

**SculptureCenter**

**Gabriel Sierra: Numbers in a Room**

# Gabriel Sierra: 1,2,3

## Ruba Katrib

Attempting to obey the signals that Gabriel Sierra sends throughout his exhibition might prove a challenging task. Reorganizing the lower level galleries of SculptureCenter, Sierra has created a series of site-specific works that disrupt the usual order of things. The labyrinthine quality of the space, filled with crannies and corridors, is emphasized through new cues and architectural elements. Slight adjustments paired with major reconfigurations call into question the meaning of the space as a historical brick-and-mortar building functioning as an active exhibition site. Encouraging modified behavior and altered movement, Sierra has unhinged the logic of the space, further broken down by the exhibition's title, *Numbers in a Room*, which articulates the idea that space is composed of data.

Taking into account the history of SculptureCenter's building as a former trolley repair facility as well as that of New York City and its subway system and signage, Sierra has incorporated the theme of tracks and signals in his construction. An exit sign slowly moves down one corridor, almost unnoticeably, at times catching up with, surpassing, or falling behind viewers as they traverse the space. In another tunnel-like corridor, geometric shapes fit snugly into arches, shifting the scale and direction of pedestrian movement while creating a new set of chambers and hallways. In other spaces, large-scale burlap-covered geometric forms create a passable barrier and a triangle fills out the corner of a landing. Tailored to the space, these forms indicate a possible revision of the given architecture, filling, opening, closing, and emptying the gallery of its traditional elements.

The introduction of new forms and language extends to a series of metal tabs similar to the ones used to communicate to the conductor in an underground train system. This information, meaningful to a specialized set of people and obscure to others, appears in this exhibition as three separate signal systems: a rotating combination of CMYK (color model) triangles, circles, and squares; a sign running through the letters of the alphabet; and the numbers 1–9. These codes communicate messages to visitors that they must interpret on their own. Projected as videos, slowly cycling through the colors and their correlating shapes, the numbers, and the letters. The change between units of information is only perceptible by slowing down. Or you might catch it as it shifts, an “R” suddenly becoming a “T.” Maybe you wrap back around the space and you notice that the “9” is now a “4.” Without offering clear instruction, the artist indirectly guides the pacing and rhythm of the exhibition.

The forms, colors, and textures that Sierra employ provide exercises in association and possibility. One asks, what seems correct or incorrect about a space, should a wall have a 30-degree angle, and, thinking of Bauhaus color and shape studies, is magenta a better fit for a circle or a square? One of the burlap forms operates as a partition in an exhibition space, the shapes now creating a new entrance, splitting what was before a boxy room. On one side, the wall is flat, and on the other it is at an angle to form a triangle. The doorway is a separate movable shape that fits seamlessly into the opening; its position changes throughout the run of the exhibition. On Mondays, it is closed.

Another room, a storage space normally shut off to the public, is now open. Inside, you might discover the notice that “occupancy by more than 1 person is dangerous and unlawful.” Elements like these call into question the preexisting signage, weaving a new texture of sense and nonsense. Through these elements, the exhibition creates its own narrative. Days of the week, minutes of the day, colors, shapes, and empty and filled spaces construct a new story. Motion activates the physical narrative and moves it into four dimensions. The questions that arise—where can you move, how you can move, what is moving and how does it move?—prompt an awareness of how much or little freedom we have in negotiating public spaces. The moving exit sign encapsulates the energy of Sierra's exhibition. A ubiquitous element of American public space, the sign here chases and is chased by the viewer. Pointing to an escape route that is always moving, never fixed, it becomes impossible to heed. In this exhibition, the sign and its purpose continually escape each other, releasing the attachment of thing and meaning.



*Untitled (o(op(ope(open)pen)en)n)*, installation view, *Gabriel Sierra: Numbers in a Room*, SculptureCenter, 2015.



*(Door Open at 47°)*, installation view, *Gabriel Sierra: Numbers in a Room*, SculptureCenter, 2015.

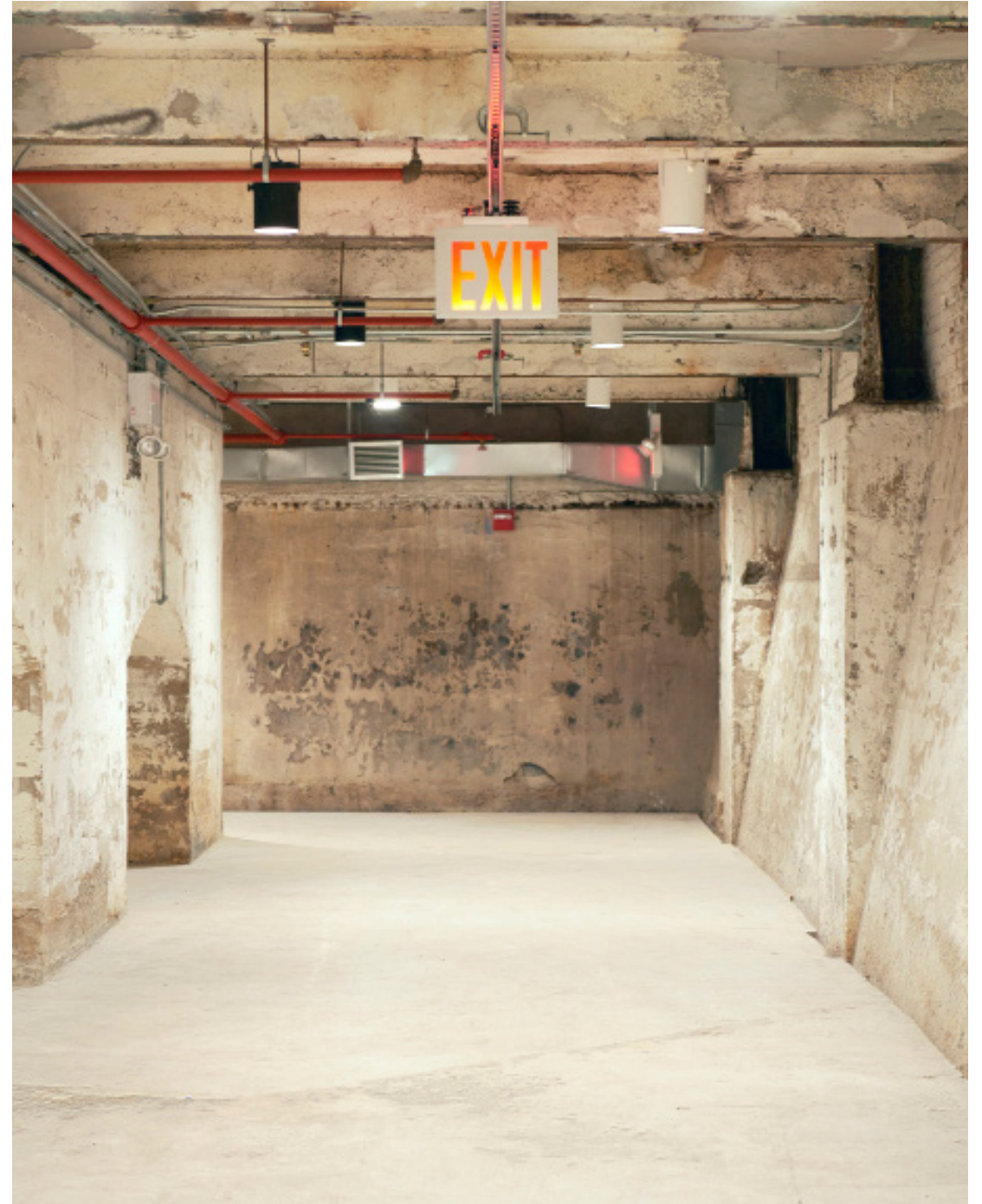


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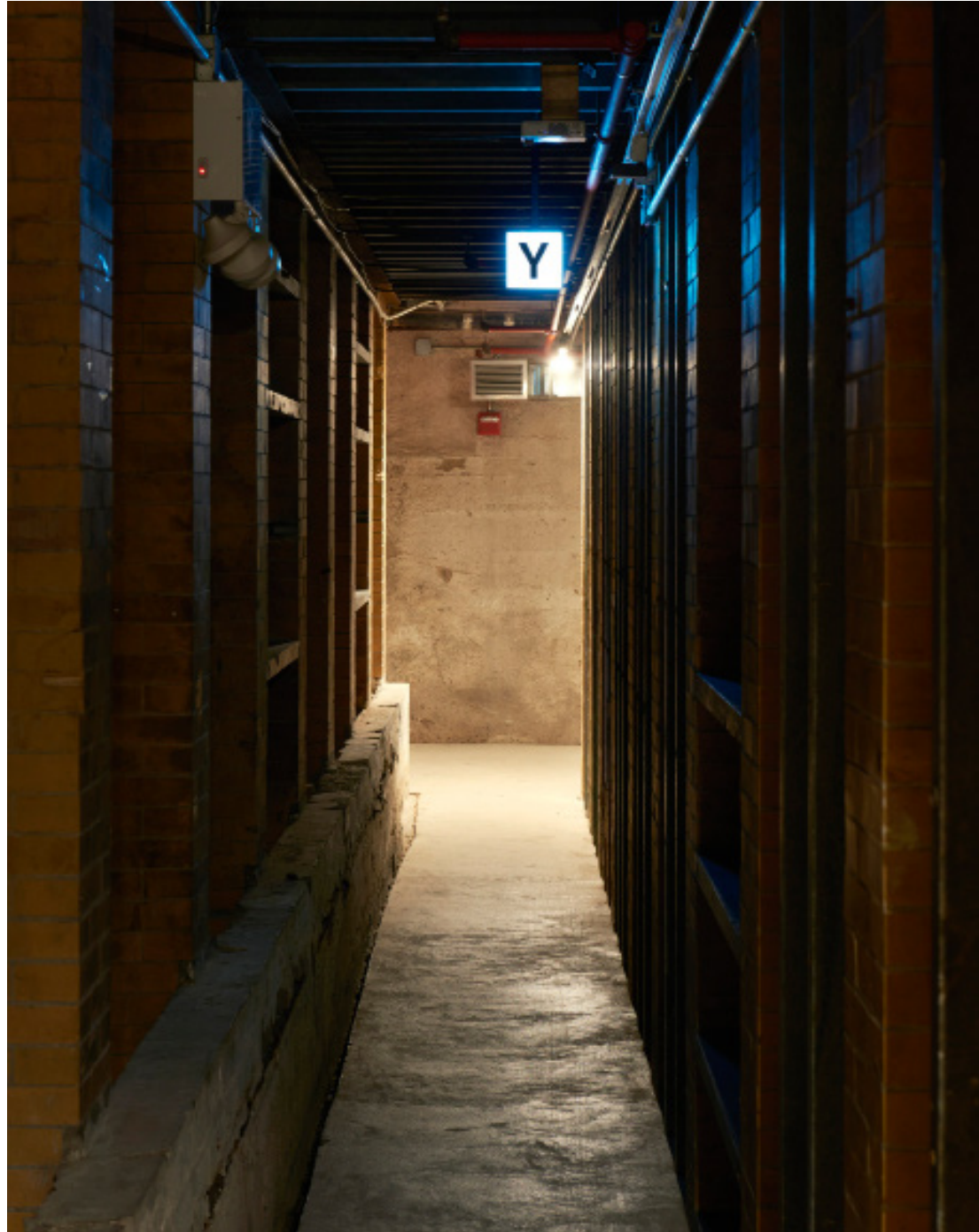


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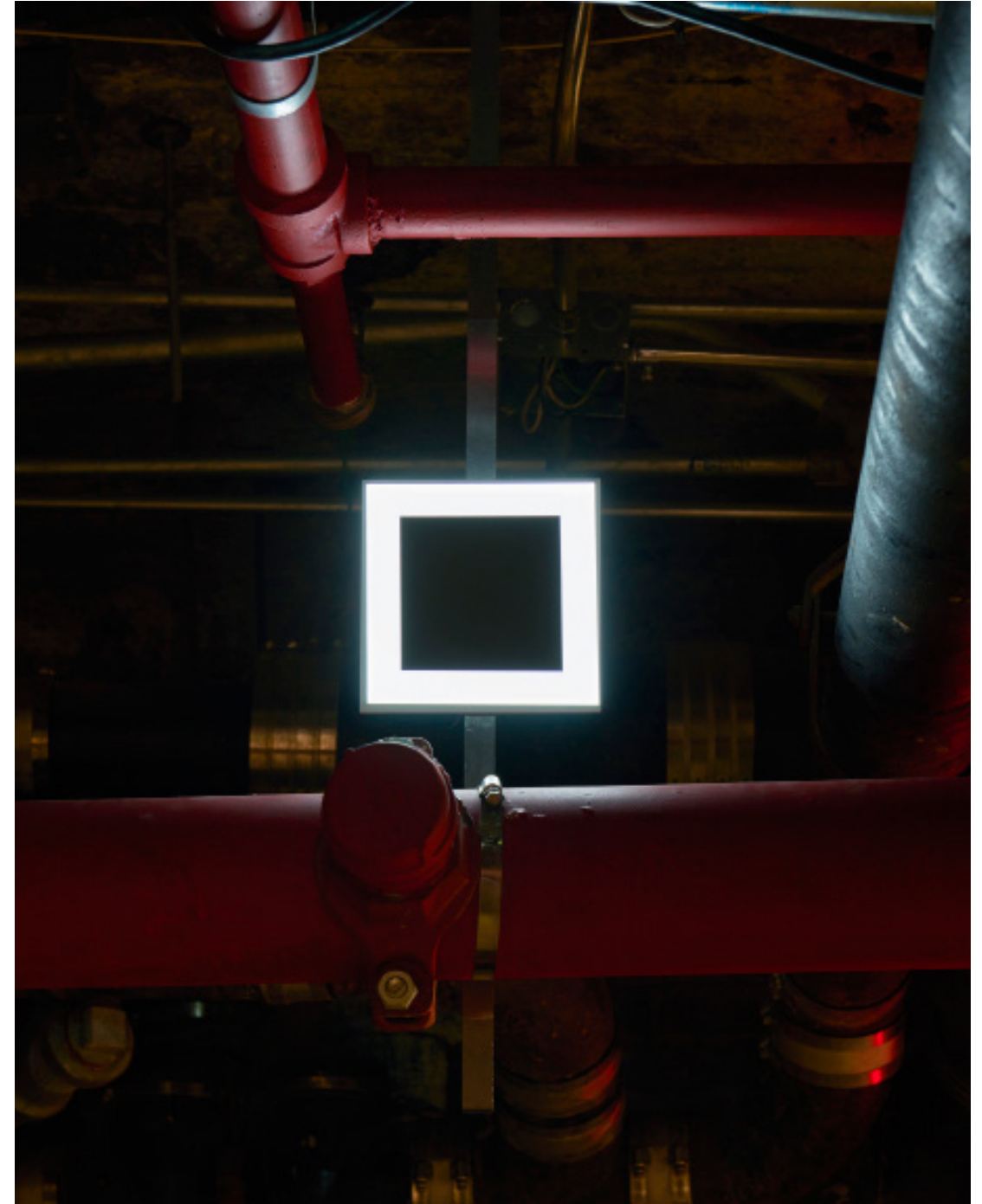




*Untitled (contratiempo)*, installation view, *Gabriel Sierra: Numbers in a Room*, SculptureCenter, 2015.



*Untitled (keyboard)*, installation view, *Gabriel Sierra: Numbers in a Room*, SculptureCenter, 2015.



*Untitled (badly explained rainbow #2)*, 2008 – 2015, installation view, *Gabriel Sierra: Numbers in a Room*, SculptureCenter, 2015.

# Checklist of Works in the Exhibition

## **(Door Open at 47°), 2015**

Door open at 47 degrees, room,  
and sign  
Dimensions variable

## **Untitled (45 minutes), 2015**

Projection over metal  
6 x 20 inches (15.2 x 50.8 cm)

## **Untitled (badly explained rainbow #2), 2008 – 2015**

Projection over metal  
6 x 20 inches (15.2 x 50.8 cm)

## **Untitled (contratiempo), 2015**

Painted wood construction and  
projection  
Dimensions variable

## **Untitled (keyboard), 2015**

Projection over metal  
6 x 20 inches (15.2 x 50.8 cm)

## **Untitled (o(op(ope(open)pen)en)n), 2015**

MDF and burlap  
Dimensions variable

## **Untitled (pretext), 2015**

Modified exit sign, metal track,  
and electronic components  
Dimensions variable