

STUDIO CHECK



Liam Gillick

TEXT BY DANIEL KUNITZ | PHOTOGRAPHS BY KRISTINE LARSEN

AN ENGLISHMAN, LIAM GILICK works out of a light-bathed, book-filled apartment high above Manhattan's East Side, where he lives with his wife, the artist Sarah Morris. Acknowledged as an originator of what has come to be known as relational art, Gillick is the first post-studio artist we've visited for Studio Check. When asked how he works, he first claims to spend "a lot of time trying to find space to not work—because I spend a lot of time lying down, to be honest." Still, he does maintain an area just off the kitchen devoted to artistic endeavors, and every object we inquired about yielded insights into his

busy life. Although Gillick's activities include sculpture, design, architectural interventions, writing, and music, most require spending quite a bit of time in front of the computers on his immaculate desk. "I'm from the first generation that used computers without having any computing skills," he says. "So I grew up with the screen as the space of work, which creates a kind of equivalence between projects. Whether you are doing something for a big building or a small nonprofit, somehow mentally, because of the screen space, you treat them somewhat equally."

On June 23, CCS Bard Hessel Museum, in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, will open "From 199A to 199B," an exhibition looking back on many of Gillick's projects. Some engaged with institutional structures (art centers, gallery spaces, and the like); some were collaborations with such artists as Gabriel Kuri, Philippe Parreno, and Angela Bulloch; and others were autonomous works. Gillick adds that "they were also all produced in close relation to a new generation of curators who emerged at the time: Maria Lind, Barbara Steiner, Nicolas Bourriaud, and Nicolaus Schafhausen."

MODEL

"This represents the hubris of public projects, which are often done speculatively. Architects pitch ideas and do competitions, things that are dangerous for artists. They make you feel like you've lost contact with the potential of art. But they can suck you in. This was an example. I worked really hard on the project, forgetting that, of course, there was absolutely no possibility of this thing actually ever happening. I keep it around because it reminds me not to be an idiot."



GLITTER

"Glitter is important stuff for me. I keep little jars of different grades of it on my desk. This is partly because with this kind of material, it takes much longer to really get a sense of it. I know what an eight-foot-long piece of aluminum is like, but a .002-inch glitter flake? I keep things around which are the least familiar—to the point where they are really in my head and I could say to someone 'I need .002 PVC red glitter' and know what I'm talking about."



RAL CODE BOOK

"This is the basis of everything. The RAL code is an industrial paint system, which is usually for architecture. And it is quite limited—terrible purples and mauves. Few good grays. But if I specify RAL 7040 gray in St. Louis or Zurich, it will be exactly the same. My work is very binary. On one level, it has these narrative threads and meandering logic; on the other hand, it's got this very material relation to abstraction, and part of that is the use of the RAL code."



RULER

"This is crucial. It's a memory stick in the true sense. It's a two-foot ruler, a nonhuman dimension. One foot is close to a man's foot, but two feet is harder to get your head around. I often use it in relation to me, to double-check. Just by changing the seat height by, for example, half an inch, you change the whole demeanor of the person, or the relationship between people."

FAILED WORKS

"I don't keep work around. I don't want to be surrounded by my work, because I'll start to like it or believe in it. That's when you start making stupid claims about your work. I have a fabricator in Berlin whom I see maybe twice a year. We keep a big distance. One of the reasons is to avoid the performative aspect of making things and being watched, as if that in itself is interesting. It also stops me from compromising. Artists often compromise but don't call it compromise. They call it happy accidents. But when I say I need it to be RAL code 3020, I've made that decision and it shouldn't be changed."

MIDI KEYBOARD

"Like a lot of people who are suburban, I grew up playing music. I had years of sitting with a sadistic Hungarian piano teacher. At art school I pretty much stopped playing music. And that was the big thing about that British moment. We all decided not to have bands and to be artists instead. Historically everyone comes to art school and starts a band. Now I do a lot of the music for Sarah Morris's films. There is a connection between the computer and the piano keyboard. I'm multi-fingered when I type—my hand makes these shapes, different key commands, and so on. It's partly thanks to the music teacher."

