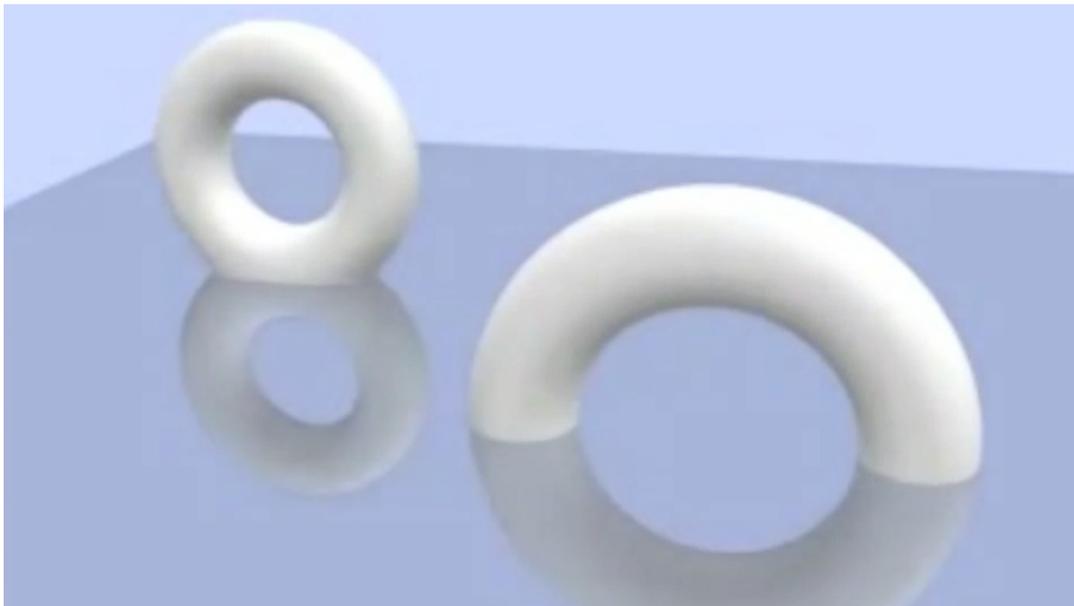


# CENTER for EXPERIMENTAL LECTURES

August 31, 2013—Shandaken Project, Shandaken, NY  
<http://experimentallecures.org>

## *Two and Monuments Two* by Chris Domenick



**Video at: <https://vimeo.com/81522847>**

Hi, OK! Let's give this a try. I'm gonna do something where I go like "this" and I'm going to communicate with Em right here, and we're going to try and like really be in tune, because it's really about timing.

As is customary in situations like these, I'm gonna read a quote from Gertrude Stein's "Tender Buttons." It's called "A Piece of Coffee."

(spoken with video)

## A PIECE OF COFFEE.

More of double.

A place in no new table.

A single image is not splendor. Dirty is yellow. A sign of more in not mentioned. A piece of coffee is not a detainer. The resemblance to yellow is dirtier and distincter. The clean mixture is whiter and not coal color, never more coal color than altogether.

The sight of a reason, the same sight slighter, the sight of a simpler negative answer, the same sore sounder, the intention to wishing, the same splendor, the same furniture.

The time to show a message is when too late and later there is no hanging in a blight.

A not torn rose-wood color. If it is not dangerous then a pleasure and more than any other if it is cheap is not cheaper. The amusing side is that the sooner there are no fewer the more certain is the necessity dwindled. Supposing that the case contained rose-wood and a color. Supposing that there was no reason for a distress and more likely for a number, supposing that there was no astonishment, is it not necessary to mingle astonishment.

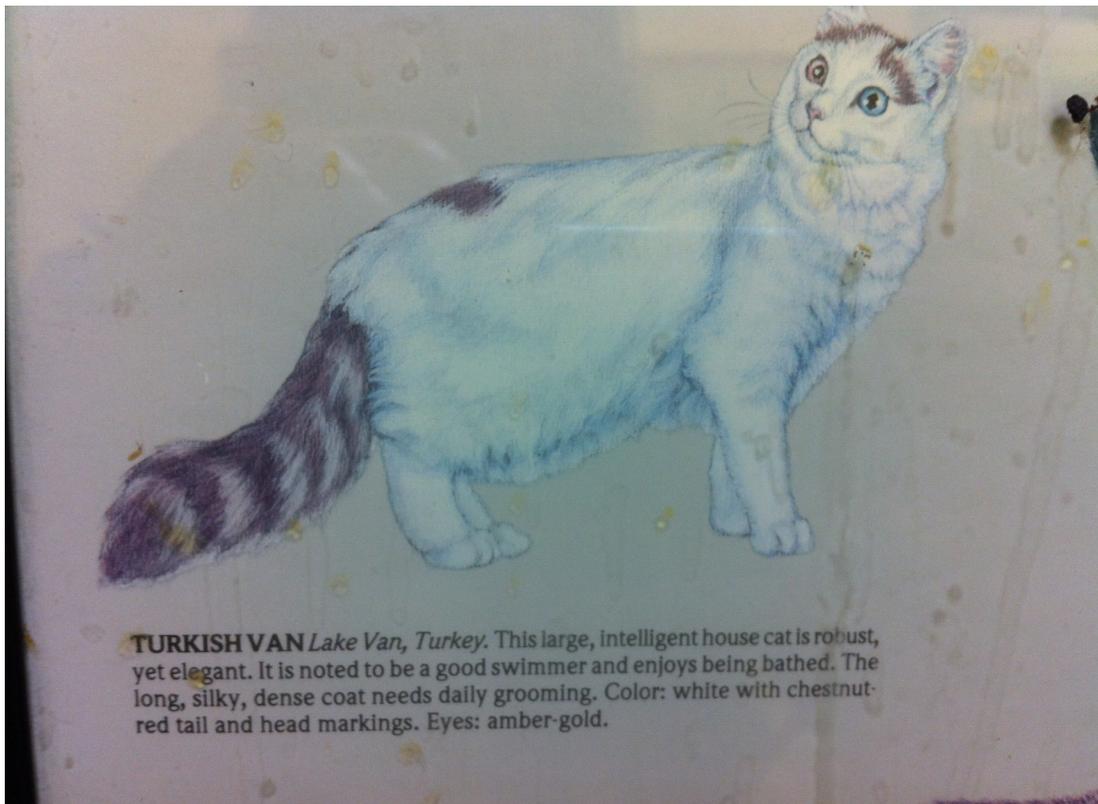
The settling of stationing cleaning is one way not to shatter scatter and scattering. The one way to use custom is to use soap and silk for cleaning. The one way to see cotton is to have a design concentrating the illusion and the illustration. The perfect way is to accustom the thing to have a lining and the shape of a ribbon and to be solid, quite solid in standing and to use heaviness in morning. It is light enough in that. It has that shape nicely. Very nicely may not be exaggerating. Very strongly may be sincerely fainting. May be strangely flattering. May not be strange in everything. May not be strange to.

*I. Disco*

So, the title of this lecture, is: “Two and Monuments Two.” It’s divided into three parts. The first part is called “Disco” which is named after the cat that I adopted in January of 2012 and soon after got tattooed on my leg.



You know, I named him Disco, and was told by a friend of mine that he was a Turkish van cat, and these cats often come from the city in Van, Turkey, where they’re often characterized by their thick white coats and two different colored eyes.



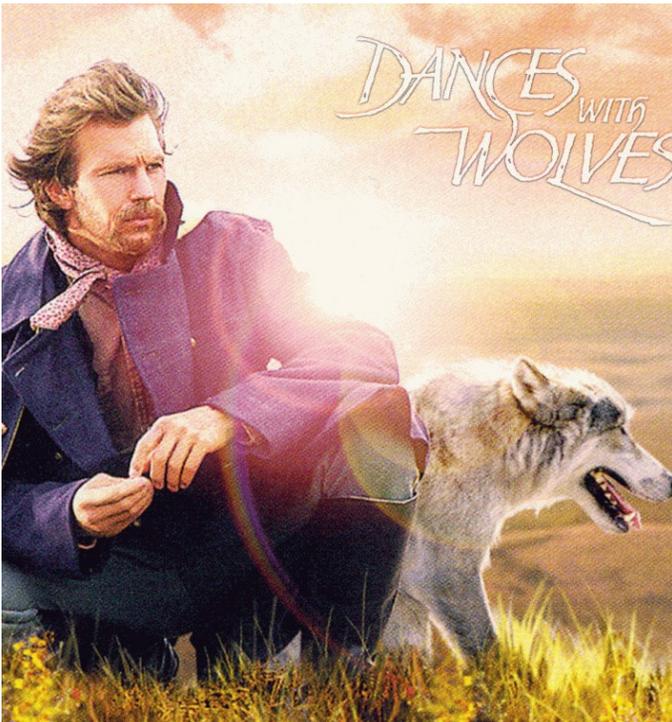
**TURKISH VAN** *Lake Van, Turkey.* This large, intelligent house cat is robust, yet elegant. It is noted to be a good swimmer and enjoys being bathed. The long, silky, dense coat needs daily grooming. Color: white with chestnut-red tail and head markings. Eyes: amber-gold.



In Van there is this monument devoted to the cat, where there's two cats, they have the two different colored eyes, and they like swimming, apparently.



Van, Turkey: I've never been there, but my friend Laura Frantz who was in residence here several weeks ago, she had been there and she gave me this postcard that was from the town of Van which now resides next to Disco's drinking bowl.



I happened to watch *Dances With Wolves* not long after getting Disco and thought a lot about the relationship between man and beast and how this sort of romantic, how this tradition was visualized in the movie and in many other situations.



And when I watched the film I read this article about this woman named Peggy Detmers in who lived in Black Hills, South Dakota, who was suing Kevin Costner, because he... So the way the story goes, this is Peggy Detmers in her, sort of, free time...





And so she was hired to build this sculpture, right, and Kevin Costner was gonna build this resort. It was gonna be called The Dunbar, based on his character in *Dances With Wolves*. And, so, you know, she signed a contract. She was gonna build this monumental sculpture for the resort and it was gonna be these thirteen or fourteen massive bronze sculptures of bison and it was gonna depict a chase that was taken from the film *Dances With Wolves*.

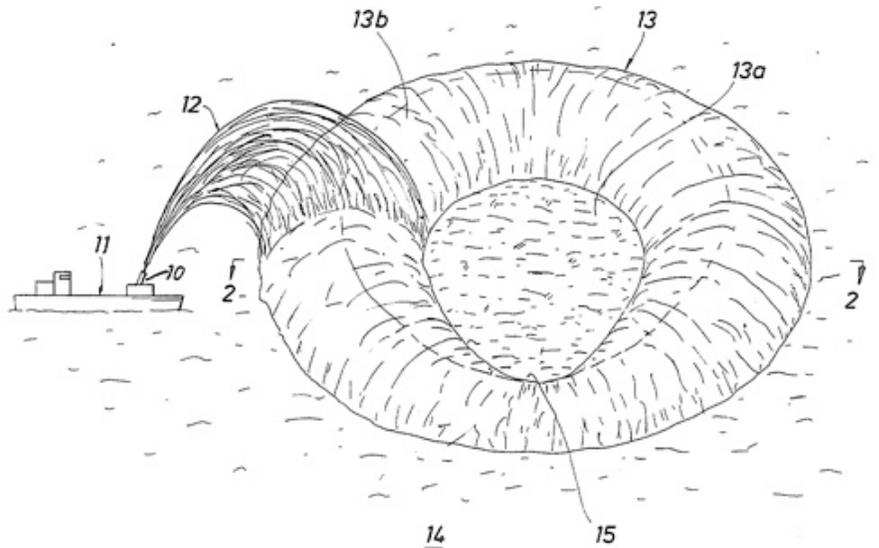
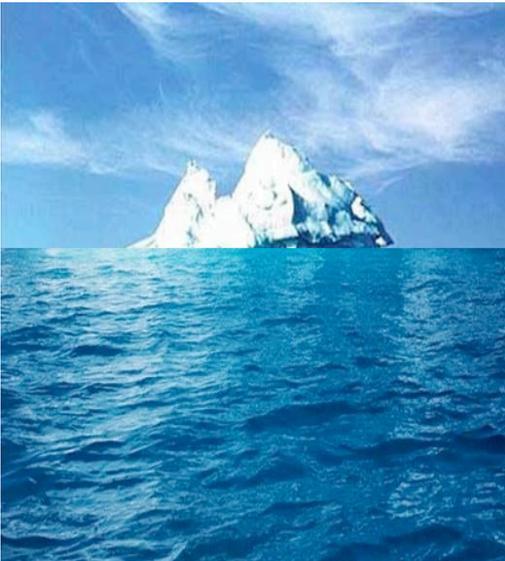


Ten years later the resort was never built, yet the sculptures were. So she decided to sue him because it was a breach of contract, there was no place for her to put her sculpture. And she had, you know, spent fifteen years devoted to working on it, and she felt like it was sort of a waste and because the Dunbar was supposed to have an exhibition space, a casino, big fancy restaurants and what not, she felt like that would have given her a lot more publicity than, you know, it not being there.





So, he built this place called Tatanka: The Story of the Bison, which is where this sculpture now resides and it's a history center in Black Hills, South Dakota. Yet she's still suing him.

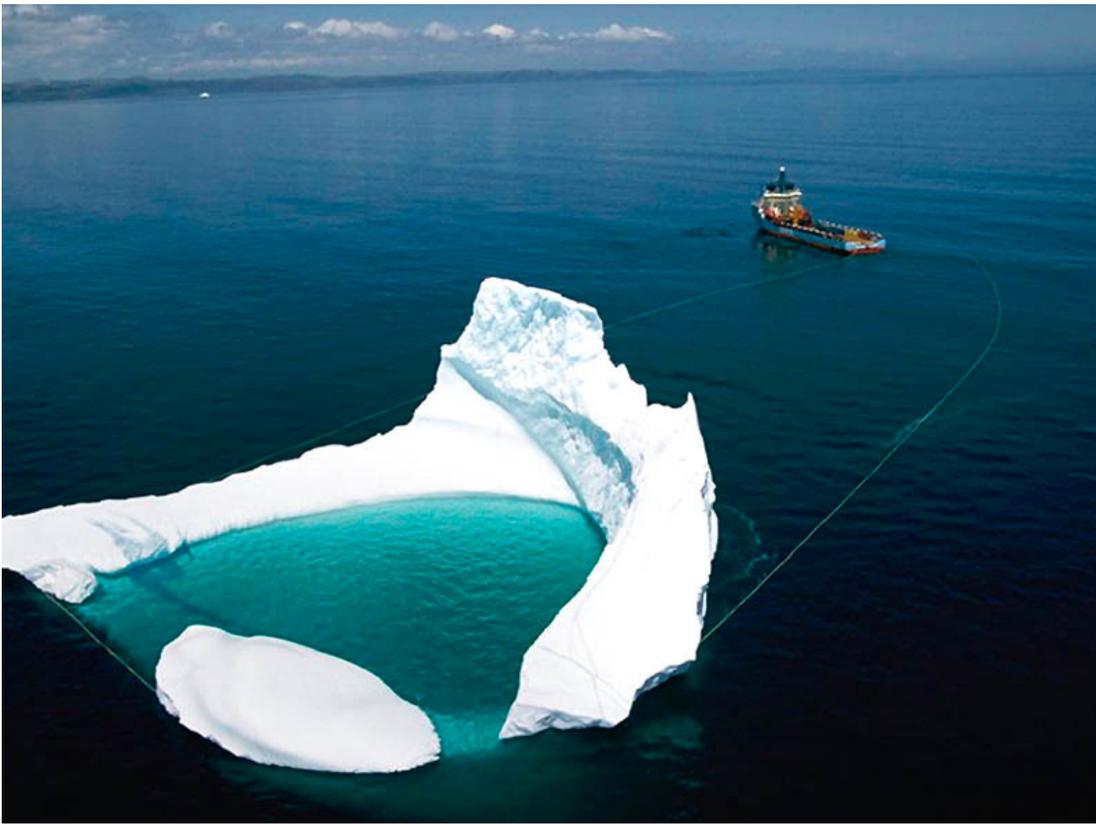


So, I started to think about the idea of nomadic monuments and icebergs and floating ice islands which have become really prolific, or they have become prevalent as off shore oil speculation in the Arctic has kind of gained more interest.

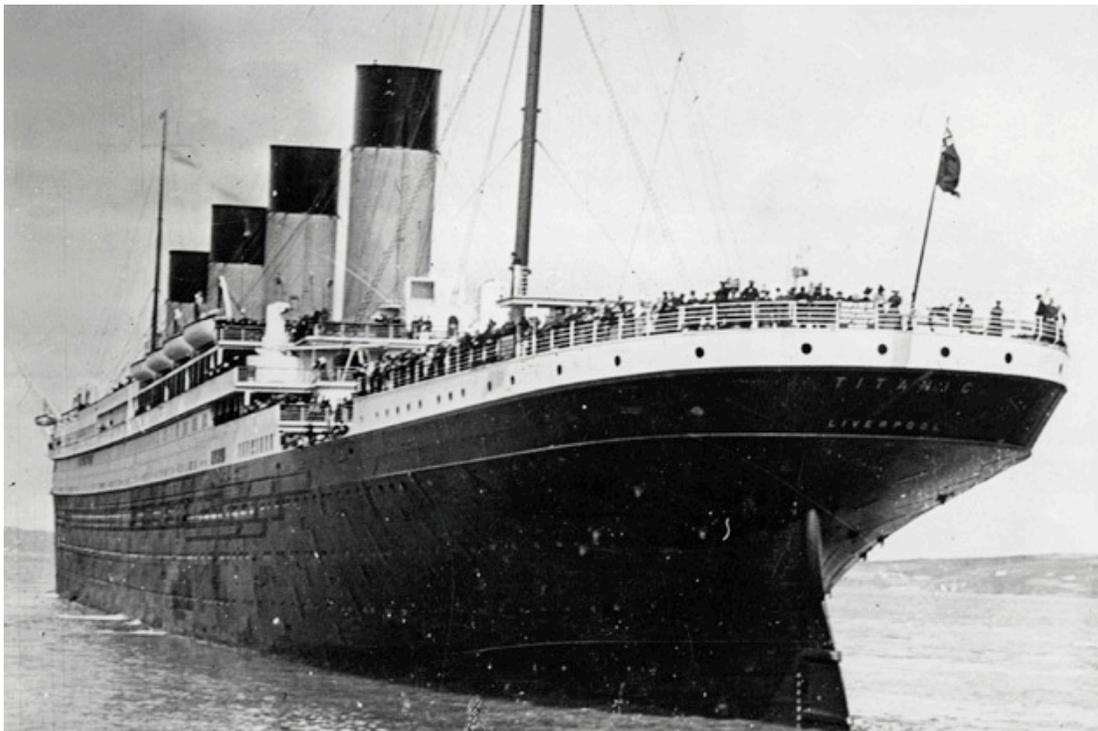


Ice islands are manufactured by spraying massive amounts of fresh water into arctic saltwater areas, and they often have this kind of amazing—they build these walls where, so, if it hits another iceberg or something it won't break. Building ice islands is also helpful because they can be towed around the Arctic and some scientists have suggested that this would be a great solution to drought. That wrapping massive ice bergs--because they're just floating reservoirs—wrapping them in insulated materials and dragging them with tugboats to LA or something could really solve the problem. Yet they melt, and it would apparently cost something like 9.8 million dollars to just drag an iceberg to say the Canary Islands or something.





So instead we have this company called Iceberg Vodka, that is actually a company that goes to the Arctic and takes huge amounts of ice from icebergs and they put it on their ship and they crush it up and they make vodka out of it. Luckily last year marked the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic and the Iceberg Vodka Company released this beer in commemoration of it.



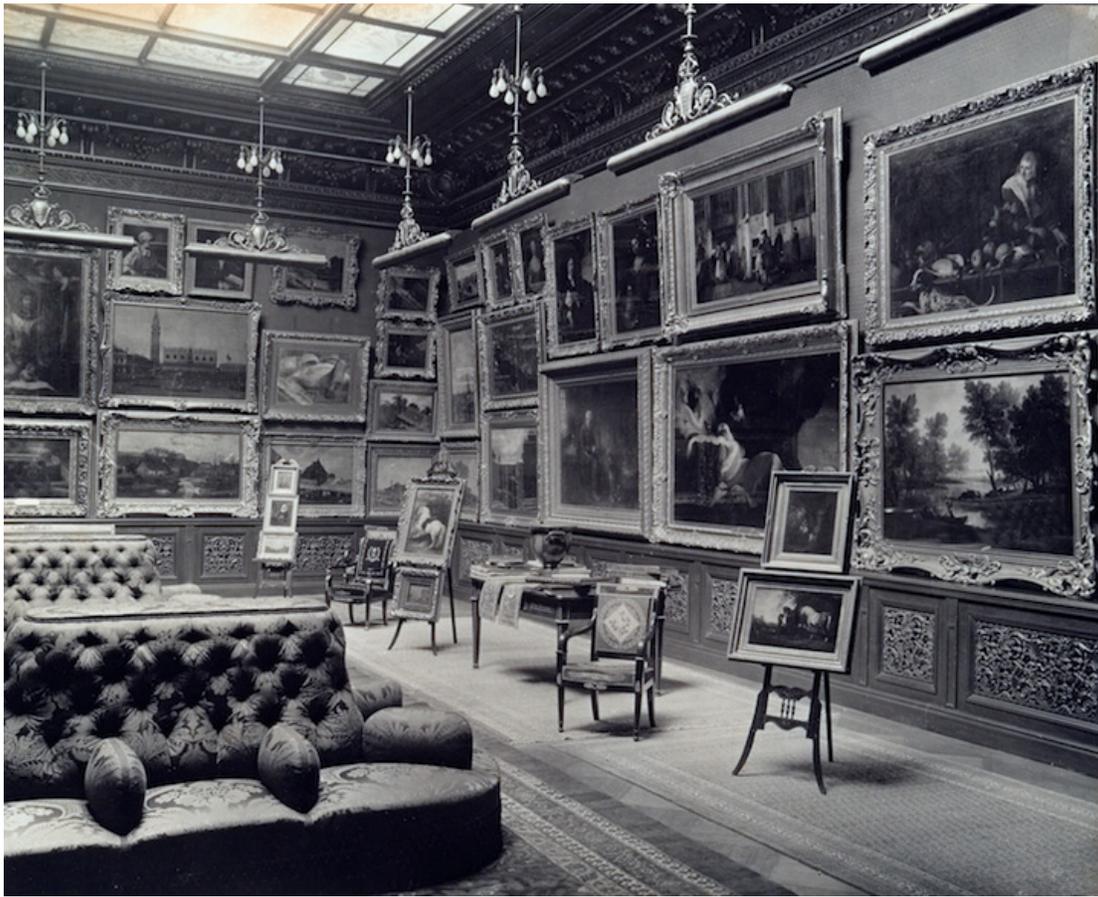


I was thinking about the Titanic in this regard because it didn't really become monumental until it sunk and claimed space for itself at the bottom of the ocean. And this is an image from the movie, and it was re-released in 3D in 2012, and it also marks the moment where James Cameron descended to the bottom of the The Mariana Trench which is the deepest part of the ocean. He was the second person to ever have done that and he apparently didn't see much.

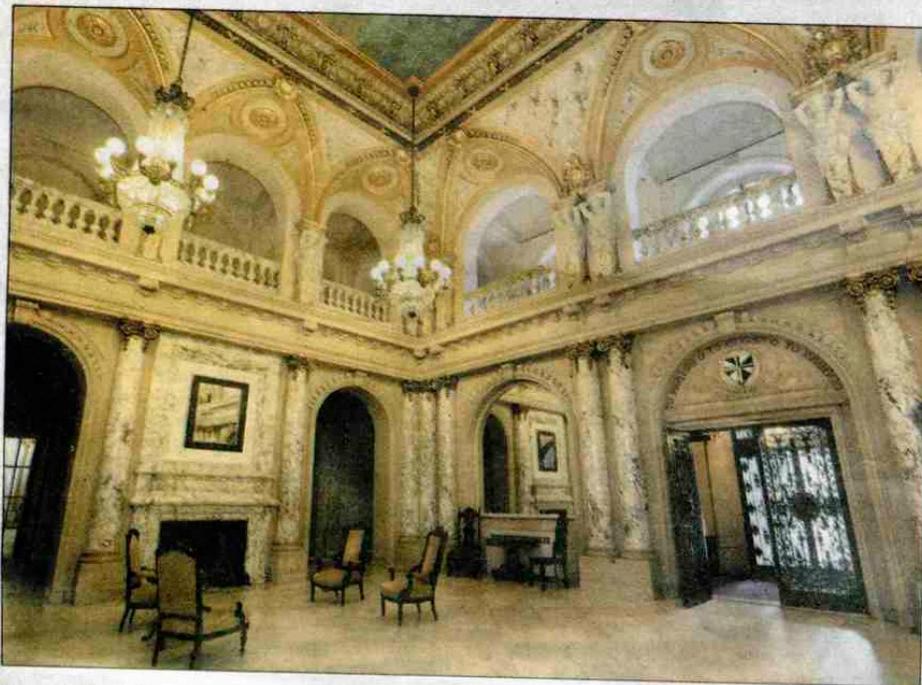




OK, so there's these two guys: George Dunton Widener and Harry Elkins Widener. Both died on the Titanic and they had owned an estate outside of Philadelphia that was designed by this guy Horace Trumbauer who also designed the Philadelphia Museum of Art. When they died they had this massive art collection that was donated to the Philadelphia Museum, and then there were these leftover pieces of architecture that were in the suburbs of Philadelphia that have kind of shifted what they were really used for over the years.



They've been a wedding venue, a Korean Church, a Christian Seminary, and was once the site of Tyler School of Art where I met this woman Emily Erb who I happened to be with when I saw this article in the Philadelphia Enquirer about the buildings; they have apparently kind of gone into disrepair and their future is uncertain.



**A court of the Elkins Estate** in Elkins Park. Long out of Elkins and Widener hands, the estates have been an art school, a fundamentalist Christian seminary, a Catholic nuns' retreat, a Korean church, and a wedding venue. Now their fate is up in the air. APRIL SAUL / Staff Photographer

# In Elkins Park, gilded mansions lie vacant

By Jennifer Lin  
and Jeremy Roebuck

*Four great houses and the 100 acres*

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By Jim R  
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# Abandoned Elkins Park mansions lie vacant

MANSIONS from a 19th-century clan in Lynnewood are among the most capacious ever home of them all with 100 rooms, a two-story porch, and formal gardens in Europe's finest.

Elkins Park or a Widener mansion living amid such splendor that Elkins Park in the early 20th century was among the richest hamlets in the country. In the 21st century isn't it going out nearly as well? It has passed one by one into family hands decades ago. The grand estates have been repurposed variously as a school, a fundamentalist seminary, a Catholics' retreat, a Korean wedding venue.

In a strange twist of fate synergy, all four mansions and the 100 acres on which they are clustered are in simultaneous states of their fates uncertain, uncertain.

Elmwood Terrace, which became Temple University's Elkins Tyler School of 1935, is empty and for after the university the school to its main campus in 2008.

More than 80 years after buying Elmswell House and El-Manor, the Dominican of St. Catherine de Richemont in 2009 to a hastily conserved, which hastily tanked. Barely a year ago, a bankruptcy judge ordered the sale. The sisters are stilling for a buyer.

Over at Lynnewood, a New York urologist and Richard S. Yoon may move. His First Korean of New York re-loses two court cases.



**Chelton House, designed by Horace Trumbauer,** was commissioned in 1896 by William L. Elkins for his son, George W. Elkins. To be an Elkins or a Widener meant living amid such splendor that Elkins Park in the early 20th century was among the richest hamlets in the country. CLEM MURRAY / Staff Photographer



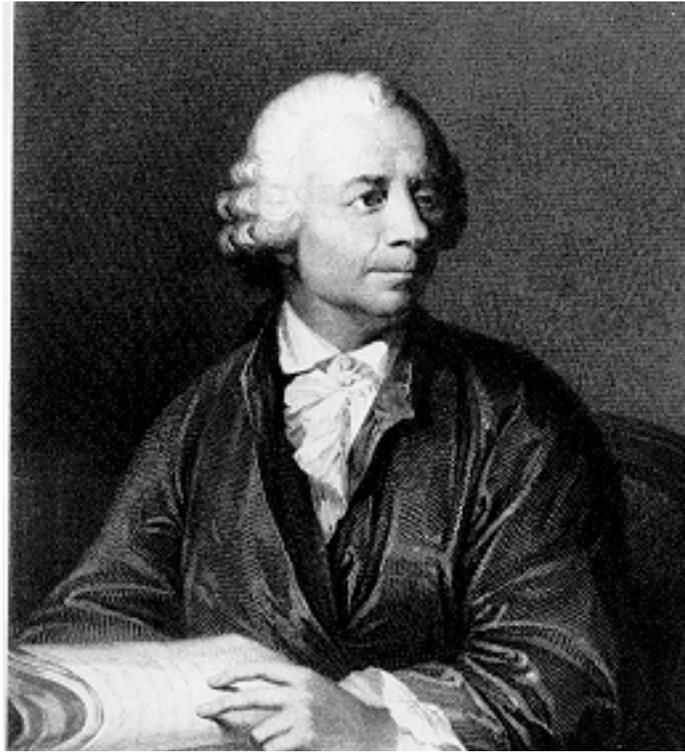
**Elstow Manor had retained** many of its original, rich details, dating to 1896, when the 2009 sale



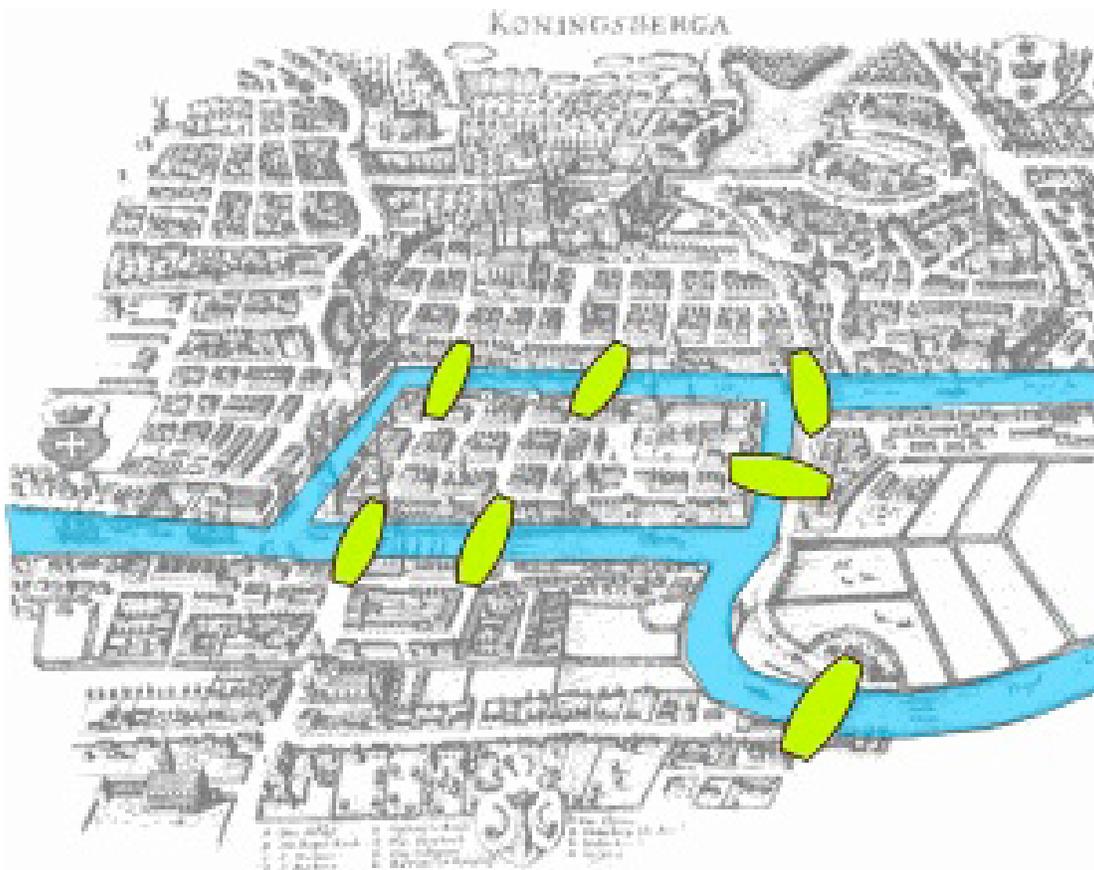
**David Dobson, executive director** of the Land Conservancy of Elkins Park, at the Elkins Estate. ARRIE KAHN / Staff Photographer

OK, so on a completely different note there is a town in Russia that is called Kaliningrad and it was once called Königsburg. So, it was set on both sides of the Pragal River and it was divided. There were two islands and there were seven bridges.





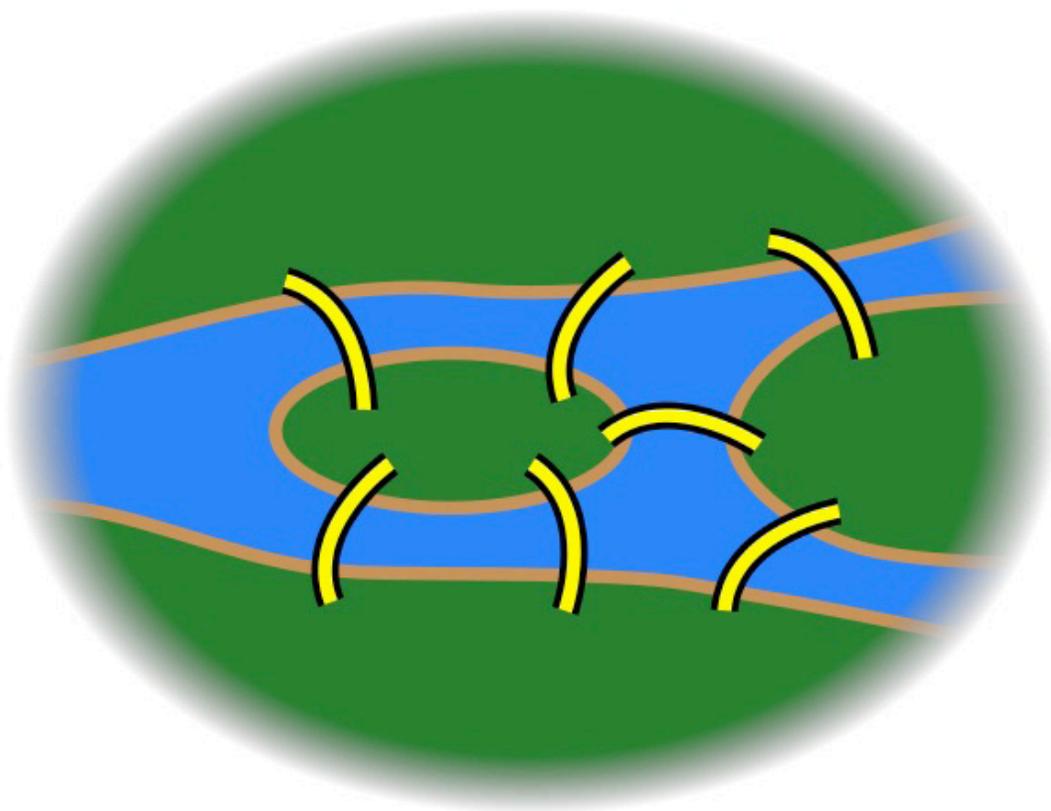
And this is a guy named Leonard Euler who was kind of a brilliant mathematician that heavily influenced the development of modern mathematics and he proposed this problem to find a walk through the city that would cover every one of those bridges.



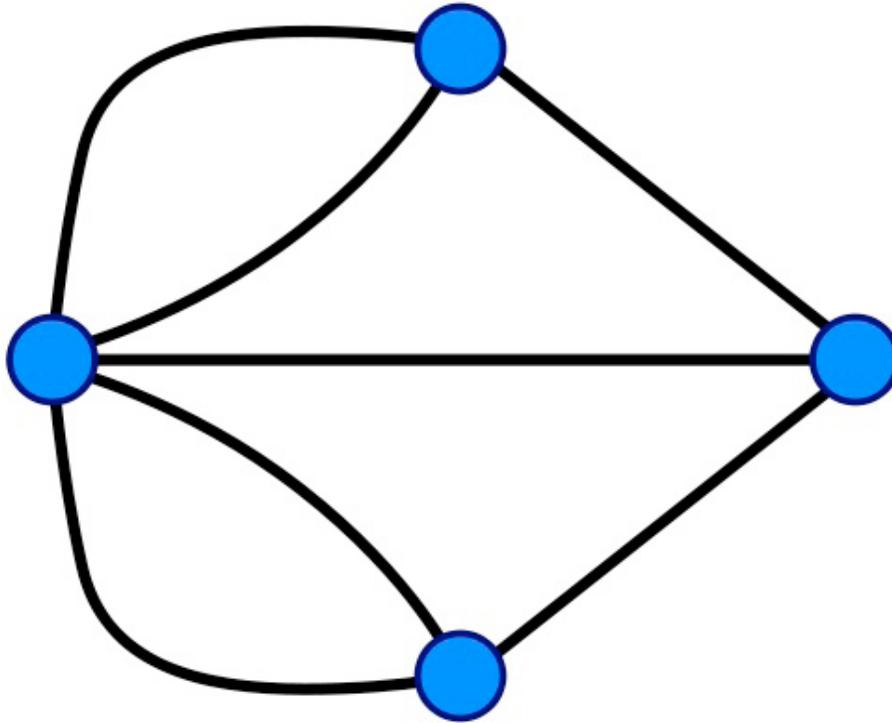


Video at <https://vimeo.com/81439729>

Every bridge must be crossed completely every time. One could not walk halfway onto the bridge, turn around and cross the bridge from the other side and therefore say: “Yes I crossed this bridge.” You had to find a continuous path that went through the city and crossed every bridge. What he ultimately found out was that there was no solution to this problem. There was no continuous path that would actually cross all of the bridges.



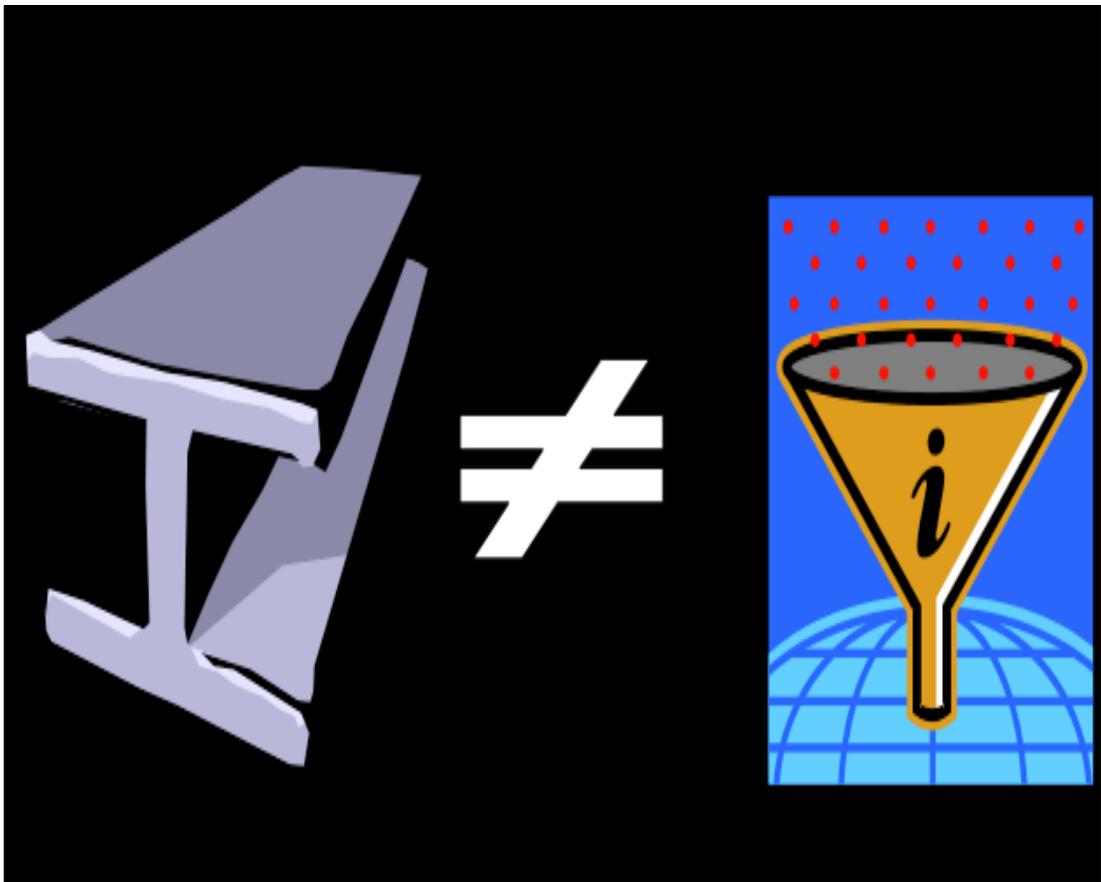
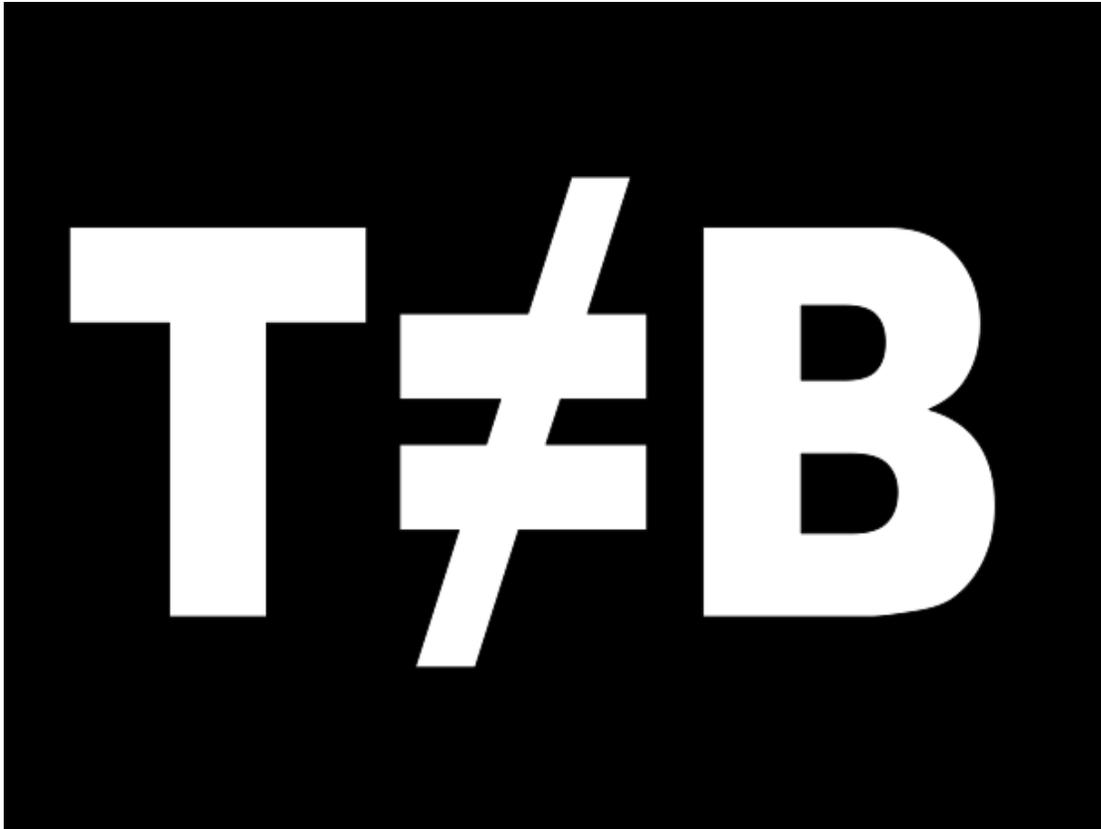
This seems sort of benign, yet it actually paved the way for the development of topology which is this branch of mathematics that is really about---just to back up a little bit, this is an illustration of the bridges kind of further abstracted. Next slide.



This is it further. So there's four points and there's seven bridges that connect those points and this is a graph. What is important in this case is not what it looks like, it's actually how many points and how many lines are connecting those points. And so topology is really about the continuous deformations of objects that are really about, that don't have to do with tearing or gluing but really are just about stretching. A coffee cup is no different than a donut, and a "2" is actually completely different than the roman numeral number "II" or two things existing in the world.



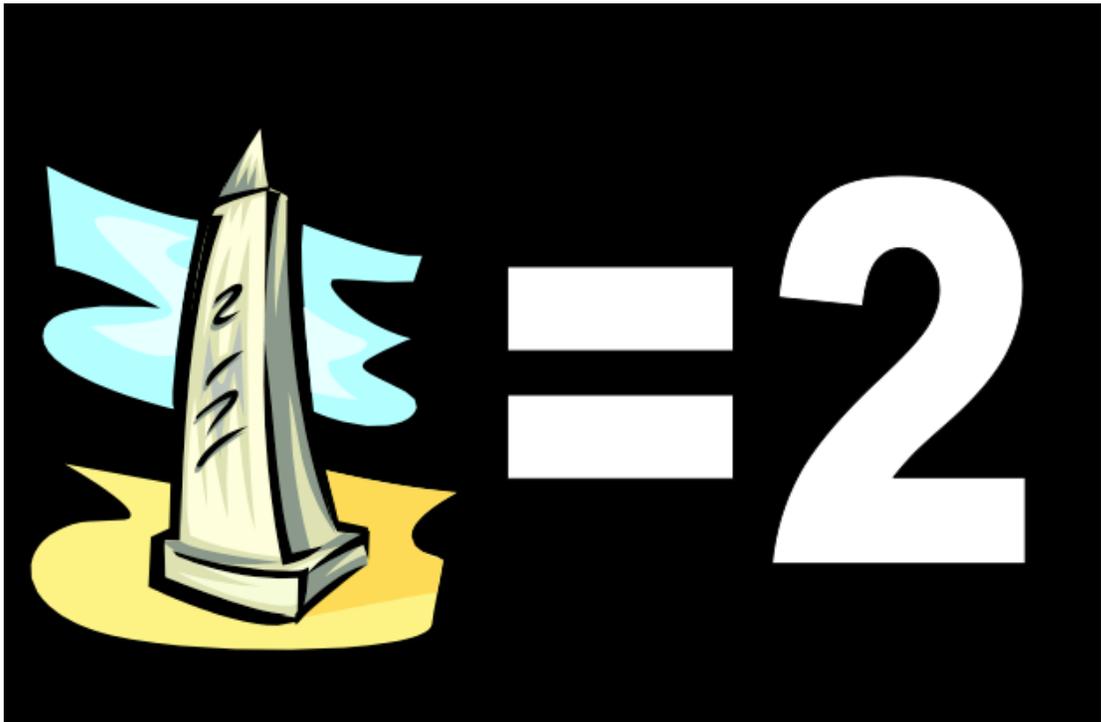
A “T” is completely different than a “B” and an I-beam is not equal to a funnel, topologically.

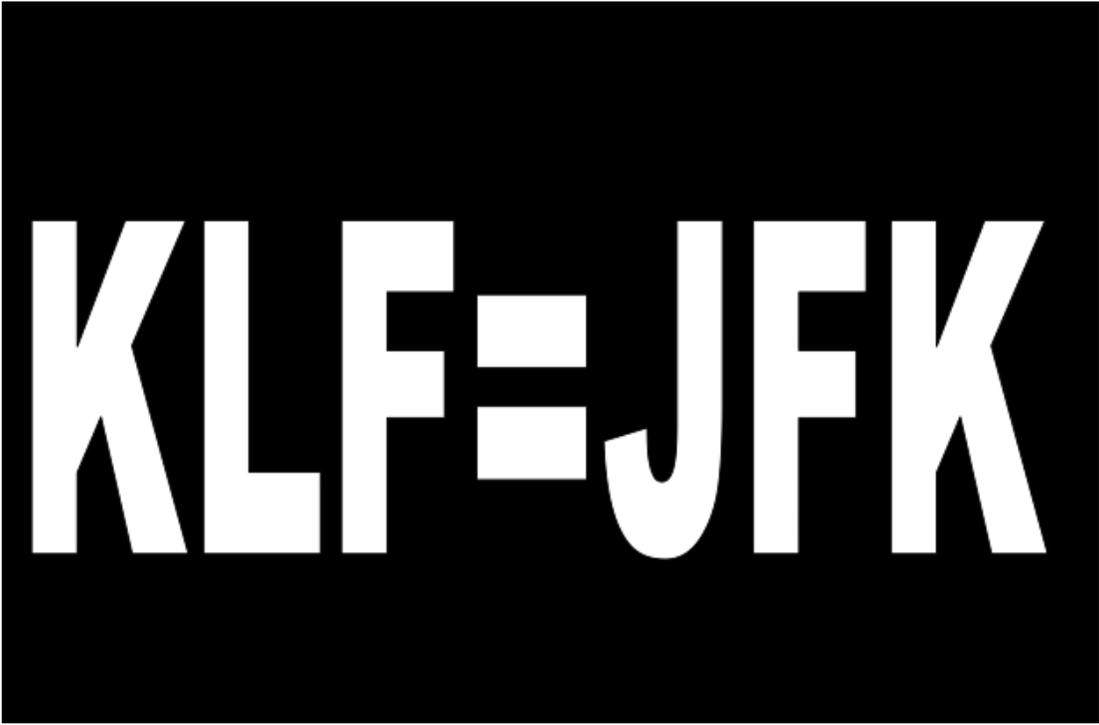




Yet, a “W” is exactly the same as an “L”, an obelisk is the same as the number “2”.

Next slide.





## 2. 2013

OK, so the second part of this lecture is titled "2013" which I got tattooed just below my ass as I was laying face down on a ping pong table a little bit more than a year ago. It's sort of appropriate in this situation because it's a series of numbers which are the rudiments of math that have been redistributed to articulate the current year, right?





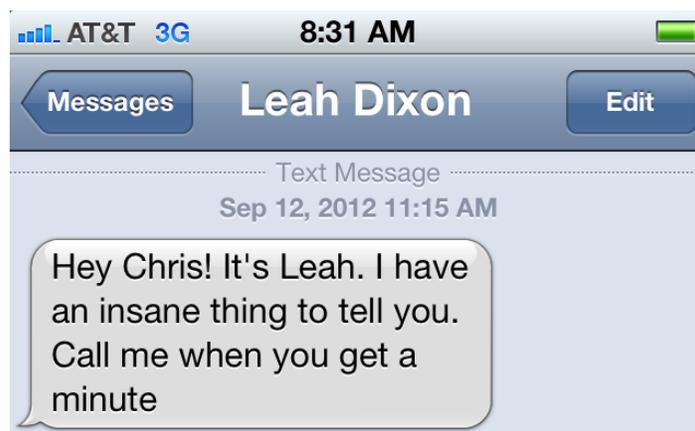
So, number 2. This is the thing that I brought with me. And just to give a little bit of a background for the 2...I made the 2. And so it's a sculpture. It exists. And to talk a little bit about why I made it. I mean what I was thinking about was that I was really into this idea that like, I guess well three...three reasons were important.

The first one was that I liked the idea that it was a two dimensional object that I could make sort of a three dimensional—it was a two dimensional idea, right, but it was a three dimensional object. Yet it had two sides, you know, it had two sides and it was the number 2, right?

And so the second one was that it was human scale, I liked that about it.

The third reason is sort of the most important, which was that it was one continuous object yet it referred to two things, right? So that's such a stupid idea but it's really important. So that like you know a 2 is a relationship, it's your mom and dad, it's your eyes hands, legs, it's, you know, it's yin yang. It's a lot of things and so it's a really basic thing but as an object in the world it's just one thing. So, OK, this is the two in a scenario in, it was actually a collaborative project with yet again Laura Frantz, who is not here tonight unfortunately but was here several weeks ago and we can sort of, think about her.

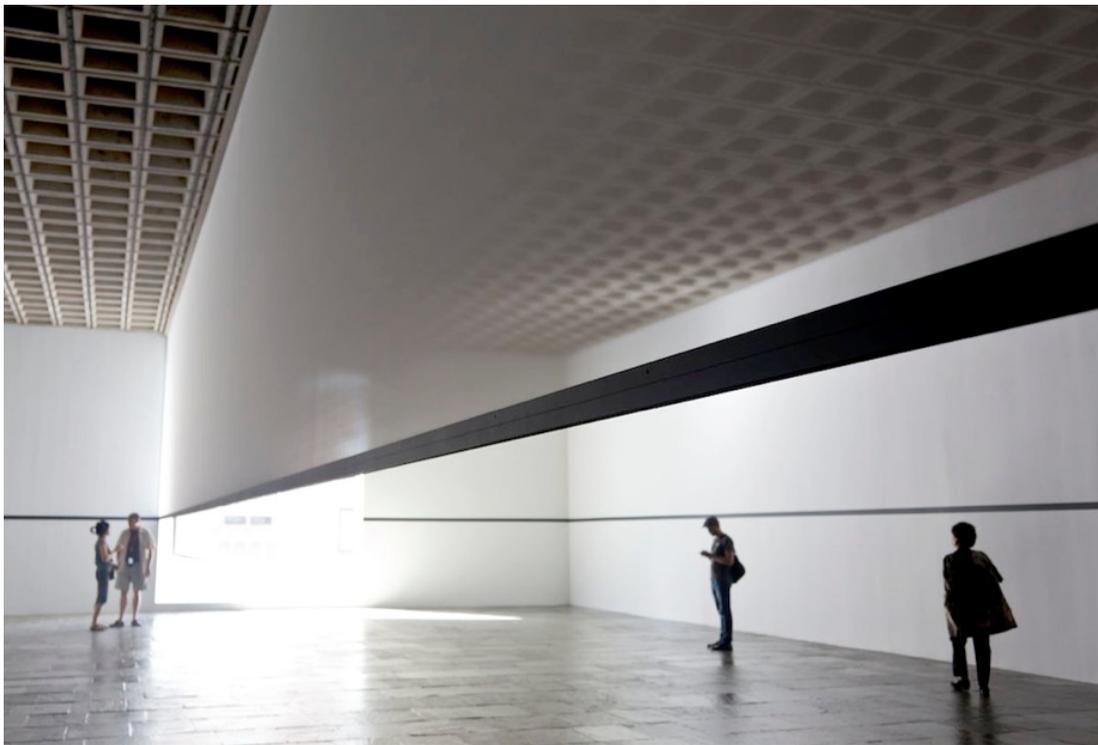
So the first part of this lecture, just to kind of rewind a little bit more, the first part of this lecture I did—Disco, this is what I'm referring to, the first part, I did this lecture almost exactly a year ago with my friend Ian Page who talked a lot about, we did it in the basement of this gallery in the Lower East Side, and he talked about flags and the game battleship and a game called kriegsspiel and with us we brought the number 2. And instead of taking this sculpture home with us after the performance I decided to leave it for a few days before I came to pick it up. Several days later I got a phone call from the curator at one in the morning which I decided not to answer. And so the next day I received this text message from my friend Leah Dixon and this is what it said, and later we had a conversation on the phone and she told me this story.





Video at: <https://vimeo.com/81529568>

OK, so the back story is that what happened on the other side of it—there was this conflict between the guy that owned the gallery and the guy that curated the show, right, and they were at odds with one another. And after the show was over the guy that owned the gallery decided to put the 2 out on the street. He didn't want to have anything to do with it or the curator, he was just like whatever. Total kind of dick move, yet it sparked this sequence of events.



Fast forward a year. I went to the Whitney the other day with Gordon to talk about this lecture and, you know, I was feeling uneasy about what I was going to talk about, we were gonna go over logistics, etc. We get into the elevator on the bottom floor and there's the curator of the show that had the 2 in it, and I decided I didn't want to talk to him, so we walked past him, we stood in the back corner but, alas, we were all going to the 4th floor. So we all got off on the 4th floor and saw the Robert Irwin piece the *Black Rectangle* which was installed. And he of course noticed me maybe a minute later and we approached one another. And if you haven't seen this show, it's actually, there's this architectural band that divides the middle of the room lengthwise with a piece of scrim that goes to the ceiling, so the room is really divided and the band stops here on me and you can walk under it but you have to duck under it. So we approached one another when I found that he was recognizing me and we stopped with the division dividing the two of us. So we stopped on either side of the dividing band and we had this entire conversation about the 2 that was sort of about like "Oh man a year ago that was crazy! Like fuckin' I'm glad it worked out and like" etc. He's like: "Oh maybe I'll send you those images that dude uh sent me or whatever..."

On Tue, Sep 11, 2012 at 6:38 PM, Juan Puentes <[juan2whiteboxny@me.com](mailto:juan2whiteboxny@me.com)> wrote:  
> A piece from Black Box.  
> Isaac, it was your responsibility as curator of the series.  
> Daniel and I had no recourse but doing this for tomorrow opens Fashion show and we are moving XiFei downstairs as we speak.

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[Click here to Reply or Forward](#)

This is part of his email correspondence with the gallery, with the guy that ran the gallery. And, you know, he just had to throw it away. And this is an image of it being on the street before it was taken back to the bar.





So this whole thing happened. It's almost like neither of us could cross the threshold. That this line was dividing us, and it reminded me of this childhood trip that I took when I was a kid with my family. We went to the Four Corners in the Southwest, which is this monument, that is, what does it do—it's the intersection of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah.

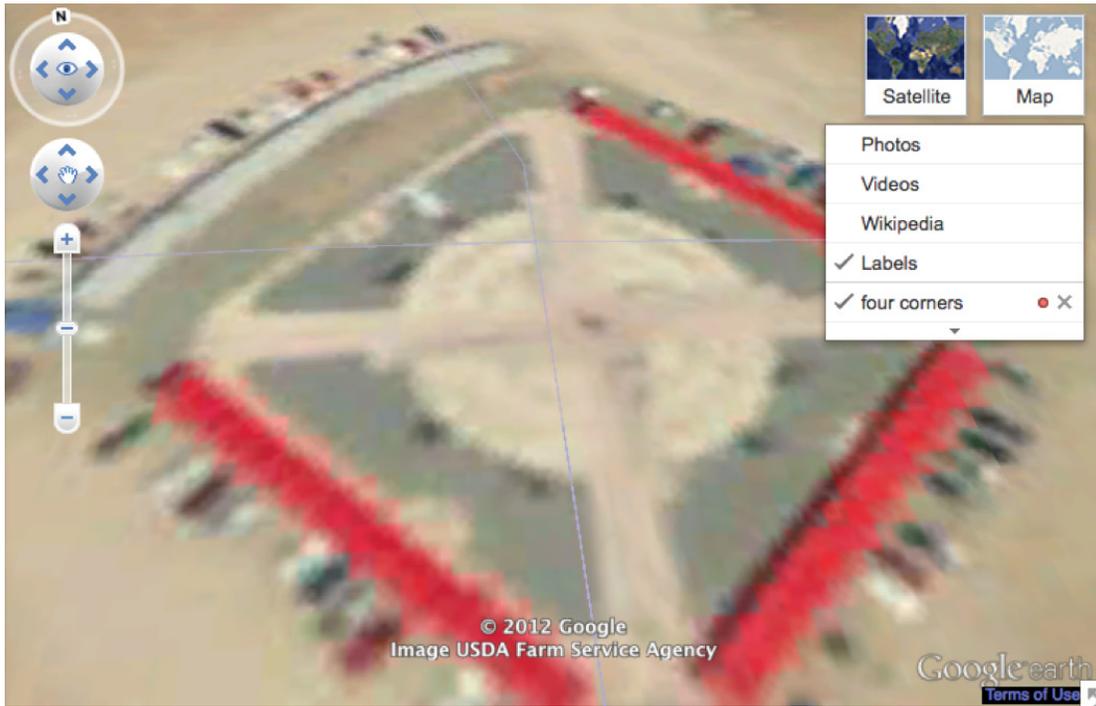


And we took these lovely photographs. This is me and my dad.



And this is me on all four states. And so what's kind of interesting to me about this photograph is that the monument is, it's not correct. It's actually, it's off several feet, and depending on what technological apparatus you decide to trust, it's a little bit to the west, or it's a little bit to the north.





Regardless, this gesture is completely bizarre at this point because suddenly this gesture is—oh yeah, so this is a Google Earth image of where—you can't really see it but there's this thing. This is the line, right, and this is the monument and this is the middle. So, it's not right. I guess what I'm trying to say is it makes that last photograph really bizarre because I'm potentially just in Arizona, or, you know, maybe I'm in two states. With a monument that is all about defining those boundaries, those boundaries are so abstract in the end. So the question that I have is: can this original place, where this original intersection takes place, can it still be located? And why topology is important in this case is because it gives us a lens to think about structural change. What kinds of transformations are possible before you really consider something different than what it was before? If a site is determined by the things in it, what is it when those things move a little bit? I've sort of been thinking about this term "liquid language," which brings me to the third part of the lecture that is tattooed on my hand.

### 3. *Nature*



Video at: <https://vimeo.com/81532404>

(spoken with video)

There is a place in Vermont where you will find a field of massive marble blocks. They are stacked, aligned in rows. There is writing that demarcates where they've come from, and where they may go. It is a place outside of time, defined by its nowhere-ness. These are not objects. They have yet to acquire weight. They are not white, or heavy, cumbersome or beautiful. They are completely devoid of meaning. This is empty space, a purgatory. A place where matter exists before language takes a hold of its reigns. And it is guided into the realm of utility, aesthetics, culture, and time.

And then it began to rain

And that marble accentuates the edges of fountains that we throw wishes in, for career opportunities, romantic successes. We carve our names into it. We walk up and down it. We reserve tables to talk about it. It shields that which is beneath it. We put other rocks on it, or steel. We call it architecture, design, sculpture, pedestals. It is the floor of empty restaurants where no one sits alone most of the time.

Which brings me to the last part of the lecture. It's about what's on this table. And I'm gonna point to things and talk about them. This is the postcard from Van, Turkey that Laura Frantz gave me a year ago.

So this is a stack of photographs that actually document the same marble quarry that you just saw images of and they were taken by Em here about five years ago the first time that we went. And what is particular about them is that the top—so I found them—we were clearing out our apartment and I found this stack of images last week and on the top there is this image of Géricault's Wrath of the Medusa that is strangely stuck to the top one with I think like honey or something. But what is interesting—I think that this—the proportions of this image in comparison, like the ratio, the scale ratio is exactly the same as its relationship to the painting, it's the same as this photograph's relationship to the marble, like, the scale ratio is exactly the same.

This is for smoking.

These are two postcards from Vermont. The first one is postmarked in Iceland and it talks about Denmark and Moscow. The second one is postmarked in Denmark but it's about kind of Brazillia. Both are sent to NY with my handwriting.

This is a pile of, you can't really see it, but this is a pile of coffee cups, you know what I mean?

And this will soon be the most expensive goblet to hit the global market, this thing right here.

These are two pennies: the first one is from 1958 and it is worth more than a penny, as are all pennies from before 1982. The second one is no longer a penny, it's actually an elongated penny. You're probably familiar with the machines that you'll find at rest stops that you can—there's usually a dial where you can choose the design that you want and then, you know, you get to crank it and it gives you the design. What's particular about this penny is that I had mistakenly had the arrow pointing between two designs and it actually printed between two designs so what you get is the top of—at the top of this penny you'll see Bar Harbor, Maine, it catches the bottom of this design. And on the bottom of this penny you get the top of a different design, which is of a light house I think in the Pacific Ocean, and the space between the two designs is actually what this lecture is truly about.

Thank you.