*Fire and Ice,* Oct. 3–Nov. 6, 2018

ICEHOUSE Project Space, Sharon CT

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*Fire and Ice* was a site-specific painting consisting of a field of hot orange-yellow splotches distributed across a cool, vaguely aquatic blue ground. I calibrated these two hues to the existing light conditions for maximum optical vibration. Optical blending of the yellow and blue resulted in scattered patches of an earthy green.The substrate consisted ofone visually continuous canvas (in three sections) measuring 10’ high by 45’ long, which wrapped around the interior of the gallery space and covered the entire wall. The canvas was stapled along its top edge to a moulding at the top of the wall, just below the pitch of the roof. Cut-outs at the door and windows and four flood lights provided a balance of artificial and natural illumination.

During the exhibition, *Fire and Ice* was experienced primarily as a painting—one that was “expanded,” spectacular, immersive, provisional, scaled to the space and reductive in color, but essentially a *painting*.

At the closing reception, I cut *Fire and Ice* into sections and gave it away to anyone who brought a stretcher. Participants in this *de facto* performance selected their section of the painting; an assistant stretched them, and I signed and dated the resulting works. These were titled *ex Fire and Ice #1, ex Fire and Ice #2, ex Fire and Ice #3,* etc. We disbursed a total of 77 paintings in this manner. *Fire and Ice* engaged the idea of the "open work," and viewers completed it through their decision-making at this event. The de-installation was integral to the work, which was theoretically unfinished until it was cut up and handed out.

The concept for *Fire and Ice* emerged from the gallery building’s erstwhile function as an ice house. Many decades ago, the thick ice that covered nearby Mudge Pond was harvested by being cut into rough blocks, then hauled to this structure (and many others like it). The 19th-century trade, which in this country was supplied by the lakes of New England, shipped all over the world. Ice was a renewable and lucrative natural resource, albeit extraordinarily labor-intensive.

Of course, ice was a fungible commodity, whereasthe idea for breaking up and distributing *Fire and Ice* is that the artifact of the performance has an organic, experiential link to the event itself. Audience members brought significant energies to the project: they had to decide how much of the original painting they felt comfortable taking, and to get a stretcher that size. They had to *show up*–to participate in the event by selecting their section–so that their painting would be a souvenir of their experience that day. Years from now, maybe will they remember standing around, enjoying the autumn sun, talking with strangers while waiting their turn. That would be something. At the political and cultural moment of 2018, I wanted to consider models of distribution based on transactions other than those of the market.