

In the Trace of the Law
DeepRiver Exhibition
March 17-April 22, 2001

DeepRiver has been constructed based on a commercial gallery model.

It has a storefront window, glass door, and finished white walls.

It has a water sprinkler system and track lighting installed just below three ceiling partitions that run East to West. The gallery measures 31' in depth on the East wall, and 33'-10" on the West wall. It is 13' in width, and is 10'-6" in height, floor to ceiling. The rectangular symmetry of the gallery is broken up by the projecting frontal part of the West wall.

My interest in the physical space began with the reception on my part of the floor plan to DeepRiver. The floor plan was sent to me via postal mail by one of the directors of DeepRiver, Daniel J. Martinez.

Of immediate interest to me was the function of the floor plan as a two-dimensional inscription of a three dimensional space. The floor plan seemed to function as a drawing of not only an architectural structure, but of sculptural elements as well, such as the track lighting armature, the water sprinkler system, and the frontal door and window frames.

Upon my first inspection of the floor plan and site, it was apparent to me that the space that the floor plan did not schematize, was the floor space itself. I then became interested in the dual and oscillating relationships between two-dimensional and three-dimensional space. How a trace or inscription engenders a read. I then proceeded to document by hand via a standard measurement tape and by hand held still frame camera the floor space of DeepRiver itself. This documentation led to certain problems, as there is a mixture of seemingly "obvious" prior traces of structures with some traces that are more abstract and ambiguous as to their prior functionality. The issue of mis-representation came to the foreground.

The problem of mis-representation was further highlighted by the seemingly innocuous and innocent operation of the exhibition announcement itself. It was made apparent to me that the artists exhibiting within this space had no direct influence or input in relation to the text, fonts, image, or color of the announcement itself, to its design or lack thereof. The only input and information the artist can provide is the title of the exhibition itself. I proceeded to submit a title for the exhibition, which was then denied. I took some time to reflect and consider the implications of such a gesture, and upon further reflection, submitted a second title. The second title was submitted and was to be given careful consideration. It was accepted after careful consideration. After further thought on this matter, I decided to invoke the trace (history) of this dilemma within the larger scope of the space itself. Thus, unlike the first title change, the second change was inaugurated by me to what is now, *In the Trace of the Law*. It became apparent to me that a critique should take place not solely on the invitation announcement itself, for this would, to me, validate its initial insistence and proposal of autonomy, but rather, the critique should take place and situate itself within the larger confines of the institution itself. Specifically, the traces of the institution and its relationship to mis-representation, obscurity, and law were to be foregrounded via visual means. In a sense, like the judiciary, a deconstructive approach has the 'power' to give "body to a shadow", and thus raises the question of whether the two can be told apart. In a sense, what exists, is always in the trace of the law.

The problem of the trace both as a physical and theoretical component raises the issues of visibility and translation, for the reading of a trace is always at the mercy of not only the law, but the legislative (inscriptive) body, and the hidden is always masked and veiled by the obvious. What is seemingly obvious is also overlooked.

Thus, the two-dimensional component of the floor at DeepRiver has engendered four three-dimensional walls and partitions, and three three-dimensional elements from DeepRiver have engendered three two-dimensional wall drawings that are representational to their "true" size. The three wall drawings were selected according to the three views given by the floor plan to DeepRiver: top view, side view, and front view. The three two-dimensional drawings are as follows:

1. The track lighting structure, water sprinkler system, and three ceiling partitions. (top view)
2. Fire sprinkler system, track lighting, and three ceiling partitions. (side view, facing West)
3. Aluminum entrance door and window frame. (front view)

These were then drawn and centered on the gallery walls. The wall drawing placements were selected according to a logic of vision allowed by the floor plan. The door and window aluminum frames were taken to the rear wall. The water sprinkler system was drawn on the East wall, and the track lighting, sprinkler system, and ceiling partitions were drawn on the West wall.

The surface finishes of the constructed walls were left in a rough and unfinished stage. This was done to highlight the mode of production that takes place and is necessary (yet never seen by an art audience) to allow and facilitate the art objects existence and exhibition as a finished and autonomous aestheticized object.

For the purpose of this project, the historical inscriptions (traces) on the gallery floor were evaluated, measured and read in order to allow the marks themselves to be the text that engender a read (a construction).

The four three-dimensional partitions and walls were constructed according to the four apparent engravings on the gallery floor that indicate or mark a trace of a prior partition or wall. It is in writing, (inscription), that the absence of the receiver and producer is taken for granted.

The measurements were taken in width and length, and the height of each was referenced to the standard height of drywall material, in this case, eight feet high. The width of the walls was rounded down to the narrowest section of each floor engraving where a prior partition is believed to have existed.

The partitions were then constructed from building materials: 2"x4"x8' metal studs, 1"x2"x8' metal studs, and 3/8"x4'x8' drywall, then joined with joint compound and compound tape. The joints where the drywall met were left in a rough stage for three reasons. One, so as to deny the surface of any aesthetic marker given to it by white paint. Two, to oppose Minimalist strategies of pristine pre-fabrication and erasure of the art objects mode of production (the violent erasure of the trace of labor). Three, to indicate to the viewer the provisional and "in-between" status of these objects as not quite sculpture-not quite architecture, for the partitions are functional and occupy such a status throughout the exhibition, yet are not permanent.

The lighting of the space was left according to the prior exhibition at DeepRiver.

The four partitions are to be destroyed at the conclusion of this art exhibition, and the wall drawings are to be painted over with white paint in order to bring the walls and space to its prior conditions.

On the exhibition announcement

The obvious has been noted and historically argued; that art maintains an autonomous existence from any social, political or cultural context. Thus its relationship to its current site is to be taken and read as independent, and its gesture and existence as a solely romantic and modernist gesture, albeit futile.

One can then propose that the first encounter that a potential viewer has with the exhibition and/or exhibiting artist is via the medium of the exhibition announcement itself. The problematic of representation and mis-representation play a major role here, and thus when it is claimed that the exhibition announcement has no direct relationship to the artists wishes of representation, it stands to read as a similar Modernist gesture of pure aesthetics and autonomy.

Thus, if the exhibition announcement proposes to be "naturally" divorced from the artists project, and in a sense unaccountable to the detailed and rigorous research necessary to "adequately" represent the artist and project, (an impossible [yet necessary] gesture), then one can state that the exhibition announcements "announcement" of itself as a sole proprietor of meaninglessness, autonomy, aesthetics and "simply design" situates it next to certain Modernist paradigms. In a word, the exhibition announcement positions itself as an art object divorced from its dialectical relationship with the exhibition, artist, and social context. To reiterate the now obvious, "there is nothing outside of the text", therefore, and logically following, nothing stands outside of critique.

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