

Dimensionality

Sheila Ayeart, Robert Fones, Morna Gamblin, Nestor Kruger, Angela Leach, Kristen Peterson, David Reed

YYZ Artists Outlet, Toronto

Curated by Andy Patton

By Wojciech Olejnik

Dimensionality is an exhibition dealing with space, and with the complication of space. Curator Andy Patton brings together artists who address the ever-expanding discourse about space in contemporary art. Their starting point is the flat canvas, the XY-plane. Morna Gamblin's work is created by disassembling Donald Judd's sculptures, where the disassembled planes are scattered across the walls, ceiling and floor of the gallery. One reads the work as an installation except that each disassembled plane is located in a different part of the gallery and reads as a strip, a shape, flatness itself. On the other hand, Robert Fones' diverse body of work cannot be simply read in terms of its physical speciality. Fones' art practice relies on many different mediums and subject matter. He appropriates cultural artifacts, such as discarded physical objects, forgotten images, even classical Greek words to reactivate (or map out) the artifact's particular, changing history. He often takes advantage of images found in popular culture, which he situates in a new context, complicating the image's history, revealing its (often hidden) layers, opening new dimensions of meaning. Dimensionality features a number of his small paintings. In these paintings compact shapes lie across the flat canvas, like Tetris pieces they always follow the simple geometry of the grid. The shapes appear to be made out of angled planes converging at points, sewn together at their seams in such a way that their peaks appear to pop out of the canvas. This type of push and pull of flatness into space is exemplified throughout the exhibition, but it eventually becomes monotonous to look at. Within the context of this exhibition one is left incapable of finding other interpretations of the work (especially in the case of Nestor Kruger and Robert Fones), instead one is left staring in the crack between space and flatness – even reading Patton's commentary does not break this trend. For all the talk of complicated spaces, for all his remarks about the contributions of theoretical physics, art and video games in the shaping of our current understanding of space Patton in the end always reverts to a discussion of perspective, to the blurry line between two and three-dimensional space, and to the basic visual experience of space. In this context the work of Sheila Ayeart is refreshing. Her work presents an impenetrable abstract space, a space that cannot be simply decoded through optics, through any spatial principles – it even causes Patton to ask: "what space is the space of her painting ...?" – further still, can this abstract space be penetrated?

The abstract holds the key to itself, to its own space. This is a crucial point. In general, the relationship between the abstract and the concrete is simple. The abstract refers to the concrete, it abstracts from it. However, it is also possible to consider the abstract as a set of symbols, as a code on its own terms. In creating the space in her paintings, Sheila Ayeart follows no external guidance for establishing space; rather it is the product of an internal code, of abstraction itself. At first glance, Kristen Peterson's work also appears to find its starting point in the abstract; but there is no starting point in this work. There is something especially odd and open here. Simultaneously, within one space, this work refers to the concrete and opens onto the abstract. *Untitled (within and Beyond the Frame)* is installed in the corner of the gallery; this piece stretches around the corner. The shapes running the length of one wall appear to push through the other wall, they race towards infinity, they extend towards illusion and flatness, towards space and non-space; they are a field rather than a closure, or a point. This work opens to multi-dimensionality, but not in the ordinary sense of the word. It lends the concept of dimensionality a certain power that is absent in most other work. Instead of using dimensionality to refer to discourse about space Peterson's work uses the concept of dimensionality to alter the nature of space itself, where it is not the x-y-z space that is considered, but space based on the axes of self and other, of abstract-concrete, of problem-resolution, illusion-flatness.