

My practice finds its motivation outside of visual art production, in culture and the process of cultural mediation. Under what conditions may a failure of cultural reproduction be regarded as a success?

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The Recognitions: Raymond Boisjoly by Jessica Powers

One particularly special artist I've had the pleasure of meeting from the Pacific corridor is Raymond Boisjoly. An Aboriginal artist based in Vancouver, BC, Raymond is concerned with exploding the boundaries of what a text (in the unlimited expansive sense of what a text can be) can produce. For the purposes of full disclosure, I've worked with this artist on at least four occasions around the Northwest. My reason for continually returning to his work is simple: Raymond intelligently packages a seemingly unmanageable range of concepts and frame-working into discrete installations and objects with a powerful intelligence and tact for expression.

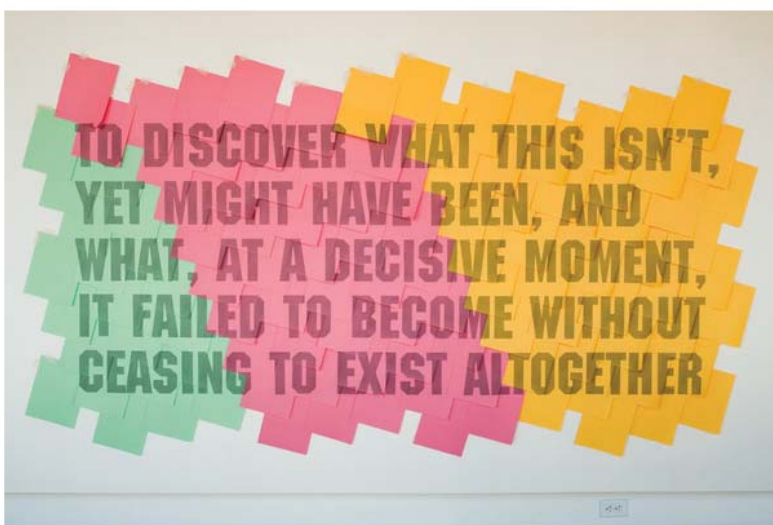
A recurrent issue in cultural production seems to be the unfixed nature of signifying symbols and images—meaning not only elides us, but in many cases cannot be controlled no matter how desperately we wish it to be. This can seem discouraging and nihilistic, particularly when it comes to us as a form of negative deconstruction that breaks apart our foundational ideas about how language or thought should work.



Many artists seem hell-bent on avoiding the swirling vortexes of contradiction and complication that their work seems to necessarily abut—anti-capitalist work made by legions of assistants and contractors only to be sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars comes to mind. Others find themselves in self-serious voids where the attempt to avoid references or pollutions of the pure meaning of the art reduces it to the point of near non-existence (much less non-art). But like all things in life, there are, refreshingly, those who

demonstrate that between two extremes there is an amazing variety of other paths. Raymond is one such person to me—his art is excited about the possibility of new connections and meanings. While much of his work is text-based in order to take advantage of the supreme elasticity and co-dependence of language, he is also involved in using common signifying items like lights to create new correspondences.

Coherentism has made gestures at replacing the strict ordered systems of past thought and argues that knowledge is contextually justified by other pieces of knowledge that create a cohering structure or web of ideas. Nothing is justified on its own, there is no bottom of the pyramid. Instead, the relations between concepts and thoughts are what create true affect and progress in the production of knowledge, or art, or culture. Raymond has said, "Coherence is something I'm interested in," a fact you can see throughout his work. Whether connecting Robert Morris' *Box with the Sound of its Own Making*, 1961, to the balsa-wood dinosaur models of childhood, or deploying a method of future-past tense description that leaves ultimate meaning open (ex: "So that it might yet become something else, still quite unforeseen, by turning an emergent past caught in the present into a mere fiction."), Raymond understands that the connections between ideas in the web of coherence are purely contingent.



The way we see a given piece of art might be different, but our eyes and how we see are also literally, physically, functionally different. Each person is bending a different apparatus of interpretation towards their own personal method of interpretation, ultimately a game of sensation, memory, and, with luck, humor. It is within this retrosopic perspective that the majority of Mr. Boisjoly's art operates. The inherent freedom and possibility of his work is expansive and offensive, but works at indirect angles.

It doesn't invade, it incorporates.

—Jessica Powers