


Minimalisms' Spurious Distractions in a Collaborative Installation

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For *Recreational Serenitorium*, Monica Dixon and Annie Woodfill are commanding the space and determining the “tyranny of perspective.” In macro terms, these artists command what is seen and control the reality of environment. Manifest Destiny *ne plus ultra*!

There is a definite and determined simplicity in Woodfill’s appropriation of the wall. Simple applications of fabrics are hung within the space to create new entry points that soften this particular gallery from its rough-hewn look. All the gallery oddities; chips in the floor tile, odd pipes and conduits that don’t seem to go anywhere, now look purposeful. This is an effort wherein the product of a fluid and intangible process becomes a design object, but one in which both Woodfill and Dixon are both in control.

Visitors to the space are immediately subject to their influence. The fabric (translucent poly, seersucker and toile) are arranged throughout the space as to direct visitor movements; starting with their very first steps in which the largest swaths immediately abut the front door. We are being told how to maneuver the landscape of this room. Coincidentally, my thinking on their work also references a fine [essay on Surform](#) by Jack Rees discussing, in the simplest of terms, the characterization of perspective and its effects. Describing shape and design as having a finite vocabulary. Reading this allowed me to look beyond Minimalism’s simplicity to reconsider what Dixon and Woodfill are really articulating.



Recreationical Serenitorium Installation by Monica Dixon and Annie Woodfill. Image Courtesy of the artists.

This collaborative installation, down to its hand-held objects; amorphous blob-like bean-filled bags in toile and poly-like fabrics, are extremely simple and that is where I think people can become duped into thinking this work is about nothing at all. Dixon's bean bags are relaxing and fun; placing them on the back of your neck or wrist, its like a 3-minute visit to Brookstone. Imagine being given a service animal to guide you through this installation, a distraction while you follow a layout that has been plotted beforehand. A first look for visitors may have them believe they are walking in and around these fabrics, going any which way, and that's all there is to it. Dixon's bean bags lull while Woodfill commands your steps. Its pretty cunning for what each has conceived, as they said in a face-to-face discussion, taking a feminist view on the ideas of Minimalism. Although I wasn't fully convinced at first in this particular conversation, with my maleness out in front, the more I thought about the space, the more I understand how correct they are. Dixon and Woodfill are exploring Minimalism beyond the old and creaky voices from half a century ago. They have taken a hyper male sculptural process to reference craft conversations, turning it inside out. Definitive decision-making is occurring from both artists through this "ambient array" of fractals and actual objects.

Dixon's soft forms represent the morphogenesis to Annie Woodfill's autopoiesis. (That's science! Learn it, Live it!) But this installation exists under perfect conditions that allow us to consider the possibilities of how *surface theory* might affect us. We can find relatable cause to the spirit these two artists enact; sterile, isolated and pure of theory. Now put these ideas into real world situations and the way these principles affect populations. Consider the aftermath of a natural disaster or war, where the perspective is changed by force and see how people *really* think. Under naturally occurring conditions, the population has to adapt to architecture and landscape that has itself, succumbed to other forces.



Recreational Serenitorium Installation by Monica Dixon and Annie Woodfill. Image Courtesy of the artists.

Think of these two artists as provocateurs. Their use of the gallery, with its long stretches of fabric and sensory service beanbags, is rooted in manipulation. It is a micro version of human behavior under both tremulous conditions and everyday living. Imagine places of controlled movements, like a department store.

Dixon and Woodfill are aware that Minimalism is a covert system of control and they are the drivers to their audience's actions and behaviors. Where it gets murky and downright sinister is when these environments are wretched panopticons for some and villas of isolation for others.

Instead of the department store layout, look at how Puerto Rico, post-Maria, is going to be reshaped. Politicians, speculators and architects will force a new perspective, dictating who thrives and who doesn't. These are ideas of control; Dixon and Woodfill have distilled this conversation into showing us how easily it happens.



Recreational Serenitorium Installation by Monica Dixon and Annie Woodfill. Image Courtesy of the artists.

Recreationical Serentorium, a collaborative installation by Monica Dixon and Annie Woodfill is on view at Vulpes Bastille through the end of June 2018.

*Vulpes Bastille
1737 Locust Street
Kansas City, MO 64111*