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Dodging Partitions

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Abstract

This a visual investigation into partitions, which separate space and sound.

While taking these photographs at Lakeside in Prospect Park, I was trying to look at and interpret this space that had become part of my routine-- first as a customer and then as an employee.

As a customer, I moved through a certain number of spaces: for paying, renting skates, putting skates on or taking them off, resting, eating, viewing, and ice skating. Though the spaces that I was allowed to wander through were limited, I still had certain freedoms to choose where to wander: through the two skating rinks or through the spaces surrounding them.

As an employee, I'd move through the same spaces but also into places that were kept off limits, like behind the skate rental desk, into the Zamboni room, in the offices. But while these new spaces opened up to me, the routes that I would take through them became more static, repeated, closed off. That changed what and how I'd pay attention to in the rink. I focused more on the doors, windows, and partitions in the space. I had been on both ends of them and I was passing through them as a routine. The repetition of my interaction with these separations put emphasis on their existence: how they revealed and obscured reflections, light, lines, and information about what was on the other side.

The new separations that came into the rink because of the Covid restrictions were nothing new. Similar separations had existed previously, designating specific purposes of places: the plexiglass around the covered rink, preventing hockey pucks from flying around; the windows between the outside public spaces and the offices, the floor-to-ceiling windows that made the walls of the rental room, the various doors at the rink, and the see-through gate for the Zambonis.

But the extra partitions didn't just define separations between spaces but further defined the separation between employees and customers, affecting how employees and customers communicated with each other. These barriers muffled or distorted verbal communication. And people on both sides of the partitions would find solutions in gesturing to each other more, becoming louder, or even dodging the separations altogether. They seemed to decide on favoring efficiency over safety.

Somewhat paradoxically, this dodging of the separations was happening right next to payment booths that were designed into the building itself with glass separations and microphones that would pass sound through them that sat there almost lonely and useless despite being almost perfect for the pandemic scenario (Fig. 1-8).



Fig. 1. *Rentals*. Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph: Khaly Durst.



Fig. 2. *Tree and Ceiling*. Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph: Khaly Durst.



Fig. 3. *Two Rinks*. Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph: Khaly Durst.



Fig. 4. *Balcony*. Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph: Khaly Durst.



Fig. 5. *Zamboni*. Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph: Khaly Durst.



Fig. 6. *Office*. Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph: Khaly Durst.



Fig. 7. Covered Rink. Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph: Khaly Durst.



Fig. 8. Booths. Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph: Khaly Durst.

About the author

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