

an uncanny ability to bring out the transformative potential in different materials. Coming to mind are a series of photographs she created by covering a single object (often a book) with reflective fabric. When photographed, these objects are transformed into flashes of white light and disappear from view. This simple gesture exposes the medium for what it is and brings it to its very limits: revealing what it cannot represent. Through their altered representation, the objects refuse the indexical relationship inherent to the photograph. As Pullen has observed, the images take on an aura, a characteristic that aligns them with the philosophical history of the medium, embodying what Walter Benjamin so famously declared that photography lacked.

Since then she has created a sculpture out of spruce and ash in the shape of a bomb, hired a pilot to fly her in a Cessna above Vancouver Island and perform “snap rolls” at 5,000 feet and created a paper sculptural model of the Outpost for Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, made from 50 stacked graph-paper notepads, which the artist then distributed for free. (In the end, the sculpture existed only as a memory for those who witnessed it.) The Outpost was also the site of the creation of her new works: a set of six unique sculptures, which when folded up each measures exactly four feet by two feet by three inches.

In these works there is a considered sensitivity to the qualities of each material. The plywood was cut, sanded and finished by following the rules dictated by the wood. The bottoms of each were then dipped in chalkboard paint, a material not intended for representation but for ephemeral inscriptions—for text, carrying with it an association with pedagogy. Each sculpture was constructed from four planes of wood linked by brass piano hinges. The decision to use piano hinges was not an arbitrary one: the hinges allow the connected planes to bend beyond a 90-degree angle, thus expanding the number of possible configurations and points of balance. The fact that they are hinged lends a kind of temporariness, and the potential for mobility to the works. Pullen has compared these sculptures to pavilions, impermanent

structures that occupy a space between landscape and architecture. Through their materials and transitory nature the sculptures come to represent this “betweenness”: they exist between art and architecture, between immobility and action, between sculpture and painting.

In Canada, the conceptual relationship between painting and sculpture has been rigorously worked through by artists such as Eric Cameron, who, in a well-known gesture beginning in 1979, methodically painted layers of tinted gesso over everyday objects (a rose, an alarm clock, a head of lettuce) until they were abstracted by thousands of layers of paint, in the end bearing little resemblance to the original object. Earlier, Garry Neill Kennedy created process-based paintings where he would cover a canvas with enough layers of white paint to mask any trace of the fabric’s texture, leaving a single thread as the lone sign of the work’s origins. Dipping the sculptures in paint, in the artist’s eyes, quite literally immerses them in this ideology.

In Pullen’s show, what was apparent over time was the way in which the matte chalkboard paint took on even the smallest marks—minute scuffs bearing traces from when the sculptures were moved or touched. The marks are reminiscent of an ephemerality that is at the core of her practice, a characteristic Pullen has enacted through works that include carving a meticulous life-size sculpture of a car from snow, dropping 2,500 superballs off the roof of a seven-storey parking garage and making a life-size cast of herself in rock candy, which collapsed and eventually shattered over the course of its exhibition. At Republic, the works were balanced in a way that made their acute stillness almost call for participation. On the closing night, this stillness was ruptured when one of the sculptures quite suddenly folded in on itself and collapsed to the floor. In this fleeting instant the work gained a certain agency, as it didn’t merely topple but changed into something else. It wasn’t its resulting rectilinear form that resonated as much as the point between its tipping and its hitting the floor—a suspended moment which held, however briefly, the potential for transformation.

## Rodney LaTourelle: In the Absence of Unambiguous Criteria

*Program, Berlin*

PATRICIA REED

Rodney LaTourelle’s latest exhibition, an immersive, site-specific installation titled *In the Absence of Unambiguous Criteria* (2007), takes the viewer through a maze-like construction of three interlinked striped corridors, each with an attached small one-person room of saturated colour. LaTourelle sets up a participatory *mise-en-scène* in which people actively navigate his *matryoshka*-like colour field spaces, transforming the typically disembodied aesthetic space of the gallery into a field of direct experience. A viewer cannot simply gaze from a safe, intellectual distance, but must wander and

slip through the sometimes narrow passageways, enveloped in varying, rhythmic colour worlds.

The three corridors, each with its own distinct colour theme, extend across the room from the street-level windows of Program’s project space, creating a juxtaposition of natural and artificial light. The colours oscillate between the reduced extremes of natural landscapes—the bright purple and light yellow of the sunset; the apple green and light blue of the lily pond and the cold silver-and-white scheme of the Arctic—to set up a total environment of chromatic relationships nestled somewhere between Goethean logic and the body’s chakra system. Exploring the interactive experience of the kinetic body, the installation could be described as a *haptic surface*, or, rather, a surface exploded into

a three-dimensional envelope. Through pure visceral intensity, the work becomes a space of proposition, inviting participants to perform within and throughout its nested volumes.

The hybrid universe LaTouelle proposes exists somewhere between architecture and abstract painting and diffuses the formal elements of both traditions. In so doing it collapses the conventional distinctions between inside and outside, figure and ground. As visitors slip through the narrow entrance, past the unfinished, raw exterior of the structure, they are immersed into a kind of *trompe l'oeil* cosmos where surfaces take on volumetric proportions, appearing as undulating three-dimensional stripes. The floods of bright, white light emanating from the small, adjacent cell-like rooms act as energy incubators, with concentrated variations of high-gloss pinkish magenta creating orgasmic centres of meditation—places to recharge oneself in the midst of modulated coloured light. The slender passageways that zigzag between the corridors blend in with the rhythm of the stripes, maintaining the illusion of the continuity of a closed form. It is an effect rendered visible only through movement—of one's own body or through the surprise penetration of the "surface" by another person in the space. Here, illusion on the corporeal scale creates an atmosphere of childlike discovery on the part of the audience, playfully intervening in and transforming the modernist desire to project painting into space.

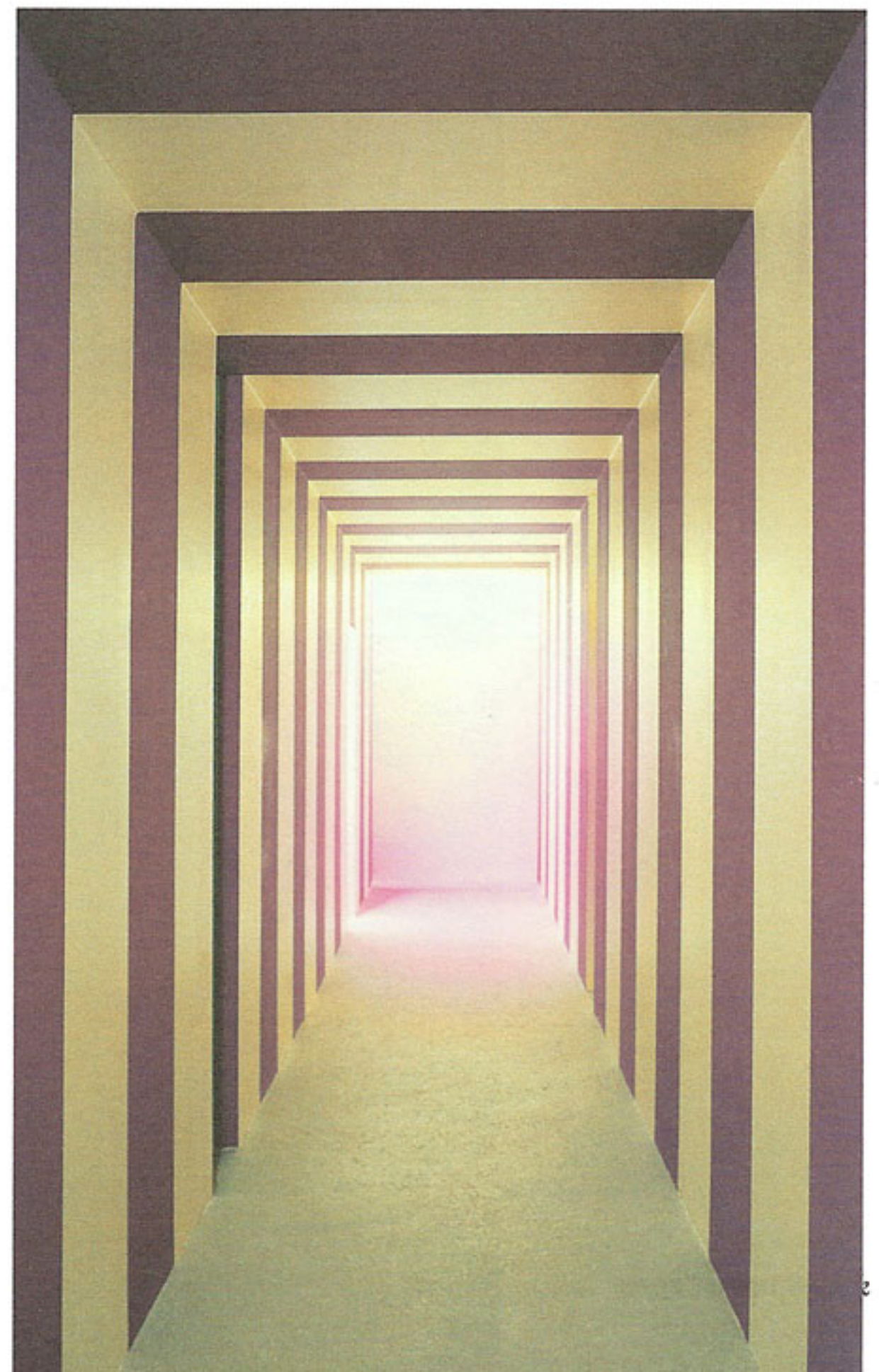
By activating visitors to the exhibition in a direct, kinetic fashion, LaTouelle draws upon the ethical tradition of the Brazilian Neo-Concretists, for whom meaning was found in viewer participation and not in an artwork's visual form. Through experiments with the liberation of painting from the frame, Neo-Concretists established

an aesthetic of embodiment. By creating a sense of wonder that preceded the scientific determination of form, time, colour and space, they fostered elemental encounters with objects in the world. *In the Absence of Unambiguous Criteria* furthers this aesthetic of embodiment by establishing an ephemeral and shifting sense of an interwoven *landscape* that is combined with unexpected colour associations in order to establish spatial transitions and pulsating rhythms of reflection. Provoking connections between the mind/body and space/time of pure sensation, the liminal nature of the work liberates the spectator beyond representation. Seeming dualities find a space to refold themselves into a complex amalgam of experiential encounter.

The visible presence of the raw and unfinished orthogonal structure within the gallery creates a contrast between the exterior surface and support and the sensual and luminous landscapes of the interior spaces. The perfect geometrical spacing and precision of the two-toned painted worlds are notable in our wholly imprecise, non-repeatable, fleeting experience of them and the atmospheres they evoke. The modulation of space enacted by the installation allows us to cultivate our own rather anthroposophical apprehension of the spaces—we can tune out our spatial expectations and conscientiously delve into primordial intuition, opening up a new awareness of our relationship to our surroundings, but also perhaps more importantly, to our own emotional logic. LaTouelle manages to whimsically untie us, for a moment, from our reductive, analytical ways, through a spatial/perceptual estrangement of the senses.

In foregrounding the forgotten connection of early European abstract artists to esoteric thought, *In the Absence of Unambiguous Criteria* stages for us, the per-

Rodney LaTouelle,  
*In the Absence of  
Unambiguous Criteria*,  
2007, mixed media  
installation, 80 m<sup>3</sup>



formers, a kind of return of colour as culture to the body. In so doing the work instigates a line of questioning concerning the current implications of this cultural legacy vis-à-vis perceptions of the body and its capacity for enactment and reception. How can one be receptive with the body, and how are such receptions learned through the body? It is said that Annie Besant, a late-19th-century mystic and member of the Theosophical Society, could see coloured shapes radiating from the body—for her,

colour was connected to the human interior, to the billions of atoms that compose us, intrinsic and expressive of our corporeal and ethereal selves. LaTourelle's installation harnesses these unknown, and perhaps unknowable, qualities of lived experience, and extends this possibility outwards. His gesture seeks to free us from preconceived perceptions; our forgotten, stolen colours have been returned and released back to us.

## Material Overtures

*Anne Fauteux, Corwyn Lund,  
Sandy Plotnikoff, James Wright,  
Harbourfront Centre, Toronto,  
curated by Kim Simon*

CATHERINE SICOT

This year is the year of craft in Canada. Harbourfront Centre, a well-respected centre for contemporary craft, invited a curator of contemporary art to propose perspectives on the role of craft in contemporary visual art production.

At Harbourfront Centre's Craft Studio, the crafters-in-residence are on display behind a long railing that allows passers-by to see them at work. Walking through this area reminded me of the visionary Jacques Tati movie *Play Time* (1967). In a hilarious scene, pedestrians reflect the gestures and facial expressions of Monsieur Hulot, the main character, as he visits his old classmate's new ground-level apartment, the architectural concept of

which had necessitated the replacement of the walls by large bay windows. In both *Play Time* and at the Craft Studio, pedestrians and visitors are voyeurs, staring at people as if they were puppets.

*Material Overtures* offered a direct response to this separation between maker and viewer. Two of the four participating artists moved their studios into the gallery to engage with visitors and worked throughout the course of the exhibition. The show questioned the boundaries between maker and viewer by presenting artists whose practices are wildly open to viewer participation. As well, the exhibition explored the links between craft and the production of artworks by including artists with a strong compulsion to make things—this compulsion ultimately acted as a catalyst for social interactions.

In *The Tinker Project* (2007), Anne Fauteux—the Tinkerette—offered to fix any broken, boring or ugly object brought to her mobile studio—the Bolmobile—in exchange for services, goods or whatever was agreed upon during negotiations over tea and cookies. As with previous projects that are part of her larger work *Bureau des objets lyriques migrants* (*Office of migratory lyrical objects*), *The Tinker Project* included the writing of con-

Corwyn Lund, *Delivery Service*, 2007, custom courier bicycle, courier, postcard edition

