

Mark Prier has exhibited across Canada and internationally in Mexico, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. He is a graduate of the Visual Studies program at the University of Toronto.

As half of the electronica duo *hellothisisalex*, Prier has played the Mutek Festival in Montreal, done commissions for CBC Radio, and taken part in the National Film Board of Canada's *Minus 40* project.

Visit www.markprier.com for more information.

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Front image: Mark Prier, *Ramp* (detail), wood, 220 cm x 820 cm x 610 cm, 2009.



Mark Prier *Ramp*

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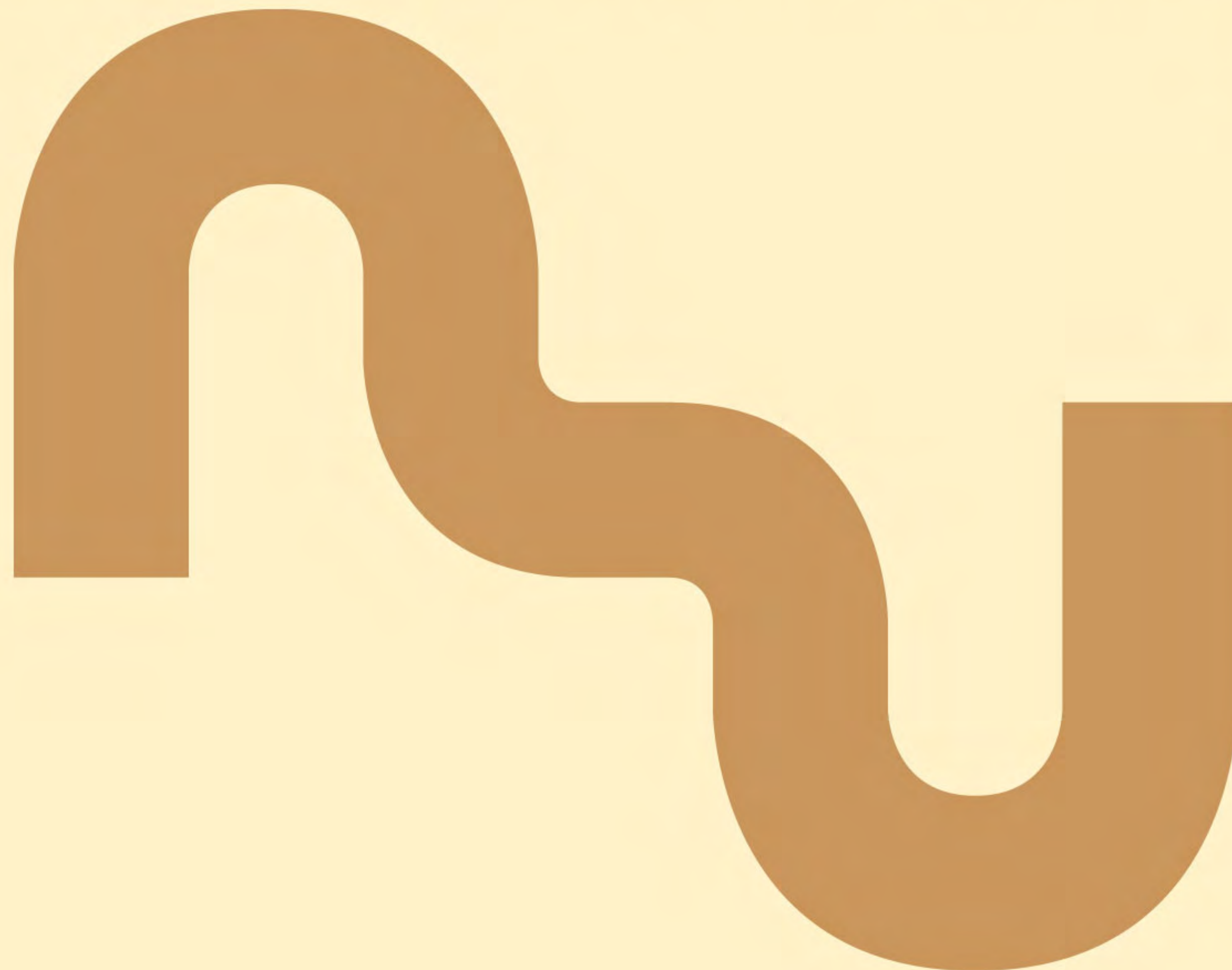




Image: Mark Prier, *Ramp* (detail), wood, 220 cm x 820 cm x 610 cm, 2009.

Ramp evokes a number of images: a wonky yet controlled path launching into infinite space like a dock, a point of reflection at the end of a journey, an ascension to some other place. Flat yet curved, it takes the leisurely scenic route instead of the straight-on approach, winding its way gradually to the summit. It is an inclined plane: a simple machine with no moving parts evoking a minimalist playground like a tame roller coaster or waterslide. It is a u-turn that fights against itself and eventually continues in its original direction, never resolving. *Ramp* is a gesture-experiment in the psychogeography of the gallery. What do you do when you enter the space and are confronted with this wooden structure? Do you walk on or around it?

Using “rough-cut” wood found on the family wood plot, Prier has constructed a sinuous pathway that begins at floor level and climbs to a height of over two metres. The wood is

derived from a number of varieties: trembling aspen, balsam poplar, spruce, tamarack, and pine. Sourced from building leftovers and fallen and wind-damaged trees, *Ramp* is built from a cycle of reuse. Its form is constructed from one shape rotated on itself, like one unit in an algorithm for walking that could endlessly repeat if it were not for the gallery walls.

A ramp is meant to make things easier: to carry weight, to provide a shortcut. In this case, Prier’s device is for getting a better view, for moving, for advancing into space. As the viewer ambles along this meandering path, the white gallery space serves as a neutral backdrop for any number of imaginary projections in his/her mind. This elicits the idea of taking a walk to clear one’s head or cool one’s emotions. It is a therapeutic exercise, where movement meets the mind. In this temporary yet personal space, the participant experiences a subtle shift in perspective literally and perhaps also figuratively. The path simultaneously leads nowhere, as it physically comes up to the wall, and anywhere, as a blank space in the mind.

From the 1915 exhibition, “0.10: The Last Futurist Exhibition” in which Malevich placed his painting *Black Square* awkwardly up in the corner of the room, to Donald Judd’s non-hierarchical objects without pedestals, artists have been forever changing the placement of art. *Ramp*, however, alters the viewer’s perspective by shifting the person in the gallery space through being on the work. Only in navigating both the architecture of the gallery space and of the work itself is the ramp properly experienced. Prier says, “Much of my work seems to involve or be about the act of walking. I suppose this one moves from the focus being on my body walking to a ‘frame’ for walking.” Here, a pathway is mapped out specifically for the viewer, a scripted wander. As a performance-sculpture, walking *Ramp* is a means of looking, where each observer-participant is a gallery flâneur taking a leisurely stroll.

Charlene K. Lau