

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY

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ADRIAN FISH

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Adrian Fish is a Toronto-born, Halifax-based artist and teacher working in the medium of photography. He has an MFA in visual art from York University, as well as accreditation from the Ontario College of Art & Design and Sheridan College. His work has been shown in a number of institutional galleries and artist run centres, including the Koffler Gallery, Red Head Gallery, A.W.O.L. Gallery, and the Anna Leonowens Gallery in Halifax. He has also exhibited internationally, both in the United States and Japan. Adrian Fish currently teaches at NSCAD University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

■ **STAGED**

The *Staged* project documents performative spaces, directed towards the spectator seating area. Each respective environment is devoid of viewers, suggesting the pregnant moment before an anticipated spectacle. The weighty absence of an audience altogether nevertheless insinuates their presence. This inversion of the traditional role of actor-as-exhibitionist, and audience as voyeur constructs a quiet tension within the image.

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Staged examines the venue of the theatre as a 21st century manifestation of Roman Empire-era structures. The lack of people within each photograph invites the viewer to contemplate the architectural aspects of the theatre environment, as well as the nature of entertainment in the present paradigm.

■ **ACADEMIC SPACES**

Academic Spaces consists of large colour photographs that document the interior environments of elementary, high school, and post secondary institutions. The images are devoid of students, and thus, the precise purpose of each given space is unclear. This ambiguity invites the viewer to contemplate the architectural elements from one image to the next, and to question the educational nature for which a given space has been designed.

The inclusion of the floor and ceiling in each image produces a claustrophobic stillness. By exaggerating the organizational system within each space, it is unclear whether the photographs are straight documents or highly constructed tableaux.

■ **RESEARCH LIKE**

The connotative content of the photographs are specific institutional research environments located within various scientific practices. Areas represented include physics, chemistry, genetics, laser, and astronomy laboratories, as well as unique research facilities within hospitals, universities, and other institutional environments. These

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laboratories contain state-of-the-art technological apparatus, and are documented so as to show the singularity of the space, without attempting to reveal any specifics regarding the precise nature of the research being conducted there. The laboratories and areas of technology photographed may be loosely linked to university teaching and research environments, but more importantly, point towards institutions in their generic entirety.

Present in and among these photographs, however, are images that refer to the act of photography itself as a research-like activity analogous to the research done in scientific labs. Images of corridors in administrative offices that offer clear visual references to the institutional environment that addresses the notion of the university as an institution where research is conducted, as well as a place in which knowledge is manufactured and administered.

The photographs of these specific environments mainly depict unpopulated laboratories, save for the appearance of a single person that appears in most of the images regardless of function and or location. Whereas only those familiar with me will know that I am the person consistently populating the images. Those who do not know me will nonetheless quickly realize that the same person keeps on cropping up in the widely diverse environments depicted. This self-reflexive gesture featured within most of the photographs suggests an acknowledgement on my part of the subjective nature of the act of image making. Therefore, I include myself as a performer within the images in order to create a puncture in the veneer of truth; that is, each image disputes ideas of objectivity that are often associated with the reading of photographs within the Modernist discourse.

Layers of meaning can be found within this body of work in the juxtaposition of the aforementioned self-reflexivity, with the content and context of the photographs. The images allude to accelerated 19th century aspirations to accumulate quantitative knowledge

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through the lens of the scientific method. This project has essentially changed very little since then as it manifests itself in the 21st century. The physical spaces depicted in the images are a product of the Modernist architecture of the mid 20th century. The laboratories photographed are the products of the institutional architecture from this period. Such characteristics include windowless rooms evenly lit by standard banks of fluorescent lights, Orwellian ceiling vents, nowaged ceiling tiles, and cinder blocks.

■ ***SURFACE***

Surface documents the interior environments within the campus of York University in suburban Toronto.

Originally conceived as a first-year graduate student project, *Surface* examines the architectural underpinnings of Modernism and Modernist architecture. The origins of Modernist architecture are rooted in architect Le Corbusier's 1920 manifesto *Esprit Nouveau*, which outlined a new set of highly rationalized architectural principles and priorities, eschewing many previously held notions of architectural design.

Surface documents these specific instances of spatial organization that strictly conform to the tenets of Modernist architecture. The contradiction between orthodox Modernist principles and common sense are conflated, leaving us to contemplate the functionality of each environment with which we are presented.

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■ **SQUASH COURTS**

Squash Courts #1-#4

In the context of archaeology and architecture, the characteristics inherent in the evolution of the squash courts located in the Modernist structure of the Bathurst Jewish Centre in suburban Toronto pique my interest. Minding the technical definition of archaeology as the study of ancient cultures through the examination of their material remains, I posit myself as both archaeologist/demographer, as well as artist/documentary photographer, simultaneously.

In Squash Court #1-front/back, the court remains utilized as such, evidenced by the accumulated markings of ball to wall contact. In Squash Court #3-front/back, the alternate usage of the court as a climbing wall is evident. The happenstance placement of climbing-wall installation apparatus, however, suggests mild or non-usage of the space as such. In Squash Courts #4 & 5-front/back respectively, the relatively sophisticated children's play equipment clearly manifests the growing needs of the community to sacrifice the squash court space originally designed for leisure, to the needs of children.

Each squash court is photographed both front and back in order to mimic traditional photographic notions of objectivity. The inherent architecture of a squash court, with its polished hardwood floors, high ceilings, and moulded out-of-bounds lines do not readily lend itself for appropriation as an alternate space, and this palimpsest is evident in the photographs. The way the courts have indeed become re-appropriated effectively tracks the demographic shift of the Jewish community in suburban Toronto over the past four decades.