

# SPACE

Symposium at  
New Museum  
New York, USA  
3 & 4 April 2009



## ROBERT BARRY

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 3 April 2009



*Robert Barry (\*1936, New York City, USA). Since 1967, Barry has produced non-material works of art using a variety of otherwise invisible media. His word pieces provide complex spatial linguistic fields of thought that activate the viewer's powers of imagination. Barry lives and works in New Jersey, USA.*

Robert Barry: I will speak about an exhibition in Paris. It is a group exhibition of artists who—over the last thirty years—have worked with the empty gallery as their exhibition. It starts with Yves Klein, who closed a gallery in Paris. Over the past years, I have made a number of empty gallery exhibitions. I was also included in the show. When you go to the museum to see the exhibit, in the entrance you first encounter some information about the artists and their exhibitions. But when you then go into the exhibition itself, what you see is just a number of empty rooms: the walls are clear, there is only a small information label with when the exhibition took place and what it was about. During that exhibition I shot a video of the people wandering around these empty rooms. What are they looking at? What are they talking about? The video was edited in Paris. Recently, I have been putting the images in the words. Instead of superimposing the words over the images, I like the idea of the words rising and then fading away. In this video you have the use of space in a couple of different ways: there is the blank space between the various images. Time is also present in this work: I took images of a previous exhibit and recycled them into the video you are looking at now. So, you have various levels of time; people roaming around the space, the art space in the video which existed in the past, and now we are looking at it in the current art space. That was the idea about that video. I thought it was interesting to have it running while you came in as an opening idea of using space as a part of the symposium. In January I did an exhibition called 62 09 at Yvon Lambert Gallery, here in New York. I shot a video of that exhibition as well. The show deals with space and time. The exhibition showed works from 1962 till the current: it showed old works, new works, old works presented in a new way, and old works combined with new ones. Once again, we have the idea of space and time, which—by the way—are very important aspects of my work.

Amongst the works in the exhibition are some of my telepathic works, which I did in 1969. For me, light is also very important. In this exhibition the light tended to change quite a lot.

*Peter Lodermeyer: You just said that several artists worked with emptiness and showed empty spaces, why is it still important or necessary to do that? Why is it important to deal with emptiness?*

Robert Barry: I don't know whether it is important or necessary. It is just an interesting approach. The galleries really aren't empty: there is something in there; the space is designated in a certain way. The space is used for a certain kind of thinking. In my work, for example, I used invisible material, such as radio waves: if you walk into the gallery, you would not actually see anything, except for a label saying that the space is filled with various radio waves. If you had taken your radio, you would have been able to hear something. I worked with other invisible material as well, such as thought waves. There is no such thing as 'completely empty'; there is always something there. Just because you don't see something does not mean there is not anything going on. The reason I made these works, was to test the limit of visual art. What makes something visual? Is it something you see with your eyes? Or is it something going on in your head? That is why I worked with so-called empty galleries. In the first piece I did, I simply closed the gallery. I knew Yves Klein had worked with empty galleries, but I did not know of any artist who simply closed it. I was aware also of the work of Daniel Buren, who filled the gallery with this striped wallpaper. But in his case there was always the striped paper. My piece was very direct: close the gallery.

*PL: Your interest in empty gallery spaces comes from your questions about art. Does it also take its inspiration from philosophical questions?*

RB: Whatever the influence, I am an artist; I deal mostly with art. That time in the 60s and 70s was a very rich time in terms of pushing the boundaries of what art could possibly be, what the term 'art' was about, and what it meant when going public. Unfortunately—except for a few artists—that time is over. The art world became a very conservative place in terms of thinking.

*PL: Why did you come back to your telepathic pieces in your show at Yvon Lambert?*



RB: These pieces had never been shown. They were originally meant to be shown in an exhibit in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1969. There were a lot of political problems there at that time. Out of protest against the way people were treated there, the American artists decided to pull out of the show. The pieces were therefore never exhibited. I was just waiting for the right time to do it, really. Because the show at Lambert was about taking old ideas, working with current ideas and trying to transcend the bridge between that space and time... There is a piece in the show that you may have seen. They are two paintings next to each other: one from 1962; the other from 2008. The space between the two represents 45 years, my whole career as an artist really. In the same room you had the red and black grid painting. My teacher at that time referred to that painting as wrapping paper, because I brought the red and black squares around the edge. So, even at that time, I was dealing with the painted object in time and space. Suggesting that it extends both physically as well as ideally beyond the work itself.

*PL: To come back to your telepathic work; I am really fascinated by it. Our topic of today is space and telepathy has a lot to do with space: the space between you and me, for example, and trying to bridge that space in an uncertain way. As far as I know, even yet today there is no scientific proof that it actually works. So, please, tell us a bit about your telepathic performances and how they work.*

RB: Well, it was like this: I would sit in front of an audience and telepathically transmit ideas. For example from a university in Canada

there was a conference call organized by a gallery called Seth Siegelau. There I telepathically transmitted an idea that could not be expressed verbally, that was the idea of the piece. I was in New York; they were in Vancouver in a conference hall. And I tried to transmit something. I also did a performance at Franklin Furnace. I would sit there behind a table and people were telling me they were picking up ideas. In the same building as one of the galleries back then was the telepathic society. They actually had a library and publicized this sort of thing. You could go there and study books about telekinesis and moving objects by thought. I was fascinated by it and thought it was good material for me.

*PL: I saw pictures of your exhibition at Yvon Lambert. How big is the influence of the space in which you show your work?*

RB: Yeah, it's important. I think about it. You have these general ideas about what it is you are doing in your work. Often I translate these ideas into the space itself. I like works that only exist for a short amount of time, that will only be there for the run of the show, then they are painted over. It's like a jazz performance or something: when you are there, you are listening to it and have to really focus on it at that moment: if you come back later, it will not be there anymore. That sort of transitory aspect of art brings that to the fore, but this is true of all art. In terms of meaning, that is how we today think about the old masters, such as Rembrandt. Today we look at his paintings in a different way than back then in the 17th century. These ideas are changing all the time anyway.



Also: I like the idea of combining things that age or change very slowly compared to those who go out of existence very quickly. The works I showed on the floor at Yvon Lambert, for example, are made of acrylic. They are tough and strong and stay in this configuration. I like that work in comparison to something on the wall, something changing all the time and only lasts for a certain amount of time. So, the elements of time and space: I really try to work with them in different ways. Just going to a gallery and filling the space with stuff is really not interesting to me. If you start working with space, you have to consider time as well, what it is to move around the space. That is also why I like to use language or words: words grab your attention, they speak to you. Even though they might be red or acrylic, they are addressing themselves to you in a way—if you choose to become engaged with them.

PL: Words usually don't need color. Why do you choose to work with different colors?

RB: You can't avoid color: there is always something, whether it's pencil or something else.

PL: But it does have an impact.

RB: Yes, it has an emotional impact. It is a good way of separating things. It looks good. Look, you should make work that looks like something. It's called visual art. Even in the so-called invisible works your mind is working and trying to somehow come to grips with the idea that is suggested to you. Whether it is gas flowing back into the atmosphere or something else... The reason why it is inert is because it does not mix: the molecules don't mix with other molecules; they remain intact. There is this ever-expanding form that is invisible to us, but that exists in your mind. You can think about the nature of this form and you can engage with it if you want. It's also recycling. I think the statement is that the gas is 'returned' to the atmosphere after it had been taken from the atmosphere. You have this recycling process going on.

PL: Nowadays, we talk a lot about virtual space. Has this ever been interesting to you? Did you try to work with that kind of space?

RB: No, not really. No. Maybe I am just the wrong generation. I am interested in real space, space you can get into and walk around and deal with or anticipate. In the panel after the opening of the show [at Yvon Lambert] we were talking about void. Mental voids, for instance. If someone offers you an exhibition and you have to decide what it is you are going to do. An artist such as myself isn't always bringing out work by making variations on his style. Then this becomes a problem, you are confronted with this void: what are you going to do? This mental problem can be referred to as a void. To me that is a kind of void. Or the void that remains after a friend of yours died. This is something you experience when you get older: people die. There is a void in your life, a space; it's a space that cannot be filled. It's a challenge, something that cannot be changed; it can be quite emotional.

Question from the audience: With regard to the piece that is now at Yvon Lambert—of the hanging pieces with the cylinder. It appears as if you are compressing a certain kind of volume of the space into those couple of millimeters at the bottom into an invisibility. In my mind, that seems to relate to the way you move material: in and out of consciousness, in and out of perception. Can you speak a bit more about that particular work in relation to space?

RB: Well, that piece is about expansion and compression. The steel disc is supposed to float 1/8 inch above the floor. The disc is suspended on a nylon monofilament, which is quite reflective. The monofilament expands a little way up to the ceiling. With the skylight in the gallery the effect is quite beautiful. The nylon filament can be invisible sometimes; the steel disc is quite strong and shiny. There is a little tiny space between the discs. The atmosphere makes the disc move very, very slightly. The blade of the monofila-



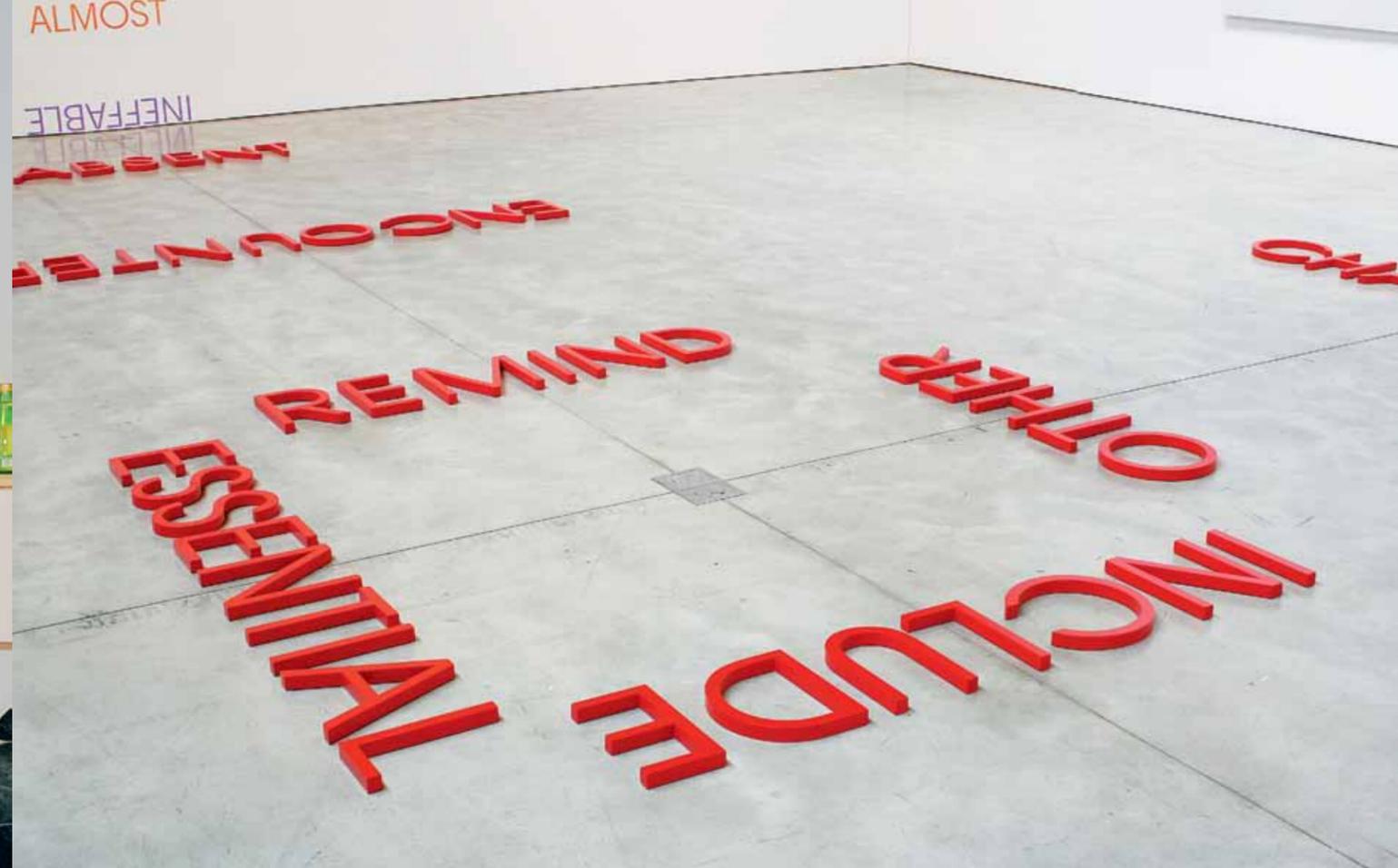
ment is different every time it is shown, depending on the situation it is in. That is the idea of what the piece is really about. The piece dates from 1967, I believe. It has been around for a while. The work is part of a series: always a disc or a cube that's being suspended. Attempting to have one solid idea implying that every time it's shown, it's shown differently because the situation is different. It is an art idea, it's about material and space and becoming engaged with the space. I am fascinated by space and time, because we live in space and time. We really can't avoid it. We move around in it and it sort of means something to us. The point for me is to use it as directly as possible and contrast these various elements of space and light and how this light is reflected.

Question from the audience: When you revisit these old pieces, do you find that—besides the changes in situation—the fundamental idea changes too?

RB: Yes, absolutely and that was the whole reason for doing it. I started to use my old age, my past, as a material for making art. That is what that show [at Yvon Lambert] is about, it is not a retrospective. At the moment I have an exhibition at the Paris gallery of Yvon Lambert. There I show only new work. The idea of combining old and new work is not new; I have been doing that for a while. I guess I started doing that after I turned 60, making something new out of the old and new work together and activating the space between. I don't know about other people, but I see things in the work that I hadn't seen before. I sometimes wish I had that same I-don't-give-a-shit attitude that I had in those days. I really didn't care; I still don't care, but these days I am a little more cautious. There are a few people now whose opinion I respect—there are only very few—but there are more than when I was young.

Question from the audience: You work mostly in gallery spaces, which are confined volumes of space. Could you tell a bit more about your conception of the medium of space itself?





RB: I like galleries and museums, because people come to actually look at the work. I like it: that is what these places are for. People come there with anticipations and expectations. They are focused on the art. Sometimes it is good to do something out in public, too—and I have done that. But I find that the people who respond to it are the same people who go to galleries anyway. There is work of me in public; I am not sure whether people recognize it as anything. Anything you do is certainly going to change the space. There is no such thing as just plain space; there is always a specific kind of space or a certain kind of place. If you are sensitive, you don't just take something from your studio and plump it into a gallery; you take into account the aspects of what this space is about and the people that go there. This is kind of challenging and it affects the way the piece is going to look—at least for me it does. I don't take something out of my studio and put it in an abstract space. I did some paintings, but they are in galleries because that is where people go to look at things. Art is a very particular human activity. It is a very important activity. And it is a special activity. In the beginning you need a few people who will support it and respond to it. Maybe that group will grow, maybe not. At least you put it out there. When you put it out, you want it to be taken seriously. At least I do, because I think a lot about what I do. For me, art is a very complicated process.

*Question from the audience: I was wondering about the diptych and the 45 years between them. What was the formal consideration for the space between them?*

RB: That was a problem when we were hanging the show. In fact, it was a problem making a new painting to go with the old one. I think I did three or four possible paintings. Some of which I may put in another show some place else. I wanted to reflect my ideas of change; I did not want it to be something so totally different, so that people could see some sort of connection between the two. The old one is a sort of found object from my youth, the other one I had to make with my old brain.

*Question from the audience: If you show the piece again, will it change or is the in between space locked now?*

RB: I have to see what it looks like when I show it again. Nothing is locked in; everything is changing.

*Jessica Stockholder: I wonder what you think your work will be like after you, when you yourself are not here anymore, in terms of exchanging and other people making those decisions on your behalf.*

RB: That is the definition of nothing, right? The void? When you are dead? That is nothing. I mean, do I really care? Yeah, I do. I care now; I probably won't care when I am dead. So, it is a question to be dealt with now. You have a certain amount of control. I have two sons, they are in their forties. You have a certain amount of control over their lives and then you totally lose control. It's like that, I think. How much control can you possibly have? A friend of mine, a fellow artist, I have known him since the 60s, happens to have a magnificent collection. I went to his place in the south of France sometimes. He

showed one of my works that was in his collection in a museum in Mouans-Sartoux, France, which is a beautiful little museum. We traded works sometime. I did not go to the opening but he showed my piece in that museum. Some people were quite disappointed because the wall piece completely changed everything. Here you have someone who is a fellow artist and should know better, really. What he did with the piece was unforgivable. I sent him an email. He came to my show here in New York. I said: "look, the next time you do this, let me know, we will try and do something or don't show it." People do things to your art when you do not have any control. You think you've got it locked in, but you don't. Barnett Newman used to say he wanted his paintings to look the same in the gallery as they did in his studio. I think that is impossible. Anybody who makes paintings knows that, as soon as you move them, they will change. To a certain extent I try to build that into my work. There is always that sort of flexibility. Also: if something is where it is, just leave it.

*PL: I have a question about your work with words, with language. Artists such as Lawrence Weiner or Joseph Kosuth care a lot about typography. Is this a topic for you as well?*

RB: Yes, but I use the same kind of words all the time. I like a very simple geometric form. I developed this look. It works well with architecture and does not distract from the word object itself. I think of them as objects really. How do you distinguish one word from the other? Each word has got its own individual history and meaning and look and color. I don't want to get involved in borrowing any-

body else's text. My sensibility is always to just be very direct. Without a lot of extraneous things going on.

*Question from the audience: Your work strikes me as very generous to the viewer in terms of interaction, which moves it away from a kind of commodity status. Would you consider your work as an institutional critique or something utopian?*

RB: No, I don't use terms like that. Earlier I spoke about losing a certain amount of control and I have that built in. I address my work directly to the viewer. That is ultimately where the meaning is going to be. It is what other people are going to think and write about it. Once the work gets into the world, it gets a life of its own. You have to consider the fact that I am undressing myself to other people. No matter what meaning I give to the work, ultimately it's going to be dealt with by other people. Over time this is going to change: people have different attitudes towards it and think about it in a different way. That is one of the reasons why I use words: they address themselves. But, I don't like words in a text. I have sort of stopped that. I did that years ago, but don't do that anymore, because I want the words to exist in all their possible meanings and then be addressed personally by the viewer. However, he may refer to them... No, it's not utopian; it's realistic. I am very much interested in how art exists in the real world. I am very much a realist, even though I am often called a conceptualist.

## JESSICA STOCKHOLDER

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 3 April 2009



*Jessica Stockholder (\*1959, Seattle, WA, USA) creates architectural multimedia installations using found objects, such as construction materials, furniture, textiles, and household items.*

### Notes arising from Symposium Space NYC, 3 April 2009

It's interesting that I can't seem to think about space without thinking about time. I work with how the experience of things 'now' bumps up against memory and knowledge accumulated in time. I am particularly enamored with picture making—picture making in space. The relationship between picture making and space is an awkward one. Pictures are still, seeming to exist outside of space and time. They are flat on the surface. The volume of things takes time to experience. The experience of space requires movement; and movement takes place in time. Conflating time and space causes a feeling of being torn from 3-dimensional space as the only way it is possible to experience space outside of time is in the space of mind (imagination, thought.)

I don't work in a verbal space. There is a knowing that accumulates from experience and in relation to the body that directs my making. There is structure and intelligence to what I make that grows from things I have made before, and in response to what I know of other people's work and the world. My capacity to articulate the work comes after the fact. I work in response to things in the moment, to how things feel, and to visual structure. It is difficult to explain how it is that I work with fiction—perhaps even narrative but not with words. The fictions I use are tied to the generalities that the mind invents through metaphor grown from particular experience of things in real or exterior space. The flow of these generalities in mind through time, cued by the experience of painted objects is a kind of narrative. That we tie emotion to these experiences is part of how we think. Fiction includes emotion thereby tying information to our memories and encompassing many parts of us. Words are general and abstract although strung together they can point at particularities. The word 'microphone' for example, describes the object but it tells us nothing about any particular microphone and how it exists now in relation to where it is and who's looking at it. I value this disjuncture between the words we put to things to quickly know what they are, and the fact that each and every single thing or objects is different. I am interested in the space in the mind between the word and experience. We think abstractly in

order to function. Every single moment we live is quite particular. I use objects and my making to call attention to that part of being human.

All my work is site related—either in a generic way or in a more specific way. I travel to work in response to the specific nature of different places. The work I make in my studio is made in relation to the generic convention of white cube exhibition, and in response to the intense particularity of different objects. Places are different than spaces. With the studio work I am assuming a kind of generality of place—perhaps that is a kind of space. With the site-related work I respond to the physical particularities of architecture, light and scale.

Our experience of mind as inhabiting space is metaphoric, fictive. We generate this fiction in our internal mind spaces. Somehow, flat picture-making space seems easier to live with: it proposes not to exist in the flow of time. Of course it does; everything does. But it proposes that itself as static, and it can be imagined as static. The experience of 3-dimensional things requires that we imagine or acknowledge the flow of time. The collision of these two experiences: one feeling more comfortable, more controlled; the other chaotic and uncontrollable. Though we understand fiction to be something distinct from reality, in fact, fiction merges with reality. The Internet is a kind of fiction: it is full of words and images that we invented. Our bodies are not actually there, but we think of it as space. Fiction defines the whole world. Architecture is constructed to present us with certain kinds of images. If the walls had holes in them revealing plumbing, electrical wires, and the darkness inside, we would feel less comfortable. Clean white walls give us the feeling that we are safe and cared for. Buildings in this way present a kind of storytelling to comfort us.

These shared cultural fictions are distinct from our personal fictions: our dreams and the stories of our lives. Our personal stories are certainly part of us, though not necessarily part of the shared world. All of our stories in mind space, shared and private, are known very differently than our knowing about things in exterior space. These two kinds of space exterior and interior hold the flow of our lives.

I aim for my work to be—in a classical way—ordered and complete. I aim for stasis in the midst of chaos. I have not been interested in watching a work fall apart. Although conceptually it is interesting to think about entropy that is not what gives me pleasure. I do like to

think about how the work is a very slow process, a slow event in time—much slower than film or video. I like to notice the extreme slowness of the work in contrast to the speed of my body.

The dualities presented by my work are dualities of life—they are not between life and an imagination of death. The duality of the static picture versus the mass and space in time, and the demand to notice the particular bracketed by the abstract structure depending on the generality of thought in mind. These dualities embodied by my work can be understood as metaphor for the relationship between mind and body. I am an atheist without certainty as to what happens after death, though I wish for continuity! In any case, we do, while living, experience ourselves as separate from our bodies though we can't escape them. This seems like an experience of space colliding with time.

### Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam: Rethinking Character

Materials and form have character and or give rise to character. This text aims to give voice to how and what might be a character in this work and what parts might be played by the various actors. The action takes place as the senses of the body meet the constructs of the mind.

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS: Three shadows wait to be. They wait for Sam to stand on three different occasions just there, in the future, out of sand. Three figures eclipsed; lost to the lights and slipped between the pages—the covers of a bed. They act—standing still on the stage. The event moves down the path, Life's middle road, the yellow brick road; mark-making as they go, teetering between artifice and good will.

Those three bend down, whispering to the lake flowing underground—their noses pressed to the floor—pressed some more—the nostrils squeezed tight so nothing can ooze. Backs bend, awkwardly. No robes flowing—no fabrics blowing in the wind. It is quiet.

The pots and pans clatter in the background. The ongoing nature of daily life in this case is sidelined. The stopped hush of snow falling is centered in the gallery. Projections—pictures—in the mind's eye and in the eye are patched together onto the wall and felt through a tunnel and in an empty space. They are in the middle of a page. The wind blows the leaves around their feet. Purple slime slips over their backs. Their noses are runny.

That eccentric branch at the door! Unsettled in isolation beckoning to the intruder with warm and enthusiastic invitation. So in love! Some wind slipping through the door and the energy and envy of the air moving is also a protagonist in the midst of the still staged artifice. The plateau of colors is still and yet more gushing, twisted and upsettingly alive than the plants at the door were last year. Here is a big heap of static event piled up like shards of broken plastic buckets.

The icebox is full of love metered out over time. Metering is a kind of control. Control is necessary to living, in concert with passion, breaking the bounds of predictability and ordered knowing. The cold of winter slows life processes. The cold of the icebox mimics winter. The cold of the gallery/white cube, like the icebox, is full of love and control.

Building—the verb and the noun—in all of its life process is a character in the event here orchestrated. The stuff—carpet, stone, hardware, wood, couch, freezer, lamps, cloths, shoes, and sheetrock—is in process as is the food cycling through our tubes—making passage.



Slow dancing mingles with the tinsel, the flashing lights of Christmas, the dance floor, and the cars on the highway at night passing through downtown. The dirt under the building is alive with worms, beetles, and mold. Being kept safe, but the surfaces are too clean and the walls have too much flex in them.

Plastic is so beautiful and so frightening.  
The shiny thinness of experience.  
Making holes in the veneer of the hard clear surface.

The line between two colors charged! It's impossible to separate one from the other, impossible to take that impossible place away and put it somewhere else. Try to put feet there. Dive into that place that is not there and point. Finger stretched out long and pointing like . . . and to the beach shore—the inter-tidal zone.

Carpet always stamper his feet—hard like there is mud on them. He doesn't like sand between his toes. She brushes her hair often. And she worries about the color fading.

Green waterproof drywall rigidly embarks on a sea journey of mammoth proportions. The green sea seems to go on forever in all directions until you step back and see the edges. The size of experience changes so drastically! He is a little dry but then she likes to swim.

Wires with electricity mess up together with the air and dust specks and balls carried on breezes through colored air.

Colored air is thick and interrupted by body parts, bone, flesh, and blood flowing along channels. Channels, like the eye's point of view, flow through space and come into focus at the end, on the wall. Projected pictures overlay the rough and tumble of the current in all directions.

The Characters are orchestrated for the eye—riding on wheels—legs flapping in the wind. The eye screeches—along in the grooves laid out for it. Like a train on its track. Meanwhile, experience and oceans of color inform the action, figures, belly, dancing, and knitting.

Back to the wall, body and wall are screen; eyes painstakingly turned around character plots of stuff. The light tunnels weave together two kinds of mapping that lie side by side: the darting map the eye manufactures and the map of being as the body learns it.

The plot thickens. (Jessica Stockholder 2004)

## RENE RIETMEYER

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 3 April 2009



*Rene Rietmeyer (\* 1957, Netherlands) is the initiator of the project Personal Structures. Rietmeyer creates objects, which he calls 'Boxes.'*

### The Emotional Perception of Art and Space

This article does not cover the physics of the space/time continuum. Other people have discussed that scientifically very well and honestly, it is not easy to comprehend. I would like to focus more on the subjective human relationship with self-experienced art and space, our surrounding environment, while being aware that space and time are not to be separated.

### Perception with our senses and other influences

Art creates "meaning" and is an essentially human endeavor. As such, questions about art and its evaluation are linked to processes of how we humans perceive and create thoughts and emotions. Perception is not just a passive processing of sensory information. Perception is the active selection and processing of all information that reaches our brain, mostly from outside of our own body in combination with knowledge we have gained beforehand.

It is commonly said that we have five senses, although some even claim a sixth sense or more. Our senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste each provide a different perspective to the space around us. By combining the input from our senses, we like to believe that we have an objective understanding of the world around us. In reality our personal understanding from the space surrounding us is a complex whole created by the input from our senses as well as our memory, knowledge, intellect and sexual perception and our personal constitution at that moment. All these factors are unstable. They influence and interact with each other constantly. What we see influences our emotions and these emotions influence again what we see. Most of the time we lack consciousness concerning these factors. We are simply not aware of them, though the total of all our perceptions in combination with all other factors is the foundation of our emotional status.

Part of our lack of awareness of emotional perception is due to our lack of attention as well as our lack of education and vocabulary. We can educate our emotional center in our brain with art. Giving art the chance to have an impact on your own emotional state means, not only perceiving art with your senses, but also creating a consciousness about the intellectual "meaning" of the art work.

We normally do not think of our intellectual abilities as important for perception, but intellect and knowledge have indeed a great influence on the way we emotionally perceive our surrounding. We should not only "feel" art, we should also "think" art.

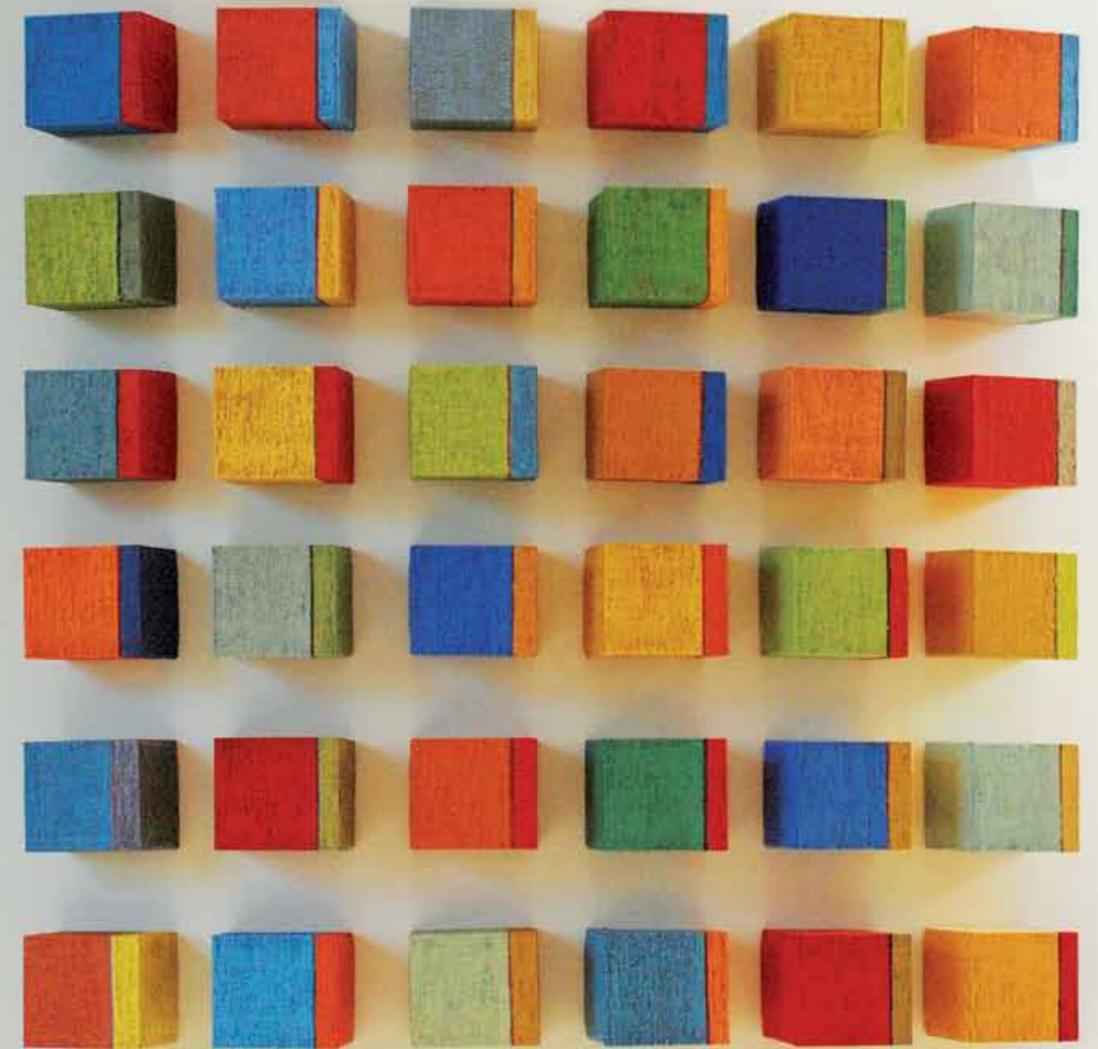
### Perception of space

The visual and/or tactile perception of the space that surrounds us makes us aware of the relative position of our own body as opposed to the objects around us. It provides us with dimensional coordinates such as height, depth and distance. This perception of space provides us with information concerning the spatial forms in which we manifest ourselves and that is essential for our movement and orientation within our surrounding environment.

It is not clear how long humans have been capable of being aware of themselves and the space surrounding them. What is clear is that our understanding of space has changed a number of times. Greek mathematicians, British physicists and German philosophers, many people have had a great influence on how humans developed their thoughts about space. Especially in the last century, the latest scientific theories concerning the structures of atoms and the research on the universe have expanded our boundaries and the way we have to see and understand Space. And although we have attained a greater, more accurate awareness about the space, we can and cannot actually see or touch, still many questions remain open.

What we know is that awareness creates emotions, so even the space that we do not actually experience can have an emotional impact on us. But in general, humans and some of the other animals react emotionally towards the space they are directly surrounded by. These emotions can vary enormously from person to person. Experiencing the same space can produce different emotions in different humans. Some people feel safe and comfortable in a very small room with the door closed, others just want to get out.

I cannot present here an explicitly articulated understanding of what emotions are, but emotions are mainly a reaction of our brain to what we perceive through our senses, and rarely the result of a spontaneous release of hormones. In order to create a larger awareness and better understanding about our emotional reactions in general and to space specifically, we will have to find the origin of these emotions.





The consciousness we perceive about the space which surrounds us is the result of the interplay between many factors, such as for example: our biological constitution, experiences we had in the past, our cultural background and our personal experiences from seeing, touching, smelling, hearing or even tasting the space. I remember very well walking around my studio in Saitama, Japan, in 1998. Tasting the pollution in the air made me aware that I should not live there for too long.

In order to create awareness, humans needed to develop a language, a set of words for being able to define and communicate the subject matter. A communication not only with others, but especially with oneself. Philosophers like Heidegger with his existential analysis of "Dasein" as "being-in-the-world" present a suggestion of how it is possible for us humans, as temporal, spatial, beings with language, to be consciously emotional. "Being-in-the-world" as an emotional human is also shaped by the articulation of "meaning" through language. Our developed language, with its set of words concerning emotion, gives "meaning" to the emotional experience of living in the space surrounding us.

#### Works of art

For approximately the past 100 years, art has no longer mainly focused on being a representational reproduction of people and scenes, influenced by the emotions of the artist. Art has now often become an intellectual construction. By becoming more aware of the emotional impact of our perceptions and the intellectual intentions embodied in the art works, we can perceive more refined impressions from the art we encounter. Humans are capable of reaching consciousness about increasingly refined emotional impressions, and it is only through the conscious recognition of the totality of all influential factors, that we can begin to exercise our full potential of human perceptivity.

There are a lot of objects created these days by many different people who call themselves artists. It is not easy to distinguish

what is art and what is not. We need to have a really close look at the sensible present of the objects as well as gain knowledge of the thoughts and ideas leading to the creation of the purported art work. Also we have to question the integrity of the creator in order to label an object as art or not. Whether this is an important issue or not is another matter that should be answered by each person by and for him or herself. But for me it is important to question this, since I do not just trust my senses while observing a work that is supposed to be art. In forming our opinion if an object is art or not, we really must be conscious of the input we receive from our senses, as well as the influences that our memory, knowledge, intellect, hormones and also our personal constitution have on us at the moment we form our opinion.

In my opinion most of the objects created by people called artists, regardless if they became famous or not, are for various reasons not to be considered art. But, although I, to my way of thinking, have good arguments for my points of view, at the end my personal subjective opinion is nothing more or less than just my opinion.

Each of the art works I make stands on its own, but every work of art is always perceived within its environment, within the space it itself exists. The way we perceive a work of art therefore always stands in close relationship with the way we perceive the surrounding space.

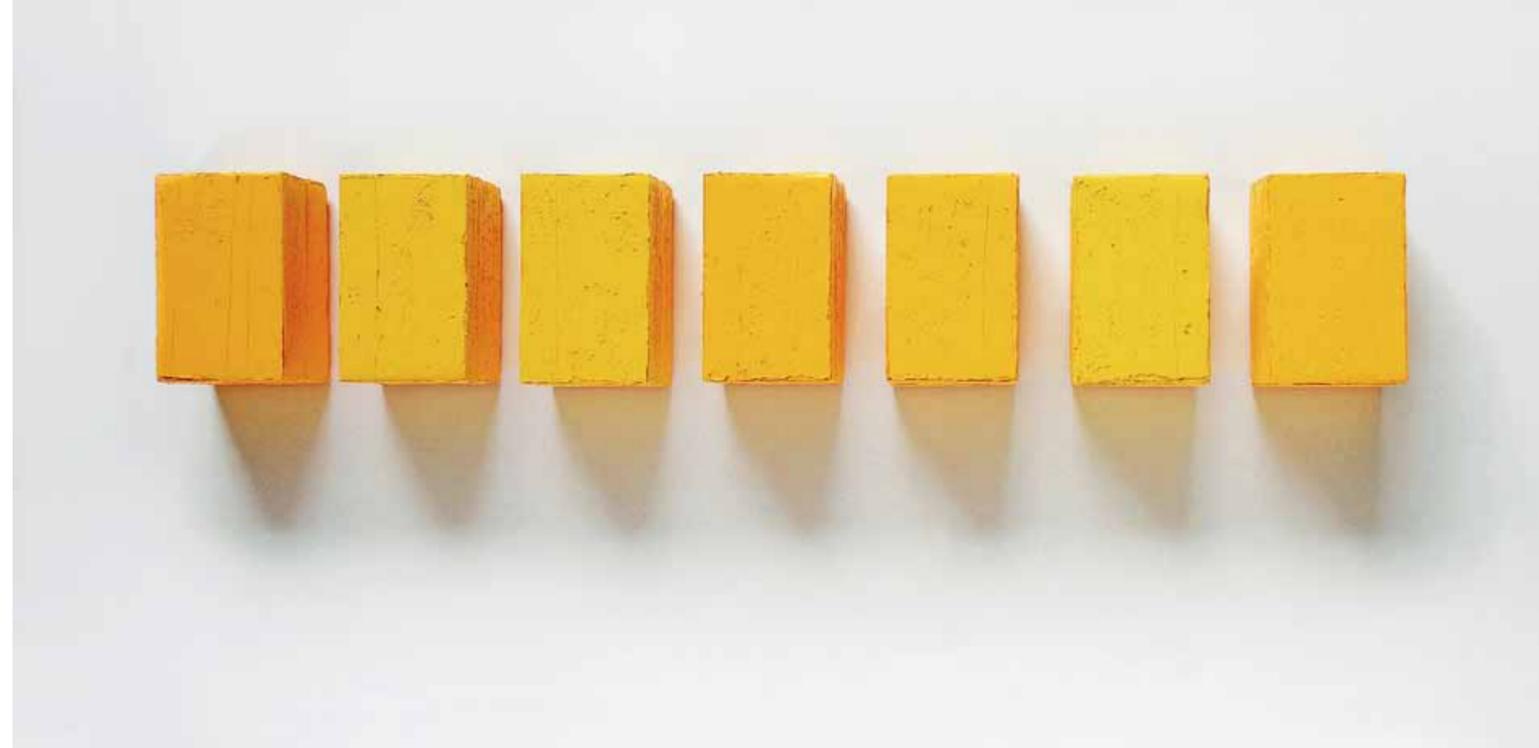
Many architecturally "beautiful" spaces have been devaluated by placing horrible objects in them but the reverse also applies, often fantastic works of art have been totally misplaced in space. A museum usually has its own exhibition design department. Wall colors, lighting and interior design elements, everything is selected with the goal of creating the, in the creators' view, best possible environment that complements an exhibition or individual work of art. And as usual, each person claims he or she knows it best, reasons best and feels best emotionally, where the artwork should be placed.

When an art work is placed in a space, the art work and the space interact with each other. Any artist aware of this fact should always try to create the best possible environment in which, in his opinion, it seems best to view the art work and the space as a whole. If possible the artist should try to influence all aspects stimulating the senses of the viewers. The viewers will still create their own unique art encounter experience, simply because each of them is a different individual, with unique ways of perceiving their surroundings.

I am an artist, not an architect. I cannot create the buildings in which my art works will be placed, but my installations take into account the environment in which the work of art is placed. When my installations are installed closely following my personal instructions regarding the space in combination with my art works, I do have a strong influence on the surrounding space itself. I basically create a new, a different space and I will have great influence on the viewers' emotional perception of that space as a whole.

#### Perception of art

Each person is an individual, a configuration of unique manifestations, a complexity of habits, temperament, language, beliefs and with powers such as abilities and the capability to consciously



want something. Therefore, each person will approach new forms of art differently and create its own personal opinion, awareness and emotions from the perceived impressions. Experiencing one hour of sitting in the Mark Rothko room at the Tate in London or in the James Turrell Skyspace near Vejer de la Frontera in Spain is something different for each person for many reasons.

The problem with attaining an accurate perception of new forms of art stems from the fact that humans always take into account their previous knowledge while perceiving something new. The extent of our knowledge creates our reality. The human mind can only contemplate what it has been exposed to. When works of art are perceived without understanding, our brain will try to find something that it recognizes in order to process what it is perceiving. These processes of perception can change what humans actually perceive.

The previously acquired knowledge about art works we have experienced before and that most closely relate to the unknown works of art we will see in the future, will influence what we see when we look at works of art that we still do not comprehend at that point in time. Therefore, communication concerning human progress in knowledge and the intellectual and emotional achievements from other humans is very important.

My works of Art, I call them Boxes, are three dimensional objects themselves and as all matter, they occupy space. The materials I use, the colors, size, shape, texture and composition do have an immediate impact on the senses of the viewer, but my works contain more than just the sum of these formal means. There is the intellectual aspect of my works, the ideas, the thoughts that formed the foundation of the creation itself. With our intellectual ability we perceive ideas and thoughts. Ideas are real things, just as people and the art works themselves are real, but we can not automatically perceive the ideas and thoughts of somebody else without learning how to do so.

As with other human functions, we have to train our intellectual and emotional abilities in order to be able to perceive clearly.

The emotional center in our brain can perceive "meaning". It does not perceive this "meaning" directly, but creates "meaning" through language as it is represented in our surroundings and the objects, things, we observe. These things may be physically present objects such as stones or works of Art, or they may be less concrete, such as ideas. To create consciousness about our emotions and "meaning" we need to be able to define our surroundings with words, language. If the words chosen to describe the encountered art turn out to be "unknown object", we should always try to find out more about it.

The way to develop our intellectual perception is the same as it is with the development of the perception of our senses, through paying attention and developing the abilities our body, our brain, has. It is a long and complex process, earliest illustrated by Plato, as he writes about Socrates' search for truth. Observing art, experiencing art and letting art have a conscious influence on your emotional perception of the space surrounding you, is a learning process, which calls for education.

Verbal as well as non-verbal expressions of thoughts play an important role in the communications between humans. With my art and the texts written about my works and thoughts, I try to educate the viewer concerning the emotional and intellectual content of my work. I try to heighten the consciousness of the viewer as to his own observations. Through my work, I communicate with the viewer in order to have influence, I try to instill in each of you a greater awareness about your own emotional perception of art and space. Knowing that, although we can experience the exact same "art and space", our conscious perception, emotions and understanding will always be very personal.

## PETER LODERMEYER

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 3 April 2009



### The Unknown Space

To be honest, I have no idea what we will be speaking about today and tomorrow. Or, to be more precise: I do know, of course, that we will be talking about space, but do we really know what that is: space? Less than a year ago I listened to a lecture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy by an artist-friend, Esther Stocker from Vienna, called “Everything I do not know about space”. For a long while I was convinced I should choose the same title for my lecture because this is precisely what has become clear to me while dealing with this theme: that space is, granted, something completely self-evident to us, but yet, or maybe even because of this, it is something unknown. The fact that I did not, after all, choose this title has less to do with the fact that I would have been stealing it—a writer does not necessarily shy away from such a crime: You know the adage about “bad writers copy, good writers steal”. What ultimately counted more was a logical reason. How can we know what it is we don’t know about space? How can we strive for completeness if we are ignorant about what we do not know? How can we speak at all about things we do not know? My talk has therefore received a more modest title: *The Unknown Space*. Neither do I see it as my task to come up with a hypothesis, but rather to open up space for questions here at the beginning of our symposium, which might conceivably provide the talks given by subsequent speakers with space again to resonate in.

Maybe you are familiar with Book 11 of the Confessions of St. Augustine, where he meditates on the essence of time. There you can find the famous statements so often trotted out: “What then is time? If no one asks me about it, I know. But if someone asks me to explain it to him, I do not know.”<sup>1</sup> Might we not claim the same to be true about space, which next to time, according to Immanuel Kant, is a “pure form of sensible intuition”? That Augustine primarily focused his attention on time was for obvious theological reasons. The relationship between time and eternity touches upon ‘last questions’. But what is the case with space? For our existence as physical, material beings it is, of course, no less relevant than time. And naturally, we all certainly know in pragmatic terms what space is: we are experts of space as pedestrians, drivers, travelers, home-builders, acrobats, real estate agents, astronauts, etc. We know how to move about in space,

how to orient ourselves, we know how to design, plan, and build spaces. But just because we do, does this mean we know what space is? Space itself? “If someone asks me to explain it to him, I do not know...” Really, has anyone ever seriously asked you what space is? Asking such peculiar questions seems to be the privilege of groups of people like scientists, philosophers, and artists.

In our science-based societies it is in particular the natural sciences that are deemed responsible for dealing with basic questions. We trust them most to have something to say that is definitive and oriented to hard facts. If you are a non-physicist attempting to extract from popular science magazines what the situation looks like concerning the theory of space in today’s physics, you will quickly discover that it apparently no longer has anything to do with our everyday notion of a homogenous, three-dimensional entity called space. Above all, there is no one theory, but rather several competing models. Even as a layman we know that the greatest challenge of theoretical physics today consists in combining the theory of relativity on the one hand with the quantum theory on the other hand to a single unified theory. The candidates for this, bearing such exotic names as ‘loop quantum gravitation’ or ‘super string theory’, work with concepts of time and space that tax the power of our imagination beyond its limits. While Albert Einstein (as well as several of his successors) tended to view the succession of the time sequences past, present, and future as an illusion of our limited human intellect and space as the sole bearer of reality, the aforementioned aspirants are working with sheer unbelievable models of time and space. These are models, which, if they need to be explained in language, quickly take on metaphoric shades of the nearly mythological or metaphysical. Due to my lack of expertise here, I will not elaborate any further. I merely wish to urge you to consider that we may not expect from physics any smooth answer to the issue of space as long as competing models such as the 11-dimensional entwined ‘threads’ of space and time or ‘crumbly’ time and space structures or ‘quantum foam’ are being discussed.

Concerning foam: the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk—and with him we come to the second professional group of space specialists—published an extensive, three-volume work between 1998 and 2004 on the theme of man’s relationship to space called

*Spheres*.<sup>2</sup> Here, foam, in addition to bubbles and globes, is the main metaphor. Mind you, the concern is not for the interpretation of geometrical or cosmic space, but rather for our own inherent reference to space, which becomes more and more differentiated from the time of our prenatal, intrauterine spatial situation onwards. Humans, this is his basic thesis, are never isolated monads, but relational beings, standing in reference to others and other things. And these relationships and memberships are always somehow determined by space. We create our own bubbles of space, i.e. all kinds of possible spatial references that we are integrated in: partnerships, the place we live in, the family, the workplace, travels, trade, cultural membership, political structures, etc. etc. Taken together it is a veritable foam of space bubbles, which permeate one another, sometimes burst, and then always form anew.

Since his book has not yet been translated into English, Sloterdijk’s morphological approach will hardly be known here in the USA. And I suppose that his literary style, which does not exactly shy away from bold speculations, might rather be received with some reserve in a country of pragmatism and analytic philosophy. A thinker schooled in analytic philosophy would approach space very differently and ask: “What do you mean when you use the word ‘space’; what context do you place it in and how is it used in ordinary language?” While writing this lecture I had to consult the dictionary several times because I had doubts as to whether the word ‘space’ would coincide in all its usages with the use of the German word *Raum*. Looking it up, I imagined a possible art work by Joseph Kosuth, one of his *Proto-Investigations*, whose most famous *One and Three Chairs* dates from 1965. *One and Three Spaces* does not exist as far as I know, but it would be feasible. What would this work look like? A real room, a photo of this room, and a dictionary entry about ‘space’. The language the dictionary was in would be a decisive factor.

One of the things we do not know about space certainly has to do with the linguistic determinants the concept of space is subject to in foreign languages. Here at this symposium we are speakers of English—but what are concepts of space like in African, Asian, the Oceanic languages, what possible unfamiliar, even completely foreign, variants of the notions of space might there be? I have a little experience with Japanese artists, enough at least to know that the Japanese concept of space MA means something other than a geometric space we can measure. It is rather an interim space (which we may also understand temporally), a tension-filled in-between, for example, the empty surfaces between the motifs of a pen-and-ink drawing, etc. Enough said, allow it to suffice that notions of space are determined differently by different cultures. That the respective typical architecture of various cultures plays a decisive role in this would seem immediately plausible. I will return to this in a moment, in a different context.

Since 2006, when we had worked out the conceptual idea of the symposium trilogy *Time · Space · Existence*, a statement by Donald Judd about space as the unknown has lodged in my mind as the nucleus of my own thoughts. His last lecture written in 1993, a year before his death, when he was already so ill that he was no longer able to deliver it himself, bears the title *Some aspects of color in general and red*

*and black in particular*. Interestingly enough, more than the first third of this text about color deals exclusively with space.

I am not able to enter into a detailed discussion of Judd’s arguments—it would make sense, and certainly be worthwhile, to organize an entire symposium about his hypotheses—rather here I will merely initially juxtapose several quotes about space as the unknown. Already the first sentences read as follows: “Material, space, and color are the main aspects of visual art. Everyone knows that there is material that can be picked up and sold, but no one sees space and color. Two of the main aspects of art are invisible, the basic nature of art is invisible.”<sup>3</sup> This strong thesis is further expounded upon: Judd points out that architecture has “occasionally” dealt with space; he mentions classics of the Modern such as Kahn, Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and van Doesburg, but also Japanese and Korean literature and Feng Shui. “But the subject of space in architecture, the nature of architecture, is not developed. Judging from the evidence of the buildings by recent well-known architects, space in architecture is no longer known. It’s not unseen; it’s not there. Within the clothes there is no Emperor.”<sup>4</sup> Judd’s findings with regard to art are no better. “There has been almost no discussion of space in art, nor in the present. The most important and developed aspect of present art is unknown. This concern, my main concern, has no history. There is no context; there are no terms; there are not any theories.”<sup>5</sup> And then, once more, for all who are still unwilling to believe this: “After a few thousand years space is so unknown that a discussion of it would have to begin with a rock.”<sup>6</sup> I will stop quoting him now, as exciting as it would be to enter into a discussion of Judd’s notion of space and to follow him in his description of a rock, its position, its substratum, a flat or a slanted level, when he asks what happens if a second rock is placed alongside it, etc. etc. What interests me is the fact of how seductive, tricky even, Judd’s idea is in selecting a very simple, ‘stone-age’ situation for departing upon his discussion of space. But do note, he expressly does not undertake this in order to look back, but so that he can describe “how a primitive discussion might begin tomorrow, if this civilization were advanced enough to bear it.”<sup>7</sup>

Judd’s socio-critical attitude is expressed here clearly enough. But with his skepticism he makes us forget that for us city people (most people who work in the art business really are city people) looking at rocks in an empty landscape is in no way one of our primary experiences of space. Quite the contrary, it is rather rare, if not fairly foreign to most of us. Should a “primitive discussion” not begin with the most normal experiences of space that each of us encounters day for day? The person who opens his eyes in the morning, gets up, goes into the bathroom, makes coffee in the kitchen, goes down the stairs or takes the elevator in order to get to the street, goes to the subway and then to the office, the university or studio...has already had complex experiences in terms of spatial phenomenology in that first hour of his or her day. He or she has already passed through the intimacy of the bedroom, the privacy of the apartment, the public space of the street, narrow spaces, wide spaces, quiet spaces, lively spaces, lonely spaces, crowded spaces, secure spaces, potentially dangerous spaces, spaces under surveillance...

If what Peter Sloterdijk says is true, that we transfer “early experiences of space to new locations and primary movements to new

venues<sup>8</sup>—and if the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard is correct with his statement in the wonderful *Poetics of Space*, where he says “[...] the house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word”<sup>9</sup> ...if both philosophers are therefore correct, then the question concerning space could begin with the home, ideally the home we grew up in, which constitutes for most of us an formative experience of space.

There is a metaphoric way of comparing the Freudian structural model of the psyche with its three instances of the id, the ego, and the superego with a house and its three parts: the cellar, the living spaces, and the attic. These are metaphors connecting man and space, which continue to inspire us even if, from a scientific standpoint, they were to be completely false. Gaston Bachelard plays around with this and dreams of supplementing psychoanalysis with what he refers to as “topoanalysis”: “Topoanalysis, then, would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives.”<sup>10</sup> The attic above us with all those things we normally store up there that we have inherited from our ancestors is the typical locality of the superego. The living spaces, bright and functional, fulfill the expectations of the ego-consciousness. Most interesting are of course, the cellar rooms with their dark corners, strange smells, secluded areas and other secrets that make our childish fears rear up. The fact that these metaphors seem so clear to me certainly has to do with my having grown up in a single family home with a cellar and attic. That I still dream of this house 30 years later without having been back there again, and that I can still vividly recall the particular atmospheres of each individual room shows me how formative early experiences of space can be.

Like no other artist, the German Gregor Schneider makes a theme of the metaphor of the house as the embodiment of emotional and psychic powers. His major work *Totes Haus ur* [Dead House ur (primal)] is the house he grew up in; he keeps working on its rooms, which he copies and transfers to museums and exhibition rooms. Several weeks ago I visited his dark building expansion at the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, a labyrinth black as night, perfectly illustrating the cellar Bachelard swears is “the dark entity of the house”: “If you start to daydream there, you get into touch with the irrationality of the house.”<sup>11</sup> If you grope your way through the dark in Schneider’s spatial installation, you find rooms of ghostly and desolate bareness and in addition the proverbial skeletons in the closets. In Schneider’s works space is emotionalized to a considerable degree, staged as an eerie entity and tied into deeply-rooted memories and fears.

It would be worth thoroughly researching Schneider’s house-obsessions and confronting them with the work of Gordon Matta-Clark, one of the most significant ‘topo-analysts’ in 20<sup>th</sup>-century art. Where Schneider conserves the house with all of its ambivalent emotions, Matta-Clark literally cut it open, changed it, dissected it, dislocated its parts and thus, also the states of consciousness correlating to it. Matta-Clark spoke of “being fascinated by the architectural spaces, or ‘recurrent dream spaces’”, as well as of “converting a building into a state of mind.”<sup>12</sup> This is to say, he did not merely accept the given effect of architectural rooms, but rather, on the contrary, tried to change their effect. Architecture became sculpture. Where the concern is for space as the unknown, Matta-Clark’s project of the *Fake*

*Estates* from 1973/74 is a virtually classic work. The project, which was never finished, dealt with 15 extreme forms of tiny splinters of space in the middle of New York City, ‘gutterspace’ that Matta-Clark had bought up at auctions. These splinters of space were to be photographed and documented in writing. They are property scraps, left over from the act of planning, purchasing and use in urban space. Space, which otherwise remains unnoticed, an absurd rest, unusable scraps of space that have sunken, so to speak, into the unconscious and become nearly forgotten. Unlike Gregor Schneider, who in many of his works retains the eerie effect of spaces, even enhancing it, Matta-Clark’s interventions in houses and his making us aware of forgotten urban spaces have an enlightening function. We could think here of the Freudian formula: “Where It was, I shall become.”

But let us return to the analogy between the house and the psyche. It would be an interesting question from a ‘topo-analytical’ standpoint to examine how a different way of building other than the classical three-part division with a cellar, living spaces, and attic would be reflected in the psyche. This not only applies to the living situation in a big city. “In Paris there are no houses, and the inhabitants of the big city live in superimposed boxes” is what Bachelard already had to say in 1957.<sup>13</sup> And how does the situation look with other culture-specific types of residences, such as lake dwellings, caves, houseboats, early half-timbered houses, etc. etc.? Just think of the traditional Japanese home without a cellar, which is not structured vertically, but rather horizontally and has movable walls.

And lest we should forget, also the “white cubes”, of modern apartments, exhibition rooms and offices lit by large windows by day and halogen lighting by night would not function as such if there were no openings in the walls and floors, connecting conduits to the outside and to the dark underground such as electrical lines as well as water and sewer pipes. Each bright residential unit of our daily consciousness is linked up by numerous connections to the underground part of the cities. Robert Gober made an artistic form of this with his *Drains* and *Sinks*. The artist himself has described the function of the *Drains* as a contact point to the unconscious. Quote: “I thought of the drains as metaphors functioning in the same way as traditional paintings, as a window into another world. However, the world that you enter into through the metaphor of the drain would be something darker and unknown, like an ecological unconscious.”<sup>14</sup> We know of such phantasms from films. Hitchcock’s *Psycho* comes to mind with its long camera shot of the drain after the murder in the shower. Or think of the fact that in horror films which are no longer set in the classical haunted house in the country, but in the big city, the evil, the ghosts prefer to get into the apartments through water and sewer pipes, bathtubs, and sinks.

But what interests me much more than these almost classical topo-analytic motifs is the fact that the new electronic media in our bright, well-lit, and functional rooms bring us a multitude of spatial expansions, which are no less confusing, unknown, and incomprehensible than the processes underneath our cities.

Since not only radio and TV have been bringing the outside world into our apartments, but also internet, e-mail, webcams, etc., entirely new spatial situations have been coming into existence. There

are people who have outfitted their entire apartment with cameras, placing their daily lives in the internet. Conversely, we can bring the privacy of other people into our own homes at a mouse-click, as a passive viewer or interactively. In real time we can speak across the continents and see each other. These extensions of space also confuse the spaces of our legal system as we know them. There are websites which are illegal to click on, depending upon the law of the state you are in. In Germany at the moment there is a controversy going on concerning the extent that law enforcement authorities are allowed to search through private computers online, and to what extent this clashes with the basic right of the inviolability of the home. Hybrid spaces have come about via the electronic media, in which public and private, inside and outside, reality and virtuality, mix in a way that had been science fiction until just recently.

Not long ago I read an article in a German literary magazine about the so-called ‘spatial turn’, the motto being “space is back”. To tell the truth, I had never noticed it had been missing. Nevertheless, especially in the 1990s, there had been a lot of discussion, fueled by simulation theorists such as Paul Virilio, concerning the “disappearance of space”. The thesis was that, due to telecommunications, high-speed travel, but above all because of the information technologies, real time was triumphing over real space. Space was literally becoming meaningless and/or insignificant. Such theses are in no way new. Already in 1843, the German poet Heinrich Heine had written at that time about a very new means of transportation: “Even the elementary concepts of time and space have started to become unstable. Space is being killed off by the train, and only time remains left for us. If only we had enough money to respectfully kill time, too.”<sup>15</sup> We may laugh at such statements but they clearly show how new technologies and new media incite fears of space. Sometimes the reactions are hysterical, no matter if they favor or reject the new technologies.

It is sad that something like 9/11 had to happen in order to make clear to intellectuals who are fascinated by simulation that events we mostly only know from media pictures, are not mere pictures, but that time and space and the existence of humans and things are real facts. The historian Karl Schlögel, one of the leading German representatives of the so-called spatial turn in the cultural sciences, wrote in this matter: “We are reminded that not everything is a medium and simulation, that bodies may be crushed and houses destroyed, [...] we notice that even in global space there are lines and knots, which are not just virtual, but may really be severed and damaged.”<sup>16</sup>

Not even the internet, new media, and global markets will be able to make time, space, and existence disappear. They are immediately connected—each in itself mysterious, hard to comprehend, and always to be interpreted anew. In recent years space has increasingly become a theme, the present flourishing of the sciences of space is an indication of this. But what we call space is increasingly unfolding, forming ever new hybrids. “The proliferation of hybrids” as the sociologist Bruno Latour put it.<sup>17</sup> Media spaces, political spaces, economic spaces, mental spaces, spaces of the imagination, geopolitical spaces, legal spaces, surveillance spaces, protective spaces, sacred spaces, memory spaces, cyberspace, spaces that Marc Augé called non-places<sup>18</sup>, spaces like shopping



malls, cash machine rooms, airport lounges and so on... Space multiplies itself, revealing ever new, unknown facets.

In conclusion, two quotations. The first is the title of a book by Karl Schlögel “We interpret time in space.” (Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit). What he means is that we do not have a completely valid notion of history, or of art history, if we lack knowledge of the real spaces, the places and regions where it took place. And once again, I must quote Gaston Bachelard: “In its thousands of honeycombs, space stores condensed time. That is what space is for.”<sup>19</sup> As beautiful and poetic as this sentence is, we should not forget that the honeycombs of this space, unfortunately, do not always contain only honey.

1 Augustinus, *Confessiones*, lib. 11, XIV,17.

2 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I – Blasen, Mikrosphärologie*, Frankfurt am Main 1998; *Sphären II – Globen, Makrosphärologie*, Frankfurt am Main 1999; *Sphären III – Schäume, Plurale Sphärologie*, Frankfurt am Main 2004.

3 Donald Judd, Some aspects of color in general and red and black in particular (1993), in: Dietmar Elger (ed.), *Donald Judd. Colorist*, Ostfildern-Ruit 2000, pp. 79-116, quote p. 79.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 80.

7 Ibid.

8 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I – Blasen, Mikrosphärologie*, Frankfurt a. M. 1998, p. 14.

9 Gaston Bachelard, *Die Poetik des Raumes [The Poetics of Space]*, Frankfurt am Main 1987, p. 31.

10 Ibid., p. 35

11 Ibid., p. 43.

12 Quoted after: [www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/07spring/attlee.htm](http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/07spring/attlee.htm).

13 Bachelard, *l.c.*, p. 51.

14 Quoted after: Alexander Braun, Robert Gober. *Werke von 1978 bis heute. Amerikanische Kunst der Gegenwart im Spannungsfeld einer vernetzten Bildrealität*, Nuremberg 2003, p. 388, footnote 217.

15 Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, Hamburg 1862, vol. 9, p. 122.

16 Karl Schlögel, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, München 2006, S. 31.

17 Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, Harvard 1993, p. 1.

18 Marc Augé, *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Oxford 1995.

19 Bachelard, *l.c.*, p. 35.

## KOCOT & HATTON

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 4 April 2009



*Kocot & Hatton is an artist couple living in Philadelphia. They have been making art about the 'in-between space' for over forty years.*

Space. What and where is space? When confronted with the word, we often think of "outer space", the infiniteness of deep space, but in our everyday world, space seems to be defined by enclosure and the degree of closure. How much space are we allotted? What shape is the space? The classic psychology book illustration of a vase versus two silhouettes presents a constantly shifting ambiguous space of figure / ground, black on white, white on black and back again. The mind wants to create a three dimensional space. Space and the void... is the void an empty space? What about the fullness of the void? Is negative space "no space" or just an inversion of space? Perhaps among the best known examples of artists externalizing negative space, turning it into solid objects are: Marcel Duchamp's bronze cast of female genitalia, Female Fig Leaf, Bruce Naumann's A Cast of the Space under my Chair and Rachel Whiteread's House, an enormous cast of the interior space of a row house. What about space and time? Looking up in the night sky we may see dead stars, their light still traveling through space, at the same time the light of some new stars has not yet reached us. Experiencing space. Walking over defined space or defining space with each step. Choreography. What about the inner space, the space of the mind? Thought. How is it measured? We can measure activity in the brain, but thought is more elusive. Space in music is silence; silence can give form to sound. Throughout art history formal organization of space has played a role. Perspectival systems have defined space: aerial, hierarchical, flat, deep perspective and so on.

Our work has navigated through differing aspects of the 'between space'. The between that defines our work exists beyond just mathematics and physics, the between of our collaborative art. Our collaboration, like our work, negotiates both physical & cognitive space.

The between and its place or placement have been fundamental to our collaboration conceptually, procedurally and to the final result. Our work begins with either a concept or inquiry which then dictates the media. If we have an idea for a project that requires using a medium unfamiliar to us, we undertake the challenge to realize the

concept. Perhaps it is natural that with a collaborative team like ours, where division of labor is not an issue, duality and an emphasis on the 'between' occurs. Often there is a straddling of opposites: between thought and form, two dimensional and three dimensional, light and dark, inside and outside, infinite and bounded, public and private, night and dawn, asleep and awake, seen and unseen.

The between has been a part of both the process and subject. 'Betweenness' can be found in our photography, from our early 1970s proposal to install a *Life Size Photograph of the Empire State Building*, for and across from the iconic building; the paradoxical time/space of our *Seventy Mile Per Hour* series inspired by Albert Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* and in our double exposure portraits, combining two perspectives and two moments. Doubling and the between reappears in *Scale/Ratio's* pairs of standing canvases and in prints, paintings and drawings created in the hypnopompic realm, the period between sleep and wakefulness.

Although common to all of us, the hypnopompic state is rarely utilized. For the past ten years we have been creating work in the semi-consciousness preceding waking. This space is not to be confused with Hypnagogic, the period between wakefulness and sleep. Andre Breton described in his first surrealist manifesto as "one evening..." when, just as he was about to fall asleep, he first became aware of the possibilities of automatic writing. Hypnagogic is technically the in-between space of wakefulness and sleep. From our attempts to paint in this space, we have found it is a space much more suited to composing written language and not so accommodating to visual language, but the hypnopompic, that is a different story.

We began the hypnopompic work as a way to extend studio time, but found that working in the dark, in the middle of the night, in the space between sleep and wakefulness also increased our level of collaborative interaction, heightening trust in our senses and sublimating our egos. There is no place for ego in the hypnopompic. The semiconscious state seems to dissolve ego merging it with everything else, as a wave becomes part of the ocean. Immersion in the quiet, interconnected space the work alone came to the forefront.

We had been working with heraldic color codes, the representation of color using graphic patterns—i.e. a series of horizontal lines repre-

sent blue, vertical lines represent red. We realized quickly that the color codes were well suited to not only drypoint but also this unknown state. Drypoints led to drawings, drawings to paintings, paintings to polaroids and on to video. No medium seemed deterred by this unorthodox studio approach. Technically, in that one is neither asleep, nor awake in this in-between state, it is not uncommon to make one's marks, fall back asleep, awake in the morning and have no recollection of participating. Working in total darkness and in the hypnopompic state became an immersion in sensations. Physically it is a feeling of floating or like standing in a rowboat. Everything seems interconnected, constantly moving, a shifting ground. Ink lines met and paint lines joined, like seismographic self-portraits.

We quickly learned several things about hypnopompic space. It is only entered when one awakens of their own accord and sudden noises will instantly jar one out of and into the thoughts of the everyday world. The duration of the hypnopompic does not last long; the moment conscious thinking takes over, it is time to stop working.

Occasionally some truly peculiar moments happen. One time Tom sensed he was making the straightest line he had ever drawn, I rolled over in bed, bumped his elbow and so much for the straight line. In the morning light, the line was remarkably straight. Perception in the hypnopompic is not what one expects outside of it. We have also found the between space of the hypnopompic to be expandable; as the years have gone by we have been able to incrementally extend our working time. Numerous techniques have been used to determine completion. A process to decide finality facilitates when one is working quite literally in the dark. In some instances it would be predetermined by a set number of days or weeks. Specific amounts of paint would also regulate the stop point for a canvas. One hypnopompic variation even included turning on a one thousand watt quartz lamp rather than working in the dark. This moving from sleep to white light and back to sleep produced some good canvases and an intriguing twist on the problem all artists face when entering the studio from a previous days work. Going from the darkness of sleep to the bright white of the studio seemed to eliminate the need to rethink and catch up to the point where one was involved with the process the day before. When the lights go on, the previous session flashes back and one can immediately get back to work.

16 June 2007 we began photographing our digital clock recording the initial moments of our entry into the 'hypnopompic' state. Each night for one year, in the middle of the night, at some indeterminate waking moment, one of us would pick up the camera from the side of the bed and point it at the clock, the only light in the room. After capturing the glowing fluorescent green display, that night's 'photographer' returned to sleep. In some photographs the moment is so precise, the camera captures the change from one minute to the next as numbers float in an undefined space.

The Color of Blue are our most recent paintings utilizing aspects of the hypnopompic. What is it about the color of blue that elicits dramatically different responses among artists? Painter Kasimir Malevich avoided blue for his square Suprematist compositions saying it was limited to sky and water; he spoke triumphantly of blue 'defeated' by white. Though Yves Klein also associated blue with sky

and water, he saw the color as freed by the association, viewing blue as expansive and as the most abstract and living color, "beyond dimensions". Donald Judd stated "Color is very hard to learn, since it is hard to know what is useful. The particulars must be the artist's own." The primary hues, and now blue in particular, have played an integral role in our work. These blue canvases are painted under contrasting conditions, both in the light and consciousness of our 'awake studio' as well as in total darkness, in the middle of the night, in our semi-conscious 'hypnopompic studio'. Previous series have relegated preparation of the grounds to the awake studio. No longer. Now all phases of work slide between the awake and the hypnopompic studios. Some grounds are even prepared in the dark.

These paintings continue our incorporation of medieval 'Heraldic Color Codes', whose simplicity conveys a pulse of hues in graphic form. *The Color of Blue* paintings represent blue via both pattern (the code) and through retinal perception (the pigment), this union amplifying blue's resonance. In some paintings the horizontal code is barely perceptible, in the act of forming, and in others, the code is more obvious. The horizontal paint seems to activate the color in a way similar to the way magnetic fields energize metal filings. The only hue in these paintings is Ultramarine Blue, though the color of blue ranges from inky shadows to a noctilucent, electric blue.

We wanted a picture plane contrasting highly absorbent and reflective light, operating much like Chartres Cathedral's stained glass windows, somber or luminescent, depending upon vantage point. On a sunny day outside the windows are dark and opaque, but once inside, the sun pours through, illuminating the glass, jewel-like colored light fills interior spaces. We hoped to bring both simultaneously, as if straddling between the inside and outside of the cathedral windows, experiencing both at once.

The Andy Warhol Museum commissioned us to create a project. Procedurally, it was an extension of our 35-mm double exposure "conversational portraits" begun in 1985. We began with a triangular set up with the sitter at the apex of the triangle; we would shoot and converse with the sitter while passing the camera back and forth. For this project we used a Polaroid camera instead of a 35 mm. Our use of a Polaroid camera may be a little unorthodox when taking double exposures, however, its use was an homage to Warhol's prolific use of straight Polaroid photography, eliminating any darkroom manipulations. Our portraits capture two moments from two viewpoints on a single frame. Sometimes the sitter's movement is obvious as though the sitter is being transported from one space to another. The literal blurriness is due to the choice of film, exposure, the movement of the sitter and the movement of the photographer.

In 2000 we asked visitors to the Delaware Art Museum's Biennial to volunteer to have their portraits videotaped. They were asked to sit in a darkened room with their eyes closed and to think about the exhibition they had just viewed. Each of the sixty participants was video taped for about one minute. Once all were completed, the infrared video ran in the galleries for the remainder of the exhibition. Portraits of museum visitors thinking about the Biennial could be viewed by current museum visitors surrounded by the same art.

A quiet, dark, empty conference room versus a boisterous reception spilling onto two floors of the museum. How is thinking affected by environment? What does thinking about art look like? The sitters' responses to the session were varied. Some thought it was the most relaxing part of their day and did not want to leave. Others were uneasy about being alone in a darkened room with two strangers. There was an element of trust and lack of trust. Some people fell asleep. One woman even verbalized that she thought we might rifle through her purse. Sleepiness? Relaxing?... Or an uneasiness of being photographed in the dark by strangers. Does this involve their personal space? Perhaps it explains the varied reactions.

In 1999 we were invited by Larry Becker and Heidi Nivling of Larry Becker Contemporary Art, to create a work for the *Fringe Festival. Outside/In-between/Inside* was the result. Two 8' high trapezoidal pieces of bubble-wrap served as printing plates to transfer the ink on to the gallery windows. Their shapes came about while experimenting with a variety of origami folds, settling on two that would suggest shutters flung open. The images reverse themselves depending upon which side of the glass you are standing on. From the outside the 'shutters' open in and when standing in the gallery the 'shutters' open out. The prints balance and mediate an interplay between the inside of the gallery and the outside urban landscape, altering both spaces with changing light marking time and space. Throughout both day and night, changing sunlight, reflections, shadows, gallery lights and automobile lights shift the perimeter of spatial inclusion. Shadows of the individual 'bubbles' move across the gallery walls and floor, subtly joining paintings and the environment. A vertical shadow, cast by the wood dividing the two windows, was frozen in time, painted in place. Individual 'bubbles' from the white ink transfer were so dense, a moth came to rest on one of the facets as if it had form. Even the ink color appeared to change, morphing from white to yellow and even to black.

*Scale/Ratio: A Work for Two Sites*, installed January 1989 addresses how paintings affect context, site and scale and conversely how context, site and scale affect paintings. *Scale/Ratio* was the culmination of our 1985 question of why was it that when a painting is wall hung it is considered to be a painting, but when standing on the floor, or leaning against the wall, at least outside of the studio, it was, in the context of the times, looked at more as sculpture. Unlike Donald Judd's specific objects, the paintings in *Scale/Ratio* are paintings.

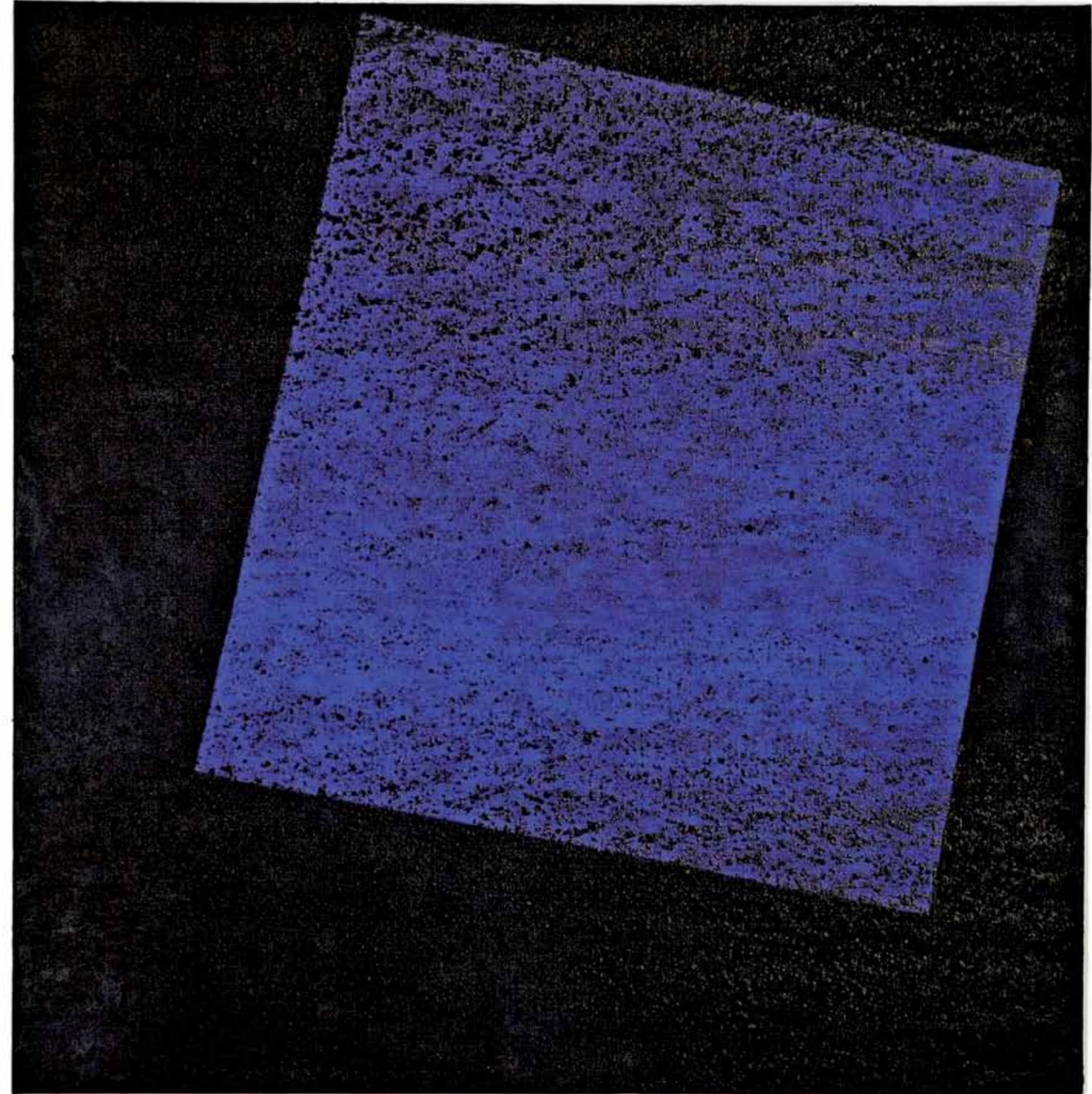
What was it about this reorientation of the canvas in space and the exposure of the back, the skeletal framework that changed it from being viewed as a painting? Why was it being perceived as a sculpture rather than as a painting? Is a painting just a surface, a skin, or does the 'bone structure' play a role? These paintings are intended to be viewed as paintings that happen to be standing in space. The reason they stand away from the wall is so that viewers can approach the picture plane from angles that wall hung paintings simply cannot provide. The reorganization of the viewing space of the painting is what has changed and with it the perception and perspective of the painting.

Our installation for two sites engages Moore College of Art and Design's institutional presence versus the charm of Jessica Berwind Gallery's historic, residential townhouse. As an introduction to the standing paintings, installed in each gallery was a Plan of BiPolar

Dynamics, a slightly altered standard textbook image of the activity of metal filings within a field of magnetic activity, illustrating the geophysical force field between the paintings in their respective sites. At Moore College of Art and Design the yellow and black graphic is painted on a 9' x 20' freestanding wall and in Jessica Berwind Gallery it takes the form of a 4.5' x 10' floor cloth. The paintings themselves are simple graphic images, two stripes, one white and one black with a narrow strip of raw linen down the center separating the pigments. Light coming through the center of the canvas conveys a space behind the surface. The four canvases are three sizes: one large, 11' tall, enveloping, overwhelming, authoritative, two medium, 5.5' tall, an average adult size, and one small, childlike, approximately 2.75' tall. As they stand firmly mirroring each other in pairs, the viewer circles finding their own position.

The project was initially conceived to be primarily about painting's place and physical space. The literal space between each set of the two canvases surfaced as an integral part of the concept of *Scale/Ratio*. Unlike Barnett Newman's ideal viewing distance of the viewer from the canvas, in this case it is the ideal distance between each canvas that allows their relationship to each other to form their 'between space'. To experience this exhibition required carrying the memory of not only the components of half of the exhibition just seen, but of their own physical interaction with it. Once across town, they could compare the two experiences. Visiting both spaces provided full realization of this work.

Ocracoke Island provided not only the right environment for translating Albert Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* into a chant; it was also the setting to make an audio recording of the work. Later, it was performed live in a tiny darkened theater in the city. The acoustics of the contrasting spaces, one expansive and windy, the other confined, narrowly focused and controlled. Differing auditory spatial attributes seem to change perception. The chant made us wonder, "when a body is moving through space, is it actually, or is the body stationary and the environment moving around and past the body, or is it both?" The question began to receive an answer some thirty-five years later while photographing landscapes from an automobile moving at seventy miles per hour. Often it involved calculating future spatial relations further down the road changing with each fraction of a second the speed showing through the elastic stretching of space. Foliage and sky flow together blurring time and space becoming more like thought. Boundaries dissolve creating a dimensionless space. Atoms of matter elongate horizontally and appear as a special form of energy, the photographs reading in two directions at once: right to left (the trajectory of the car) and from left to right (the vanishing landscape as it passes). When preparing our statement for this work, we called on Daniel Marlowe, chair of Princeton University's Physics Department, to confirm or disprove our theory. According to Marlowe, the answer to whether we are moving through space or if the environment flows past us, was something that could only be articulated in mathematical terms, but he said the simple answer is "both are correct." However, there was "one element of the equation" which was "very wrong." Even though we were driving 70 miles per hour, we were actually moving at a speed of 800 miles per hour, factoring in the earth's rotation.



## PETER HALLEY

By Karlyn De Jongh



*Peter Halley (\*1953, New York, USA) has been painting prison-like spaces since the 1980s. He gave a presentation about his work at the Space symposium at the New Museum, New York, but because he did not have the time to edit his speech, Halley has asked me to write it up, providing a short impression. This is what I heard him say:*

For Peter Halley space has always been the subject of painting—painting, which he understands as anything that involves an image. To him, we live increasingly in a 2-dimensional world of images. The flatness of painting reflects this; the imagistic world is less affected by our physical or 3-dimensional spatial experience.

Peter Halley came to New York in 1980. The space of New York has been the primary drive of his work. The paintings Halley made in 1980 had cinder block walls. They were about a walled-up space, a denial of the infinite or transcendental space of 'Abstract Expressionism' and 'Color Field Painting'. At that time, for Halley, there was a transition from an interest in the natural world—the expansive American landscape, a probing into into what physical or natural space was about—to an inquiry into social space. Halley's paintings are an inquiry of social space: a space that we humans create, rather than the natural space created around us.

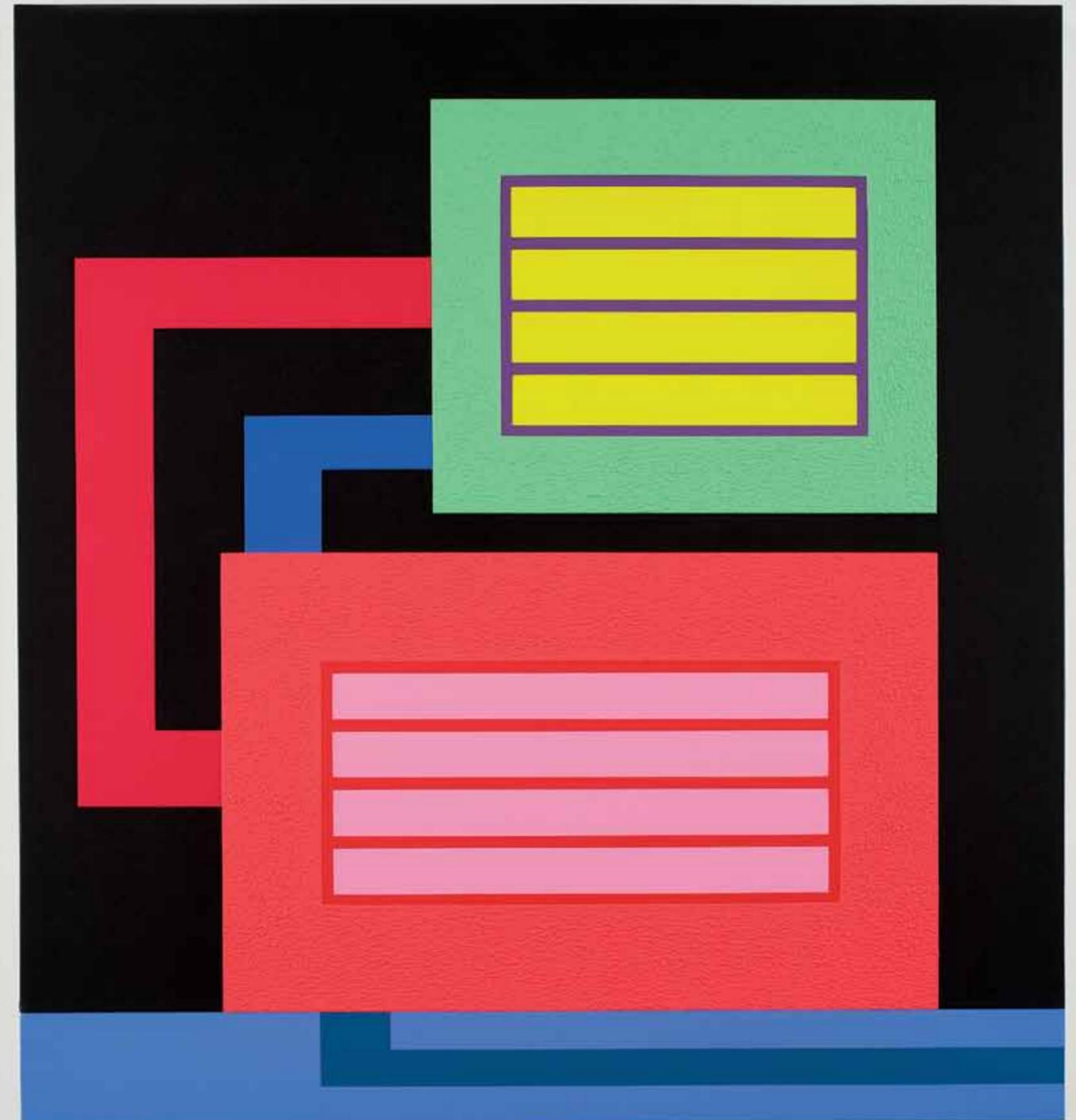
When he first came to New York, Halley had a distinct sense of isolation. That partly had to do with living alone and finding himself isolated from others. He became interested in our spatial experience and our psychological experience in society, which to him is determined by physical isolation. Being in a car or at home in front of the computer, we may be interacting with other bodies, but these are not physical, social experiences. According to Halley, our spatial experience in our society is not a free determination of how we use space, but is more-and-more governed by the social structures that have been built by others—be they streets, highways, or any other kind of transportation system. This has also been extended to our spatial experience of communication; the space of communication used to be almost identical. At the time, there were no home computers and no Internet. But Halley says that this even extends to the telephone: if you speak to somebody on the phone you are entering a spatial network very similar to our physical spatial network in which the network of determination is almost completely pre-determined.

Halley believes we spend a lot of time in isolated situations, in cars, office cubicles, time at home, etc. He adds that this is maybe less so in New York or any other city, but it is definitely the case in suburbs. This isolation seems to be in contrast to the history of the city: the city is a gathering place. That idea of the heterogeneity of the city is essential to the development of humanism. Isolated space and the idea that you communicate or connect with others, but only through predetermined networks, had become an obsession with him. In a diagrammatic way, Halley depicts how communication goes in and out of these prisons. That has become the basis of his exploration of space for the last thirty years.

Halley's work is autobiographical. The relationship between the 'cell' and the 'self' is clear, he says. In the mid-1980s there was a transformation of the space he felt he was in: it was the first time that the flow of information or communication emerged above the ground line. It was in those days that Halley heard of Jean Baudrillard and his emphasis on the hermetic self-referentiality of our social or technological situation: the way we are in fact more-and-more separated from the forces of the natural world: if we want cold air, we turn on air-conditioning; if we want to speak with someone, we often use technology rather than going to see him.

By 1993/94, Halley started drawing at the computer using Illustrator, a program that created a 'stretchy' kind of space, which allowed him to easily change the proportions of rectangles, for instance. He has compared this stretchiness with animated cartoons, like *Road Runner* that he enjoyed as a child and that showed extreme situations in space. When Road Runner pops out of a little rodent hole, gets stretched and then pops back to his original shape, it is the kind of metamorphosis of space and shape that Halley found throughout our popular culture. In fact, to him, it reflects our actual experience.

The point Peter Halley made was that he started painting during the time of the telephone monopoly and cable TV. Now, we have a fully developed Internet and with it come these entire social networks, this multi-modal access to information and to one other. In some ways, Halley thinks his paintings tend to reflect his personal experience as he goes through life: as decade follows decade, our lives become more complex and multi-connected. At the same time, he thinks that his attention to this subject also reflects the proliferation of communication, which we have seen in the last fifteen years.



## RICHARD TUTTLE

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 4 April 2009



Richard Tuttle (\* 1941 in Rahway, NJ, USA) is an artist well known for his small, subtle, intimate works. His art deals with issues of scale and the classic problems of line. Although most of Tuttle's work are three-dimensional objects, he commonly refers to his work as drawing rather than sculpture. Tuttle subverts the conventions of modernist sculptural practice by creating small, eccentrically playful objects in often humble materials such as paper, bubble-wrap, rope, string, cloth, wire, dye paint and many more. An important issue in his work is to leave the modern 'cubist' concept of space behind and try to address other dimensions. Lives in New York City.

By way of a little foreword I am going to try to read four lines of Euripides of fragment 25. I am going to attempt to read it in Greek first, so I hope there are no classic Greek scholars here.

φεῦ φεῦ, παλαιὸς αἶνος ὡς καλῶς ἔχει  
γέροντες οὐδὲν ἔσμεν ἄλλο πλὴν ψόφος  
καὶ σχῆμι', ὄνειρον δ' ἔρπομεν μμήματα  
νοῦς δ' οὐκ ἔνεστιν, οἱ ὄμεσζα δ' εὐφρονεῖν.

Aἰολος, Fr. 25

alas, alas, how well the old story holds:

we old men are nothing except noise  
and appearance. We creep along like dreams,  
thinking we alone have sense. We make no sense to others.

Aiolos, Fr. 25

People have always said, that I look like I have something to say, but they cannot understand what it is. Now, I get to blame it on being old.

The reason I was happy to be asked to speak about space is: it is a subject I know nothing about. Either you can change that, or try to fathom it. The phone just rang, my mind being on the subject of

space. The person calling had to hear things like: "dimensions are not space." But I liked saying: "my generation invented space as frame." This was just a first step, a kind of door. Now, the frame can be in another dimension. Thus, proving the dimension, while accepting, even justifying, three dimensions and constructing a bridge between it and another dimension. What seems strange is, when another dimension is grasped as space. This is probably because the grasp of that dimension is using this dimension's space definers. Part of using another dimension as the frame is, it helps you understand dimension free of space. It is outrageous that space is either measured in the world, or is held measureless in the mind, quantitatively and qualitatively. Time, of course, is the same with chronology and chronos. We go on measuring time and space, parsing part and parceling them to heart's content. Every sentence we speak has to balance qualitative and quantitative. Beauty is thought to derive from such a balance. Because quantitative issues have so dominated thought since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. And to those issues are added a predilection for concrete. Artists have been left with the issues of qualitative abstraction. This is upsetting to me, because no matter how great their very needed discoveries, they are seen as not being important research and/or development in the real world.

So, there is the space to be measured and the space not to be measured. I have usually tried to cast my mind between them. That seems uncomfortably close to immeasurable space. Perhaps, that is because I labor under a persuasion for the abstract. Piero Manzoni, for example, being persuaded for the concrete, gets more sensual. This is a condition, which allows him to say interesting things about space. Things, which seem abstract, but are not. One way I have experienced space, is while in Japan, a very two-dimensionally oriented culture. I squint, thereby reducing my habitual three-dimensional seeing down to two. The squinting flattens everything. I am talking about the interior of a coffee shop, for

example. But I cannot tell if my sense of space comes from destroying the three-dimensional, or from creating the two-dimensional. Of course, I am not interested in illusion created umpteen ways to such fanfare, though I should be, and maybe will take up the subject later on. It is the real experience of space, which haunts me, eludes me, fascinates me. It argues for all experience of the real.

I wonder what a dog thinks of space. Chucko, my dog, thinks in facts. Comfortable, or not. On the right track emotionally, or not? Is there space, or not? I am equally impressed by how careful he is, not to be stepped on and how disregarding of feet when they are in the space between him and where he wants to pee. He thus depends on my spatial judgment. He never complains, when I yank him.

In the late 80s, people needed more space. In the new increased space certain judgments became possible, the promise that a new epoch had arrived. Many people were happy for unheard-of liberties, but there was a new destructive energy unleashed. This was the repeat of a pattern, where space starts within the self. Even our understanding of an ambiguous human being is ambiguous. Perhaps that means space must be ambiguous, that real space must accommodate measured and unmeasured space. Easy to say, but ultimately, this space turns into ambiguity too, without the possibility for definition. Does one hold the very indefinable in one's mind as space? Is space something we cannot hold in the mind? Is there another entity, like mind, not just an extension, like soul or consciousness, where all things fall, where space does not have to be found, but is, like a promised land?

I once heard a behavioral psychologist talk about how the five senses reform themselves upon waking after sleep, which was supposed to prove a kind of ordering principle through self-observation emergence from darkness into light. But as a two-way path reforming as well as 'unforming', it depicts real space, not illusory. I promised myself—and us—to look at illusory space, though I normally would never look at such a thing. It is just a hunch, there is something interesting to be found. What occurred to me was, in the relation between light and illusory space, there are certainly artworks which have taken this up. For example, James Turrell's projected light cube in the corner of a darkened room. We have to consider the interchangeability of time and space. For example, in Ad Reinhardt's painting. The time you take from perceiving a black square to 'not a black square' defines a space Turrell objectifies. But Ad's space is real, in the sense his art is reality based, giving an actual experience of reality. It is the purpose of existence. To do so takes enormous love and defines existence, leaving no doubt of its existence in doing so. Still, we have nothing concrete except the frame.

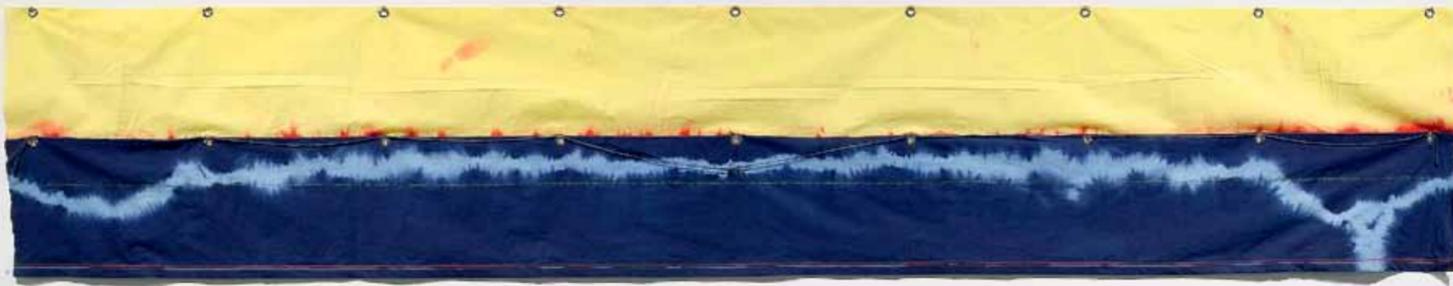
Infinity is a point extended forever. This is dimension, but could it be space? This is a question, which should be able to stand on its own two feet. But even then, it may be about dimension. Space eludes us once again. Is the very nature of space illusory? This is what Turrell's piece seems to bring, even as a relief, albeit serious, to the quagmire of picturing space as real. Ad called his squares 'absolute paintings', because the artificial illusion was replaced by the real. He himself enjoyed a reverse chronology. Also Rauschenberg cleverly always started at the end and finished at the beginning. But

these searches and researches are again linked to larger cycles. Ad had a very compelling side directed toward the Byzantine worldview, so opposite from the Western-European, which calls it corrupt. Each culture has its space. Is this illusory space as real as the culture, which can be defended until death, as many have? That seems to argue space is real. Why then is it so hard to be real? Scientists have their problems, artists have theirs. Is representation of space a problem for artists? Decidedly, yes. You could say painting tries illusionistically, so space cannot be an illusion in this sense. And sculpture must be in it, which never is quite possible. A good question would be: if we were to locate space in another dimension, would it matter? Oddly enough, I think it would. A keyword is 'matter'. I think the matter of space would extend throughout. That proves light is not illusory and cannot illuminate space. Ad was right.

So, 'matter'—forgive me for taking advantage of the easy correlation in English between the two meanings—has appeared suddenly in the space-frame. We need to go on defining, trying to define, matter. Just like we need to go on defining the human being endlessly, our health depends upon it. Always testing the current opinions with a mind toward creating new ones. Some get trapped; some get lost. Do these imperatives require space? Do they operate in what we call space? Is space then a kind of matrix? Do we enjoy having this matrix played upon? Are there borders beyond which we are offended? Is this matrix space, the same as, or a hindrance to its apprehension? What is the imperative to represent space? Is this imperative what defines the artist? One of the things? Or in which all things reside? That we are in no way perfected, though we are perfect? Can we see our inabilities in the inability to see space? Is space a mysterious whole we claim to be, but are not, and thus we are removed from it? The artist being what restores us to it, makes us honest with ourselves. Why do we hate the idea of the corrupt artist so much?

The Japanese admire cherry trees, think symbolically the flowers drop at their peak, not after, like other flowers. We should live life like this. Perhaps the flowers take on a weight at full bloom that breaks their stems. Many flowers seem to make light: daffodils, roses, and cherry blossoms. Sitting under a blossoming cherry tree, the intoxication is more about space being created before it dies in the polarities of the world. Maybe artists' space is the moment space is born. Is the space the artist wants to depict the space at the moment of birth, or some other? Can one say the moment of birth is like all things *a priori*? Then, is the space, which can be measured or not, *a posteriori*? Is the space we want between, is that just a concept, a word, not outside? Can space be put into a word like this? Can only a philosopher or philologist examine this kind of space? Does it have some unique capacity for depiction? Is it a space only seen in art? Do we reach it through the *a priori* portal, thus the somewhat mystical position of art? Why art is a language, for example? Why it has rules? Why would we be asked to speak about space? The only space you can speak about comes from and takes along with it *a posteriori* space. Therefore it sounds very intelligent to speak about it, but you never know what space you are talking about and forget the vehicle is language, so you are really saying nothing about, well, space.

The same could be said of time. Certainly there could be no art coming from the equal. To be asked to speak about space is therefore to



ask you to make a fool of yourself. On the other hand an actual place in the mind for the meaning it holds, for space, is a whole other thing. If you look at almost any work of mine you see this space. This is a space actually in the world, it is of/in art. How we make this space could be the subject of a symposium directed toward each artist's very practice. It is very lonely work for the artist, for the world-space is hostile and extreme individualism is backward. This space is dimensionless and permanent, not personal, arbitrary. Achieving it is like achieving art. You can feel it, whether it has ever been achieved in a city's culture, for example. You can feel if it has died, is living, or if it is needed. Ordinarily, space is not something you look over. But the space of art is easily recognized by this. This space might be represented by the frame, holding experience inside, creating another space. This space has no words in it. A space with no place for words is unthinkable. Filled with pictures. We like this space because it is the only full embodiment possible within a tradition of word, deity and origin. So, satisfactorily enhanced through genius. Jan van Eyck always used words in his framing. In fact, the creation of the world could be the creation of space. The word: this is the deity.

When have I ever experienced space? Never. Normally I go through space on the way to the mailbox, as in a soup of air and light. An invisible soup, something which defines 'invisible'. When something takes up space, it becomes visible. I can experience the visible, not the invisible, unless mystical through the visionary, or as illusion. Is space an abstract concept? How do we know an abstract concept? By building a space around it? So, if the space is the abstract concept, we build a space around a space and that is what we call 'space', even projecting it into the universe? We do not like to think that we cannot experience the real, but when you give up the false claim of knowing the real, you can experience the real through art.

Certain artists give space. Tony Smith brought home an Agnes Martin painting. His young daughter said: "that's not painting, that's

space." So, are we asking ourselves: what is space? The way the world sees it, or the way art sees it? How can you talk about space the way art sees it? You cannot. Piero Manzoni, Yves Klein and Lucio Fontana are artists who have focused on space, you could say in opposition to time. Their work can be spoken of. The famous Yves Klein Blue, nothing but ultramarine, becomes art as space. Fontana's compositions over and over reveal space and are usually titled 'Spazio' this or that. I always liked them, so hungry for space am I. But what is it, I feel about this space? Usually, I feel good, unburdened, expansive, as if this abstract concept has become real, not tortured that the mind has gone outside the body. Real space has been conjoined with the space in experience. Color is part of this; color has been conjoined through the process. Abstract concepts lack color, are colorless. Space also is colorless, therefore cannot be experienced by itself. What then is the relation of color to art? Why will man never dominate art, his own invention? Why do Manzoni, Fontana and Klein always come with the message of hope? Is the decline of hope always associated with the decline of art's ability to make space real? The surefire acceptance we can experience space in life?

These three artists were particularly vulnerable to the loss of hope. Have Mediterraneans, their mythology, always created hope from the concrete? Fontana is suggesting he made the leap from the spatial to the concrete, or vice versa through art. He was so hopeful and excited with this discovery, for he could say it in words. One quality of space is that it is 'concrete' in the sense of real, a discovery he made through art, that meant art was real, too. On this side of the Atlantic, time had to be abstract. It was too much to say that time was real, too. But it was great to say time was not real, something which was definitively not abstract, opening space for all.

My apprehensions of ordinary space coincide with the development of human history through the great discoveries of inductive and deductive reasoning. But my apprehension of non-ordinary

space is still more meaningful, helpful, affecting and truthful. I have struggled to unify what is not remembered in ordinary space with what seems like the same in non-ordinary space and in memory. Thank you. Thank you for the chance to say that. It's a confession.

*Peter Lodermeyer: Thank you very much, Richard, for this really profound text. I like your confession that space is a subject you know nothing about. Yesterday, I made a somewhat similar confession and talked about 'the unknown space'. In order to start a discussion it would perhaps be helpful to talk about your current show Walking on Air at Pace Wildenstein gallery. I think that most people here have seen it. So, I would like to ask you how you dealt with the space, that impressive, strong gallery space, in terms of it being a frame for your work.*

Richard Tuttle: The space of the gallery as a frame? I think one of the major themes in this show is the notion that ambiguity is not a bad thing, but a good thing. Each piece has three different thematic levels. The content of each piece is supported in three different ways, which is one way more than is normally asked to support an argument. Peter, what you said interested me, because of some of the things I was saying here about dimension. I mean, physicists are now telling us there are eleven dimensions. So, how can we extend to a dimension outside the three dimensions? I feel, in these new pieces, that the framing as such is actually done in another dimension.

I love that. When Jan van Eyck built the picture plane that most of us use in our daily lives, he would always include words on his frame. I do not know why artists have forgotten that, because these certain kinds of spaces can only be said in language. In Van Eyck's case, he is giving you a message that is ambiguous too, because he is either using the frame to exclude the language, the word, the kind of space that is in a word from the central area. In my talk, I say that space then becomes a place for a picture. Or conversely, you could say that

he is holding in the frame as functioning, as coming from the external world, which is not involved with that kind of space.

I feel the pieces in the show are in a direct lineage from Van Eyck, because the word, of which we always undervalue the importance, is a passage or a linkage to a dimension that can be used in framing. I have made a lot of works, which are trying to see what it would look like if you could look beyond the three dimensions, which I consider very limiting. But in this case, it also says why we have the possibility to be happy in the three dimensions that are primarily operative for us.

Back to the answer: The ambiguity in the framing is that the pieces themselves are framed, as it were, from the viewpoint of another dimension, as well as they are framed by the gallery space. A very intelligent friend of mine said that we are still in a cubist period. If you look at a little photograph from a cubist period, you see that cubist art leaves the wall and goes out to the viewer, through the space of the gallery and everything. You become cubistic, the space becomes cubistic, the painting becomes cubistic. And that is really great, that is a wonderful, wonderful feeling.

But as time has gone on, the cubist pictures have gone back to the wall and just sort of sit there. I mean, just as the way this room is set up and all of us being here, we are very much in cubistic types of interrelationships. I am tired of living in a cubistic world, but lo and behold, that turns out to be the linkage between these ambiguities, which are as extreme as you could be. On the one hand, you get an intense argument for the access to another dimension, and then you get its opposite, where fundamentals are clearly built within the three dimensions of a typical gallery space. A lot of people have problems with the white cube. It is something that allows the artist to play a social role, which normally does not exist for them because they are alienated.

## KEITH SONNIER

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 4 April 2009



*Keith Sonnier (\* 1941 in Mamou, Louisiana, USA) is one of the first artists who worked with light as a sculptural material. In the late 1960s he started experimenting with the combination of incandescent light fixtures or neon tubes with all kinds of objects to explore the diffusion of light through various materials and the surrounding architectural space. Sonnier's material and process based work encompasses a large range of media including performance and film (in the 1970s). His largest and most seen work is the more than 1.2 kilometer-long light installation (0.77 miles) at the Munich airport (Germany) from 1992. He lives in New York City.*

I usually talk about space when I talk about my work. I have always dealt with space, but being invited to participate in this 'Space Symposium' prompted me to make divisions in the different periods of my work and how I thought about space and how I used it in each period of my work.

I use space constantly. Every artist does. When I first made objects, I dealt with the space in between things. The first objects were based on the five senses: on how something felt, or looked, even on how something smelled. I began to notice that there were all these different associations that came up when making the early pieces. In the end the most intriguing thing about the sculptures was that they became about the space in between, and what actually happened when you physically got inside the piece and how the body actually felt being there. I began to conceive the works by focusing on how a person would move within the space created by the artwork. This was the start of my interest in how work was actually made in relationship to space. The floor-to-wall relationships within space became important to the design of the work as did the architectural confines of the space the work would eventually occupy. In defining a given space, the relationship of the floor to the wall replaced the traditional sculptural base, or plinth, as a support. You have to realize that, at that time, I was making sculpture in which the base had been left behind. We didn't use it anymore because of the influence of Carl Andre and Smithson. Even Brancusi, in his towers and columns, the support is integral. This

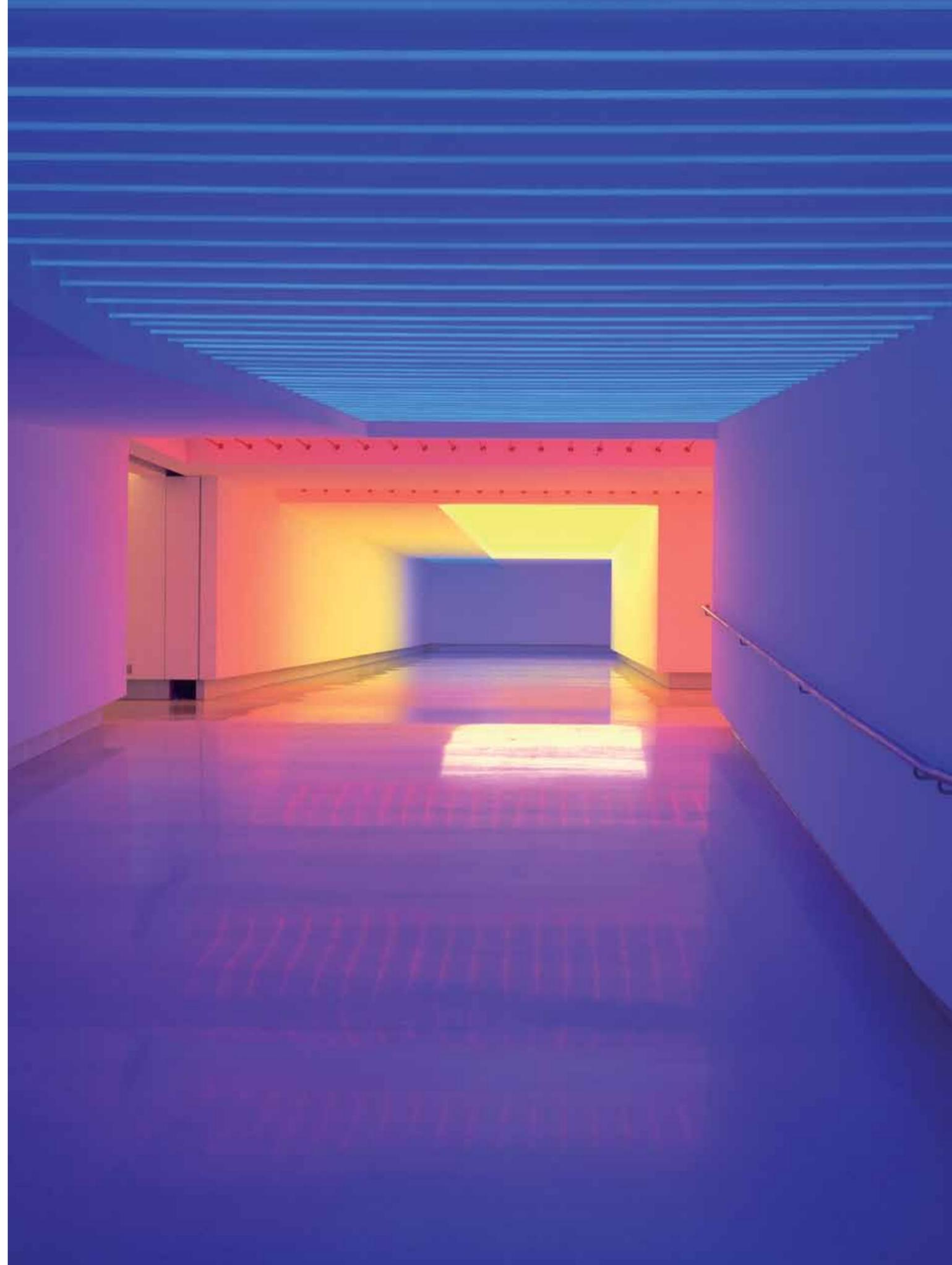
approach to sculpture without the need for a traditional support altered the spatial possibilities in ways that were very important in influencing how I thought about making sculpture.

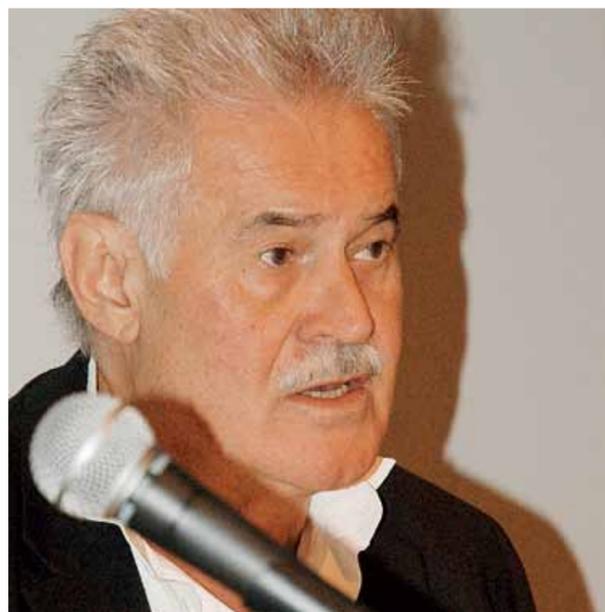
In order to develop this floor-wall-relationship further, my rubber and latex pieces attempted to open up the frame of the space. They not only used the architectural support of the wall and the floor, but created an illusion whereby you feel you can physically enter the wall: you can go into the space created by pulling something away (the latex) and move into the void created by having done this. It's very much what happens in cinematic space: the camera opens up the frame and moves into the space itself.

I began to introduce light into the idea of the 'space-in-between'. Before, all the pieces were based on touch, or different kinds of tangible principles, but not so much light and only infrequently sequenced light. In particular I'm thinking about a series of pieces called *In Between*, where I stood in front of the piece and watched the lights on either side of the sculpture blink on and off and somehow this seemed important in the creation of a sense of another spatial dimension. It was this weird kind of psychological thing where I could sense that I could somehow go into the wall. It was very romantic in that way too. This series of work introduced transparency by actually allowing you to see through space. By leaning the work on the wall and by using the architectural support of the wall, I could physically move into it. I was beginning to use the camera a lot at this point too, so I could photograph being inside the sculpture.

Somehow the light, the reflection, the physical being of the person in the sculpture—and the fact that one could physically move through the art—became increasingly important to me. I began to embrace light, at first it was incandescent light, in a very intense way. But it wasn't until I started using neon, which is a 'gas' generated light, that the effect of the color became much more intensified. The psychological affect of color and how it altered space became very interesting to me. These early glass and neon pieces from the sixties provided the groundwork for all the architectural installations that were later done on a much larger scale as public commissions.

I had a sculpture installed in my studio for a while and it evolved into the beginnings of a set that was used to make a tentative





body of video work. The sculpture was called *Mirror Act* and it was made from two parallel mirrors: one on one wall, and one on the other. In the space that was created by the placement of these two mirrors, I did at least ten years of video work. *Mirror Act* was the set for the early simple television narrative pieces that were done in what I came to refer to as an 'infinity channel'. The two mirrors facing each other began to create a different kind of space (like a channel) and a much more complex kind of space for me to work within. Before, I could stand in front of the work and somehow attempt to move into it, but now with these mirror pieces, I could literally be in the sculpture and see both my front and my back. It was this front and back sort of working idea that began to alter my thinking about using light and working within architectural space. When I stood in the sculpture and the mirrors allowed me to open up the frame so to speak, I could begin to set up a different kind of dimension. As I mentioned before, I could see the front and the back, the top and the bottom of the space, I could move into space in its entirety. I could literally go into it and feel all its dimensions. These ideas were very important to me and led to the video works which in turn led to a whole new way of approaching the architectural work that would come later.

These works allowed me to think about another type of space: deep space. What was beyond this concept of the enclosed space? I thought about space in terms of being literally immersed in the space. In a way it was this research into the concept of deep space that led to a series of sound works. I began experimenting with radio waves, sound waves, different types of radio signals, and wrote radio plays for theater people. I began to bug telephones. I did interactive sound pieces, where one space was connected and amplified and bugged to another space, which in turn was amplified and bugged back across the country. So, say you were in the Los Angeles space, your voice would be in New York.

You could feel these people were enclosed in a confined space, but there was also this sense of the sound traveling through the expansive space between.

After the sound pieces, I tried to make this same sort of transmission happen visually. After several years of research, I formed a bogus kind of company called the "Send/Receive Satellite Network" with Liza Béar. We made propaganda tapes to convince NASA that we had to be allowed the use of a satellite. It was hilarious. For me, this opened up a political arena: going to Washington and dealing with NASA, presenting these ideas and why we had to actually use the satellite and what it was going to cost. The first tapes were all propaganda. I went to four blast-offs. The first one I went to was at Cape Canaveral and it was hilarious. A big bus took us to the site and there were all these people there, Indian Chiefs from the West, businessmen and others who wanted to invest in the project. In the end we were allowed to use the satellite that I actually saw go up—it was a CTS satellite, a low flying one. We convinced NASA to loan us a satellite truck. We did a weekend of interactive connection, with actors, musicians and artists in downtown New York City.

In the 80's, the art world reverted back to normal, with paintings and lots of bronze sculptures. I had to reinvent myself once again, because I realized that if I were to continue to make art and have some sort of interest in space, I would have to try and work in other directions. I went back to the early work, and from there to a series of works that dealt with the environmental use of space; how one physically moves through space.

Fluorescent Room was made in Eindhoven, in the Netherlands. It was completely lit with fluorescent powder. It was like a wild abstract disco. The piece was extremely successful and being inside it felt like being in a kind of lunar landscape: it felt like you were moving in deep space in a controlled abstract environment. It brought to mind

some of the early works where I felt I could enter the space, where I could "move" through the mirrored glass. This led to a totally renewed embracing of the architectural element and a new understanding of what contemporary architecture is really about. The recent current trends towards what I refer to as 'skin' architecture has really changed the traditional notion of architecture.

Being an artist, one continues to make art no matter how absurd one's investigations might have become. I made a lot of drawings and a lot of sculptures, and I began to use the kind of objects that I was seeing and reading about. I made a series called *Antenna* as I'd become interested in what sound waves actually looked like. I did a lot of research in sound: how one might actually draw sound, and how one might draw sound and space and those kinds of phenomena.

There was a series of inflatable pieces that I did very early on and that began to re-enter the work. I got interested in atomic bombs and what happens to a space when a bomb goes off: the impact, the explosion and the implosion.

After this body of work I started working with the idea of architectural space and how a pedestrian—I think of the viewer as a pedestrian in these circumstances—might negotiate and move through the space to experience the art. I did airports for a while, lots of them. Now I am working on a type of space that is a totally natural type of space. I am doing work in a cave and am trying to deal with space in its most primitive sense. The piece is in Japan and is an old abandoned quarry. I learned a lot about space from doing the architectural work.

I had such a strong background in color, but began to think about color as being able to create a volume within architectural space. It made designing the pieces a lot more interesting and challenging to me. It led to some huge commission works.

#### Questions

*Karlynn De Jongh: Your light installations are partly material objects and partly light. The light seems to go beyond the material space of the object. How do these 'two' aspects relate to one another?*

Keith Sonnier: Sometimes objects can transmit or project light. In the larger sculptural works that are not environmental, but are more architectural in nature, light can be perceived as a volume that one could physically move through. In the floor-to-wall works, especially the works that deal with projection or reflection (mirrors), one can move into the pictorial space and in doing so, one becomes aware of the parameters of the space.

*KDJ: How does the physicality of the viewer relate to the seemingly not so physical light?*

KS: One has to consider the psychological aspects of light... take the moon for instance... it affects us all; it affects the tides; it affects the world. Light on the surface of the body affects the mind.

*KDJ: In your symposium text you spoke about moving through a space. And that you see the viewer as a pedestrian, someone that moves through space. Do you see this moving as a bodily action? Or is it something intellectual as well? How do you understand the encounter the viewer has with your work?*

KS: I have always approached work with a somewhat 'situational' condition in mind: one moves into the work; one moves out of the work; one moves past the work. The sculptural conditions of space are very different now as we no longer think of sculpture as merely an object on a pedestal.

*KDJ: To be able to move through space, it seems the space needs to be of a certain size. How important are size and scale for you?*



KS: One can think of space as a microcosm or a macrocosm... in the sense that it is either small and you look into it, or it is big and it encompasses you. And then of course there is infinity.

*Question from the audience: Do you consider color a material in the architectural sense?*

Keith Sonnier: Yes, pretty much. At the beginning a lot of architects didn't; they were very pissed. But that changed a lot and I have great working relationships with architects now. Even if it is just white light it still has a tremendous amount of volume. The new architecture is 'skin' architecture: transparent and translucent. It provides a kind of lit volume within space.

*Question from the audience: Your early neon lights date back to the early sixties. That is about the same date as Dan Flavin, isn't it? Are you influenced by him?*

KS: I am ten years younger than Flavin. Flavin was never really forthcoming. I referred to Flavin as *prêtre manqué* and he referred to the artists of my generation as Dada Homosexuals. But we did get along, even though he was hard to talk to. I was friendlier with Donald Judd. Flavin is a great artist but he's from a different generation, a different outlook. The Minimalist artists were not very established and so they really had trouble accepting us. I feel I have more in common with Rauschenberg. But I am interested in lots of different kinds of art and lots of different artists.

*Question from the audience: You seem to be a very interdisciplinary artist. I feel that in contemporary art nowadays, there is not so much interdisciplinary work being made. How do you see this development?*

KS: I think you are right. The art world is going to change a lot with this recession. Everybody has been interested in what I call 'art on the hoof': let's get it sold, let's get it merchandized, and let's get it bought. My generation wasn't so interested in that. I was amazed whenever anything was sold. I am very happy that I've sold work. But I think that in order to interact with something, you have to devote some time to it. It is about personal endeavor and personal research. I am glad Mr. Tuttle has time to study his Sanskrit. I think that this kind of thing is very important. Artists are supposed to do that. Artists are supposed to delve within many different levels of the culture. Our job is to acculturate society. We need art in order to live.

The art world has become a very big machine now; we might have to readdress what it does for the culture and why we need it. In America it became very much equated with economic value. Before the last twenty years this didn't apply so much. We are a global art world now which I think is a very important and interesting development. One must have a world view!