

Artist's Statement, "Installs", Neal McDonald, August 2008

The "Installs" are a series of installations inspired by modernist paintings. My response to these works, when I was a child, was always some form of surly outrage, the classic "I could do that; why is it in a museum?" These works embody that exact juvenile triumph—not only have I made the works, I have made works that make the works, and *have even gone so far* as to make works that make the works that make the works.

The adult's answer to this question is partially philosophical and endlessly political, which opens up a second set of vistas for surly one-upmanship, which I have also pursued, assiduously. The exhibition space is modeled after the Whitney, and each installs, as shown, takes up a quarter of an entire floor, because yeah.

The "Installs" exist only in Autodesk Maya, a computer animation software program.

The "Installs" shown are comprised of machines and their output. The machines depicted are imagined as fabricated from a small machine shop, from folded, bolted, and welded sheet metal, electric motors, lamps, and some lens assemblies taken from slide projectors. The removal of the lens assemblies was part of a performance. The movements of the machines change how the lamps illuminate a white canvas. Provisions are made, in the mechanism design, for the minute adjustments demanded by the specific geometry of each installation venue-- should the works require installation in multiple simulated venues.

The machines are realistic; they have a chance of working, were they to be built—but they have not been built, other than in the program—but they do work (demonstrably: they color their walls), so, in a sense, they have been built. I will never build them.

There are a variety of modernist reference modes. The canvas continuously acted upon, the framing mechanism of the screen, and of the room in which the objects are shown, the ladder, helpfully, democratically left for accessibility's sake (which you, personally, can't climb), and especially the Eames Compact sofa. The works exist only as actions on the canvas. The machines enact shadow plays, a formalist referencing of the history of animation—you got that they were animations, right? An enormous intellectual candy wrapper, layers and layers of showmanship, staging and self-mediation in the service of crap your kid could do while eating candy.

The "Installs" exist as documentation only, this being the information age. Is the work the images made, the machines that make them, the video that documents it all? Would these installations benefit from realization, which, after all, would just be taken down in a month, leaving us only with documentation? How does the level of accessibility of this work compare with the usual, fleeting, indifferently-photographed gallery show?