

## Gareth Lichty, *Warp and Weft*

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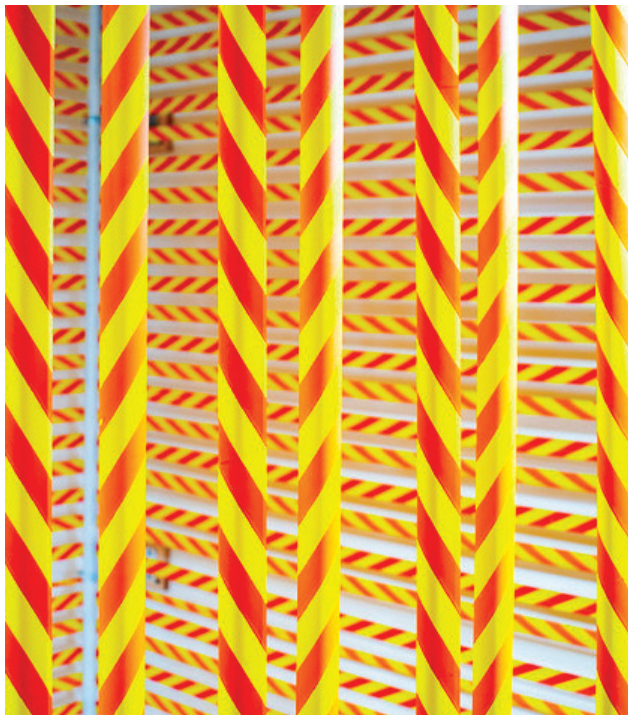
### *Marking Space* Curatorial essay by Shirley Verrico

Gareth Lichty's sculptural practice is rooted in his drive to mark volume within space. He has created a series of site-specific installations that embrace both the x and y axis, marking each with brightly colored field tape. His previous works like *Warp* (Ontario Place, Canada), and *Warp* (Silo City, Buffalo), focused on the verticality of abandoned grain silos. For both, Lichty suspended geometric loom structures laced with fluorescent tapes from nearly invisible heights. The dramatic verticality of the installations is disorienting, drawing the viewer's attention up and away from the space in which they stand.

For his installation at Buffalo Arts Studio, Lichty has added the horizontal weft to his composition, both condensing and amplifying the energy of his work. Lichty has wrapped the horizontal weft around the exterior of the gallery, winding in and out of the room's many corners and defining the asymmetrical space.

The weft is suspended away from the wall, allowing the tape to vibrate gently in response to changes in air flow. For the warp, Lichty has fabricated a suspended loom system that relies on gravity to create the visual and physical tension that activates the installation. Unlike his previous *Warp* projects inside the silos, the top of the twelve looms are clearly visible, suspended from the ceiling at heights determined by the exposed electrical conduits, sprinkler system, and HVAC ductwork, all of which criss-cross the ceiling. The pristine verticality of the tape stands out against the irregularities of the room, with each loom rotating slowly and casting animated shadows across the installation.

Lichty adds tension and energy to *Warp and Weft* by replacing single colored tape with red and yellow striped flagging tape, a material used for surveying, mapping, tagging, and roping off restricted areas. For both the warp and the weft, Lichty alternates the angles of red and yellow stripes to form a dynamic chevron pattern.



Lichty's process creates both visual and physical disruptions amplified by observable vibrations caused by movement within the space. Both the colors and the patterns become hyper-energized within the white walled industrial space of Buffalo Arts Studio's gallery.

Because red has the longest wavelength, it is one of the most visible colors in the color spectrum (second only to yellow). Its ability to instantly grab the viewer's attention is the reason why it is often used to warn people of impending danger. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) standards for marking physical hazards require the specific red of the tape be used for fire protection equipment and apparatus, indicating danger and flammability. The yellow is for marking physical hazards. This color combination is so readily identified as marking danger that CDC medical illustrators picked red for the S protein, orange and yellow for the M and E proteins and a grayish background when developing the image of the COVID 19 virus that is most commonly used in print and digital media.

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The color combination, especially when striped, also conveys a sense of joyful anticipation. Red physically stimulates the body, raising blood pressure and heart rate. Red is associated with movement, excitement, and passion. Yellow can be read as cheerful and energetic. Yellow promotes optimism. Together, these colors recall the excitement of the circus, fast food, and amusement parks. *Warp and Weft* uses the tension of this color context to add another layer of vibrancy to the installation. The viewer is simultaneously cautioned and called, attracted and deterred. Lichty's installation is full of the ambivalent energy so many feel at this strange moment; the constant state of anxiety during twelve months of quarantine and the cautious optimism looking forward to herd immunity. *Warp and Weft* is so visually compelling that it completely absorbs the viewer's attention, grounding them in the present and allowing for a much needed moment of relief.



### Artist Biography

Gareth Lichty (born London, Ontario, 1980) is a sculptor working with excessive amounts of handmade or manufactured units to create large-scale installations dealing with the internal and external architecture of space. He received his MFA from SUNY Buffalo (2016) and his Honours BFA at York University (2004) in Toronto and Sculpture at Leeds University (2002) in England. He has exhibited internationally with exhibitions in Europe, New Zealand, China, USA, and Canada. Lichty lives and works in Buffalo, New York.

