THE American Surveyor
A FOOT IN THE PAST... AN EYE TO THE FUTURE
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The Quad Father

Trimble Sweden
A visit to the factory

Surveying Art
Seattle artist takes to grids

New Scanning Technology
There's info between the shots

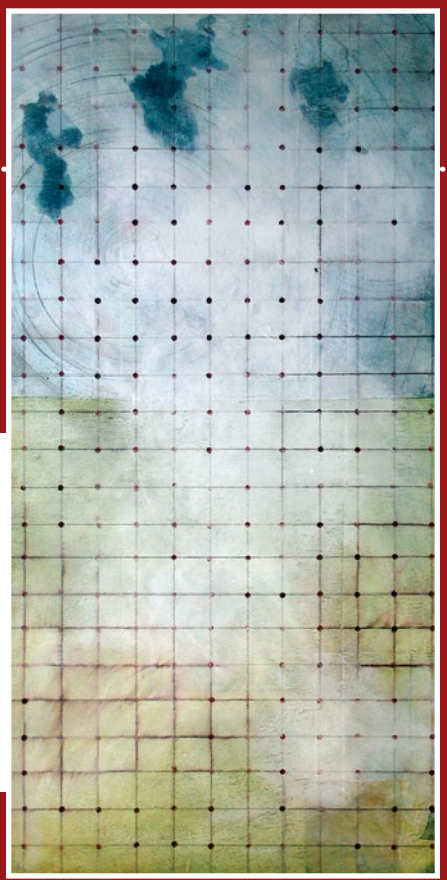
the surveying inspired art of perri lynch

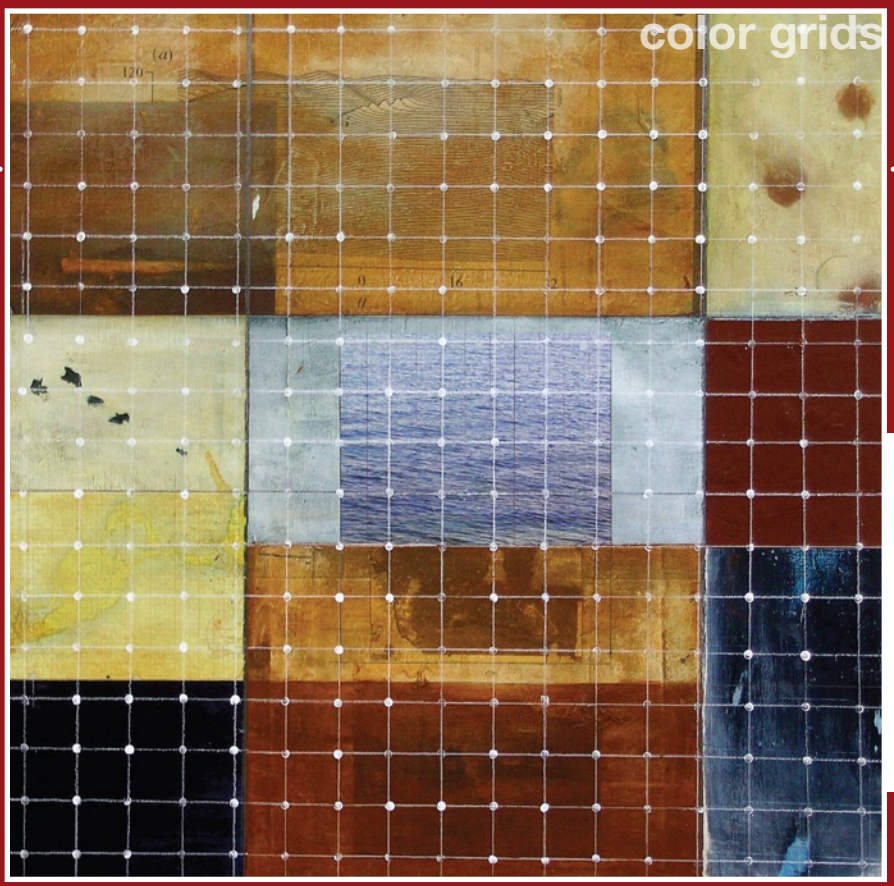
By Gavin Schrock, LS

A Blending of Arts

Land surveying is rightfully described as an art, and not just in reference to execution of skills and knowledge required. Surveying describes and projects both linear and abstract thoughts and ideas over the broadest of media – land and landscapes – to apply that which seeks precise definition to that which defies definition: land and landscapes.

Though the following distinctions may be a bit out-of-date, Western classical art tends to seek to describe objects and thoughts in algebraic terms, very much the way that geodesy and surveying might. Eastern art is often viewed as expression in non-algebraic terms, as in the deliberate imperfection, outlier, flaw, or striking non-symmetrical element. A grid, vector, network, or mark resultant of land surveying activities can be a particularly unique synergy of the algebraic and non-algebraic.





On-Grid – Each canvas in the series depicts elements of human spatial definition over natural features.

It was this very notion that intrigued noted Pacific Northwest artist Perri Lynch and drew her toward the art of surveying for inspiration. Perri has gained a certain affinity for the land surveying community, the unique point of view of surveyors, and a surprisingly fresh appreciation for the arts.

Where Art Thou?

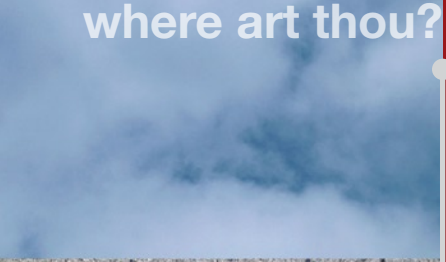
Perri first came to the attention of the surveying community from her work "Precisely Known Completely Lost," a photographic and sound series. She matched images of survey monuments (from the point of view most familiar to us, looking straight down) with a perfectly skyward image from the same monument. Audio from each site collected at the time of photography was played in loops exhibition.

In the exhibit materials for "Precisely Known Completely Lost," Perri notes, "Sense of place does not exist in the physical world. It is not universal and it is not permanent." Part of her attraction to survey monuments is that they are a manifestation of this human desire for sense of place, and a renewed appreciation for the practical value of such amenities.

Straight Shot - Art for a Calibration Baseline

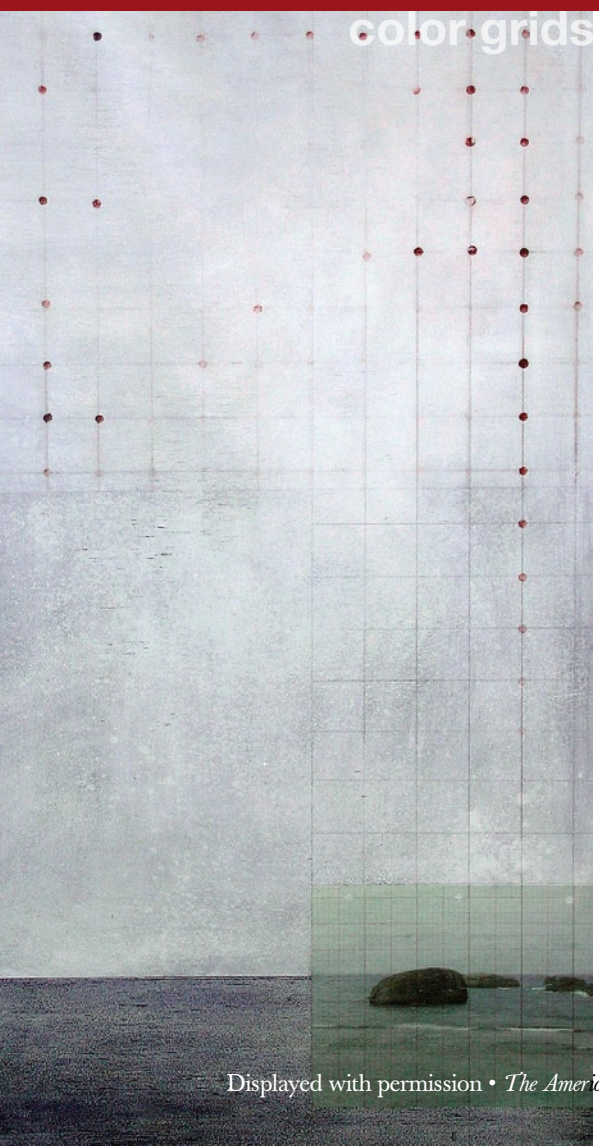
Few outside of surveying appreciate the value of the NGS Calibration baselines. This became glaringly obvious when a heavily used baseline in the most center of the Puget Sound region of Washington State was in peril of destruction. The baseline had been established on the grounds of Sand Point, a former Navy seaplane base on the shores of Lake Washington in suburban Seattle.

Like many bases closed in the past few decades, the site was handed over to the local community for development as a park and community facilities. A number of the grand



Simultaneous views down to a monument and upward from the same point mixed with sound in Perri's exhibit "Precisely Known Completely Lost"

Perri oversees layout and construction. Layout done with local RTN and VRS.



baseline art

developments slated for this site would either destroy or obstruct the baseline. After years of search for an alternate site and seeking an easement for the existing line, it became apparent that no one in the community or local government wanted to hear anything about calibration. The easement was revocable. But public art can have a permanent easement (of sorts).

Seattle's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs was approached; there is a 1% for arts program which seeks to place public art as a compliment to capital improvement projects. Sometimes it is hard to find art that fits in with infrastructure projects. One engineer asked, "Do we paint migrating salmon on sewer pipes before we bury them?"

The arts office put out a call for artist proposals. It was not a surprise that Perri jumped at the opportunity and prevailed in the formal selection process as a clearly stated goal in the call for artists was to emphasize surveying and the baseline. Perri sought to "amplify the obscure," which is what surveying and baselines are to many. "I have been visiting this park for years," says Perri, "and I never even knew this baseline was here." Her hopes for the art piece are not only emphasis on surveying, but to "help folks connect to the specialness of subtle things and provide a new perspective on a familiar scene."

The piece is a series of black limestone pillars, set parallel to and along the entire kilometer-long baseline. Only the first and last stone are coincident with the NGS marks; the rest of the six-foot high stones are placed in a progression of doubling distance at each subsequent stone. One side is rough, the other smooth; again the contrast of regular and irregular or natural. Holes are drilled at eye-height (and at child and ADA height) aligned perfectly with holes in each subsequent stone, thereby giving the observer the perspective of a surveyor.

The surveying community fully embraced the project, with generous contributions from the local chapter, Trimble, and volunteers. The dedication event drew a near-record crowd for public art projects under that

floating datum fixed grid

Floating Datum — Fixed Grid

Stones from zero

The artist at the "Straight Shot" baseline art installation.

baseline art

particular city program. You can read more about the project at Perri's project blog: *http://sandpointbaseline.blogspot.com.*

Perri Lynch - Profile

Perri grew up in the coastal region and islands of New England (much of it on a sailboat), but relocated to the Pacific Northwest as a full-time artist, photographer, and dreamer. She has also taught art in places such as India.

A graduate of Evergreen State College in Washington State (known for such outward thinking artists as *The Simpsons* creator Matt Groening and *Far Side* cartoonist Gary Larson), Perri went on to study printmaking at the University of Washington and then at Cranbrook Academy of Art. Perri's production company, Velocity Made Good (VMG), and studio is perched up above the sailing school at the very same Sand Point park where her Straight Shot installation stands.

An avid sailor, Perri crews on racing vessels, including ocean-going 58-footers with crews of 12. You may often find the artist hanging out with and listening to land surveyors, or seeking out obscure control monuments in far away countries.

Floating Datum Fixed Grid

Another of Perri's installations consisted of a grid of poles and sailcloth near shore at a former superfund site. Observers on passing ferries see the rows of poles merge into patterns of straight lines almost appearing as single poles from the changing view points.

"The grid reminds us of the human compulsion to map and monitor," states Perri. The wind movement and humming sounds of the sailcloth balance this with natural rhythms.

Grids

An ongoing series of paintings got its name from the "On-Grid" initiative (see December 2006 issue), a national movement to support development of Real-Time Networks. While Perri had been working on the fundamental concepts she wanted to convey with the painting series, that overlay of the precise over the imprecise, a title remained elusive.

Perri was intrigued by the idea of this invisible control grid over the land known as real-time networks. Each canvas in the series depicts girds and other elements of spatial definition like text, equations, and photographs of human-made features over natural features, landscapes, skyscapes, contours, and images.

Foresight

There are very few "monuments" to surveying in this country. It is encouraging that talented artists such as Perri have found beauty and intrigue in the art of surveying. The ongoing outreach efforts of our industry should include art and artistry not only in conventional art pieces, but in our publications and events.

Perri's further plan for the baseline piece is to propagate the doubling progression of the stones around the globe. If projected in such a manner, stones would end up in places like Vancouver, British Columbia, the edge of the Arctic Ocean, the tip of Mongolia, even Easter Island. Now that would be a great project for the U.S. surveying industry to get behind!

Gavin Schrock is a surveyor in Washington State where he is the administrator of the regional cooperative real-time network, the Washington State Reference Station Network. He has been in surveying and mapping for more than 25 years and is a regular contributor to this publication.