

INSTALLATION BY FÉLIX GONZÁLEZ-TORRES  
September 16 - November 20, 1988

When I was asked to write a short statement about the work in this space I thought it would be a good opportunity to disclose and, in a certain sense, to demystify my approach. I hope that it will guide the viewer and will allow an active participation in the unraveling of the meaning and the purpose of this work. Many may consider this text redundant; an unnecessary intrusion, or even a handicap. It is assumed that the work must "speak for itself," as if the divine dogma of modernism were able to deliver a clear and universal message to a uniform "family of man." Others know this is not true--that each of us perceives things according to who and how we are at particular junctures, whose terms are always shifting. Preferably the exhibition gallery will function as an educational device, simple and basic, without the mysteries of the muse, reactivating history to affirm our place in this landscape of 1988.

This work is mostly personal. It is about those very early hours in the morning, while still half asleep, when I tend to visualize information, to see panoramas in which the fictional, the important, the banal, and the historical are collapsed into a single caption. Leaving me anxious and responsible to anchor a logical accompanying image--scanning the TV channels trying to sort out and match sound and sight. This work is about my exclusion from the circle of power where social and cultural values are elaborated and about my rejection of the imposed and established order.

It is a fact people are discriminated against for being HIV positive. It is a fact the majority of the Nazi industrialists retained their wealth after the war. It is a fact the night belongs to Michelob and Coke is real. It is a fact the color of your skin matters. It is a fact Crazy Eddie's prices are insane. It is a fact that four colors--red, black, green and white--placed next to each other in any form are strictly forbidden by the Israeli army in the occupied Palestinian territories. This color combination can cause an arrest, a beating, a curfew, a shooting, or a news photograph. Yet it is a fact that these forbidden colors, presented as a solitary act of consciousness here in Soho, will not precipitate a similar reaction.

From the first moment of encounter, the four color canvases in this room will "speak" to everyone. Some will define them as an exercise in color theory, or some sort of abstraction. Some as four boring rectangular canvases hanging on the wall. A few experts will interpret them as yet another minimalist ecstasy. Now that you've read this text, I hope for a different message.

For all the PWAs.

Félix González-Torres  
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