



China Blue, The Construct of Observation

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Abstract art now stretches beyond the third dimension into the realm of time. China Blue's new sound installation, Negative Ellipse (2005), on view at the Yellow Bird Gallery as part of "Optical Simulations," appropriates Richard Serra's Torqued Ellipse into negative space. Providing a digital recording of the sound waves that move throughout Serra's work, China Blue combines sculpture, feng-shui and deep, cavernous tones in an attempt to transform the viewer of abstract art into a listener, using embedded sensor technology.

Jill Conner: Is your work at all affected by the tight relationship between word and image?

China Blue: A definition I heard once was "audio is energy made physical." It was a definition that made a lot of sense to me because it nicely dovetails with the feng-shui perception of space as being always filled with energy. The type of energy that I refer to is the energy of the people who have lived, and continue to live in homes where they also work. One of the traditional solutions for problems in space is to use soothing sound. Thus my interest in focusing on audio was again stimulated on this discovery.

JC: Does art history influence your work to a large degree, or is the Western notion of beauty irrelevant to art that is made today?

CB: I think that the concept of beauty is problematic. It is burdened with historical and patriarchal idealism that conflates the idea of celebration with the concept of inaccessibility. The Mona Lisa's smile, for example, is as opaque to comprehension.

I am interested in the transcendence of borders whether social, aesthetic, geographical or cultural because I view life as a big tapestry woven with multiple views of various cultures that create our world. And, it is my desire to always have bits and pieces of them around me.

JC: Can you explain the use of feng-shui as a form of architectural therapy?

CB: I see feng-shui as a non-hierarchical viewpoint. I like this idea because it reflects my interest in investigating the question of borders whether they are aesthetic, physical, geographical or social. My work also incorporates elements of architecture, sound, language and nature as well. I am interested in a holistic view of production that links divergent systems that serve as a working model to look at what occurs when their borders touch.

JC: What are some examples of feng-shui that exist within the social sphere?

CB: The concept of feng-shui in its seemingly subjective form is to create harmony for people in relationship to their homes and offices and their personal needs for happiness, children, success, money, etc. It is a social view of the butterfly effect that can be applied to many different types of spaces and locations like a room in a house, the location of a building on the street, a shopping mall, or the position of a home on a large country lot. It is about the study of the relationships of people, places and the changing condition of the world.

JC: Does your work seek to accommodate the viewer? Richard Serra's "Torqued Ellipse" sculptures perform in a much different way.

CB: The reason I incorporate the viewer is because feng-shui is a holistic concept and is about incorporating those that occupy the space. This is an idea of inclusion. What is interesting is creating a holistic concept that incorporates the viewer, the resident, the visual form and fluxing conditions of life. The "Torque" sculptures are not at all related because the intent is much different. Serra's work challenges architecture such that the incorporation of the viewer is an effect and not the intention.

I am interested in mapping human energy in the form of sound and words while simultaneously referencing the places we visit or inhabit. My intent is to map how energy theoretically fills, flows and shapes space based on the presence of a person or persons. Since sound is energy made physical this precisely illustrates my intent. Relating it to a space establishes another aspect of physicality, thus connecting the two seemingly unrelated arenas in a seamless way through the vehicle of sound.