

sculpture

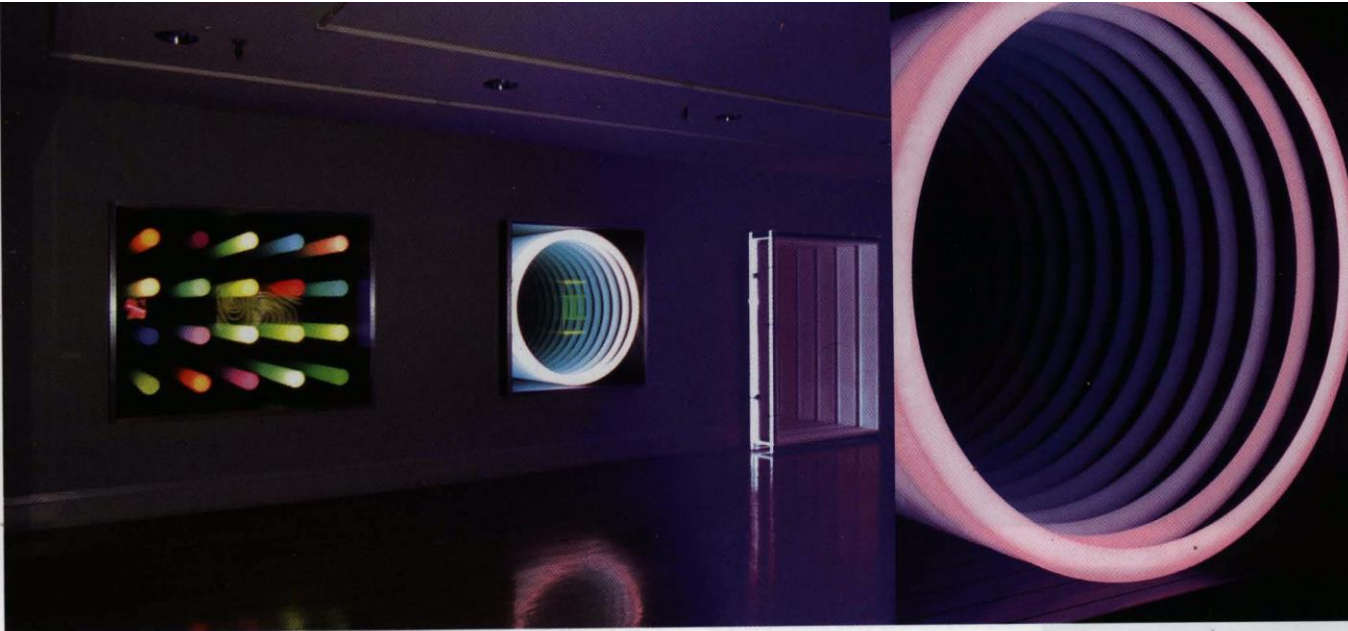
July/August 2014
Vol. 33 No. 6

A publication of the
International Sculpture Center
www.sculpture.org

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Above: Chul Hyun Ahn, installation view of "Perceiving Infinity," 2014.

Right: *Portal* (detail), 2013. Plywood, LEDs, and mirrors, 61.5 x 61.5 x 6 in.

multi-mirror reflections in which light takes shape, darts around the boxes, and spills out. In Ahn's view, light becomes infinite potential. He articulates not only its ability to dazzle, but also its determination to reveal unheard-of places.

The 10 mirrored boxes featured in his recent solo exhibition, "Perceiving Infinity," ranged from small four-inch-size constructions. One hulking, four-foot-deep presence measures eight by 12 feet. Inside, circles, ovals, rectangles, scratches, and suggestive sculpted scenes appear to repeat, tilt slightly, recede, and protrude. In each of these works, Ahn chases infinity, but it hovers somewhere beyond reach—outside the gallery, outside perception. Infinity is impossible to perceive directly; one gets only a hint of a feeling. Luminosity stabs at infinity. Illusions of unfathomable space stab at infinity. Perhaps it is there like an eternal light, capable of forever morphing, chewy and phosphorescent.

Taken together, the light boxes speak to possibly conflicting states, including the melancholic and the winsome. One involves rivulets, and another a collision of sharp fence pickets. Ahn often leans toward

eerie synthetic coloring. In *Forked Series #27* (2013), blue-green becomes sharp, science-experiment phthalocyanine green. In *Untitled (Double) #4* (2013), a lime-green torrent snakes out in a bizarrely menacing sequence of squares. *Portal* (2013)—purple and round—feels calm and resolved, if a bit forlorn. *Dots* (2012) consists of jubilant, rocketing pods, non-threatening and sweet. But in *Mirror Drawing #23* (2013), insistent scratches violently mark off an unsettling bare black oval.

When Ahn builds and encases more literal sculptural flourishes, his light boxes become dream spaces. *Railroad Nostalgia* (2012) is a murky, endless train track, theatrical and vague, evoking a melancholy song. *Tunnel* (2013) props up a ladder that appears to sink down forever through the floor and into a cinder-block nowhere, a ladder to hell. *Void* (2011) forms an otherworldly, blue-black corridor that suggests an untrustworthy shipping container.

Such is the state of infinity. If it is possible to get a sense of it, likely it is teetering, near-neurotic. It could be dangerous or terrifying. In infinite space, angels and demons climb up and down the same ladder, and they wait for the same train.

—Marcus Civin

DETROIT “(in)Habitation”

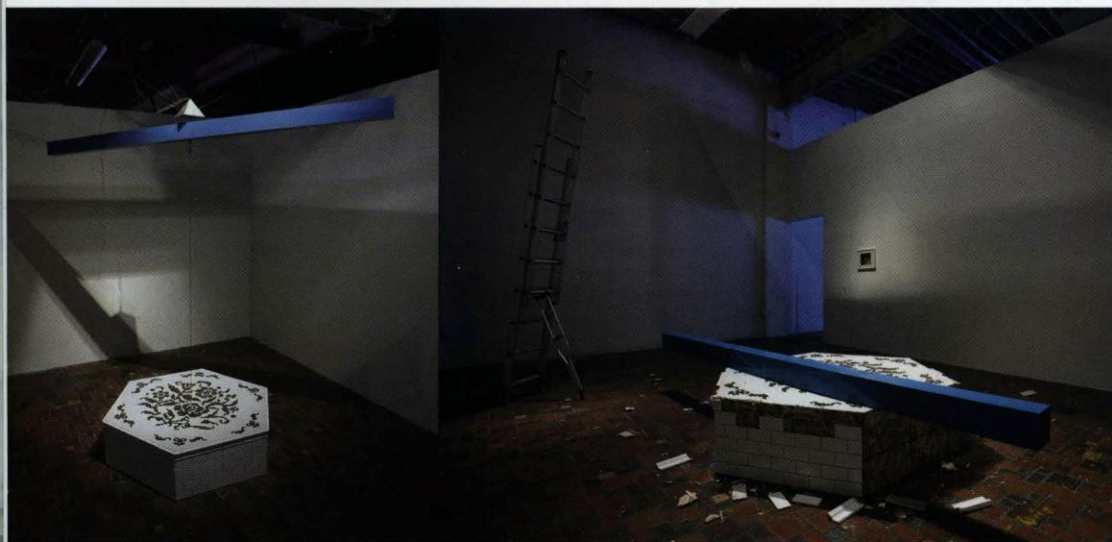
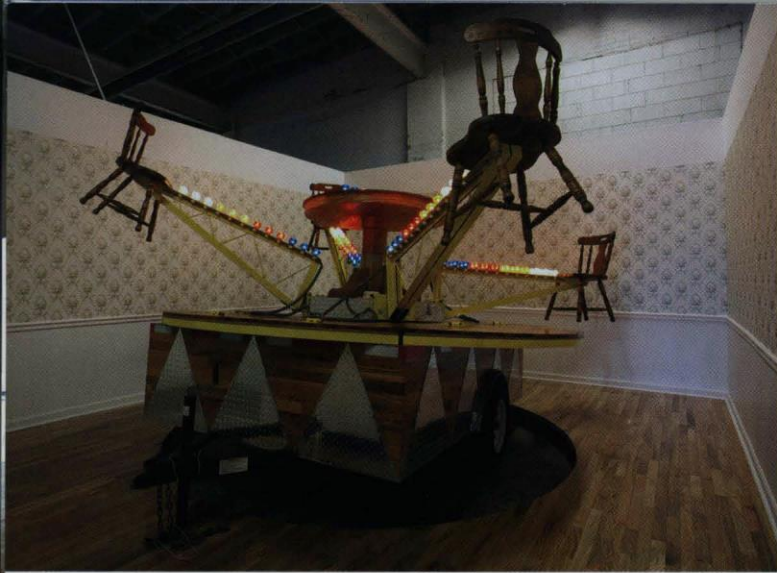
Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD)

Habitation has become a popular topic in Detroit. Credit the many pictures of abandoned buildings circulating as “ruin porn.” Credit, too, the late Mike Kelley's *Mobile Homestead*, a full-size re-creation of his childhood Detroit home, permanently moored behind the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD). In timely response, MOCAD mounted the provocative group show “(in)Habitation,” which featured sculptural installations by Michigan artists Matt Kenyon, Osman Kahn, and Jason J. Ferguson. Using flashing lights, motors, a magnet, custom electronics, and software, the artists invested traditional concepts of habitation with ideas about corporatism, the housing crisis, spiritual faith, and the gulf separating private from public space. Organized by Gregory Tom, gallery director at Eastern Michigan University, “(in)Habitation” altered and undermined conventional notions of hearth and home.

Kenyon's contributions included *Spore 2.0*, a rubber tree plant in a self-sustaining ecosystem whose health relied on the financial health of The Home Depot—the plant's corporate source. The amount of water that the plant received

depended on fluctuations in Home Depot stock, accessed by a phone application and connected via programs and circuitry to the plant. Should poor stock performance cause the plant to die, Home Depot would presumably provide a replacement, free of charge, thereby fulfilling its promise to replace a defective plant for up to one year. Another Kenyon contribution, *Cloud*, compressed the rise and fall of the U.S. housing market into a 20-minute performance in which an ingeniously engineered mobile cart created, then disseminated miniature bubble clouds in the shape of houses. Gradually, these clouds floated to the ceiling, dissolving there or drifting slowly to the floor.

Kahn's *There Are Times I Lose Faith* consisted of an inexplicably floating steel beam (held in place by a hidden magnet) hovering above a tiled hexagonal platform. Periodically, and without warning, the beam would plunge to the ground, damaging the tiles and signaling the precariousness of faith—whether in relation to religion, government, corporate culture, or love—as well as the consequences of failed faith and the effort required to reestablish it. In *I'll House You*, fluorescent tube lights described a pitch-roofed house. Breakability signaled the fragility of house and home, while the flickering light conveyed in



Morse code a line from Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*: "I'm not capitulating!" Ionesco's repudiation was of Romanian fascism, Kahn's of contemporary forces menacing the American Dream.

Ferguson's *Dining Room* and *Home Sweet Home* aimed at transforming everyday domestic settings into flashy amusement park rides—thereby

Above: Jason J. Ferguson, *Dining Room*, 2013. Trailer, wood, welded steel, carnival lights, altered dinette set, wallpaper, audio, and mixed media. **Left:** Matt Kenyon, *Cloud*, 2013. Custom software and electronics, surfactant, helium, and compressed air. **Below:** Osman Kahn, *There Are Times I Lose Faith*, 2013. Aluminum, Neodymium magnets, custom electronics, wood, stainless steel, and tile. All from "(in)-Habitation."

merging monotonous, private family experience with intoxicating, public family fun. *Dining Room* featured a wooden dinette set, the chairs separated from the central table by trusses topped with multi-colored chaser lights, the whole suggesting a carnival whirligig. *Home Sweet Home* communicated the cozy, sampler-inspired adage with hand-formed steel letters, filled with flashing carnival lights.

Ferguson's installations, like the other "(in)Habitation" works, challenged everyday assumptions, often on multiple levels, bidding viewers to perceive reality in unaccustomed ways. Can art do any more?

— Roger Green

NEW YORK

Germaine Richier

Dominique Levy and Galerie Perrotin

Germaine Richier's recent exhibition, shared by Dominique Levy and Galerie Perrotin, was the first show of the French sculptor's work to be seen in the U.S. since her untimely death in 1959 at the age of 57.

Although Richier was associated with major figurative sculptors of the 1950s such as Kenneth Armitage, Lynn Chadwick, and Reg Butler (and less directly with Marino Marini and Alberto Giacometti), her manner of

thinking and working were completely her own. With deliberate twists, linear supports, and elemental contortions, the fiercely tripod *Le Berger des Landes* (1951), the remarkable *Le Griffu* (1952), and the sensuously ambiguous *La Fourmi* (1953) all render the figure in inscrutably distended positions that go beyond typical studio poses. Richier's figures are lean, stalwart, and pulsating with vigor. They suggest the dire complexities of an atmospheric moment—post-World War II polarities in French culture.

Ever since I first saw a Richier sculpture at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris in the late 1980s, I have always regarded her work as important in the way I would regard the work of Abstract Expressionist sculptors in New York, particularly Ibram Lassaw, David Hare, and Theodore Roszak as important. On a formal level, both Richier and Roszak deal with the figure in highly eccentric ways. The connecting point is their rigorously imaginative pursuit of form. In general, sculpture in Europe and America in the late 1940s and '50s tended to move in the direction of expressionism.

What strikes me about Richier's figurative work is her ability to maneuver a unique plastic point of view into an unpredictable form. She clearly knew how to make the transition fit, whether surreptitiously or consciously, from one nuance to another. Rarely, if ever, is the form separated from the affect. This kind of thinking is uncommon in art today, whether in France, Germany, or the U.S. As a result, the subtlety in Richier's work has gone unnoticed, placed outside the discourse that belongs to sculpture, if such a discourse still exists. What does one do with such incisive works as *L'Orage* (1947–48) and *L'Ouragane* (1948–49)? Following the example of classical equivalencies with nature, Richier projects "the storm" and "the hurricane" in the mythical