

Relating flags to things I'm interested in conceptually

- Placing a flag can be an aggressive act, like a farmer placing flags in his fields to scare away unwanted visitors, or a scout marking territory on reconnaissance.
 - Surely these aren't actually intimidating to anyone who isn't a bird. Can placing flags "aggressively" be farcical?
 - *I HOPE SO*
 - To mark territory, to assert an authoritative presence
 - What does it mean to place a flag in a place where territory has already been claimed?
 - The flag becomes a political tool
 - Of course a flag is an aggressive act. Even if the average person flying a flag from their porch isn't saying "intruders stay out," their pride still supports a subtext of national power. There is a weird issue of pride here, where I am questioning if having pride in a flag entails having pride in everything the flag represents (i.e. they obviously have pride in what the flag means to them, but do they have pride in what others see the flag as? A southerner can fly a confederate flag and be proud of their region and it's "Southern Pride" but northerners might interpret that same flag as a symbol for racism.)
 - I mean obviously people don't fly a flag and have conscious pride in the negative aspects others may see. How could they possibly know every interpretation outside of their immediate context? But, theoretically, do you have an obligation to know those interpretations if you're going to use a flag. You certainly do if you want to use flags in artwork.
 - There is an interesting conversation here about the specificity/locality of a flag. Is the meaning plastic enough to say what it needs to say perfectly? Is it scalable.
 - Maybe there is a farcical play that can happen here. Using a flag as symbol of representation is inherently messed up because the flag doesn't actually represent the same thing everywhere. How can this be exploited to make a Robert Smithson type body of work (believability-wise)
 - I mean, this *does* fit into the whole notion of simultaneously being idealistic and pessimistic: using the flag as a symbol of representation when really it doesn't actually represent that well.
 - This is extra funny to me because all this time I'd be emphasizing flag's efficiency, when it turns out whatever their message is, it isn't communicated that well
 - Unless you consider it this way: the flag is hyperlocal. It's, yes, mainly concerned with the local interpretation/reception of the flag, but it's also hypersensitive to its immediate context: its need to be efficient in movement, its height above the area's

obstructions. It's all about where it is. That makes their reading, and that makes the meaning. It's not the design, it's the locality. The design is totally arbitrary: so long as the audience agrees upon what it means, the sensitivity to the context builds its symbolism.

- Unrelated, but I'm totally enthralled with the sudden realization that it's most often about the gesture, *not* the content.
- On that note, what does it mean to draw the flag as a symbol? I guess it's important to question "as a symbol of what?" Are you thinking of the flag as symbol of representation? Are you thinking of it as a symbol for specific context representation and communication? I like the idea that the flag is a way to communicate with those are most local to you. What don't like is the unimplied subtext that it's unnecessary to communicate with those that are not local to you
 - Does it say that? Just because it's in favor of one thing doesn't mean it rejects another. Still, it seems like it's saying that we need local conversation, and that global conversation is just fine without a special tool.
 - Maybe the megaphone is the global tool. That's pretty farcical. Obviously projecting your voice through a megaphone doesn't mean people outside your locality can hear. Speaking loudly to people don't speak your language doesn't mean they understand you better.
 - But hey, don't knock it. I mean, Klutis used it (in some other form) to talk about representation. It'd be interesting to know how far he thought that extended voices: did he consider this a tool to amplify the speaker to the nation? To the world?
 - There's also nothing that says these two have to represent local and global. The thing about these symbols is that they're pretty American. What if one was hypelocal to its immediate surroundings (the flag) and the other was a bit broader range? Maybe the megaphone is broader but still remains within a certain locality too. Like maybe the

megaphone can be used to talk about student groups. It's broader, but it doesn't spatialize itself like saying "it's global" and therefore the discussion of volume and actually hearing is invalid. Maybe it's the opposite of what I thought: the megaphone *does* need a label, and that label specifies what affinity group we're talking to or about.

- That's a good question: is the megaphone's extended range about talking to a wider group, or talking about a wider group locally? In other words, should the subject of the statement be a larger body, or should the recipient of the statement be a larger body?
- What happens when the megaphone's labeling is just of a flag? Does it then talk about extending the local wider? That sounds like globalism/neoliberalism, and I'm so not into that. But maybe you could read it as a "think locally, act globally" tired phrasing. Amplifying the local concern. That's the problem! I mean, that's why history sucks. It's too concerned with our concerns and not with the objective fact.
- Ok here's the fix: it's not about spreading an agenda, it's about moving towards representation and democratic decision-making. If you can build a structure that takes the flag's locality and brings it to a wider attention, that's not a bad thing. When it involves homogenizing the global, then it's bad; but as just ensuring everyone has representation, that's okay. So that type of structure is the ideal. What's the pessimism?

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- Talking about communication
 - Sebastian is talking about planes for communication? Where surfaces can be used for speech?
 - I think hypothetical, utopian structures for communication is also fruitful.
 - Complete acceptance of "the idealistic artist" No, you should also embody the cynicism/pessimism (*what is the right word here?*) of knowing most things fail to be perfect

- How can using symbols contribute to a sense of idealism or utopia?
- As a follow up, how can the fact that these symbols are from another time bridge a gap between political action and the discussion on history and the present
 - It seems logical that they can! The politics of what's happening here is what is making you question history. A flag and a megaphone can be the link: they may be real props from the past, but they are icons in the current. That shape, and the form, is presently an icon for the action more than it is the actual action.
 - Basically that question of history is considering history as a broken system
- Flags (pennants) historically as a trophy, and contemporarily as a souvenir celebrating an institution
 - Today as an icon, the whole "souvenir" part comes in when we look back on the past usage and try to mimic that meaning even though we've moved on
 - This could be the link that connects the flag as a team-supporter to the history issue! The only thing that allows this form to be an icon is that at some point its form was an object in use that actually used to mean something, but maybe we don't even think of that usage anymore. The question of history comes in when we wonder what we recognize: the icon or the actual object. Do we care about the present (seeing this form as an icon for something) or do we care about the past (recognizing an object that used to have function)? I am questioning here how significant that object's history is, when the icon (existing in the present) means the same thing. Maybe. I mean, the icon only means that because the past gave it that meaning. Well, I'm not saying the past has given us nothing, I'm just questioning what good it is to learn the derivation of something when the symbolic order takes care of instructing its meaning
 - I don't think this one is really going anywhere. It's worth noting that the pennant in the present is an icon for an object that existed historically, but that's about it. I wonder, then, what does it mean to draw an icon of an icon?
 - An icon of an icon of celebrating a team or institution
 - So what is the role of history in developing an icon? So the first icon (a souvenir flag) gets created because an object has use then gets outdated. We see it, recognize its history and transfer its historic meaning to the icon. This transition feels like it still has to mimic the form fairly well. For example, it's still an object, the same material, and usually has a design printed on it (like the name of the institution or something). The second icon (the drawing of the souvenir) is created when the first icon transforms from signifier to signified. The first icon has to become its own entity before the second icon can emerge. In real world terms, the souvenir signifies institutional support, without first channeling the

actual object. The original reference is obsolete. Creating another layer of icon erases the history. Creating an icon questions history.

- How can flags be used to talk about question the past's role in the present and the present's role in the past?
 - First, what is your interest in this?
 - Typically, an appeal to tradition or history is made in defending cases. Sure, we all agree that we are currently in a position to define what world we want to live in (and I think it is indeed the artist's role to work with this types of ideas, and it's definitely the type of thinking that's been instilled in me because of Cooper), but how much of our new world do we want to base on the old world? With a rapidly technologically developing world, how relevant are history lessons to defining the future? I don't mean to say the past is irrelevant, or even that we should shift focus away from the past, but I want to echo that in creating a new world we must thoroughly question everything the past held. It's like Asher repeats from queer theory (and a quote that's been bugging me ever since): "There will never be a system that fully includes and represent everyone, and there will always be flaws with whatever system is in place. So, the best we can do is recognize this continual failure and continually hope for something better to be put in place" This is the type of oscillating between (or maybe just simultaneity of) idealism and pessimism (pessimism isn't the right word, but I'm not yet sure what is) that I'm really interested in. I think that oscillation relates strongly to past and the present
 - On oscillation vs simultaneity: I can't tell if I'm flip-flopping between feelings or if I continuously feel both directions pulling equally
 - Wait wait wait. I mistyped. It's not that I'm wary and query of the *past*. I'm wary of *history* because of its a facade: leading us to be it is a facsimile of the past when really is written in the present and is very aware of the issues of the present. History is the present in the past, when it should be the past in the present. History has revisions: things excluded, things overtly included. History is geopolitical, and it is most likely biased.
 - So how do you experience the past if not through history?
 - Was it Aristotle that believed looking up into the stars to define our galaxy was foolish because we could look down and define an ideal cosmology? Maybe we can experience the past by looking the opposite direction. We can form an idealism (and as queer theory dictates, continuously shoot down our own manifestations of that idealism)
 - This is of course farcical! Duh! Whatever idealism I would create would obviously be informed by the knowledge I already learned

of the past. Maybe the huge joke of it all makes it too stupid. It's not at "Robert Smithson level" yet. Robert Smithson created a really unbelievable of how everything worked, but he created a full system to make that logic seem irrefutable: "how can I argue with you when you're so convinced? How can I argue with you when I look at your system and for a split moment I'm enticed and *I'm convinced?*"

- So create a complete system that is simultaneously obviously unbelievable but enticing/believable. Then fully embrace it! The act of farce can be known to you, even if others don't totally see it. That you are not being serious should be clear to at least 50% of the audience, but 100% should—at one point or another, even for the slightest moment—be enticed enough to suspend their disbelief. . . Just like history.

- **Icons and perfection**

- Can icons achieve a perfection of representation? Should we accept that a certain symbol means something, can it be thought to be seamless with the actual idea? Can an icon immediately evoke a thought or idea?
 - Maybe in a locality
 - All semiotics function this way: meaning is only apparent in a society that accepts it. How is an icon any different from a word?
 - Let's say yes for now. Icons themselves are perfect because they represent an idea but aren't the idea themselves. The recipient of an icon could take with an issue, but they don't issue with the icon itself. I don't think this is true, but okay.
 - What does it mean, then, when you make an icon of an icon? Does an icon speak to icons, or does it speak to the idea the iconographed icon represents? What does it mean to abstract an idea through another layer of representation
 - Maybe it's more appropriate to say that icons are one of the best examples of the *myth of* representation: that we think that some idea can be fully embodied by a symbol. The idea is abstracted, but we forget the difference between the actual and the icon. They signify the same thing to us. We believe in that myth of representation.

- So when you make an icon of an icon, you abstract the nuances of the actual idea even more (specific details fall away, but it stays real enough that we fill in all the gaps of what we think is missing. We think, then, that the icon fully represents the idea.) So abstracted more, allows the viewer more room to fill in for the initial idea?
 - This immediately makes me think, then, how we come to accept that myth. If I'm relating this to what Asher said, it's taught.
- **On templates**
 - Making templates of flags and megaphones from plastic, using the templates for drawing, but also thinking of the templates as artworks in themselves. Use art to facilitate art.
 - What does this "standardize"? Political action? Student action?
 - I mean, this is really what making icons was doing anyway. This is just taking it farther. It extends the use. It extends use and makes it easier, but by adding another layer of icon, it removes it once more from what it really should be, and therefore lessens the effectiveness. Interest in past, present, future. Looks at the past icon, works specifically for the present, knowing that in the future it will not work. But actually this facilitates the transition into ineffectiveness. So it's sort of farcical, or at least has the potential to be. I can present these in the moment as bringing access to forms that represent student power, facilitating anyone to create images that reference student power. But in a more meta sense, I should know that increased access to these tools would lessen the gesture. And I should have an opinion on that: do I care? Do I agree with that nihilistic viewpoint? This is an issue I really do need to work out outside of just flags and megaphones. I keep pushing for accessibility with the belief that with access to information people will do the right thing and will better themselves, but what if Kierkegaard is right? What if it just means people never have to feel passionately about anything because they can cast such a broad net, and therefore they never achieve mastery?

Ok here's first there's actual pennant flag. The object with function from which all icons are formed. The object's function is as a prize to the victors.

Then there's the souvenir flag, which references the initial object. It simplifies the function to mainly form (i.e. Knows that seeing the original object signifies something (victory) and attempts to recreate that by inserting the form.) eventually, this replaces the original in terms of a reference point. The new function is displaying hopeful support.

Then there's the drawing of the flag, which references the souvenir. It reduces all specifications of applications to a form

Each layer of iconography simplifies specifications of application and then as a new entity takes on new function.

CAN A FLAG
BE AN ACT
OF
AGGRESSION?
DUH.

Brief ideas:

- Create a template a la plastic circle templates for flags Just laser cut some plastic. Then use that to make some structures. Do the same for the megaphone
- Megaphone/Cone shape made up with bent flags
 - flags are detritus..... is that the self defeating?
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