Hillary French

I remember Bill Parker most vividly as a whirling force of energetic knowledge with a natural predilection for encouragement and inspiration. He was loud and warm and positive - all gusto and validation for art, ideas, people and students. Overflowing with prodigious knowledge and love of Photography and Art and their Histories - and Psychology, History, Culture, Philosophy, Science Literature, Semiotics - seemingly everything.

Bill encouraged us to identify multiple sources and inspirations for our work: to literally collect favored imagery, texts, practices, memories, iconography, ephemera, and more. A "collectanea" - creating a source of associated meanings and relationships to help ground our work. Almost anything was relevant - if it was. Very freeing and centering.

Bill's insistence on Photography's primary distinction - that images are tethered to to world (and thus "Truth") by the simple physical reaction of light, bouncing off something, and then impressing on a photographic surface - was already thrilling me. His enthusiasm helped sharpen my own way of examining and playfully probing that central fact in my work. The tension and distance between object and image, the transition from 3D object to 2D image; the object-ness of a photo itself (inspired especially by the 19th C direct positive processes - Daguerreotype, Tintype and Ambrotype) I was seriously interested in that primary physical fact, and used photograms, positive and negative imagery, relief casts and photographs to explore themes of play, people lives, crime and forensics, veracity, absence/presence, and more.