

CALENDAR

GALLERIES

ARTISTS



## *WINDOWS & MIRRORS*

SAYRE GOMEZ, ANDREW NORMAN WILSON

New Capital

3114 W. Carroll, Chicago, IL 60612

November 18, 2011 - December 17, 2011

## *THE ECONOMIES OF TRANSPARENCY*

BY COURTNEY R. THOMPSON

New Capital's one-year anniversary show successfully showcases what directors Chelsea Culp and Ben Foch have brought to the cluster of art spaces that make up several blocks on Carroll Street in East Garfield Park. New Capital's split-level exhibition space, white cube upstairs, exposed brick and raw materials downstairs, proposes a conversation not only between the artists in each space, but the public's perception of viewing them as distinct, continuous, overlapping, and/or disconnected. I have seen variations on these possibilities over the past year and the current exhibition of video projections and installation by Andrew Norman Wilson and site-specific installation by Sayre Gomez is no exception.

Writing about Victorian novels, cultural studies theorist Raymond Williams observed they provided a “dramatization of a process, the making of a fiction, in which the constituting elements, of real social life and beliefs, were simultaneously actualized and in an important way differently experienced, the difference residing in the imaginative act, the imaginative method, the specific and genuinely unprecedented imaginative organization.”

While this observation has expanded and contracted through various theoretical machinations over the years—Williams was crafting his most interesting cultural critique in the 1970s—his ideas are still referred to in many circles within and outside the confines of art history, visual culture, and activist criticism. His notion of cultural studies was specifically political and he referred to his ideas under the umbrella of cultural materialism.

I was reminded of Williams' writing as I surveyed the exhibition “Windows & Mirrors” at New Capital’s opening this past Friday. Norman Wilson and Gomez provide an interesting refraction to William’s cultural-materialist lens. Both works offer a chance to evaluate transparencies of economies, or rather economies of transparency, not only in their location, situated in an artist space in East Garfield Park, but also in their execution and illumination of artists as cultural producers.

Norman Wilson's tentative habitation of the lower raw space is expressed in the installation and transparency of packaging. Large white cardboard boxes conceal two projectors and the work seems ready for transport at a moment's notice, while still reflecting site specificity. A television remote and instruction manual are cleverly tucked in a brick recess next to a glowing blue monitor wrapped with packing plastic; its blurry error message still visible underneath. Under the staircase a section of receipts for the monitors and projectors used to display the works are laid out under Plexiglas, revealing the economic process of presenting the video works. After the exhibition the equipment will be returned for a refund to the respective big box stores of purchase.



[Why is the No Video Signal Blue? Or, Color is No Longer Separable From Form, and the Collective Joins the Brightness Confound](#) from [Andrew Norman Wilson](#) on Vimeo.

The main video work, *Why is the No Video Signal Blue? Or, Color is No Longer Separable From Form, and the Collective Joins the Brightness Confound. ~ A Guided Meditation ~* (2011), was not easy to hear in the space with a healthy crowd, but snippets of Norman Wilson’s narrative permeated the lower level when there were lulls in conversation. The video can be viewed above, and while I gleaned a distinct impression from viewing it in the space, repeated viewings are necessary for fully appreciating the “guided meditation” suggested by the subtitle—one I originally and pleasantly misread as a guided mediation.

While parsing this information, I ambled up the stairs to view the three windows installed in the white cube space upstairs. Formally reminiscent of Gregor Schneider’s rooms, and his practice of transforming gallery interiors into minimalist domestic and industrial interiors, Gomez’s windows echo many a disused storefront or abandoned domestic space behind and upon their glass surfaces.



Installation view of **Sayre Gomez's** *Uww 31*. 2011. Reclaimed materials and vinyl tinting film. Image courtesy of the artist and New Capital.

While these windows certainly mirror these kinds of inexorably crumbling urban landscapes, the term site specific seems interestingly suspicious. These recreated and/or repurposed windows inserted into the white cube reflect the viewer upon their grimy surfaces more than offering an insightful view of a specific neighborhood, or a didactic critique about gentrification.

In revisiting William's words, I realized how reductive a term like social practice could be for artists considering their role as cultural producers. What I enjoyed most about "Windows & Mirrors" was a subtle implication of the viewer, and an opportunity to leave a neighborhood, that I visit only for art exhibitions once a month, with more questions than answers about my own role as cultural consumer.

***-Courtney R. Thompson, Contributing ArtSlant Writer***

(top image: **Sayre Gomez**, Installation view of "*Uww 32*" and "*Uww 33*", 2011, Reclaimed materials and vinyl tinting film © Courtesy of New Capital and the artist.)

Posted by **Courtney R. Thompson** on 11/21/11

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