

THESIS

ANALOGUES

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

ANALOGUES

Block by block, pixel by pixel, my three dimensional work suggests the framework of the virtual and how it has become increasingly routine to cross its borders. Handheld devices are our tangible windows to the cloud, a reminder that we still reside in a physical world. The use of wood and enamel accentuate the materiality of my pieces but also suggest a link to historical mosaic and stained glass work. The exponential evolution of technology is contrasted by the excessive manual fabrication within one piece. The two dimensional drawings are the cloud itself. They express the invisible narrative within a single device as well as the dialogue it has between other connected technologies. Just as the sculptures have been stripped of function to highlight their physicality, the drawings broadcast a corporeal familiarity onto an incomprehensible dimension.

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ANALOGUES

For me art making is an expression of my thoughts, a way to visually organize my stream of consciousness. The act of making forces me to winnow out all of the trivialities that run through my mind and focus in on more homologous conceptions. It is a learning process, one that is both internal and worldly.

I engage in two kinds of art making. Though their creation processes are quite different they are connected through my conceptual focus. Through drawings and paintings I find a way to react to my thoughts intuitively. This process is emotional and predominantly unplanned. My sculptural work is more calculated. The attention to detail and precision found in these pieces stems from my background in metalsmithing and jewelry. Throughout history metalsmithing, as a craft, has required the utmost fastidiousness as a sign of skill and dedication. Although the materials I choose may not relate to traditional metal work, I handle them with a similar degree of consideration. It is this time and labor-intensive level of fabrication that allows me to live with an idea, research, experiment, and grow. It is necessary to include both types of expression to create a symbiotic and balanced environment in my life.

Although I engage in art making for my own benefit I am aware that it can also be a powerful means of communication. Good art has the potential to affect people's values and lead to life changing epiphanies. Because of its capacity for message, consideration of one's audience is of utmost importance to me. It is my experience that many people are intimidated and confused by contemporary, conceptual artworks. I wish to employ a more populist and all-inclusive art making strategy to broaden my viewer base. After all, the purpose of art is to express our humanity and culture. By excluding all but the most elite, whether deliberately or not, artists may be missing the mark entirely. Conversely, I do not want to alienate established art audiences. Making wide reaching artwork doesn't mean it must be void of innovation or intellect. One piece can contain many layers of depth ranging from purely visual to any number of metaphors and references. I also believe that it is not an artist's role to agendize works. I feel that art can act as an important instigator, a way to create questions and discussions. Art does not have the answers, just the power of foresight.

Literature and films that engage ideas of foreshadowing and adumbration are substantial influences on me and inevitably my art. Books such as George Orwell's *1984*, Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World*, and films like *Blade Runner*, *Children of Men*, *Wag the Dog*, *The Island*, *A Scanner Darkly*, *The Matrix* and others are for the most part political fictions set in the future. They tend to be dystopic warnings about the course humanity is taking. They also have a commonality that closely relates to my

artwork: the idea that technology is its own entity, that it might not be controllable or that it will significantly alter human nature. The questions these grim parables ask are ones that I ponder frequently, and are manifest in my self-expression.

My fascination with technology and its relationship to popular culture drive the content of my artwork. They span a wide audience and they are steeped in controversy and speculation. Both have significant influence on daily life, especially in America and other westernized cultures. However, they are often overlooked from day to day precisely because we are so immersed in them. They become covert players in our subconscious.

The combination of my philosophies and interests has driven my work into these realms of technology and popular culture. I have chosen the pixel as a symbol, an iconic representation of our human built-society. While the atom is the building block of the natural world, so the pixel is its parallel in the virtual. My three-dimensional thesis work parodies three-dimensional electronic devices and two-dimensional images by abstracting them through physical pixilation. Handheld multimedia platforms have become icons of the digital age. Because they have widespread use and tend to be taken for granted, abstracting their forms encourages the viewer to reconsider their own relationship and understanding of that popular technology.

My first explorations in the realm of the pixel were based on jewelry forms (Fig. 1-2). Besides being easily recognizable, jewelry, as an image, is mass consumed. There are millions of advertisements for “fashion jewelry” both on

paper and on the Internet. Jewelry represents items that are to be desired by all, yet only a few can actually attain. This makes jewelry a social status indicator, which is a layer of content that I could not avoid addressing in the work.

Handheld technology, too, can indicate social status, but it is quickly becoming cheaper and more accessible. I feel that the issue of status in work that represents technology devices can't be entirely discounted but my primary focus is more on the technology itself.

To accentuate this, I methodically build, block-by-block, pixel-by-pixel, counter to contemporary technology. This is again a type of abstraction, one that could denote opposition to advancement but what I hope will show the link between antiquated and current practice. I have chosen wood as an analog material. Besides its relatively uncomplicated workability, it brings substance to the pieces. The grain, the warping, and its natural feel contradict the binary sphere where imperfection is inherently void. This helps to make an object that is bereft of function and yet just as desirable as its counterpart.

My first attempt to demonstrate these ideas physically was "*We Have the Feelies and the Scent Organ Instead*" (Fig. 3). The title is a reference to a section of Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World* in which the characters are discussing the need for art.¹ Fine art objects that imitate mass-consumed "anti-art" are ironically juxtaposed and leave the viewer with the communistic vs. individualistic

¹ "The Savage was silent for a little. "All the same," he insisted obstinately, "*Othello's* good, *Othello's* better than those feelies." "Of course it is," the Controller agreed. "But that's the price we have to pay for stability. You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We've sacrificed the high art. We have the feelies and the scent organ instead."

dilemma in Huxley's book. While this piece is successful in evincing the mass production of technology, the blocky form does not replicate the sexy, tactile qualities of the designs used to create desire in potential consumers. I was able to resolve this issue by continuing the cube construction, which references pixels, but smoothing the outer surface to match the shape of the devices more closely.

The *Versificator* series follows the evolution of the Apple I-pod Nano chronologically (Fig. 4-7). In this series my goal was to capture the rapid advancement in technology, which has allowed Apple to upgrade the quality of the screen and storage while also reducing the size of the object itself. Through this series I am also contrasting industrial fabrication, which emphasizes the production of multiples, with tediously handcrafted one of a kind art pieces. Apple does an excellent job of creating devices that are mass-produced but still have the feel of a personalized item. The term

“mass individualization” expresses the intrinsic contradiction between the two.²

The title *Versificator* is a device in George Orwell's novel *1984*, which personifies this opposition as it composes music and literature without the use of human creativity.

² Mass individualization- a term used in “e-commerce” to describe the large-scale development of products, which are customized to buyers. The concept predates the Internet; however, network technology has provided the infrastructure for a major expansion in companies offering mass individualization. It can be applied to anything from services such as financial investment packages to manufactured products such as computers. It is also known as “mass customization”.

With *Cellular Phone (subverted)* I took an inverted approach to the way the other pieces compare current and historic technologies (Fig. 8). By placing a glass grid over the original screen of a cellular phone I subverted its intended function and imbued it with subtle suggestions of the past (Fig. 9). This exploration increased the range of media options I have to work with the subject matter. It gave me a peek at what is possible with an actual working knowledge of circuitry and computer programming, a facet that is necessary to investigate as I continue to create work in this vein.

Voxels is an attempt to break down the elements of the digital realm and relate it to our 3-D reality. A voxel is a three-dimensional pixel, a unit that enables us to project our 3-D world into only two-dimensions.³ Doing this allows us to visualize the screen as a window into an alternate existence. The individual blocks of the piece represent pixels, which in our reality are manifested as voxels. The pile of hand cut and individually dyed “voxels” is a deconstructed image of the Firefox logo (Fig. 10-11). This logo is used to represent the Internet, a virtual domain of its own. The video displays the process of constructing the image using the blocks thereby placing them once again into two-dimensions, as pixels on the screen (Fig. 12). This interplay between dimensions emphasizes the frequency with which many people interact with digital realms and may in

³ Voxel- *jargon* (By analogy with "pixel") Volume element. The smallest distinguishable box-shaped part of a three-dimensional space. A particular voxel will be identified by the x, y and z coordinates of one of its eight corners, or perhaps its center. The term is used in three-dimensional modeling.

some ways confuse the two. The laborious hand placement of each individual block alludes to the human element still needed to fabricate these seemingly automated dimensions, as well as to the fact that they were a human creation from the beginning.

In my recent two-dimensional work I have been exploring biomorphic inspired mapscales using ink and acrylic washes. They originated from a style of doodles I have been playing with for years. Interestingly, like my sculptural work, they too incorporate elements of technology. Circuit boards, blueprints and machines are some of the influences that I have noticed. This aspect must have been coming out in my work subconsciously and now consciously. Additionally, there are also plant-like characteristics that contrast against the man-made. I believe this duality relates strongly to my pixilated objects, as the wood used in my sculptures relates to the bio-morphism in the drawings.

The series of drawings I have created for my thesis work are more strongly influenced by the narrative created by digital devices as they speak internally and to one another (Fig. 13-15). The three-dimensional sculptures represent the iconic surface of technology while the drawings are maps of the inner workings of that technology. They are the interactive component to the icon's static symbology.

Cloud-speak is an installation piece that utilizes two of my sculptures to reference the communication that happens invisibly within and between these technologies. The cloud is a term used to represent the infrastructure of the

Internet. It is used when referring to storage and access of information from which a physical location is not easily traceable.⁴ The drawings are a human interpretation of the incomprehensible activity within the cloud. By projecting my vision of how this technology works I hope to invite viewers to imagine what it would be like to see this interaction manifested physically, how it would encapsulate our world in a dense and intricate web (Fig. 16).

The two sculptures act as anchoring points for this dialog. In this series I am interested in exploring devices that personified communication. These pieces are based on cellular phone models and are fabricated using the same technique as the *Versificator* series. However, in this interpretation I did not pigment the surface, instead leaving the wood grain and grid structure visible. Doing so promotes the materiality of the object and accentuates the hand crafted aspect. It also acts as a neutral backdrop for the screen. Transparent enamel evokes stained glass while also mimicking the glow of an LCD screen. The images are based on icons found on cellular phones. One icon represents the signal strength in which the phone is able to converse with its brethren (Fig. 17). The other is the symbol for the “Instant Message” application that allows users to chat using the Internet (Fig. 18).⁵ By observing the signs and symbols created for these devices

⁴ Cloud computing is a general term for anything that involves delivering hosted services over the Internet. These services are broadly divided into three categories: Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS), Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) and Software-as-a-Service (SaaS). The name cloud computing was inspired by the cloud symbol that's often used to represent the Internet in flowcharts and diagrams.

⁵ Instant Message- an electronic message sent in real time via the Internet and therefore immediately available for display on the recipients' screen

I discovered how closely they relate to hieroglyphics and other historic symbolic systems.

The connection between human history and the present seems to be recognizable in every aspect of society. The process of research and making helps me uncover patterns and systems that span time and media. Through this particular exploration I have gained a more in-depth understanding of digital technology and its role in contemporary society. It is loved and feared, convenient and futile. Though it is seen as a product of the information age it is inextricably linked to the past through its evolution. I see my thesis work as a monumental step in unifying my interests and research but it is not final. I now have many avenues to explore and hope to incorporate new media and technologies as they become available.

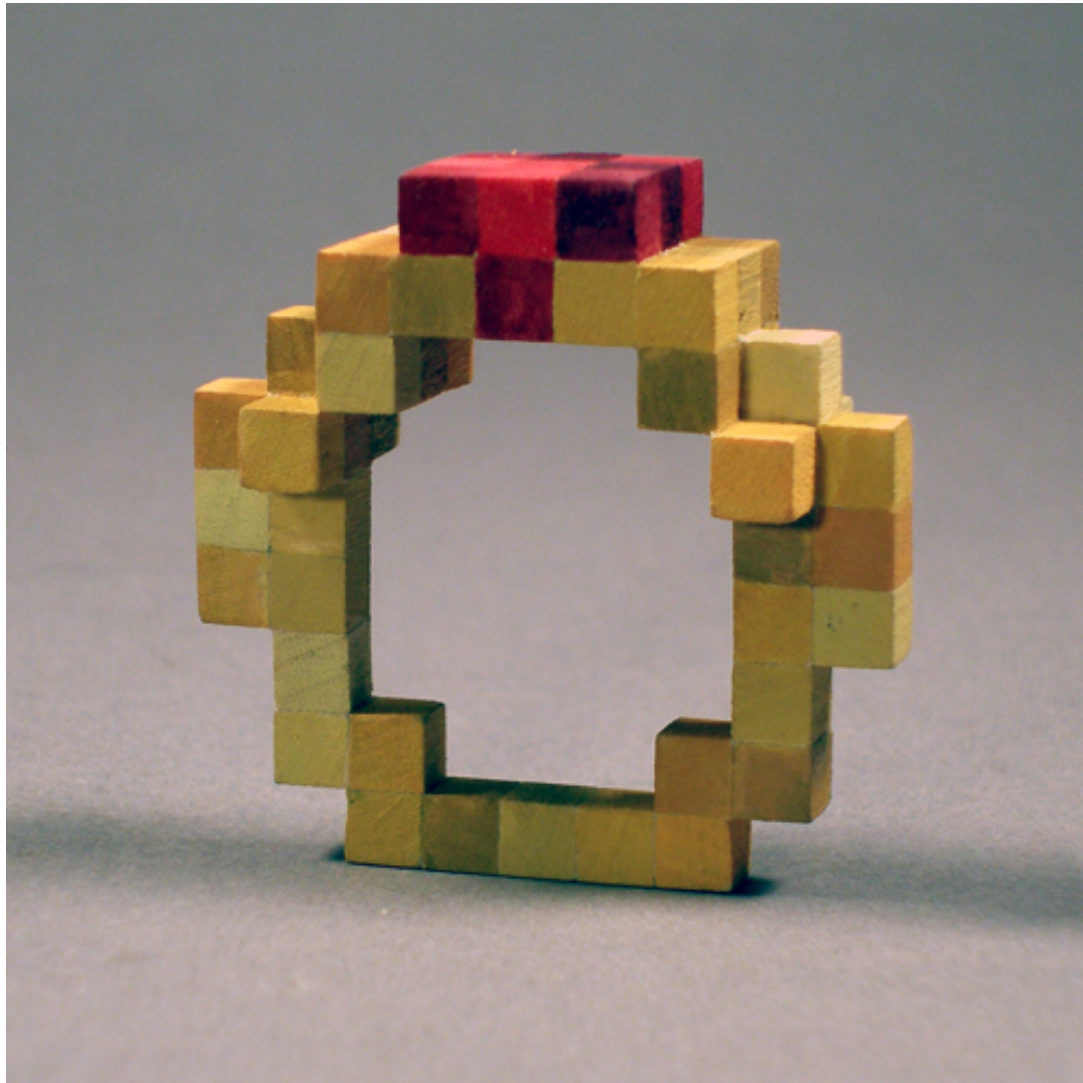


Fig. 1, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Analogue Ring*, 2008,
Hand cut and assembled basswood cubes, acrylic wash, 1 ½"x 1 ½"x 1/8"

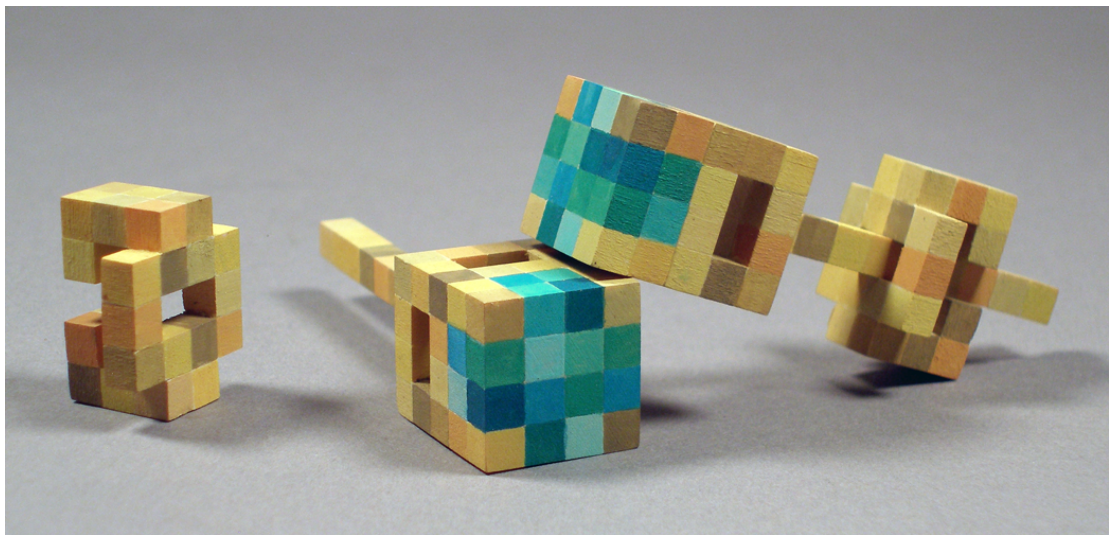


Fig. 2, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Analogue Earrings*, 2008,
Hand cut and assembled basswood cubes, acrylic wash, 1"x 2 ½"x 1"



Fig 3, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips,
"We have the feelies and the scent organ instead", 2010,
Hand cut and dyed basswood cubes, copper, enamel, acrylic wash,
1 ½"x 3"x 1"



Fig. 4, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Versificator: 1st Generation*, 2010,
Hand cut and assembled basswood cubes, copper, enamel, acrylic wash,
1 ½"x 3 ½"x 3/8"

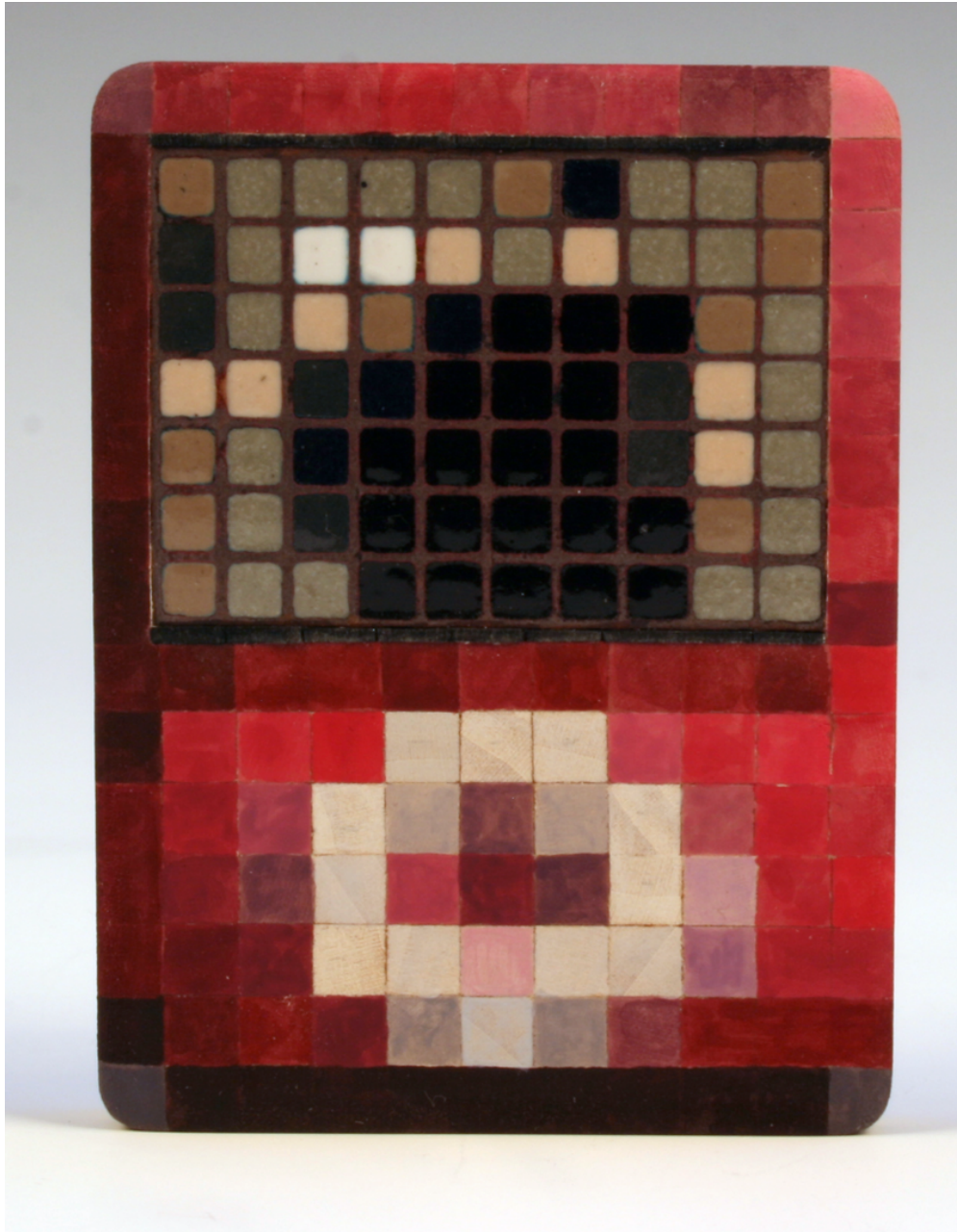


Fig. 5, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Versificator: 3rd Generation*, 2010,
Hand cut and assembled basswood cubes, copper, enamel, acrylic wash,
2 1/16"x 2 3/4"x 5/16"



Fig. 6, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Versificator 4th Generation*, 2010,
Hand cut and assembled basswood cubes, copper, enamel, acrylic wash,
3 1/2"x 1 3/4"x 3/16"

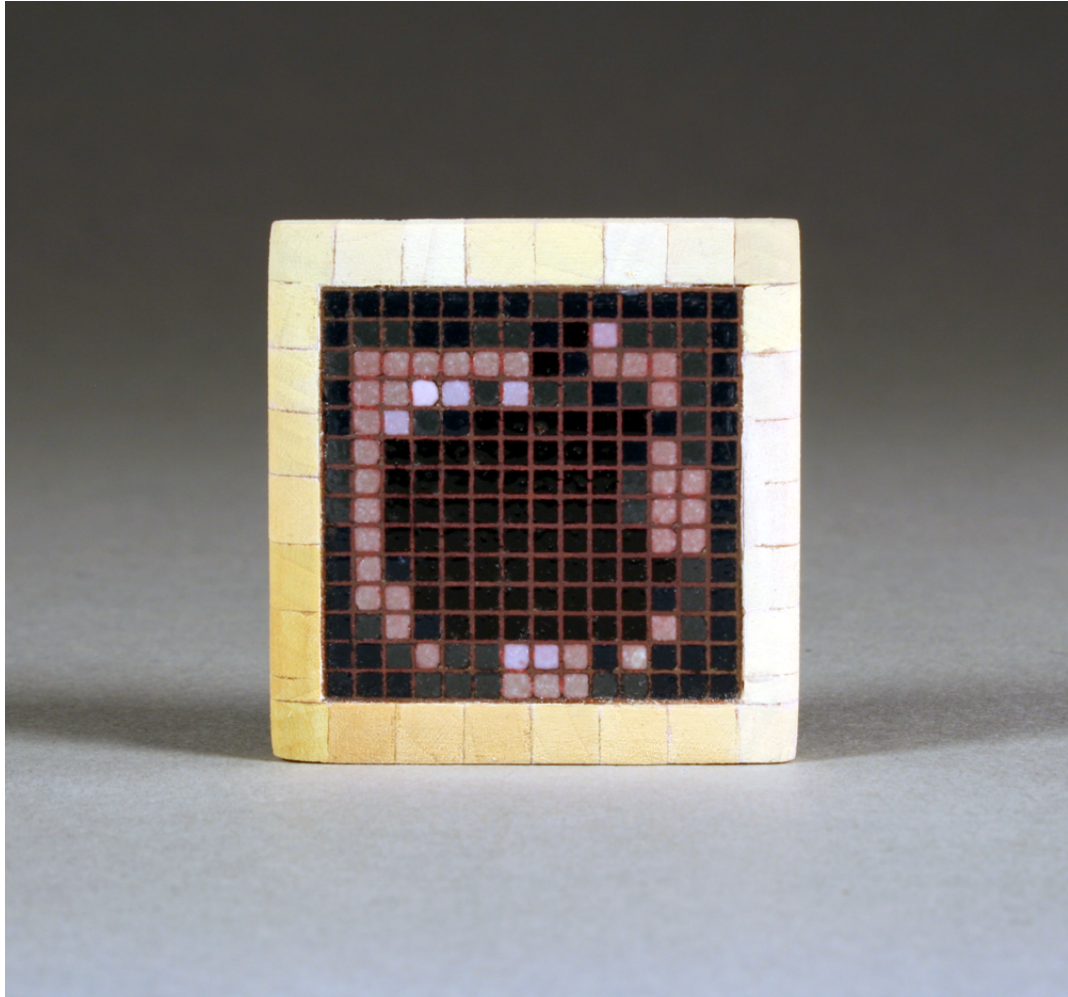


Fig. 7, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Versificator 6th Generation*, 2010,
Hand cut and assembled basswood cubes, copper, enamel, acrylic wash,
1 ½"x 3 ½"x 3/8"



Fig. 8, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, Cellular Phone [subverted], 2010,
Cellular phone, copper, plique-a-jour enamel, 1 11/16"x 6 1/4"x 7/8"

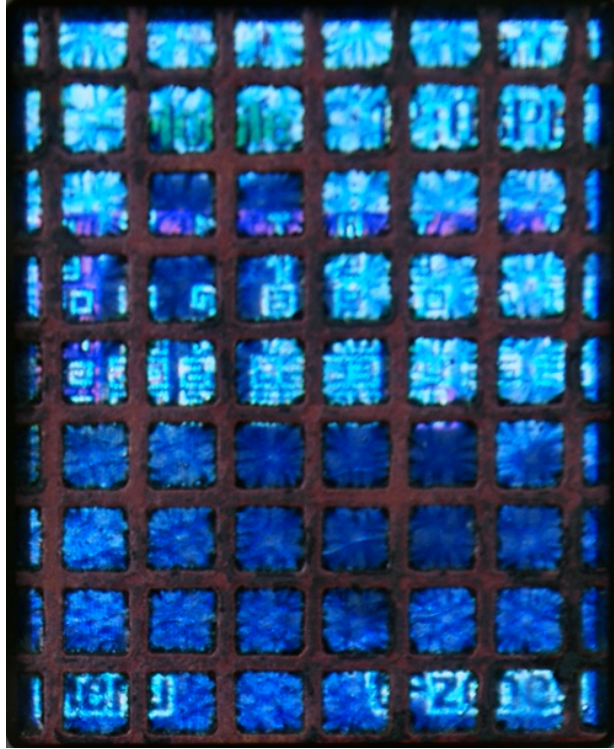


Fig. 9, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Cellular Phone [subverted]* (detail), 2010, Cellular phone, copper, plique-a-jour enamel, 1 11/16"x 6 1/4"x 7/8"



Fig. 10, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Voxels*, 2010,
Hand cut and dyed acrylic cubes, 3"x 3"x ½"

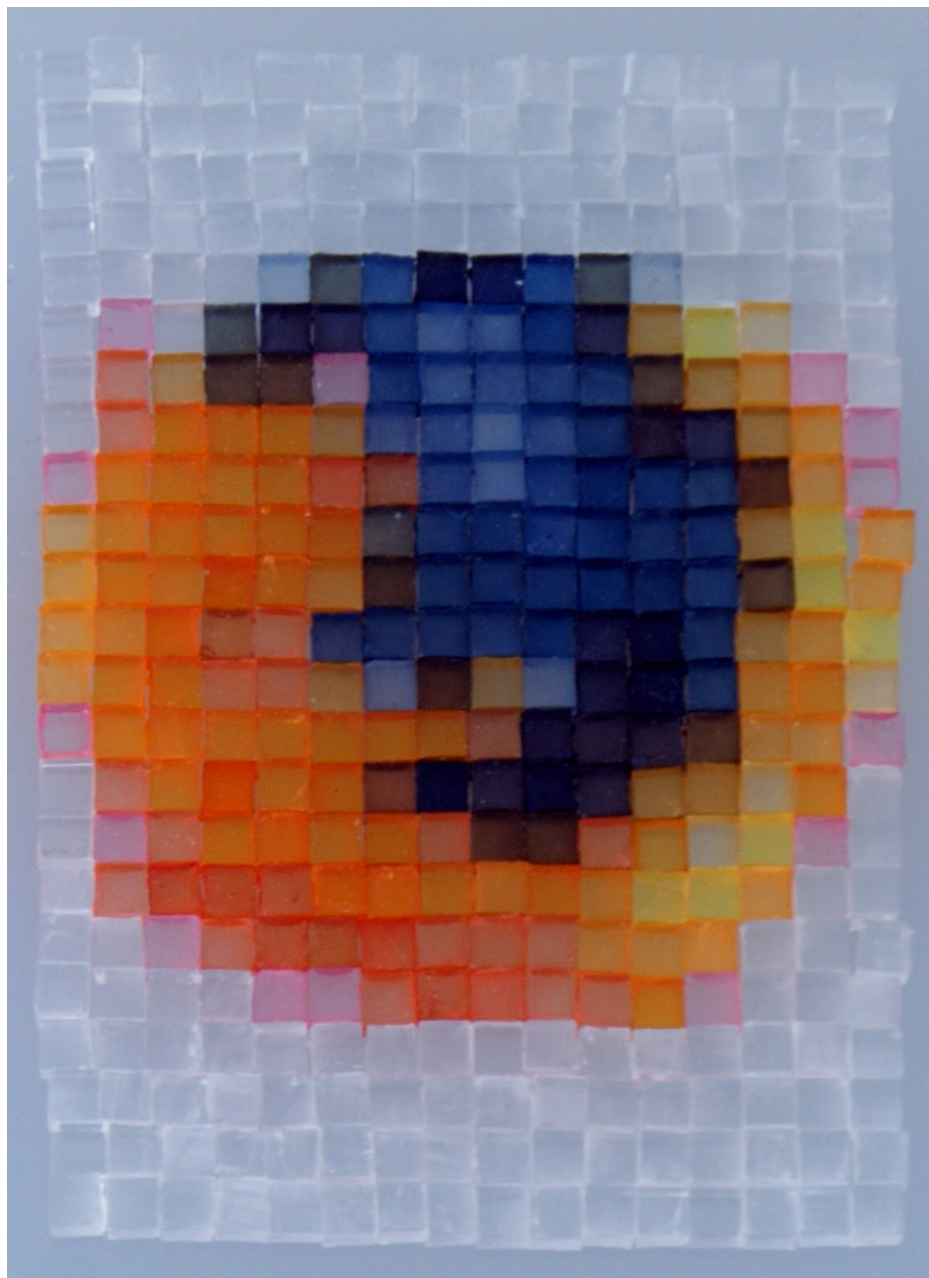


Fig. 11, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Voxels*, 2010,
Hand cut and dyed acrylic cubes, 2"x 3"x 1/8"

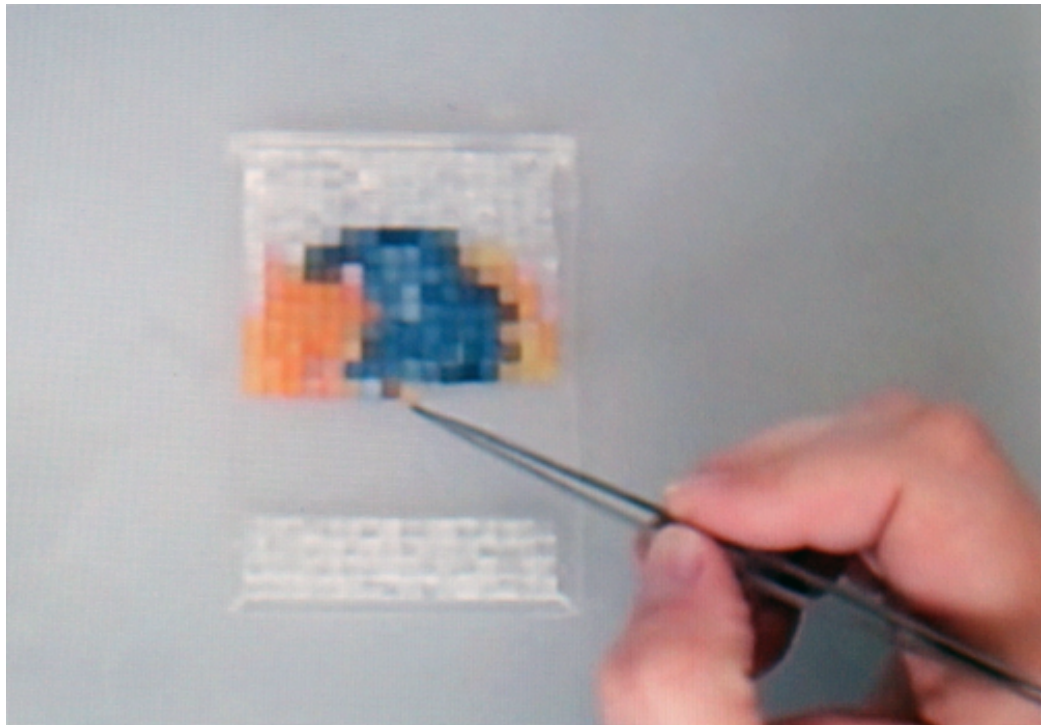


Fig. 12, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Voxels* (video), 2011,
Hand cut and dyed acrylic cubes



Fig. 13, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Cloud-speak* (detail), 2010,
Ink and acrylic wash on paper, brass wire, sterling silver wire, basswood,
Installation size variable



Fig. 14, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Cloud-speak* (detail), 2010,
Ink and acrylic wash on paper, brass wire, sterling silver wire, basswood,
Installation size variable



Fig. 15, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Cloud-speak* (detail), 2010,
Ink and acrylic wash on paper, brass wire, sterling silver wire, basswood,
Installation size variable



Fig. 16, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips,
Cloud-speak (with Cell-con [signal] and Cell-con [chat]), 2010,
Ink and acrylic wash on paper, brass wire, sterling silver wire, basswood,
Installation size variable



Fig. 17, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Cell-con [signal]*, 2010,
Hand cut and assembled basswood cubes, copper, pique-a-jour enamel, 1 3/8"x
4"x 3/8"



Fig. 18, Lindsey Elizabeth Phillips, *Cell-con [chat]*, 2011,
Hand cut and assembled basswood cubes, copper, plique-a-jour enamel, 1 ½"x 2
7/8"x 3/16"

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