

MIT List Center

Matthew Ritchie

This interior three part work in the Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center, was commissioned through the MIT Percent-for-Art. A program of the List Visual Arts Center, installed in a building designed by architects Roche Dinkeloo and Associates. This work from 2002 is called Games of Chance and Skill. Its British born artist, Matthew Ritchie's map of the history of the universe. Matthew Ritchie interviewed, in his studio in Manhattan.

It's a map that can be read in a number of very simple ways, as a progression of forms through space and time. And it can be read in a number of more complicated ways, as a series of scientific descriptions of those events. And on a third level as a series of stories that describe, how those events have been visualized by different cultures especially our own Western culture over several thousand years. Starting along the hallway, different colors denote an elemental character of the universe. The yellow for example, signifies quantum mechanics. Red the emergence of time, green thermo-dynamics and so on. These characters appear again on the ceiling lightbox, overlaid with fragments and equations such as Einstein's general theory of relativity.

I've been told on good authority that, some of MIT as many Nobel Prize winners have walked through the piece with their eyes firmly on the ceiling, and checked that all the equations are in the right place and there's nothing wrong. Which I'm glad about still, because a lot of time into that.

(LAUGHING)

Less esoteric is what's on the glass panels facing the swimming pool, an area Ritchie calls a participatory space. Whether for swimming laps or competing for medals. Here he included elements drawn from systems of gambling and chance. The kind of math used in everyday life. It's a reminder that MIT's research and learning is not only theoretical, but has applications in the everyday world.

MIT has consistently found itself investing in the real world. It's not an ivory tower. It invests in reality aggressively through very risky complex ideas. So I wanted to bring all those things into play with this kind of very blatant allusion to gambling and risk and the fun of that too; the excitement you get out of.