Acknowledgments

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The booklet was used as a device to translate the poems placed on the chairs.
Model to exhaust this place
(SculptureCenter Pavilion)

For his new commission at SculptureCenter, Rafael Domenech has created a large-scale modular installation in the ground-floor gallery. Responding to the conditions of the exhibition space as a former trolley repair shop, Domenech used the building’s existing structure, in particular the tracks of an industrial gantry system, as a machine to produce and facilitate the work. Working with materials typically destined for construction sites, the work engages with the urban vernacular of the rapidly growing Long Island City neighborhood.

Domenech’s installation functions at multiple levels simultaneously: as a sculpture, a decentered architectural model, a pavilion, and a venue for public programs and gatherings. As such, the work acknowledges the varied possibilities and promises of contemporary art institutions. Installing large panels made of aluminum-framed construction mesh, the artist creates what he calls “space modulators,” which constantly redefine the architectural surround. Another element posits the book as a standardized unit, organizational mechanism, and architectural device. The work’s multiplicity is further articulated by the artist’s research in concrete poetry as a strategy to suggest different ways of handling and approaching the book, according to its orientation and the distribution of sentences on the page. In this instance, in addition to writings by the artist himself, the installation distributes two poems by the exiled Neo-Baroque Cuban poet, novelist, essayist, and critic Severo Sarduy (1937–1993) that concretize a poetics of dislocation.

Parts of Sarduy’s poems, as well as some writing by Ulises Carrión and Domenech, are laser-cut into the construction mesh with a machine assembled by the artist, further underlining his engagement with the works’ production conditions. Domenech has also constructed forty-five and a half modular chairs of interlocking plywood panels, which during the run of the exhibition are called on to support participants in conversations and discussions. The chairs are a reductive variation on the Bantu design (one of the oldest chair prototypes, of unknown origin), and when disassembled they become panels that, leaning against the walls, disperse concrete poetry throughout the gallery. The chair panels measure $32 \times 17 \times 1$ inches, and there are 91 of them, the same as the number of lines in the poems by Sarduy.

Additional support mechanisms are two 42-foot aluminum crossbars mounted on gantry rails that give them the capability of moving back and forth. Each crossbar holds a $12 \times 12$-foot and a $12 \times 8$-foot panel suspended two inches above the floor that can rotate 360 degrees as well as move along its length. These panels, together with the stationary pieces on the floor, constitute a structure that can shift in size, shape, and purpose. The height of the panels is 12 feet, equivalent to that of the walls present in the space, producing a correlation between the viewer’s relation to the artwork and to the building.

Above the panels hang 16 lamps that double as photobooks of pictures that the artist has taken on walks in his Bronx neighborhood and drives around the Hialeah neighborhood of Miami, where he used to keep a studio. Additional lamps were made with recycled styrene and fluorescent bulbs from Domenech’s contribution to SculptureCenter’s 2019 group.
exhibition *Searching the Sky for Rain*.

The dimensions of each element in the exhibition are defined by the standardized metrics of available products, following a 2 × 4-inch and 4 × 8-foot scale. This metric system, which regulates architecture, is defined by the global free market that employs the container as its main mode of transportation/distribution and the regulations enforced by insurance companies. Domenech refers to these regulations as “transparent architecture,” and he often compares the relationship between visible and invisible architecture as a tactic for understanding space.

In the wall that separates the lobby from the main gallery, Domenech has excised a 12-foot-wide ellipsis; in so doing, he exposes the steel studs in the wall, spaced 16 inches apart. Seen from the lobby, the studs blend with the aluminum structures in the space beyond, producing an amalgamation of vertical components.

The installation also features elements from Domenech’s *Las palabras son muros [Pavilion for Astoria]*, his outdoor pavilion installed at the Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, in 2019. Addressing an economy of means in his production, the artist shows how artwork exists in the ecology of a practice at the intersection of studio, institution, and urban space.
Work of art in the age of codes and regulations
Sohrab Mohebbi

The planetary project of a unified metrics of life is almost complete. The movement of goods in standardized units traded in stock markets and shipped in containers across the world flows more or less seamlessly. The market regimes of maximizing profit disrupt vernacular forms of exchange, dimensions of products, routes of transport, and any other obstacle to the streamlined travel of commodities. All aspects of life, from the navigation of cities to finding love, are algorithmically propagated and transported via 5G networks. Everyone is surveilled, traced, and followed as long as they carry their mobile devices, and lost, suspended, without them. Insurance companies financialize the future by issuing catastrophe bonds that investors leverage against other assets.

These procedures are governed and administered via universalized codes and regulations, a semantic architecture that is devised and imposed by legally binding contracts and treaties. This linguistic infrastructure guarantees the protocols of sameness, universalizing metrics of relatability that define the dimensions of planetary daily life. Governmental and financial institutions are the editorial staff of the semantics of globalization that maintains, monitors, and regulates these parameters, metrics, and dimensions (within which life happens).

The work of art exists and functions within institutions that are plugged into the same infrastructure. Given these conditions, the notion of the authenticity of the work of art, which has already been questioned on account of its reproducibility and monetary value, is replaced by the specificity of the work. A contemporary artwork, a genre of art that operates within the institutional context, performs and practices its presumed autonomy through its specificity. Since the advent of post-studio practices, this specificity responds to a broader network of operations and connections within which the art institution functions. In other words, the integration of the artwork in the institutional context (historical, architectural, semantic, procedural, or otherwise) finds expression in contemporary art. The work of art, once freed from its “parasitic subservience to ritual,” is now conditioned by the rituals of institutional codes and regulations defined by the free market and the semantics of globality. Art’s response and interaction with such conditions marks the horizon of contemporary art.

The specificity of the work emerges from its engagement with various institutional metrics. These include not only the physical architecture, the neighborhood, the historical conditions, and the exhibitory protocols, but also the legal parameters that are decided by governing organizations—compliance with the ADA Act, insurance and liability policies, fire codes, security requirements. These ubiquitous metrics are not restricted to art institutions; they constitute the regulatory apparatus of all aspects of everyday life in offices, factories, live/work spaces, cafes and restaurants, airports, subway stations, and so on. These are the spaces where city dwellers, to quote Benjamin, “relinquish their humanity in the face of the apparatus.” The work of contemporary art, to repurpose his analysis of film, asserts this humanity against the apparatus.

The work starts as a file generated on one of several platforms,
whether Sketchup or Adobe. What is the status of the file? Is it the artwork or is it what the set is to a film? Benjamin notes that in film the work of art is produced only by means of montage. The components of the montage (script, set, acting, makeup, wardrobe, soundtrack, and so forth) are not the work of art in itself. Similarly, the file is not the work; nor is the email, the spreadsheet, the concept draft, or the press release. It is rather the installation and the production on site that creates the work of art. This procedure is not unique to contemporary art, as architecture is also realized from multiple supportive components that eventually congeal into a building.

The work of contemporary art is specific, temporary, and adaptable. Made for display, the work is assembled and produced in situ, yet with the closing of the exhibition the work in its totality, or in large part, is disassembled, relegated to storage, or consigned to the recycle bin. The work is essentially temporary, since it will not exist post-exhibition as a whole, or at all. Therefore, the question of what is a work of contemporary art is rephrased as when is it a work of contemporary art. This also responds to how a work is considered at a future date when certain parameters integral to its creation are no longer in place. Furthermore, given obsolescence, the technological equipment intrinsic to the work doubles as an archive of material culture. The neon tubes, projectors, 8-track, magnetic tape, cathode-ray tubes, no longer commercially produced and rarely operational, contribute to the work’s temporary status as contemporary art. Yet they also show how the work overcomes the apparatus by ingesting and preserving it.

The contemporary artwork, built from a file and made with supplies off global hardware-store shelves, can appear in different sites either simultaneously or at different times. However, does the work remain the same when it is adjusted to each site, potentially given new measurements and materials? The work is adaptable and subject to change and modification. This additional temporality of the contemporary art work further distinguishes it from the eternal, universal artwork as we know it. Unlike a painting, for instance, which when it’s done is done, the contemporary work of art, in the age of codes and regulations, might either be dismantled forever or adjust itself to a fluctuating set of conditions.

Benjamin compares the painter to a magician and the filmmaker to a surgeon. The former maintains and works from a “natural distance,” from reality, while the latter “penetrates into its tissues.” The contemporary artist is like the surgeon, but unlike the filmmaker; instead of showing the workers’ class potentialities by providing an image of a communal possibility, the artists use the metrics and semantics of planetary unification toward other ends. The museum-goer responds to the everyday metrics psychologically, as these are compatible with the standards that regulate ordinary life. Yet the work can upend those standards—infest, infiltrate, de-administer, deregulate, un-prescribe them. It can further democratize the tools and strategies that it develops so that its constituents could, potentially, carry them into daily life. This takes the form of programs that transfer knowledge through tactical distribution of the work’s position vis-à-vis the infrastructure by engaging and creating its constituents. The constituents are a public formed and engaged through the infrastructural and semantic rather than the relational and immediate, or, in other words, through the abstract. Risking redundancy, the work reroutes the metrics of standardization, not only those represented by big-
box hardware store impositions and architectural limitations, but also those of the legal, financial, and procedural infrastructure that administer the panoramic excavation of life.

If with photography images have been untied from specific locations, with standardization most contemporary living environments can be replicated in multiple places. The generic architecture of Shanghai, Long Island City, Vancouver, or Dubai follows this logic of homogeneity. The sameness of the image is translated into similarity in all aspects of urban and, increasingly, rural life (whatever is left of it). These generic conditions include the contemporary art space with its ubiquitous prescribed parameters, conventions, and protocols. The contemporary urban environment that implements the planetary metrics of capital becomes increasingly hostile to flâneries, the unstructured exploration of a city. Getting lost or going unseen is no longer an option. The contemporary work of art that uses these metrics to create other forms of navigation of the semantics of the standardized everyday fleetingly disrupts the regulatory forces. In the age of total algorithmic distraction that hollows all instantaneous human desires instantly in service of data exchange bonds, art articulates a different form of distraction, prompting “new tasks of apperception.” Benjamin identifies this “reception in distraction” in film with its potential of mass mobilization. In contemporary art as defined above, this reception takes place through the dislocating of the habitual metrics toward unfamiliar ends.

Benjamin notes how fascism organizes the masses by preserving property relations, while granting people expression instead of rights. Contemporary algorithmic hyper-expressionism similarly maintains existing relations, as does the work of art that articulates itself by following distractive protocols that are streamlined through regulatory platforms of anti-social media and corporate news. But the work of art that considers the infrastructure of planetary semantics finds articulation in abstraction as its mode of distractive reception and an analytical generator of new vocabularies and images. This is the politicization of aesthetics. It does not mean making political art, far from it. Rather, it insists on aesthetics as the sphere of operation that rejects the creation of beauty somewhere at the expense of ugliness in another.

* Suggested by Rafael Domenech in direct reference to Walter Benjamin, the title of this essay captures the main concerns and suggestions of the work. The essay is an attempt to elaborate on some of these concerns in light of Benjamin’s formulations. All quotations by Benjamin are from his The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Medio, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008).

If UR Reading This It's 2 Late

Tony Cokes
dies smely performance
Focus Group: When Truth Kills Truth
Jordan Strafer and Phoebe Osborne
Untitled (publication for Sarduy)
el Tin Angel

a Congo Square

el Jimmy Ryen's

COMO FIBRA DE NIEVE

SOBRE UNA PIÉDE BLANCA

Las palabras son muros

sucesivos arcos

el palacio es un libro

96 97
flechas rojas, minúsculas
al boogie - woogie
la espiral de la frase
formando una cenefa
EL PIÉLO CARGELITA
RIGA TAPIZADO EL MURO
SOLDADA UN CURO NEGRO
COLORES DILATADOS

sobre la cal la sombra

al fijarse, una cúpula

con cascabeles

carnígero

con pulseras de oro

al Birdland

en las muñecas

al Carnígero Hall
con castiños de plumas
armazón y sentido
al Cafè Bohemia
DOBLE QUE EL SOL DESPLAZA
la sombra redondeada
al Cafè Metropole
al Voyager’s room
a New Orleans
en los sonoros pafios

Edie Condon

del Nick’s

del Cotton Club

edificios de signos

poligono estrellado

wasn’t dat a wider ribber

frascos llenos de piedras
Workshop: Model to exhaust a lamp
This manual is typeset on Gridnik (1974)

Designed by Wim Crouwel for Olivetti

It was never used.
EXHAUST
A
LAMP
is a workshop led by Rafael Domenech that explores relations between objects and language. The artist invites us to construct a paper lamp as an experimental publication. Domenech uses workshops to facilitate the creation of original artworks that participants can bring home after taking part in the process of making.
The lamp is a display device, light is the vehicle to expose layers of language.
 COMPONENTS

Paper
Cardboard
Vinyl
Double-sided tape
Electrical wire
Lamp socket
AC power plug
LED bulb
1. Cut a desired length of wire. Split and strip 1 inch on both ends.

2. Unscrew the lamp socket. Insert the wire through the top cap and attach each side to the + and - bolts on the socket.

3. Separate the AC power plug. Insert the wire through the top cap and attach each side to the + and - bolts on the bottom part.

4. Screw in the bulb and plug it in to test if it turns on.
5. Select two or more of the six provided cardboard shapes. Combining the top and bottom shapes, you can obtain an array of forms.

6. Select paper for your lamp.
   Paper size:
   Letter (8.5" x 11")
   Tabloid (17" x 11")
7. Use the plastic templates to cut paper shapes. Place the template on the paper and hold. Carefully, cut along the edge of the template to obtain the desired tone.

8. Cut the same number of large and small pieces.

9. Use paper for rectangular lamp as needed.
10. Place double-sided tape on the top and bottom edges of the paper. Trim the end of the tape as exemplified in the drawing.

11. Fold the paper in half. Fold both taped sides.

12. By now, you should have an even number of paper shapes.
A black line of ace face
river
bottles.
Run the electrical wire through the cardboard tube and secure it in place. Place the bulb in the tube and turn on.
This edition is published as part of Rafael Domenech’s project Model To Exhaust This Place (SculptureCenter Pavilion).

rafael domenech 2020

7/100
Checklist

Rafael Domenech

Model to exhaust this place (SculptureCenter Pavilion), 2020
Aluminum, construction mesh, acrylic, stretch wrap, photographs, LED lightbulbs, electrical wire, plywood, vinyl, styrene, fluorescent lightbulbs, drywall
Dimensions variable

Untitled (publication for Sarduy), 2020
91 panels of baltic birch plywood, vinyl
32 x 17 x 1 inches each

Model to exhaust a lamp, 2020
Workshop instruction manual
Edition of 100
8.5 x 5.5 inches

Workshop: Model to exhaust a lamp
Sat, Mar 7, 2020
Model to exhaust a lamp was a workshop led by Rafael Domenech that explored relations between objects and language. The artist invited participants to construct a paper lamp as an experimental publication. In his larger practice, Domenech often uses workshops to facilitate the creation of original artworks that participants can bring home after taking part in the process of making.

Untitled (object label), 2019-20
Repurposed styrene, fluorescent light bulb, electrical wire, vinyl

All works courtesy the artist

Public Programs

Tony Cokes’ Book Launch
Mon, Feb 3, 2020
Celebrating Tony Cokes’ three-part solo exhibition and the U.S. release of the accompanying publication, the artist, Carpenter Center director Dan Byers, and SculptureCenter curator Sohrab Mohebbi discussed newly commissioned video pieces and delved into concepts that have occupied Cokes’ practice for decades.

Tony Cokes: If UR Reading This It’s 2 Late: Vol. 1-3 is the first monograph of Cokes’ oeuvre. Featuring critical essays by Christoph Cox, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Sohrab Mohebbi, and Kerry Tribe, the publication constructs a visual cartography of the artist’s work over thirty years.

In this public dialogue, Cokes and Byers focused on three new video works commissioned for this cross-institutional exhibition, m.j.:the symptom (2020), Testament A: mf fka k-p x ke rip (2019) and The Morrissey Problem (2019). Mohebbi expanded on his catalogue essay detailing Cokes’ ongoing Evil Series (2003 – present) and its increasing relevance in today’s political climate.

In Practice Roundtable: I Want To Believe
Tue, Feb 4, 2020
In conjunction with In Practice: Total Disbelief, exhibition artists Andrew Cannon, Emilie Louise Gossiaux, Ficus Interfaith, K.R.M. Mooney, Andrea Solstad, and Andrew Norman Wilson gathered for a roundtable discussion with Kyle Dancewicz, the exhibition’s curator.

dies smely performance
Tue, Feb 4, 2020
dies smely is a long-distance music project that began in Brooklyn in 2017. First and foremost a collaboration among friends and lovers, dies smely is an experiment in pop and punk music. A band with revolving members and shifting roles, this iteration is a special collaboration between Helen Chu and Emilia Wang.

Focus Group: When Truth Kills Truth
Jordan Strafer and Phoebe Osborne
Thu, Feb 20, 2020
In conjunction with In Practice: Total Disbelief, exhibiting artist Jordan Strafer and Phoebe Osborne gathered participants for a focus group to conduct a market research study on the topics of love and truth.
Model to exhaust this place (SculptureCenter Pavilion)
Jan 16 – Mar 23, 2020

Model to exhaust this place (SculptureCenter Pavilion) is curated by Sohrab Mohebbi, Curator, with Kyle Dancewicz, Director of Exhibitions and Programs.

Model to exhaust this place (SculptureCenter Pavilion) is made possible by the Friends of Rafael Domenech.

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