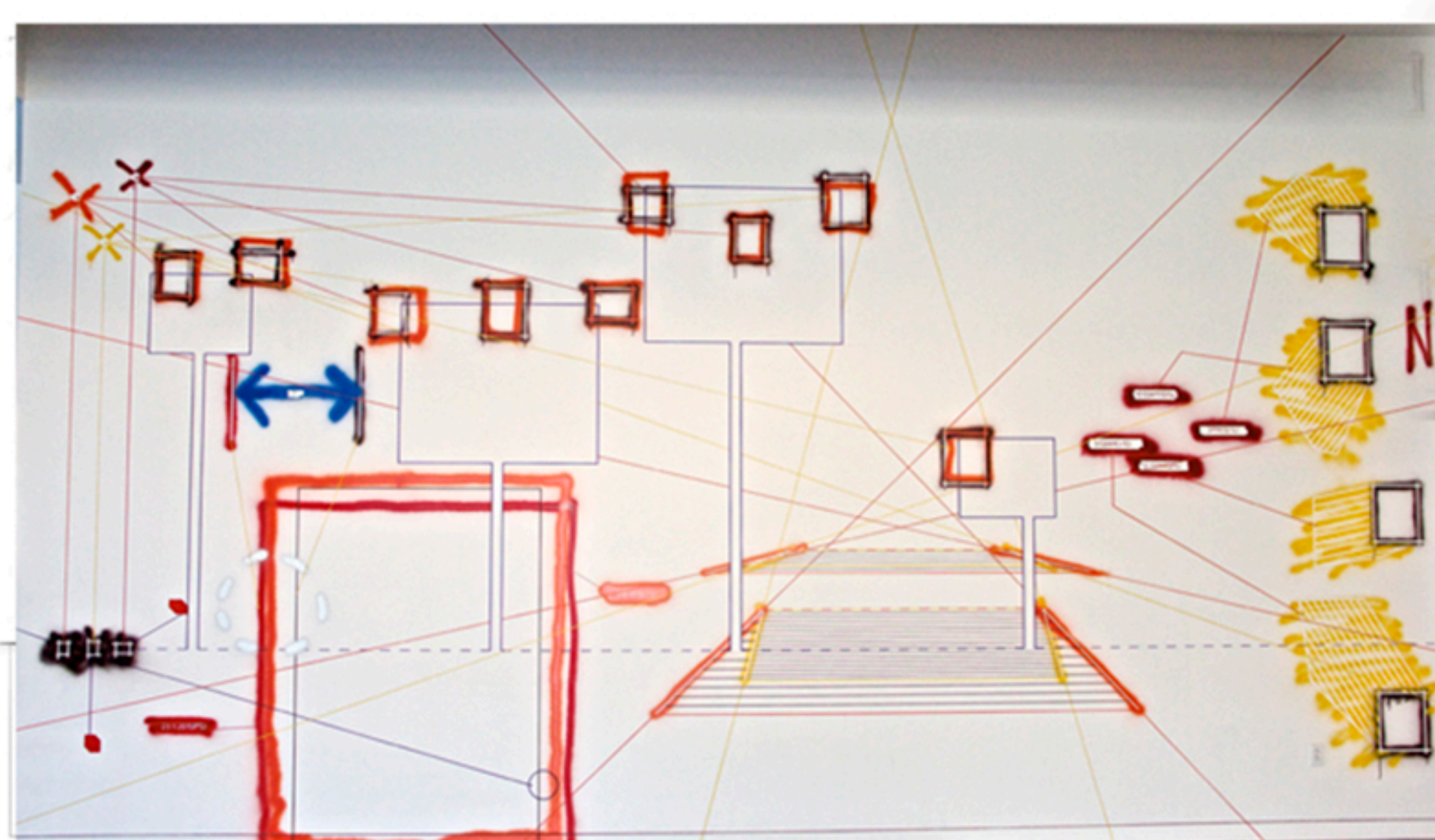


Artist's Voice: Peter Soriano

Posted on September 24, 2015 by [agelfand](#)

This fall, the Colby Museum of Art commissioned artist Peter Soriano to complete a mural installation for the Museum's lobby. Now on view in our lobby gallery, *Permanent Maintenance* is a multipart wall drawing, employing acrylic and spray paints and inspired by specific sites on Colby's campus. Soriano's work, in its pictorial references to engineering, surveying, and architectural diagrams, challenges viewers to examine their own practices of observing not only objects but the spatial relationship between them as well. Soriano sat down with Andrew Gelfand, Anne Lunder Leland Curatorial Fellow, near the completion of the installation to discuss the work. Excerpts from the conversation will be published on *The Lantern* over the course of the exhibit. Below, Peter explains the inception of the project and his starting point of Richard Serra's 4-5-6, on display in the Museum's Paul J. Schupf Sculpture Courtyard.



The project started with Sharon [Corwin, Carolyn Muzzy Director and Chief Curator] seeing an exhibition of mine in New York. At that time the Museum was just about finishing its renovation and she had ideas about turning the entrance galleries into a more informal exhibition space. That year, I also started doing larger and larger pieces. Sharon saw a show where the biggest piece I did was 15 feet and over the course of the following year these pieces got larger and larger and so I felt more at home working on such a large-scale piece when I visited in the spring [of 2014].

Off the cuff, I said I'd love to, as a subject matter work, with Colby as a place, as a site of a whole lot of stuff that happens. Increasingly, my work is getting more vague in terms of where it starts and I look at that starting point as a just a way to open up the picture. What I normally do is throw a large piece of paper on the floor and work on site. I begin looking at the place I'm interested in and seeing a certain situation dynamics of various things that interest me, which can be anything from light sockets to chairs. I begin looking at how my mind sees this stuff. Because I'm a formation of a sculptor and I'm essentially an abstract artist, I'm not that interested in representation; I'm more interested in the physical dynamics of objects in relation to each other and my perpetually shifting position on them. So I said a natural place is to begin with the Richard Serra's outside (4-5-6) which I kind of like but I'm also the farthest thing from Richard Serra in that I'm interested in lightness as opposed to weight. I'm interested in drawing as a flexible mutable medium and not about a kind of volume. I am, however, like Serra, interested in situations.



We started on the dialogue that the piece would begin with the Serra, so when I finally got the work going I began looking at the cubes from a variety of different ways for the first section. There are four ways I looked at them. The first was as a frontal object—they are 6 x 5 x 4 feet in different iterations so I imagined in my studio without measuring what a 6 x 4 rectangle would look like. With these pieces, I'm increasingly trying to find ways in which others can come into them, work with them, work with me, and interpret them. Then I actually measured what a 6 x 4 space looks like on the wall. I was off by seven inches so that was the first part: what does this object look like in front of you.

Then I began looking at the shadows, coming here at various times of the year and figuring out where north was and the length and the stretch of the shadow at various times of the day. That was a temporal aspect to the Serra piece.

Third, I was interested in the two other cubes and began seeing that as a plain in depth. It was the middle of the winter. I came here and they were filled with snow so I couldn't do the measurements on them. As a result, I made a mock in the studio and stood between 5 and 4 feet high ones. I placed a grid in front of me, like the old landscape 19th century grids, and stepped forward and back, seeing how my field would shift in relation to my moving forward. So those two local brown lines, one is the five-foot and one is the four-foot and how that thing expands how you're over it.

The final part, which goes with a lot of what Serra at the time was interested in, is what you see peripherally. I built these mock ups in my studio of three little Serra pieces and placed them as they are here. Again using my little grid and putting my head on the floor, I began from various sites measuring where they would be if I were viewing them from a given position.

That's the start of that wall: four ways of looking at objects, four ways of moving around space and gathering information. And I really look at this wall work as the most open ended as possible. It's a series of drawings not unlike drawings in my sketchbook, saying, "How do I look at things? How do I look at space?" I'm not interested in anything definitive — I'm in a space of openness and flux. Drawing is the most temporary, the most ephemeral medium. Give me two more years here and I'll come up with ten other ways of how this view can be seen.

[This conversation has been edited and condensed from its original format]

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- [October 2015](#)
- [September 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [July 2015](#)
- [June 2015](#)
- [May 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [March 2015](#)
- [February 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [December 2014](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [October 2014](#)
- [September 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [July 2014](#)
- [June 2014](#)
- [May 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [March 2014](#)
- [February 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [October 2013](#)