

Derosia

Dominic Kim, Superposition, Issue 2, Autumn 2023

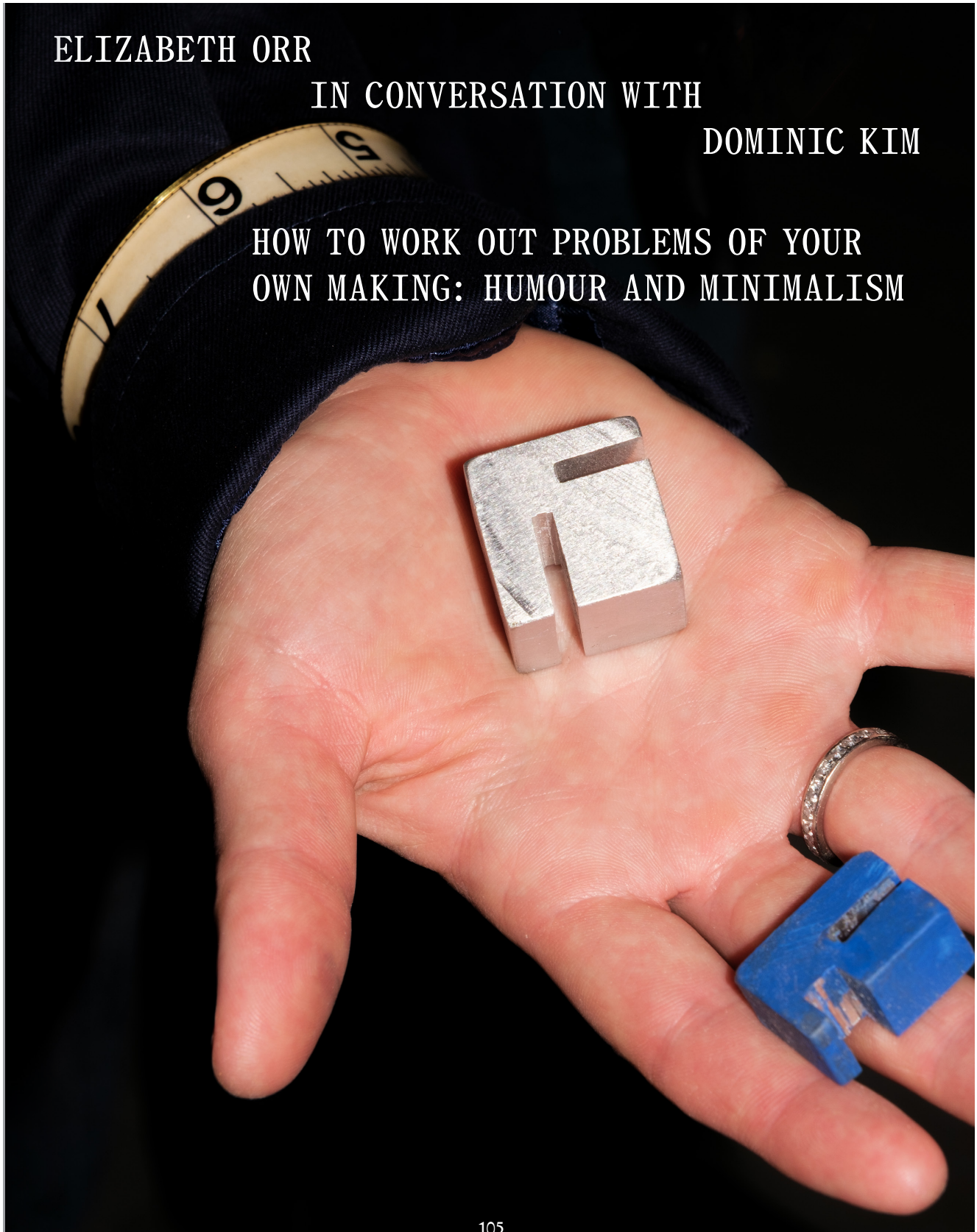
SUPERPOSITION

ELIZABETH ORR

IN CONVERSATION WITH

DOMINIC KIM

HOW TO WORK OUT PROBLEMS OF YOUR
OWN MAKING: HUMOUR AND MINIMALISM



DK It's been quite a while since we last talked. What has happened since, and what are you busy with now?

EO Last time we talked, I was preparing for a residency in Napoli, making work for Vin Vin in Vienna. Napoli was wild and busy. After that, I have just been in New York, and now I'm working towards my third solo show at Derosia, opening in January 2023. Yesterday, I moved from Williamsburg to Fort Greene in Brooklyn.

DK Has anything developed from your idea to collaborate more with architects?

EO I'm now interviewing my friend Pierre de Brun, who works for an architecture firm in New York City. My show is based on a saying, 'the code builds the building, or the code makes the building.' The interview was videoed and will be included in the show. Pierre talks about how as an architect, you can't always do everything you want, which we both think is a beautiful thing. I begin by asking him about constraints in his work with public housing and how those constraints lead him to make design decisions. As an artist, I work within my own rules, which I invented. A sculpture and building code.

It's the dynamics of rules and breaking those rules that I'm interested in, I guess, but there is also always the ruler that rules me. Measurements are central. I also like to think about abstraction, finding room for abstraction within measurements. What does it mean to choose different sizes and so on?

DK It's interesting how these disciplines work within a chosen or given framework. Even if the work is not physical, we must rely on common rules and dimensions. In this context, let's talk about your recent works. They seem larger or is that just an impression?

EO Some are still the same size as the earlier works, and a few are larger, but the smaller works are often perceived as large. I think, partially, this is because of a precedent set by minimalism. The smaller ones measure just 25 inches, and the bigger ones are big.

DK In the older works, there have been much smaller elements that remind me of blinds or household objects, but now they are less, and with these larger elements, I feel like they're getting more abstract. But it's moving away from those household objects and becoming something new. It becomes harder to relate to a familiar scale. Then your work interests me in reference to the city and its relation to the scale of the urban structure. You grew up in Los Angeles and now live in New York, so do you notice differences in that relationship?

EO 105%, It's night and day. California has expanded on all kinds of levels, energetically, spatially, etc. In New York, you feel like you're inside something, and in California, you feel like you're without something. It's much more free fall and outdoors. It's funny, I often wonder why I live in NYC. I don't want to get into the LA vs New York discussion because it's overlaid. I see these works as very

internal, very much about fixtures, what I'm calling architectural attributes: wall plates for light switches, blinds, grates, and shutters, are all attributes. They're not necessarily structural, but they are attributes of architecture. They're a sort of addition or an appearance of architecture. They are an attribute, something that can change, that can be interchangeable, or that can shift, easily replaced.

The blinds are very internal, and windows are a subject in art history. It's the perfect metaphor for looking outward; there's nothing that gives me more pleasure than seeing one of those windows on a wall. It's a façade and, at the same time, an art object. It doesn't necessarily have a use in architecture, but it has a relationship to architecture.

I'm very invested in contradictions. It's important for me that things are not so clearly spelt out in art, film, music, or anything. I like it when there's room for some nuanced meaning and where clarity isn't the goal. With my work, it's exciting to me how contradiction leads to a meaning outside of hierarchies and moral and value-based judgments. I feel this when people talk about a 'third' in art. I lean away from using the 'third' to describe my work.

I always loved how in algebra, if you have a negative, then a closed parenthesis, and another negative, it makes a positive. Twists and rules which break other rules are very exciting, especially in the graphic quality of integers in algebra. The window on the wall is like a shutter that opens to nothing and does nothing.

DK You were talking earlier about these codes or rules that you've created yourself. How did you develop them? Was it a process that evolved over time, or was it a theme to which you stuck to certain elements?

EO That's a good question. It's probably comparable to how you see 'Superposition'. Sometimes it feels like working on it is tedious, but other times it's amazing because you invented a problem to solve: it's your fault. When you ask how I developed this thing, I see that the decision to do something outside of a purely capitalist way of working is so inherent that it's purely on its own trip. I'm working for the project, it's not working for me. I developed my own codes or rules that I wanted to work through. I'm not entirely clear on when or how it happened, but it happened.

DK So, it's intuition.

EO Exactly. And it was influenced by my late father, light and space artist Eric Orr (1939–1998). He worked with measurements as part of his language of abstraction in his sculptures made of metal, using water, fire, etc.

My sculptural work also has a lot to do with my video editing practice and how I work with technology. As a person, as an artist, and as a worker, I first used the internet when I was in kindergarten. I'm a true Millennial, but I like to think I'm a Millennial Cusp. Major queries for me are:

How has minimalism influenced the design of technology, and how has that design of

technology influenced art? We are in a specific period right now where we've developed a lot of prosumer devices. Attainable devices and software are being used to create professional content. We're very prosumer-focused right now. We're prosumers of technology, not just consumers anymore. So I'm interested in the relationship between art and technology, particularly how minimalism influenced the design of technology in the 1960s, and now in 2022, how art is influenced by technology or the design of technology, and technology itself.

DK Last time we talked a little about man versus machine and the use of technology in your work, I was surprised that you do almost all the elements by hand. Especially those joints that connect the elements together. Material-wise, we talked about that contradiction, for example, in the use of metal paints.

EO I work mainly with aluminium, glass and Plexiglass. All the materials are flat panels, and my project is to make them all fit together. All my measurements are either 1/8 or 1/4 inch. The sculptures are modular.

For future projects, I want everything to snap together. That's my goal. Most of it, I cut myself on the table saw. I have the slots cut with the laser, but I make a model first. I sand all the aluminium with an orbital sander, which creates this finish that's not even, but it removes all the scratches, and I like the texture.

Going back to your statement about the handmade and the machine-made, it's a very fruitful part of this work because it leads to contradictions; I don't believe in a rivalry between machine and handmade. When you talk about it, I think we're much more connected to machines and more adaptable. In Jean Baudrillard's 'Simulacra and Simulation', he goes on and on about this disconnect between nature and technology, using Las Vegas as an example. I don't think it's that strange. I don't think there's a force there. It gets a little sketchy when he comes to mega-powers, greed, wealth, and capitalism. Technology is weaponised by superpowers. The baseline is cumulative; we are using each other's tools. It's a tool situation. Anyway, I'm getting off-topic.

DK Is it strictly an economic aspect of cutting things by hand, or do you want to do it by hand? Do you want to do it yourself, or is it part of the process? Does imperfection create a quality?

EO Yes, let's come back to that. It's economic. I'm an artist living in New York City in 2022. I sell my work when it sells. I would like to do more ambitious projects, for example, snapping is something which will happen once I get a museum exhibition that will give me some production funding. Or I will find a way to work with some engineers. I'm American. I'm Aspirational.

In an old artist talk, I spoke about reading artists' work once you find out how/if they make money outside of their artistic practice. This person works in advertising or as a nanny, a carpenter, a bartender. Now, I'm working in fashion advertising,

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specifically in a post-production house. I'm the Post Production Coordinator. I work remotely from my studio. It's an employer's worst nightmare. I get all the work done. I'm fine, but it is economical.

DK Do you choose the angles freely and intuitively? I think it's about composition,

E0 Exactly. It's amazing to use the language of the blinds as a starting point for that. Sometimes the blinds are all closed or open, for example. When I first moved to New York, my blinds were all messed up, and the landlords couldn't be bothered to fix them. They were these wooden blinds, with some open and closed and others broken. So that was the first idea that came out of that window.

DK I like that they're not 100% perfect.

E0 A gallerist I work with came into my studio and said: "You know, a difficult part of your work is thinking about perfection. And the handmade, that's difficult because the work is begging for perfection. It's also about negotiating the desire for perfection. That's part of the art. It's so wild." For example, I'm now using distressed Plexiglass discarded from a shop in Long Island. The supply chain has emerged as a significant global concern. Often when looking at large-scale sculptures, I think about the supply chain. When I see a huge metal sculpture or something, I think, "man, how much money did that cost? What is that thing? What resources did it take to get this where it is?"

DK Do you mean upcycling?

E0 Sort of. I love upcycling. In my practice, I often look for ways to upcycle, but not in just a symbolic way.

DK I have a technical question. You said that the sides of your sculptures are laser cut, and I'm wondering if those are the only parts and if the others are done by hand?

E0 Exactly. I used to do the sides with a jigsaw but luckily abandoned that challenge. Both sides have to be perfect, or the whole thing is screwed up. You have to be exact, or it's a nightmare.

DK I'll come back to the colour. The green and the blue remind me of a green screen and a blue screen. I don't know if that has anything to do with it, but I'm wondering if you've tried other, more industrial finishes like anodising, or if you're mainly concerned with painting it yourself?

E0 Usually, I use a compressor and a spray gun to paint, but recently I've been trying to emulate a technique that creates texture, usually used for interiors called a French Wash, sort of like Venetian Plaster. You paint a lighter colour. You let it dry, and then you apply a darker colour. After that, you take muslin, scrunch it up, and pat it down. It's like wallpaper. It's inevitably kitschy, but I like it when you can see it that way. I'm also interested in bringing in this weird language of strange interiors or wall applications, but it's also beautiful. I also treated the surface of my piece 'Central

Rounds' for Celine's collection; the work is in one of their stores in Tokyo.

DK You sent it to me, and I think I've seen it somewhere.

EO It's aluminium; I sand it down, put salt water and a little bleach on it, wrap it in used plastic bags and put it in the sun. I let it bake there, and then this patina develops on its surface; it's reassuring not knowing what will happen. I treat the surface multiple times.

DK I remember you telling us about transporting the works to Italy in a suitcase. How did that go?

EO It was great. It worked, and I transported stuff back that I didn't end up using. Since my logic for constructing is modular, and as I'm working with eight and quarter-inch sheets of aluminium and glass, I can use wood pieces that I cut. I can use all of my pieces for different works.

DK When did you develop this modular way of working?

EO I was interested in using the language of architectural models and frames. Also, I wanted to make a sculpture that was working within its own construction language, developing a language of construction through and through. I also want everything to slide together, to fit just so, and to be able to be taken apart. Some people say it's sexy, but who knows: they are just a slit in the wood. The way the pieces are held together creates frames, but it's little pieces holding things together, fragments of an A-frame. I also chose the colours based on video language. The bright green is the same as a green screen that you can chroma key out.

DK That's what I guessed, and I assume the same is true for the blue.

EO Yes, some blue but also yellow, I wanted to do something yellow, but for some reason, no yellow colour appealed to me; I had the idea to colour it with turmeric, a spice that represents the essence of yellow; it was sacred to me, I couldn't approach it another way, but I am also obsessed with mintgreen; I love that colour. It's like Kelly green. I also wanted it to look like a princess cake or Wedgewood, with an interior decorating strategy. I love interior design choices. Interiors fall under the architectural attribute category. Not *structural*. The shades of blue that I sometimes use seem utilitarian to me. I think to myself, "let's make it a colour's colour," and that's a utilitarian blue.

DK I feel that continuity is becoming more important in your work, but you spoke about a discontinuity between all your different kinds of work; how do you decide what to make for a particular exhibition, and how are your shows connected to this idea of conflict and interaction?

EO Very connected. I'm obsessed with having a very concise conceptual premise for exhibitions. My first solo exhibition was

called 'Lost Lead'. It's funny being an emerging artist in New York, as you might not sell anything, but 'LossLead' was an idea used in marketing. For example, when the bank gives you a pen with their name on it, the price of the pen is a loss for the bank. To make the pen and then give it away to you is a loss to the bank, but as a loss leader, it might lead to other things. My whole show was like a loss leader. I used a kind of formica for the sculptures in 'Loss Lead', a laminate surface you may see in a more institutional setting like a big university or as a diner countertop. In America it often flags some sense of unease, a cheap way to have a smooth, easy-to-clean surface. Formica spoke to this idea of a *lossleader*, a decision made by a corporation or an institution; a decision.

Similarly, I'm thinking about building codes and discovering how they relate to my own codes as an artist and their relationship to what I'm producing. I'm interviewing Pierre de Brun, a French architect based in NYC, about architecture and how building codes influence architectural decisions.

Now, I'm very focused on my January 2023 show with Derosia. I will soon be saying, "OK, buckle up, *this* is what I want to do in the show." I'm still asking myself questions like; how do I want to frame it? Am I *allowed* to do it? What book do I want to write? I'm starting to work with the ready-made; rulers and wall plates for lighting switches. I want objects in the space that you are not desirable in the art space; to subvert the precious and commercial quality of the gallery space.

DK I know from friends and painters that every once in a while, they have shows where they have a certain number of hours, along the lines of, "this is how much I can do in a year. I can paint about six paintings", or something like that. And they need to be invested in these things. So when you have a concept for a work, how many variations of that work do you make during the process? As an architect, you have this crazy range of iterations through circumstance and decline. Different parameters determine how you have to proceed, and there are choices to be made with considerations like the economic aspects. But when there is a strong idea at the beginning, it's about the survival of that idea with all these messy things that dictate that. How fast do you get to a finished piece? How does the process look? I feel like you're comfortable with those elements, but that's maybe just my imagination. You're fast.

EO The process of deciding how to do the work is strange, as it's both slow and fast. I don't know how to explain it. I'm good at working under deadline pressure. I thrive on it. I've been thinking about this work since March. It's been really slow, but then it'll wash over, and I can be fearless. It's hard for me to put a time frame on the different works, as though I'm monetising my labour in capitalist time, which of course, is nearly impossible to ignore.

DK Do you do sketches?

EO Yes, I sketch; I use Plexiglass and a lot of cardboard for that as well.

DK There is a 1:1 model. When you work on that scale, there's so much more to it than the finished piece. I think that process is super interesting, the sketches, those construction drawings, the unfinished parts, and the assembly; that's the actual artwork. But I think that's something that you don't show. It's just the perfect artwork that you would end up showing in a gallery.

EO Yeah, it seems like it came out of nowhere, but it didn't. It went through a huge process. It's crazy.

DK I was reading something about humour, which is a difficult subject in architecture. There have been periods that some would say failed because they were based on humour. Is there a humorous aspect to your work, and how is that connected to you?

EO Yes, humour is important to my work and my life. The way it operates, with people getting it sometimes and other times not. Some people are more amused by my artwork, and some will be repulsed or bored, saying it is serious. I'm open to all of it: please give me the range of human responses. Manipulation is overrated; for example, using French wash is funny but equally beautiful. I need all the meanings, all the contradictions. All of the green pieces do this as a perfect-looking object on the wall, which is kind of funny, but on the other hand, it's a green screen that looks good. I think it's exciting when both aspects coexist, especially for minimalist sculpture. It's a contradiction, but that's also what humour is. Funny to some and not to others.

DK Yes, I agree.

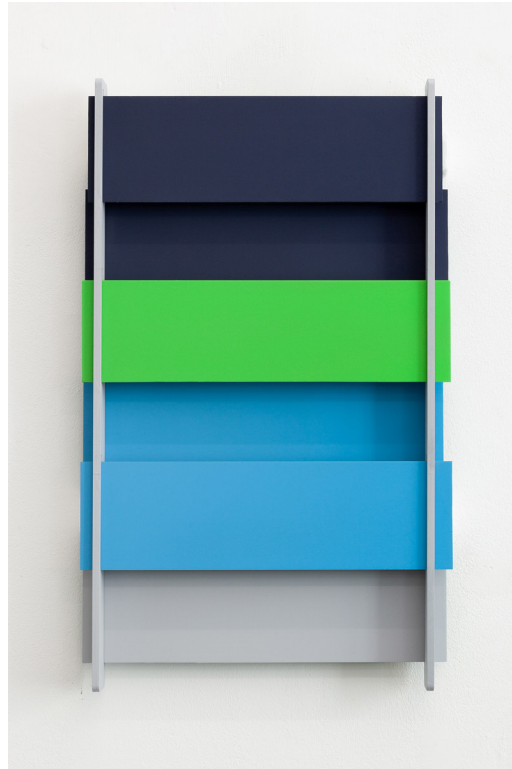
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Dominika Tylcz, BOMB, July 17, 2023

BOMB

Elizabeth Orr Interviewed by Dominika Tylcz

Sculpture that investigates architecture and perception.



Elizabeth Orr, Color Bars #5, 2023, acrylic, wood, aluminum, 19.5 × 11.75 × 2.25 inches. Photo by Flavio Palasciano. Courtesy of the artist and VIN VIN, Vienna.

Elizabeth Orr’s sculptures employ codes of built environments, often taking the shape of architectural elements like louvered shades, outlet plates, fences, and other barriers that obscure sight lines. Through a subtle yet determined reconfiguration of these elements, Orr turns them into what she terms “Architectural Attributes”: abstracted architectural forms that call attention to the ways in which they structure the space, movement, and meanings around them. By emphasizing objects that usually linger in our peripheral vision, Orr plays with the mechanisms of framing and exclusion, which makes me think that her medium is not necessarily sculpture but rather perception.

—Dominika Tylcz

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Dominika Tylcz, BOMB, July 17, 2023

Dominika Tylcz

Your works often live on walls, and when approached frontally they can come across as painting impostors. Simultaneously, they enter into a parasitic relationship with the gallery's architecture. Why do you give your sculptures this ambiguous status?

Elizabeth Orr

I love the three-hundred-and-sixty-degree quality of sculpture. But I am also interested in playing with elements of directional engagement. I think of my wall-hanging sculptures in relation to perception as well as drawing an analogy with theater. In theater, there is a fourth wall that is the invisible wall between the performer and the audience. The fourth wall exists in opposition to the backstage. I look to engage with the space around the object that is hanging on the wall by drawing attention to the apparatus that allows it to hang.

This idea of "painting imposter" is funny to me. Perhaps this is something that we can celebrate? Honestly, I feel like few paintings aren't imposters of paintings. In a way, I'm hanging a prop of a window, or shutters, or a fence on a wall; so it changes the wall and could change our perception of the wall. Are we seeing from the inside out? The outside in? The in in? The out out? Does it highlight the commercial context of the gallery's white wall or a domestic space? I see these elements as the imposter that complicates "illusion" but not as an imposter of painting.



Installation view of Elizabeth Orr: Calibration, 2023, VIN VIN, Vienna. Photo by Flavio Palasciano. Courtesy of the artist and VIN VIN, Vienna.

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DT

You return to the same form many times, which is a gesture that conjures Minimalism's discrete objects and mass-produced goods. But your commitment to shutters specifically has lasted almost a decade. What sustains your interest in these things?

EO

My longstanding work with glass panes relates to the metaphor of a window, which has now turned explicitly into blinds and shutters. Glass is full of symbolism. It's an everyday interface, a screen, a window; it's a mediating surface with a substantial symbolic history of use in commerce, as in window shopping. Glass is delicate and desirable, and it has an inherent seduction that continues to appeal to me.

Minimalism is a deep root for me. I grew up in my father's studio in Venice Beach. He was the Light & Space artist Eric Orr (1953–1998) and was very committed to Minimalism in his work and incorporating it into his everyday life as it relates to Zen Buddhism. Because I was indirectly and directly introduced to these concepts as a kid, I have internalized Minimalism as an art movement and as a guiding principle and approach to life, to capitalism, and to everyday objects.

Minimalism has the reputation for being very hands-off. I see my work as being very hands-on. Although the works are iterative and refer to mass-produced objects, they are not entirely fabricated. I make them in my studio; there are sometimes fingerprints and inconsistencies.

DT

There's another conceptual outcome of the repetition which is that it's as if you are enacting a script for an object, testing the limits within which it still maintains its integrity. There's this unusual performative dimension to your sculptures. Do you consider it in relation to your sculptural work?

EO

Working through iterative forms is incredibly fruitful for me. I am invested in creating meaning through subtle changes and ruptures in repetition. Because my sculptural work is rooted in my practice as a video artist, it is hard to deny a performative dimension of the work. However, it is less about performativity and more about objects' potential to be activated and in what ways. I want the sculpture to be both inactive and refer to the potential for activation. So, as you can imagine, louvered blinds are a perfect symbol of inherent activation in that they are designed to have movement.

I am interested in how Kinetic and Optical art movements emerged when cinema was becoming mainstream and were in direct relationship with—and some would say in competition with—cinema. My intention is to give my sculptures an inherent presentation of motion. I have a fascination with lyricism in film/video and music—specifically, timing, movement, and spacing. These are echoed in my sculptural practice through slight shifts in repetitive forms; some of the works are even called Variations, like music.

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Dominika Tylcz, BOMB, July 17, 2023



Elizabeth Orr, Quick Crate #1, 2023, acrylic, wood, aluminum, 8.5 × 7.75 × 1.5 inches. Photo by Flavio Palasciano. Courtesy of the artist and VIN VIN, Vienna.

DT

This performative potential also relates to the perceptual play in which you engage your viewers. It's magical to me how you manage to heighten the moment of seeing and ground my experience in the here and now. How do you prepare this perceptual scaffolding for your viewers?

EO

That phrase “prepare the perceptive scaffolding” resonates with me. I look to exteriors of buildings and how they vacillate between moments of visibility, design, and structural decisions. I use mostly one-eighth-inch- and quarter-inch-thick sheet metal and glass with the parts sliding together and constructed to be modular. The transparency or opacity of the surfaces in my practice are the scaffolding as they maneuver between visibility, opacity, transparency, and color in an attempt to create narratives. The different perceptual sequencing is linear and nonlinear, perhaps on top of one another, a tilt here or there, or something just visible enough.

DT

Your work also reveals omissions, shortcuts, and ellipses of perception. Are you drawn to these moments? Do you wish to make implicit presences visible again around your sculptures?

EO

Through visibility, invisibility, and more often than not against spectacle, I work toward

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contradicting methods of displaying presence. I see art-making as an opportunity for a close read. Subtlety is very important while at the same time creating an object that feels familiar, something anyone can project onto. The past couple of years I have framed my work as “Architectural Attributes” under the umbrella of what I call “Perceptual Scenarios.”

EO

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *The Primacy of Perception* is a formative text for me. I relate it to how perception can operate in art. In the book, there is a passage where Merleau-Ponty writes: “Perception does not give me truths like geometry but presences. I grasp the unseen side as present, and I do not affirm that the back of the lamp exists in the same sense that I say the solution of a problem exists. The hidden side is present in its own way. It is in my vicinity.” I relate “the lamp” to wall-hanging sculpture; all the other visible parts of the object suggest the entire form of the object itself. Similar to the fourth wall in theater, wall-hanging is asking for a direction that rests on the imaginary. It is an unseen possibility, a potential.



Installation view of Elizabeth Orr: *Calibration*, 2023, VIN VIN, Vienna. Photo by Flavio Palasciano. Courtesy of the artist and VIN VIN, Vienna.

DT

The way you approach architecture is so uniquely analytical. Could you tell me how you think of architecture and what aspects of it are fundamental to your practice?

EO

My references to architecture are abstracted, pragmatic, and illustrative. When I use the term “Architectural Attributes” to describe my sculptures, it is not about purely structural concerns but also attributes which are design choices in architecture that perhaps result from building

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codes but that have a function that allows for a design component. “Architectural Attributes” mean elements, essences, and semblances of architecture. I’m trying to extract an essence of, and at the same time refer to, very concrete examples.

DT

In your show at Derosia earlier this year, the video *This Room* (2023) illustrated how your work indexes different protocols constituting a room and its uses. The first sentence of the script you wrote says, “This room knows I’m here.” It reminded me of Alvin Lucier’s *I am sitting in a room*, a musical piece in which he used a recording of his voice to amplify sonically the shape and presence of the architectural space. Could you tell me more about how you think about this reciprocal awareness between people and rooms?

EO

This Room begins with waxing poetic; it’s also a spell in a way: “This room knows I’m here.” We are in the room at the art show; things are placed with intention, but also this room is designed for us to inhabit it.

The second half of the video is an interview with New York–based architect Pierre de Brun. We discuss how building code builds the building. As an architect, you can’t always do everything you want, which we both think is a beautiful thing. He speaks to constraints in his work designing public housing and how those constraints lead to design decisions. It’s sculpture and building code, and the dynamics of rules and breaking those rules is what I’m interested in.

Elizabeth Orr: *Calibration* is on view at VIN VIN in Vienna until July 22.

Dominika Tylcz is a curator and writer based in Queens, New York. Their research revolves around spatial and embodied modes of meaning-making.

ARTFORUM



Elizabeth Orr, In and Of, 2021, aluminum, wood, plexiglass, 24 x 15 x 1 1/2”.

VIENNA

Elizabeth Orr

VIN VIN

Hintzerstrasse 4

March 26–April 24, 2021

Elizabeth Orr’s exhibition “The Over There” is about perception: The artist wants to separate architectural elements from their ordinary context, thereby relieving them of their typical function and transforming the viewer’s impression of them. In the show, this strategy of defamiliarization is realized quite effectively. Individual pieces appear lost and lonely, isolated on one wall each. However, if this curatorial decision highlights the spatial effects of decontextualization, it also serves to bring each individual work into focus.

The objects on display can be divided into two categories. On the one hand, there are vertical rectangular structures, such as *In and Of* and *Blue Screen* (all works cited, 2021). These are composed of an aluminum frame, Plexiglas slats, and wooden fixtures, one in green and the other in blue. Their appearance derives from louvered blinds, their

Plexiglas slats angled as if to modulate the amount of light allowed into an interior space. On the other hand, the horizontally oriented *Viewfinder* and *Rest (1)*, wherein the artist uses green wooden fixtures to mount sheets of aluminum behind a glass pane, seem to allude to the qualities of reflection and transparency generally associated with windows.

Looking at these works, I’m reminded of Fredric Jameson’s well-known passage identifying the depthlessness of the postmodern world with the seemingly weightless reflective glass surfaces of buildings such as Skidmore, Owings and Merrill’s Wells Fargo Center in Los Angeles. Orr, however, is not prepared to give up on depth. As if in answer to Jameson, her adaptations of windows and blinds break down the totality of architectural surfaces. In doing so, she reinterprets them as subtle phenomenological devices, inviting the spectator to explore the openings, fissures, and planes that mediate between their viewing position and the imaginative space contained “Over There.”

— *David Misteli*

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Jeanne Vaccaro, BOMB Magazine, June 2021

BOMB

Come to My Window by Jeanne Vaccaro

The aesthetics and erotics of boundaries and portals.



Elizabeth Orr, *Blue Screen*, 2021, wood, aluminum, plexiglass, 20 × 15 × 1.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

If the pandemic has been a portal to a portal, it has also been windows all the way down. My eyes are wobbly from the journey. I wasn't sure I could even trust my vision when, sitting on my couch, mid-Instagram scroll, I thought I saw something on the screen that was surely a projection: a jalousie window. Perfectly executed to scale but confusingly placed on a wall—was I meant to look at it or through it? This window wasn't mine. It belongs to video artist and sculptor Elizabeth Orr. Orr's exhibition *The Over There* at Vin Vin (2021) takes the architectural out of context, exhibiting a window on a wall as a collection of planes to be looked at. Over a series of works beginning with her lecture "Spirits in Rotation," Orr has been preoccupied with glass as a mediating surface between us and "something else." The something else might be technology, as in the glass screen on our computer or cell phone that inevitably breaks, or the wider field of capital and commodity, as in the window shopping and commercialization of goods on display. The walls of the gallery mediate the surface between consumer and desire.



Elizabeth Orr, *Open Frame*, 2021, wood, aluminum, plexiglass, 24 x 15 x 1.5 inches (left); *Spirits in Rotations*, 2020, aluminum, plexiglass, 24 x 15 x 1.5 inches (right). Courtesy of the artist.

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Jeanne Vaccaro, BOMB Magazine, June 2021

Made during the pandemic, Orr's louvered blinds are both figurative and minimalistic. Affixed to the gallery wall on their perimeter, a white window looks onto a white wall. The confrontation with perspective is immediate, as is the intervention into the hegemonic reign of the white wall of the gallery. This question of relational orientation to objects, people, and environments is theatricalized by Orr's "fake architectural moment." Orr has reverse engineered the process of mechanical standardization so it is no longer regulated, but personal, imprecise. Inspired by the bent and bruised domestic blinds on a living-room window she looked out of for many years in Brooklyn, *The Over There* asks if the only two available perspectives are being on the inside looking out or being on the outside looking in. This process of defamiliarization is meant to activate the viewer's proprioceptive senses, tuning in to the often unremarked architectural detritus that gives our experience a structure and a shape. The domestic is not private anymore, if it ever was. The domestic is the public I inhabit. If I began the pandemic looking at contemporary art through browser windows, I eventually came to look at my windows through contemporary art. Through this interface I see myself as participating in the aesthetics and erotics of publicity, my interior space distinct from and connected to what is outside the frame, as I look out onto the world.

Derosia

John Garcia, Art Observed, October 15, 2017



ART OBSERVED

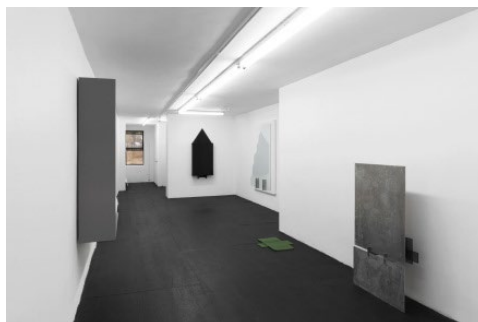
NEW YORK – ELIZABETH ORR: “OUR HALLWAY IS SURROUNDED”
AT BODEGA THROUGH OCTOBER 15TH, 2017

October 15th, 2017



Elizabeth Orr, House (2017), via Bodega

In the back room of Bodega, a new video by Elizabeth Orr began with one word: “HERE,” a coy move to set the location before her projected video lit up with a full sentence that manages to double back on the grandiosity of its previous line: “There is no spectacle to be revealed.” This statement, taken in conjunction with the artist’s minimalist sculptures arranged around the front room, sets a terse, self-critical tone for Orr’s new exhibition, *Our Hallway is Surrounded*, a show that makes much of the act of both creating space, and dispensing with that same space’s contextual aura.



Elizabeth Orr, *Our Hallway is Surrounded* (Installation View), via Bodega

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John Garcia, Art Observed, October 15, 2017

Orr's sculptural works seem to be in clear dialogue with art history. They are not merely "influenced" by minimalism, but present themselves as meticulous facsimiles of the cutting-edge work of the mid-1960's. Even the declaration, "There is no spectacle to be revealed," presents itself in the same deconstructive tone as that of Frank Stella's famous line "what you see is what you see." Or, to take the press release at its most literal, "through a resolutely obscure layering of imagery and tinted glass, Orr's work reveals nothing but the mechanism of revelation itself."



Elizabeth Orr, A Free Economy Farmed and Hunted (2017), via Bodega

That being said, Orr's video also moves beyond Stella's tautology. Moments before a green chessboard floats across the screen, a block of text appears, ending with the line, "Morality to the strategy is inconsequential." While immediately referencing how to play Chess "FOR THE WIN" (another line from the video), her text takes a more interesting tone when applied to the subject of historical minimalism. In excising the pseudo-spiritualism that Ab-Ex painters, like Barnett Newman for instance, lumped onto their work, Orr makes the case that minimalists also threw out the moral imperatives that is often part of any spiritual or religious hierarchies. Or perhaps more notably, they did away with that end of their thinking entirely.

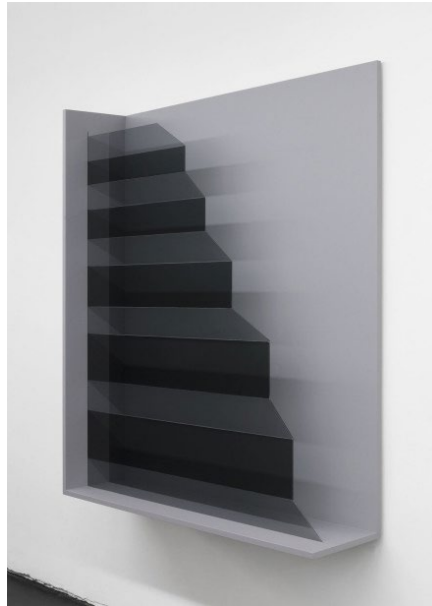


Elizabeth Orr, Hunter (2017), via Bodega

The titles of the five sculptural works also set up a dichotomy between the moral roots of domesticity, or "old country" life and the muddled moralities of technology and academia. Farmer, House, and Hunter refer to a bygone era when a day off from the fields meant a day in church, while Central Server brings to mind the facelessness of the inner-workings of the Internet. Another work, A Free Economy Farmed and Hunted underlines the personal disconnect of highbrow political movements meant to save the proletariat.

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John Garcia, Art Observed, October 15, 2017



Elizabeth Orr, Farmer (2017), via Bodega

Considering the artist's aesthetics alone, Orr's sculptures are quiet and beautiful. Each piece straddles the line between sculpture and wall work, with only *A Free Economy Farmed and Hunted*, a deconstructed cardboard box painted green and backed with felt, standing free from any wall supports. The other four sculptural works, each containing a variety of shaped and tinted pieces of glass, are mounted directly to the walls. The face of *Central Server* is made up of two pieces of salt stained aluminum, recalling the surface of Carl Andre's 1969 work, *64 Square Aluminum*. Just behind aluminum is a small set of tinted glass rectangles that butt up to the wall. These small glass pieces are revealed only when viewing the sculpture's profile.



Elizabeth Orr, Our Hallway is Surrounded (Installation View), via Bodega

As visually appealing as these works may be, the more powerful statement is made through Elizabeth Orr's nuanced rereading of the minimalism movement. Orr does not merely pay homage to a style; she instead reopens the casket to cast light on a complicit body. As the physical signifiers of minimalism spread throughout the gallery, Orr examines how their function and meaning have shifted in the present era, and how that function might be repurposed for her own ends.

Orr's exhibition closed on October 15th.

— J. Garcia

Derosia

CSPA, Issue 14, 2016



REGARDING 'MT RUSH': AN INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH ORR

(all images: Mt. Rush, Elizabeth Orr, video still, 2016)

Derosia

CSPA, Issue 14, 2016

Q: Tell us about MT RUSH. How did this piece come to exist, and why?

ORR: One, This question presents a good opportunity to explain the exact dynamic between me and my project MT RUSH. I am working for MT RUSH. Locating the exact time or sequence of how I came to this movie is impossible, in a sense I have no idea how this came to be. But it's been amazing working on this piece and feeling like MT RUSH is not about me, it is outside of me, I am working for this piece.

Two, I know about our chronology.

Our history - a couple of years ago I donated money to advocate for abortion in congress. Since contributing, I have received hundreds of emails from the DCCC begging for funding, demanding I sign a petition or urging me to donate NOW to the Democratic Party. Although I could easily unsubscribe from these emails, I developed a fascination for the audacity of tone, combined with a pleading address - at times oddly personal (i.e. "Obama NEEDS YOU", or a subject line - "WE QUIT... BUT WE DON'T WANT TO QUIT"). In the process of becoming more aware of these marketing strategies, I began to see these mass political emails as a prime example of the current American Political system. Urgent and alarmist terms, guilt-tripping, deceptively personalized, and of course intricately engineered. As part of my research, I began to subscribe to the GOP emails, only to find that a similar strategy is used. The emails began to become a revealing representation of the American political climate. I began scheming of a way to incorporate these emails into a narrative and came to the idea of a solitary figure, a character memorialized in the Great American Outdoors - The National Park Service Ranger - Ann Ranger. Ann Ranger becomes the filter from which to look at these emails, creating a space of interpretation outside of the typical email interface. Where she can look at how alarmist, urgent and, at times, harassing fundraising strategies relate to the current political climate.

Q: The piece exists as a performance and a film, can you tell us about working in those two different mediums? How do you approach the same theme and structure working live vs. working digitally?

ORR: Part of working on MT RUSH was working with EMPAC (The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) as an artist-in-residence. As part of the residency I decided to stage a scene of MT RUSH

as a live performance piece/video installation. I was excited to integrate the energy of a live performance into the finished piece. The scene is set in a video installation of four hanging flatscreens, as Ann Ranger accepts an award for "Most Likely to be a Whistleblower of the National Park Service User Experience." In this scene there is the undeniable tension and uncertainty between the live performer, in this case - Ann Ranger and the audience. Creating more fodder for the already awkward but strong character.

I see my role as directing performances for the camera, along with directing the choreography of the camera (incl. in this case animations) with the subject. I enjoy working with actors in my performances and movies who are not necessarily trained. This becomes symptomatic of the term type-casting. With type-casting you are using subjectivity of the performer which could be their identity, behavior, and emotional sensibility, as part in parcel of the character. The character and actor speak to one another, are unified.

Q: How do you engage with themes of ecology and climate in MT RUSH?

ORR: Questions of ecology and climate are part of MT RUSH, beginning with an inherent critique of the U.S.. While shooting at The Mount Rushmore National Memorial, I realized how much the piece became a study of the memorial itself and the politic of the memorial. I also began to see Mount Rushmore as a powerful land art sculpture, an homage to capitalism.

One example where critique plays a role - in the cinematography I focus on the rock formations which flank the heads, along with the debris that lays beneath the heads- When you imagine Mount Rushmore and the heads of the Presidents- which have been seen a million times before, captured in many different films and images, one has a familiarity of it. Mount Rushmore is a powerful, figurative, land art memorial that is both grounding and grotesque. While there, I was struck by the huge presence of the debris from the mountain. This debris is the rock, the remnants from when the sculptor and team strategically blew up parts of the mountain in order to carefully chip and sculpt the heads. The debris of rocks covers a larger surface area than the heads themselves. As you look at the memorial in person you are actually at eye level with the debris, not the presidents. The debris of the mountain, the action of blowing up the land, lays beneath the heads of the Presidents, creating a direct relation between the colonialism of the America, and in a sense- a turning of heads - from the reality

of that violence towards Native Americans, and the environment. Reflecting the care, precision, violence, and ambition that forms our country and government and the relationship with nature.

Q: The animations become a character in the film, along with goats, landscapes, and Ann Rangers' sunglasses. Can you talk about the role of the non-human in the work throughout? What shapes Ann Rangers' interactions with the world around them?

Yes, while MT RUSH is a one woman show, it also has these other characters that you mention. Specifically the emails, which take on the personality of the oddly personal, demanding, aggressive, and soothing tones. The animations of the e-blasts the (NPS UX- National Park User Interface) for Ann become a companion at the onset of the piece, appeasing and creating an outlet for interaction from the solitude of her day-to-day life. While Ann is alone she is not without input from these e-blasts, sexts from women, and nature.

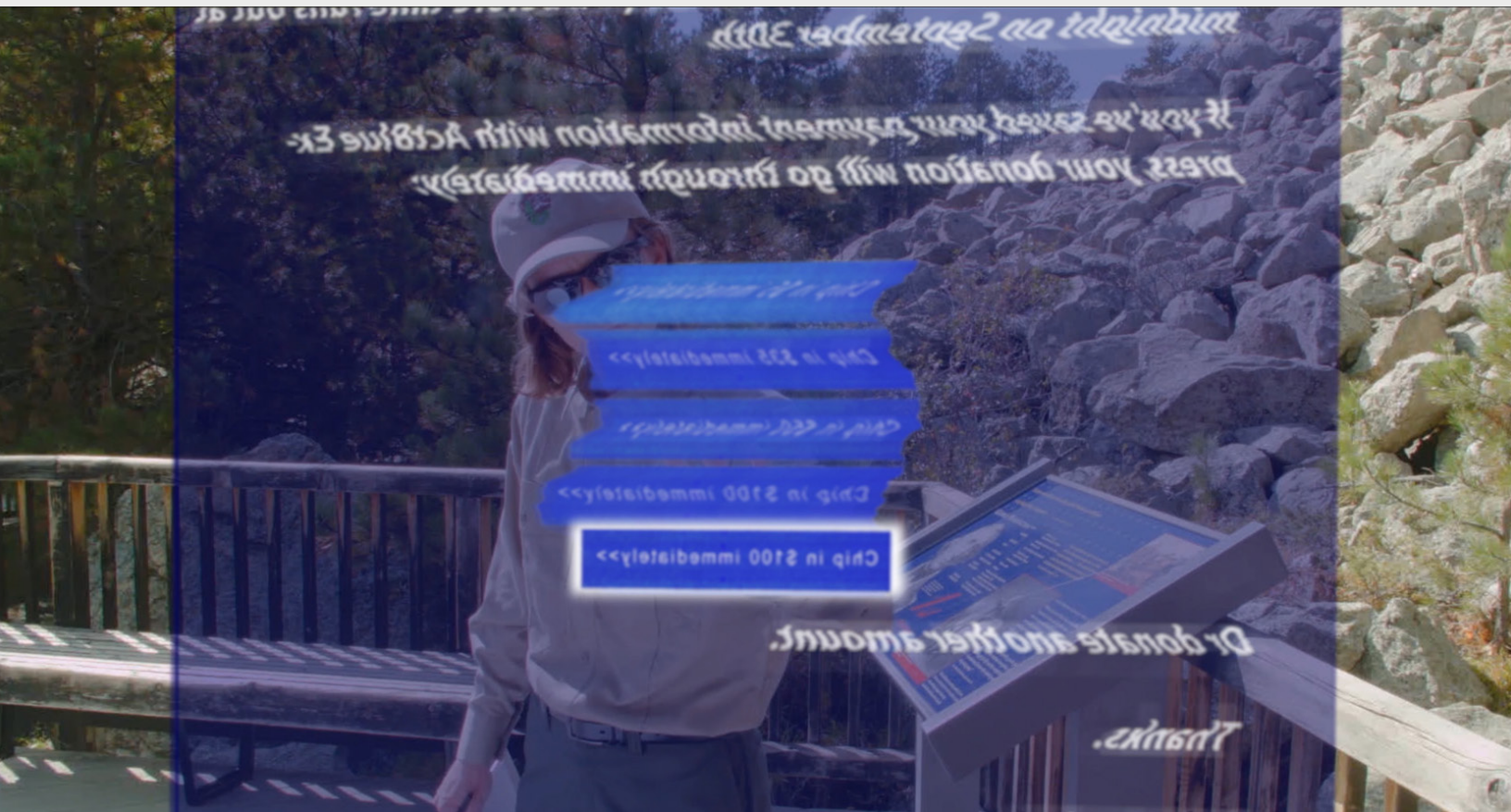
Q: Why do you make films?

ORR: I both love being the director and the collaborative element of the process. I love having the opportunity to bring in different artists/performers/technicians into one project. Along with doing art direction, sound, editing video, the whole process, I love it all.

Video as a digital medium has such potential to reach a broad audience. Making single channel digital work has the capacity to be sent off anywhere, and be seen in many different places. I'm really invested in finding venues for this work all over the U.S. and not just in the certain culturally diverse and rich states. While MT RUSH will not be streaming online initially, the internet also takes on video and the reach of subject matter.

Q: Can you talk about structures of gender in your films, and how you engage with them?

ORR: Assuming Ann's Ranger is how I think about it. Ann Ranger just assumes her gender in her performance. She doesn't explain it. We assume



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that she is gay, queer, or androgynous- she never explicitly explains anything about it in the movie. She just acts as herself and herself is a gender that exists in the imagination and potentially in the desires of many of us. The lone ranger, a lone dyke female ranger.

It's funny how when one sees most media one assumes it has a heterosexuality. This as an idea is pretty amazing, that a piece of work, a video, a sculpture, an artwork, can have a sexuality. Ann is very queer, she sexts with women. Ann in the script describes herself as "A woman who texts other women." I identify MT RUSH, a movie, as a woman who texts other women.

Q: Anything else you would like to add?

ORR: MT RUSH premieres the first week of September at the Museum of Art and Design in NYC. I am currently looking for places all of the country to screen the piece before the 2016 Presidential Election. So if you want to screen, email me and we can talk logistics- etilburyorr@gmail.com

Elizabeth Orr (b. 1984, Los Angeles, CA) is a filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist based in Brooklyn, NY. Currently she is part of the collaborative group - No Total based at Artists Space Books and Talks, and is working on her first large-scale film Mt Rush. Orr is represented by Bodega gallery in NYC and is the manager of her late father, Light and Space artist- Eric Orr's Estate. She received her B.A. in Liberal Arts at Hampshire College and her M.F.A from Bard College in 2014. Her work has been featured in multiple organizations in the U.S and abroad including Artists Space Books and Talks, New York, Recess, NY, MoMA, NY, If I Can't Dance I Don't Want to Be Part of Your Revolution, The Netherlands, ICA Philadelphia, PA, Harvard University Carpenter Center, MA, NurtureArt, NYC, and has been commissioned by MOCAtv, LA and the Museum of Art and Design.



ArtReview

Elizabeth Orr *Loss Lead*

Bodega, New York 4 April – 3 May

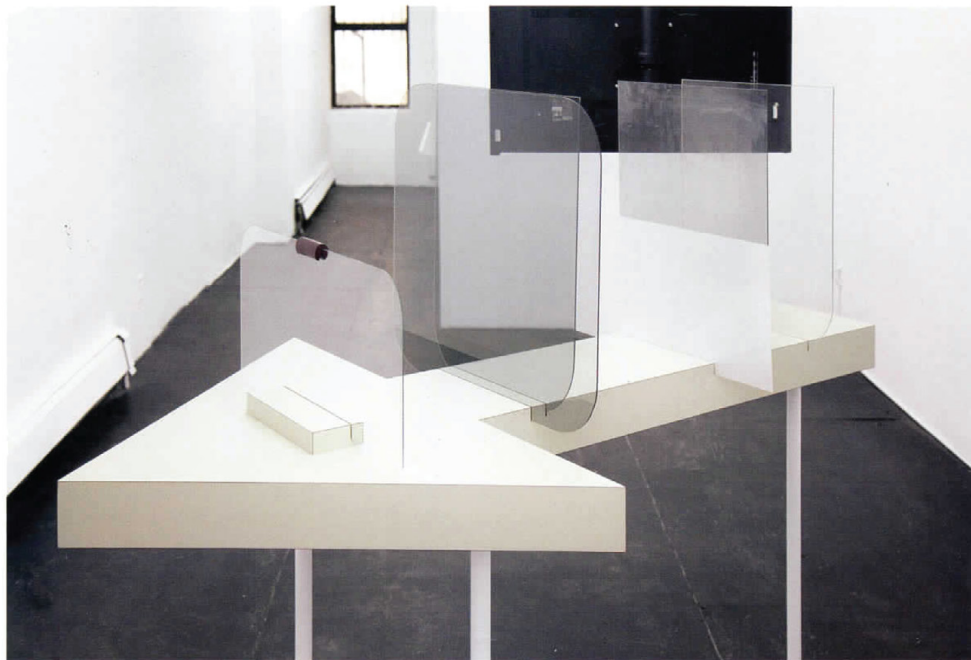
Elizabeth Orr's *Loss Lead* is named after a seemingly counterintuitive marketing strategy that reduces the price – and profitability – of one item to spur sales of another. Bananas at a grocery store are one example; they're usually priced below cost and placed far from an entrance, with the hope that customers will be lured deep into the store and enticed to buy other, surrounding things. Live shows at a casino are another. They're usually unprofitable, though they offer patrons the opportunity to gamble before and after the show, which is when real money is made.

Is there, then, a loss lead of *Loss Lead*? Perhaps it's the strawberry yogurt, which coats a glass pane forming part of the installation *Projected Return* (all works 2015), a big, ridiculous, arrow-shaped tabletop pointing to nowhere but the wall. (Apparently in Sweden they actually frost glass with yogurt.) In *Projected Return*, the yogurt

looks like it was factory-made, not applied directly by Orr. But really, this is beside the point. Loss lead is used here as a crutch to parody corporate marketing strategies and their administrative aesthetics. The arrow is one example. It's inset with different-sized glass panes that look like the kind that separate sad, queuing masses from bank tellers, or the angled glass of presidential teleprompters. The arrow also makes an appearance as a misbehaving cartoon character in the video *Gaussian Catharsis*. It floats back and forth across the screen taunting the work's frustrated human protagonist, who squares off with it on a sidewalk in Albany, New York.

The pleasure of *Loss Lead* is the way Orr makes an abstract muck of her references. *Ghost Posture* is simply a tall piece of bronze glass, inset into a Formica base that could be a cross between a pig trough and a cheap upside-down desk.

In the video *Loss Lead*, the term is defined with jargon about 'strategic meditation in the workplace' and 'predicted future returns'. The video is set in a high-floor conference room in the *New York Times*'s Manhattan headquarters. The camera lingers lovingly on a Poland Spring water bottle, pans over sleek if generically contemporary office furniture and keenly makes one aware that it's high over the city, not down in its streets. This elitist separatism is reinforced choreographically in one of the video's best sequences: the three actors in *Loss Lead* all turn at once to walk towards the room's floor-to-ceiling glass windows, like modern-day flaneurs taking in the city from their privileged positions high, high above it. It's these stylistic overtures to class that make *Loss Lead* interesting. I wish there were more of them. In Orr's hands, they're especially canny. *David Everitt Howe*



Projected Return, 2015, glass, Formica, flavoured yogurt, foam, steel,
36 × 72 × 12 cm. Courtesy Bodega, New York

ARTFORUM

Elizabeth Orr

BODEGA

167 Rivington Street, Lower Level East
April 4–May 3

The sun sets on a passive-solar conference room, on ergonomic pleather rolling chairs around a glossy table with a conference phone. Everyone's excited in this video (Elizabeth Orr's *Applied Marketing Topic: Loss Leader* [all works 2015]) to talk about a pricing strategy for which the piece and exhibition, Orr's first solo, take their names. (A loss lead, like a nascent art practice, is something offered at a profit loss in hope of future gain.) Swiveling toward the camera, a corporately assertive acolyte played by the artist Mariana Valencia vaguely declares: "My understanding of loss lead is just in terms of marketing." Another, played by Emma Hedditch, is eager to learn: "I am going to be interviewing them later this week about strategic meditation in the workplace."



Elizabeth Orr, *Applied Marketing Topic: Loss Leader*, 2015, video.

Such moribund exuberance already suggests the inanimate, and the piece's installation as a sculpture, closely facing one wall and supported by a metal pole descending from the ceiling, cements its continuity with the abstractions on display. The show has nothing on the walls, and at the center of the gallery are two Formica structures, *Ghost Posture* and *Projected Return*, the former's shape resembling a traffic arrow and the latter's something like an airport carry-on size-test box. On these stand unframed panes of minimally varied tinted glass, evoking, perhaps, the Instagram filter array, or just how much the history of Minimalism and the pages of a Uline catalogue really have in common. Corporations are disseminators of aesthetics, too—the architectonic mishmash seems to say—and this is what their dreams look like.

— Abraham Adams

Derosia

Gordon Hall, Title, January 7, 2013

title

Due Diligence: Elizabeth Orr’s Work Ethic

Posted: January 7th, 2013 · Filed under: [Reviews](#)

University of Pennsylvania [Institute of Contemporary Art’s First Among Equals](#), 2012, presented as part of a performance series curated by Bodega

by R. E. H. Gordon

Elizabeth Orr will be performing her work, A Moral Body, on January 19, 2013, 7pm at Bodega.



“work.

amazing.

do you.

go for it.

amazing.

perfect.

100%

totally.

ready.

yes.”

Our work takes many forms. There is the work we do for money, and the work we do for free. We work for ourselves, we work for others. Job-work. Art-work. The work of knowing one another. We work it. We compel and applaud one another for working it. Werrrrkkkkkk. Our work ethic. Elizabeth Orr seeks to make visible the pervasive presence of work, money, and creative labor and the ways these mediate our activities, relationships, and beliefs. Orr locates us in relation to the lived realities of these terms, not in judgment but by mapping our positions, a prying open of this thorny mess. As Orr says: “I didn’t want to make a value judgment on the ethical, religious, and the way we work, just situate it... Where, just where.”

The performance begins with Orr’s voice speaking to us about an old idea—the ethical imperative toward work passed down in the United States from its Protestant forebears. The term “Protestant work ethic,” coined in 1904 by Max Weber, has a complex and specific history but has been generalized over time to become a way of referring to a linkage between ethical behavior and hard work. A good person is a person who works. Idle hands are the devil’s tools. *Work Ethic* poses the questions: How is this belief in the ethicality of diligent labor still operational? How do we understand what we are doing in relation to these inherited narratives? Are there different ways to understand the idea of “good work,” to broaden the definition of what constitutes labor? In the aftermath of an election year defined by talk about the value of hard work and the absence of American jobs, and in the midst of the continued, if muted, development of the Occupy movement, it is an apt moment to re-map these dynamics. Artists continue to do our art-work and our job-work in the shadow of these re-emerging questions. This is, Orr’s performance indicates, a time to make art about work and about money.

Derosia

Gordon Hall, Title, January 7, 2013

Work Ethic is a performance in which the performers play themselves, their verbal first-person accounts serving as the center of the piece. Orr chose an emerging artist and a high-end fashion brand strategist out of enthusiasm for their personal vernaculars and the unique histories of their decisions to pursue their specific careers. Orr was drawn to these two people because of the differences between their lives, choices, and beliefs, and because they are highly motivated and hardworking queer-identified individuals in different, though interrelated, creative economies.

There are implicit tensions between their positions— the idealistic artist, highly skeptical of the influence of the market on her work and life; and the creative realist, exercising her passion for making within the boundaries and benefits of the lucrative field of high-end luxury advertising. Orr, however, is not interested in elevating or vilifying either of these positions, nor is she interested in teasing out the potential conflicts between them. “It’s like I’m an expert on richness, but I’ve never been rich, and I’ve never really been able to buy any of the things that I’m an expert at teaching people how to buy,” remarks the strategist, and we might expect this statement to be set up in the context of the piece as an object of ridicule as it would be by many in the art world who ethically differentiate between art and advertising. Rather, Orr situates each of these narratives in her piece not as exemplary or reproachable positions but as personal narratives that are the result of a complex interplay of idealism, necessity, ethics, and compromise. And in moments, the two positions reveal themselves to be not so distinct from one another; the strategist’s account of her experiences working in the world of high-end fashion advertising could be easily argued to parallel the situation of many contemporary artists with close ties to the commercial art market. In addition to the latent conflicts or confluences between them, both figures frankly discuss the internal conflicts and ambivalences they have about their own industries, expressing enthusiasm, hope, doubt, and frustration in equal measures. In this way, *Work Ethic* provokes us to see the problems and promises of the interplay between creativity, labor, and money not only in disparate creative industries but in the specific narratives of these two queer feminist makers.

This effort at leveling the distinctions between public life and private life is a thread throughout the piece, compellingly conjured in these two figures’ self-reflexive and comic descriptions of their work clothes, and the accompanying silent physical outlining of their bodies in various incarnations: This is what my body looks like. This is what I’m wearing over my body. This is what my body looks like on a good day. And this is what I’m putting over it on a good day. This is what my body looks like on a bad day. And this is what I’m putting on it on a bad day. These descriptions of their physical presences in the world fall somewhere between body image, mirror reflection, and external opinion, and in so doing locate the supposedly personal terrain of one’s own working body as hovering, unstably, between this variety of private and public contexts. Toward the end of the piece, Orr further conjures this complex interplay of public and private selves in the shift to a discussion of romance, and in so doing positions it as co-extensive with labor rather than distinct from it. Within friendships, conversations land indiscriminately on topics of work, jobs, money, clothes, romance, sex, and love, among much else, and *Work Ethic* mirrors this familiar intermingling of these diverse elements of our public and private lives.

The script of *Work Ethic* developed out of a series of informal conversations between Orr and the two performers that became formalized into the performance score through a process of reiteration. Orr subsequently facilitated *Work Ethic*’s rehearsal process through the production of a beautiful and carefully designed document, a hybrid between a dramatic script, a movement score, and a map. A line down the center of the document serves as the string that spatially divides the two figures in the performance, with color coded text horizontally and vertically providing prompts, lines, and stage direction. This document is not visible with the performance in the museum, and in looking at it I am struck by what seems to be an unnecessary investment of time and labor on Orr’s part in the production of a document that benefits only her two performers. However, Orr’s investment only seems unnecessary if I approach it as a mere tool in the service of creating the performance, for surely there are less laborious ways to communicate to performers what to say and do. Viewed more holistically, Orr’s investment in this complex private document encapsulates the web of interrelationships between work, art, and friendship that the work itself conjures. The performance’s significance lies not only in its finished state in the museum, but in the creative process that produced it as a space in which friendships and communities are elaborated and solidified. Orr put forth her labor, enjoying the particular satisfaction of doing work that exceeds mere necessity. Her labor was directed as much toward creating a finished performance as it was in the service of providing three friends with a space to talk with one another about their work.