



CHRISTOPHER COZIER inDEVELOPMENT



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Inside cover: *Development Pattern 4*, 40 x 52"
(detail)

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WORK IN PROCESS

By Nicholas Laughlin

"What am I doing? Making drawings on paper."

In Development means both *in process* and *in progress*. This recent body of work by Christopher Cozier explores both *how* the artist makes things and *why*: the incorrigible impulse to make images and the possibility of thereby changing the viewer's sense of being in the world. And why, specifically, in the medium of drawing – whether with pen, pencil, brush, or knife-blade – on paper.

Cozier describes drawing as his "note-taking," but these works are not simple records of observation. A certain object seems to act as a trigger for memory, attracting the artist's ardent attention. It may be a curiosity, like the table-brush in *After All That Talk*, an antique contraption for sweeping crumbs from a polite dinner table. Or it may be some mundane, obscure thing seen repeatedly, unremarkable to the point of near-invisibility: the silhouette of a forlorn tree in Port of Spain that becomes a default landmark; the wall and gateposts surrounding an empty urban lot, site of a now-bulldozed Victorian house; a coin whose patriotic symbols are worn away as it passes through countless hands, countless rituals of exchange; or the concrete and clay breeze bricks ubiquitous in tropical architecture of the past five decades.

As these objects become images for contemplation and replication, Cozier's repeated renderings are investigations of line, tone, proportion, perspective, accident: all the mechanics of image-making. They are also a form of conceptual scrutiny: of the meanings images bear or can be made to bear, but also of what the artist calls "conditions of visibility." How much of the world around us, he seems to ask, is actually visible to the eye of memory, the eye of invention?

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A pattern of circles and diamonds is an exercise in geometry, until it is rendered in sections of cast concrete, when it becomes a response of architectural technique to certain facts of temperature and light, and the need to enclose a space without sealing it off – as you might wish to do in a hot, humid place, where the practical idea of a wall, a structure providing privacy and security, must accommodate a need for ventilation.

Development Pattern is a drawing of a breeze-brick wall, characteristic of tropical architecture in the later twentieth century. It is also a kind of map: not of physical topography, but of a territory of the artist's imagination. Like other maps, it makes a claim on this territory. Like other drawings, it is a claim on visibility itself, the problem of how we comprehend the world by looking at it.

A breeze brick – a geometrical pattern rendered in concrete – is designed not so much to be *seen* as to be *seen through*, literally. It both frames and fragments a view of what is on the other side of its wall. It lets in (light, air, sound) and keeps out (intruders). Depending on where you stand, it may protect or it may trap. An engineer might explain the principles of weight and tension through which an arrangement of breeze bricks coheres into a wall. An architectural historian might explain its widespread adoption in tropical regions since the 1950s as an element of vernacular Modernist architecture defining a break with a colonial past. A sociologist might explain that in parts of the Caribbean breeze-brick patterns suggest the suburban housing estates laid out after Independence, the schools and hospitals and government buildings whose ribbon-cutting ceremonies were meant as milestones on the hopeful road to self-determination.

Cozier's drawings don't explain – they inquire. In the first place, they ask us to *look* at these *Development Patterns*, these *Sites of Exchange*, *That Tree*: to pay attention to these obscure objects, near-invisible because unremarkable, which compose the texture of mundane life in a small twenty-first century post-colonial tropical place; and which may hold more essential truth about that place than official symbols and monuments and the familiar "big" themes which reassure academics and museum curators.

The drawings also ask us to consider *why* we look – at some things, not at others; and they ask us what *looking* means, what it amounts to, what it changes, what it doesn't. How do our visual imaginations (and visual memories) get stocked with some kinds of images and not others? How do our expectations and ignorances filter and screen? What parts of the picture are we therefore missing?

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This fascinated pursuit of scrutiny is the quintessence of Cozier's work in all media, but what he calls "the stains-on-paper domain" – making marks on paper – is the heart of his practice. Drawing, he says, "is ephemeral and immediate. I want to talk about occupying the frame with my thoughts."

On another occasion, he adds: "The drawings are as much actions as they are objects. They record an internal struggle." The struggle is both to see and to be seen – to *make* visible and to *be* visible. It is a problem and a discipline. It is a mode of awareness achieved through what Cozier elsewhere calls the "little gestures" of repetition, returning again and again to an obsessed-over image, looking and re-looking, thinking and re-thinking.

Some of the images in the *In Development* works have a long genealogy of inquiry in Cozier's *oeuvre*. They return again and again, refined, transposed into other contexts or other media. The images travel with the artist – some of these pieces were made during working visits to Johannesburg (where he collaborated with David Krut Print Workshop), New York, and Kentucky, as well as in the artist's studio in Trinidad – and reconcile themselves in "moments of encounter in unexpected places." An ink drawing becomes a silhouette, a cut-out shape, a small sculptural object, a stencil. A repeated thought becomes manifest in a mode of replication: the rubber stamps characteristic of Cozier's previous *Tropical Night* series; the silkscreen and linocut prints included in *In Development*; or the "interactive object" he has created for gallery visitors to take away, a template for the viewer to make his or her own images.

Visibility is inherently participatory: an image must be seeable by someone. And the story of the world we tell ourselves – our comprehension of history, identity, purpose – begins with images. To be in the world is to see it, to draw it in the space of imagination we call memory. Drawing is thinking. Thinking is drawing.

Nicholas Laughlin is the editor of The Caribbean Review of Books and the arts and travel magazine Caribbean Beat. He is also co-director, with Sean Leonard and Christopher Cozier, of the contemporary art space and network Alice Yard, based in Port of Spain.

Small table



suspect



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 to the person who could be who who and people who just have here in the known and just that one of the make and have a piece of

of exchange



red
 white
 blue





PREVIOUS PAGE

Red White & Blue / 2012, mixed media, 36 x 52"

LEFT

Now Showing I / 2012, mixed media, 60 x 60"

RIGHT

Now Showing II / 2012, mixed media, 60 x 60"







LEFT

After All That Talk 2 / 2011,
2-color linocut, 30 x 22", edition of 12

RIGHT TOP

Shell Pink, Site of Production / 2012,
ink on paper, 14 x 14"

RIGHT BOTTOM

Site of Exchange 1 / 2012,
ink on paper, 14 x 14"

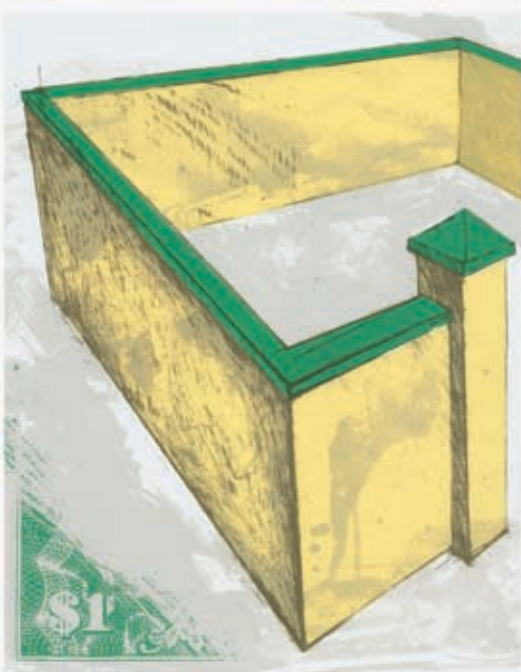
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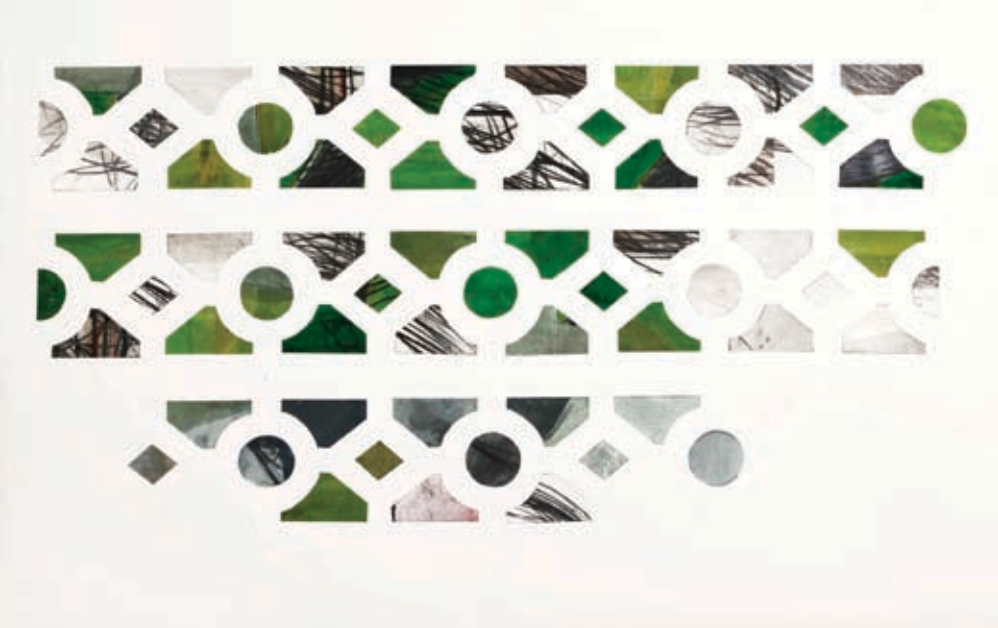
All That's Left / 2011, silkscreen,
9 x 7" each, edition of 30





all that is left
APG





TEMPLATE

Viewers are invited to cut out a common tropical ventilation or breeze-brick form, available at David Krut Projects and online. Use as a template to create your own design on a wall or any surface. Please send your image, thoughts, and its location, to dpatterns2013@gmail.com. It will be placed on <http://dpatterns2013.wordpress.com>. The template and instructional video can also be found on the website above.

"This invitation continues my interest in participatory collaborative visual conversations. This is not a project about nostalgia. To me, these patterns represent a moment of hope and possibility (yet unfulfilled?) that we may all share."

– Christopher Cozier

LEFT *Development Pattern 2* / 2012, mixed media, 36 x 52"

ABOVE RIGHT Christopher Cozier working in his studio, 2012

BACK PAGE Film still from Cozier's instructional online template video, 2012



BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Cozier (b. 1959) is an artist, curator, and writer living and working in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Cozier's work has been included in exhibitions *Into the Mix* at Kentucky Museum of Art, *Afro Modern* at The Tate Liverpool and *Infinite Island* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. His work has also been included in the 7th Havana Biennial, The Stenersen Museum in Oslo and the Chicago Cultural Center, among others. He is the co-founder of Alice Yard, an arts organization and residency facilitating regular exhibitions, performances and discussions in Port of Spain. Cozier co-curated *Wrestling with an Image: Caribbean Interventions at the Museum of the Americas* in Washington, D.C. in 2011. He was an editorial adviser to *BOMB Magazine* for their Americas issues (Winter editions 2003 – 2005) and was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2004.



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