REPLAY

Austrian Cultural Forum
New York
May 4 – Sept 5, 2016

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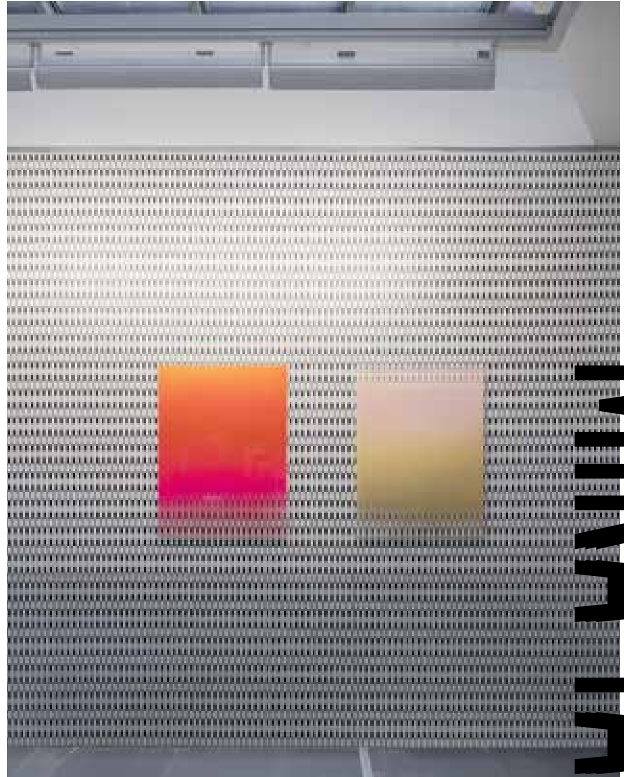

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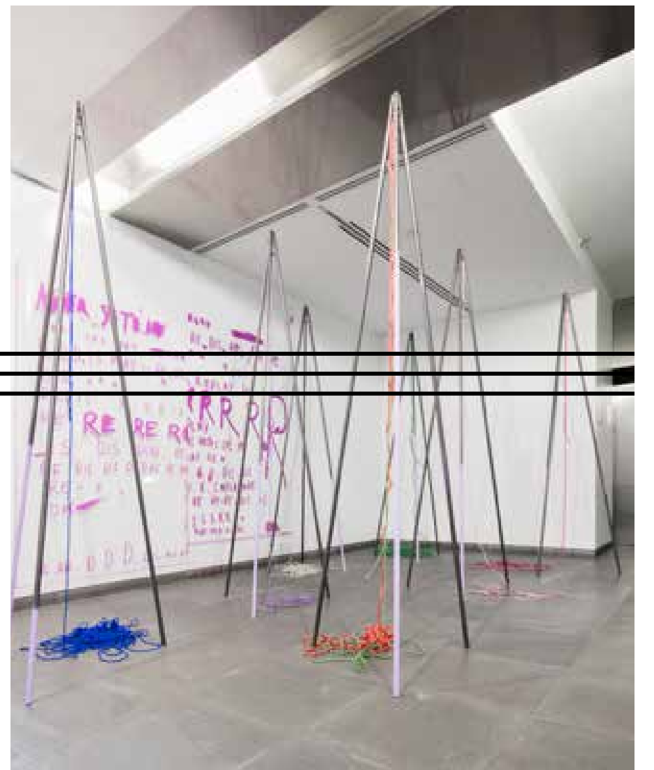
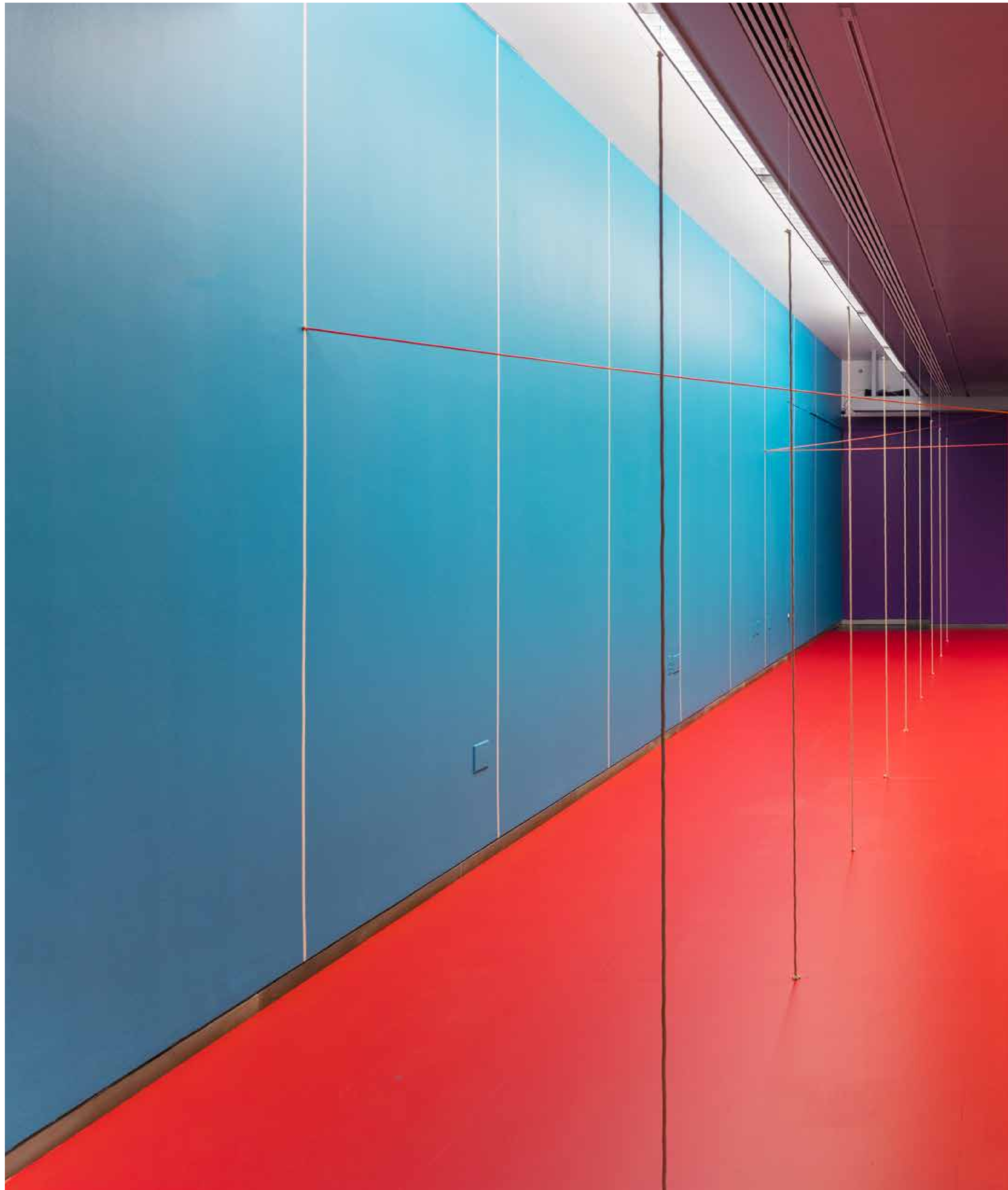


HERMES PAYRHUBER



DIS-PLAY / RE-PLAY

Austrian Cultural Forum
New York
May 4 – Sept 5, 2016

Artists:
Judith Barry
Martin Beck
Brian O'Doherty
Hermes Payrhuber
Gerwald Rockenschaub
Mika Tajima

Curators:
Prem Krishnamurthy
Walter Seidl

Photography:
Naho Kubota

Design:
Project Projects

Director, ACFNY:
Christine Moser

Exhibition Coordinator:
Natascha Boojar

Director's Foreword
Christine Moser

In 1992, East Tyrol-born world citizen Raimund Abraham won first prize in the architectural-design competition for the new Austrian Cultural Forum building in New York. The jury was set up of international architectural icons including Richard Meier, Charles Gwathmey, and Kenneth Frampton.

In 2002, the groundbreaking building opened to great international acclaim. Kenneth Frampton called the new building "the most powerful piece of architecture to be realized in Manhattan since the Seagram Building and the Guggenheim Museum."[1] Mayor Michael Bloomberg officially declared April 18 the Day of the International Cultural Forum.

Inside, the architectural sculpture contains a gallery on five levels, a library on two floors, seminar and reception rooms, and offices and apartments. To quote Frampton once more, "The ACF is a twenty-five-feet-wide pencil point tour de force, which makes it a kind of compressed microcosm, or even, at a stretch, a city in miniature. It remains a demonstration of the fact that if a true professional intelligence is present and the vision is strong enough, an idea can be carried through with integrity to a fertile result, despite all the dimensional restrictions and the programmatic congestion."[2]

For the artists and curators of the three visual art exhibits per year, the gallery space is a challenge to their vision and creativity—a challenge that, when met, holds big rewards. Over the years, the gallery has been home to many impressive artistic answers and statements. This certainly holds true of the current show, *DIS-PLAY/RE-PLAY*, where Judith Barry, Martin Beck, Brian O'Doherty—author of "Inside the White Cube"—Hermes Payrhuber, Gerwald Rockenschaub, and Mika Tajima, as well as curators Prem Krishnamurthy and Walter Seidl, have created a mutually reinforcing dynamic and ambience between the works of art and the showrooms. My sincere gratitude goes to the accomplished artists and curators for coming up with this spectacular show and *Gesamtkunstwerk*!

In 2017, we will celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the landmark building and of the institution as a hotspot of contemporary creativity in New York and across the US. On this occasion, it will become once more apparent that the "Inner and Outer Life," the contemporary and innovative programming as well as the radical boldness of its external appearance, work hand in hand, as intended.

Raimund Abraham, Austrian Cultural Forum New York building. Photo: David Plakke

1 Andres Lepik, Andreas Stadler, and Peter Engelmann. *Raimund Abraham & the Austrian Cultural Forum New York* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 108.
2 Ibid., 110.

MARTIN BECK

Strategy Notebook, 2015
HD video
5:24 minutes, looped

one day after another, 2014–15
18 pigment prints
11 × 8.5 inches each

Martin Beck's exhibitions and projects engage with questions of historicity, authorship, and display. Drawing from the fields of architecture, design, and music, his works often explore past precedents and archives of exhibition and communication formats, while negotiating the role of display as a precondition for image making. For his work at the ACFNY, Beck inhabits the building entrance with a Muzak-like soundtrack and single-channel video that evoke the experience of a corporate midtown office lobby, while also softening and humanizing the building's interior sensibility to create a more welcoming space. Reconnecting this entrance with the top floor of the gallery through the partial removal of an exhibition wall, Beck presents here an installation from his PDF "notebooks," which lend insight into a rich and associative exhibition-making process, intertwining analytic and personal reflection alike.

r/w/r(oe), 2016
three plexiglass plates, screws
4 × 8 feet each

Gerwald Rockenschaub's work is shaped by analytic thought and the self-imposed reduction to a limited palette of central elements and structures. His spatial installations in the Austrian Pavilion at the Venice Biennial in 1993 and mumok Vienna in 2005 can be understood as minimalist objects on the one hand, while at the same time they refer critically to the conditions of exhibiting contemporary art in the white cube. Rockenschaub works directly with the architecture of varied exhibition spaces to expose or invert the relationship between beholder, artwork, and the space, so that visitors themselves become an aesthetic component of the installation. For the exhibition at the ACFNY, Rockenschaub intervenes in the lobby with an angled plexiglass composition mimicking the colors of the Austrian flag. The letters of the title stand for the colors red/white/red, while the country's first letter in German, *ö* or *oe*, is indicated in parentheses. With this sly take, the artist simultaneously plays off of the building's identity by employing its native monochromatic elements in order to create visual disruption.

GERWALD ROCKENSCHAUB

The Exhibition and the Display, 2009/2011

Martin Beck

When discussing the "exhibition," I presume that most of us have a certain idea of what constitutes an exhibition. The same might be true of the term "display." But I am quite convinced that ideas of what "display" refers to vary much more than those about exhibition.

I will try to address this discrepancy by taking a closer look at the terms themselves, specifically at their evolution in the postwar period, when the exhibition was a key medium for mass communication. Today, exhibition—and, even more so, display—have become not only art-world but household terms.

In present-day dictionaries, definitions for the term "exhibition" are fairly similar, but the entries for "display" diverge dramatically. Depending on context, the meaning of "display" ranges from a performance to a device for the visual presentation of data, from an animal's mating habit to a computer monitor. In the field of art, display is consistently mixed up with the exhibition and the process of exhibiting. The terms are often blurred, which produces a little of a muddle, specifically when asking how "display" differs from "exhibition."

But instead of a clarification I will produce a little more confusion; confusion with the paradoxical purpose of getting closer to distinguishing the two terms, however provisional those might be.

I want to begin with two contradictory assumptions: The exhibition is an obsolete format of communication. The exhibition is everywhere.

Let's start with the latter. Over the last decade, academic institutions across North America and Europe established numerous graduate and postgraduate programs that focus on exhibiting and display as a new research topic and as a field of professionalization. Some of these (mostly curatorial) programs developed by slowly shifting their curricular parameters from a (sometimes) administrative understanding of curating to the production and research of exhibitions. Other such programs were rooted in industrial or architectural contexts. In both instances, the discourse about curating and the claim for design were replaced by a rhetoric of the exhibition and the display.

By way of conferences, publications, and actual exhibitions, this new rhetoric became manifest in the field of contemporary art; a rhetoric whose field of reference had long been just a subchapter of art history, an issue for marketing experts, or a topic for a handful of artist nerds. The rapid proliferation of this "new" exhibition discourse twisted modernity's emancipatory drive, the formats of what defines publicness, and the visual splendor of corporate art institutions into a discursive tangle that is almost impossible to straighten out. As is the case with tangles, numerous lines of thought were short-circuited in the process, the result being that a specific discussion of the conditions and ramifications of concepts and practices of exhibiting and display became increasingly difficult. The exhibition and the display exploded into the public debate, and the two terms' omnipresence diminished the chances of using them other than rhetorically.

That is why a clarification and differentiation of the terms might become crucial. It is through the process of disentanglement that the potential and productiveness buried in their terminology might be activated; it is from here that the intertwined threads might be transformed into effective routes of action.

Now, back to the first assumption: that the exhibition is an obsolete format. The exhibition is a genuinely modern form of communication, developed during the second half of the nineteenth century as an experiential and visual system capable of addressing large audiences. Ambitious national presentations staged in spectacular, purpose-built environments, representation of the work of artists in the form of Salons and counter-Salons, and product displays in vitrines and shopwindows were only some of the formats negotiated by early exhibitions. They allowed for information to be distributed, visual arguments to be staged, and audiences to be seduced. The exhibition was one of the primary sites for experimenting with mass communication, and, in the early twentieth century, experimentation with display strategies became one of the testing grounds for modern art.

Although the art and museum sector was the main field in which new forms of looking and relating to visual culture were developed in the first half of the century, from the mid-1950s onward trade fairs, commercial advertising, and corporate and government exhibits increasingly became the sites where new exhibition formats and techniques were tested. The main separation that emerged between artistic and nonartistic forms of exhibiting was manifested in the way they each considered and addressed the notion of display. Forms of display regulated—through their visibility or invisibility—the political and economic status of what was exhibited, as well as how a viewer was positioned.

But what exhibitions are we thinking of, and what do we mean by "obsolescence"? Here are three descriptions from this period in which exhibiting and the idea of an emancipatory utopia might have been closest, a time when the exhibition was a primary instrument of public speech. In one of the first significant books on the subject of the exhibition, titled *New Design in Exhibitions*, the Swiss artist and graphic designer Richard Paul Lohse wrote in 1953:

> In their essence, exhibitions are an expression and a play of forces that embrace a variety of cultural, economic and political trends; they are barometers indicative of a situation, or the profession of a mission; pioneers for a coming evolution. Exhibiting means evaluating …
>
> An exhibition is an ideal medium for influencing the public. … [T]he problem of exhibiting assumes a cultural and social aspect in the widest sense of the word.
>
> The realization of a cultural and social idea constitutes the most important objective of the art of exhibiting.[1]

In the introduction to his book *Exhibitions*, which was simultaneously published in Stuttgart and New York, the German designer Klaus Franck wrote in 1961:

> To exhibit means to choose, to display, to present a sample or an example. The imparting of information is the aim of every exhibition, and such information may be of a didactic, commercial or representational nature. Aimed at man as a consumer of products and ideas, an exhibit is meant to teach, to advertise and to represent—to influence a person. An exhibition differs from all other media of communications, because it alone can simultaneously transmit information visually, acoustically and by touch.
>
> Effectiveness is the main criterion of every exhibit … a plan must underlie the solutions of the problems arising out of the economic, physiological and psychological requirements of the individual exhibition.[2]

A few years later, Hans Neuburg, a Swiss graphic artist and exhibition designer, tries to follow up on Lohse's and Franck's publications. He writes himself into this history but questions it at the same time. In his 1969 book, *Conceptions of International Exhibitions*, he writes:

> We do not need to lose many words explaining what an exhibition is and the functions which it exercises. To exhibit means to expose, to show, demonstrate, inform, offer. In either an enclosed or open space some topic is shown or objects are presented in such a way that their specific qualities can be comprehended. It is, of course, clear that this should be done as instructively as possible.
>
> One thing is certain: exhibiting is and remains exhibiting. It is all the same whether it is permanent or temporary, dismountable or peripatetic.[3]

Interestingly, Neuburg's English translation drops the last sentence of his explanation: the German and French versions conclude with an almost melancholy *punctum* that translates as "Will the exhibition survive or has it already had its days?" Lohse's, Franck's, and Neuburg's books are among the most prominent publications on the subject of the exhibition in the postwar years. They reference each other, are visually and methodically connected, but also set distinctive

priorities. Lohse begins his book with a history of the exhibition by indexing significant exhibitions since the mid-nineteenth century; Franck creates a rulebook by laying out the creative possibilities of exhibition-making in a systematic way; Neuburg refers closely to the two protagonists but positions himself as a pragmatist who offers structural guidelines as he navigates the blurry contours of different exhibition genres. Lohse and Franck are explicit about the selective nature of the exhibition as well as the role of the viewer within a curated environment. They both are unafraid to address the complex relationship between the exhibition and the audience, one that is negotiated through judgment and manipulation. They consider the relation to be one of power as well as responsibility and to be at the heart of exhibition-making. In both books, this structural dimension comes forth as emblematic for the modern exhibition. Those modern exhibitions tried to inform and persuade, to enlighten and direct; they were liberating and selling at the same time. Not surprisingly, at the moment when the exhibition becomes the agent of emancipation it succumbs to the logic of control—on the level of its form and in the way it constitutes the viewer. The modern exhibition is the gridded exhibition. The emancipated spectator is the controlled consumer.

What is surprising about the above descriptions is that Lohse and Neuburg raise the question of longevity in relation to the exhibition: they ask not about a longevity of specific exhibitions but about the long-term relevance of the format. It seems that the exhibition euphoria reflected in their books is tied to a skepticism that results from the fragility of its basic condition: the exhibition is a temporary format and as such differs dramatically from the material conditions of an artwork of the time. The emancipatory potential assigned to the exhibition is by definition itinerant, ephemeral, and subject to continuous contestation.

As Lohse puts it: "The history of exhibitions is a history of politics, and no less of the changes which have taken place in the foundations of our social structure."[4]

What is furthermore notable is that not only does Neuburg address the term "display," but he does so almost in an afterthought. This most likely has to do with language—Lohse, Franck, and Neuburg are German-speaking authors, and "display" is an English-language term—but it also points to a genealogy of the term that is contextually and geographically specific.

Neuburg's book was published in 1969 and was able to take into account the fundamental transformations of the advertising industry in that period and how those changes affected the exhibition. Neuburg introduces display as a new exhibition category and positions it after his other major categories, which match those in Lohse's and Frank's books: that is the representative, the informative, and the commercial exhibition. He talks about display as "a modern type of three-dimensional tangible offer, e.g. shop-windows decorated according to a scheme, using dummies and also stands in shops placed on the counters."[5] Neuburg mentions the English usage of the term, but instead of a definition he cites the entry in the publisher Langenscheidt's German dictionary of the time. There, "display" is translated as *Entfaltung*, *Aufwand*, *Schaustellung*, *Schaufenster-Anlage*, which he then translates back as "exposition, show, exhibition, window-dressing." Neuburg's categorization assigns display only a handful of text and image pages, whereas the page counts for the other categories are in the dozens. He justifies his brevity by lack of qualified examples: "Good display solutions are rather few and far between until now because there are still only relatively few designers that have occupied themselves in this field."[6] He speculates that this may have to do with display's affinity with the advertising industry, from which, in his assessment, sound commentators keep their distance.

Not surprisingly, the North American perspective presents itself rather differently. In the United States, display is not a question of good design, nor are advertising techniques considered unworthy for an artist. From early on, display is an integral part of the modern exhibition discourse. In 1953, concurrent with Lohse's book, George Nelson published his book *Display* in the Whitney Interiors Library, for which Nelson was a series editor.[7] His other books, *Living Spaces*, *Chairs*, and *Storage*, were also part of the series and formatted along the same parameters. *Display* is a coffee-table book that introduces a large selection of exhibition examples, including exhibit designs done by Nelson for the Museum of Modern Art, as well as other venues.

The loose structure of Nelson's book attempts a genre- and category-bending approach to the exhibition issue, which is also reflected in the playfully optimistic layout, typical of American graphic design of the postwar period. Visually and conceptually, the book is in stark contrast to the thoroughness and rigidity that mark the European books. A short introduction is immediately followed by numerous exhibition examples that are annotated with place, designer, and materials only. Part of the introduction is a definition of the term "display":

> The word display comes from a Latin root which means to unfold or to spread out. As used by us, in a variety of situations, it always conveys the idea of calling someone's attention to something by showing it in a conspicuous way. … The plumage of the male bird and the antics of the fighting fish are "display." So are the illuminated letters in a mediaeval manuscript.
>
> The purposes of display are many, although the essential procedures always involve attracting attention. The object of display may be to attract a member of the opposite sex; to establish identity … ; to indicate social position … ; to convey information … [a]nd to attract customers. The great bulk of display, in this unromantic age of ours, is designed to persuade someone to buy something he may or may not need or want.[8]

Several issues are foregrounded here and seem essential to the understanding of display in its relationship to the exhibition: display is not an object or a device, as it is positioned in the German-speaking discourse. It is, rather, an activity, and the explicit purpose of display is not support but seduction: display is an active operation rooted in a biological behaviorism. Despite the possibility of using the term as a noun, "display" is presented here as a verb. This slight grammatical differentiation makes manifest a discursive operation that—by focusing on one instead of the other—can produce display as either a static or a dynamic category: "the display" or "to display." This might explain why, despite their difference, the terms "exhibition" and "display" continually cause confusion: both are part of a discourse that constitutes itself through the tension that emerges from the grammatical conflation of "display"'s double meaning: *the display*, *to display*. The exhibition is, despite its ephemeral and potentially itinerant status, a static format. In contrast, display emerges from this admittedly behaviorist definition as an operation that can consequently be understood as a method; a method used to generate form within the exhibition.

This distinction certainly is fragile and might not hold up from every perspective. But it may help us to differentiate between exhibition and display, between format and form production. It may help slightly to loosen up the knot in which the exhibition and the display are conflated and entangled.

Written in German in 2009, this text was translated and presented in December 2011 as a lecture at Ludlow 38, the Goethe Institut's contemporary art space in New York City.

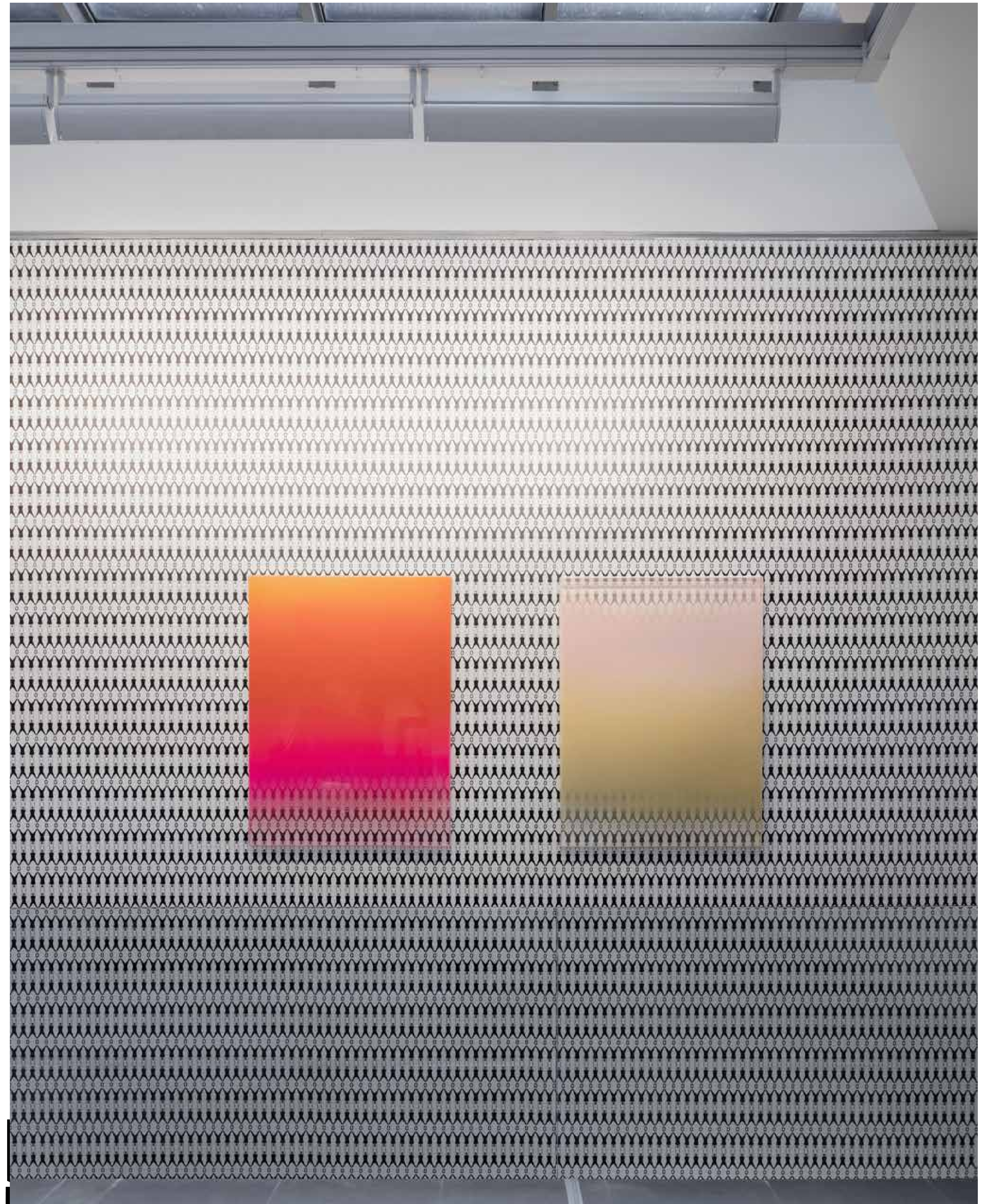
1 Richard Paul Lohse, *Neue Ausstellungsgestaltung/Nouvelles conception de l'exposition/New Design in Exhibitions* (Erlenbach: Verlag für Architektur, 1953), 8.
2 Klaus Frank, *Ausstellungen/Exhibitions* (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje; New York: Praeger, 1961), 13.
3 Hans Neuburg, "Basic Rules for Planning an Exhibition," in Neuburg, *Internationale Ausstellungsgestaltung/Conception internationale d'expositions/Conceptions of International Exhibitions* (Zurich: ABC Edition, 1969), 14.
4 Lohse, *Neue Ausstellungsgestaltung*, 12.
5 Neuburg, "Basic Rules for Planning an Exhibition," 67.
6 Ibid., 168.
7 George Nelson, *Display* (New York: Whitney Interiors Library, 1953).
8 Ibid., 7.

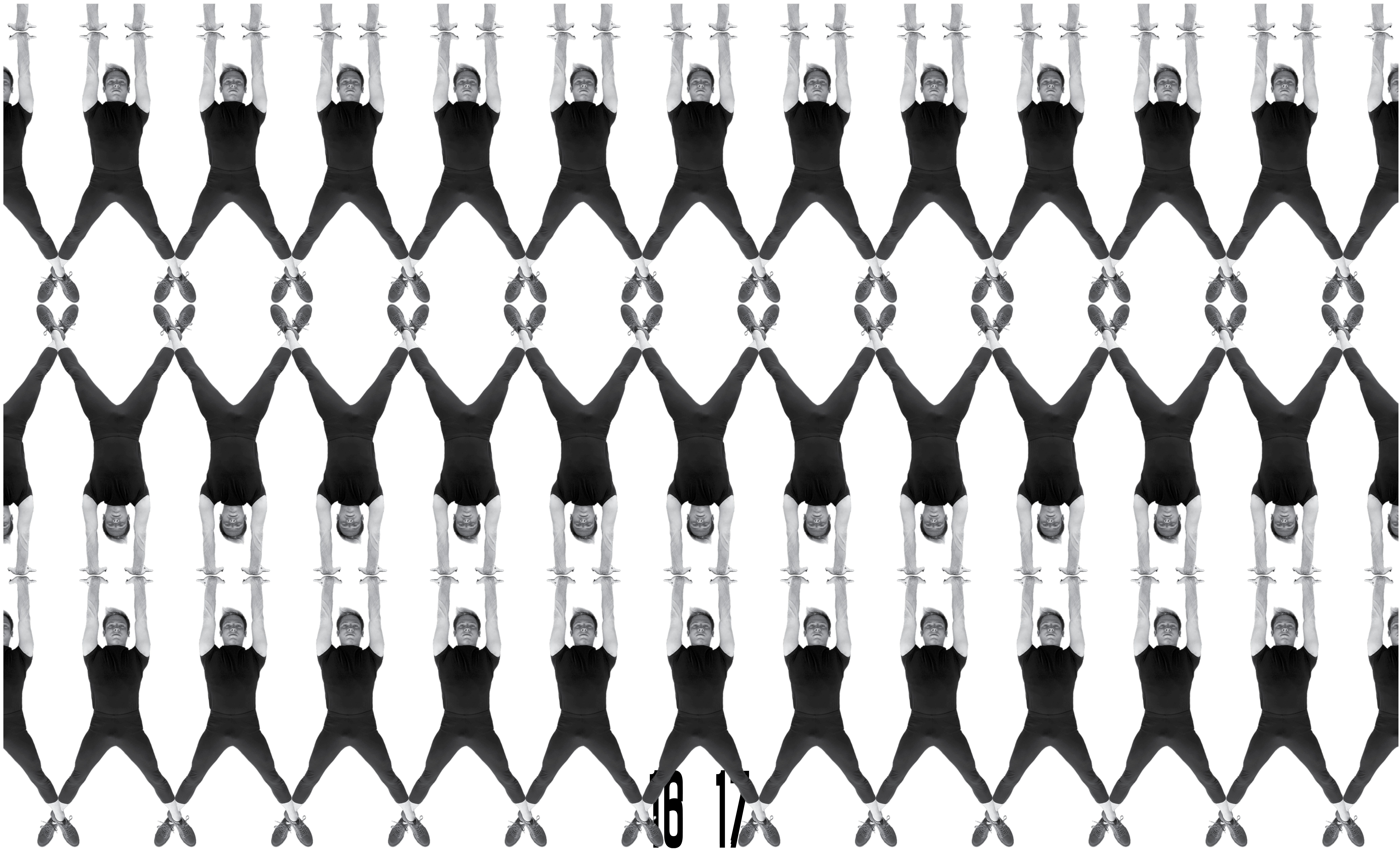
MIKA TAJIMA

Free Body Culture, 4, 2016
digital print, paper
dimensions variable

Furniture Art (Busan) and
Furniture Art (Franz Josef Land), 2016
spray enamel, thermoformed cast PETG
52 × 39 inches each

In her mixed-media practice, Mika Tajima combines aspects of sculpture and performance within an exploration of modernism, creative labor, and the body. Rather than producing one kind of artifact, she investigates the performative potential of exhibition space in multiple ways. This gives her installations an architectural quality, as they are both arrangements of objects and zones of ergonomic activity. At the ACFNY, Tajima takes over the double-height interior wall that spans multiple exhibition levels with a site-specific installation. It juxtaposes a fine-resolution wallpaper depicting a repeated pattern of one athletic figure, which challenges the building's strict geometry. Her "Furniture Art" objects, fabricated in a partially translucent material, are hung on this wall to create a playful atmosphere that focuses the gaze away from the immediate environment to allow for immersion in the multiple layers of the work.





JUDITH BARRY

They Agape, 1978
two-channel video installation, sound
30 minutes, looped

Judith Barry's work explores the complex interrelationship of public address, representation, changing paradigms of art, and popular culture. Barry trained originally as an architect, and her research-based practice operates between installation, architecture and design, film and video, and performance. Her two-channel black-and-white video installation, *They Agape*, is presented in the lower mezzanine gallery. This double-projection piece follows two woman architects who are also best friends. An aggressive voice-over accompanies the women's ongoing analysis of their relationship, while a soundtrack of late-1970s punk music echoes the congruence and discord of the protagonists' interpersonal dynamics. Installed by the artist in a manner that engages with the building's unusual design, the piece touches repeatedly on notions of fantastic architecture; near the conclusion of the script, the lead character remarks, "That is a stairwell … [that] has since left the building to which it was attached to lead a life of its own." Playing with architecture and human interaction in both its installation and its text, *They Agape* offers a glimpse into the relationship of architecture, gender, and social interactions from a moment in which accepted roles of practice were being rewritten.

Dissenting Spaces, 1986
Judith Barry

> Space: That which is not looked at through a key hole, not through an open door. Space does not exist for the eye only: it is not a picture; one wants to live in it.
> —El Lissitzky, "Proun Space" (1923)

In his manifesto for the *Proun Space* installation at the Great Berlin Art Exhibition of 1923, El Lissitzky related his function as an exhibition designer to his artistic practice and to his desire, in the Proun series, to establish an "interchange station between painting and architecture, … to treat canvas and wooden board as a building site." From these early investigations (later somewhat transformed by the Revolution), Lissitzky developed an approach to exhibition design that sought to problematize the role of the spectator, to create "by means of design" an active participation rather than a passive viewing.

In one of his most famous exhibition designs—the *Demonstration Rooms* for the International Art Exhibition in Hannover and Dresden in 1926—Lissitzky was faced with the problem of how to display an overwhelming amount of work in a rather small and intimate space. His solution involved the use of thin wooden strips attached to the wall at 90° angles and in vertical rows; these strips were painted white on one side and black on the other and mounted against a gray wall. From one vantage the wall appeared white, from the other side it appeared black, and when viewed from the front it seemed to be gray. Thus, according to Lissitzky, the artworks were given a triple life. In addition, the paintings were double hung on a movable panel system so that while one of the two was visible, the other could be partially seen through the perforations of the sliding plate. In this way Lissitzky claimed to have achieved a solution whereby the specially designed room could accommodate one and a half times as many works as a conventional room. At the same time, only half of the works could be seen at any one time.

We might compare Lissitzky's method to that other exhibition/display system which reached its apogee in the 1920s: the life-size diorama. Most notoriously instituted in the Museum of Natural History, the diorama is perhaps best characterized by Carl Akeley's famous *Gorilla Group Diorama* completed in 1926. There it is the spectacle itself (in this case the spectacle of "nature" and "wildlife") that must be duplicated and re-created in such a way that the viewer might experience simultaneously the power of domination as well as the surrender of belief. At the same time, the quest for greater and greater verisimilitude had already culminated in the development of the cinema apparatuses, so that in one sense at least the dioramas of the Museum of Natural History point to a relative loss of power instilled in the object.

Previously, the Victorian era—the historical juncture of both industrialization and psychoanalysis—had produced a fetishization of the domestic object leading to the design of specific cabinets enclosed in glass for display. But the exotic and fetishized objects, often collected from foreign lands, also referred to another tradition of display: the spoils of war. In "Greco-Roman" times, displaying what had been taken in conquest had taken on various meanings, since "bounty" was exhibited not only to nobility but also to commoners and slaves. Those who lined the streets gazed in awe at power conquered, brought home through possession, and served up as symbolic consumption. This dramatic exposition of the conquered object, surely the beginning of fetishism as developed in Freud's reworking of the myth, leads to a reconsideration of possession: as in, who is possessed and who is not. The numenistic object lies in waiting, ready to grab hold, to snare, anyone who will dare to look. Medusa's head or Eurydice or the Gilded Calf: one can come close only to transgress.

But possession can take another form, that of a refusal or denial as in the case of functionalist design. Most utopian movements in design have tried to strip the object of its symbolic powers, as though the power of utility could somehow restrain the object's power over us. But, as Robert Venturi points out, functionalism was only symbolically functional: "It represented function more than resulted from function." Exhibition design, particularly in relation to objects, is deeply symbolic—it can rest on no other ground.

So we have the two poles of exhibition design: the theatrical, as in Akeley's *Gorilla Group Diorama*; and the ideological, as in the constructivist *Demonstration Room* by Lissitzky. Both reflect a desire to present situations in which the viewer is an active participant in the exhibition. And as Benjamin Buchloh points out, historically this incorporation of the viewer was symptomatic not only of a crisis in the representation(s) of the modernist paradigm, but also of a crisis of audience relations "from which legitimation was only to be obtained by a re-definition of its relations with the new urban masses and their cultural demands."

Increasingly, these cultural demands were resolved under the sway of another kind of exhibition design, one designed not simply for display, but rather one designed specifically for consumption, to cause an active response in the consumer, to create an exchange. This is the situation of the retail store. For it is in these spaces, in which one lives and works and through whose media apparatuses one is enculturated, that we find the congruence of the theatrical and the ideological, to my way of thinking the culmination of exhibition design.

To develop this practice to be something other than just a way to move the eye through space, to make the spectator actually inhabit the space, Lissitzky had to produce an architectural effect. But for Lissitzky this was only an effect (as Buchloh notes, a shift in the perceptual apparatus), without a call to action, without a change in the social institution itself.

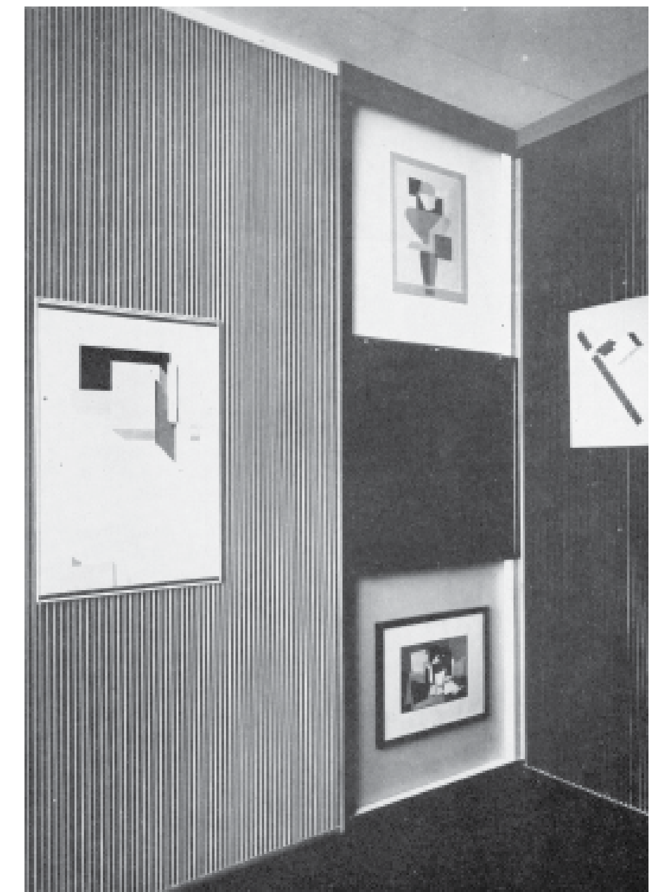
On the other hand, Georges Bataille, writing in *L'Espace*, declares that space is discontinuous—the product of the engagements of forces, the void through which the threatening gestures must be exchanged. Yet all resistance does not necessarily occur in space; rather it takes place through the agency of discourses that mark, channel, and position the body through and in other perspectives (read as representational systems). One challenge, then, most certainly is to confront the supremacy of the eye/I (no accident that homonym in English!).

How to force a confrontation? If architecture embodies our social relations, then presentational forms (including staging and lighting devices from the theater, opera, and Las Vegas, as well as more obvious museological techniques) must refer to ways in which we wish to experience these relations. One confrontational tactic yet to be explored is the subversion of the wish for closure, possession, and gratification. One way to do this might be to make threatening the assumed neutrality of the exhibition space itself.

In the design for the exhibition *Damaged Goods*, the metaphor of delayed gratification is an appropriate one to describe the effects produced by these objects on the would-be consumer. Many of the display systems used in this exhibition design are constructed to force the spectator/consumer into various possible subject positions, to make viewers spatially as well as visually aware of their location, a location that might be disruptive, jarring, and unsettling, and which might produce a kind of uneasiness. Given these conditions, the exhibition becomes the set for a play with objects; this is not the way we live, but may allude to something else.

Carl Akeley, *Gorilla Group Diorama*, 1926. As installed at the Museum of Natural History, New York.

Judith Barry, exhibition design as artist contribution to *Damaged Goods*, 1986. Curator: Brian Wallis. Exhibition view at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, featuring Haim Steinbach, Allan McCollum, Jeff Koons, Gretchen Bender, and Louise Lawler. Not shown: Barbara Bloom, Andrea Fraser, and Ken Lum.



El Lissitzky, *Cabinet of Abstract Art*, 1926. Installation view of *Demonstration Room* showing works by El Lissitzky, Oskar Schlemmer, and Louis Marcoussis. Landesmuseum Hannover.

This text was published originally in the catalogue for *Damaged Goods*, a group exhibition curated by Brian Wallis at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, in which Judith Barry's contribution as an artist was to design the exhibition.

Ode to the Rope with a Knot with a Hole, for Thomas Bernhard, 2016
mixed-media installation
dimensions variable

Hermes Payrhuber's works deal with architectural assumptions about space; he invites the individual to engage with his sculptural interventions, which address the body as the center of attention. The wide variety of materials and media employed—ranging from raw to solid, rough to finished—evoke sensual and reflective responses. At the ACFNY, Payrhuber transforms the upper gallery into a labyrinthine situation using upright steel sculptures and textual material referring to the concept of the exhibition. Related to Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard's novella *Walking*, in which a conversation during a walk triggers an analysis of thinking and existence, this installation suggests multiple sensory experiences within the relationship of bodies to environments and varied possibilities for "reading" an artwork as a densely layered text. The steel sculptures are not only props for walking but also metaphorically undergird the human psyche and support its continuous functioning. Taking the exhibition title as subject, the artist questions what is truly "on display" and what material is "replayed" by way of reverberating visual tropes.

HERMES PAYRHUBER

Boxes, Cubes, Installations, Whiteness and Money, 2009

Brian O’Doherty

> But not yet have we solved the incantation of … whiteness … is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows—a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink?
> —Herman Melville[1]

Space is shapeless so we continually box it, delivering quotas of void. Box is easier to understand than space, so we ask it questions we used to ask of space. So box must be prompted to mumble, parse, and speak for itself. Thus the boxed interventions we are pleased to call installations, which have attitude, particularly to what boxes them. Every installation is engaged in reciprocal definition with its box, asking the (sometimes bewildered) question “Where am I?,” the answer being of course, you’re boxed. Which brings us to the six dimensions of containment.

The box, which I have called the white cube, is a curious piece of real estate, and has a long history of occupants like a room in an exclusive hotel stripped to its basic function: enclosure.[2] The history of this space, as we know, is a history of developing self-consciousness; a room, a gallery, intensely conscious of itself? How does a room, a box, get that way? It has its own comedy of manners, comedy being a frequent offstage voice when we talk of art matters.

Consider the space Modernism delivered to the rude transgressions of Postmodernism. Sensitized walls. Corners enclosing turbulent space. A floor no longer just something underfoot. A ceiling that is more than a light-giving lid. A box so self-aware that it may be neurotic.

It—the box—had a love affair with Modernism. The modernist white space celebrated above all the medium and the regnant medium of Modernism was paint. Like any medium it had an alchemical potency that no matter how exploited, remained simply paint. The mythologies of paint—juice, organic substance, secretion stroked into representation, revelation, and “expression”—are twinned with the mythology of the hand, a five-tentacled member with “touch,” leaving residues of “process.” Or so it went. The most radical of modernist paintings quietly hung on the wall. In retrospect, what strikes us most is the civility of late Modernism, and its ability through formalism, to suppress minority dissent and not make a mess on the floor.

However roughly treated, the white cube is like a straight man in a slapstick routine. No matter how repeatedly hit on the head, no matter how many pratfalls, up it springs, its seamless white smile unchanged, eager for more abuse. Brushed off, pampered, repainted, it resumes its blankness. Its still potent powers, like those of the blank canvas, should not be underestimated. The empty canvas springs upon the first stroke made upon it with a confusing presentation of historical options and prohibitions. The gallery-box, invisible through most of Modernism, ultimately hot-housed similar complexities. Once its implicit content was outed, it was no longer mute. It was—is—ready to engage in conversations that, like those about the theater, question its relevance.

Many installation sites, apart from museums, which have their own cosseted spaces, are often won from unforgiving architecture. Sometimes these rooms have an admirable previous function. Apart from a courteous nod to history, I’m not in favor of memorializing origins, but that is a matter of variable taste (all taste is period). As we know, to produce the pseudo-neutrality of whiteness, several repressions must be practiced. Elimination of distracting cues inversely releases the potency of whiteness. Now every white gallery speaks a spatial esperanto. The gallery in Buenos Aires or Kraków or London encloses the same space, the same timelessness, the same assumptions. What a triumph of a cultural model. A neutral space everywhere pretending to be placeless.

But the immediate context of most galleries is the city and its mythos. Galleries and museums are almost exclusively urban. What pulsations from city life permeate the international galaxy of white cubes suspended in their aesthetic ether? Physical location is as much a fact as a fist, and there is increasing pressure of the white walls from without. How much of the street do you bring with you when you enter timelessness?

Since the sixties there is a subliminal anti-white-cube history—e.g., narrating the unseen view outside the windowless gallery, physically breaching the wall to let the outside in, pretending the gallery is something else (a media room, a schoolroom, a disco—the impersonations are endless). All acknowledge a desire for the quotidian and secular. What city vibes pass through the walls of these exclusive white spaces? It depends on the city. Because the conditions—aesthetic, social, monetary—that maintain their white cubes vary from city to city. It is difficult to calibrate the way a city influences the artist working inside his/her white box. Site-specific is more than just the room you work in. Is there a city-specific content that gets into the work and how do you recognize it?

So the white wall is a filter, with degrees of permeability. Like its sister applied spaces, theater and concert hall, it tends to preselect its audience, keeping out the unmoneyed, the so-called lower classes, the uninitiated, and the indifferent. It issues an invitation to the opposite of these. The white walls are social regulators subscribing to the rhetoric of inclusion. There’s nothing inherently evil about this. It isn’t much talked about. Highly pedigreed spaces tend to be exclusive, and sometimes vice versa. But when we speak of art we must now speak of money, even as, Saturn-like, it now consumes its own value.

Money has become part of the discourse. Some art takes money as medium and content (the wicked cheekiness of the bejeweled skull?). We are close to black comedy. What is the aim of art? Pleasure? Spiritual enhancement? Political action? Psychological insight? Entertainment? Re-visioning ourselves? None or all of these (though museums are making a case for spectacle and entertainment). The answer is money. If there is product, there is money.

Money has become a prime player in our trade. It is the young artist’s expected reward, the collector’s viaticum. Its supermarket is the art fair. Its temple the auction house where price but not value is determined. The ghost of Ezra Pound utters its feeble “Usura.”

But tainting art-as-money and money-as-art is probably misguided idealism. There are greater follies abroad in our culture. Dysfunctional idealism gratefully migrates to what are rumored to be the more reputable precincts of the temporary installation. Does the fact that you (usually) can’t buy it bestow an ethical superiority? But any claim of ethical superiority—though I have made it on my own behalf—is suspect. Installations, like every other kind of art, are accompanied by the obligatory (often self-delusional) rap. But there is a case to be made for installations (the word covers a mongrelized plurality of genres) apart from fiscal purity.

Something addressed unequivocally to the “now,” with no future (except in photographs), puts another set of responses in motion: double-track watching, remembering even as you look, not much different from recalling the last performance of a play, perhaps, or remembering the only time you heard Sutherland sing. The great divide in memory of events is location, before and after. Or as David Hume put it: “The chief exercise of the memory is not to preserve the simple idea, but their order and position.”[3]

You might say that installations are stuff, disposed in self-supporting conditions, asking to be deciphered. Responses must be made now, or posthumously in the space of memory where, implicated in its restless landscape, they are categorized, edited, eventually diminishing, by half-lives, like the memory of dead friends. Which is as it should be, since the future, once marvelous potency moving toward us, has withered with our expectations.

There is something exhilarating about impermanence, particularly since modernist art addressed itself to the future, converging there with the bourgeois desire for immortality. That future arrived like an express train and went by into the past. There is no future left. Installations avoid both money and future by ignoring both. They depend not only on their enabling box, but (rarely spoken of) the context of ideas into which they are inserted: the curator’s. For the context of an installation includes not just the city and the artist’s previous work, but the curator’s shape of mind. How much risk is invited, encouraged, allowed? What prior dialogue took place? What is the curator’s aesthetic and social profile? All irrelevant when subsumed in mutual amiability.

The white cube I described over thirty years ago is no longer the same place. The stresses on it from within have increased. This has to do with the diversification of artistic practices, of which photography is one. Photography’s mass invasion of the gallery is as recent as the early 1970s. It competes with paintings, and calls on the powers of the white cube when it plays to spectacle—blown-up size, light boxes, aesthetic mystification. But usually, photography does without the gallery’s artifying powers. Most photography exhibitions look like slices of neatly framed life inviting you to walk through a spatialized book. Photographs have a kind of vagabond status like letters. They are at home anywhere, since their (usually legible) content is, like a letter’s, self-contained. Photography did its share in demystifying the gallery as a privileged space. It reduced the white cube to a utilitarian frame.

The greatest breach in the white cube’s walls was the invasion of film and video. Video’s beginnings around 1980 aspired first to broadcast, then the gallery. Monitors were stacked, pyramided; feedback and delay introduced to installations as the observer became the subject (Peter Campus, Dan Graham). Such installations became rare, though there were still some mega-spectacles (Nam June Paik). Video didn’t require a gallery, just an empty space. It turned the gallery into a viewing room. Screens, including the “I–Thou” computer screen, define their diverse audiences. Video prefers a neutral twilight. Film asks for a measure of darkness. Neither needs the transforming powers of the cube. They aspire more to the theater’s experimental black box. The black box presents a different neutrality. Its walls dissolve. Its darkness has no implicit content beyond the rhetoric of expectation and disclosure. Video and film define the white box on their own terms. Their unruly energies, time-based demands, and “theatricalization” of the viewer demystify the space inherited from late Modernism. When something is demystified it migrates elsewhere. Where is the demystified white gallery’s “elsewhere”?

It has migrated, like some science-fiction virus, into the audience, into us, into our white-walled attitude, into our fetishized eye, into the mental scarifications of a tribe connected by Internet and blogs, extending the art world’s verbal culture. As a tribe we cross national but not social boundaries. We can be located by the triangulation of money, public relations, and the attitude that is the residue of the white box’s powers. Some may call this post-post panorama the great decadence, an allegory called “The Triumph of Money.” But such a dystopian tizzy needs to be regulated by low dosages of irony. We are what we have developed, or developed into. Art and its reception always intersected finance. Art is made to be co-opted. Does countercultural exceptionalism merely reenforce this? Can installations escape? Perhaps.

Installations—a site, a place, the spectator’s literal presence—call on and sometimes attack the multipurpose, polymorphous spaces that host with equanimity the shouts of contrary aesthetics and house-broken protests. They force an immediate dialogue before they swoon into memory, which is “compounded,” as Proust wrote, “of an exact proportion of remembering and forgetting.”[4] Not quite true, as it happens. In the end, all we most certainly have, like installations, is the “now.”

1 Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1993), 163.
2 See Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
3 David Hume, “Of the Ideas of Memory and Imagination,” in *The Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Brian Beakley and Peter Ludlow (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 181.
4 Cited in Margaret Mein, *Proust’s Challenge to Time* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), 43.

Parallax City (Rope Drawing #125), 2016
rope, nylon cord, Liquitex
dimensions variable

Brian O'Doherty investigates the limits of perception, language, serial systems, and identity, seeking to engage viewers' minds as well as their senses. In his seminal essay series, "Inside the White Cube," first published in 1976 and enjoying its fortieth anniversary in 2016, O'Doherty argues that galleries' antiseptic white walls have helped to determine the meaning of postwar art as much as the artworks themselves. O'Doherty's own artwork strives to move beyond the white cube by emphasizing the spectator's agency in the experience and interpretation of an object or exhibition. In the ACFNY's main gallery, he presents *Parallax City*, his newest "rope drawing" from a series started in the early 1970s. O'Doherty's installation transforms this gallery into an immersive puzzle of perspectives that overtakes the original elements of the space, inviting audience movement and participation.

Prem Krishnamurthy and Walter Seidl

Architectural historian Kenneth Frampton once called the Austrian Cultural Forum New York (ACFNY), designed in 1992 by Raimund Abraham, “the most significant modern piece of architecture to be realized in Manhattan since the Seagram Building and the Guggenheim Museum.”[1] With a width of only twenty-five feet and a depth of eighty-one, the twenty-four-story tower’s symmetrical glass facade mirrors Manhattan’s ever-changing cityscape and social dynamics. Within a tiny footprint, it houses a complex public program encompassing a theater, offices, and a library, alongside an unconventional and multilevel venue for presenting contemporary art. In this aspect, the building represents a case study that poses challenges to traditional exhibition practices.

It’s an understatement to say that the ACFNY possesses unusual spaces for exhibiting. The floor plan offers only one traditional gallery space, the main gallery, which occupies a lower level. The other galleries are small in scale, distributed onto multiple mezzanines, and overshadowed visually and spatially by the prominent circulation staircase and chromed elevator core, which together form the backbone of the building. Even the main gallery does not offer an open ceiling and blank surfaces for presenting artwork. Instead, the overall design revels in a panoply of visible materials, ranging from glass to particleboard and reflective metal; there is exposed hardware, foregrounded mechanical soffit, a glossy stone floor, and bright red utility panels. It’s nearly as if these multiple finishes are themselves meant to be the permanent objects on view, alongside whatever artworks might currently be installed.

Since artist and writer Brian O’Doherty published his now-historic series of essays, “Inside the White Cube,” in *Artforum* in 1976, the art world’s obsession with the *idea* of the white cube has grown exponentially: witness the explosion of exhibition spaces, art museums, and temporary venues with empty white walls, poured concrete floors, and uniform lighting. The scale of exhibiting has also expanded consistently, with the increasing frequency of ever larger art fairs, biennials, and commercial ventures. Mega-gallery Hauser & Wirth recently christened a massive Los Angeles outpost with more square footage than either New York’s New Museum or Met Breuer.

In such imposing spaces, the artist is presented as the sovereign, who inhabits volume with utter autonomy. As O’Doherty persuasively argued, the widespread acceptance of the white cube as the standard model of gallery architecture in the latter half of the twentieth century carried deep-seated ideologies and economic motives: by transforming artworks into sacral vessels, the pristine, hallowed context of the white cube helped to boost sales and grow careers. The newer trend toward monumental spaces suggests a bolder financial proposition—one that lionizes the artist through an even greater investment, in order to multiply market value—as spectacularity at this scale has become the unsustainably contemporary norm.

The ACFNY offers an opportunity to explore the opposite condition. The building, a reflection of the real-world real estate relations within Manhattan and the world at large, forces artists to work within contexts that challenge the idea of autonomy. Here, artists, like other citizens, are individuals yet contingent: although accorded an open space and freedom of expression, they are nevertheless invited to work within visible constraints. With this backdrop, *DIS-PLAY/RE-PLAY* starts from the assumption that there is no perfect space of exhibition; instead, context is the law that binds us together. It must be negotiated by all parties involved, sometimes through mastery and sometimes through submission.

Embracing the term “display” (which still evokes negative, commercial associations within contemporary art discourse) and pairing it with “replay” (the idea of rehearsing or recapitulating a previously held position), the exhibition takes the idiosyncratic architecture of the ACFNY building as an opportunity for response, invention, and exploration. Six international artists, who have explored questions of architecture, exhibiting, and design in their past work, were asked to work within the ACFNY’s spatial constraints and offer new perspectives based on the parameters of presentation. The exhibition plays with unusual locations and opportunities within the ACFNY—including the entrance foyer and lobby, the double-height mezzanine walls, and the top floor of the gallery—which are activated anew through specific artworks and installations.

Starting from the early twentieth century, there is a lineage of highly specific spaces that experiment with the display of artworks. Examples range from Soviet artist and designer El Lissitzky’s second *Demonstration Room* at the Landesmuseum Hannover (1927–28) to Austrian architect Frederick Kiesler’s spaces for Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of This Century gallery on midtown’s Fifty-Seventh Street (1942), as well as Kiesler and Armand Bartos’s World House Galleries in the Carlyle Hotel on Madison Avenue and Seventy-Seventh Street (1957). Whether through slatted displays and movable screens, biomorphic furniture and adjustable easels, or even complex, curvilinear walls, these non-normative venues created situations in which architecture itself became an active player in a given exhibition. Rather than a blank surface for the projection of artworks (and values), such spaces served as highly charged contexts that explicitly altered the reception of the works on display, as much as those same artworks altered their surroundings. In these historical precedents, the reciprocity between architecture and object proves impossible to deny.

To a lesser degree, this is also the case at the ACFNY. Its complex design program and architectural compression cannot help but express its particular character in every room. There is something uneasy about the tension between building and usage, and its articulation in the exhibition spaces. The building’s jagged facade, iconic and striking from street level, is repressed on the interior. Appearing placid, the interior build-out is not immediately challenging or radically “other” (as Kiesler and Bartos’s intensely curved walls must have been for their first visitors); instead, at first the ACFNY’s galleries adhere to the outward visual codes of a classic white cube, with clean walls and track lighting. Yet the exhibition spaces are subtly askew with regard to traditional art presentation, offering little continuous wall surface for hanging and disparate levels that demand constant consideration for both exhibitor and viewer.

Perhaps understanding and accepting these galleries requires acknowledging that they were never intended to show contemporary art along conventional lines. Far more, the ACFNY’s goal was to fashion a branded and iconic island of Austrian cultural specificity within midtown. Through this unique position, the architecture highlights both the opportunities and the limitations existing within all exhibitions.

The artists in this show—Judith Barry, Martin Beck, Brian O’Doherty, Hermes Payrhuber, Gerwald Rockenschaub, and Mika Tajima—bring a multidisciplinary range of approaches and diverse strategies to bear on this project. They have each approached the challenge of the ACFNY quite differently. Some have engaged the building head-on and attempt to overtake it; others address it slyly, commenting on the intimate spaces it produces and the social practice of architecture. Pliancy comes into play—in some installations, the body is asked to contort, to move through space in unusual ways and accommodate the artwork. These positions can produce analysis, empathy, even identification; within different encounters, the building’s range is tested.

DIS-PLAY/RE-PLAY addresses the aesthetic and social relation between art and architecture, with its great potential to redirect experience in both visible and parenthetical ways. At the same time, the artworks, with their specific presence, occupy a central position within the exhibition; in some moments, they may even overshadow their architectural surroundings, yet they never escape them, which strengthens the sense of reciprocity between the spatial and the artistic. Rather than attempting to neutralize or normalize the building’s striking character, the exhibition takes on the challenge of playing productively with the building as an actor. Through this framing, a three-way process of dialogue opens up: between the artists, the ACFNY, and the viewer, implicated through the invitation of the exhibition.

1 Julie Iovine, “For Austria: A Tribute and Protest,” *New York Times*, March 7, 2002, http://nytimes.com/2002/03/0 7/garden/for-austria-a-tribute-and-protest.html.

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Martin Beck, "The Exhibition and the Display," in *Exhibition*, ed. Lucy Steeds (London: Whitechapel Gallery; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 27–33.

Brian O'Doherty, "Boxes, Cubes, Installations, Whiteness and Money," in *A Manual for the 21st Century Art Institution*, ed. Shamita Sharmacharja (London: Whitechapel Ventures and Koenig Books, 2009), 26–30.

Exhibition

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Brian O'Doherty, *Parallax City (Rope Drawing #125)*, 2016

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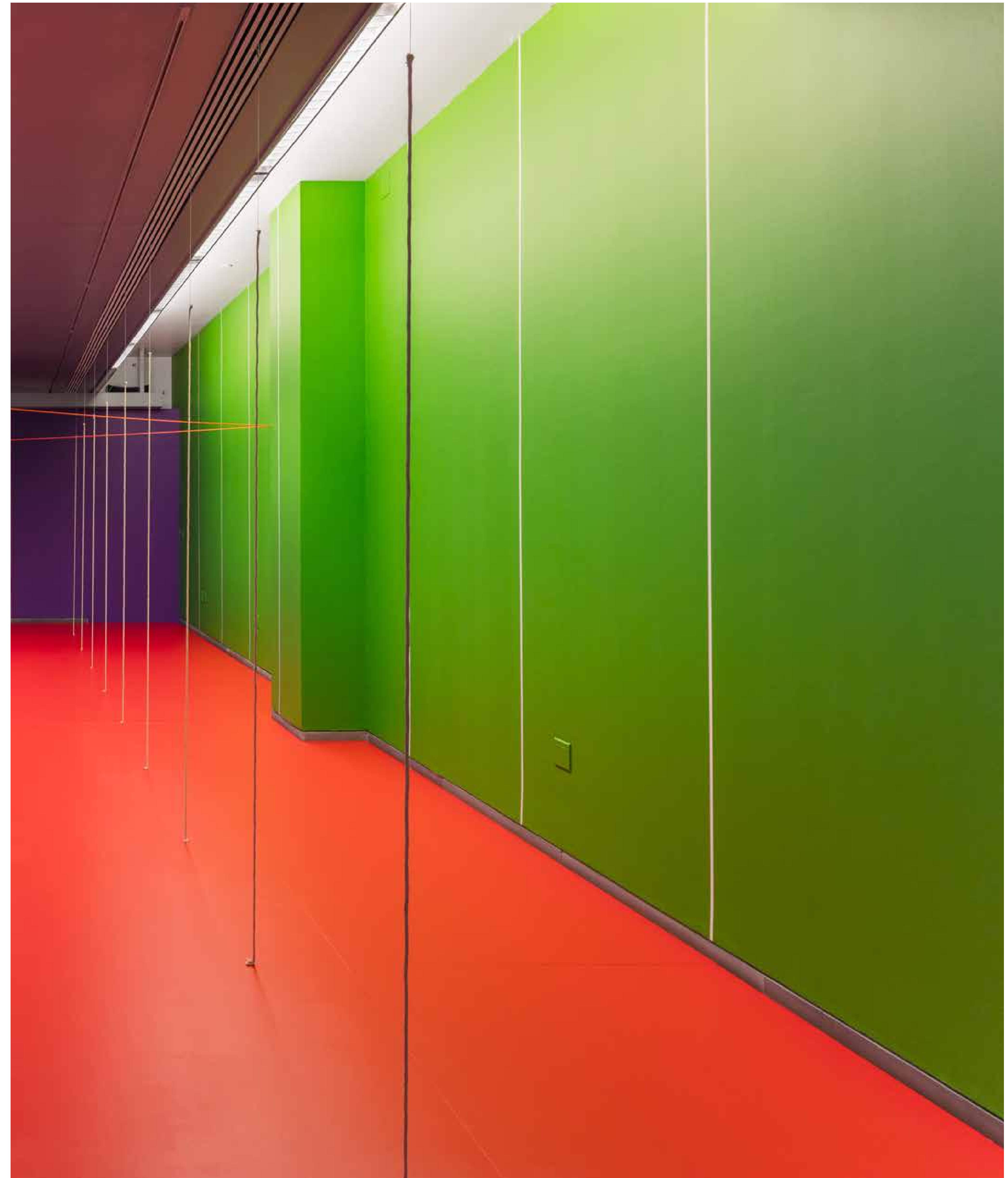
Mika Tajima, *Free Body Culture, 4*, 2016



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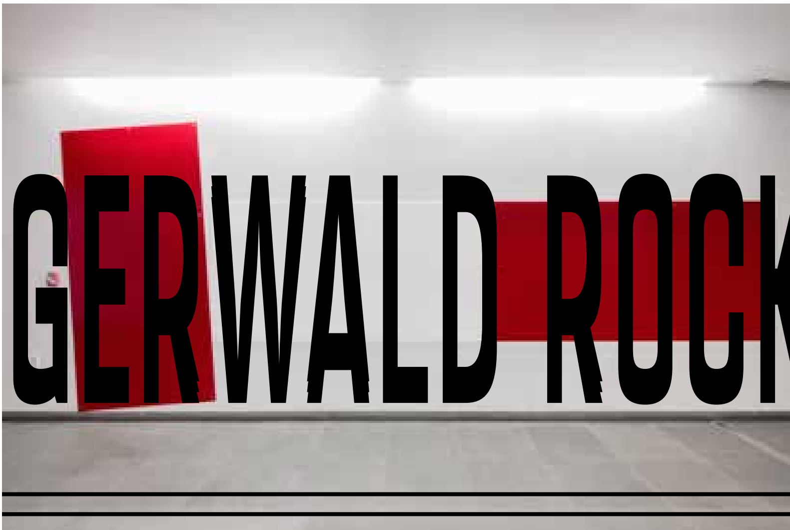

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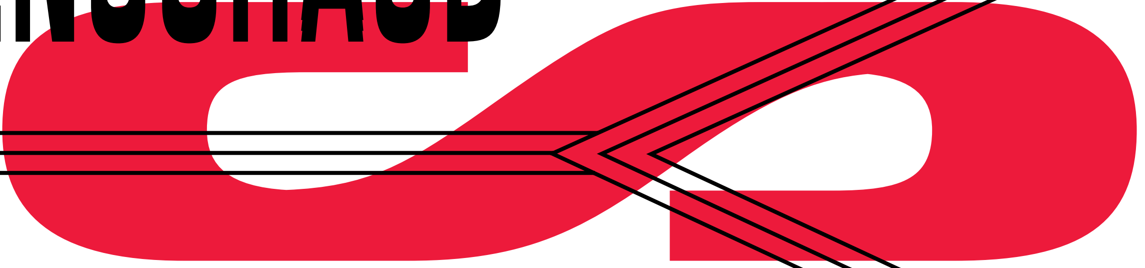

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