

The Kitchen

512 W 19th Street New York, NY 10011
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Alan Ruiz: *Container and Contained*

June 17–July 24, 2021

Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm EDT

Opening Reception: Saturday, June 19, 3–6pm EDT

FREE, no reservation required

The Kitchen is pleased to present *Container and Contained*, the first institutional exhibition in New York City by artist **Alan Ruiz**. Ruiz’s practice considers the way the built environment engenders social hierarchies through an array of media, standards, and techniques. The exhibition includes three works that explore the redistribution of value and authority through multiple systems.

For the exhibition’s central work—*Transfer II (WS-B690-L40)* (2021)—Ruiz has leased 300 square feet of The Kitchen’s air rights (all that remains in the organization’s possession) for the duration of one year and at the cost of \$1/month, radically below their market value. “Air rights” refer to a building’s development rights, or the cubic volume of air over an existing structure that can be developed legally based on the 1961 Zoning Resolution. Air rights are tradable assets, commodities exchanged among Real Estate developers that endow certain properties with the right to develop vertically beyond the city’s zoning laws. These resulting “supertall” structures have redefined the shape and outline of the city and, more often, cast it in shadow.

Transfer II (WS-B690-L40) legally redistributes The Kitchen’s remaining tradable cubic volume of air over 512 West 19th Street to the artist, thus placing a temporary hold on the immaterial asset from entering into other forms of exchange. The work remains within this container so long as the lease is in effect. Yet because of the nature of the lease, which establishes an ongoing relationship between parties, this work suggests a dynamic interdependence between the artist and institution, who both serve to contain one another. The interplay established between Ruiz and The Kitchen as lessee and lessor is extended to adjacent properties through The Kitchen’s past sales of 10,000 square feet of air rights to surrounding development—electrifying the complex web of relations or systems in which The Kitchen’s building is only one part to a large whole. *Transfer II (WS-B690-L40)* has also been recorded with the city via NYC’s Automated City Register Information System (ACRIS). Recording this document makes the work a part of the building’s history through municipal archives. Enacted within the existing forms of property rights and transfers, the temporary lease perpetuates a range of possible effects. Just as any speculative asset is a projection into an unpredictable future, the recording of this

Memorandum of Lease raises questions about potentially affecting the property's air rights as a *depressed* value in the future.

On The Kitchen's ground floor—in a space typically used as a theater—**WS-C-62A; WS-C-62B** (2021) partitions the space through a series of thresholds and apertures. The form of these units, and the standardized armatures that contain them, echo surrounding luxury development. Windows exist at the boundary between interior and exterior and often index a border between private and public, accumulation and dispossession. As media that has historically served as a covert index of class position, the potential occlusion of windows in the city's endless expansion skyward further suggests that these thresholds and boundaries exist not only at the limits of containment but as parts of a system that spectacularizes access to light and air. As forms common to the envelope of a building, such apertures also enframe the fantasy of an organization's capacity for transparency, giving rise to speculation on what exists inside.

The tension between what an institution holds, both in its history and futurity, is further signaled in **VIII** (2021), a score-based work that indexes various registers of time in The Kitchen's day-to-day operations, from the banality of its eight-hour workday to its fifty-year institutional legacy of artistic experimentation.

In advance of the exhibition, The Kitchen partnered with the New York Center for the Study of Groups, Organizations, and Social Systems to host an online group relations forum in the Tavistock Tradition on June 5. Entitled ***Standards, Structures, and Institutions: Reimagining Authority, Value and _____ in a World of Difference***, this one-day event was designed by Ruiz and Dr. Patrick Jean-Pierre to facilitate participants in exploring societal experiences that both subjugate and free us, using a systems psychodynamic lens to work with and confront the standards, structures, and institutions—both visible and invisible, literal and unconscious—that define our internal and shared external world.

Alan Ruiz: *Container and Contained* is organized by Matthew Lyons.

Exhibition Checklist

Transfer II (WS-B690-L40), 2021

A one-year lease of the remaining 300 square feet of The Kitchens Air Rights at \$1 per month. Memorandum of Lease recorded with the City's Financial Department.

WS-C-62A; WS-C-62B, 2021

Aluminum Composite Panel, Glass, Plywood, Steel Studs, Existing architecture. Variable dimensions.

VIII, 2021

Recording of Philip Glass's *Dance IX* (1986, recorded 2009) played every day the exhibition is open to the public at 8:08 minutes before closing time. Speakers placed according to the audio plot of Sarah Michelson's *Devotion* (Performed at The Kitchen on January 13–22, 2011). Four

Super-Softlites programmed according to the working day. Four Negative Air Scrubbers placed in the back of a room. Doors to the organization kept open during working hours.

Funding Credits

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The artist would like to thank Creative Capital for additional support.

About Alan Ruiz

Alan Ruiz (b. 1984, Mexico City, Mexico) is an artist based in New York whose work explores architectural space as both a perceptual and a political medium. His work has been exhibited at the Queens Museum, Storefront for Art and Architecture, The Kitchen, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1708 Gallery, and TG Nottingham, among others. His writing has been featured in *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, *Millenium Film Journal*, *TDR*, *BOMB Magazine*, *Archinect*, *Headmaster*, *InVisible Culture*, and others. He has participated in residencies with Whitney Museum's Youth Insights Program, Abrons Arts Center, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Ruiz received a 2019 Creative Capital award, and he will be an artist-in-residence at Chinati in Marfa, TX in Fall 2021. Ruiz received an MFA from Yale University, a BFA from Pratt Institute, and was a 2015–2016 participant in the Whitney Independent Study Program. He teaches at Pratt Institute and in the Department of Visual Studies at The New School. www.alanruiz.net

About The Kitchen

As one of New York City's oldest nonprofit alternative art centers (founded as an artist collective in 1971 and formalized as a 501c3 in 1973), The Kitchen is dedicated to offering emerging and established artists opportunities to create and present new work within, and across, the disciplines of dance, film, music, theater, video, visual art, and literature. Recognizing its longstanding legacy for innovation, The Kitchen remains devoted to fostering a community of artists and audiences, offering artists the opportunity to make—and for audiences to engage with—work that pushes the boundaries of artistic disciplines and strengthens meaningful dialogues between the arts and larger culture.

Among artists who have presented significant work at The Kitchen are Muhal Richard Abrams, Laurie Anderson, ANOHNI, Robert Ashley, Charles Atlas, Kevin Beasley, Beastie Boys, Gretchen Bender, Dara Birnbaum, Anthony Braxton, John Cage, Lucinda Childs, Julius Eastman, Philip Glass, Leslie Hewitt, Darius James, Joan Jonas, Bill T. Jones, Devin Kenny, Simone Leigh, Ralph Lemon, George Lewis, Robert Longo, Robert Mapplethorpe, Sarah Michelson, Tere O'Connor, Okwui Okpokwasili, Nam June Paik, Charlemagne Palestine, Sondra Perry, Vernon Reid, Arthur

Russell, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Spiegel, Talking Heads, Greg Tate, Cecil Taylor, Urban Bush Women, Danh Vō, Lawrence Weiner, Anicka Yi, and many more.

The Kitchen OnScreen: onscreen.thekitchen.org

Instagram: [instagram.com/TheKitchen_NYC](https://www.instagram.com/TheKitchen_NYC)

Facebook: [facebook.com/TheKitchenNYC](https://www.facebook.com/TheKitchenNYC)

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