

John Hawke

Questions that currently motivate my thoughts...

What kind of public spaces may exist in the public imaginary? Can these spaces be approached or realized? Can painting reproduce the ambivalent experiences of control and chaos that accompanies urban encounters? Could one paint a typology of disciplinary spaces of the built environment?

In studio work and urban interventions, I am interested in exploring how we encounter urban spaces. In painting, this has led to metaphorical spaces that challenge the "entrance" of the viewer to model the relations we have in actual space: as the eye is to the painting, so your body is to urban space. What happens when the signifiers of control and authority decay? How decadent must a barrier be before we brave crossing it? Modeling this relation between sign power (authority) and its dissipation through exposure to the chaotic vectors of urbanity, fascinates me.

The interventions materialize these problems, pushing and provoking in concrete space-- often as experimental counter-responses to prevailing logics. Beginning with the collaborative platform "Orange Work" in 2004, the interventions at times take an architectural form, that aim to recode street spaces by widening their disciplinary parameters in order to enable new behaviors ("this bus stop bench reclines!"). An organizing polarity is the actualization of communality that is so assiduously precluded by normative street architecture-- i.e. park benches that are divided and face outward, underlining the assumption we are essentially individuals rather than social beings.

At other times, the interventions take the form of signage speaking from the voice of the state, declaring new conditions for labor, new spatial privileges, or commemorating unsavory but relevant historical events. The assumption of authority empowers these works, creating a form of AUTHORIZED DISRUPTION, giving them a surprising and provocative power across an extremely wide spectrum of audiences.