

Anisotropic: If The

Nuance Looks Moot

Its Effects Are

Radical, Or: The

Sequoia National

Forest Is Mind-

Blowingly Big and

Old and It's For You

To Look At: Chris

Adler Interviews

Brody Albert

by [Chris Adler](#) | Nov 28, 2015 | [Brody Albert](#), [Contributors](#), [Interviews and Conversations](#), [Vacancy](#) | [0 comments](#)



B: There are basically three works that I'm thinking of doing – some happening inside the space and some actually happening outside the space. The first is actually based on this tunnel, which is this tunnel that leads off of the 105 to LAX. Everyone who lives in LA has been through this 100 times. The tunnel has this fascinating thing to me where the sidewalk is really, really skinny, so it forces people, when they're walking, because of the ongoing traffic, to rub their shoulders and their hips against the wall.

C: And those are the drag marks?

B: And those are the drag marks. It's kind of beautiful, so there are these drag marks that go throughout the entire thing.

C: Wow, and then- are there marks from vehicles as well, from bang-ups?

B: I don't think so, I think that would do something else entirely. Because that's soot, right? So it's just soot getting lightly removed. So that's it, but there are moments –

the internet's being slow –

where people are tagging and writing their names, but for the most part it's shoulder and hips. And I've been going there and pulling over and trying to photograph it, just trying to figure out what's going on, and I'm super, super fascinated by that. That there's this drawing, this kind of mural that's being made by people passing through this area, that's just forced to happen because of the specifics of the architecture. It's kind of this strange thing to me, you actually can't walk this. There's no sidewalk leading to there. I don't quite understand exactly what's happening, but it's pretty fascinating to me. It's maybe maintenance people, someone who got stranded, somehow some homeless people.

C: You could post up outside the tunnel for a full 24 hours and see what or who comes in and out of that tunnel. And then jump on them and say "WHAT ARE YOU DOING!"

B: MICROPHONE! . . . Let me show you this. So when I was in my old studio, I had this realization that I could just gold leaf directly on to the wall, which, you can see where this is going.

Maybe I deleted it. Did I delete it? I deleted it.

B: So I realized I could gold leaf on to the wall. Part of the idea of this gesture is thinking about not just the mark making, but the sculptural depth that's being removed, and then transferring that onto the wall here with some material.

"They're inseparable, certainly. You can't take the psychology out of space. . . making sculptures is a process of removal. How much can you take out and still have something? Take out what you know, maybe. . .//. . . It has something to do with how deeply and strongly it [material choice] is embedded in the world, and how much it will live outside of its own meaning" – Charles Ray, In an interview with Zachary Cahill for Mousse 41, Dec. 2013

B: I started doing this in silver leaf, and that is a specific mark that was in here when I was photographing it. But part of my idea is then to have this as an ongoing thing. Because the walls of VACANCY will take up that much, and then the next extension could be another

exhibition and the next extension could be another exhibition. So it's doing the same thing that I've been doing of transposing a space onto another space, one set of marks onto another set of marks – like the table (La Estrella, 2014), a communally created drawing that's made by multiple people, kind of rethought through me and then transposed onto another space for a kind of recontextualization.

Our web stuff is kind of, we just got new internet so it's kind of a slow providing...

B: Kaeleen, she's making a website. Our idea is to take over your website.

C: Awesome.

B: So that, when people would go to you website it would land here. This is a proof of concept – we've taken all of the tunnels in Los Angeles and linked them together

C: All of them?

B: This is only an example of three. We have a map of all of them and we've been working with a web developer to make this happen. So the idea is kind of remapping it through this space.

See our internet is. That's super slow.

B: But so it's a street view and you'll navigate to the website and be dropped into the middle of a tunnel and it'll be moving, and then right when you're about to hit the precipice of the tunnel it will...

C: Shift you into darkness again.

B: So you're continually in the dark looking at some light which is outside. Kind of like respatializing Los Angeles, respatializing these tunnels. And then calling VACANCY itself another tunnel, a third tunnel.

C: Exactly, it's very much a tunnel or a tube.

B: So, this came first, and I had a desire to do some wall work, and to continue some of the theoretical ideas that were happening with the table. In terms of mark-making, reperforming the act of a community's hand, doing some kind of material displacement,

spatial displacement. And then, I've also been thinking about these security gates.

C: Yes.

B: We have a security gate on the outside of this studio and someone's been tying socks to the outside of it.

C: pfffftttt!!! ha ha ha ha!

B: Which is totally wonderful. Ha ha ha! It's not there now, I come back and it's not there anymore.

C: Dirty socks, though.

B: Dirty socks, and no. Sometimes. There was a clean sock, too. I don't even know. It's not particularly dirty, just a sock.

C: So? Artist, homeless? No suspicions of people's practices that involve socks in this building?

B: Ha, no, definitely not. But part of the trajectory in my work is realizing that I'm making substrates, part of what I'm doing is actually making a platform, and I've been looking for a way to activate it. So with La Estrella, for instance, the structure of the table was actually the substrate for this other layer of drawing, for this activity that's going on. So recently I've been thinking, what if I make the substrate, like a fabricated substrate and then have whatever's activating it, whatever is hanging on there be this found stuff, more linked to the real world in a different way.

C: We've been thinking of things very similarly in terms of bases and modifiers, and I love the idea of bringing in these objects, hung on a fence that you would never see – you never see a freshly painted security fence – that soot we were talking about piles up way too quickly, to many cars, instant rust.

B: Wait but it's not even painted, let me show you this. Velocrat? Valchromat. It's a dyed MDF. It's a colored MDF.

C: Awesome. And very toxic to saw apart?

B: Actually, they refuse to call it MDF because it doesn't have the formaldehyde, and it's water resistant.

C: But is this actually what they make recycled park benches out of? It looks very similar.

B: No, when you look it up, those are always finished. And so I'm thinking about not just doing this out of metal but doing it out of this material that it's not supposed to be done out of. I'm thinking about this red or this yellow- not too sure, actually.

C: Wow. This purple's really nice too.

B: Purple's totally pretty! I know, I know. So it would work like this pivoty thingy. And all of the hardware is available as 3D models on McMaster-Carr. Have you ever looked at this?

C: There are 3D models available for all of this?

B: On almost all of their hardware. So if we go to screws and bolts.

our internet's so slow right now.

B: So then I'll mill all of the screws, all of the bolts. I'll mill. . . McMaster-Carr is so beautiful, it's like my favorite site. So if you go to product detail, they have CAD drawings, they actually have downloadable Solidworks files.

C: Aww. Ffff- that's so cool.

B: So I'm going to mill the casters, I'm gonna mill the hardware, so the entirety of this security gate is going to be made out of this solid material. Unfinished, unstained, just of this extreme matte, light-sucking, monolithic color. And I think it should be functional, too.

C: It might just have to be handled very carefully. For the opening, giant guards with white gloves?

B: Well, let's fit this into an art historical perspective, in fact all of the things I'm talking about I can kind of do this with. So part of this it fits into the lineage of the gallery as closed, right like Robert Barry the gallery is closed. Or this kind of early, late, first-wave conceptual, early institutional critique stuff where they're playing with the space and demarcating the space. So part of it does that to me – I actually like the idea of closing off the space. So you

can see through this scrim, but it kind of claims this entire space as a sculpture. It's like a drawing that's claiming the whole space. In that sense, Mel Bochner is a big one for this.

C: Yesss.

B: Not only. . . yeah, well getting ahead of myself. The measurement pieces. Where he would use –

C: Basically measure the interior of the gallery, give sort of a scale reference to the frame.

B: Right! So much artwork that fits into a critical dialogue is about an examination of frames. And I think what I'm always trying to do is find a frame, find some sort of art historical reference, and some sort of cultural reference, and make you aware that you're seeing those things through this frame. And fucking with that frame, and also trying to find pleasure in that as well.

C: The pleasure in fucking the frame.

B: Part of what this work is saying is that the gallery itself is a frame of perception, you are viewing this work through looking at this frame.

C: You're nailing it. That's so much of what installation is about for us. It's this container and this gesture. By sealing it off it allows you a physical estrangement, it becomes the vitrine.

B: And allows you to think about it culturally as well. And it's funny since you're already making your space smaller, I'm going to make it even smaller. And by doing this, the sculpture doesn't really stop there, it's this entire space. I guess what I like about the security gate as a form is that it holds references to all sort of modernism, like Agnes Martin and grid-based paintings, and it being this thing that can say "look it's institutional critique, it points to the framing of the space, it can touch these walls, it's affecting you in this bodily way, it has a power dynamic."

C: It has a huge power dynamic.

B: It has an interior/exterior thing of "where is inside" and "where is outside." Which, I think is in a lot of my work anyway, when I transpose one space onto another space or one interior onto another interior and then put it onto view, I mean, I've always thought of the

studio as a metaphor for interiority, and the gallery as a metaphor for exteriority, and then to overlap those things there's a kind of resonance in that that I think is kind of beautiful.

But let me show you a completely separate idea.

B: When we were texting before, I was up there. The Sequoia National Forest. These trees take up three or four lanes of a highway- they wouldn't fit in the room we are in now. They are mind-blowingly big and old and powerful, and, I've learned so much being up there. I've learned about perception. Last time I was up there, I was just registering what my brain was doing by being in the space. What is my brain doing when I'm looking, hiking, it's so much just about just perceiving, I am just perceiving. And watching my brain, myself, kind of navigate around these things that I'm looking at. It did this thing and it made me think well what does art really do well? What does it really do well? And art does that space well. Art does that space of just perception, of just slowing down and looking, and trying to understand what you're looking at. And it really made a case for me to do to a certain kind of slow, intent making. When I look around, and I diagnose what's happening in the art scene in general, I see a lot of casualness. I see a lot of slapdash, attitude, irony, casualness. And I want to really take that as something to like, push away from. And say: "why can't I offer something that's slow. Something that is really intent. That I want you to spend time with. That I don't want to just be like this 'You get it? You get it?' type of thing." I want it to be this slowed down perceptual thing that's about looking and thinking. So somehow being in that space allowed me to realize that there's this hyper-casualness everywhere. And it feels. . . cynical. And I don't want to be cynical. It's so much goopy, neon, self expanding foam, and it's not thinking about these contingent points that an art object has. It's not thinking about material process, context, form, it's not asking for that. And as a viewer, I want to be a forensic viewer. I want to be someone who looks at artwork and asks all of those questions. And not to come to some sort of grand conclusion, but that I am feeling enriched when I'm following that path of inquiry. If I'm looking at this and I ask "what is this?" "what is it made of?" "how is it made?" "where am I?" "what is the art historical context?" I want something to be triggered from that kind of pathway. And too much it's just about attitude, and that makes it just like a fucking cool T-shirt. Like, so much of art is just cool T-shirts.

"If the nuance looks moot, its effects are radical. If, for instance, a social difference is 'expressed in' or 'projected upon' a detail of fashion, but that this detail—let's say a shine of silk instead of nylon—is taken as an intermediary transporting faithfully some social

meaning—'silk is for high-brow', 'nylon for low-brow'—then it is in vain that an appeal has been made to the detail of the fabric. It has been mobilized purely for illustrative purposes. Even without the chemical difference between silk and nylon, the social difference between high-and low-brow will have existed anyhow; it has simply been 'represented' or 'reflected' on a piece of cloth that has remained wholly indifferent to its composition. If, on the contrary, the chemical and manufacturing differences are treated as so many mediators, then it may happen that without the many indefinite material nuances between the feel, the touch, the color, the sparkling of silk and nylon, this social difference might not exist at all” – Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 2005.

B: Anisotropic is a word that I actually got from Rosalind Krauss talking about Jackson Pollock – it means having different results when measured different ways. So my work is going to have different meaning if a painter looks at my work than if a photographer looks at my work

C: And that breaks down to individuals.

B: So that's another reason why I try to go for these everyday objects. A table, a park bench, stains on the ground, light through the window. Because it's this thing that's an open enough platform that each person can bring to it what they will. So Karen Barad, being a physicist, she said something that's like – goosebumps right now – she said that, when you measure light one way, it's particles, and when you measure it another, they're frequencies. And she's not saying that the measurement is different, she's saying they are different things, that the instrument of measure is inseparable from the thing that it's measuring. Which is like “pppshhhccrrrrr!”. Okay.

C: Which is to say, actual different realities existing, coexisting with every person.

B: So then if you take that and you extend that to viewership, and extend that to the realm that we're used to thinking about critical art as an examination of the frames of perception, the frames of perception are the work and are inseparable from the work.

C: And when you think about the power structures embedded in criticism. This one-point-perspective. It hurts my heart sometimes.

B: No, it's true! Umm. I can't believe I'm going here but did you listen to that “This

American Life” a couple of months ago, where it was talking about the Eric Garner case? It was the videotape, right, that one was actually videotaped. And they had a police officer view it, who is like a liberal, open-minded police officer, and they had the reporter view it. And the reporter was like, “can you see what’s happening here? This officer is actually choking this man.” And then the police officer is like, “can you see what’s happening here? That policeman was under threat.” They were viewing the same thing but had different measuring apparatuses, so then because of what they were looking at, were getting different results. So then we could talk about it as criticism, but we could talk about it as social justice as well. It’s really a fucking incredible realization that like, I think we need to talk about, and I think we need to think about, and art actually for once seems like a good metaphor for being able to deal with it. And I almost never can think that. But then all of the sudden, replicating soot on the wall, or light through a window, actually becomes a political move. It actually shows us in some sort of Brechtian sense that the world is constructed, and it’s for you to look at.

