

Art and Cake, March 16, 2018

Robert Irwin Lets in the Light at Sprüth Magers
January 20 - April 21, 2018

By Jody Zellen



Located on the first floor of a high rise tower directly across the from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Sprüth Magers, Los Angeles is an enclosed space. When built, the windows were covered so as to maximize available wall space to hang artworks. For his installation, Robert Irwin has removed these walls allowing the light back into the space. Irwin first viewed the gallery when it was under construction. “Why in the world would you take a room that had that much beautiful light and put walls up?” he says. “So I took the walls down. What does that mean? It lets the outside world in. So now the whole thing becomes an interaction with the quality of that space.”

Irwin’s first floor installation (the gallery has a second floor exhibiting other Irwin pieces) is an immersive experience. It functions as a series of squares nested together creating layers that are both translucent and transparent. In the center of the gallery are six tall square chambers constructed from semitransparent white scrims. These spaces appear to be rooms but they cannot be entered. Each wall has a spray-painted black square in their center that functions as a window as well as as a graphical element that interrupts the surface. The piece (*Untitled*, 2017-2018) is about the relationship between inside and out, using fabric and light to create a hall of mirrors. A window on LACMA’s facade across Wilshire Boulevard draws the viewer’s

gaze through Sprüth Magers windows and across the street. The distant window becomes the back square that is echoed throughout the piece. It can be found in different forms in the landscaping, on the windows, as well as on the gallery walls.

The work is meant to be seen in daylight as when the sun shines through the windows, it casts evocative shadows on the walls and floor, many stemming from the slender pillars (white columns) Irwin erected in the space surrounding the chambers to emphasize the original architecture of the gallery. The work also functions as a visual echo chamber as it becomes disorienting when many viewers are in the gallery and their silhouettes are confused by the scrims. Because Irwin works with simple shapes and materials, the complexities and subtleties of his installation are difficult to describe and better to experienced.

In contrast to the airy and light-centric site specific installation on the first floor, Irwin's works installed on the second floor have the opposite effect. A faux wall constructed from black translucent material bisects the space through which works made from painted and illuminated neon tubes hung vertically on the wall can be viewed. These pieces have a somber appeal and while at first glance seem to be simple lines, they are carefully constructed units that investigate complex color relationships. Irwin's installations are transformative experiences that use minimal materials to invite viewers to contemplate ideas pertaining to perception, memory and illusion.

<https://artandcakela.com/2018/03/16/robert-irwin-lets-in-the-light-at-spruth-magers/>