

1708GALLERY

A NON PROFIT SPACE FOR NEW ART

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GALLERY HOURS T-F 11-5 | SAT 11-4

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Infrapolitics

Alan Ruiz

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RICHMOND - 1708 is pleased to present *Infrapolitics*, an exhibition by Alan Ruiz. Reflexively engaging the physical and institutional conditions of 1708, *Infrapolitics* explores the systems through which power, in its literal and symbolic form, is distributed across spatial, social, and economic networks. Working with raw materials of the urban landscape - metal, glass, and electric light - Ruiz's approach points to a complex mapping of the space between the aesthetic and political dimensions of the globalized built environment, probing a reconsideration of its supposed neutral infrastructures which are often kept out of view.

The work at 1708 begins with the physical site of the gallery, though it draws outwards towards the broader infrastructures of city planning, construction, and the homogenization of architectural environments. Working from research into the history of the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike, and its use to both connect and divide the city along socio-economic and racial lines, *Infrapolitics* asks how art might be used against its more recent tendency to serve as a lubricant for forms of "soft" gentrification and economic development.

As a site-reflexive work, it focuses on 1708 as much as the surrounding Arts District of Richmond.

Beginning with the actual electricity that powers 1708, *Infrapolitics* is comprised of a central intervention, *Western Standards K80X4*, that reroutes conduits from the basement up through air vents in the gallery's floor. As sculptural elements, the electrical conduits both power the gallery as well as a group of LED safety lamps, shifting these materials from merely passive objects to highlighting the active social and political implications of infrastructure itself. Retaining their functional properties, these sculptural forms are in service to systems of circulation and are informed by the material geometry of such systems. They index the unseen relations through which power is conducted and

regulated. With *Western Standards-LV1-4*, air vents themselves double as stainless-steel sculptures Ruiz designed with parametric software more often used in real estate driven architecture. *Western Standards (Enclosures 1-12)*, a series of wall-mounted units, is constructed of the seemingly benign glass used in commercial and corporate construction, a ubiquitous illusion of transparency that simultaneously mediates the boundary between access and exclusion, and designates places of class labor, hierarchy, and mobility.

Additionally, for *Infrapolitics* Ruiz has requested a change in the institutional protocol for supporting and paying artists – requiring 1708 to become certified by W.A.G.E (Working Artists for Greater Economy), an organization which sets minimum payment standards for cultural institutions based on their overall operating budget. In doing so, 1708 will join a larger network of cultural organizations that understand the necessity to make an infrastructural change in how artistic and creative labor is supported and sustained.

As Ruiz has written, “form is far from an inert and neutral container but a highly charged political and ideological field.” *Infrapolitics* extends this notion in that the network through which something as prevalent as electricity is distributed is considered as anything but inactive. Rather networks and infrastructures are an index of the contingent and highly charged ways the built environment reflects and reproduces social hierarchies while also presenting the political potential for modes of indirect action.

Alan Ruiz (b. 1984, Mexico City, Mexico) is an artist whose work explores the way space is produced both as material and as ideology. His work has been shown in exhibitions at the Queens Museum, The Storefront for Art and Architecture, The Kitchen, TG, Nottingham, Callicoon Fine Arts, and the Bronx Museum of the Arts. His writing has been featured in *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, *Millennium Film Journal*, *TDR*, *BOMB Magazine*, *Architect*, *Headmaster*, and *InVisible Culture*, among others. He has participated in residencies with Whitney Museum’s Youth Insights Program, Abrons Arts Center and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Ruiz received an MFA from Yale University and was a fellow in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. Ruiz is a recipient of a 2019 Creative Capital Award.

This exhibition is made possible in part by a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant, with additional support, to date, from La Diff.

For more information, please visit <https://www.1708gallery.org>Image: Alan Ruiz, *Networking*, 2019, Courtesy of the artist.

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