Basic Space

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BASIC SPACE

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

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Major: Art

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The American suburban landscape and lifestyle incites my investigation of land use, development and consumerism. Our cultural obsession with the “dream home” and the act of displaying a social identity through popular architectural enhancements is what attracts me to this landscape. In my work I emphasize banal architecture and ornamentation to accentuate issues of sameness and draw attention to the loss of individuality. The information is distilled into a visual language inspired by my personal histories with zoning, geography, and land use, borrowing from the flatness and simplicity of cartographic design, informational graphics and architectural illustration. In my own work I use the same approach for the clear readability of subjects. The sterile forms and structures within my work are removed from their context to communicate discomfort with this new non-space and the continuing suburban development.

I am attracted to the repetitive visual patterns of these suburban spaces and utilize their elements to emphasize their intended use as solely decorative embellishments. Examining the landscape for architectural elements that have become fundamental signifiers of living space, I appropriate these repetitive forms by reconstructing them into piles and emphasizing mundane façades. In this manner, I draw attention to the ideas of landscape consumption and identity. I incorporate the endless rhythm of this landscape through the repetition of generic, silhouetted house forms and dense groupings of
architectural elements to highlight how one individual space can no longer be
distinguished from another.

The repetition of indistinguishable architectural and decorative elements mirrors
the monotonous nature of the suburban terrain. These architectural components have
become so redundant that they are part of the natural landscape. This replication of
housing contradicts the desire to achieve a unique identity by providing a false sense of
individuality through predetermined design choices such as color palettes and exterior
ornamentation. These superficial elements are limited to a select group of architectural
enhancements that become a standard for housing developments. The over-production of
this typology becomes so commonplace that it becomes both the architectural standard
for many communities and the only option for new homeownership.