Mika Tajima » Book Machine – Post Script installation

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Book Machine – Post Script installation

Centre Pompidou

This commissioned project by Centre Pompidou and One Star Press is a continuation of two strains of interrogation in my work—production as performance, and how the built environment shapes human activity in the age of immaterial production.

The Book Machine project deals with production after writing — post script. These are the immaterial activities that follow the labor of writing: design, communication, discourse, and knowledge production. What is materialized from these labors is a book presented in a physical structure all shaping the encounter with the contents of the publication.

In this project, we materialize book production itself. Now as the publishing industry becomes increasingly decentralized – desktop publishing is literally a network of computer desktops linking writer, editor, publisher, designer and printing house together, we face yet a new radical shift in access to production: on-demand book printing machines such as Espresso Book Machine produce bespoke high-quality bounded books. Similar to now-accessible 3-D printers, the finished product (the sum of multiple immaterial labors) becomes material like a cup of coffee made by Gutenberg.

Book Machine approaches the museum as a factory foundry with its production floor forging physical and immaterial human activity. The museum here is being used as a print bed, photocopier, and computer desktop—a giant machine with its mechanics exposed. In the vein of my recent investigations of industrial factories such as automotive plants and textile mills (jacquard loom as proto-computer) undergoing production transformations, I now look to the museum as factory, a place where images, subjectivities and ideas are formed, displayed, and consumed. Human activity is shaped like a serif at a type foundry.

Sculpting and shaping space is similar to the design of a letter type—building a typeface to move the eye easily across the page. For Centre Pompidou, I have created an alphabet built from simple geometric shapes, broken down to abstraction, to essential elements. Typeset letters shape the environment and human activity. Here the type reflects language of our time: abstraction.

'Post Script' also refers to PostScript programming language that revolutionized computer printing in the 1980s. It provided the common computer language for sharing the way things look on any computer – one step closer to a global desktop. PostScript enabled vectored, scalable text and graphics, instead of pixelation. The technology presented an aesthetic that is commensurate with the space of digital production: smooth, flexible, and infinitely scalable. Type was no longer a physical metal nor an image but rather a series of descriptions/procedures. All that is solid melts into the air.

Exhibition page link: One Star Press.