

Dislocated Sites, Divided Spaces

Vered Maimon, brochure for exhibition *Carl Suddath: New Work*, Inman Gallery, July 2006.

Carl Suddath's new works defy pre-established categories. As objects they seem to exist in an indeterminate zone between sculpture and architecture suggesting both abstract models and specific objects. Moreover, through their mode of installment in the gallery the works are encountered not simply as "objects," but also as formal propositions concerning space, scale, mass, and material. Their installment thus evokes a theatrical aspect; a form of staging through which Suddath subtly articulates the relations between definitions of objects and strategies for the occupation of a space.

The first object the viewer encounters is a green structure that divides the gallery space. It functions as a barrier forcing the viewer to move around it thereby soliciting a bodily interaction. Its shape, in particular the way it both suggests and denies the regularity of a pattern, and its materiality, steel and white Plexiglas, suggests a fence or a screen. This object is meant to evoke specific references without directly representing them. Its pattern, for example, is inspired by a 1952-54 design for an unrealized building by Mies van der Rohe for a Convention Hall in Chicago. The color of the structure follows Herman Melville's description in his short story *Bartleby, the Scrivener* of a high green folding screen which isolates Bartleby and hides him from the sight of his employer, the narrator, yet keeps him within the reach of his voice. It is this simultaneous sense of removal and connection, of a relation that is created between those that are meant to be separated that is invoked in Suddath's structure. This sense is echoed in the structure itself as it joins together two individual axes: the opaque screen that is meant to block vision and the fence that divides and deters. With its two axes the structure not only divides the space, but also delimits an in-between space that is formed amid its two central parts.

Melville's screen is turned into both a "trope" for an unmarked site of division that the structure materializes in the form of an in-between space, and an "event" since the correlating function of defining a space and identities is enacted in the way the object occupies the gallery space. It is thus simultaneously a materialized form of an abstract signifying function and a concrete object which performs a function in a specific space. In each case it is not meant to represent a "real" of fictional object, but to call attention, conceptually and materially, to the way the occupation of a space is always also a form of definition, not just of territories, but of roles and identities. Form is social as much as it is material, it is what shapes an experience as much as determines its possibilities out of specific relations between bodies, objects and spaces.

Suddath's installation explores these different relations by situating next to the green structure a wooden rounded object that suggests an opposing formal proposition. It differs in material and scale, occupying a much smaller space, and is made as an indivisible exposed object that is attached to the wall, rather than composed of individual units that are welded together as the green structure is. It defines a space not through division, but by protruding itself out of wall's surface in an assertive manner that conveys self-sufficiency and autonomy. Although these material objects and formal propositions define different experiential modalities through their particular occupation of the gallery space, they are not viewed as disparate or unrelated. Instead they point out that relations can be formed between opposing propositions much in the same way in which those that are separated by rank are nonetheless linked by what separates them. This realization is made possible because these objects, existing as they are in an indeterminate zone, solicit a particular kind of sensibility that is also at the same time an encounter with the unnoticed.

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