Space as Expression: Some Thoughts on Dimensionality

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Sometimes a group exhibition offers a new way to think about what a group exhibition could be. *Dimensionality*, an exhibition curated by Andy Patton at YYZ Artists' Outlet, is a special accomplishment in this regard.

Having been to the show, and sensing that something very unique was presented there, I came to realize that it would not be fruitful to follow the usual procedure in reviewing a group show—i.e. to discuss the individual merits of the works in relation to overarching thematic concerns. *Dimensionality* foregrounds something else: a new thematic concern. Dimensionality works in relation to overarching spatial experience, a new relationship between space and works. All of which, of course, could only happen in the very space where the works are enlisted to work harmoniously together.

With *Dimensionality*, one cannot regard the gallery space as a neutral container of artworks; one different kind of space—a space that, without losing its integrity and continuity, is nonetheless animated in a multitude of dimensions and directions by the different kinds of works enlisted there. Hence the space seems to be freed from its physical parameters, made looser, loses its contour. It no longer "houses" the works but simply becomes the effect of what the works do. This, I think, is one of the meanings of the show. It is something that cannot be entirely anticipated in advance of the actual "taking place" of the space.

In his introductory text to the exhibition, Patton states that he selected these artists because he sensed a new kind of space in their work. According to Patton, this space is more akin to the virtual, diagrammatic space of the computer and our information society than the illusionistic or pictorial space usually associated with conventional painting. With the exception of one American painter, extract a commonality from these diverse pieces beyond their point of departure. At most, one could say that, in varying degrees, these artists have more or less disregarded the logic of the picture plane. For example, Robert Fones' *trompe l'oeil* effect casts a relief image outward from the picture plane into "real" space. Morna Gamblin projects the coloured planes of a wall sculpture by Donald Judd onto the gallery wall, ceiling and floor, making the Judd completely contingent to the gallery architecture. Nestor Kruger's computer rendering of an interior fluctuates between the sensation of complete flatness and implosion. Kristen Peterson's deliberately incomplete wall drawings compel the viewer to seek a vantage point that would give "sense" to the work. I have seen each of these works elsewhere in the context of solo exhibitions. I found, having experienced *Dimensionality*, that they seem to work better in this group show. Perhaps this is because a solo exhibition implies some sort of closure, thematic or otherwise, that is contradictory to the nature of the works in *Dimensionality*. I think Patton must have intimated more than just a connection between the works. He has orchestrated a new opportunity that is more than the sum of the individual works. The fact that most of the works seem to be motivated by a desire to "take off from" their material constraints into other kinds of space is intensified by having them share the same space. Patton's excellent introductory text, entitled "The Quick Download," outlines his motivation in curating the show and offers brief and insightful accounts of the works. In it, Patton notes that space is the initial frontier. This leads me to understand what actually happens in the show. Its space is an expression of the works. This is something I certainly could not have anticipated and its effect is a wonderful surprise. I think, for the curator, artists and audience alike.

David REED, Judith's Bedroom, 2003. Digital C-Print. 8.5 in x 15.25 in. Photo: courtesy of the artist.


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