



FrontRow

A DAILY REVIEW OF THE DALLAS ARTS



Visual Arts

What Mysteries Lurk Within Tom Orr's Elusive and Engaging New Work, *Ghosts Stories*?

By REBECCA CARTER October 28th, 2010 10:00am

It glows. It hums. It refracts. It reflects. It's quiet. It's pervasive. It includes. It arrests me before I enter. Black and white stripes on the doors could be part of gallery decor. Knowing better, it is a moment of recognition. Orr's signature stripes announce the entrance. Greeting and obstructing view, they assert and they flirt.

Stripe. Stripe. Stripe. Stripe. Stripe. A glimpse of shiny surface inside fractures the lines. Outside comes inside: blue sky, green tree, black sweater, black vinyl.

My figure has arrived as appearance, and I'm there to notice. We are both here and this is phenomenological presence. I am aware of looking, aware of what I am looking at and aware that I see myself. Inside the work, outside of myself already and haven't yet opened the door.

RATING ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

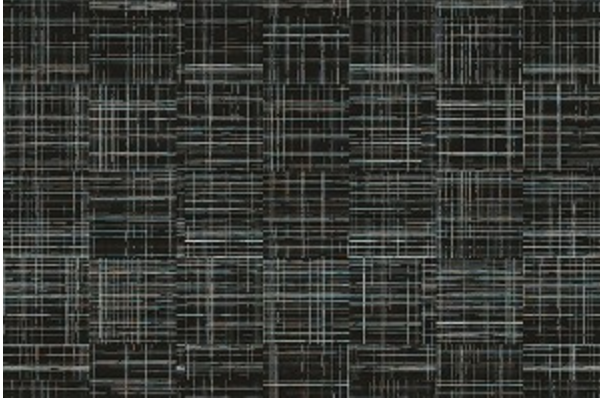
Go See It

LOCATION

Marty Walker Gallery
2135 Farrington St.
Dallas, TX 75207

DATES

Oct 16 thru Nov 13

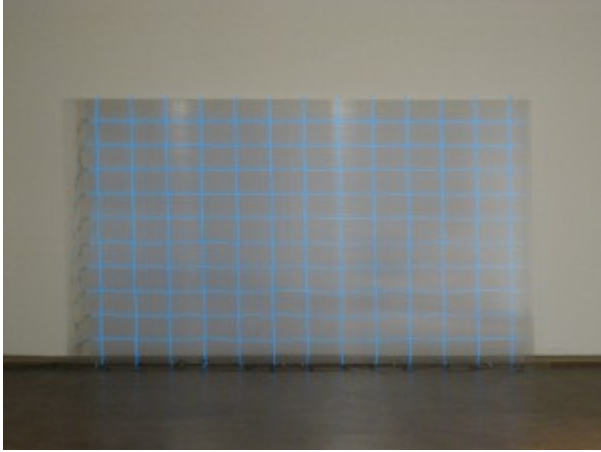


Tom Orr, Ghost (Madras 2), 2010, edition of 3; archival ink prints mounted on acrylic, 18 ½ x 28 inches.

Before I do: Look up, look over, look back. What else? The announcement: “Tom Orr” and “Ghost Stories” titles either side of the entrance. Now I’m in the world of childhood summer narrative past-times. I’m thinking of sleepovers, and the imagination of something more than what normally passes as reality. It’s the world in and beyond appearances: mirages, the barely there, a once alive that remains to haunt, but in friendly way that suggests the camaraderie of facing the terrifying together in a graveyard on a late summer evening.

Open the door and now inside the gallery: another layer of perception. Myself broken into parts like a funhouse. A grid of mirrored squares covers the wall right beyond the doors. There are the stripes again only completely fractured. My reflection intersperses. I’m in the middle of all this but fragmented, not me.

In brief impromptu conversations near the front desk of the downtown YMCA I’ve had glimpses into Tom’s process. There have been several shows this fall: the one at Brookhaven, the Sustenance Show, and this one, at Marty Walker. He’s busy, engaged: alternately excited and enthusiastic, or uncertain and dismissive. Weeks before the Ghost Stories show, Orr is frustrated, uncertain. He had big plans for big sculpture: but... the market, this economy. Marty Walker has slashed the gallery in half. The heat of the summer drives him out of the studio sooner than usual. He is waking earlier, drinking less, and working out. Another birthday is coming. The Y is a haven, makes it all more tolerable. A few weeks later, the energy shifts. Things have come together. What seemed like it was falling into dissolution has congealed.



Tom Orr, Adults Without Heads, 2010; electroluminescent wire and plastic, 70 ½ x 127 inches

Standing in the gallery in front of the work I sense that the constraint of scale has been productive: forcing (nudging) a distillation of thought. There are four discrete but inter-relating works: each some version of a post-minimal im/material grid: falling, slumping, fracturing, extending, dissolving, re-combining.

On the back wall, the intermediary channels of a panel of clear greenhouse glazing holds in place a relaxed and glowing grid of pale blue electroluminescent wire. Another evocative title: Adults without Heads. Grown up, but all body.

A third sculptural work, Ko Onagadori, takes its name from show roosters bred in Japan for their extraordinarily long tail feathers. These guys just sit there on pedestals and look good, or when not on display, in cages with their tails all rolled up and pinned to the wall. Strange life. Ko Onagadori is a series of frames that open onto nothing partially resting on a clear plexi pedestal: barely there, entirely present.

Image at top: Tom Orr, Window, 2007-2010; Plexiglas mirror and wood, 81 x 157 inches.