

RETAIL THERAPY Project Statement

Everything belongs to design, everything springs from it, whether it says so or not: the body is designed, sexuality is designed, political, social, human relations are designed, just as are needs and aspirations. – Jean Beaudrillard

If the soul of the commodity..... existed, it would be the most empathetic ever encountered in the realm of souls, for it would have to see in everyone the buyer in whose hand and house it wants to nestle. – Walter Benjamin

I shop therefore I am - Barbara Kruger

RETAIL THERAPY is a superstore of tangible intangibles. The super-sized products on the shelves are ethereal commodities, symbolic product surrogates, that have entered into American consciousness since the events of September 11th. Words that express ideas and ideals such as security, normalcy, relief; before, belonging, duty, were extrapolated from a daily dose of the media. Life, liberty and happiness, our inalienable rights, are suddenly present in our minds, as are the colors red, white, and blue as seen in our perpetual peripheral vision. These 'ethereal commodities' have already taken form in our psyches, and now take an elusive yet patriotic form within the gallery space. Boundaries between art and everyday life are blurred while the national plea to return to 'normalcy' prevails-to fulfill our patriotic duties; to shop, consume, and to buy.

Prior to September 11th, the 'products' on the shelves were going to be derived from the psychology of consumption; need, greed, want, desire, fulfillment, etc....paired with looking at product icons that might express our current historical moment. One idea was to use cans of 'slimfast' as that icon. 100 cans of slimfast, like Warhols 100 Campbell Soupcans... but after the 11th, these ideas seemed somewhat trite and trivial. The vision of a superstore persisted in my mind.

RETAIL THERAPY is an art installation conceived for the Epsten Gallery at Village Shalom. The work takes on a site-specific nature in two ways. The first, was an objective desire to respond to the physical parameters of the space provided, taken advantage of the gallery volume in its entirety. Here the desire to create an experience of being within the art versus looking at the art safely from a distance was a goal. Secondly, was the need to respond to the greater physical site of 123rd & Nall, and its proximity to 119th & Nall- a destination-location to fulfill all of our retail and consumerist suburban-societal desires. These elements provided me with the conceptual framework to commence the creative process of developing RETAIL THERAPY.

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13 January 2002