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Tectonic Breaks

Curated by Friends (Jenine Marsh and Aryen Hoekstra)

Jen Aitken, Zoe Downie-Ross, Andrew Hoekstra, Tiziana La Melia, Matt Schust

June 27 – July 19, 2014

The contemporary city is a great accumulation of architectural relics. Haunted by its many familiar ghosts, the city is composed of skeletons of worlds that died without ever existing. A modernist building, once a utopic symbol of hope, now appears heavy and dark, an image of a time that never came to pass. Structures mark the real date of their construction yet they point toward a time outside of time, to futures that have been overrun by the present. Styled towards specific idealistic aims, architecture is forever a retro look that wears the death of its ideals on its sleeve.

Tectonic Breaks proposes as a thought experiment an alternative way of thinking and experiencing architecture. Can architecture be re-thought of as something other than a skeleton space worn like the dead shell home of a hermit crab? Instead of being put on and endured can the city's architecture instead be felt as a gesture, the continuous movement of an enduring present? This proposed position is in contrast to structure as ideology, which limits physical reality. As gesture's fluid motion moves through space and time, it reveals the city's skyline to be a radical site of potentiality that never sleeps. The artists included in *Tectonic Breaks* — Jen Aitken, Zoe Downie-Ross, Andrew Hoekstra, Tiziana La Melia, and Matt Schust — approach this alternative conception through discursively architectural physical acts that use structural limitations as a starting point for engagement.

The cast concrete and polyurethane foam sculptures of Jen Aitken isolate Brutalist architectural forms in autonomous, human-scaled objects. Outside of historic context, movements become styles, but Aitken's work proposes formalism as a productive condition of the present. Though these works resist any exhaustive reference, they acknowledge an obscured place, demanding from her audience an extended and deliberate encounter. Matt Schust's acrylic paintings construct reductive abstract spaces where a gestural scaffolding negotiates a grey area for symmetry, composition and illusionism. While rooted in the formalist tradition his paintings point towards nameable structures, including diagrammatic plans and commercial design/layout, through which he can address concerns relating to painterly space. In Zoe Downie-Ross' projected three-screen video, *Untitled (Delay) Triptych*, institutional infrastructures are interrogated through a slow-pan. The camera positions the spectator as complicit to the choreographies of bodies, electricity, and air within the building-as-machine.

Tiziana La Melia's drawings relate a mis-heard description of the minimalist, symmetrical

sculpture of Donald Judd while visiting Marfa, Texas. “Symmetry” heard as “cemetery” led her to a poetically altered experience of Judd’s work. In her draped sculptural painting, La Melia’s work explores an unsure position between meanings found and meanings made. Encountered leaning in a gallery as opposed to standing in a home, furniture designer Andrew Hoekstra’s *Oak – Plinth* is neither a stand for sculpture nor ashtrays, neither busts nor butts. Function is tempered by structural, architectural aspirations. The city, like the living room, ends up requiring navigation rather than inviting inhabitation.

Tectonic Breaks brings together these five artists to attempt a collective redefinition of architecture - to put it under construction, again and again. An indefinite present bristling with scaffolds of glass and stone, the city becomes responsive to our touch, softening the lines drawn and walls raised between limitation and possibility.

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