



## MIA FEUER

9/18/09

FLUX SPACE

by *janet koplos*

PHILADELPHIA “Displacement,” Mia Feuer’s exhibition of two constructions, occupied—in the threatening sense—the galleries of this North Philadelphia alternative space, which is located in a huge mill building that also features artists’ studios. The entry gallery was nearly blocked by *Turnstile* (2008), a formidable array of steel poles, turnstiles and overhead sheet-metal boxes, along with diagonal bracing that seemed to serve optical more than structural purposes. With segments of jail-like bars that varied from around 5½ to perhaps 10 feet in height, the work was like a chaotic prison with just a dash of funhouse: as you threaded your way through the temporarily welded structure of maybe a dozen reconfigurable parts, in no place were you actually trapped, although that sensation fleetingly recurred.

This work was inspired by Feuer’s recent stay in Palestinian territory and her exposure there to security checkpoints and surveillance apparatus. She makes no specific reference to that experience but generates feelings of directional uncertainty and cold coercion. Her use of bright yellow paint—ordinarily a color of cheer—on one side of each diagonal brace and on the inside of one of the fractured boxes looming overhead demonstrated her clearly mixed feelings. No attempt was made to conceal the welding, and the structural elements were a mix of round and square poles, so the whole conveyed a blunt physicality. The intentional charmlessness of it grated against the buoyant yellow but suited the dim lighting and ominous shadows as well as the irregular surfaces of this relatively raw and hardly neutral gallery space.

In the more elegantly installed upstairs room, Feuer presented *Collapse* (2009). It looked like the trusses of an incomplete bridge or roof, compressed into an extended bundle and painted a uniform bright blue. The whole mass, more than 10 feet long and 3 feet thick, was stabbed into the wall about 6 feet up, a soft-margin red circle marking the spot on the wall as if the mass were a gargantuan dart thrown at a target. Gallery information revealed that the material was foam rather than steel or wood, which explains how it could be held aloft without some major brace or cantilever device, and that it was inspired by a storied railroad bridge in the artist’s native Winnipeg. *Collapse* is a threatening word in regard to bridges, although the color soars.

Feuer pairs her harsh industrial sensibility with an interest in social implications and a feeling for emotion-generating formal qualities, recalling Mona Hatoum in the former and Nancy Rubins in the latter.



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