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Notes on an Installation: *Crater of a Home, Corner of a Mind*

Brooks Turner



Composite image of two spaces from *Crater of a Home, Corner of a Mind*, 2014, installation: 25' by 13' by 10'

Dismantled more than two years ago, *Crater of a Home, Corner of a Mind* remains in our world like a ghost: You can catch a glimpse of a once lively being through photographs or letters, but you cannot know her through the shade. The goal to me in building an installation is to create a space that cannot be encapsulated by photographs, video, or text. An installation should be purely spatial, physical, visual, something that could never be retold. Through this text, I attempt to give a partial voice to the ghost of *Crater of a Home, Corner of a Mind*.

* * *

We enter through a doorway into a shallow waiting room filled with a dull yellow light. A bench built of two-by-fours with an AstroTurf cushion is pushed against a wall only a few feet back from the entrance. As we enter, we turn to the right, our shoes clicking against wood floorboards covering cement, and encounter a fish tank that contains a strange configuration of walls, objects, and images, like a model of an interior flooded with water. Opposite the fish tank and to our left, the installation transitions from waiting room into a dreamy flux of inside/outside, home/cosmos. As we pass through the extended threshold, we move from night to day as the yellow light gives way to a piercing electric blue. The click of our shoes becomes a soft crunch against green AstroTurf. Wood molding lines the top and bottom of the surrounding walls. In front of us, a large wood structure of exposed two-by-fours and plywood stands eight feet tall. From this angle, it is difficult to tell how deep it goes; we can enter it through a doorway to our left or go around it

down a narrow hallway to our right. We go left. As we move toward the entrance, we pass a plaster bench, sculpted like the surface of the moon, full of craters and hills. Behind the bench, an image taken from the surface of the moon covers two eight-foot walls that meet in a 90-degree corner. Hanging in darkness beyond the moon's horizon, the flattened earth, a foot in diameter, folds across the two planes. The relationship between the bench and the image moves us from exterior furniture to lunar landscape. A small silver monochrome painting in a decaying wooden frame hangs over a black section of the image. We turn away from the painting to enter the dark space of the structure. Crossing the threshold, our feet land in sand. The ceiling is low, probably seven feet. Unlike the exposed wooden frames on the exterior, the room within is smooth and painted grey. When we reach the end of the short and narrow hallway, this interior space opens up into a small room. To our left, an alcove extends into the wall where blue, orange, and pink fluorescent lights provide a backdrop for the static of a television. To our right, the static of another television placed on the ground dances across the surrounding sand and up the walls. The room is thick with the invisible and silent fog of vibrating white noise. Through a window opposite the television, blue light, like the light of the moon, seeps into this interior, and we see through it the silhouette of a mountainous landscape painted against the far wall. Ribbons of VHS tape, like tangled nerve fibers holding forgotten memories, pile up on the floor and weave together to form a ceiling above. Blue light refracts infinitely through the VHS tape. It is the space of dreams seen through our bedroom window. We retrace our steps, turning to the left as we exit. A silver plant spreads its fronds across the stars painted on the wall behind it. We follow these stars down a hallway and arrive in the deepest part of the night. Stepping from AstroTurf into the VHS tape landscape, we must move slowly and carefully to keep from becoming tangled. Our shadows send a cascade of shimmering stars sliding over the hills and through the skies on these negated ribbons of information. When we reach the far wall, a narrow crawl space leads back along the exterior of the structure. We crawl through, from VHS tape to AstroTurf, and find ourselves once again before the plaster moon-bench. We turn to the left, then right, and finally we reencounter the fish tank. The space of the installation has imposed itself on our bodies and minds, and we recognize the submerged structures and images as the forms that make up the installation. Only through the fish tank can we see the installation in its entirety, and yet we are not present from this perspective.

* * *

To cross the threshold at the entrance of a home, our bodies must occupy two locations simultaneously: the inside and the outside. *Crater of a Home, Corner of a Mind* took the two-dimensional plane of a threshold and extruded it into three dimensions, pulling into its space the outside of the yard, the sun, and the stars, the inside of bedrooms, living rooms, and other inner spaces of the home, and the

inside/outside of the structural architecture that divides space into this dichotomy. Our dreams, our bodies, nature, and geometry were mixed within that extruded threshold. Its dense space, like the center of a black hole, was and is timeless. The atmosphere was stale and lifeless but still occupied by a strange presence. I built the installation, but we were all interlopers within its space.

Following Brechtian logic, *Crater of a Home, Corner of a Mind* was not real, but rather a poetic representation of lived experience. Exposed two-by-fours, visible screws and nails, dangling electric cords, patched walls, and, most obviously, the exposed beams and high ceilings of the building's architecture made the artifice immediately visible. The viewer was not a passive spectator of artistic representation but rather an active participant in the phenomenology of the space. Being and world became intermixed: Thoughts hung in the stagnating spaces between built walls, bodies left traces of selfhood in the AstroTurf, sand, and VHS tape. In a Heideggerian meditation on worldhood, the viewer could not be removed from the installation, and the installation could not be removed from the viewer.

After sitting with this space for six months, I finally decided to dismantle it. I removed the readymade objects and lighting, stripped the ground of AstroTurf and fake wood flooring, bagged the VHS tape, ripped the sheetrock from its two-by-four studs, unscrewed the wall frames, shoveled out the sand, and painted over the remaining marks on my studio wall. Those pieces bearing the marks of *Crater of a Home, Corner of a Mind* would come together again two months later to form a new installation, cannibalized and regenerated [...] "From one world to the other, from one dwelling to the other, dreams come and go" (Bachelard 63).

Brooks Turner is an artist and writer who lives and works in Los Angeles. He received his MFA in Sculpture from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Works cited

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

