

# Ding Ren

## *Propositions* Artist Statement

Set in 1967 Paris, Jean-Luc Godard's film, *La Chinoise*, depicts five revolutionary youth plotting action to accompany their Marxist-Leninist philosophies. In a passing scene, the male protagonist proclaims, "it's not silence that scares me, but sound and fury," wherein for a moment, the audience feels that these youth may break free of the idealized political image they have created for themselves—they might choose silence over naïve ferocity, and they might think before they act. It is within this potential moment of silence and inaction that I locate my artistic practice. Despite the different media of my work, the overarching philosophy that guides my decision making process is rooted in notions of silence and nothingness. In a "bigger is better" era of record breaking auction prices and blockbuster art exhibitions, I believe in the potential of refusals, of thinking small and taking a step back to notice and reflect upon the in-between, barely there moments.

For *Propositions*, I have created two pieces that specifically use the Area 405 space and the context of the exhibition to literally address the potentialities of simple nuances.

*Line Research (Propositional Version)*, features a slide projector on the floor, which is propped up by propositional texts collaboratively selected by the curator, Stephen Dewyer and myself through email correspondence. The projector shines an image onto the wall of the exhibition space with the phrase "A PROPOSITION STARTS WITH A LINE" written with rub-on-letters atop a pencil drawn line. *Line Research (Propositional Version)* is a self-referential piece, in that the slide of the drawn line and text directly refers to the stack of books. The piece also alludes to the need to gain knowledge and conduct research before taking any sort of action, which, in an art historical, institutional setting, often occurs in a dark lecture hall with images projected on the wall.

*The Map Is Not The Territory* piece is created from the already existing paint chips, peels, and gauges, which pervade the Area 405 space. The positive and negative shapes created from the wall's imperfections serve as cartographic markers as I match the abstract shapes with actual map locations. This gives the otherwise disregarded imperfections a literal location, matching them with islands, bodies of water, states, and territories. To accompany the matches, a plaque outlines the etymology of the territories, which grounds the otherwise abstracted shape with both a location and meaning. In creating the map diagrams for the plaques, neighboring territories are erased so that the map location is isolated, with nothing but explanatory text locating it. This act of eraser is essentially a disorientating cartographic nightmare, but it links the actual map locations with the found shapes on the wall. Since these found shapes are disorientated and have no context to begin with, they are assigned a cartographic one. *The Map Is Not The Territory* piece finds potential in the already existent nuances and imperfections of the Area 405 space.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge that this piece would not have been possible without the cartographic expertise of National Geographic Map Librarian, Mike Karabinos.