

David Schafer

Untitled Logos No. 5: A Morphology of Exchange

2020

102" x 102"

Printed graphic on adhesive perforated vinyl mesh

Untitled Logos No. 5: A Morphology of Exchange takes the form of an advertising façade combining a selection of thirty modified corporate logos from a variety of categories. This work explores how advertising codes are transferred to the consumer. By virtue of abstraction, these logos have been altered and simplified into modernists tropes, where the content and specific identity has been removed. This reduces them to forms of color and code, mimicking the corporate landscape we inhabit. The code is a form of socialization and generates a formal set of social relations analogous to money. The collected logo-signs represent a selection from banks, credit cards, oil and gas, fast food, fashion, media, entertainment, auto industries, and the military. The advertising images stage a realm of self-referential signs, and the individual is distinguished by their random selection of objects in the domain of consumption.

I am interested in how all of these relations form a system in the industrial capitalist framework of the political economy, and where the individual is alienated by signs, and social relations are fetishized. As a play on the concept of center, *Logos*, is also a term used in Theology, Linguistics, and Philosophy to represent ways of theorizing the concepts of presence and origin. The context of Mandarin Plaza is significant for its history in Los Angeles and Chinese immigration and how it is structurally laid out as a mall with two levels and open floorplan representing a design strategy from the 1960's. Immigration laws encouraged new residents into Chinatown and Mandarin Plaza which is the first major commercial center built in the Chinatown neighborhood and is continuing to attract new commercial growth.

Foyer-LA is located in a former retail space at Mandarin Plaza and the effect of the perforated window graphic suggests multiple viewing situations. It prevents one from seeing into the gallery space but allows one to see out to the mall from the inside and observe pedestrians and viewers. This panopticon situation entails surveillance while being hidden from view behind the window. In addition, I am interested in *The Arcades Project* of Walter Benjamin from the 1920's, regarding the Parisian arcades, shops, street life and the flaneur, and how one could see their reflection superimposed onto the object of desire featured in the shop windows.

Urban development and gentrification continue to erase the past and colonize land and space to maximize profits for investors and developers. In many situations the new live/work/shop/play spaces are integrated and are inextricably intertwined into one colossal complex. These highly engineered social frameworks and platforms have been compressed algorithmically to maximize profit and density, and at the same time exclude specific strata of the public. As the Neoliberal agenda dictates what is good for the market is good for society.

I continue to be interested in the writings of William Burroughs on "societies of control", *The Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord, and more recently Shoshana Zuboff's *Surveillance Capitalism* and Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*, and how they continue to speak about spectacle, consumerism, and appearances in society. Capitalism has also evolved by maintaining its racist exploitative roots which are inextricably intertwined with questions of economic empowerment. With newer opportunities for surveillance from the panopticon to digital tracking and data mining, the authoritarianism of our society is invisibly woven into the new models of the social sphere. *Untitled Logos No. 5: A Morphology of Exchange* is a form of rebranding to question the way in which society is owned by neo-colonialist and multi-national corporations.