

TECHNOLOGY: PURSUING THE DIALECTICAL IMAGE

by

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of the requirements for the degree

of

Masters of Fine Arts

in

Art

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Craig David van den Bosch

April 2007

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I first typed the words utopian image into Google.... started finding the term dialectic associated with them, then dialectical, then I typed in utopian image dialectical...then I found Walter Benjamin and the dialectical image. This was how I acquired the title for my show. It just seemed to fit what I was trying to coalesce in my mind. After having researched various aspects of technology and how it has affected the body and will continue to do so today and into the future, I tried to find a central theme. I tried to pinpoint the root of our exponential technological pursuit. It occurred to me that the common thread was the pursuit of a Utopian Image within our society, our body and our mind.

Using the term, “dialectical image”, my current work addresses the dynamics of biology vs. technology and asks whether there will be a harmony between the two as the gap closes. The term dialectics has taken on a multitude of forms over the years. It can be defined as logic or any of its branches or any formal system of reasoning or thought. In addition, it can mean the juxtaposition or interaction of conflicting ideas, forces (virtual reality vs. reality, biology vs. technology) or in other words, a Marxist process of change through conflicting forces. In this instance, the conflicting forces are entropy and technology’s utopian promise. In today’s terms, “dialectics” can also refer to an understanding of how we can or should perceive the world (epistemology, the theory of knowledge), an assertion of the interconnected, contradictory, and dynamic nature of the world outside our perception of it (ontology, the study of being or existing), or a method of presentation of ideas or conclusions.

I am proposing an extension of the interpretation of the term “dialectical image” in accordance with today’s technologically driven possibilities. If Walter Benjamin gained interest in the dream as a legacy within Surrealism, a movement that, ultimately, was a disappointment to him, then the ability that technology holds to facilitate these dream-like states would fulfill the dialectical image. We then enter the waking dream. Benjamin believed that the fragments resulting from this process had to come from a collective, not solely the individual as the Surrealists believed. This is where they parted ways. Until this point, they were both in agreement that the phantasmal had to become

commonplace, reality. Technology is changing the way in which we interpret these age-old perceptions of reality and is weaving a new fabric. How will we interact within this new fabric? It is uncertain. Will technology free us from the Sisyphean behaviorism that we subscribe to or will we be able to transcend? These are the questions I am raising in my current body of work.

I reference historical works of art, in particular religious scenes from prominent painters such as Giotto, Titian, Raphael and Bellini. Speaking to the events associated with the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, I felt that these images could be adapted to the story of the enhanced human: Human Version 2.0. From reports of stem cell research providing cures to modern ills to artificial limb replacements that work with your neurological system to cerebral memory implants and cloning, the infiltration of technology within the body is inevitable. What will we deem necessary and ethical concerning the evolution through technology of humanity? Will there be a war between those who are in the technological fold or will we have a choice? Will unaltered humans be able to communicate with those who choose to enhance both their body and mind? Will we even need a body? What defines life if the body is taken out of the equation? Like Christ, spreading an unpopular doctrine that eventually became accepted by millions of people around the world, will the enhanced human be the new martyr? My collages present a science fiction visual associated with this question. I believe the indoctrination will be a far more readily accepted practice than the conversion to Christianity.

Frequently in today's society, individuals are willing to hand over their autonomy. Many people give vital information to databases such as those associated with online shopping and social spheres like MySpace and others. People are ready to release their personal information. Societies and cultures gobble up new technologies and enhancements. From cell phones to Ipods, to computers, technology is a part of everyday life and new innovations are adopted as quickly as they are released. In our world of accelerated technological development and the demise of Moore's Law, (the empirical evidence that the number of transistors on an integrated circuit for minimum component cost doubles every 18 months) and the rise of Exponential Law (the more technology we develop, the faster it grows) it is not ridiculous to fathom a day when these technologies

are willfully integrated with the body. Humanity is always looking for a cure and would be unlikely to oppose nanotechnology coursing through our veins if it was maintaining and repairing our systems.

Computers surpassing human levels of intelligence are not unthinkable. Using technology to manipulate matter at a molecular level will allow us to create any environment imaginable. Virtual reality interacting with the physical world (could it still be called virtual?) is becoming tangible faster than we had imagined. Along with these advancements, transcending the body is something we need to take stock of in order to begin to define what it means to be “human”.

Fact or fiction, I am extremely interested in the philosophical and ethical questions raised by technological advances. It serves as a constant reminder of the adaptability of the human species to the ever-changing world. Whether that results in the transcendence of typical negative behaviors is another matter...



Image 1 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical (Copeland Show) Title



Image 2 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical (Copeland Show)



Image 3 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical (Copeland Show)

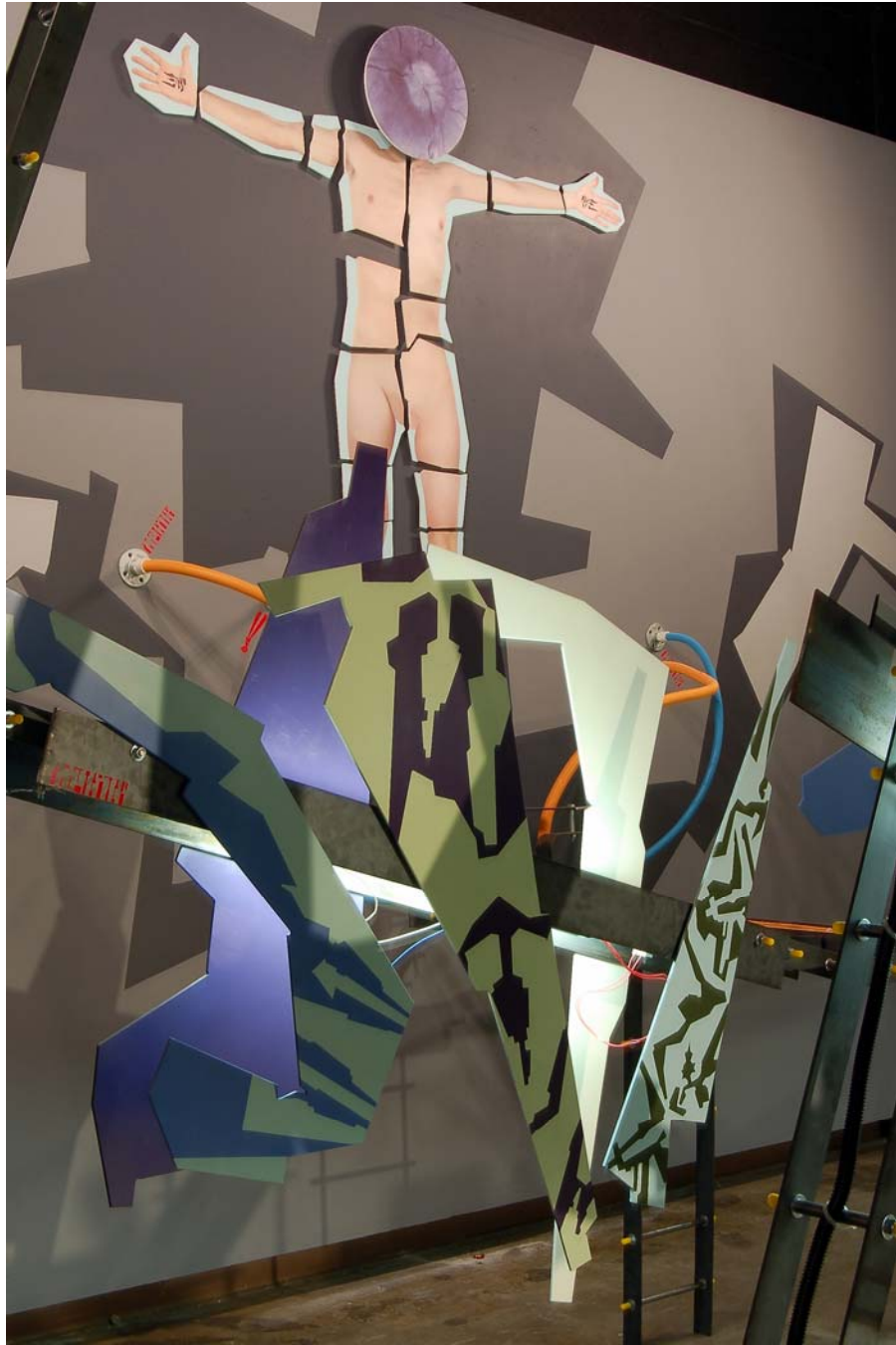


Image 4 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Copeland Show)

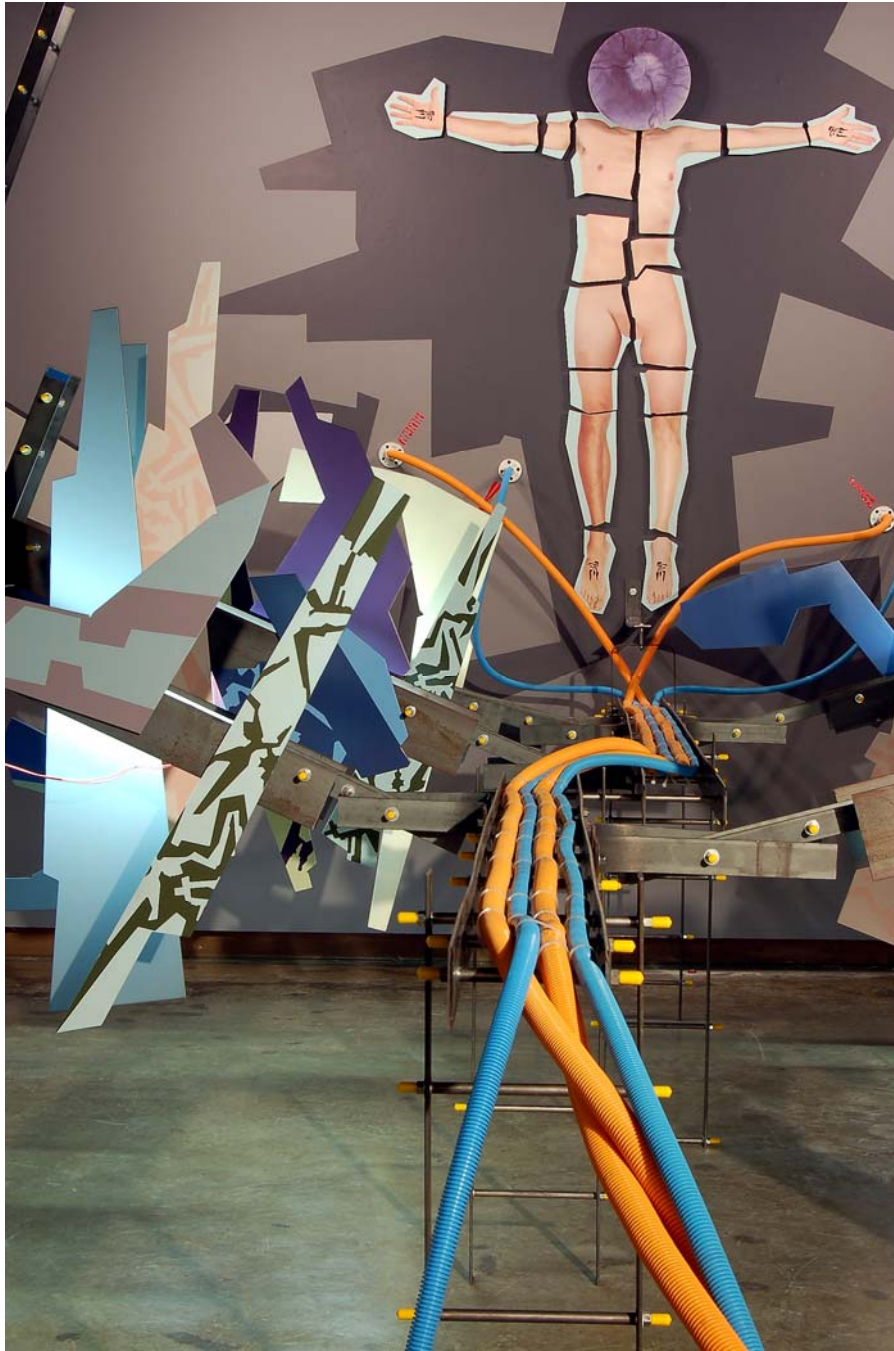


Image 5 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Copeland Show)



Image 6 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Copeland Show)



Image 7 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Copeland Show)

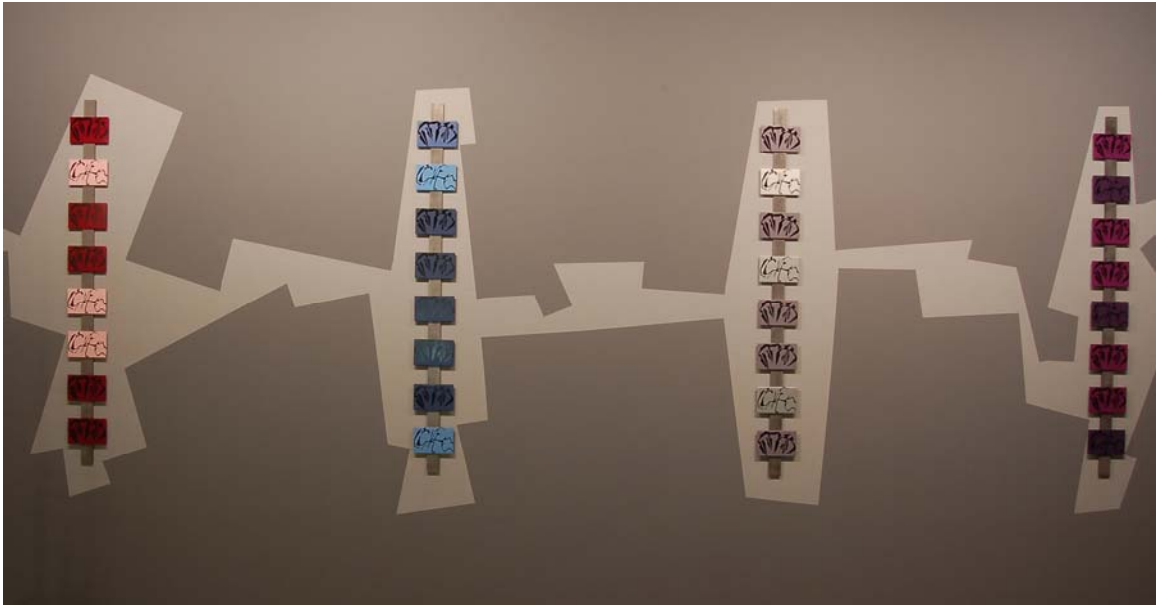


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Image 13 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Copeland Show)



Image 14 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Copeland Show)

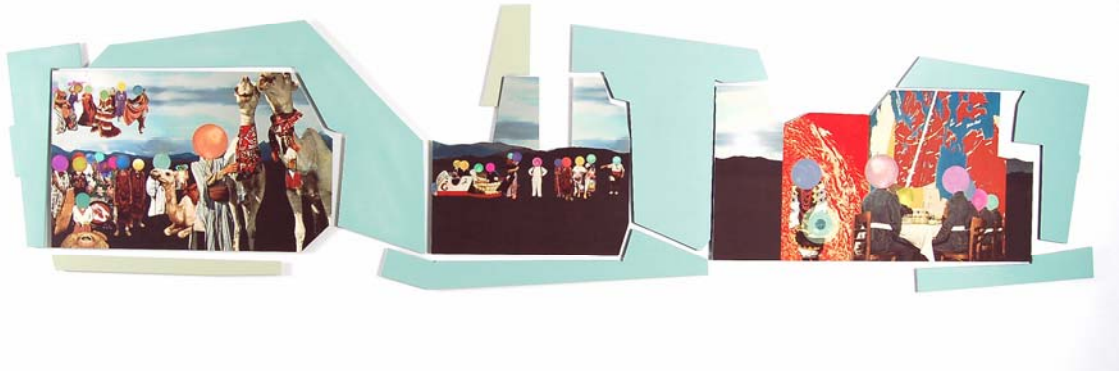


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Image 21 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Copeland Show)



Image 22 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Graduate Gallery Show)

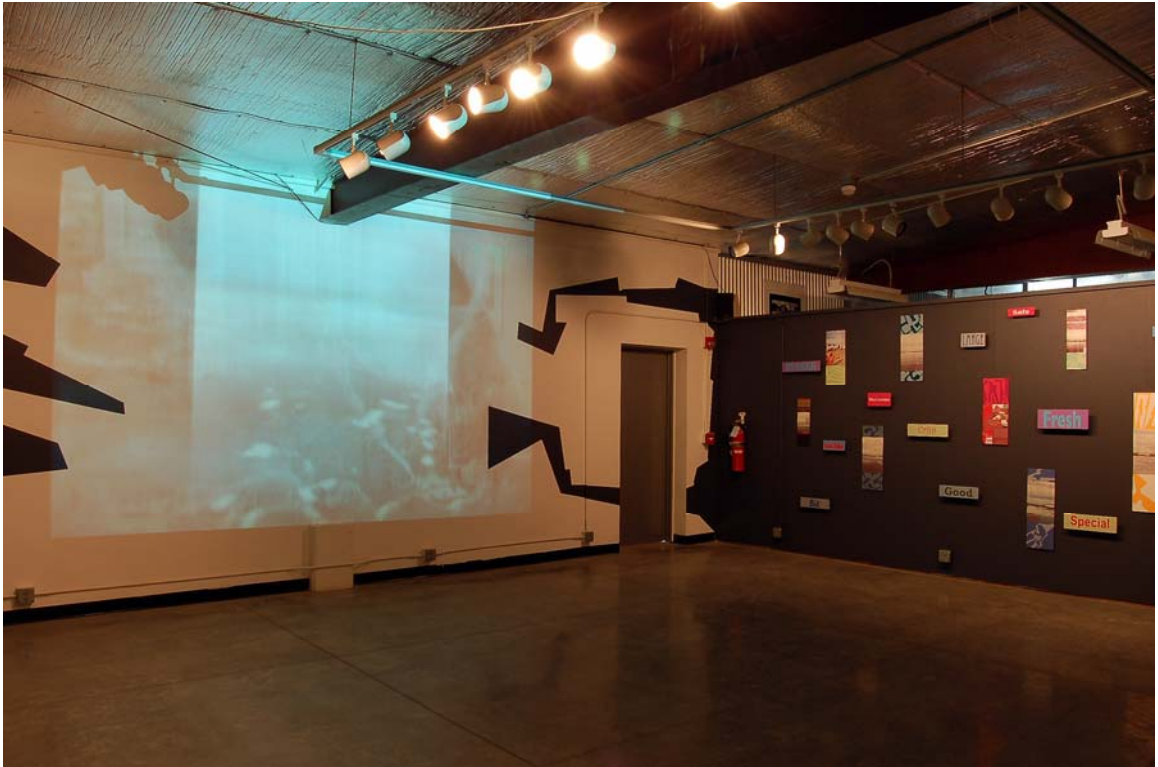


Image 23 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Graduate Gallery Show)



Image 24 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Graduate Gallery Show)

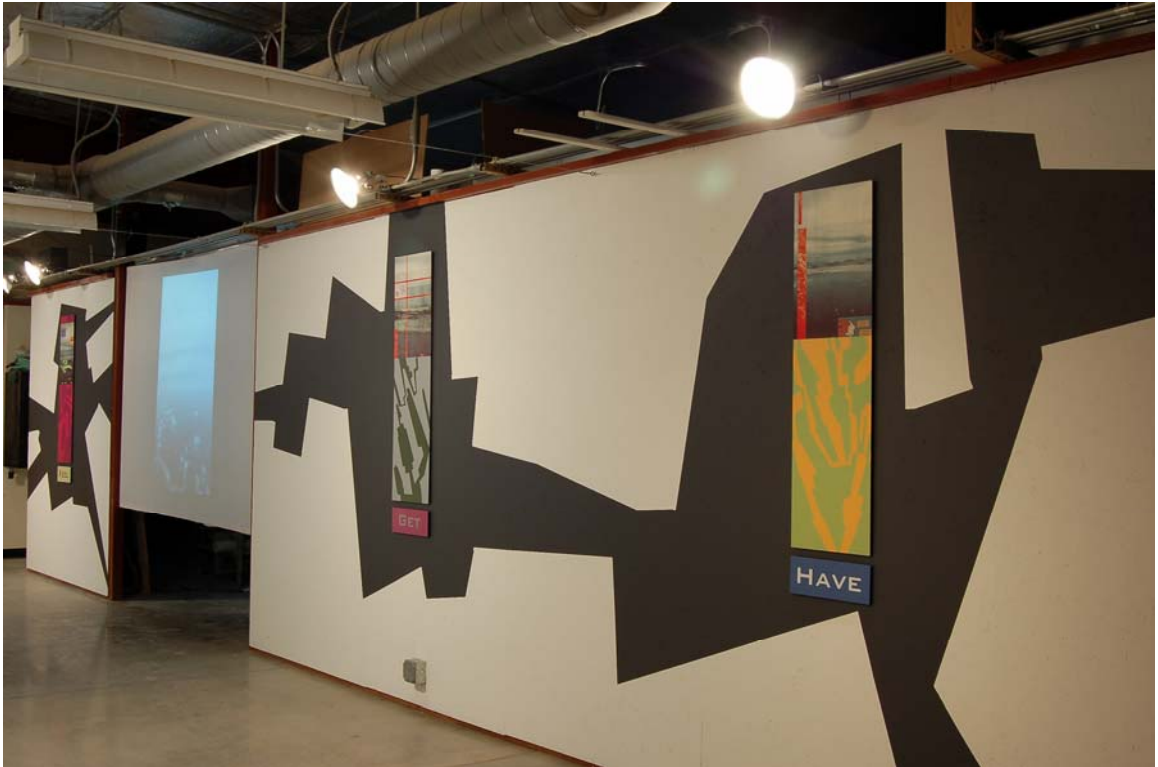


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Image 30 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Graduate Gallery Show)



Image 31 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Exit Gallery Show)

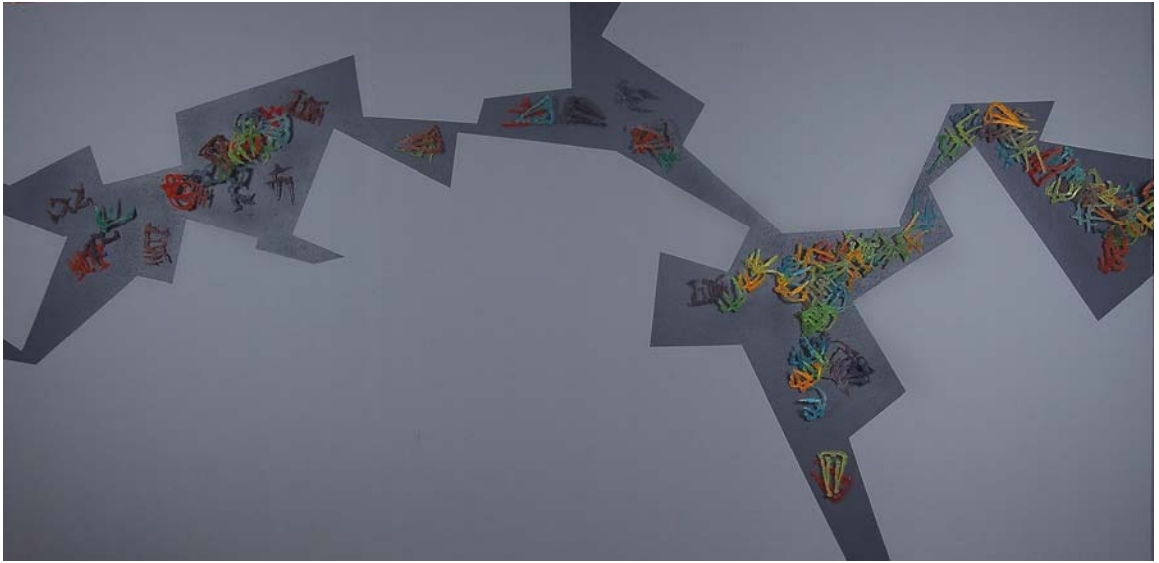


Image 32 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Exit Gallery Show)



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Image 34 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Exit Gallery Show)



Image 35 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Exit Gallery Show)



Image 36 - Technology: Pursuing the Dialectical Image (Exit Gallery Show)