

Heather Rasmussen
TransportTransform

I am working with the manipulation of scale, mapping, color, and shape in able to control an environment.

For the past year and a half I have been taking photographs of the Port of Los Angeles. I have been fascinated with the volume of shipping containers that occupy space in the port, how they are stacked and arranged, and how their colors and shapes formally relate to children's toy blocks. I see these locations within the port as miniature environments. These environments are especially accessible through the form of photography, therefore, I am able to manipulate and change the containers and the space they are in. I produced such a large archive of photographs of the Port of Los Angeles and the containers that I felt my original intentions in the work were obstructed due to the size of the collection. Recently I've been attempting to engage in the Port in a different way, thus simplifying the ideas behind the work by returning to the inherent materiality of the containers as objects.

Shipping containers are made out of steel and are meant to be indestructible. By creating these containers out of paper and folding them by hand I am removing their strength as sturdy objects for shipping and the movement of goods, making them into delicate formations of color and shape.

The structure of the sculpture is determined by a satellite photograph retrieved from the Internet. The containers are placed on the floor by color, size, and height based on the map created from this photograph. Like a photo interpreter, I am using the two-dimensional image 'seen' by a machine and re-processing it back into a three-dimensional space. I am using a system in which I determine the number of containers on the top layer, based on color and size, then count the stacks based on shadow height. By using this system I am not only paralleling the relationship of a map and its physical site, but my process of counting doubles as a potential sampling of all the world's containers used in trade from a specific site and moment.

In addition, I am interested in the cranes that move these containers and their massive scale in relation to human size. By cropping these images, I am literally cutting out the feet of the cranes and placing their form against a solid blue sky, a perspective only achieved while standing beneath the crane. This perspective illustrates the enormous size of these beautiful machines as well as their intricate construction, while removing their specific operation to lift and move heavy containers.

The sculpture of the containers and the photographs of the cranes reduce the physical objects in scale and literal weight. The manipulation of scale and the interpretation of mapping, color, and shape are used as tools to control the existing environment. This purely visual interpretation abstracts the original environments of the Port of Los Angeles and simplifies it physically for the viewer to grasp.