

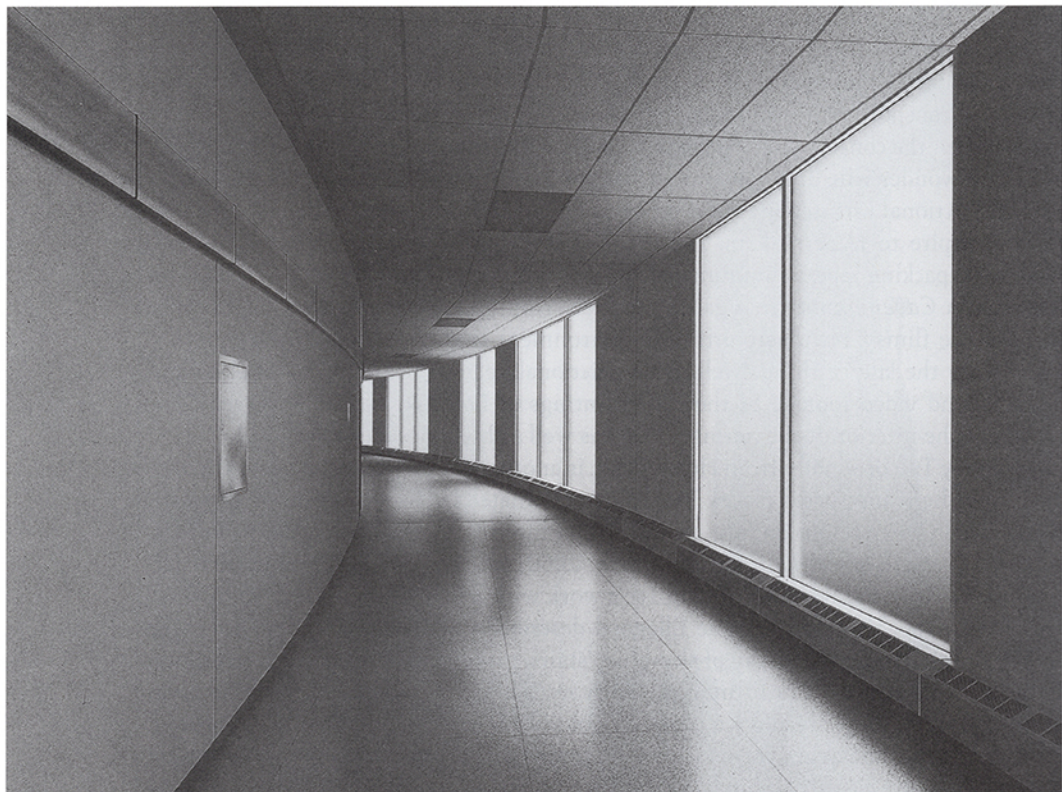
offers an intense substitute. Typically the viewer remains keenly conscious that the simulation is an artifice. Nevertheless, the skilled craftsmanship and involved conception that went into producing the simulation yield an uncanny effect: as viewers we feel ourselves transported into another realm brought magically to life within the borders of art. When the conceit is recognized, the ordinary becomes extraordinary, leaving the viewer to wonder why and how was such an exacting clone of a place accomplished.

The fictional architectures and topographies created by visual artists do not necessarily aspire to hyperrealism. For example, Paris-based Thomas Hirschhorn used cardboard, packing tape, aluminum foil, and other throwaway materials to produce his installation *Cavemanman* in a gallery in New York in 2002. No viewer was likely to mistake the flimsy, obviously artificial environment for a real place. (*Cavemanman*, supposedly the labyrinthine dwelling of a fictional hermit, also included books, mannequins, and video footage of the cave paintings at Lascaux, France, and seemed to represent the interior of the hermit's mind as well as his physical habitation.)

Shirley Tse, originally from Hong Kong, is another artist who emphasizes the artificiality of her constructed places. Tse, who is fascinated by the proliferation of plastic packaging in the world economy, carved shapes into the surfaces of sections of sheets of polystyrene to make *Polymathicstyrene* (2000), a landscape on shelving that follows the walls of a gallery. Analyzing Tse's work within an exhibit devoted to fictional architectural spaces, curator Anne Ellegood described the experience of visitors who look down on a morphing array of sky-blue "stairs, mazes, buildings, arenas, reservoirs, rivers, pyramids, hills, rock formations. Each section is inspired by different elements of our culture—some are aligned with technology and include forms resembling computer monitors, data chips, and control panels; others are otherworldly, like the surface of another planet or a spaceship launching pad."³⁵

The exploration of invented environments can include those that exist only in the shared imaginations of the audience. Although the set for a television show, for example, truly exists at a specific location (on a lot in Hollywood, perhaps), the environment it represents is somewhere else, a somewhere that may not be anywhere, really. American artist Mark Bennett creates detailed floor plans of the living spaces of fictional television families and groups—the home of the Ricardos from *I Love Lucy*, *Gilligan's Island*, and so forth. In looking at one of Bennett's drawings, we see the architectural context in which the television shows of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were staged. We are touched by the fact that life, even fictional life, can take place in such narrow confines. Bennett's work probes how these domiciles in television land mirror our own homes, then and now. What does it say about us that a make-believe space (Ralph and Alice's apartment in *The Honeymooners*, for example) can seem more real to us, because we know it in more intimate detail, than our neighbor's house, a place we may never have been invited into?

Recent advances in digital imagery (both still and video) have allowed artists to blend the factual and the fictive dramatically, to warp space and fold time, and find openings to new dimensions. The ability to create convincing illusions with computer software has given artists a powerful new tool for simulating places, real and imagined. Craig Kalpakjian's *Corridor* (1995) [6-11], for example, is a digital video representation of the view we would have moving through an environment that was created entirely on the computer. According to David Toop, "every detail of *Corridor*, from the texture



6-11 Craig Kalpakjian | *Corridor*, 1997

Cibachrome mounted on aluminum, 29 1/2 x 39 1/2 inches

CREDIT: Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, © Craig Kalpakjian

of the paint to the slight reflections on each surface, is the result of programming, not the hammering of nails."³⁶

Responding to and representing the digitizing of information, contemporary artists may investigate places that are not tangible but exist only as virtual spaces. Cyberspace and other new realms of virtual reality have spawned new conceptions of structure, such as *liquid architecture*, a term that refers to structures that mutate or expand into multiple, seemingly non-Euclidean dimensions. Another important arena of experimentation, for artists and scientific researchers alike, is virtual immersion environments created by three-dimensional imaging technology. Whereas some of these environments attempt to mimic the actual world, others present fantastic realms that are strictly computer generated. A participant may enter these worlds, like Alice going down the rabbit hole, by donning goggles (for viewing) and a wired glove or chest device (for navigating).

Artists who are exploring the new terrain of fictional immersion environments include Scandinavian Sven Pahlsson, who creates 3-D computer animations on a