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Aaron Flint Jamison

NEW YORK,
at Artists Space

by Courtney Fiske

Aaron Flint Jamison: *Manifold to Half Matrix*, 2013, letterpress- and offset-printed paper, dimensions variable; at Artists Space.



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There's a cultivated obscurity to Aaron Flint Jamison's practice, a hermeticism that borders on mysticism. For his first solo exhibition outside of Europe, the Portland-based artist cleared Artists Space's Greene Street loft of all but a handful of sculptural elements and even relocated the institution's offices to an auxiliary site. The aura of the art object was refigured as the aura of the machine: the "black box" whose defining operation is obfuscation.

At the gallery's entrance stood a FARO Focus 3D scanner mounted on a tripod. Set within twinned modules, its lens revolved at a steady clip, transforming the apparatus into a readymade kinetic sculpture. Its purpose, one surmised, was to scan the room, converting real space, concrete and inhabitable, into data. A black wire fed from an outlet in the backmost wall into the scanner; another led out from the scanner, traversing the floor in a desultory line before meeting an Ethernet switch mounted on a table fashioned from purpleheart wood. Excessively long—it was twice pooled—the wire exaggerated its function of connectivity, as if attempting to materialize the abstract inputs and outputs it relayed.

On a windowsill adjacent to the table, an IBM laptop, linked by a cable to the same Ethernet switch, processed data sent from the scanner. On its screen, a progress bar inched forward, marking the time until the scan's completion. A series of folders also appeared onscreen, each titled with the date ("10-10-13," "10-11-13," and so forth) and containing three high-resolution scans. A white cable extended from the switch, describing the interstice between floor and wall. Architecture thus joined in the FARO-IBM circuit to form a



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recursive whole, simultaneously mapping and being mapped.

Between scanner and laptop, two isolated elements intervened: the first, a wooden plinth, painted white and topped with a piece of perforated foam; the second, a bizarre device cobbled from six computer fan units, two Supermicro servers and thirty 250 GB hard drives that stored data from the scanner. In the latter's center, a wooden cylinder spun on an electric motor, while vents on either side emitted soft streams of air.

As in Jamison's recent show at Cubitt in London, press release and checklist were conspicuously absent, compounding the illegibility of the objects on view. Artists Space's website likewise eschewed explanation, linking instead to a spreadsheet of the show's production balances, which detailed entries for everything from "whiskey for gary" to each piece of technical equipment to a copy of Alexander Galloway's 2012 primer on digital culture, *The Interface Effect*. At watch from an incommodious chair, the gallery attendant had been instructed to keep mum. This opacity seemed to be part of the point: the work's mannered reticence and the attendant's muteness exaggerated the system's inscrutability.

In place of standard curatorial literature, two sets of texts—plastic-sleeved pamphlets and an 80-page book, each permutations of the same material—offered an oblique orientation. In them, selections from a 1967 essay by Jean Genet appeared alongside excerpts from the FARO user manual. Printed on varying paper stocks—some pulpy, others smooth—they solicited touch but explained little.

Immured in Jamison's strange circuit, the viewer's body becomes ancillary and at risk, both threatened by and invisible to the technology that surveyed it. The scanner functions best in static, unpeopled, idealized space; moving bodies disrupt the data collection. The machine's paradigm could be described as Yves Klein's *The Void* meets the society of control. As a sticker on the scanner's side warns: "INVISIBLE LASER RADIATION / AVOID DIRECT / EYE EXPOSURE." One can look, but not too intently, and even then, one cannot really see. Art here was posited as something that supplants or exceeds human vision.

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