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## Christine Hiebert and the Architecture of Line

Leda Cempellin

*South Dakota State University*, [Leda.Cempellin@sdstate.edu](mailto:Leda.Cempellin@sdstate.edu)

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**LC:** Is there any particular reason for choosing blue tape for your wall drawings?

**CH:** I came across the tape a little bit by accident. Part of what I am working with is how marks inhabit a field, an idea of residence. I use architecture as a model to think about how lines get joined to create structure, how they build up, how they move in tension with the space, how they create a sense of passage through the space or create separate spaces. An *experience* of space. So the idea of architecture in my drawings is not in terms of enclosure, rather in terms of structure and habitation— how lines join or even let go of each other. One summer, I was thinking about building an actual house. I was very tired of drawing, and I decided to just play around with floor plans. At a certain point I stopped making floor plans with pencil on paper, and decided to make a same-size architectural plan on the wall— I just put blue tape onto the wall, to mark where I thought a door might go, or a window, or a wall. I need to explain to a European audience that everyone in the US knows that this blue tape is used by house painters and construction workers. A similar tape is used in Europe but it's brown, not blue. This particular tape is repositionable, so you can put it down on a wall, pick it up again and move it; it won't pick up the paint and destroy the surface. That was the first reason I used it. For me, changing the placement of a line has always been crucial. I don't plan any of my drawings, I don't know where a line should end up, so I have to be free to put something there and then erase it, move it, or sand it away and get back to the white space. I don't know how dense the drawing will become, I don't know what white space will be preserved, I can't know any of that from the beginning. Then, the color blue became important too, as the blue in these walls drawings makes one think of a huge architectural blueprint, resonating with my ideas of structure and residence. Another thing, from early on I have been making charcoal drawings on paper in fairly large scale (4x9 feet), but I always yearned for a bigger, vast space. The tape allowed me to step up my scale and to enter the drawing more physically, move around in it, and be able to experience it from many different viewpoints.

**LC:** Being repositionable, the blue tape has become part of your process. What makes you feel that a drawing is finished?

**CH:** Well, I don't know how long a drawing will take: sometimes it happens sooner, sometimes later. Sometimes it just cannot be resolved, so I put it away for a couple of months, or even a year, then pull it back out and work on it again. I stop when every line has a job, when all the lines are doing something. Every time I work on a drawing, I need to bring everything into the present and see how all the parts interact with each other at a given time. I stop when I feel like everything is in the present layer.

**LC:** Are your site-specific wall drawing installations preserved in some form by institutions, or is the tape removed and discarded as soon as the exhibition is over?

**CH:** At the end of an exhibition, these drawings are taken off the wall, they get crumpled up into a ball and they are thrown away. I love the impermanence because I am really trying to find

the freest experience in making drawings. That just seemed wonderful that they wouldn't be permanent, they couldn't be repeated, and they couldn't be painted on the wall.

**LC:** How do you want to engage the architectural space of the building, and how is that related to what you want to express with your work?

**CH:** I've been given different kinds of architectural spaces, I wouldn't want to come to the same kind of spatial configuration twice. The tape's color can be seen from a long distance. And it also starts to lift off the wall. It's very difficult to capture this in photographs, but when you see it, it looks like a sculpture that's hanging in front of it, rather than attached to the wall. This alters your sense of the space. I learned to play with that. By changing the angles of the lines I could suggest the feeling that you could move back through the wall. I thought the outcome was very sculptural.

**LC:** An artist's book came out of that experience: can you give us a little bit of background on that?

**CH:** One particular wall installation made for the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich called *Round Trip*, this was up for a year or so. The director was keen on making something permanent out of it, so he proposed that we make an artist's book, published by the museum. The book is called *Continuum*, and it has a nice large format. It has two functions: one is to document the piece; the other is to contain an autonomous piece, where the architecture of the book is used as the format for a drawing. This drawing is in the form of some loose folios contained within the book, they are 12x18" and fold out to 18x24". They are silkscreened prints, images of blue lines that move across the page or sheet and sometimes continue onto the

# CHRISTINE HIEBERT

## AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF LINE

interview by LEDA CEMPELLIN  
Associate Professor of Art History at  
South Dakota State University



back side. As the pages are turned, the visuals interact with each other, and since the folios are not bound, you can take them apart, reorder them, and turn them upside down. And you can see through them to what is printed on the other side, as the paper is somewhat translucent. The composition works in all these ways, unfolding in relationship to the folio architecture. That was a wonderful project for me, I always hope that every format will give me a new way of working and thinking.



Christine Hiebert in her studio, 2010. Photo © 2010 Teresa Tamura, courtesy the artist