

“Here Is New York” Individual Titles: SECURITY/INSECURE, SECURITY/SECURE,
SECURITY/KIOSK (Tony, Tom, and Devo; 508 Broadway)
1988 Ongoing

“There are roughly three New Yorks. There is, first, the New York of the man or woman who was born here, who takes the city for granted and accepts its size and its turbulence as natural and inevitable. Second, there is the New York of the commuter—the city that is devoured by locusts each day and spat out each night. Third, there is the New York of the person who was born somewhere else and came to New York in quest of something [. . .] Commuters give the city its tidal restlessness; natives give it solidity and continuity; but the settlers give it passion.”

—E. B. White, *Here is New York*

In 1988 I moved from the West Village to Soho. 508 Broadway to be precise. In that in-between phase of staying in one apartment and signing a lease for another—my first studio—I walked back and forth, Village to Soho, Soho to Village. The meandering route eventually led to Broadway, and what a route. It’s truly an urban canyon and originally the Indian path from the Upper West Side to Wall Street—which was an actual wall BTW . . . protecting those settlers from the hostile unknown. Walking those various, well-patterned routes, at different times of day, the urban landscape changed, evening to morning, with the solace of afternoon in between. Businesses and residences open or closed, were protected or vulnerable, or maybe neither. I began to recognize these façades as individuals, but more than that, not really as barriers, which is what they are designed for, and rather as resting moments, almost modernist paintings or sculptures that culture crafted. Their nuances were studied and recorded in those three weeks of in-between of the Village and Soho. And that record became the first body of work out of the “gate” as an aspiring young MFA graduate. I always thought of them as an “in-between,” a segue, not a security system. Rather than a blocking mechanism, the gates were something that held the space for just a while. These gates’ compositions were based on real situations, measured and replicated. No locks were shown, the gates were closed, but left open as if you could raise the gate and see the white cube of Art Oz behind. Some people did. Especially with the kiosk. So these three gates revisit that time, and sorta all the different faces of New Yorkers that E. B. White describes. One home grown, another the day trader, and one the transplanted permanent fixture. Three New Yorkers, three gates from 1989.