

Space replaced by Volume

Perry and Marty Granoff Center for the Creative Arts
27th April 2011 to 11th May 2011.
Curated by Ian Alden Russell

(press release)

Bodies in space are the central concern of *Space replaced by volume*, Dennis McNulty's forthcoming show at the Granoff Center for the Creative Arts. The sculptural, photographic and video works included in the show have emerged from McNulty's research on the 20th Century architectural commissions at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island and are a response to the ongoing human occupation of these spaces and their wider socio-cultural contexts.

McNulty was initially intrigued by the enigma of Brown University's Sciences Library (or SciLi) - a fourteen storey Brutalist superstructure and a notable example of the kinds of high-rise libraries constructed at US universities from the late 1960s onwards. SciLi towers over the historic architectural district of College Hill, almost otherworldly in its contrast with its surroundings. Designed by the architects Warner Burns Toan and Lunde in 1971, the Sciences Library is recast here as a monument to the modernist moment when the occupation of *space* ceased to be an extraterrestrial concern – when instead of imposing humanity on space, space was imposed on humanity.

Through his research, McNulty uncovered *Spaces in space*, an article in the November 1969 issue of *Progressive Architecture* magazine. The article describes Warner Burns Toan and Lunde's work with the Grumman Aerospace Corporation on a design for a manned laboratory satellite - a space station. The collaboration, which occurred alongside the commissioning and design process for the Sciences Library, is described as “one of the most exciting architectural commissions of the present generation”. A series of diagrams, graphs and photographs of models and mock-ups accompany the article, reminiscent of and perhaps indebted to the aesthetics of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which was released the previous year in 1968. In fact, Warner Burns Toan and Lunde produced a 20-minute film as part of their research, which is described as “2001 in miniature”.

In *Space replaced by volume*, the newly constructed Granoff Center for the Creative Arts becomes a context in which to consider points of contact between science, science fiction, architectural time and the production of certainty. Among the works, all of which have been produced for this show, is the video piece *Billion year old carbon*, which was shot in the stairwell of the Sciences Library. Other works draw on details of the *Progressive Architecture* article while addressing the materiality and aesthetics of the Sciences Library and the context of its construction.

The title *Space replaced by volume* refers to an agreed change in terminology during the architectural collaboration between Warner Burns Toan and Lunde and Grumman, to avoid confusion between the astronomical engineers and the architects over different meanings of the word “space”.

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