

Ingrid

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Model/ model Secular Response 2A.R, 2004

MARTIN ENGLER //

*OR THE SEA-PIECES OF
MONSIEUR BARTLEBOOTH

The art of the puzzle begins (...) when he, instead of allowing the workings of chance to wipe away all traces, he resolves to replace chance with trickiness, with entrapment, with illusion.

George Perec, *Life: A User's Manual*

The metaphor of the puzzle lies close at hand when one approaches the multi-colored, interconnected paintings of Ingrid Calame. And yet perhaps not in direct proximity, for nothing is brought, through the use of machines or by hand – as is the case with George Perec –, into the regular, amorphous-organic form of those myriad puzzle pieces out of which, little by little, miniature artistic worlds come into being. And the starkly colored panel paintings of Ingrid Calame, her multi-layered, color-pencil drawings or the large-scale works upon transparent Mylar, a blueprint paper made from plastic, have little in common – not only in their choice of motifs but also in their inner structure – with the sea-pieces, cityscapes and mountain landscapes that consist of hundreds of individual segments. Nevertheless, it is possible to recognize, on several levels at once, lines of connection and correspondences between the seemingly autonomous abstractions of Calame and the uniformly stamped or cut puzzle-pictures of our childhood.

George Perec's eccentric billionaire Monsieur Bartlebooth, who stands at the center of *Life: A User's Manual*, develops in any case a self-willed liaison between the disciplines of puzzle games and painting that have been summoned up here. Oscillating between the wish to get a grasp on the world through images and a simultaneous insight into that fragility which compels the world constantly to contemplate its own demise, Bartlebooth rushes headlong into an adventure that is fascinating and redundant in equal measure. After he has received instruction for ten years in the art of watercolor painting, he dedicates himself to the painting of sea-pieces during two decades of travel around the globe. Bartlebooth spends the next twenty years in reassembling the watercolors which have been mounted on wood and sawn into puzzles, whereupon he transfers them back to the respective locations of their creation, where they are all dissolved in acid.¹

The visual worlds of Ingrid Calame, at once potently colored and compositely structured, revolve as well – at least with regard to the precarious relationship between the part and the whole, between centrifugal and centripetal forces – in constantly new loops around the image of the world and its dissolution. In a similar fashion as with the eccentric watercolorist, here as well the balance between composition and chance happening, between reality and abstraction, must again and again be freshly focused upon and realigned.

Street and puzzle

The raw material of Calame's multipartite painting, with its oscillation between panel-painting format and installational works upon walls, consists of spots taken up from sidewalks by blueprint paper: traces of spilled, emptied or lost liquids which, after their fleeting components have evaporated, remain upon the walkways as amorphous patterns. It must be said that these conceivably quite reduced remains of urban life evince in their morphology qualities and characteristics which are important for their subsequent treatment in paint. Closely related to the process of photographic exposure to light, the final result of this random, unregulated, quotidian gesture is "burned into" the public image-carriers which spread out in sheer, never-ending expansion. Subsequent to the gestural act which occurs in the fraction of a second is a process of slow fixation upon the public image-carrier which lasts for days and even weeks.

This distinctive, contrary temporal structure already deserves attention solely on the basis of the repeatedly cited proximity of Calame's paintings to Jackson Pollock's drippings.² It seems as if the painter, who has lived for many years in Los Angeles, is involved in investigating upon the dissection table Pollock's dance upon the canvas, his squirting and dribbling of paint into the picture, as well as in subjecting it to a painterly recycling with utterly divergent signification. One could describe the result – at least provisionally – as Action Painting in slow motion.

The outlines of these imprints from evaporated liquids are transferred by Calame and her assistants onto transparent Mylar to a scale of 1:1 in a process which is both painstaking and artisanally exacting. This is a bundle

The street as a puzzle*

of papers which since the late 1990s has grown into several hundred specimens that are ordered according to location of discovery, date and time of day, size as well as form.

The time of day in particular attains importance when, as in the case of the largest stained surfaces, the process of blueprinting takes several hours. The result is then the silhouette of a stain the size of a parking place which is divided into several strips of Mylar and which, in contrast to the smaller and smallest stained surfaces, is represented only partially and in changing segments. Thus, with the passing years, there has been accumulated at the edges of perception a metropolitan alphabet of life gone by, an open compendium of fortuitous inscriptions upon walkways and in pedestrian zones. The incomprehensible diversity and heterogeneity of the object which is under investigation is gathered together from all directions, without ever seriously claiming to establish a complete and comprehensible systematization. In comparison to Pollock's 'spontaneously' artificial³ drippings, Calame's repertoire of spots is in a totally different manner "literal," in the most concrete sense possible, to take up one of the fundamental terms of US-American art history during the 1950s and 1960s: Between the gesture and its trace, between the action of spontaneous dynamism and its exactly enduring representation, the idea of a "literalness" located between everyday routine and chance happening is loaded in a completely new way in terms of both contents and form.

Then, already in the next step, the innumerable traces of bygone events, previously fragmented and robbed of their original surroundings, are joined again into a new and to a high degree artificial context. From stains that have been gathered from the streets of American cities there is now created upon the neutral background of the studio floor a freshly spread-out patterning of their urban vestiges. Random chance and daily occurrence, street and city are now fully removed from view, so that the booty captured during the perambulatory search for traces may be joined into a subjective floor-picture which owes allegiance only to its own autonomous composition. The disjointed diversity of the original sites is condensed into a field which is filled to the point of bursting and which nevertheless still gives an inkling of the extensiveness and unsurveyable nature of the places where the stains were found. For also the dimensions of the artist's studio still allow the overlapping, semi-transparent strips of

Mylar to merge into a cartographic over all which interweaves in ceaseless relation wide-wall format and close-up, the sure ascertainment of reality and the menacing loss of orientation.

To the extent that the anonymous stain from the street scarcely reveals its origin any longer, the origin of the stains, the site of their creation or their past materiality is degraded to neglect-inciting connotations in Calame's reconstruction, which both fills and consolidates space. The marginal and repugnant element, the olfactory aggression of dirt and droppings which is actually and inseparably linked to this alphabet of the street, is here deliberately and definitively obliterated. The aseptic white cube of modernist and post-modernist art also incorporates this conceivably foreign "exteriority" with considerable surplus value. The result is a confusingly beautiful, painterly formulation which is situated in the energy field oscillating between everyday reality and autonomous pictorial invention, and which at no time desires to renounce the richly resonant soundboard of its origin.

Autonomy and color

After this large-scale reorganization of the compendium of stains, the project moves conclusively from the street to a pictorial format, from the sociological search for traces in the metropolis to a mode of painting that investigates a personal artistic origin. The strips of Mylar spread out upon the floor are now themselves covered with Mylar and blueprinted, in order to isolate individual pictorial formats out of the unsurveyable over all of the studio floor. The tempo of the artistic process at work here continues to be that of slowly evaporating liquids. The gestural, actionist dynamism which, in similarity to the formal proximity of its painterly surfaces, suggests a specific line of tradition leading back to the Action Painting of the New York School, formulates, here as well and above all, a multi-layered background for a fascinating discourse on painting.

The spread-out arrangement in adherence to the proportions of the studio floor, which shimmers in fascinating alternation between a medieval palimpsest and the cartographical registering of an unknown continent, is now repeatedly condensed. Each outline of a stain receives

its own color which is assigned to it by the artist and which it shares with no other outline in this specific pictorial format. The colored sketches which are created in this way are then transferred onto aluminum sheets with enamel. Whereas the outlines lying on top emerge in their entire shapes, the delineations which are stacked beneath only become visible in segments: the further one's gaze seeks to penetrate into the depths of the field constituted by the floor, the more the respective stain becomes lost, along with the multiple layers which support it, in a hermetic over all.

The painterly density of these pictures is that of shining automobile enamel, and its coloration seems to show the black street-stains a way back into the variegated world of comic strips and supermarkets, glossy magazine ads and industrial colors. And yet a highly individualized palette is formulated, one which balks at being ascribed to any of these areas. But to the extent to which not only the olfactory present of the street comes to be more and more condensed, the layered transparency of the diverse preliminary stages withdraws behind the materially heavy, closed-off surfaces, and alongside the gesture and dynamism of Pollock emerges the sober industrial aesthetic of Minimal Art. Solely in parallel to the colored-pencil drawings occurring in the aluminum pictures, the internal structure, the blueprint of these pictures, is disclosed as if within an X-ray. The opaque heaviness and the material of the painting make room here for a construction drawing which runs the risk of collapsing due to an excess of information.

Image and shadow

Once again, just as with each of these self-copying transfers, the scale of 1:1, the deliberate *literalness* and immediacy of the experimental arrangement lying at the basis of these paintings, has been conclusively transformed into a mysterious ambiguity. The model to which these images refer, the exact nature of their relationship to tradition, has been concealed with consummate virtuosity in and behind the shining enamel surfaces brimming with color and energy. The pictures of Ingrid Calame display a skillfully staged area of blurriness hovering between an abstraction

devoid of referentiality and an eminently precise connection to the reality of a specific location. Now, at the end of this complex process of approach and recession, the surfaces of her pictures constitute themselves out of individual color-events which lay claim to absolute conspicuousness and autonomy. These stains of color, conveying at once gesture, dynamism and composition, seem to have been poured onto the canvas as in a process of Action Painting, and yet they preserve here as well the ambivalence between dynamism and slowness which was already established in the first blueprinting, inasmuch as each ever-so-small, dynamically squirting splotch of color is at the same time the clearly contoured result of a controlled painterly act.

"Every genuine picture possesses a shadow which doubles it,"⁴ writes Antonin Artaud in 1964 in *The Theater and its Double* and thereby delineates, by means of example and for the theater, an artistic mode which transcends its borders in that it turns its attention to what are for Artaud the surreal silhouettes of an otherwise formalistic culture drained of energy. The idea of doubling, the copying of an original that is no longer productive in order to utilize its fragmented and subsequently reconstructed matrix in a new form, can cast light as well upon Ingrid Calame and her multi-layered relationship to the American painting of the post-war era. The seemingly spontaneous and direct painting to which she alludes is doubled by a painterly reconstruction which quotes and copies itself in perpetually new loops. Beneath the immediacy and literalness of her pictures there remains, perceptible like a shadow, all that which otherwise would be repelled like beads of water from the hermetically sealed, glossily shining surface.

Stain and nature

In contradistinction to the self-reflective pessimism of Monsieur Bartlebooth and his final failure – the billionaire dies bent over one of the last puzzles, without having accomplished his "life's work"⁵ – Ingrid Calame sets a concept of painting which on the one hand seeks in a quite similar manner a site between the part and the whole, between reality and its dissolution, and which on the other hand is capable of deliberately

maintaining the artist's project in a state of hovering ambivalence. With strict logic she formulates her concept of a picture situated between street and image, between autonomy and world, as an equation with innumerable unknowns which is at no time compelled to deliver an ultimate solution. This fascinating, ambivalent arrangement takes on dimensions which in the most concrete sense relate to the surrounding space and burst their format, at the point when the constellations of stains are joined together into works spreading out over walls and thus take over complete sweeps of wall and room as their image-carriers.

In the works of the *Secular Response* series, it is not the neutral studio floor in Los Angeles which is used as the supporting background for her spread-out arrangements, but instead contentually laden spaces which are appropriated. Reality and autonomy become interconnected in a further loop when in *Secular Response 1–3* the floors of a church, of the New York Stock Exchange or – in a group of works still to be realized – of a planetarium become new locations for Calame's artistic constellations.⁶ As a result, the work takes on a double locational relation,⁷ refers to an anonymous street as well as to a concrete place that is impinged upon by multiple determinations. With the step out of the studio into public spaces, Calame opens up for herself a new referential space with regard to the social context of her work. Her field study in the urban no-man's land is linked to those centers where, in her view of things, significance and power are generated in our contemporary era: religion, economy and science. And already noticeable here when comparing *Secular Response 1* and *Secular Response 2* is an expansion of complexity and an increasing difficulty in attaining an overview, characteristics which could, with the circular form of the planetarium, actually in a literal sense attain cosmic dimensions.

Out of the constellations which here as well are no longer fully comprehensible, a master plan has been used to select those areas which are to be realized at the respective exhibition location. With the switch to a panoramic format of wall painting, the constitutive ambivalence inherent to the oeuvre of Ingrid Calame is once more given explicit formulation. The busily variegated, glossy aesthetic of the panel paintings now makes way for monochromatic constellations of color which display the spread-out ordering of the outlines along with – according to the respective pic-

torial segment – parts of the floor plan of the main trading area of the New York Stock Exchange as well as the recurring blank spaces of the more or less circular built-in sections. Even more than in the earlier, comparatively small-scale works, the countless outlines are here joined into large-surfaced formations which no longer lay themselves open to view as continents of stains gathered together and stacked one atop another. Solid, absolutely flat land masses emerge which, not less because of their monochromatic, green coloration, call up associations, not only of continents and maps, but also of pseudo-organic associations: a rhizomatic, endless mode of painting which evinces a serial rhythmization imparted by its spatial orientation and which allows, in the final picture as well, a disclosure of the loss of orientation such as was already apparent in the spread-out arrangements.

With the half-artificial, half-natural coloration of these continents, here at the latest an arc is spanned back to our point of departure. The tension between reality and abstraction which was already apparent in the first blueprinted stains becomes grounded in the realm of the natural: Between the dissolving landscapes of Bartlebooth and the minutely assembled continents of Ingrid Calame, Jackson Pollock makes his voice heard one final time with his terse and terminating assertion: "I am nature."

¹ George Perec, *Das Leben Gebrauchsanweisung* ("Life: A User's Manual"), Frankfurt am Main 2002, p. 197f.

² Cf. Libby Lumpkin, *Ingrid Calame: Icons of Memory*, in *Calame*, Deitch Projects, New York 2000, n. p., or David Moos' text in the present catalogue, *Ingrid Calame: NYSE*, p. 50 ff., et al.

³ Cf. Lumpkin, loc. cit., n. p.

⁴ Antonin Artaud, *Das Theater und sein Double* ("The Theater and Its Double"), Frankfurt am Main 1979, p. 14f.

⁵ Perec, loc. cit., p. 773.

⁶ Cf. once again the text of David Moos in this catalogue concerning the complex implications which this new context also raises for the work *Secular Response 2*, which was realized at the Hannover exhibition.

⁷ Cf. Raphaëla Platow, *Ingrid Calame in: Painting⁴*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts 2003, p. 5.



Secular Response 2A.R., 2003, 376 x 3207cm /
12'4" x 105', Emailfarbe auf Mylar-Pauspapier /
enamel paint on trace Mylar, Installationsansicht /
installation view: Rose Art Museum, Waltham MA

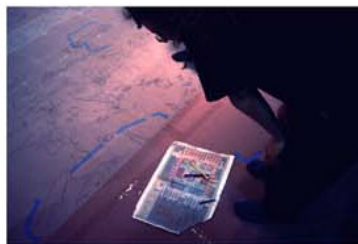


Ingrid Calame und
Assistenten bei der
Arbeit an / Ingrid Calame
and assistants working on
Secular Response 2A, 2003



Secular Response 2 A.E., 2003,
376 x 1067 cm / 12' 4" x 35'
Emailfarbe auf Mylar-Pauspapier /
enamel paint on trace Mylar,
Installationsansicht / installation
view: James Cohan Gallery, NY

Ingrid Calame und Assistenten
bei der Arbeit an / Ingrid Calame
and assistants working on
Secular Response 2A, 2003



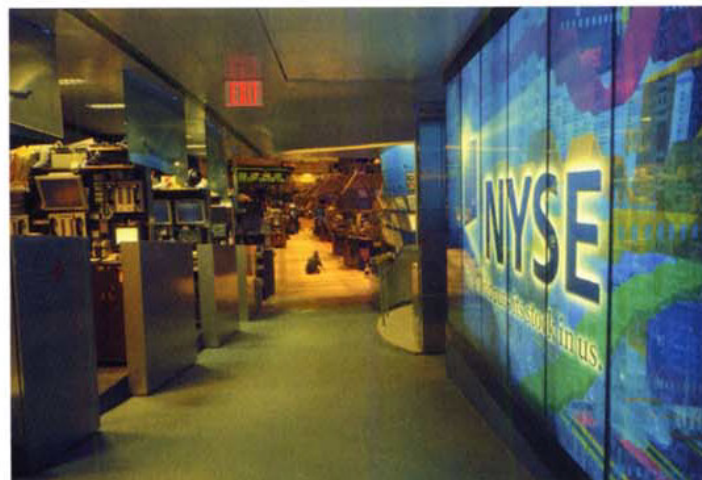
Secular Response 2 A.E., 2003, 376 x 1067 cm / 12' 4" x 35'
Emailfarbe auf Mylar-Pauspapier / enamel paint on trace Mylar
Installationsansicht / installation view: James Cohan Gallery, NY



Ingrid Calame und
Assistenten beim
Durchpausen von
Flecken in Las Vegas /
Ingrid Calame und
assistants tracing
stains in Las Vegas
November 2000



Ingrid Calame und Assistenten
beim Durchpausen der Zeichnung
in der New York Stock Exchange /
Ingrid Calame and assistants
tracing drawing in the New York
Stock Exchange, Mai 2001



DAVID MOOS //

Today we can depict an enormous, so-called stateless, monetary mass that circulates through foreign exchange and across borders, eluding control by the States, forming a multinational ecumenical organization, constituting a de facto supranational power untouched by governmental decisions.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980)

Ingrid Calame rose to prominence in the late 1990s by exhibiting large-scale enamel paint on trace Mylar works with titles such as *Spalunk ...* (1997) and *b-b-b, rr-gR-UF!*, *b-b-b* (1999), which were stunning upon initial impact – striking viewers as immense clarified variations on Jackson Pollock's drip paintings. Calame's magnified single – color splashes had the bravura and ferocity of Action Painting yet manifested this energy upon the fragile support of Mylar, a material associated with drawing. These works moved from floor to wall, occupying and connecting space. By addressing the twin topics of painting/drawing and wall/floor, Calame affected a genial deconstruction of Pollock.

One thinks such a thought with trepidation. Pollock's drip is the most powerful iconic sign in modern painting.¹ With the advent of the drip and his consummate command of its articulation Pollock achieved an innovation so totalizing that from its inception to our present moment, painting has struggled to negotiate its impact. One grasps at successors, parsing the legacy: Twombly's scrawl; Klein's performances; Warhol's oxidation paintings; Marden's skeins.² Avoidance or parody have been the dominant responses, for, as Kirk Varnedoe recently observed, "Pollock himself seemed to have staked all possible claims on his own terrain."³

Calame's large Mylar drawings unfold across three dimensions. Coming down from the wall, the pictorial space, they project across the floor, unrolled into physical space. One must walk around the drawing, taking care not to intrude upon the Mylar. Pacing the work's perimeter, one calls to mind the telltale images of Pollock at work, wondrously captured in Hans Namuth's photographs that show the painter dramatically leaning over his painting, sometimes stepping onto the canvas to deliver the drip. One peers upon Calame's Mylar and projects oneself, through those images, into the work's "arena" (to use Harold Rosenberg's word).

ingrid calame: NYSE

This sensation is hyperbolic. It is fitting, however, because the scope of Calame's project is exaggerated. In April 2001 she gained access over two weekends to the main trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange and undertook a 15,000-square-foot drawing, an elaborate tracing that meticulously produced

stain-like shapes similar to her preceding enamel-on-Mylar works. Not only did this work map the entire square footage of the main trading floor six months prior to September 11, but she developed this project and undertook essential preliminary work while temporarily occupying a studio on the 91st floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Calame's work seems fated for addressing, intentionally or not, large paradigms.

Calame's process of creating painted shapes is painstaking, the antithesis of the singular gesture. All of her shapes are stains that she has lifted from the streets of three cities – Los Angeles, New York, and Las Vegas. "I trace the lacy stains left by the evaporation of nameless liquids, their contours determined by the viscosity of the vanished fluid and the texture of the surface onto which it pools," Calame has characterized her process: "Singling out the marks from the cement palimpsest of pedestrian life, I choose each for its aesthetic appeal, the expressive quality of the organic or mechanical gesture that it made."⁴ As one closely observes a work such as *b-b-b, rr-gR-UF!*, *b-b-b*, with its title that onomatopoeically renders sounds heard while tracing, Calame's compendium of stains is graphically displayed. Some of the stains reified in enamel are puddle-like, large pools of liquid; others bear the force of impact and are defined by direction and speed; still others might simply be small seepages, drops, drips, or drizzle. The stains derive from human, animal, mechanical, or



b-b-b, rr-gR-UF, b-b-b, 1999, 884 x 762 cm / 29' x 25',
Emailfarbe auf Mylar-Pauspapier / enamel paint on trace Mylar
Collection Peter Goulds

natural sources.⁵ The entire vocabulary of the street, spoken in fleeting liquid residue, is mapped by Calame.

In her studio she maintains an archive of her silhouetted stains that she arranges into constellations; configurations that are subsequently retraced for Mylar works, pencil drawings, or paintings. Never is the scale of a stain or its shape altered. This veracity is important for it connects her work to experience in a literal way. The stains accurately reflect her itinerary and bring mapping into contact with drawing, merging cartography with painting.

This highly personal methodology retains a distinct precedent in American art. In the Panorama, a now-defunct nineteenth-century practice, artists sought to convey the grandeur and enormity of the newly discovered continent. If the earliest panoramas, invented in late-eighteenth-century Europe, were circular paintings installed in circular rooms, the genre soon evolved to answer distinctly American needs. By the 1840s artists such as John Banvard or John Rowson had begun to paint on astoundingly large lengths of canvas that were wound onto huge rolls. Now rather than have the viewer rotate in the center of a circular room, the canvas unspooled before the audience. Banvard pioneered this new technique for his 1846 opus, *Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River, Painted on Three Miles of Canvas, exhibiting a View of Country 1200 Miles in Length, extending from the Mouth of Missouri River to the City of New Orleans, being by far the Largest Picture ever executed by Man*. Regardless of how accurate this claim was, artists like Banvard "made lengthy, laborious, and expensive trips sketching river scenery and then spent weeks and months transferring those sketches to canvas."⁶

Panoramas of the Mississippi offered viewers a proto-cinematic experience that was part travelogue, part documentary, serving as spectacle and vicarious journey. The genre afforded an ideal means of surveying, mapping, and culturally occupying the landscape.⁷ Panoramas raise compelling questions concerning the relationship between landscape and painting. Not only do they obliterate the constraints of the easel picture by virtue of gigantic size, but they doubly realize that landscape can only properly be represented in painting through abstraction and thus introduce the element of time in an effort to reconcile seemingly infinite space. The relationship between Calame's Stock Exchange drawing and its subject matter is analogous to the panorama's relationship to landscape.

In an impassioned letter written to a facilitator who was essential in arranging access to the Stock Exchange floor, Calame describes the art work that she intends to accomplish

Secular Response 2 is a proposed 50,000-square-foot drawing. The floor of the Main Room of the New York Stock Exchange will be filled with drawings from streets of three American cities – New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas – and retraced. The final drawing will capture the actual-size floor plan of the Main Room, and all of its posts and booths, as a silhouette superimposed with the active marks of the street.⁸

Although the size of the finished drawing was not as large, her methodology remained consistent. Arriving to the New York Stock Exchange on two Friday afternoons in April with a team of assistants, Calame proceeded to lay out her specimen stains and then worked almost continuously through each weekend, accurately retracing the stains onto 15,000 square feet of Mylar that precisely mimics the footprint of the entire floor.

The photographs that document her effort seem staged, perhaps the stuff of a science fiction film. The backdrop of the New York Stock Exchange, universally recognized through its many media incarnations, is evacuated of traders, the screens have gone blank, and Mylar – the material of art – now occupies the inner sanctum of capitalism's most sacred site. One is challenged for ways with which to caption these images that dramatically recontextualize this place. Such a transformation of the Stock Exchange's function, even for two weekends, is an astounding achievement. Other artists, such as Christo for example, have made access to sites and the coordinated organization of extensive resources integral to their artistic visions. Calame has refrained from such an approach, choosing to focus rather on her own intimate experience. Drawing, understood as tracing, anchors her endeavor. Walking through her cities with assertive intent, in a manner that loosely connects with the ambulatory practices of Vito Acconci, Richard Long, and Sophie Calle, Calame selects her stains. Inverting the role of graffiti writers who lay down tags, Calame lifts the imprint of the city's used surface, reclaiming anonymous stains from the ultimate public territory.

"How do we understand a whole from its parts?", Ingrid Calame asks laconically in her notes for *Secular Response 1*, a preceding project

from 2000 that used the floor of the Ardsley United Methodist Church, Calame's childhood church, located in the small town Ardsley, New York, as the template upon which she organized stains. "The quantity of fragments of information from which we derive our understanding of a whole unit (the universe, the world, the human body) has increased and the understanding itself further abstracted."⁹ The motivation is simple. In a world of overwhelming complexity, where humanism may be defeated by information, Calame sets out with pencil in hand to construe the structures of our world.

How to represent global capitalism? Andreas Gursky's *Chicago, Mercantile Exchange* (1997), an over-sized, digitally produced photograph that captures for one breathless instant the frenetic paroxysm of the traders – gesturing, signaling, competing, communicating, calculating – the instantaneous flow of capital, offers a point of comparison. This spectacle is literal and reveals how the system works, employing vital human switches within a vast computerized network. Another Gursky image, *Stockholder Meeting, Diptych (Hauptversammlung)* (2001), presents a more imaginary scenario: a collaged acropolis of corporate deities – the logo-branded gods of multinational industry assembled – atop Olympus. Such digitized fantasies seem to capture the unrepresentability of the system in which we are all inevitable, predictable participants.

The New York Stock Exchange is the pituitary gland of global capitalism. Its secretions determine and regulate the health of the global business body. By literally mapping the contours of this body, and doing so with the imprint of streets from three quintessentially American cities, Calame has produced a twenty-first-century panorama. The shoreline of rivers, outlines of forests, profiles of settlements, Indian encampments – all of this essential narrative scenery that punctuated the old landscape has been converted into myriad linear networks, the pedestrian, seemingly inconsequential stains that perpetually permeate the visible surface of cities.

"Capitalism forms when the flow of unqualified wealth encounters the flow of unqualified labor and conjugates with it," Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, their philosophical diagnosis of the historical and political forces that structure modern society.¹⁰ It is tempting to read Calame's contours as constituting

a map not of territories but rather of flows – literally, perhaps, liquid assets. Capitalism, understood by Deleuze and Guattari, has since its inception been the ultimate deterritorializing force, crossing borders and blurring national distinctions. Writing presciently in 1980, before the implosion of Communism and the formation of the European Union, they surmised an accurate working definition of global capitalism, cited at the beginning of this essay: "... a multinational ecumenical organization, constituting a de facto supranational power untouched by governmental decisions."¹¹

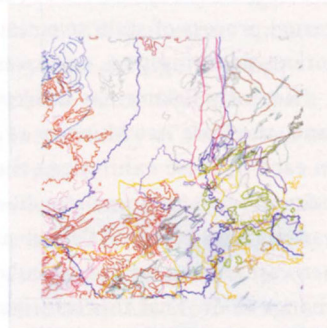
"NYSE: The world puts its stock in us." This self-congratulatory phrase adorns one of the entrances to the main trading floor, a billboard aimed at itself. Calame's title, *Secular Response 2*, challenges this mantra, decoding the "ecumenical" aura with a secular, artistic response. It seems superfluous to note that the nation's trust in God is inscribed on all of its minted money.¹² Elaborating upon *Secular Response 1*, her Stock Exchange drawing radically asserts one individual artist's subjectivity. From the casual process of stain selection through eventual retracing, Calame is intent, dauntingly so, on inscribing her line.

Recently Calame has utilized her drawing to mount projects in Cleveland, the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, and in New York.¹³ In each of these exhibitions the drawing functioned as the template for a painted work that was attached in sections to the gallery walls. These various sites afforded Calame an occasion to elaborate a specific part of her vast tracing and to articulate in paint information from the stock exchange floor. That this information was realized through the encompassing tracery of reified stains supplies her work with its peculiar power, defining painting through residue rather than assertion. Her line, as contour, unfolds incessantly, unraveling to infinity while always maintaining its drawn intimacy that is akin to handwriting.

In what she calls *Working Drawings*, Calame employs colored pencils, selecting a different color for each individual stain. On square sheets of Mylar she follows the itinerary of her shapes, many of which extend beyond the edge, elaborating them across a varied, indulgent spectrum. Each sheet is a kind of viewfinder, a tile within a much larger matrix of stain shapes. Drawing is her way of asserting an order, extracting an essence. In this regard, with its linear expressive intensity, Calame's work

relates to projects of other artists similarly concerned with the life of lines. Ghada Amer's meandering embroidered thread works, where lines constantly suggest figurative possibilities, or Shahzia Sikander's intensely invested surfaces that incorporate aspects of language, come to mind. Although the work of these artists construes abstraction as incorporating legible figuration, Calame's work remains 'abstract'. Her project, which deploys the method of figuration, dwells, rather, in the realm of pure visual metaphor. This achievement, of using the didactic method of tracing to produce arigorously abstract-looking image supplies Calame's work with its narrative potency. The stains that she brings to her chosen architectural sites release their residual street history and, through transcription, assume a new artistic identity. By converting the prosaic stain into the abstract line, her work chases the old utopian dream of modernism, where painting can escape from the world of reference and become, in the words of the art historian T.J. Clark, "a script none of us have read before."¹⁴ Of course, as postmodernism has tirelessly taught us, there are no scripts, no codes, that we have not seen and previously read. Painting is a recursive practice, it refers to the past, while always holding out the prospect of a surprising future.

Calame's conceit is to displace the old painting categories of landscape, nature, and the body – everything that Pollock collapsed into his drip – with a slow action of drawing. While her myriad lines purport to represent stains, they actually, through transcription, come to signify other narratives. Her floridly colored, carefully articulated lines that meander, vector, intersect, and overlap, accrue meanings as they move from gallery to museum to church to Stock Exchange,



oben: #126 Working Drawing, 2002, unten: #144 Working Drawing, 2003
jeweils / each: 76 x 76 cm / 30" x 30"
Farbstift auf Mylar-Pauspapier / color pencil on trace Mylar

tracing out the pathways of our movements, thoughts, systems, beliefs – even, for lack of any better ascription, our democracy. Too picaresque? Perhaps because of its proximity to Ground Zero, one is able to contemplate and even embrace with the New York Stock Exchange drawing such over-determined territory.

When Yves Klein traveled from Paris to Japan in 1952, he was struck by the fact that a human shadow could remain visible after death. "Hiroshima, the shadows of Hiroshima," Klein wrote, reflecting upon his encounter with the silhouette of a human being that remained seared onto the ground after the atomic flash: "In the desert of the atomic catastrophe, they were a witness ... both for the hope of survival and for permanence – albeit immaterial – of the flesh."¹⁵ Klein used fire as a medium to convert this experience into something tangible, charring corporeal imprints onto canvases. Calame, having worked on the Stock Exchange floor, utilizing some stains that were gathered from the pavement nearby the World Trade Center, has imprinted her line with capitalism's epicenter. Her work provides an apt visual metaphor for the randomness and anonymity of the free market which seems similar to the street, for as Calame has remarked, "it is a sort of no man's land and everyman's land."¹⁶

This essay, here revised and expanded, originally appeared in *Art Papers*, XXVII, No. 6 (November/December, 2003), p. 22–27.

- ¹ "It covers everything," Peter Schjeldahl declared: "no other art can be wedged in beside it." Cf. Schjeldahl, *The Rise of Abstraction II*, in: *Abstract Painting, Once Removed*, exhibition catalogue, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston 1998, p. 36.
- ² The repercussions of the drip exceed the domain of painting, often being understood to have affected Robert Smithson's asphalt run-downs and glue pours, Eva Hesse's suspended rope pieces, and Richard Serra's actions with molten lead.
- ³ Kirk Varnedoe, *Comet: Jackson Pollock's Life and Work*, Jackson Pollock, exhibition catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1998, p. 68.

- ⁴ Ingrid Calame, statement in *Selections Winter '98*, brochure, The Drawing Center, 1998.
- ⁵ "Calame identifies transmission fluid, motor oil, dog urine, blood, spilled juices, fence paint, and bubble gum as sources for the shapes that have since evaporated but still left their mark." Cf. Dana Friis-Hansen, *Ingrid Calame, Abstract Painting, Once Removed*, p. 50.
- ⁶ John Francis McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 17. For an extensive analysis of Banvard, cf. pp. 18–46; his novel roller system and machinery was described and documented in *Scientific American* IV, December 16, 1848, p. 100.
- ⁷ It cannot be coincidental that the panorama assumed its ambitious American incarnation in a decade when the Doctrine of Manifest Destiny was being most forcefully promulgated. The trope of enlargement fuels the imagination as Whitmanic metaphors animate the geography of mid-nineteenth century.
- ⁸ Ingrid Calame, private correspondence, January 24, 2001.
- ⁹ Ingrid Calame, *Secular Response 1*, limited edition self-published catalogue, 2001, unpaginated.
- ¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 453.
- ¹¹ Concerning trans-border and trans-institutional financial transactions, the recently deceased Mark Lombardi produced large-scale flowchart drawings that traced the often circuitous yet intersecting flows of legal and illicit capital, from source to ultimate recipient. In his deeply researched diagrammatic works the collateral implications of clandestine plots were expertly revealed.
- ¹² On the back of the one dollar bill to the left of "In God We Trust" are the Latin words "Annuit Coeptis," which means "God has favored our undertaking."
- ¹³ "Calame mounted the following exhibitions: *Secular Response 2 A.M.*, at Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, May 30 – August 17, 2003; *Painting⁴: Ingrid Calame, Katharina Grosse, Michael Lin, Jimmy O'Neal*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University,

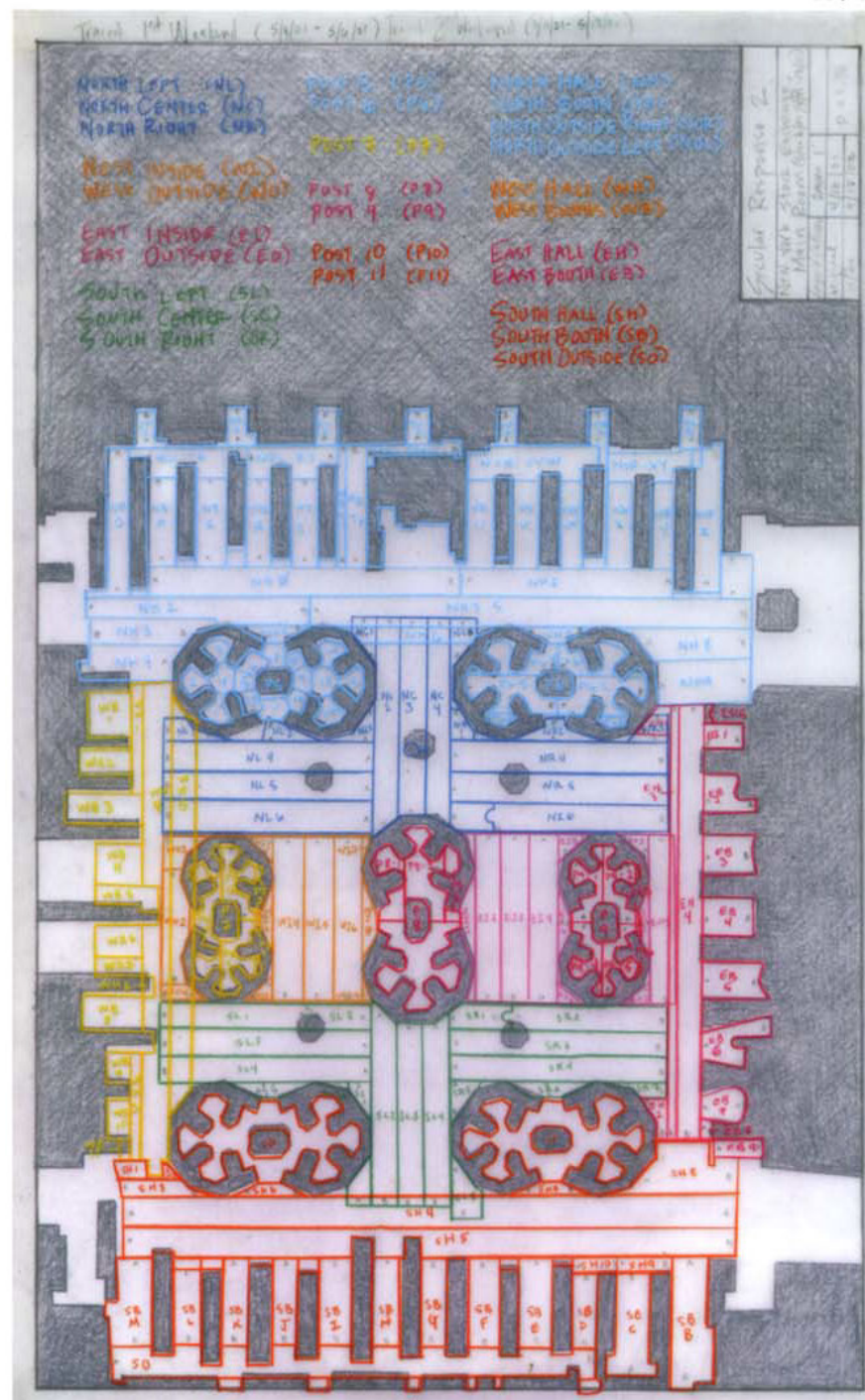
September 11–December 7, 2003; *Ingrid Calame*, James Cohan Gallery, New York, October 4 – November 1, 2003.

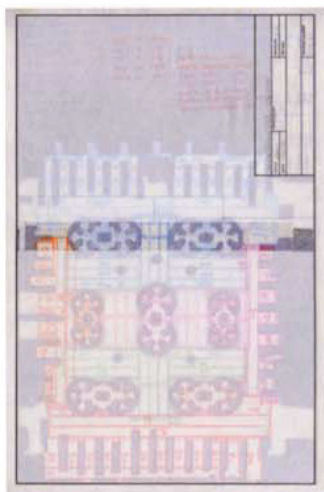
- ¹⁴ In his long essay on Pollock, Clark endeavors to elucidate how abstraction ultimately, reluctantly, relates to the representational world: "... abstract painting must set itself the task of canceling nature, ending painting's relation to the world of things. It will make a new order to experience ... But painting discovers that none of this is achievable with the means it has. Nature simply will not go away: it reasserts its rights over the new handwriting, and writes its own familiar script ..." Cf. Clark, *Jackson Pollock's Abstraction*, in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945–1964*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, p. 221.
- ¹⁵ Yves Klein, in Sidra Stich, *Yves Klein*, Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag, 1994, p. 179.
- ¹⁶ Interview with the author, Los Angeles, July 15, 2002.



Ingrid Calame und Assistenten beim Durchpausen der Zeichnung
in der New York Stock Exchange / Ingrid Calame and assistants
tracing drawing in the New York Stock Exchange, Mai 2001

*Drawing of Secular Response 2 im New York Stock Exchange, 2001, 44 x 28 cm /
17" x 11", Farbstift auf Mylar-Pauspapier / color pencil on trace Mylar*





Secular Response 2 A.R Viewfinder
 2003, 44 x 28 cm / 17" x 11",
 Farbstift auf Mylar-Pauspapier /
 color pencil on trace Mylar

s./p/ 63-67 Detail

Secular Response 2A.R



