

The Highlights - Avatar Gone Analog: Musings on The Bridge Project by Do Ho Suh

In September 2010, Do Ho Suh presented an unusual and unorthodox work at Storefront for Art and Architecture called *A Perfect Home: The Bridge Project*. This writing (by that exhibition's curator) is a gesture meant to foster conversation about the contentious status of *The Bridge Project*, as an art object in the context of the series of sculptures that compose *A Perfect Home*. *The Bridge Project* is markedly different in the way it was conceived and made, and in the form it assumed from Suh's ongoing musings about the question "what does the perfect home embody"?

Do Ho Suh, *The Bridge Project*, installation view, Storefront for Art and Architecture, September 15, 2010 - December 7, 2011. Photo by Ofer Wolberger.

The Bridge Project is a work in progress, an object of research that culminates at different times and places in visual expression. The presentation of this idea at Storefront was formally organized by two components. The first was a synchronized, four-monitor slide show, interspersed with animations, which articulated four design proposals for an inhabitable bridge spanning from Seoul to New York. The second was an animation based on an algorithm interpreting data from Suh's history of travel between cities across the globe, in concert with mappings of ocean surface currents in real time.

The four bridge proposals encompassed divergent typologies and systems. Suh harnessed information from various fields of knowledge, including boatbuilding, oilrig construction, geopolitics, ecology, geometry, and physics. In preparation for this exhibition, Suh collaborated with architects, engineers, and designers to envision an inhabitable bridge connecting the spatial, temporal, psychological, and cultural distance between Seoul and New York.

The medley of sculptural works composing *A Perfect Home* which fall under Suh's larger body of work, *The Speculation Project*, fulfill the requisite conditions imposed on and expected from his artworks that can easily be understood and read according to the terms set forth by each of their shapes. The contours and outlines of Suh's sculptures create borders between this and that life - a clear delineation between spatial realities of the general integrated world and the isolated, reified world of art according to its most conservative definition. *The Bridge Project* collapses these lines and boundaries in multiple ways.

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The Bridge Project posits a pervasive, fundamental, essential question, how in this age of virtual realities, can an artwork occupy a delineated position? The plethora and diversity of images and vantage points, perspectives and investments composing what are essentially four slide shows build 'worlds.' The viewer, like an avatar, circles in and out and between the screens, gathering materials rich and coherent enough to actually forge another place that for all intents and purposes has real edges and volumes that compose forms. Suh is animating a wholly other kind of materiality, strikingly differently from the steel, nylon, silk and other materials of the sculptures composing the meta-series *A Perfect Home*.

Given that Suh is drawing data and images from our everyday and from the annals of science, can *The Bridge Project* do what art in its strictest sense is meant to do? Does this project disrupt the very continuity of the world, as we know it? When you circumambulate, for instance, *The Perfect Home II* and *Reflection* or lie down within *Blue-Print* you are shifted out of your day to day and into another spatial, emotional, associative space. These works are understood according to a set of terms easily grasped by the art market and critics.

Art movements, as we know them well, have challenged the object and attempted through different strategies to question what we privilege in terms of a visceral, aesthetic, phenomenological art viewing experience. The bleeding of private and public, the dissolution of the object, the anti-object: these are terms that circulate and bubble up in art discourse as ways to order and structure positions and answers to these quandaries. *The Bridge Project* is evaluated in light of these debates and their results in sets of criteria that determine what is and isn't an art object.

The Bridge Project as it was presented at Storefront appears to affect a kind of scopic-landscape of windows onto interstitial spaces. The bridges are systems of signs and elements that oscillate and flourish in a larger context where forms occur and operate symbiotically, holistically. With *The Bridge Project*, Suh reveals the inner workings of his mind, strips away veils used to clad and build three-dimensional physical, material shapes and forms, and offers information and interpretations of space, memory, and historical and environmental factors in such a way as to generate other new formations in alternate and imaginary, spatial dimensions. This is simply a poetic move from the analog to the digital.