FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE PROOF
a work of three-dimensional literature by
David Colosi

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council: Project Space
125 Maiden Lane, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10038
http://lmcc.net

Viewing Hours:
Tuesday, October 7 – Saturday, October 11, 11am-7pm
Reception: Thursday, October 9, 6-8:30/9pm

Talking about Raymond Queneau's work in the Oulipo and his own, Jacques Roubaud said, "*To be a mathematician, first one must be a reader of mathematics: its games; its history; its anecdotes; its madmen. Such readings stimulate the imagination.*" David Colosi's latest work of three-dimensional literature, *The Proof*, is the product of just such a stimulated imagination.

Inspired by the story of Andrew Wiles' proof of Fermat's last theorem, Colosi has constructed a labyrinthine space which doubles as the interior of a mathematical equation and the laboratory used for its generation. Wiles described his experience of mathematics in terms of entering a dark mansion. "*One goes into the first room, and it's dark, completely dark. One stumbles around bumping into the furniture. Gradually you learn where each piece of furniture is, and finally after six months or so, you find a light switch. You turn it on, and suddenly it's all illuminated. You can see exactly where you were.*" This aptly describes the space Colosi has constructed.

Evidence of the labor of a mathematician fills the room: chalkboards scribbled with notes carve the space as scientific equipment animates this abandoned laboratory. The first sign the viewer encounters – replacing the "Welcome" mat or the "Yes, We're Open" sign – reads: "Let (the viewer) = X". As the viewer puzzles through this environment, several questions come to mind: who occupied this space; why was it abandoned; what, exactly, is trying to be proven; and is the proof complete?

The chalkboards offer clues. One reads, "Set out to prove the following: Implications[Fermat's Last Theorem + Wittgenstein's Joke Conjecture = God is human-made]." With this conjecture as a starting point, all of the boards proceed with names, citations, theories, and narratives of mathematicians like Galois, Euler, Kronecker, Wiles, Pascal, Hilbert, and Gödel; literary figures like Diderot, E.B. White, Primo Levi, and Roubaud; Christian theorists like Aquinas, Augustine, Anselm; atheists like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett; artists like Joseph Beuys, Gary Simmons, and Ilya Kabakov; and philosophers like Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Hobbes, Bergson, Eco, Kant, Freud, and Descartes.

The foundation from which the equation is built consists of a black geometric grid where each box is labeled in chalk with a prime number in one corner, an element from the periodic table in the other, and the name of a God in the center. As a result of the execution of *The Proof* and the viewers' traffic, these

markings become erased with time. The names of dead gods (taken from H.L. Mencken's <u>Memorial Service</u>) are in the most accessible locations and vanish quickly, and today's Gods are in the hard-to-reach places. Presumably with more work, time, and traffic, all will eventually be erased.

The objects of calculation share this environment with the viewer. Mathematical symbols, as if having leapt out from the chalkboards, await the viewers' call to act. As objects do they carry their meanings into the physical field, or are they defunct mathematical signs ripped from their signifieds? At the exit the same sign, "Let (the Viewer) = X", reminds viewers that *The Proof*, like any mathematical calculation, requires both their action and participation.

Colosi's work leaves as its artistic product not the visual detritus of a narrative space, but art as a gas that lingers. Mathematicians say that a good mathematical problem is defined by the mathematics it generates rather than the problem itself. *The Proof*, as a work of art, will be judged similarly.