

Gaylen Gerber
Back and Continuing
April 3 – May 9, 1999
The Suburban, Oak Park

In this exhibition, I added only a monochromatic gray *Backdrop* to the space, a canvas on wooden stretchers that was the same size and shape as the largest unbroken wall in the Suburban. By doing this, I was able to insert my work into the flow of activities at the gallery in a way that both looked towards David Robbins's inaugural exhibition *Two or Three Comedies*, and towards Dave Muller's subsequent *Three Day Weekend* exhibition, as well as all the exhibitions that would follow it. Both David Robbins and Dave Muller agreed to cooperate with me in this situation and install or reinstall their work in relation to my *Backdrop*. In David Robbins's case, I asked that his entire exhibition remain in place for the duration of my exhibition so that my *Backdrop* would simply be inserted as a ground for his previously existing exhibition. David Robbins felt that it only made sense to have the piece that was actually installed directly on top of my gray painting remain, and so that became the exhibition. In Dave Muller's case, I asked that my *Backdrop* remain in place and that as he installed his exhibition that he would treat my painting with disregard, installing his exhibition as he would normally do. When I came to the opening a few days later, to my great delight, Dave Muller had taken me at my word and gone as far as painting a text piece by Sam Durant directly on top of my *Backdrop*. The ease with which these relationships developed made this something special.

I was interested in positioning my work in a way that it would be seen as in between things: between the architecture of the newly opened Suburban and the art that would go in it, between exhibitions, between artists, etc. I'm interested in what I see as the normative aspects of visual language: the way that we, as part of a shared culture, take certain forms, colors, etc. for granted as institutional or as neutral common ground (as opposed to other forms or colors the we pay attention to as being expressive). I wanted the work to be perceived not as an expression in itself but as an expression of the normative aspects of visual language that, because of the work's situation, had to also be acknowledged as a background for other representations and activities.