Craig Kalpakjian

Craig Kalpakjian

L7 #3. Framed inkjet print. 35 ¼ × 35 ¼ inches.

L7 #5. Framed inkjet print. 35 ¼ × 35 ¼ inches.

L7 #9. Framed inkjet print. 35 ¼ × 35 ¼ inches.

4   *L7 #4*. Framed inkjet print. 35 ¼ × 35 ¼ inches.   **2018**
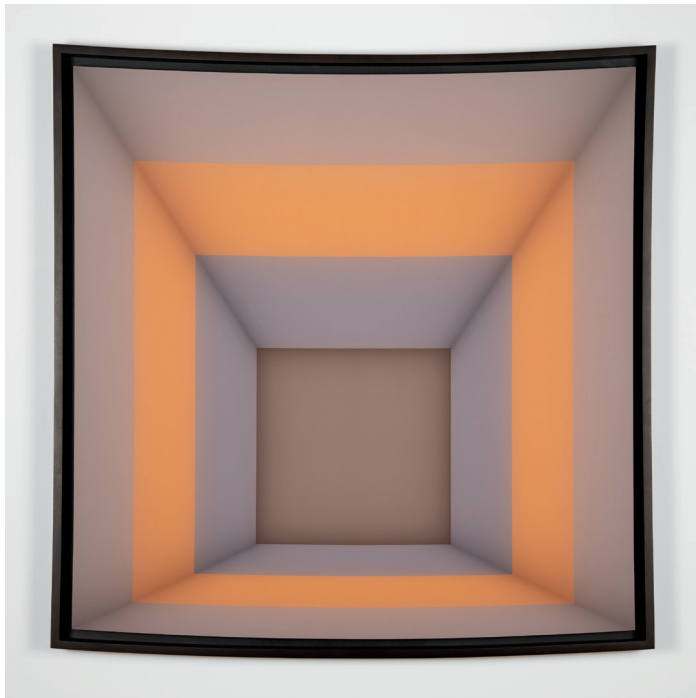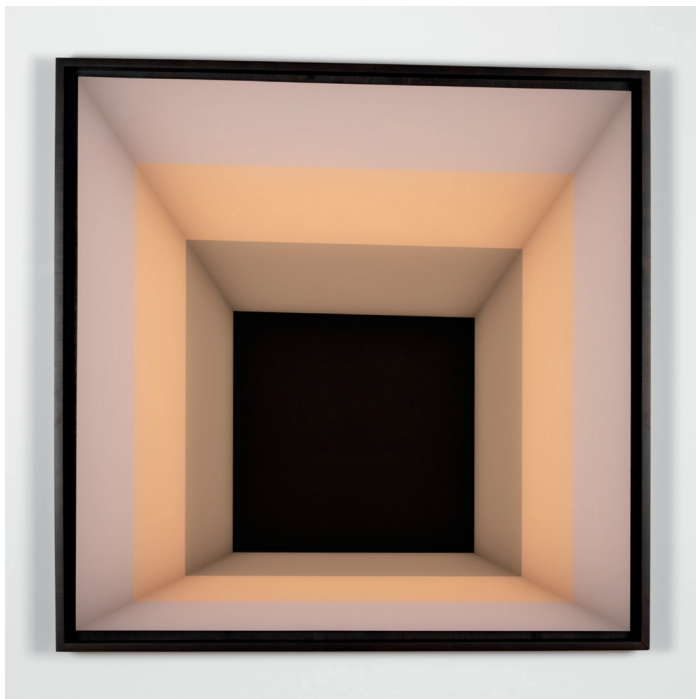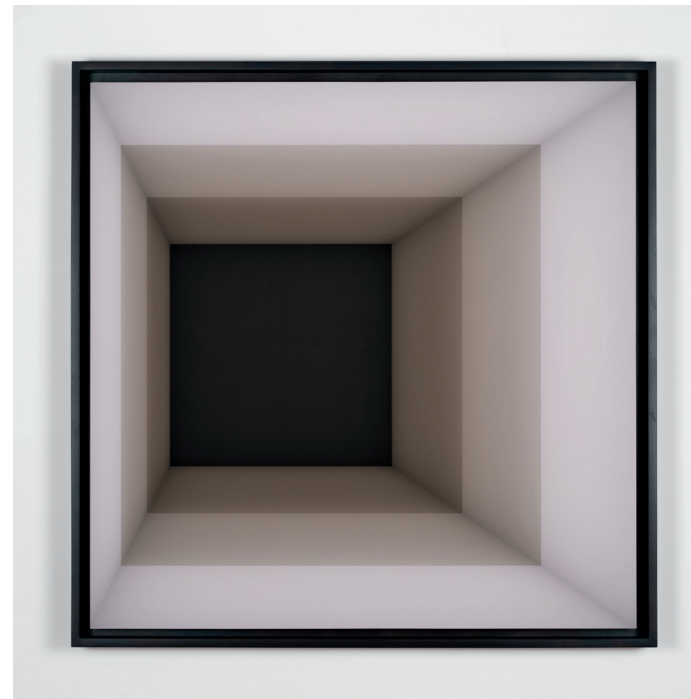

5   *L7 #1*. Framed inkjet print. 35 ¼ × 35 ¼ inches.   **2018**

6   *L7 #2*. Framed inkjet print. 35 ¼ × 35 ¼ inches.   **2018**
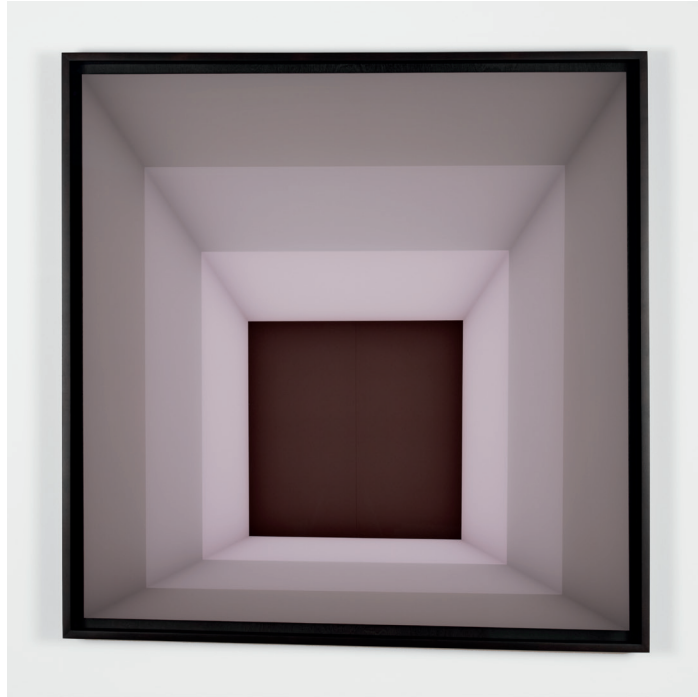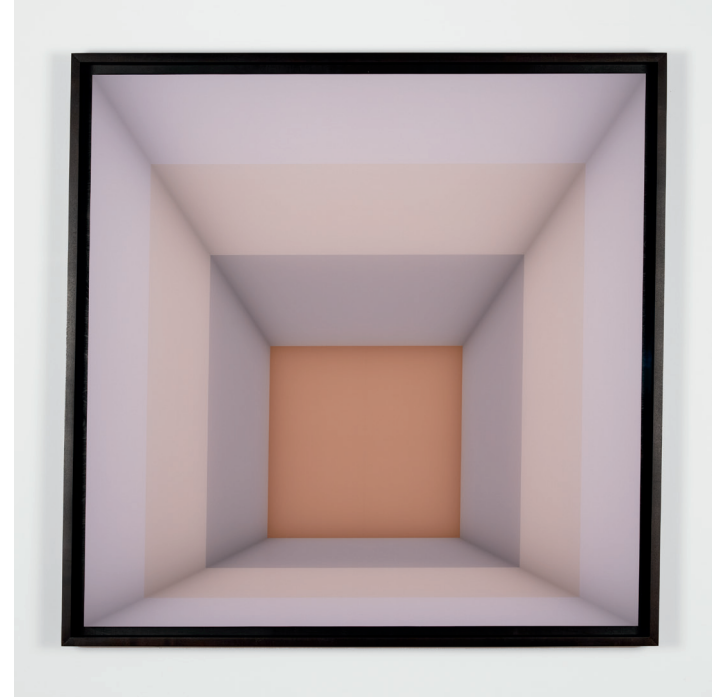
9   *L7 #8*. Framed inkjet print. 35 ¼ × 35 ¼ inches.   2019
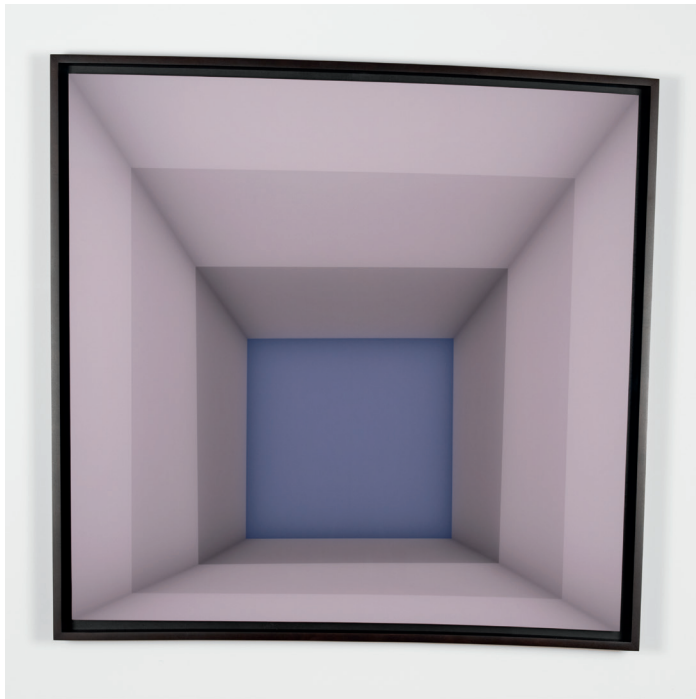
10   *L7 #10*. Framed inkjet print. 35 ¼ × 35 ¼ inches.   2020

11   *Goal Less (mini)*. Portable solar panel, lithium power station, aluminum truss frame, daylight LED light panel. 86 × 24 × 30 inches.   2020

Goal Less. Portable solar panel, lithium power station, aluminum truss frame, daylight LED light panels. 93 ½ × 59 × 29 inches.

Into the Corner. Surveillance system (cameras, DVR, monitor), scanning spotlight, DMX controller, compass, aluminum truss, base. 29 × 95 × 37 inches.

14   *Into the Corner*. Detail.   2020
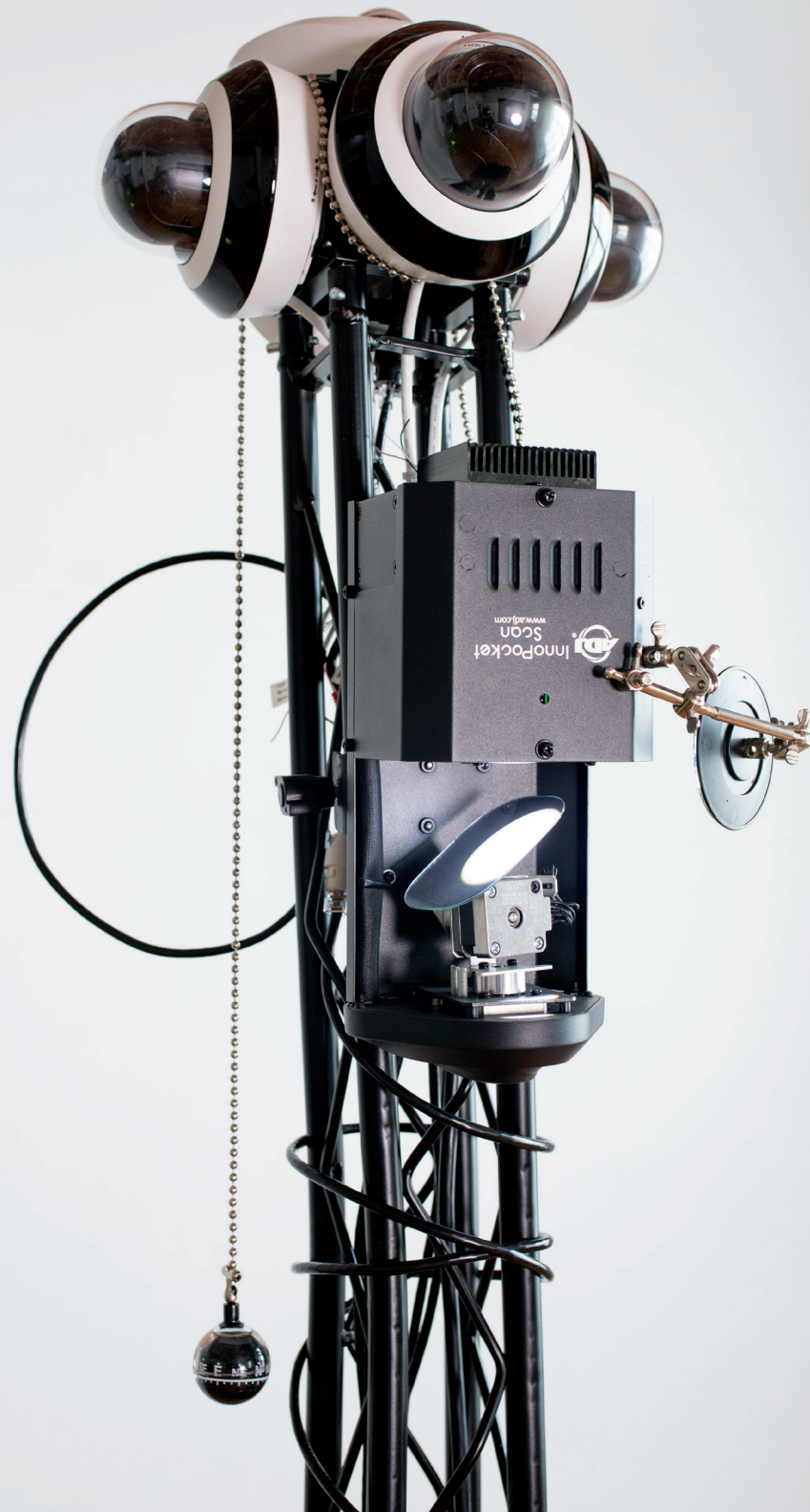
15   *Into the Corner*. Detail.   2020
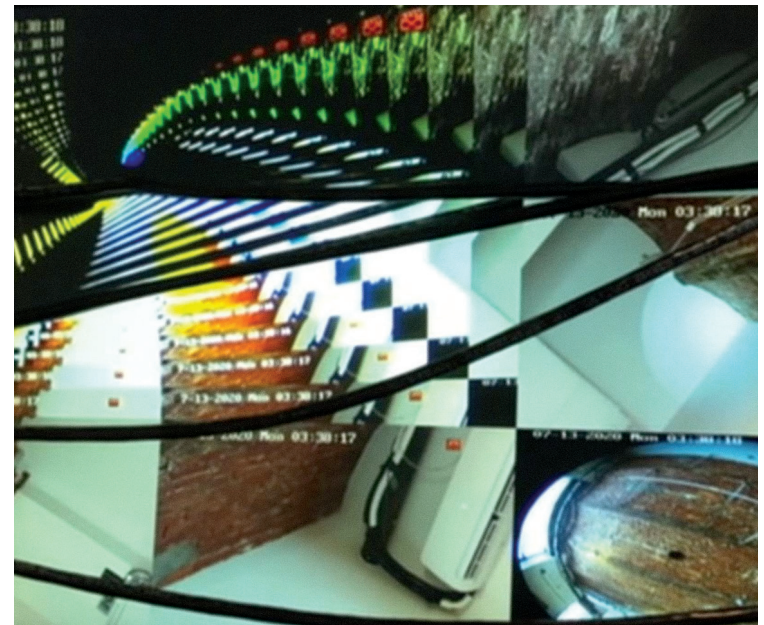
16   *Into the Corner*. Detail.   2020
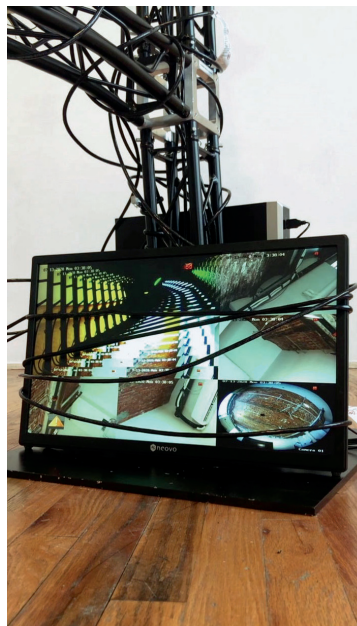
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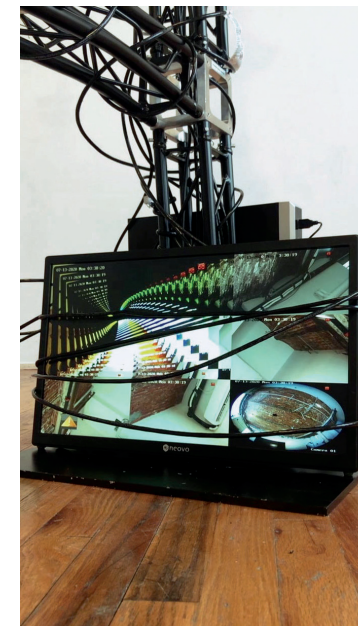
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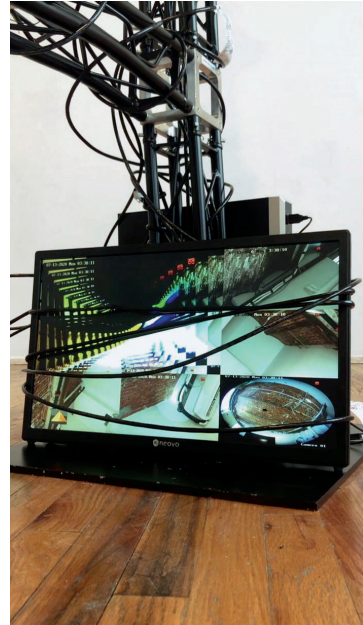
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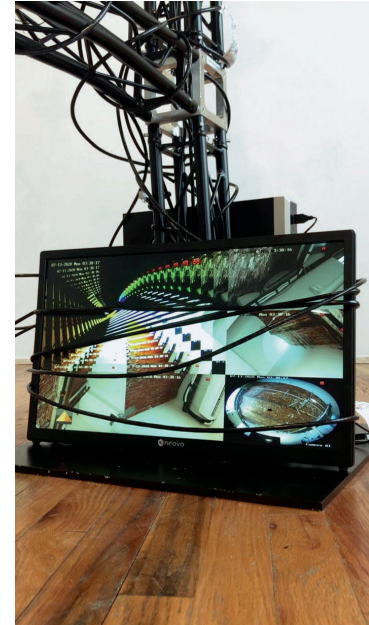
00:26.880

Damage Control. Lighting truss, surveillance system (camera, DVR, monitor), moving head spotlight, DMX controller, black mirror ball, surveillance mirror, detritus. 84 × 74 × 72 inches.   2019
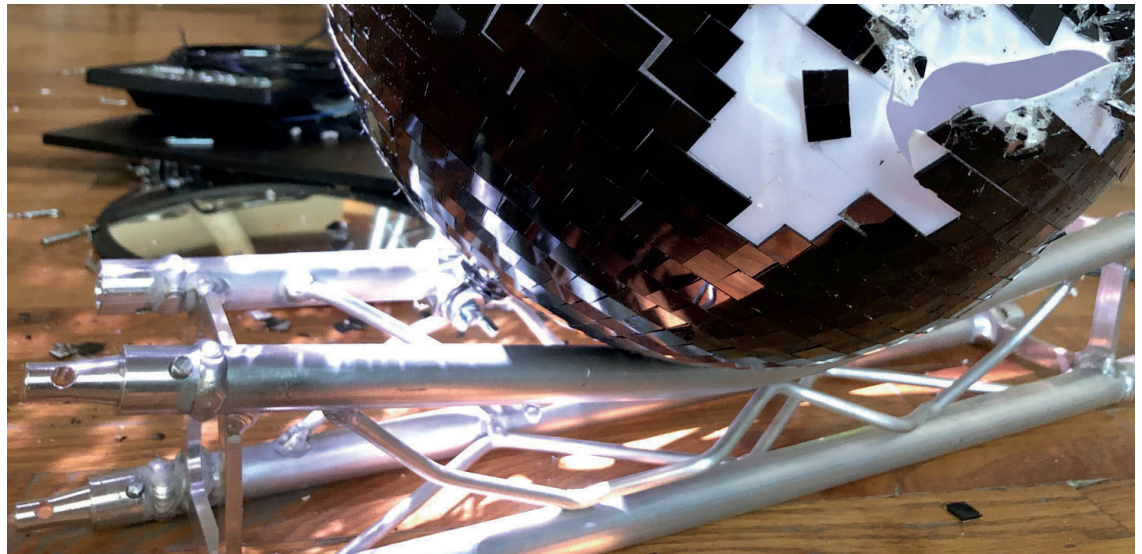
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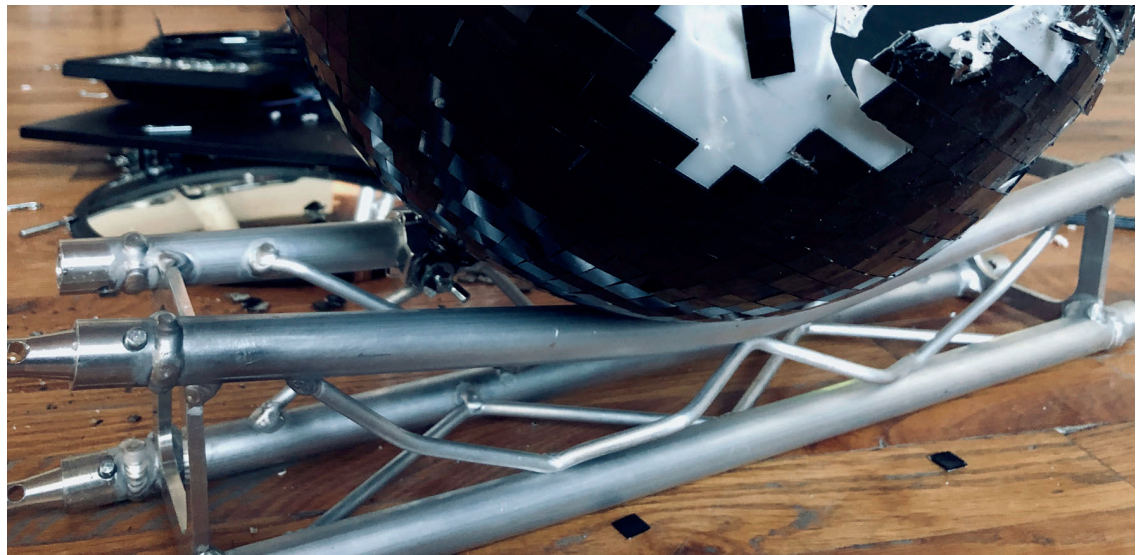
20   *Damage Control*. Detail.   2019
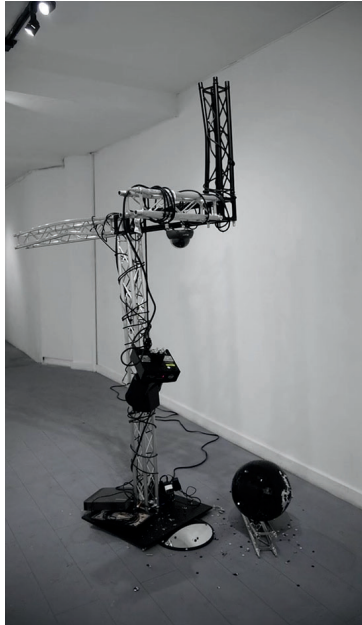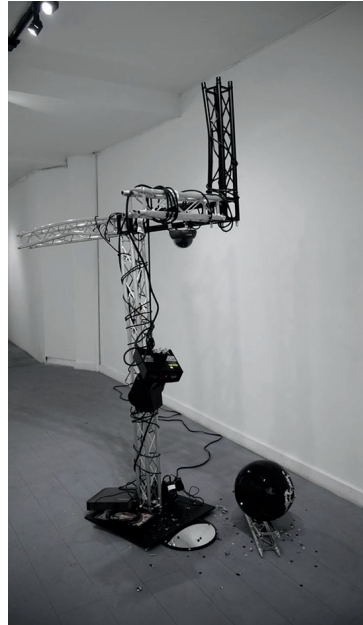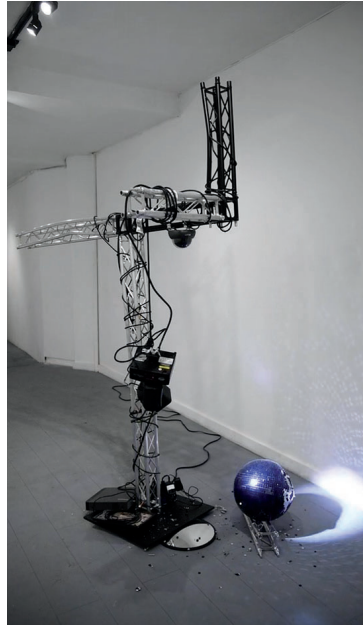
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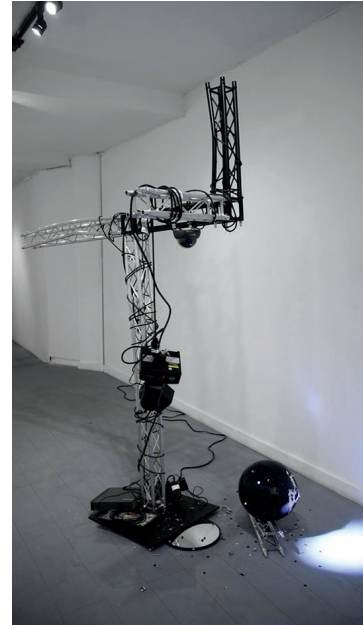
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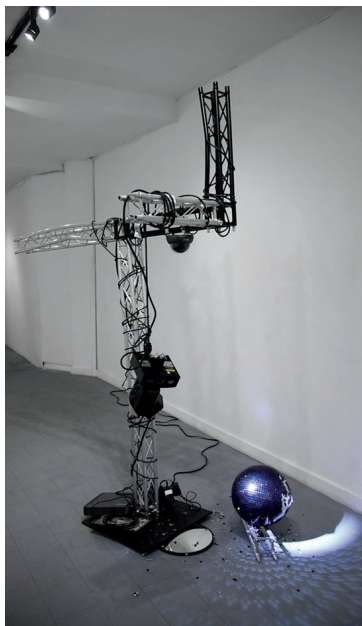
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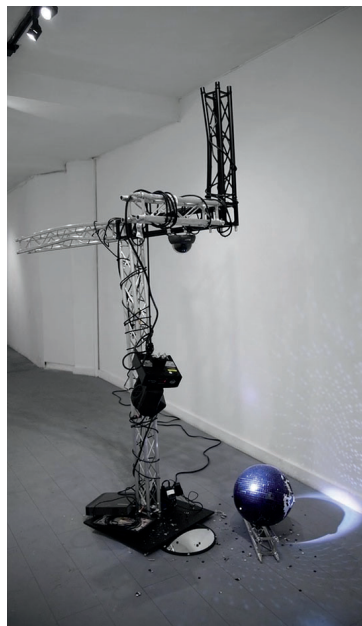
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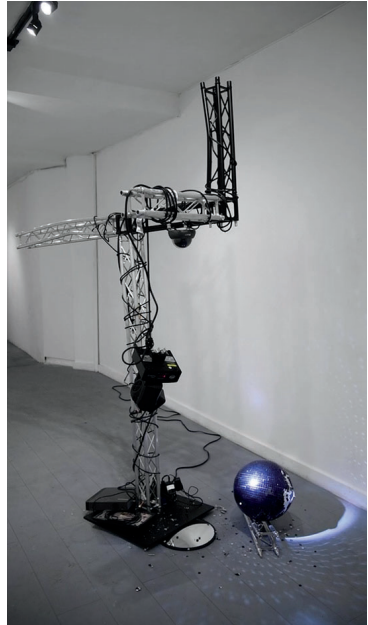
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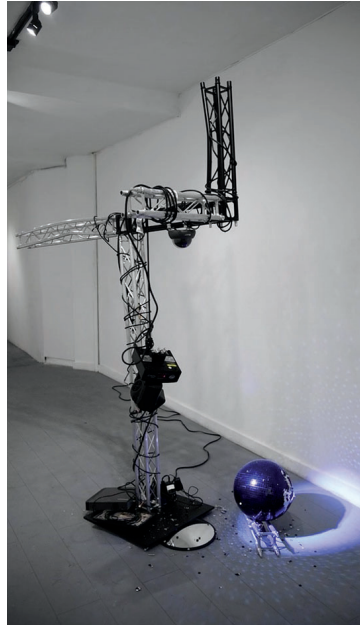
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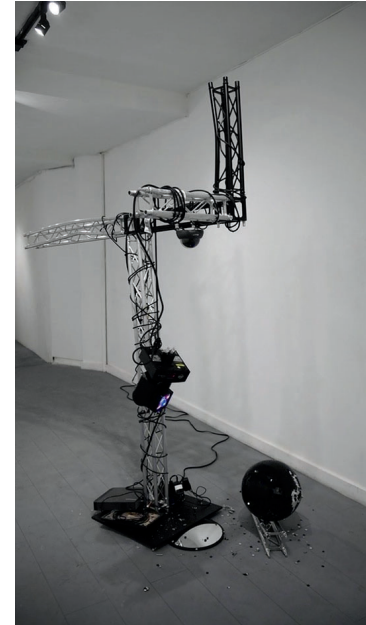
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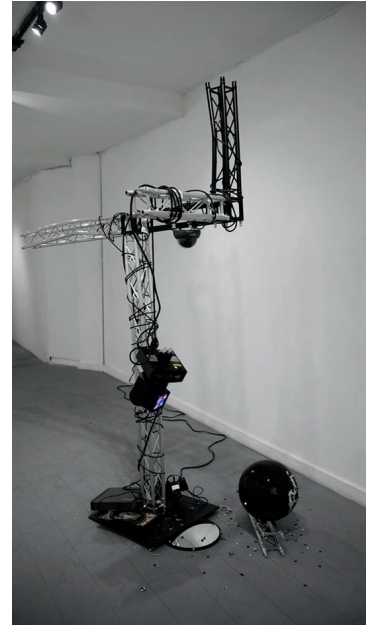
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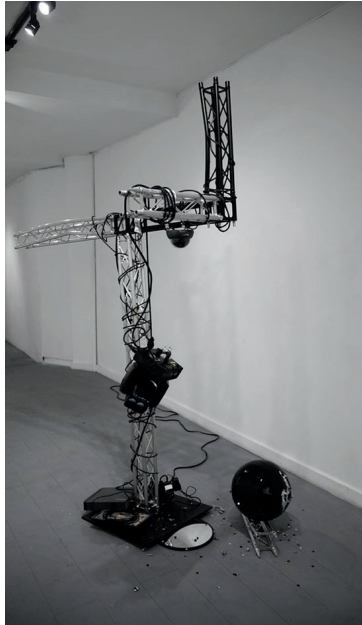
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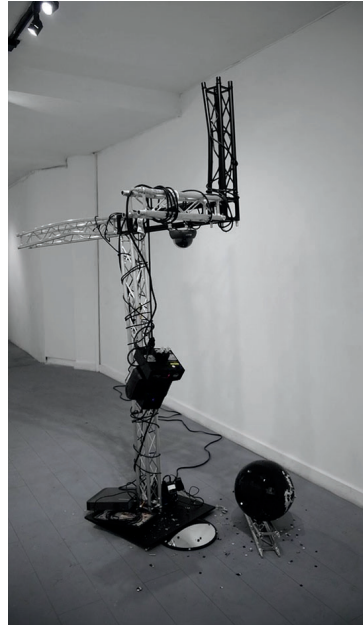
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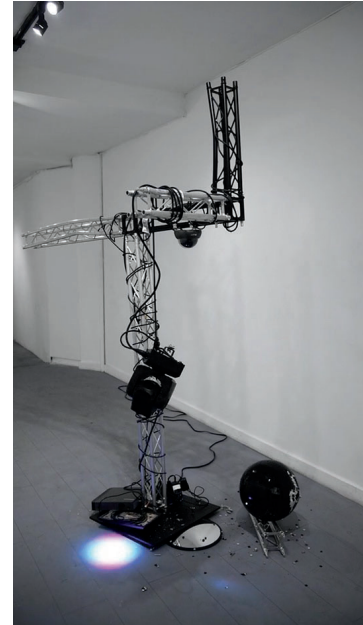
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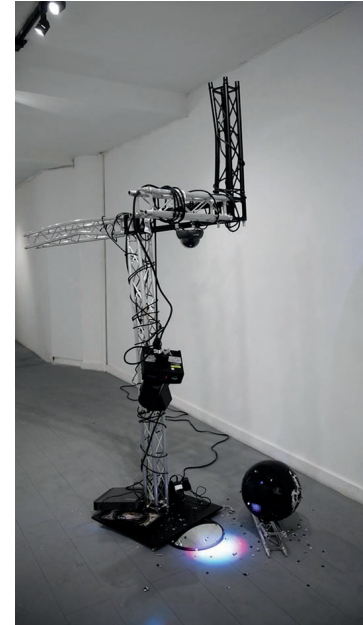
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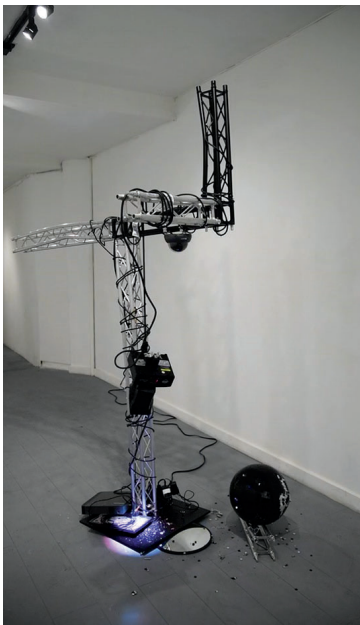
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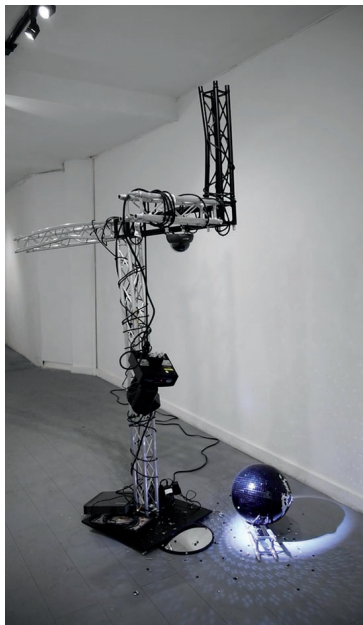
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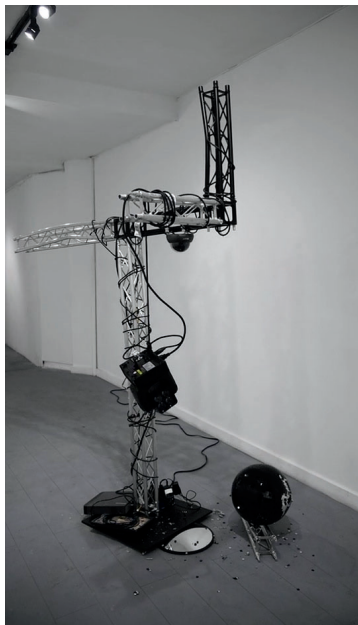
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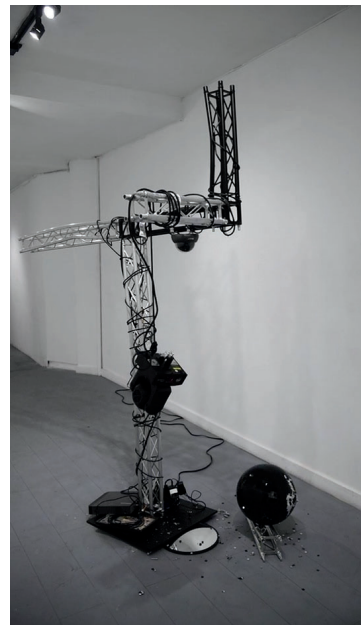
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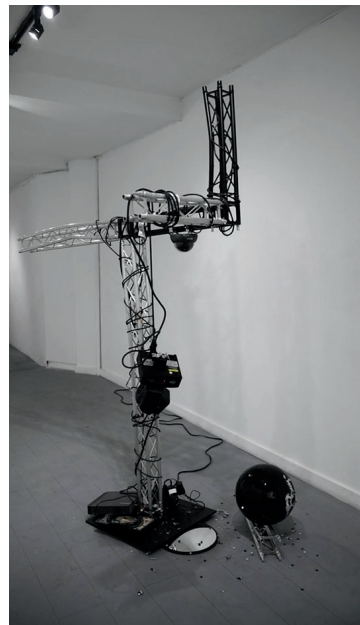
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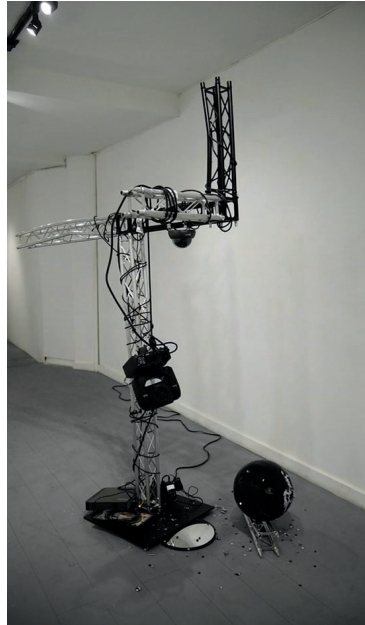
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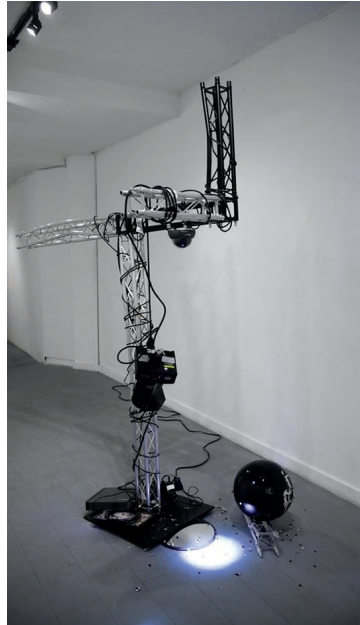
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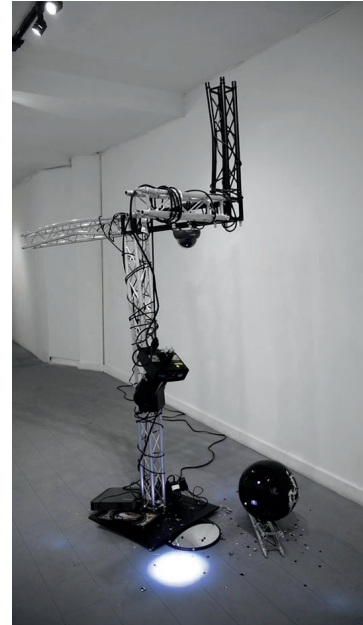
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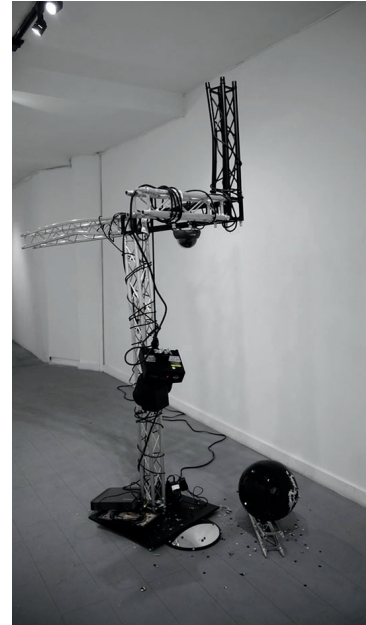
01:57.600

22   *Silent Running*. Dual moving head spotlight, DMX controller, houseplant, lighting truss and base,
            surveillance mirror, sandbag weight, watering can. 51 × 50 × 28 inches.   2019–20

24   *Units (30°/60°)*. Framed inkjet print. 33 ¼ × 33 ¼ inches.   2019

25   *Dark Units #4*. Framed inkjet print. 28 ¼ × 24 ¼ inches.   2019

26   *Dark Units*. Framed inkjet print. 34 × 34 inches.   2019
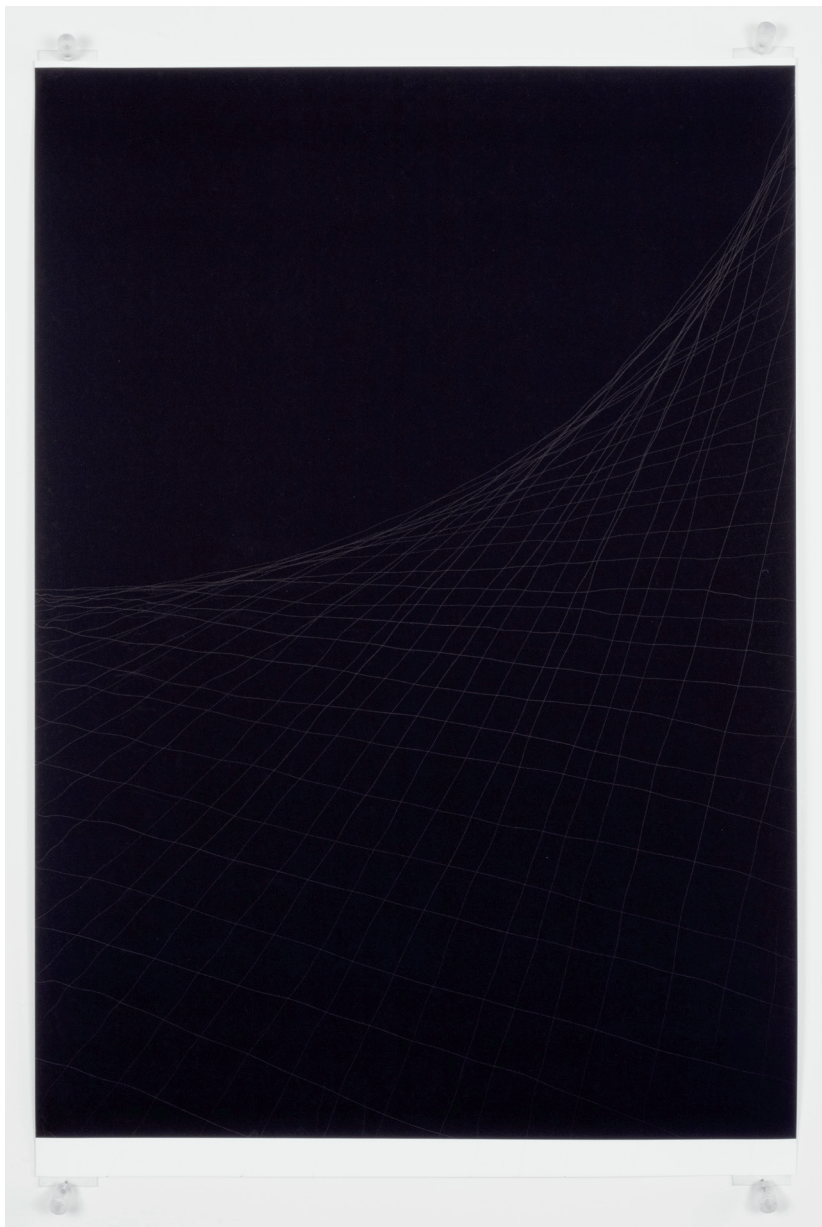
27   *Untitled Grid (z=x²-y²) #2*. Pencil and inkjet on paper. 19 × 13 inches.   **2020**
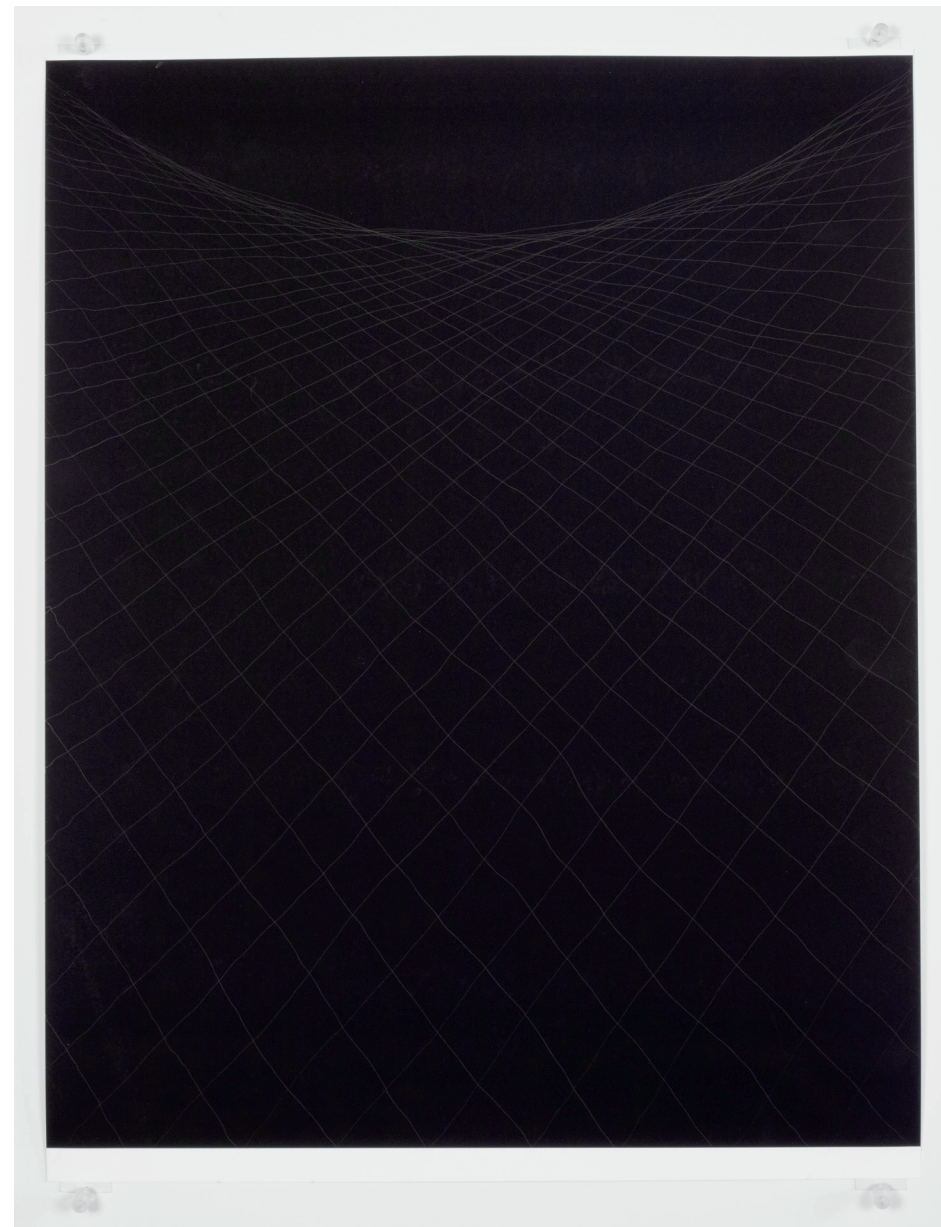
28   *Untitled Grid (z=x²-y²)*. Pencil and inkjet on paper. 22 × 17 inches.   **2020**

Beneath the Register… Mirror ball tiles, surveillance mirror. 12 ¼ × 12 ¼ × 6 ½ inches. 2019

Craig Kalpakjian **CK**

with
Yasi Alipour **YA**

Craig Kalpakjian is often remembered as one of the first artists to critically engage with the digital realm. In his early work, he created computer generated renderings of artificial spaces that appeared as banal photographs depicting institutional spaces devoid of people. The results were eerie. One was made to face the familiarity of the hallways; to recognize that these architectures have always been designed to isolate, alienate, and erase people; to acknowledge that as spectators of this work, one was already familiar with the sense of surveillance. For more than two decades, Kalpakjian has continued to closely engage with technology and make works that lead us to ask the haunting questions of our era of Neoliberal Capitalism: the technologies of power, surveillance, and control.

I met Craig in his studio in Queens. In preparation of his upcoming exhibition at Kai Matsumiya, (now rescheduled for October), the luminous studio was filled with works, past and present. We walked from one room to the next as he generously introduced each work. As I was fully taken by the visual allure of his work, we began discussing our shared interest in squares—and the frustration that comes with that. Ultimately, we found ourselves sitting, surrounded by his thought-provoking work, and delved into a long conversation revolving around politics, systems, student protests, graveyard maps, and Jacques Tati's *Playtime*, and much more.

Little did we know that much would change within a week. What followed is common-place these days: health concerns, social distancing, cancellations, rescheduling, and ultimately a Zoom conversation. The irony was not lost on either one of us. So, we used the virtual platform—to be suspect these days—to finally bring the interview to reality. What follows is the result and accordingly, it is haunting and funny, square and anti-capitalist, playful and abstract, technical and literal, with crooked utopias and OCD, and much more. It is a snippet of all that is the essence of Kalpakjian's practice.

YA

I would like to start our conversation by borrowing a few words Diedrich Diederichsen used in his essay for Frankfurt's Museum für Moderne Kunst recent retrospective of Cady Noland: "the architecture of demarcation, of public enclosure, of guiding, of control."

The words for me are a very interesting way of thinking about your practice. In first glance, your work speaks the language of abstraction and makes reference to the legacy of minimalism. But then with a closer look, one finds that they are unearthing questions that are much closer to the words above. I would like us to start with your "L7" series. Here you specifically engage with Josef Albers and his squares. And yet the work also refers to your iconic early works that focused on renderings of institutional spaces emptied of people. I know Cady Noland has been a big influence for you. Can you tell us when you were first introduced to her work?

CK

I first saw Cady Noland's work in the late '80s at Colin de Land's gallery, American Fine Arts, where I had also exhibited in a group show. Her major installation at the 1991 Whitney Biennial remains a touchstone, and for me this was part of a re-examination of minimalism and the sculptural legacy of the '60s. Noland's recent exhibition in Frankfurt was a great opportunity to be reminded of these issues in her work and how important they were to me at the time, especially with the relative absence of the work from public exhibition, and the rarity of seeing it in the US or New York in the last ten years. It's also interesting that a few of the more recent appraisals and reviews talk specifically about her family history as the daughter of the Color field painter, Kenneth Noland. Quite understandably, she plays that down, but it's undeniable that this is part of the position she's working from.

I do feel like when I started making installation and sculpture, I was part of this larger reappraisal of the legacy of minimalism that was going on in my generation. There *were* actually many social issues being confronted in minimalist work right from the start, but the predominant reading was formalist. I think that's one of the reasons Donald Judd, among others, rejected the term minimalism. One of the great things about the new Judd exhibit at MoMA is the insistence that his work was about space. Robert Morris is another prime example. My focus was certainly on the space around my work, but I was thinking about an almost literal charge to the space—in terms of whether it is protected, isolated, confined—by using functional protective barriers. I was also working with objects that could function as weapons, which is something that definitely bleeds into what Noland was doing, a powerful, aggressive adoption of the vocabulary of minimalism. Someone wrote of her creating a language or vocabulary with her work, and looking back I do feel like she opened up the space in which I was working—it's a really good way of describing how I saw my work functioning. The sense of disruption and disequilibrium is very much what I continue to be working with, taking geometric abstraction and doing something else with it related to control and power.

YA

Thinking about the vocabulary, can you tell us more about the title of your series "L7"?

CK

The term "L7'' was 1960s slang for calling a person "square." In the '80s there was a great girl grunge band called L7, but the term was originally a kind of hippie code. You could call a person an "L7" and they might not know you were calling them a square, or you'd say: "something is so L7." [*laughter*]

The works in the "L7" series are a direct reference to Albers's "Homage to the Square" (1950-1976), but you know, even Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) is famously not exactly square, so I was thinking: *what is not square; what is off?* The ways that the square can be off but still be more or less read as a square, and it can sort of activate our desire to correct it. It's been said that in his writings, Mondrian is looking toward a "perfectly equilibrated future society," that art could help "straighten out society's crookedness and inequality… that he wants to reach out to the world, offer a helping hand." It does make me think of the OCD response of straightening a work hanging askew, that desire to correct something that looks off. I know many artists have had the experience of hanging work in architecture that is never perfect, and I recall having an argument with a gallerist in Germany who insisted that the work be hung according to a level—even though, because the floor was not level, it looked more correct to hang it in line with the floor.

YA

That reminds me of my first visit to your studio. The "L7" series was the first work I encountered in person. And my brain really wanted to "level" it, to fix it, to correct it, to straighten it out!

CK

Exactly. And I've often felt that myself, even in public places or other people's houses or offices.

YA

The reference you made to Mondrian is so interesting. The old utopian dream of "correcting" the "crooked" and your squares that are stubbornly unleveled, impossible to correct, outside of utopia. It's interesting to think about Malevich and Mondrian. What about Albers himself?

CK

Well you have these earlier 20th century geometric abstract artists, so many of which were clearly utopian. But it's hard to make a utopian argument about Albers, as much as I admire his work. And it's hard to put it beside someone like Ad Reinhardt whose lifelong political commitment is well documented, even if he didn't want his paintings to be read in that context. Personally, I can't help but do it, and I think it adds to the work, but I think he was interested in purity in a different way. Still, the absolute negation of Reinhardt's black paintings, the difficulty and the resistance of that work, is something that I feel is beyond anything Albers attempted. It puts it on a different level for me.

YA

You know, it's also interesting to think of Albers as a character moving through history, from Bauhaus to Black Mountain, to Yale—which perhaps is the point of conforming to the institution?

CK

Well the question becomes what we're left with, what we're to do with these utopian ideas at this point in history. The utopian aim I find absolutely beautiful and compelling, but of course it's hard. [*laughter*] It's hard in 2020 to maintain these utopian beliefs. We can no longer believe in progress or utopias in the same way. We don't believe in revolution, but at the same time, we've seen functioning institutions that we depend on taken apart, corroded by disbelief. We're confined by institutions, but I'd still wish to hold on to some sense that we *can* correct them, that we're not just slipping backwards. If we still want to believe in questioning, critique, justice, what's been called "Democracy to come"… the righting of wrongs… will we always just be correcting what's once again become crooked?

YA

The old utopian desires and our era of the "almost square" and it's crooked-ness. You know as we're thinking about abstraction, politics, and finally architecture, I want to pause on one of your early works: the "HVAC" series. There too, your images speak the language of abstraction. Yet, what you are focusing on is the interior of HVAC systems. So, there we have it, squares and these invisible structures of (or the desire for) control. I would like to hear more about your relationship with architecture in general and to start to think about power and control in your work?

CK

Those ideas really were the impetus of these image works, the computer generated renderings that I began in the early '90s. They come directly out of my installation works, which were mostly free standing sculpture, (though some of them were attached to the wall). Those works referenced the context that they were in, the architecture around them. I was thinking about institutional architecture and the architecture of control—crowd control, passage, flow, and threat management—or you might say threat containment. Some of these ideas were just emerging at the time, and it was beginning to be talked about and theorized at an academic level throughout the '90s. But of course, there were some thinkers who were exploring it earlier. I was also thinking about insides and outsides, boundaries. I often mention the significance of systems-theory in my work, and the delineation of the inside ("the system") and the outside ("the environment") that's fundamental to the analysis of a functioning system. The question is always where you draw that line and define the system. In all of this—crowd control, containment, even just the architecture, obviously—these boundary issues are absolutely crucial. In the "HVAC" works I wanted the air ducts to call some of this into question. The HVAC system functions as a double-negative in a way: it's the inside of the inside, which is connected to the outside. You're inside a room, and the HVAC system is even

further inside the building—it's inside a wall. But it's also the way out, connected to the outside where air is brought in from. Another thing that a lot of these images evoke is the narrative trope from science fiction and action films of actually escaping through the air ducts of the HVAC system. And then with these duct systems—with their grates and filters—there's this idea or fantasy of almost dissolving, "becoming molecular" [*laughs*], dematerializing your body and being able to pass through, if not a wall, then a vent.

YA

Somehow the thought of the double negative makes me think of your dilemma with the unleveled imperfect "L7", to be almost-the-square that fails at being a square and refuses to be corrected. But I'm really intrigued by how you framed the recurring theme of the HVAC escape scene. I never thought that the sci-fi trope is why the interior of the HVAC systems and all the air ducts is so familiar to our social psyche.

I want us to take a moment to discuss your recent monograph *Intelligence*. To start, you have included Deleuze's essay, "Postscript on the Societies of Control" (1992). It seems to be pivotal to so much of what we have discussed so far.

CK

Yes, I think the essay is absolutely seminal. Especially regarding much of the thought about architecture that I was talking about. It goes back to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and his thinking about spaces of containment, spaces of discipline, like the panopticon prison. It's also fascinating that Foucault was theorizing the neoliberal state back in the '70s, when it was really just being born. Deleuze takes Foucault's late seminars and elaborates on them. This essay in particular is also quite playful, and for that reason it seemed appropriate for this catalogue, in relation to my installation *Black Box* (2002). Here, Deleuze begins to think beyond the society of discipline and control to the more contemporary issue of self-control. Like the neoliberal model where we're all seen as human capital and we're encouraged to view ourselves in that way. It acknowledges that the hard control structures are absolutely still functioning, but at the same time, we see them surpassed by the virtual; by self-control and how we've internalized these structures. Beyond the domination of the state we become our own police.

YA

That speaks so clearly to your project *Black Box* which is the focus of *Intelligence*. In that project, you used a product produced by Sony, the AIBO robot. You took the robot designed to behave like a dog—and its artificial intelligence designed to adapt to its owner—and placed it in confinement. The installation focused on the dog's daily photographic diary from the insides of his empty white cube. The viewers only saw the exterior of the the cell and the abstract photos produced by the imprisoned robot. In the monograph, I was so taken by your text piece where you combine AIBO's manual with an Interrogation manual produced by the Headquarters of the Department of the Army. AIBO's manual opens with this sentence "The AIBO robot is the name which Sony

has given to its family of entertainment robots, robots that are designed with the goal of presenting a vision for a new type of lifestyle in which human beings derive enjoyment from mutual existence with robotic creatures." The *Intelligence* Interrogation manual opens with "This manual provides doctrinal guidance, techniques, and procedures governing the employment of human intelligence (HUMINT) collection and analytical assets in support of the commander's intelligence needs" The juxtaposition is haunting. And that's only the beginning. In another interview you contemplated the author of each of these texts.

CK

Right, that was an unexpected question. Bob Nickas asked that at the end of our interview. It's not something that I had explicitly thought about but it's relevant, and in a way another exercise in virtual thinking. Imagining the writer of the text is similar to imagining the robot dog confined inside the box.

YA

This piece of yours for me encapsulates so much of the legacy of the 2000s (and the American invasions in the Middle East). The same way that Noland's is such a mirror to the '90s. I noticed somewhere that her Paula Cooper exhibition—with the iconic piece with the Manson girls—had happened right before the O.J. Simpson fiasco.

CK

The timing of *Black Box* is also interesting because of the lag from the initial installation in 2002 and its reiteration in 2013. The way it was seen and the flavor of the work itself became quite different—the more sinister readings that initially remained implicit became unavoidable by 2013. The focus in the first installation was on artificial intelligence and an almost abstract idea of confinement, as well as the absurdity of confining a mechanical toy, or using it in a psychological experiment. It was more of a type of reverse engineering, an examination of programming and artificial intelligence. When the same work was reinstalled in 2013, the association with solitary confinement, interrogation, and torture—issues in the news at the time—came out more. How the functional objectivity of the experiment might relate to that became an issue, even if it remained absurd to be thinking about this in relation to a toy robot. What was originally below the surface in the work became more explicit, and the playfulness becomes quite disturbing. With the juxtaposition of the manuals, I'm kind of running with that ominous playfulness and letting it take its course.

YA

I think it is fascinating to think about the space of playfulness and humor in your work, even though you deal with subjects as formal as the legacy of abstraction or as loaded as political power and control—and to go back to where we started (with the quote on Noland's work)—the violence that is in surveillance, control, architecture, and abstraction!

CK

I think that the question of abstraction in all of its divergent meanings is really paramount—there's

dimensional abstraction, there's mathematical abstraction, there's social abstraction. Any kind of systems thinking involves an abstraction. There's a level of abstraction to language also. It's both confusing and fascinating.

YA

I think confusing and fascinating is the right place to be right now.

CK

Absolutely. [*laughs*]

YA

Something that for me was brought to the surface in *Intelligence* was the idea of consumer technology. You are one of the only artists I know who deals with technology and yet isn't dedicated to one of the two ends of the spectrum: the high-end technology or the copy-left, open-source alternatives. The technology in your work is stubbornly middle class. You work with what has been designed to be consumed. I think considering your project, *Projection, Reflection, Structure, Structure* (2017) is a good place for us to discuss this.

The piece consists of an inkjet print and a mirror installed in a corner, and a moving spotlight that is programmed to project on the print. The result is that the print and the mirrored image are transformed into this mesmerizing abstract work. Can you tell more about the project itself? I'm also interested in how all this ties in with what we have been discussing so far, the violence of the mundane in our neoliberal world.

CK

There's something I find interesting with readily available, consumer-grade technology. Things might come to market very rapidly now, but consumer technology is still slightly aged, not so new that it's unfamiliar or subject to the same fantastic claims. There's something about its pragmatic nature. Since it is commercial, it is seen as a solution to a practical problem that actually has a market. Too often artists end up being used in some way to validate research and technology—whether it's commercial or something that ends up connected to the military-industrial complex. There's also something perversely liberating about taking something that's widely available and using it for the wrong purposes. Rather than having something designed for you and then promoted by a corporation, you're instead taking a product and adapting it to another need. Then there's the specifics of this technology, the technology of entertainment, which initially seems a strange conjunction but is a huge market today. It always reminds me of Slavoj Žižek's comment that "the fundamental ethical injunction today is to enjoy ourselves." Entertainment, the production and consumption of "content," becomes a major motor of capitalism.

YA

It's interesting, I wonder if you are misusing these products or using them to their logical absurd conclusion, like the AIBO. Supposedly Sony's AIBO project failed since they stopped producing it. But of course, isn't Roomba the exact same idea, perhaps now minus the façade of entertainment.

CK

Yes—and in my work *Bios-fear* (2016), I did use a Roomba, which roamed the gallery space with a small plexiglass enclosure filled with live cockroaches attached to the top of it. And the Roomba is made by a company that makes military robots as well.

YA

Woah, I had no idea! The military-industrial complex is of course at the heart of the *Black Box* project.

CK

The text project with the user's manual and the army intelligence manual is very much indebted to Harun Farocki, who, besides being very interested in labor, was especially critical of the military-industrial complex and its use of technology. He was very aware of the crossover between gaming/entertainment and the military use of 3-D technology, even the way that games are used by the military. The military technology is redeployed in consumer games that are violent in a more mundane way. His examination of all of that, as well as the labor involved on both ends was absolutely inspirational for me. Along with the analysis of the "entertainment industry," which I think comes out of the Frankfurt School, and the enormous importance of this in terms of where we are today in the late-capitalist world, with the function of both the artist and the "end user," the consumer of content that we all are at the same time. Which is unfortunately the endpoint, and also could more and more become simply the end of culture as we have known it, seeing art not as culture but as product, as simply entertainment—almost as pacification.

YA

Now that you have brought up labor, I would like us to shift our focus to *Silent Running* (2019). This work consists of moving spotlights, a surveillance mirror, and a houseplant. It's another one of your projects where the idea really took me as well as the visuality of it. The plant is lit by the spotlight and grows. The viewer is implicated both by the mirror—which is how we see half of the "sculpture"—and by the way the lights move, almost mimicking a surveillance camera. Something that stood out to me in reading Deleuze in relation to your work was the idea of the continuity in the systems of control—in comparison to disciplinary power which is corrective and punitive. To use Deleuze's example, in regard to education, in systems of control, one no longer graduates, you are trained and always in need of further training. I'm interested in the idea of labor and the exhaustion of the insular closed system you have built here.

CK

It presents itself as a closed system but of course it's also absolutely not closed. It needs power and it needs water. In this sense it needs care, which I like. It has to be watered weekly, which is hopefully not going to be so difficult while we're quarantining.

YA

I was actually worried about this piece. [*laughter*]

CK

Me too. There's someone who's living in my studio building who can come water it, so it's okay for now. The piece is named after a '70s apocalyptic sci-fi film starring Bruce Dern that I saw as a child and remember loving. A greenhouse is sent out to space because things can no longer grow on Earth. A number of technicians are with them to run the ship and care for the plants. They struggle among themselves, and with corporate cutbacks—and it's all set to a theme song by Joan Baez.

YA

Amazing! I did not see that coming!

CK

[*laughing*] Yes! There's robots with AI that are cheating at card games while they're playing with the caretakers. Some very nice details. That's what the title of my work refers to, but the sculpture itself is another case of putting into action a system that has some degree of isolation. Another recurring system that's self-sustaining to some degree, but also has a sense of foreseeable failure as the plant overgrows the sculpture, and the inevitable pathos that's involved with that. Along with the absurdity, this time, of using entertainment lights as grow lights, with the subtle implication that we're entertaining the plant as well as maintaining it.

YA

You know I just noticed that even in the documentations of *Silent Running* (2019), if you look closely, you'll find the watering can.

CK

Yes. There are automatic self-watering systems for gardens that you can hook up to a hose with a timer, but the fact that the watering can is there is a simple reminder that this system still obviously has to be cared for. It's an important part of the sculpture.

YA

I think what is interesting about your relationship with technology is that you are not just a polite user, you really get into the mechanics of the machine and play with its logic. I noticed somewhere, that in part of your education, you focused on Physics. Do you think that comes into play in your work? I was also taken by Deleuze saying: "Types of machines are easily matched with each type of society—not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating them and using them. The old societies of sovereignty made use of simple machines—levers, pulleys, clocks; but the recent disciplinary societies equipped themselves with machines involving energy, with the passive danger of entropy and the active danger of sabotage; the societies of control operate with machines of a third type, computers, whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy and the introduction of viruses."

CK

Yes, and as an artist using the computer it was always important to me to remain skeptical of this desire for

Projection, Reflection, Structure, Structure (2017). Installation view.

control. It's part of the seductiveness of technology that I think always needs to be questioned.

In studying physics, I was most interested in Relativity and Quantum physics, which have a level of abstraction that you don't find in classical mechanics.

YA

That's fascinating. It seems to me that classical physics and mechanics is more of a tool in how you manipulate material and poke fun at a lot of things. I was just thinking about the idea of movement and machines in general. Do you think about the relationship of your work with the figure? It's uncanny how the moving machines become bodily for me.

CK

Most often I would say it's a question of the viewer filling in an absence of the body, the relationship to the body that's viewing the object, but it's true, there's also the body of the machine. Especially with their movements and lenses, they become more figurative. I'm thinking particularly of another piece that I'm working on now that uses surveillance cameras mounted on top of a kind of column, that could be seen figuratively, but even in *Projection, Reflection, Structure, Structure*, the device I use is called a "Moving Head" spotlight!

YA

Really? [*laughs*]

CK

Yes! There are what's called scanning spotlights, where the light is stationary and there's a mirror that moves, but the Moving Heads, where the light and lens move and pivot are a really particular thing, and they do have an anthropomorphic quality. I remember being transfixed by these spotlights at music concerts. It's also curious that the movement of the AIBO, its limbs, joints, and pivot points are referred to as having "*multiple degrees of freedom.*" This allows it to move in ways resembling a dog. The moving head spotlights pivot on two axes, so they have two degrees of freedom, allowing them to point in every direction. This movement becomes a kind of choreography. That's certainly part of its attraction.

YA

Once again, I'm totally taken with the naming, "two degrees of freedom" and "moving heads." Both would make good band names, I think.

CK

For a band I might prefer "No degrees of freedom"!

YA

Well played! To return to an earlier idea, the question of labor and the exhausted machines, or this idea of use or misuse, function or malfunction, I would like to shift our focus to one of your recent pieces, *Goal Less* (2020). In this one you have another closed circuit, with Daylight LED Light Panels that shine on a portable solar panel which in turn charges a lithium power station, which in turn provides the energy for the LED lights. I'm intrigued by the stillness of this piece in relation to the kinetic works

we just discussed. But more importantly, here once again what you present to us as a closed system is anything but. Of course, there is waste and the whole system still needs to be periodically plugged in!

CK

There's definitely a stillness to this piece that is different. It doesn't draw the viewer in in the same way that the Moving Heads do, but then there *is* movement in a different sense—of power and of light. And in that way this piece deals with the issue of loss, waste, of inefficient systems. There's a questioning of the efficiency of systems and, again, issues of failure, of optimism, utopia, and futures.

YA

Wow, it's so amazing to see these thoughts echo throughout your work, from the un-leveled square to the battery leaking energy.

For my last question, I have two thoughts. As we wrap up, I would like to learn more of your relationship to sci-fi. And then I would love to hear more of your thoughts on what I noticed you mentioning in another interview, a famous quote attributed to Fredric Jameson "It is easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism."

CK

Fredric Jameson, as far as I've been able to track it down, is referring here to a comment about J. G. Ballard and his dystopian science-fiction futures. And both of those two are seminal figures for me. J. G. Ballard's work so often shows the dysfunction of technology, like in his book *Crash* (1973). There's also his obsession with architecture and enclosure. Ballard spent his teenage years in a prisoner of war camp during WWII, which he wrote about in *Empire of the Sun* (1984). He has a profound understanding of the dysfunctional human interactions that can arise in confined situations—it's something that shows up in almost all of his work, a conjunction of architecture, the social, even scarcity. But Jameson also wrote *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), (with the wonderful subtitle "*The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*"), a book that looks at the history of utopia and science fiction in literature. He looks at the relationship between progressive political thought and technological science fiction—the relationship of utopia to dystopia and different futures, our evolving ideas of the future. All things I'm often trying to play out in much of my work. But to get back to the quote itself, about what we can or can't imagine (for example the end of capitalism), I was—perhaps a bit facetiously—asking if AI could help us with that. It brings me back to ideas of intelligence and imagination, different kinds of intelligence, problem solving, machine learning, and even machine imaging (which is not the same as imagining). It does seem that people want to try to make machines think creatively. The question becomes what problems they might then be focused on or allowed to focus on (and again we might go back to degrees of freedom!). At that point, issues of desire and the unconscious, even forgetting, would also have to be considered.

As an interesting aside, in the film *Silent Running* (1972), as the lead character de-couples his greenhouse from the mothership and starts drifting off into space,

away from the sun, he very implausibly forgets that the plants need light. [*laughter*] He has a eureka moment and starts setting up lights on stands for all the plants he's taking care of.

YA

Well, somehow, I like it as a way of thinking about where we are right now.

Craig Kalpakjian
Fall 2020
Kai Matsumiya

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