

Marcus Civin / 9 *ELCHE*: Artist Statement

I transcribe Russian novels. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoyevsky challenges the notion of absolute truth. Raskolnikov resists seeing himself as criminal. To friends he is intellectual; to family, principled; to the poor, generous. Raskolnikov confesses gruesome murders to the police, yet asks himself, "What is meant by crime?"

My transcription of *Crime and Punishment* represents visually the relationship of individual to environment. I explore institutional and technological mediations of that relationship. The project thus activates multiple truths.

When I began, I chose a sampling of structures from world religions and considered histories of religious justification for murder. I assigned a number to each architectural plan I chose. As I progress through Dostoyevsky's text, I roll dice to randomly link a passage of text with a structure.

I write small to create an equivalent of intense description. The drawing on page [##] is the ninth passage of *Crime and Punishment* I transcribed. The passage finds Raskolnikov paused at the doomed pawnbroker's door, fingering the ax under his tattered coat: "He rang a third time, but quietly, soberly and without impatience. Recalling it afterwards; he could not make out how he had had such cunning, for his mind was as it were clouded at moments and he was almost unconscious of his body."

I tie this passage to the plan for Elche Synagogue. The Fourth Century synagogue at Elche in Southern Valencia, Spain, is an example of Greek-influenced architecture, and the westernmost ancient synagogue. A strategic military position on the Mediterranean Sea, Elche has been sacked by Carthaginians, Romans, Barbarians, Visigoths, Moors and Christians.

My work copies and documents itself in the process of becoming. I photograph myself drawing, and I leave large format xeroxes of my transcription drawings for neighbors. Photographs in *9 Elche* show a shadowy section of my studio desk with pencils, an open book and a container of White Out. A lit doorway outlines my body as I distribute the work on Bartlett Street in San Francisco.