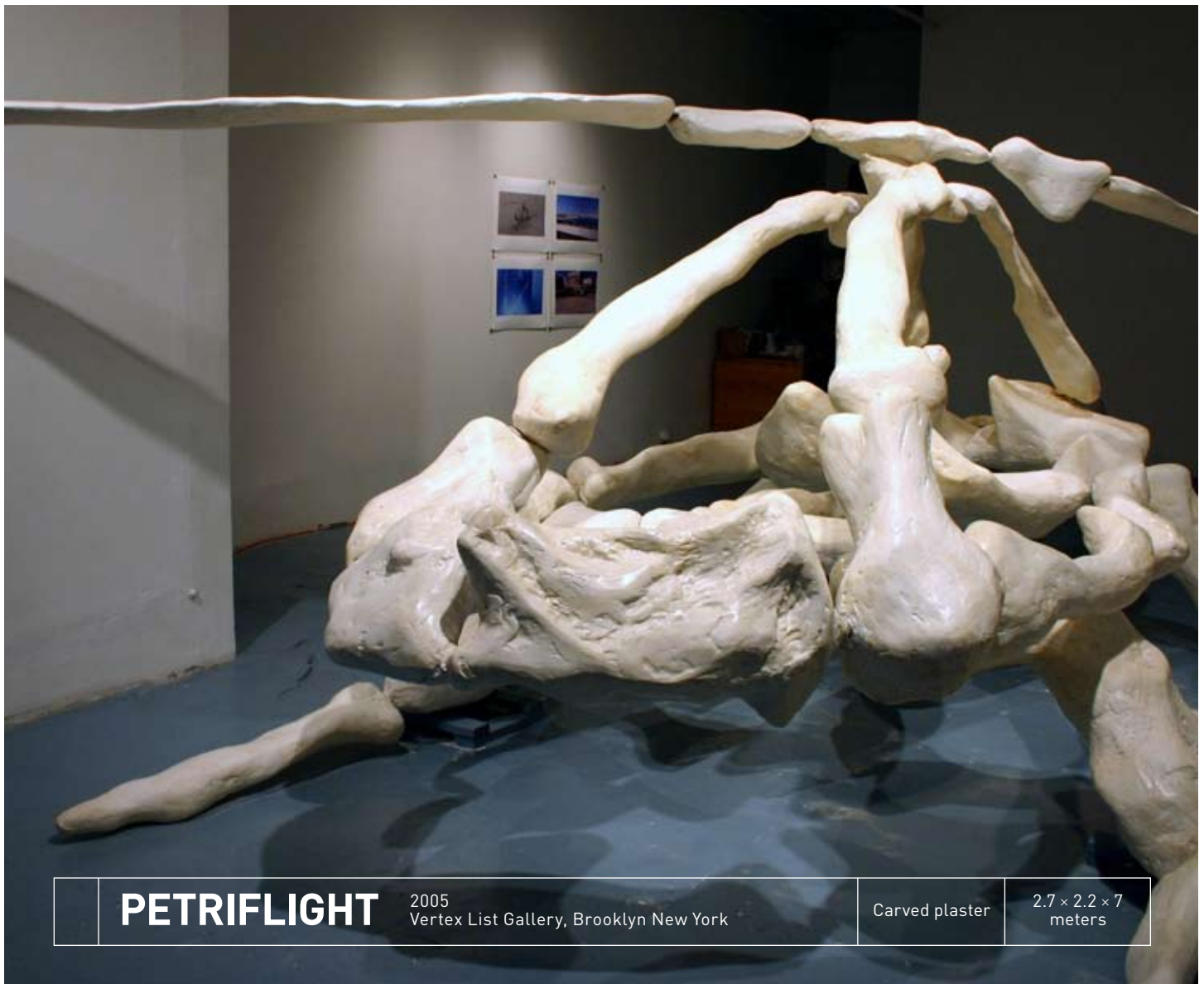
Like the Eyeball the Ear is in fact recording sound as an organ that is freed from the constraints of a body.

When it was in the harbour the attempt was to capture an expansive sound, as if the whole harbour were a large chamber with sounds crossing its shores. When it was installed on the gallery wall the recordings ranged from truly mundane sounds of diesel engines to the disturbing confessions of a group of young woman in residence. Inside the gallery one could listen to a combination of live and prerecorded segments from its various locales.

"We were really mad at her so we went and sat on her bed and just stared at her."

Ilan Sandler 2005.





PETRIFLIGHT

2005
Vertex List Gallery, Brooklyn New York

Carved plaster

2.7 × 2.2 × 7
meters

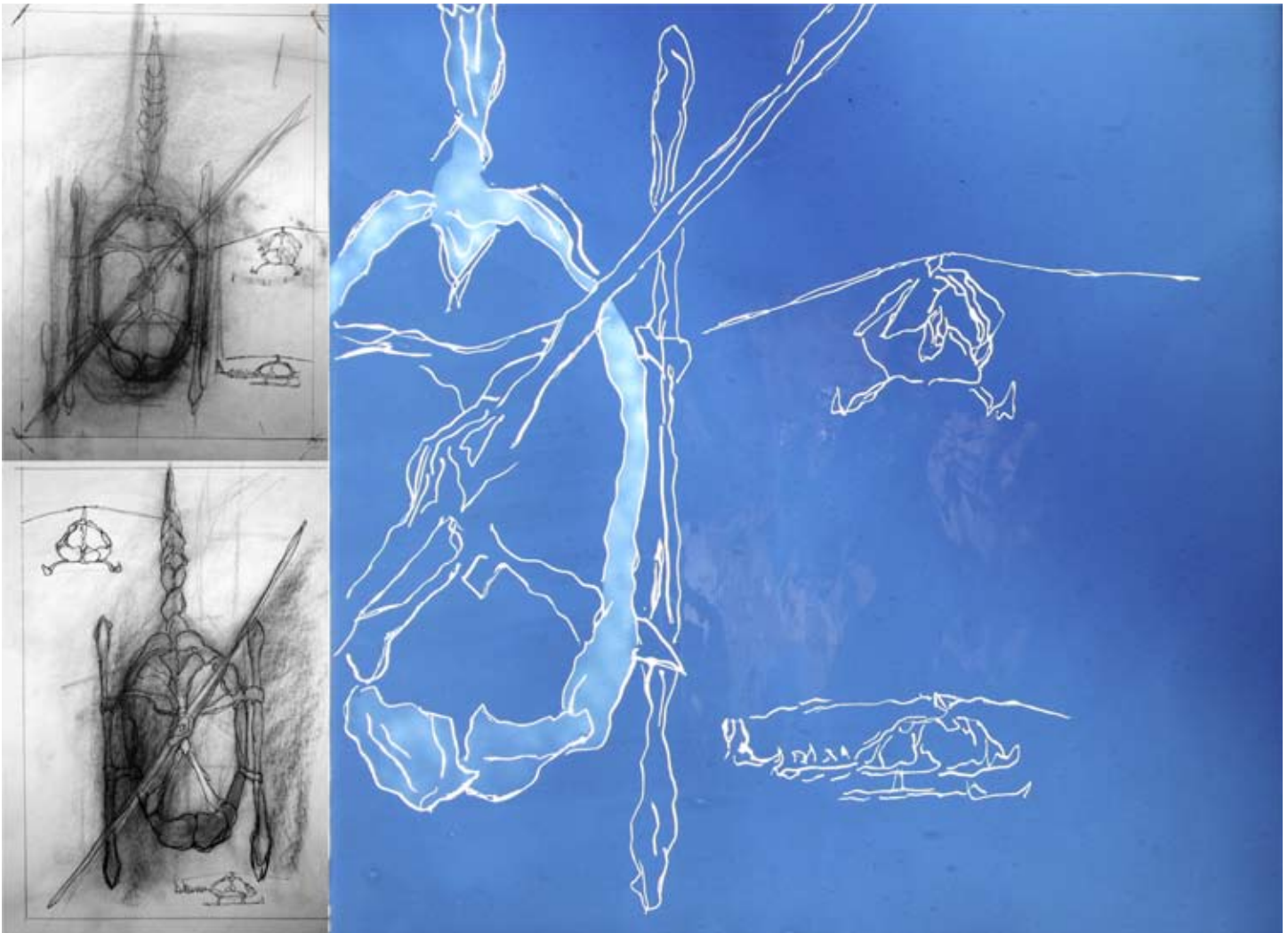
- *Petriflight* is a sculpture that integrates aspects of biological species with contemporary technological machines. The project has involved sculpting the form of a full size helicopter from simulated dinosaur bones. I am interested in exploring both real and metaphoric influences that living organs and fossils have had on the evolution of objects. I have created an object that merges contemporary technological phenomena with prehistoric remains in order to merge two distant epochs in the evolution of life on earth.

Petriflight fuses the remains of an ancient world with a contemporary flying machine that offers an alternative reconstitution of the archeological fragment. While paleontologists piece together a body and theorize a way of life from bones and fossils, *Petriflight* moves from the forensic to the fantastic. I am interested both in the unique sculptural properties of the helicopter—an agile and economic vehicle for human flight with clear links to the world of insects and birds—and its similarity to the skeletal characteristics of dinosaurs. The sculpture links our desire to fly with our archaeological knowledge of early life, both of which represent dramatic cultural

and technological achievements. The fantasy of *Petriflight* liberates fossils from the earth and launches them into a context in which a sculptural object can represent ideas from two distinct worlds and thereby create its own timeless existence. The sculpture's material presence becomes a point of intersection for the interdependence between technology, fossil fuels and the origin of the ideas that form new objects.

The piece has developed from research of dinosaurs in three collections: The Fundy Geological Museum in Nova Scotia, The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Museum of Natural History in New York City. The unique collections allowed me to explore the evolution of different bone structures; from the early Triassic period at the Fundy Museum to the wide range of creatures from several pre-historic periods on display at the other museums. Spending time in these collections reinforced the relationships that exist between museological displays and contemporary sculptural practices.

—Ilan Sandler, 2005



30 bones



ARREST

Commissioned by Eastern State Penitentiary
Philadelphia PA 2001–2003

Stainless steel,
Digital audio

Various
dimensions

- A young woman is murdered. Her body is found, but the killer is not. Her heartbeat is arrested, but no arrest is made. Ilan Sandler's *Arrest* explores with heartbreaking precision the distance between these two aspects of one event, the purgatorial space in which he and his family have lived since the death of his sister Simone in 1994 at the age of 21.

A cellblock in the long-closed Eastern State Penitentiary provided the environment for this work. This historic stone structure, dating to 1829, is thick with the atmosphere of lives lived, and extravagant with decay: peeling plaster, brick dust, moss, broken furniture. Rather than try to counter such an overwhelming presence with a large gesture, Sandler has used economical means to bend the weight of this prison environment into new meanings: piles of brick dust suggest the inert remains of a life, dust returning to dust. Streaming rust marks running down the back wall of a cell stand in for tears. Vaulted ceilings of cells and corridor become shrines to loss.

Inside the cells, heartbeats sound, alone or in thudding counterpoint as recordings of Simone's surviving family

members. Along with these are their words, culled from recorded conversations and then rendered in a sweetly childlike cursive script in steel wire, that forms fragile, filigreed bars across the sixteen cell doors. All this precipitates an experience of deep inwardness: the interiority of a cell originally built for a single prisoner to contemplate his crime; the heartbeat heard as if inside the body; the curlicue wire messages floating in midair, as wispy as thoughts inside a head.

The effect of those thin "gates of text," as Sandler calls them, is tricky, however. Sandler is exquisitely sensitive to point of view, here and in other works.¹ And his conceptual layering is as subtle and effective as his choice of materials. On the most overt level, we look inside cells closed off by words. The survivors of a horrific crime are imprisoned, in this sense, by their thoughts. They are stuck with their own suffering, deprived of closure.

But the gates are permeable, at least perceptually, as thin screens that allow us to hold two views at once: flat and deep, steel and inner space, words and physical brick dust, rust, light on walls. In this duality we can begin to imagine the perpetrator inside a cell, caught

now, and made to see everything through the screen of those thoughts: held in a kind of apparatus for the inducement of remorse. In this sense, Sandler has constructed a sacralized space for an imagined communal ritual, leading to remorse on one hand, and catharsis on the other.²

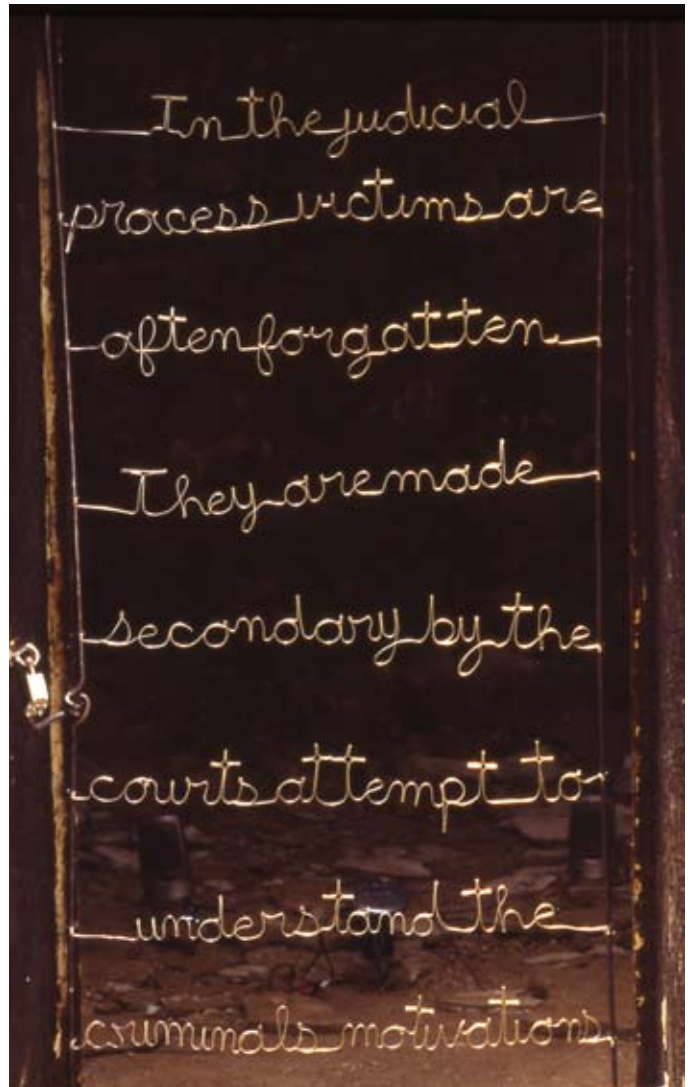
An equivalence balances finely on the fulcrum of the wire gates, of two purgatories, one real and one imagined; the family's and the perpetrator's. Sandler's piece honors the first, in the perpetually unfinished state of emotional incompleteness of his family, and opens the possibility of the other. The recorded sound of birds heard at the end of the cellblock, taken from the surroundings where Simone's body was found, seems to offer the promise of some alchemical change inside the affected hearts, some small movement toward peace.

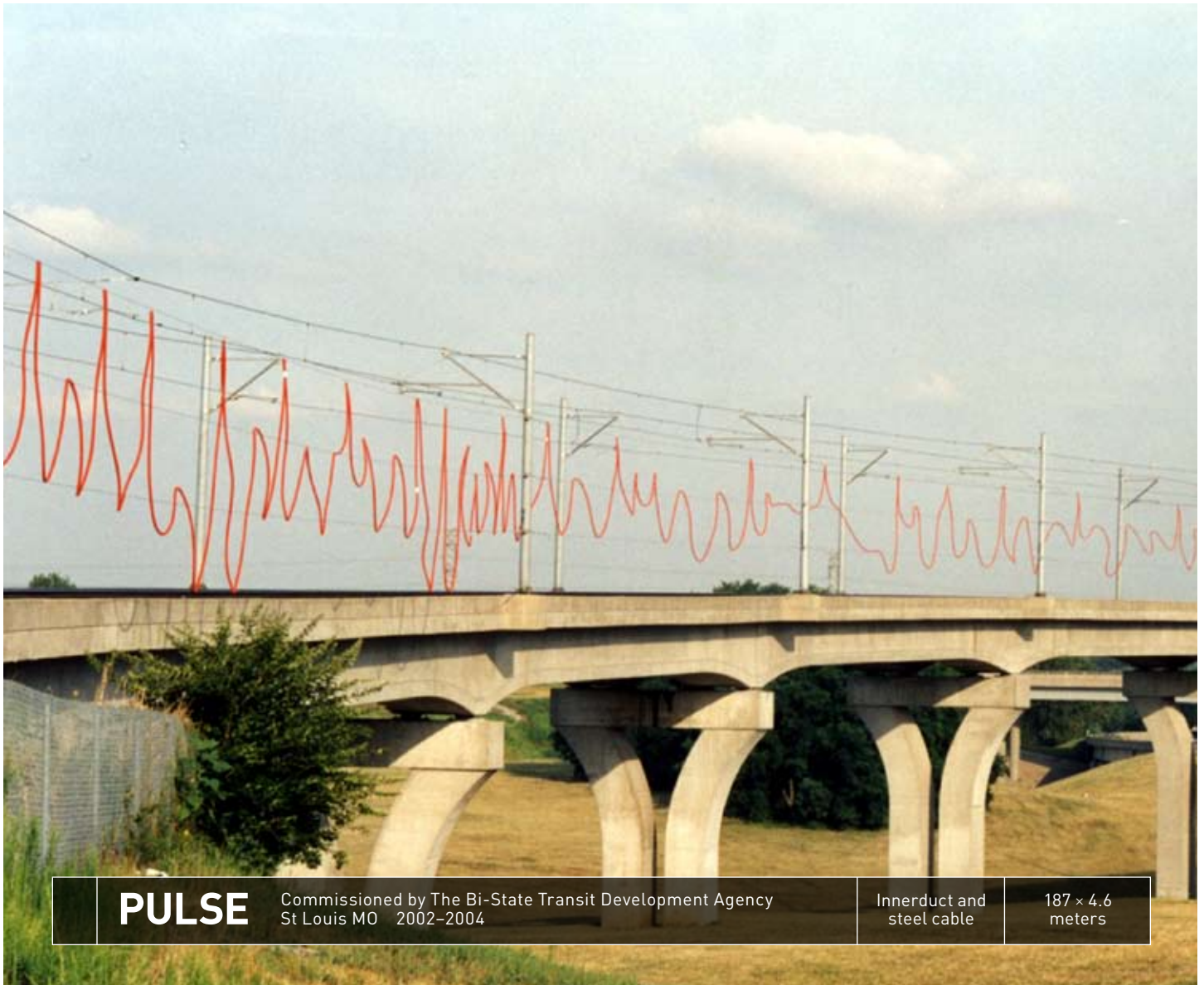
—Miriam Seidel

*Miriam Seidel is a corresponding editor
for Art in America.*

1 His Roaming Eyeball (2002), for example, is a structure engineered to manifest shifting points of view; and his outdoor public artwork, the 614-foot long Pulse, is conceived to be seen from multiple, fast-moving vantage points.

2 Another work, The Mouse Project (1999–2000), was completed with a ritual act, the covert burial of a mouse's remains in a museum wall.





PULSE

Commissioned by The Bi-State Transit Development Agency
St Louis MO 2002–2004

Innerduct and
steel cable

187 × 4.6
meters

- The sculpture consists of a grid of steel cable and a line of bright orange corrugated plastic innerduct material. The pulsing line can be seen as phenomena as varied as transit flow, a heartbeat, a seismic wave or an e-mail. The sculpture is visible from the train line, the highway and the air.

—Ilan Sandler, 2002



PEDDLING IDEAS

Philadelphia
2000

Steel

1.2 × 1
meters

- Two steel sculptures of bicycles were suspended between buildings in Old City Philadelphia during the 2000 Fringe Festival. The bicycles appear to travel between buildings on opposite sides of the street.

—Ilan Sandler, 2000