Katherine S. Dreier's Vision for a Country Museum: Integrating Avant-Garde Art and Modern Life in Rural Connecticut

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Katherine S. Dreier (1877–1952) is today best known for the Société Anonyme Collection and the Dreier bequest (1952), both at the Yale University Art Gallery. Together these two holdings have enriched the Art Gallery with more than one thousand works of American and European avant-garde art, including Brancusi's *Yellow Bird*, Duchamp's *Tu m'*, and important works by Mondrian, Klee, Léger, Schwitters, Ernst, Miró, Picasso, Braque, Lissitsky, Kandinsky, Gabo, Man Ray, and others that now form the core of the Gallery's holdings of twentieth-century art. Dreier's eye for quality, appetite for innovation, and altruistic spirit fueled her taste as a collector, leading her to amass holdings in modern art rivaling those of Albert Barnes, Walter Arensberg, John Quinn, or A. E. Gallatin. Yet during her lifetime, Dreier did not consider herself to be solely a collector. Rather, her acquisitions for both the Société Anonyme and her own private collection in the years from the 1910s to the 1940s were part of a larger life mission: to promote and to educate the American public about the newest forms of international contemporary art.

Inspired by John Ruskin's and William Morris's views on the social and spiritual significance of art and deeply influenced by theosophical principles, Dreier promoted her mission through an impressive array of projects, from organizing exhibitions and giving lectures to publishing books and supporting emerging artists. As an abstract painter, Katherine Dreier considered that she was acquiring the works of her fellow artists—indeed, she preferred to collect living artists and befriended many whose work she patronized. Her zealous commitment to modernism, which she viewed as an expression of humankind's "Finer Forces," was part of Dreier's multidimensional, optimistic view of art's place in society.

Although the main vehicle for Dreier's advocacy of contemporary art—the "Société Anonyme, Inc.," co-founded with Marcel Duchamp in 1920—is acknowledged as a beacon of international modernism in the United States between the two world wars, a lesser known initiative of Dreier's deserves a closer look: her visionary Country Museum of Visual Education. Formulated in the two years prior to the transfer of the Société Anonyme collection to Yale in 1941, Dreier's plan for a museum offers insights into the formulation for art's necessary place in a holistic, vital society promoted by this remarkable personality. The Yale Art Gallery's initial receipt of works from the Société and subsequent additions for the collections (including many works that she solicited from living artists specifically for the Société Anonyme) are, in fact, fortunate outcomes

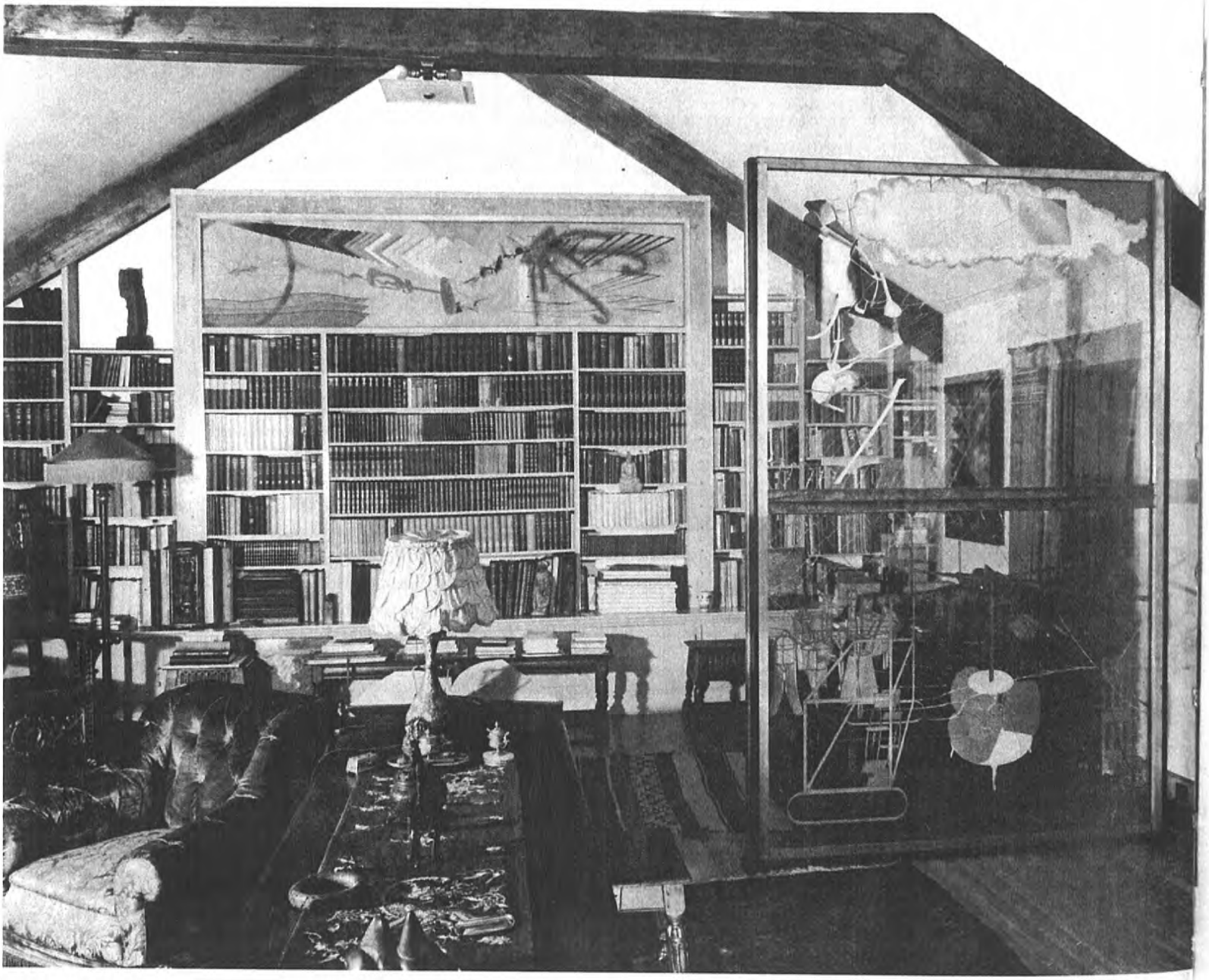

Fig. 6. Photograph of *Tu m'* and *Large Glass* installed in Dreier's study in The Haven, where they were slated to remain permanently.

of Dreier's energetic yet ultimately unsuccessful campaign for a self-sufficient museum.

Dreier began to envision establishing a museum building soon after organizing the Société Anonyme's landmark International Exhibition of Modern Art in the winter of 1926–27.[1] With the exhibit still on view at the Brooklyn Museum, where it was to receive 53,000 visitors in six weeks, Dreier announced her intention to find a permanent home for the Société's operations. In its first seven years, the Société had operated out of rented quarters in New York and at host institutions, but the critical attention to the Brooklyn Exhibition and attendant rise in public interest pointed to the need for a permanent institution of contemporary art in New York. "We are now going to concentrate on our new building," she wrote on February 8, 1927, "but just what form our activities will take to put this across, I do not yet know."[2]

If a building to house the Société Anonyme collection permanently did not materialize until the transfer of the Société's collection to Yale began in October 1941, it was not for lack of effort by Dreier. She expressed to Duchamp her intention to create a permanent museum as early as 1923.[3] In June 1928, Dreier initiated arrangements to house the Société Anonyme collection temporarily in the offices of a New York bookseller who was to allow the Société to maintain a gallery there—a plan that did not succeed. She also made inquiries about real estate in Manhattan, including the Heckscher Building (on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 57th Street), which the Société could not afford. (Coincidentally, the following year, the Heckscher Building became the first home of the Museum of Modern Art [MoMA], under the direction of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.) Art historians have explained Dreier's lack of involvement in the founding of MoMA by the fact that she was "still too absorbed in the dream of her 'own' museum to be able to participate in another,"[4] but it is also likely Dreier stayed her own course out of independence, pride, and commitment to her uncompromising view of modernism. Dreier's vision of modernism, promulgated through the Société Anonyme's programs, was far more progressive and international than MoMA's, whose founders were predisposed toward French Postimpressionism and figurative modernism.[5] For years afterward, Dreier took great care to distinguish the Dreier-Duchamp museum concept, originally called "The Société Anonyme, Inc.: Museum of Modern Art 1920," from its later namesake. "You might not be cognizant of our organization: the Société: Museum of Modern Art," she wrote to publisher John Barnes Pratt in 1933. "Great confusion occurred when—The Museum of Modern Art took our subtitle in 1929. Since then we have always added the 1920. The humorous part is that they have the money for a building and all its equipment but little Modern Art—whereas we put whatever money we had into a collection but so far have no building."[6]

Dreier's attempts in the late 1920s to find a building were not fruitful, and by the end of 1928, lack of funds forced her to announce, definitively, that the Société Anonyme would cease active operations in New York. During the 1930s and '40s, the Société Anonyme functioned as a museum without a building, sponsoring traveling exhibitions, lectures, and loans from the collection in storage. However, Dreier's vision for a museum did not fade. Instead, what had started out as an idea for a permanent home for the Société's collection was transformed into plans for an ambitious, wide-ranging cultural institution. During the years 1939 to 1942, Dreier drew up and amended detailed plans for the Country Museum, intended to house not only the Société Anonyme collection, which by that time had grown to hundreds of works, but part of her own private collection of some four hundred works, as well as additional acquisitions ranging from Greek and Roman art to Old Master paintings. The Country

Fig. 1. Front view of The Haven, West Redding, Connecticut, showing main entrance. Two photographs taped together. Inscription verso: "To the right the library / Below the garage to be turned into the Current Exhibition Hall . . ." Box 70, folder 1808, Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Museum also would organize temporary exhibitions in many fields of human endeavor, including industry and science, and support a wide variety of complementary educational and leisure activities. This Country Museum was to be housed, Dreier proposed, in her Connecticut home, "The Haven" (fig. 1), her base of operations throughout the 1930s.

Dreier had begun looking for a country home in Connecticut as early as 1920, in the same year the Société Anonyme was founded. On October 9, 1920, she wrote to a New Rochelle, New York, real estate firm, Allabough & Sons: "I spent the entire day looking for a country place up at Westport and I have come to the decision that what I want is so individual that it must come to me, therefore I have given up the idea of looking for it."[7] It is not clear if Dreier was looking for a house with the museum idea in mind, or if the museum idea came to her later. She found the singular home she was searching for—The Haven—by 1931. Located in West Redding, Connecticut, near the town of Danbury in rural Fairfield County, the property included a sprawling white house of some twenty-five rooms on eighty acres of land and three barns, one of which served as storage space for the Société's collection of modern art and sculpture.

Her enthusiasm for the Société Anonyme dampened by the economic downturn, the stock market crash, and the establishment of MoMA, Dreier retreated to The Haven by 1931, devoting herself to her own painting for two years, before returning to her promotion of modern art and collecting activities with renewed passion. Dreier's experiences in the late 1930s of organizing traveling exhibitions to be shown at host institutions—such as the *Four Painters* show in 1936, which traveled to the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Springfield (Massachusetts) Museum, Wells College, and the Chicago Arts Club[8]—pointed to the logic of establishing her own art museum, as a permanent space would simplify administrative logistics and allow greater creative control in installations. Nonetheless, plans for loan exhibitions would not be abandoned. However, what made Dreier's Country Museum such a unique and multifaceted project was her concept of it as more than an art museum. Dreier envisioned a comprehensive educational center for art,

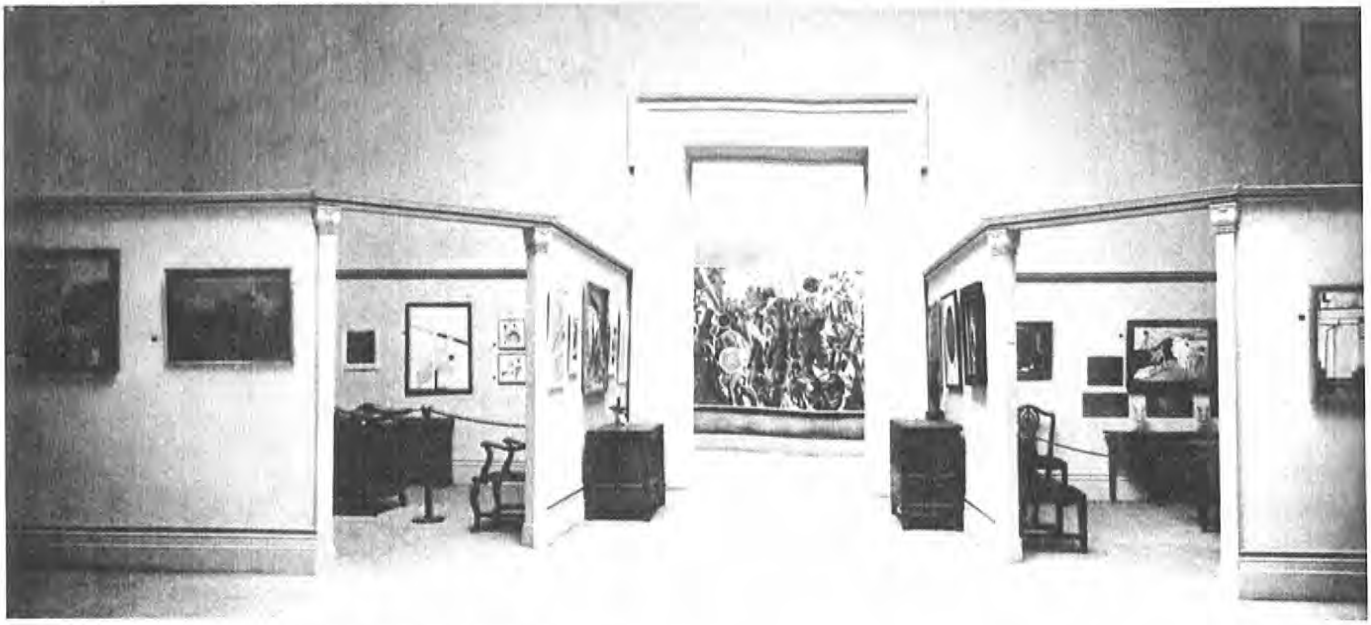

Fig. 2. Installation view of the Société Anonyme exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (1926–27), organized by Katherine Dreier, showing rooms furnished as domestic interiors.

history, and science, with both permanent collections and rotating current exhibitions.

In 1940 and 1941, Dreier drafted several letters to appeal for funding for the new venture. Announcing with characteristic fanfare and moral certitude that an ideal site had been found—"a private residence of some twenty-five rooms and including a large garage and several smaller cottages, which could easily be remodeled, on a site of eighty acres"—Dreier solicited financial support for the transformation of this residence into a multifunctional museum.

Dreier's plans called for the acquisition of The Haven at a cost of $125,000. The Country Museum would buy The Haven, and a director was to live in one of the cottages on the property. The Société Anonyme would then donate the collection to the newly established museum. Additional funds were allotted for remodeling, fire proofing, and five years of operating and maintenance expenses, bringing the total necessary to $350,000—a huge sum around the year 1940, especially given the financial crunch as the United States faced possible entry into the war in Europe. This reality did not stop Dreier's determination, and she offered charter memberships ranging from $500 to $5,000.

Dreier emphasized the positive attributes of The Haven's country locale, stressing that the new museum would "not only reach a large rural neighborhood in Connecticut, but [is] within a radius of easy bus rides of many prominent schools, colleges, and universities," underscoring its educational mission.[9] Furthermore, the former private residence, which she did not clearly identify as her own house, "will be ideally fitted to demonstrate art in the home in all its phases."[10] Dreier had presented examples of contemporary art integrated into a home environment more than a decade earlier, in her installation design for the Brooklyn Exhibition. In addition to paintings hung in a single row on empty walls—a radical new way to install art that departed from the salon-style installation of filling up the walls vertically—the Société Anonyme exhibition included four small rooms furnished to simulate interior spaces. There was a reception room, library, dining room, and bedroom, each decorated with works from the exhibition hung on the walls (fig. 2). Dreier's intent as early as 1926 was to encourage the

integration of this new abstract art, which many viewers and critics found difficult if not downright incomprehensible, into domestic living spaces. "Unless we have Art in the home, we cannot learn its language," wrote Dreier in one of her many articles promoting modern art.[11]

Dreier transformed her own homes—her 1920s apartment in New York on Central Park West, The Haven in West Redding where she spent the 1930s and '40s, and her final home, Laurel Manor in Milford, Connecticut, where she moved in 1946—into spaces where the art she owned was integrated into living and work spaces. Works of art in The Haven were placed in rooms filled with a mixture of furniture styles (fig. 3), including bulky, elaborate wooden tables and chairs. The architecture of the house itself was far from modern. The Haven was a sprawling, New England wood-shingled structure, and the estate included a rather traditional small church, barns, and gardens. To Dreier, the anachronism between the setting and the art housed therein was not a contradiction, but, in her mind, was an expression of successful integration of contemporary art into everyday life.

Photographs of interiors of The Haven depict a number of works from Dreier's collection. Brancusi's *Yellow Bird* was installed in an entry hall at the base of the spiral staircase (fig. 4) and his *Leda* was exhibited outside in the garden (fig. 5). Dreier's study featured Duchamp's *Tu m'*, reinstalled from its original placement in the commissioned site over the bookshelves in Dreier's New York City apartment,[12] along with *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (fig. 6).

Although exhibiting works in a home setting was part of Dreier's vision for the Country Museum, her ultimate goal was more elaborate and wide-ranging. To assist her with the Country Museum venture, Dreier enlisted William Mathews Hekking, the former director of the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York, who was just finishing his tenure as the director of the Division of Arts at the Los Angeles Museum.[13] Dreier proposed to make Hekking the Country Museum's first director, and for three months beginning in February 1941 paid him $900 per month for his salary and expenses.[14] Hekking authored a twelve-page proposal on behalf of the Country Museum, outlining the project's aims, ultimate goal, and financial strategies. "In a nutshell," wrote Hekking, the Country Museum would present "pertinent installations with the utmost clarity which are vital to public health, well being and happiness and which may guide [members of the public] in their own problems for the enjoyment of their leisure. It is adult education in its best form . . . a Country Museum throbbing with character and personality, not a vest pocket edition of a city museum!"[15] Hekking stressed that this would be "distinctive from other museums in the city—not another museum in the park," perhaps making oblique reference to the Metropolitan Museum's location on Central Park (as well as the locales of other major urban museums) and suggesting that Hekking and Dreier perceived a lack of vitality at New York museums with their lack of integration into natural surroundings.

Dreier's preparations for the Country Museum included having an architect draft plan of the property site (fig. 7) as well as of the house itself. She intended to remodel the interior of The Haven as needed. On the back of a photograph of the front of the house (fig. 1), Dreier noted: "To the right the library / Below the garage to be turned into the Current Exhibition Hall . . . ," indicating that she was giving thought to the layout of the museum.[16]

The art portion of the museum would house permanent collections, based chiefly on the Société Anonyme collection and Dreier's personal collection of modern art, augmented by acquisitions. Dreier strongly implied that among the planned acquisitions would be "the Kress collection of Old Masters,"[17] but it is unclear if she secured an

Fig. 3. Photograph of interior of The Haven (probably a section of Dreier's study). Over the fireplace hangs Heinrich Campendonk's cartoon for a mural commemorating the return of Schneidemühl to the German nation, 1928–30. Man Ray's Lampshade (1921) is on the low table. Both works are now at Yale. Photo: Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.

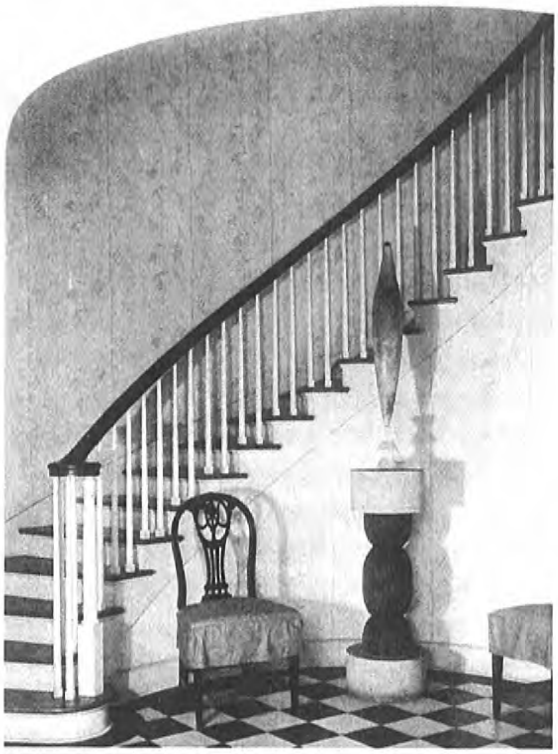

Fig. 4. The interior of The Haven showing Brancusi's *Yellow Bird* at base of spiral staircase. Box 70, folder 1809, Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Fig. 5. Photograph showing Brancusi's *Leda* installed in the garden of The Haven. Box 70, folder 1808, Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

actual commitment from Samuel Kress for such a collection. Hekking's proposal also mentions that the "the fourth or fifth most important collection of the Greek and Roman art in this country"[18] would become part of the Country Museum, although there is no further information on this cryptic allusion.[19]

A series of rotating current exhibitions, housed in the remodeled garage (visible in the lower right in figure 1), according to Dreier's fund-raising letter, would consist "alternately of Art, Craft, Industry, and subjects of Civic Interest like Health—Traffic-Lights, etc., while the Industrial Exhibitions would include the Romance of Paper—the Use of Glass Both Ancient and Modern beginning with the Egyptian and Persian glass through to modern glass furniture and stockings [sic]!"[20] In a handwritten correction to a carbon copy of the typescript, Dreier added to these sentences a reference to "the famous Glass by M.D." She was clearly referring to Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, also known as *The Large Glass*, which she owned at this time and displayed prominently in her study at The Haven (fig. 6, p. 50). Duchamp's *Glass* and his important painting *Tu m'*, which Dreier had commissioned for her New York apartment but then had carefully reinstalled at The Haven, were slated to remain as permanent installations in the new Country Museum.[21] It is an indication of Dreier's willful misinterpretation of Duchamp's work that she implies that *The Large Glass* be recontextualized as part of an industrial exhibition on the history of glass.

Educational activities for youth and adults would be central to the Country Museum's activities, but with a "liberal, experimental rather than a doctrinaire attitude for art education."[22] The Haven would cooperate with other organizations to offer a complement of activities such as art study clubs, music and dramatic clubs, and nature and horticultural groups. The proposal also called for acquiring adjacent property for

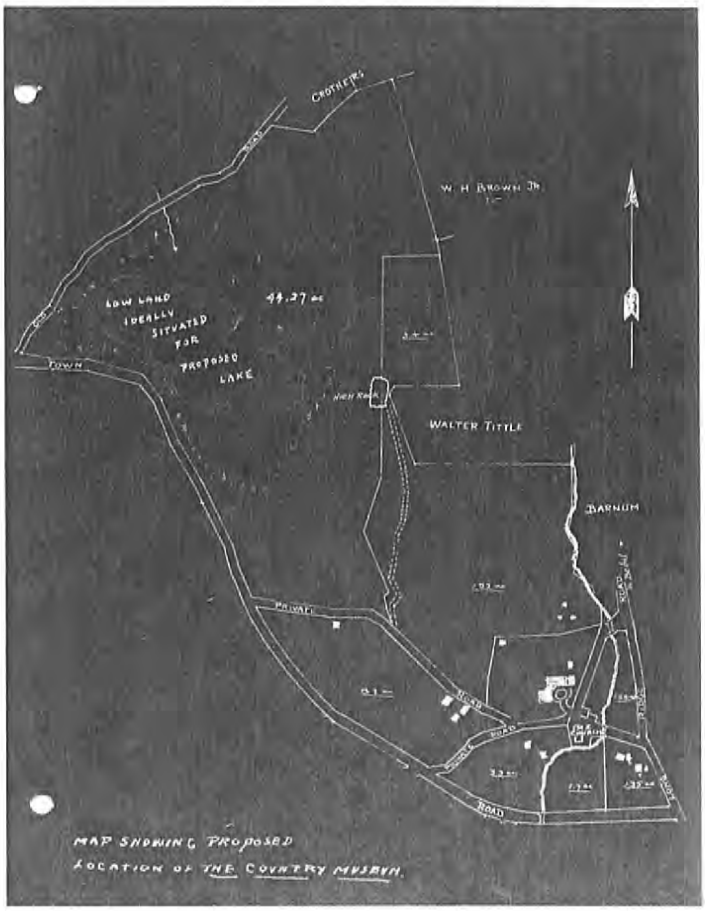

Fig. 7. Architectural plan of The Haven and surrounding area, labeled "Country Museum". Box 60, folder 1624, Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

eventual restaurant and cottage hotel facilities and parking lots. Loan exhibitions would travel not only to circulate knowledge about art, but also as a source of revenue.

In a sense, the museum Dreier and Hekking imagined around 1940–41 looks forward to the trend in today's museums, which are being transformed into leisure, educational, and cultural centers, with cafes, comprehensive art education departments, film screenings, lectures, and other activities not strictly related to the exhibition of art. The Country Museum's inclusion of fund-raising activities such as garden parties and country weddings presages contemporary practices as museums innovate new ways to make the institution relevant to the community as well as financially sustainable. Thus, the Country Museum plans can be seen in the context of the history of museums as an alternative, visionary model for a cultural institution as well as a realistic approximation of current solutions and strategies in the museum world.

The larger significance of the Country Museum plans can be set against the backdrop of the outbreak of World War II in Europe. In the proposal, Hekking makes more explicit the ideological underpinnings of the Country Museum. The mix of artistic and scientific installations, the collection of musical recordings, and a library to be housed at The Haven "sustains a certain dream of our early American forefathers—Democracy coming into its own!"[23] The larger context of the battle of democracy against totalitarianism is invoked in the proposal's "Ultimate Goal":

> America's unregimented creative intelligence could, if given an opportunity, make a real contribution to American life which would, in a sense, be an answer to humanity's silent prayer . . . while Europe, our cultural background, is being strangled and poisoned with the belief that one man can decide the fate of millions in a situation where uncreative, regimented masses make such power possible.[24]

The second half of this sentence, starting with the mention of Europe, is crossed out in pencil in what is likely an editorial correction by Dreier. It is possible that Dreier was not interested in being so politically explicit, but given her documented pro-German sympathies up through the beginning of the war, the crossing out of Hekking's reference to Hitler's rise in Europe at the time suggests an unresolved ambivalence about the project's political goals.

As part of Hekking's job to raise support for the museum venture, Dreier sent him to meet with Yale School of Fine Arts dean Everett V. Meeks in September 1940. When nothing came of this initial interview, the following March the ever-persistent Dreier went herself to meet with Yale's president, Charles Seymour, who referred her to the director of the Yale Art Gallery, Theodore Sizer. This initial meeting, intended as a fund-raising call for the Country Museum idea, began negotiations that eventually led to a signed contract for the transfer of the Société Anonyme collection to Yale University in 1941. The exhibition of more than a hundred works from the collection in Yale's galleries the following year (fig. 8) was the largest showing of modern art from the permanent collection to date. The transfer to Yale of "our lovely educational collection of the Société Anonyme . . . to be cared for in perpetuity"[25] did not diminish Katherine Dreier's hopes for her own museum. With characteristic resilience and tenacity, Dreier reconceptualized the project as a separate one from the Yale institutional affiliation and announced that now "Mrs. Stuart Hay [a neighbor-friend] and myself . . . will start on our second half of our program and that is to create a Country Museum out of—The Haven."

Although Dreier's ostensible goals were altruistic, turning her expensive, sprawling home into a museum was also a financial strategy. With the breakout of war in Europe and with her own funds diminishing, Dreier had to think about establishing well-being

Fig. 8. Katherine Dreier in the exhibition "Modern Art—Societe Anonyme Painting," the first exhibition of her collection after she transferred the collection to the Yale University Art Gallery. Photo: Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.

and security for both herself and her art collections. When Yale rejected the idea of financing the project of transforming The Haven into the Country Museum, citing the expense of fireproofing the building and other reasons, Dreier decided to sell The Haven. She moved into a new home, Laurel Manor in Milford, Connecticut, in April 1946, choosing the location partly to be closer to New Haven and the Société's collection at Yale. By that time, Dreier's financial pressure included an outstanding loan of $16,000 to her bank.[26] In the mid- and late 1940s, Dreier continued to keep works from her private collection at her Milford home, inviting sympathetic colleagues, such as Frances Brand Blanshard, to "come see me in my home where I can show you some Kandinsky's and Mondrian's [sic]."[27]

Although the bulk of the Société Anonyme collection went to Yale, after Dreier's death in 1952, her impressive private

collection—reflecting a more personal assembly rather than an educational survey[28]—was dispersed among several American museums by Duchamp, the executor of her estate. Brancusi's *Yellow Bird* went to Yale, Duchamp's *Glass* from Dreier's study is now at the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Arts (where it rejoins other Duchamps from the Arensberg collection), and other works are in the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Phillips Collection in Washington. Although Dreier's vision for a Country Museum that would bring these works—and many more—together did not come to fruition, her ambitious plans for this project offer a fascinating insight into one of the most unique personalities in the history of modernism. Dreier's vision for a Country Museum of Visual Education exemplifies a lifetime of advocacy for new and exciting forms of contemporary art and illuminates a specific moment in the history of American museums and educational initiatives.

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1. See Ruth L. Bohan, *The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition: Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1980, 1982).

2. Katherine S. Dreier to Frances B. Ackerman [Mrs. Frederick Ackerman], February 8, 1927. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

3. Robert L. Herbert, Eleanor S. Apter, and Elise K. Kenney, eds., *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest at Yale University: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 23.

4. Robert J. Levy, "Katherine Dreier, Patron of Modern Art," *Apollo* 113 (May 1981): 317. On Dreier's interpretation and advocacy of modern art, see also Susan Grace Galassi, "Crusader for Modernism," *ArtNews* 83, no. 6 (September 1984).

5. The founders of the Museum of Modern Art—Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lizzie P. Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan—demonstrated a much more conservative approach to modernism than the Société Anonyme and Katherine Dreier. The MoMa favored French figurative modernism and "masters" of the Paris school. In contrast, Dreier and the SA sought out the most progressive work from a wider range of countries, often showing totally abstract canvases. A fundamental ideological difference that underlay this contrast is Dreier's insistence on modern art's social and spiritual significance, whereas the MoMA focused on its formal and aesthetic qualities. See Bohan, "Brooklyn Exhibition," 122.

6. Dreier to John Barnes Pratt, February 16, 1933. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

7. Dreier to Allabough & Sons, October 9, 1920. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

8. The four painters in the exhibition were Josef Albers, the leading abstract artist associated with the Bauhaus, who had moved to the United States in 1933 and was teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina; Werner Drewes, a painter and printmaker who also had taught at the Bauhaus in the 1920s; Paul Kelpe, another German abstract painter; and Katherine Dreier.

9. Dreier, untitled typescript of fund-raising letter for the Country Museum, addressed to "My dear Mrs . . .", n.d., unpaginated. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

10. Dreier, fundraising appeal letter, n.d.

11. Katherine S. Dreier, "Modern Art," *Buffalo Arts Journal* 9 (April 1927): 269. Quoted in Ruth L. Bohan, "Katherine Sophie Dreier and New York Dada," *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 9 (May 1977): 99.

12. In 1931, the painting was moved to The Haven. A photograph of it, taken in 1936 after Duchamp had repaired *The Large Glass*, shows that Dreier had a frame built around both painting and bookcase. See Herbert et al., *Société Anonyme*, 231.

13. Also supporting the project was Hekking's assistant, Frederick Hartt. When the Société Anonyme collection was transferred to Yale the following year Hartt was hired to catalogue it. Hartt was inducted in April 1942, stalling the cataloguing process, which then took another eight years to complete, culminating in the publication of the first Yale Société Anonyme catalogue in 1950. For the authoritative account of the transfer and integration of the Société Anonyme collection at Yale, see Herbert et al., *Société Anonyme.*

14. Records show that beyond the three months, Dreier paid only for Hekking's travel expenses. Herbert et al., *Société Anonyme*, 41. Hekking was eventually released from the project as Dreier herself undertook negotiations with Yale University president Charles Seymour, Yale School of Art dean Everett Meeks, and the director of the Gallery Theodore Sizer for the transfer of Société Anonyme works to Yale.

15. William M. Hekking, "Proposal," typescript, 12 pp., n.d. [ca. 1941], 2–3. Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

16. It is unclear if the "library" refers to the existing library or the planned library for the museum (or if they are one and the same) but the designation of a hall for current exhibitions indicates that Dreier wanted the museum to have some type of rotating exhibitions.

17. Dreier, untitled typescript of fund-raising letter for the Country Museum, n.d., unpaginated. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

18. William M. Hekking, "Proposal," typescript, 12 pp., n.d. [ca. 1941]. Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

19. In other correspondence, Dreier says the collection would also accommodate "a very fine small collection of Japanese prints and also of etchings, three good Flemish tapestries, some very beautiful pieces of old silk, some unusual pieces of Chinese peasant embroideries, as yet little known or appreciated, and some very nice paintings of the nineteenth century. Like Shirlaw, Charles Davis, Chase, Erle, etc." – all items from her personal collection. Dreier, quoted in Herbert et al., *Société Anonyme*, 23.

20. Dreier, untitled typescript of fund-raising letter for the Country Museum, n.d., unpaginated. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

21. As it turned out, after Dreier's death, *The Large Glass* was allocated by Duchamp to the Philadelphia Museum of Art while *Tu m'* joined the Société Anonyme collection at Yale as part of the Dreier bequest.

22. William M. Hekking, "Proposal," typescript, 12 pp., n.d. [ca. 1941], 8. Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Katherine S. Dreier to Miss Bennett, October 28, 1941. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

26. In a letter to The Bank of New York, October 16, 1946, Dreier makes arrangements for a payment on a loan of $16,000. Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

27. Dreier to Frances Blanshard [Mrs. Brand Blanshard], October 21, 1947. Frances Blanshard is the author of a book on the development of abstract painting, *Retreat from Likeness in the Theory of Painting*, which pleased Dreier. Blanshard also authored a manuscript, "A Memorable Stage in the History of American Art: Katherine S. Dreier and the Société Anonyme," n.d., which offers a highly favorable historic account of Dreier's contributions.

28. Dreier's personal art collection was considered distinct and separate from the Société Anonyme collection in her mind and in the mind of later art historians – such as George Heard Hamilton, who organized the exhibition *Katherine S. Dreier, 1877–1952: Her Own Collection*, on view at the Yale University Art Gallery from December 15, 1952, to February 1, 1953. Publicity for the exhibit noted Hamilton's assessment that while the "educational" mission of the Société Anonyme led to acquisitions "without the interference of personal taste" (citing Dreier's own statement in the Société Anonyme catalogue of 1950), in her own personal collection she expressed the private taste "she so scrupulously refrained from imposing upon her public activities." George Heard Hamilton, cited in "Yale Honors a Pioneering Collector," *The Art Digest* 27 (December 15, 1952): 14.

Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin 2002

England's governmental art funding body will require the organizations it finances to measure and improve their energy use — a first in arts funding policy.

In Kansas, the House has approved a plan to allow taxpayers to dedicate a portion of their annual returns as a donation for arts programs. The plan is intended to offset governor Sam Brownback's decision to eliminate funding for the arts in the state.

Farm Fresh Art: Food, Art, Politics, and the Blossoming of Social Practice

by Liena Vayzman

Image: Fritz Haeg. *Edible Estates Project. regional prototype garden #6: BALTIMORE, Maryland*, 2008; commissioned by the The Contemporary Museum - Baltimore for the exhibit *Cottage Industry*, planted April 11 to 13, 2008. Courtesy of Clarence and Rudine Ridgley. Photo: Leslie Furlong.

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At the start of my talk for the "Artist as Citizen" panel at the 2010 College Art Association conference, I invited the audience to break out of their passive role and walk to the front of the room to taste slices of lemon. I'd brought the lemons, from my tree in Oakland, to the conference hotel during a Chicago winter. Witnessing the audience's visceral reaction to the taste sensation—the range of responses and memories it immediately elicited—I became convinced of the capacity of human-scale, food-based interactive practice to break down barriers and penetrate the mind-body split.

Food offers a tangible, tasty vehicle into dialogue on issues of power, place, sustainability, and community. Today, many emerging and established artists choose to work with food as process, subject, metaphor, and praxis. Often classified as relational aesthetics, these civically and socially engaged practices transgress both disciplinary divides and the boundary between art and everyday life. Many elevate collaboration and negotiation among multiple stakeholders above the former ideal of a single artist's making an expressive or self-aggrandizing statement.

Feeding the new crop of art is a richly mineralized history with roots in eco-aesthetics and eco-art (as in projects by artist Mel Chin). The collaborative, socially engaged practices of today have more in common with works like Bonnie Ora Sherk's *Crossroads Community (The Farm)* (1974–1980) than they do with the large-scale environmental Earthworks of Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer. An environmental piece with multiple stakeholders whose educational initiatives continue today, *The Farm* was one of the first their garden observations on a chalkboard for visitors to see, tasks all related to their science curriculum.[7] Such a leveling situates this project both in the history of conceptual art and Earthworks; however, *Edible Estates* possesses a community-minded and solution-driven resonance those earlier projects did not always possess.

Haeg and his volunteers succinctly transform the aesthetically pleasing into the utilitarian and socially motivated. One particular garden in Los Angeles (2008) was made up of half conventional lawn and half edible garden. Such an arrangement displayed the evolution from one into the other and invited visitors to consider the relationship between the two. In this example, the "before" and "after" coexist, providing proof of the possibility of transforming the decorative into the productive. The act of replacing a lawn—the very symbol of the control of nature for aesthetic ends—with a productive landscape embodies a larger shift from art for art's sake to art as cultural and social transformation.

WORKac (Work Architecture Company). *Public Farm 1: Sur les paves la ferme!* (*Above the Pavement, the Farm!*), 2009; installation view, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY. Courtesy of the Artists.

Activist Alliances

Implicit or explicit in many of these projects is a critique of corporate agriculture, one that is shared by urban agriculture projects like City Slicker Farms, in Oakland, and grassroots activist groups such as Milwaukee's Growing Power, and is expressed in nationwide educational initiatives.[8] Food in art has parallels with a vibrant tradition of food-justice activism, including Food Not Bombs. This group has been cooking meals and distributing them to those in need since 1980, as well as providing food in support of activist events and utilizing donated food that would otherwise be wasted. Socially engaged art projects involving food also have affinities with some forms of protest and street theater, such as the naked protests and performances staged by Genewise and T.H.O.N.G. (Topless Humans Organized for Natural Genetics) against the 12th World Congress on Food Science and Technology and the Institute of Food Technologists Annual Meeting, two pro-biotech conferences

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brownfield projects by the Trust for Public Land. It involved the transformation of seven acres of public land in San Francisco that was considered to be derelict into a new city "farm park."[1] Notable for its organizer's interdisciplinary training and the reach of its garden-based projects, the project is a direct predecessor to much of the food- and gardening-based artworks being made today.[2]

From projects like Amy Franceschini's FutureFarmers' *Victory Gardens* (2006–ongoing), to Bay Area artist Jesse Schlesinger's taking visitors on overnight trips to the organic farm where he works, to Matthew Moore's *Farmstand* at Sundance Film Festival, to internationally scaled initiatives like Fritz Haeg's *Edible Estates* (2005–ongoing), artists are sowing seeds for further critical thinking about the food we eat. In this article, I survey a range of practices and strategies currently blossoming around the use of food and gardening, and provide cultural context for the freshest crop of artists working in this way. My methodology combines appetizer aesthetics—whetting the reader's appetite for more by appealing to the theoretically underprivileged sense of taste—with a smorgasbord structuralism that offers an array of options for pleasure.

"Unprecedented Urgency"

Public attention has increasingly been drawn to the politics of food production and distribution. Although the subject is gaining currency nationally, it resonates particularly on the West Coast. This regional concentration is in alignment with the agricultural industries of California and the Pacific Northwest, the local and sustainable food movement, and the area's history of environmental awareness. Gaining pungency from the threats of chemically and genetically modified corporate agriculture, artists' actions exist in the context of a rise in sustainability imperatives, an awareness of climate change, and the pressing inequality between global hunger and American overabundance. Empowered by postmodernism and precedents in performance and conceptual art to transgress disciplinary boundaries, artists function as key contributors to this larger discourse.

Berin Golonu, co-curator of *The Gatherers: Greening Our Urban Spheres*, an exhibition at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) from October 2008 to January 2009, has rightly pointed out that today's artists routinely create public awareness of environmental concerns.[3] But they don't stop there. Contemporary practitioners, Golonu writes, "turn such awareness into direct and immediate public action...As we face the very real threats of devastating climate change, a global food crisis, and oil shortages, they address environmental concerns with an unprecedented urgency."[4]

FutureFarmers (Amy Franceschini and Paul Cesewski). *Bikebarrow*, 2007, 6 x 4 x 2 ft; installation view, San Francisco

that took place in Chicago in 2003.[9]

These activist projects coexist with artist-initiated and interdisciplinary activities that acknowledge the intersection of economic, racialized, gendered, and cultural identity formations with the politics of food access. Queer activists have been active and visible in creating new dialogues and formations around food, performance, and art. Dirtstar's Night Soil is an open-air night market of artists' farm stands, performance, and collaboration organized around the intersection of food politics and queer politics. The event was a vital part of the National Queer Arts Festival in 2009 and 2010.[10] The collaborative's name intersects gay slang with the celebration of farming—conflating dirt with dirtiness. In the Bay Area, the cooking collaborative Queer Food for Love prepares gourmet meals for the community, while the Queer Farmers Film Project is a documentary film project investigating back-to-the land farmers.

Laura Parker. *Taste of Place,* 2001–ongoing. Courtesy of the Artist. Photo: David Matheson.

Locally Made

Artists working with food and gardening raise questions about the artist's political role in a timely and necessary global perspective. They function as local—witness the extreme geographic specificity of Laura Parker's soil tastings—and global citizens (consider Michael Rakowitz's *Enemy Kitchen* [2004–ongoing]). Food is inextricably tied to global economic structures, globalized corporations, increasingly internationally reaching patents, and constantly moving food commodities (think of the ships that daily glide in and out of the port of Oakland, or the cross-country trucks that carry California produce thousands of miles away, or the multitude of ingredient origins in a single fast-food burger).

As artists working with food claim the local as an antidote to increasingly alienated food and experience, they are equally claiming a space within global discourse. Hence, artists function as global citizens and local citizens—food ties us both to a geographically specific locale and to a globally aware network.

Laura Parker's *Taste of Place* (2001–ongoing) installations literally give us a taste of a specific place as they draw attention to soil health. Parker's work applies conceptual art strategies to *terroir*—the idea of place-based taste honed over centuries in the French cultural patrimony and transposed to Northern Californian food and wine culture.[11] At a tasting (which does not include ingesting soil), participants smell soils and "develop an impression" from various locations, tasting the food grown in it to develop an appreciation of regional differences.

The artist's quasi-conceptual instructions—referencing those of prominent conceptual art projects like Yoko Ono's instruction pieces—direct the participant's experience:

You will be served soils from the local farms. First the scent of the soil will be stimulated by adding a small amount of water and stirring to release the earth's aromas as if from a fresh rain. Then you will smell, identify the scents you recognize, and note their properties. You will then be served food grown in the same soil you have just smelled. See if you can taste in the food the same

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Museum of Modern Art. Courtesy of the Artists.

Going Outside

How do artists participate in and activate dialogue on the cultural politics of food and agriculture? A main strategy is to leave the confines of the gallery and museum in favor of creating gardens and farms. Projects that seem like utopic agrarian visions—such as transforming the area in front of a major US city's city hall into a food-producing garden, or turning a major museum's entrance area into a farm—have actually come to fruition.

In collaboration with Slow Food Nation and volunteers, artist and architect John Bela built a functioning, productive urban farm on the Civic Center lawns in front of San Francisco City Hall in 2008. The project, part of FutureFarmers' revival of WWII-era victory gardens in backyards, combined dispersed backyard gardens with a large demonstration garden in front of city hall. The plot was once the site of a victory garden, or "war garden," which the U.S. government encouraged Americans to plant in their yards during wartime to provide their own produce.

This WWII-era impetus toward localization was reenacted in San Francisco between January 2007 and September 2008, during which eighteen pilot plots were planted in the backyards of fifteen families who represented the cultural, geographic, and economic diversity of San Francisco. Starter kits were delivered to the houses by a *Victory Garden* gardener upon a tricycle and included "a lesson on how to build a raised bed, planting, drip irrigation system installation, water- and time-saving timer set up and one follow up harvest and seed saving lesson."[5] It is a sign of this project's social efficacy that the city hall farm yielded one hundred pounds of fresh, organic produce each week during the summer of 2008, all of which was donated to the San Francisco Food Bank.[6]

But what other criteria should critics use to evaluate this work? A tension between usefulness and aesthetics underlies a project such as *Victory Gardens*, leading one to question the ways social practice is able to interface with the established institutions of museum and gallery. When interactions and natural cycles are reduced to objects for exhibition, one must ask what constitutes the finished piece—the process, its formal beauty, the ripple effects of others' actions, or the artifacts? Viewed in a white cube-gallery, items such as FutureFarmers' *Bikebarrow* (2007) (a bike-wheelbarrow hybrid) and *Pogo Stick Shovel* (2007) (a combination of the two devices) are in danger of being read as conceptually witty, yet ultimately hollow, sculptural forms. They long to be activated by interaction, shared lived experience, community engagement, and the cycles of preparing, planting, growing, and harvesting that form the work's content. An item such as FutureFarmers' *Victory Garden Trike* (2007), a custom-built adult tricycle that was used to deliver gardening materials, is a more vibrant artifact, possessing a history of usefulness that *Pogo Stick Shovel* lacks.

For Fritz Haeg's *Edible Estates*, the Los Angeles artist works in collaboration with local volunteers to turn water-wasting urban and suburban lawns into vegetable gardens. Located at sites across the United States and in England, the gardens demonstrate land-use strategies for small-scale food production and advocate for the replacement of chemically polluting lawns with productive and socially interactive gardens. From the first prototype garden in Salina, Kansas (a geographical location near the center of the United States), *Edible Estates* has created gardens from lawns in numerous regions of the United States and the UK.

Haeg's gardens also include an educational linkage, one of several components that work to level hierarchies between participants and artists, and between art and non-art. A recent iteration of *Edible Estates* involved students from a local fourth-grade class who regularly measured the plants' growth, took soil samples, weeded, harvested, and recorded properties you smelled in the soil. Please note your reactions and experiences.

While *Taste of Place* is earnest, I enjoy interpreting it as sly commentary on the fetishization of *terroir*. As Amy Trubek shows in her book *Taste of Place*, even in France, regional foods are not based on the natural environment (i.e., the geographical specificity of a particular climate and geology), but on a region's cultural domain. That is, the cultural domain, rather than the physical characteristics of a place, creates its "foodview." A similar thing is taking place today, I believe, as artistic producers are actively working to reshape Americans' foodview.

Projects such as *Temescal Amity Works* (2004–2007), a collaborative project by Ted Purves and Susanne Cockrell, also pivot on the notion of the local. The artists encouraged residents of Oakland's Temescal neighborhood to harvest from their backyard fruit trees and redistribute the excess produce. In addition, they coordinated numerous events that positioned the neighborhood as a community established around shared backyard agricultural history and production.

The sense of civic engagement exhibited in projects such as theirs is in direct opposition to the formalist tradition and "art for art's sake." Thus, this new art is often far beyond disciplinary boundaries—a move keeping with the fresh thinking in art that has been followed by the dissolution of disciplinary silos in art schools. As a revitalized space of freedom—reinvigorated through the possibilities for cultural change afforded by social practices—art reclaims its right to engage, be touched and tasted, and to get out of the kitchen and into the streets.

Bonnie Ora Sherk. Boys mow lawn on *The Farm* (View south toward Army Street Freeway Interchange), 1976 from *CROSSROADS COMMUNITY (The Farm)*, 1974-1980. Courtesy of A Living Library.

Going Back Inside?

The sweetness of utopian promise mixes with a possibly bitter aftertaste in the tension between art's ability to effect change and its always-imminent institutionalization. We witness this negotiation as leading museums provide space for artist-driven projects focused on food and farming. The Museum of Modern Art's commissioning of the young architectural team WORKac (Work Architecture Company) to temporarily redesign the courtyard of PS1 Museum into an interactive, functioning farm during the summer of 2009 points to a shift in the zeitgeist. *Public Farm 1: Sur les paves la ferme! [Above the Pavement, the Farm!]* required organizers to work with a diverse group of experts, from structural engineers to soil experts, to create a canopy of cardboard tubes that served as growing vessels for vegetables and other plants.[1] [2] This environment also served as a socially interactive space appropriate for concerts and outdoor interaction. Artist collaborative Fallen Fruit recently curated EATLACMA, a yearlong investigation into food, art, culture and politics at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The endeavor culminated in a day of performances on Nov. 7, 2010, with the participation of fifty artists and collectives. In many ways, this event marked both the blossoming and institutional celebration of this artistic

trend. Let us hope that the two developments are not at odds.

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Ed. Note: For more on Temescal Amity Works, see "Serving, Cooking, Giving It Away: Food, Art, and the Places In Between." For more on Laura Parker, see "Interview with Terri Cohn." For more on Enemy *Kitchen, see "The Other Senses." All articles appear in this issue.*

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NOTES:

1. *Crossroads Community (The Farm*) is documented and continues as "A Living Library."

2. Sherk is a landscape architect, planner, educator, and artist.

3. *The Gatherers: Greening Our Urban Spheres.* Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, Oct. 31, 2008-Jan. 11, 2009. Co-curated by Veronica Wiman, the exhibition included practitioners who combine art with cultural activism around sustainability and reflected an international perspective, with artists from Turkey, Sweden, and USA.

4. Berin Golonu, "Revolution: (Sub)Urban Gardening," *Art Papers,* November/December 2008.

5. Amy Franceschini and Garden for the Environment. *Victory Garden 2008+*.

6. "City Hall Victory Garden." *Victory Garden 2008+*. See also: Amy Franceschini, Daniel Tucker, Anne Hamersky, and Courtney Moran, *Farm Together Now*.

7. A strong educational component and involvement of local knowledge is also evident in the Manhattan iteration of *Edible Estates,* which takes a historical approach to the Native American and natural history of Manhattan Island.

8. On the community gardening and urban farming movement, see "Vacant Lot Gardeners," in Chris Carlsson's *Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners Are Inventing the Future Today!* (Oakland: AK Press, 2008).

9. For an account and documentation of Genewise and T.H.O.N.G. (Topless Humans Organized for Natural Genetics), see the Site of Big Shoulders: Brian Murray, "Genetic Counter-Strikes."

10. Disclosure: Liena Vayzman participated in Dirtstar 2010, presenting lemonade and improvised tea as part of *The Lemon Tree Project: Abundance and Decay*.

11. Amy B. Trubek. *A Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey Into Terroir* (University of California Press, 2008).

12. For photographs of the growing plants and a stop-motion animation of the last month of the architectural construction at *Public Farm 1: Sur les paves la ferme!,* see ArchDaily: David Basuto, "Public Farm 1 at PS1 finished in stop motion / Work AC," July 9, 2008.

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Street

Womb

Condo

Shelter

Unaffordable

HOME

Nest

Contested

Nomadic

Sweet

Imagined

Sanctuary

Public Housing

Foreclosure

Refuge

Root division

Moira Murdock

HOME

Curated by Liena Vayzman

Featuring work by:

Verda Alexander
Eric Araujo
Mr. Ben Venom
Ronit Bezalel
Mark Blaisdell
Jan Blythe
Alexander Cheves
Elizabeth Chiles
Teri Claude
Torreya Cummings
Derek Haverland
Jessica Hayes
Sarah Talia Himmelfarb
Rachael Jablo*
Ian Kimmerly
Sarah Klein
Michael Krouse*
Seth Lower
Moira Murdock
Sasha Petrenko
Meghann Riepenhoff
Dan Rule
Jana Rumberger
Nadim Sabella
Brian Stinemetz
Chris Thorson
Liena Vayzman
Sanjay Vora
Hannah Pearl Walcott*
Donna Wan
Serena Wellen

**Root Division Resident Artist*

Cover Image: Derek Haverland

Ian Kimmerly

The Aesthetics and Politics of Home in Contemporary Art

Liena Vayzman

Is home a fleeting dwelling place? A memory? Luxury for the rich? Site of regional identity? Domestic heaven or hell? Nostalgic marker for lost history? Who can lay claim to the white-picket-fenced symbol of the American dream?

This exhibition taps into a resonant theme in contemporary society: the aesthetics and politics of home. Thirty-one artists interpret the concept of home in innovative works of sculpture, video installation, photography, design, painting, and documentary film. "Home" shows the elusive resonance of houses, homes, and dwellings, from the anonymity of the built environment to the promise of bliss and identity in the domestic interior. While attentive to the poetics of lived-in space, the curatorial intention was to raise questions around the political, economic, and social implications of access to home. In an era of instant communications across continents, computer-created realities, contested national borders, and immigration debate, artists pinpoint a zeitgeist of displacement and continual reconstruction of home.

Dan Rule

Residential architecture is the springboard for Alexander Cheves' works. Two sculptural forms – a towering skyscraper and a tiny A-frame house – contrast the idealized notion of home in children's' drawings (and adults' minds) as a white-painted single family house with the reality of urban high rise living, here imagined as an anonymous beehive of hundreds of individual domestic cells. Verda Alexander's *Lakeshore Apartments* superimposes an inverted, negative cutout of a skyscraper onto a paper form resembling an interior window treatment. The co-mingling of a postindustrial architectural icon with domestic decoration advances the conversation on the possibility of human scale experience in the urban landscape.

Alexander Cheves

Jana Rumberger

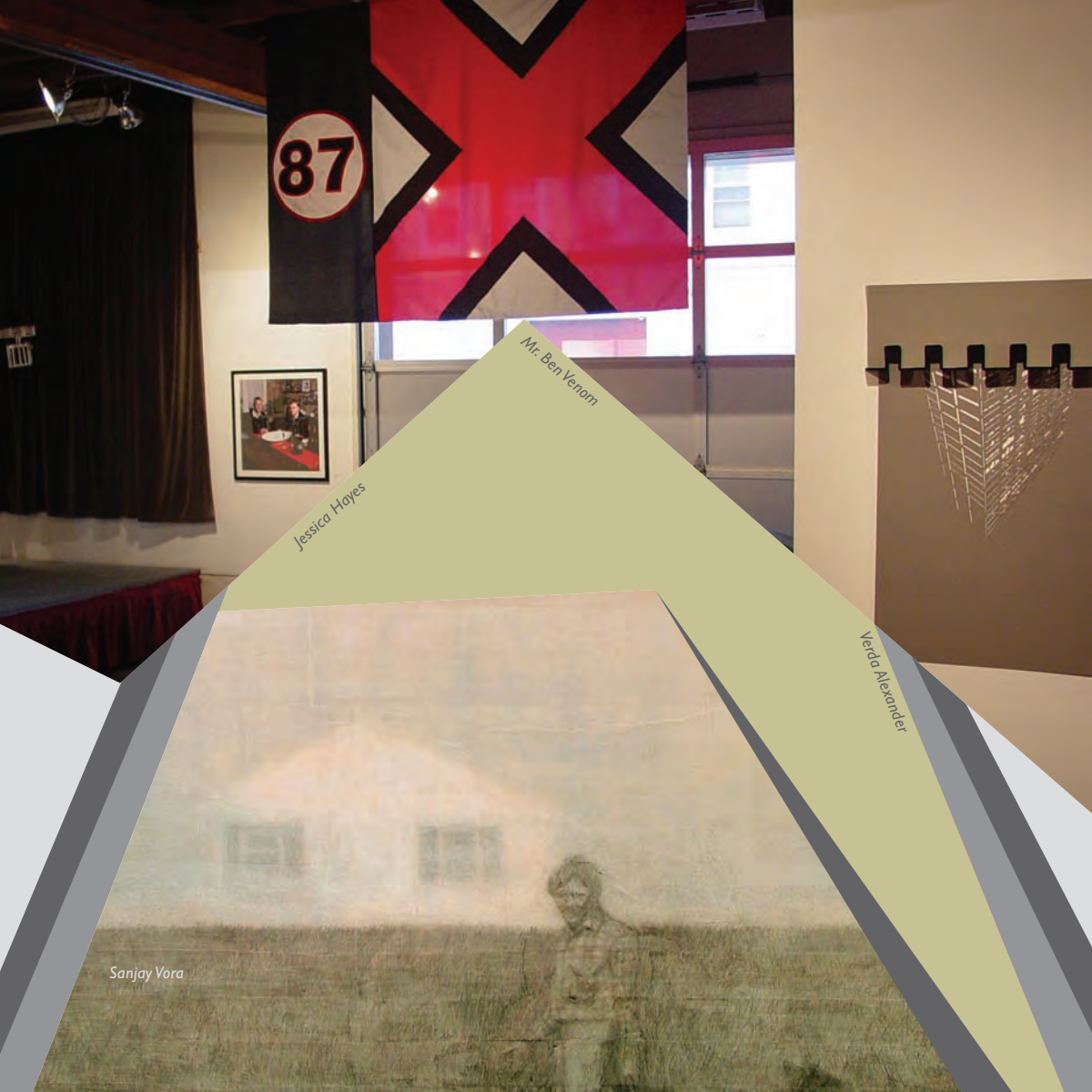
Transition, rootlessness, and movement are characteristic of the 21st century, particularly for artists, whose need for community and inspiration lead to big cities, with concomitant high rents and landlord woes. The constant process of uprooting, relocating, and rerooting is transmuted into sculptural form in Jana Rumberger's *The Cage Project (Personal History)*. The large-scale installation is a suspended accretion of cages made from pages of the artist's journals from 1987 to 1998, which she tired of moving from place to place with each move in a transitional life. Written thoughts, hopes, reflections, and projects are given a permanent home; text turns into sculpture; and ideas are transformed into an evocative form that concretizes the passage of time. Rachael Jablo revisits the process of moving in a series of photographs of seven places she inhabited in San Francisco, a city known for both its high rents and continual turnover of residents. Each image features the pile of newsprint she used to pack her belongings when moving from apartment to apartment over a period of several years. In Ian Kimmerly's painting *Toy Houses*, blur and painterly mark-making disrupt the visual plane and connote continual transition, pointing to the constant buying, selling, renting, and subleasing of houses and condos and the resulting instability in the cultural landscape.

Transforming domestic detritus into art, Mark Blaisdell's photographs document semi-annual trash throw-outs in Melbourne, Australia, when furniture and large household items are discarded on the curb for disposal. While the objects in the photographs appear purposefully arranged, the assemblages of personal belongings left on the street are photographed as found. The transposition of inside and outside is expressed in different photographic terms by Talia Himmelfarb, who re-photographs a slide projection of an image of the interior of a house projected onto its exterior. Inside and outside are thus both flipped and conflated. Sarah Klein's video *Dirty Work* shows the dark side of the enforced domestic role culturally attributed to women. In a series of short animations, simply drawn female characters shift from cleaning house to creating explosions and other disasters, undoing the traditional coding of the domestic realm in the feminine.

Elizabeth Chiles

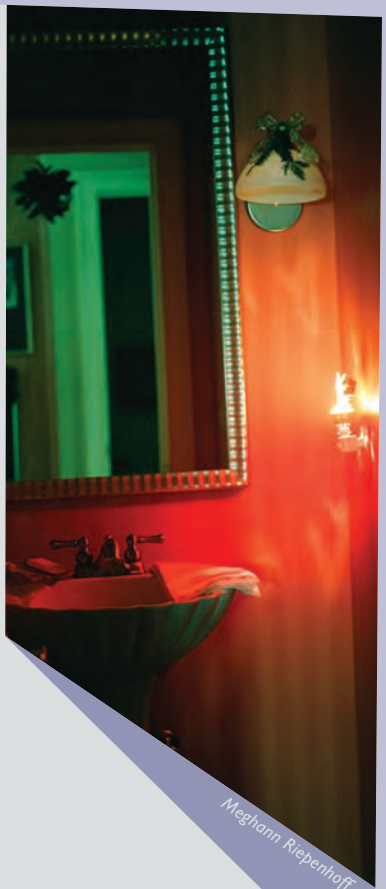
Nadim Sabella

Jan Blythe


87
Jessica Hayes
Mr. Ben Venom
Verda Alexander
Sanjay Vora

Teri Claude

Teri Claude's *Inside Bernal Hill* is a collaborative project made with the artist's rabbit, Dusty, investigating the layers of history of the artist's Victorian house in the Bernal Heights area of San Francisco. In the process of constructing a burrow, the rabbit has been excavating artifacts in the backyard. Claude presents an installation of objects unearthed in the animal's instinctual home-making -- such as pieces of crockery, toy soldiers, rusty hardware – highlighting making and remaking home as human, animal, and cultural processes. The past lives of homes and their inhabitants are also explored in the work of German-born Nadim Sabella. The artist makes large-scale color photographs of the interiors of abandoned houses across the United States. He has constructed a single miniature house based on the various photographs. Sabella's photograph of a room containing a fallen piano covered in years of dust is here paired with the dollhouse-like reconstruction; close scrutiny of the miniature house reveals a room replete with a tiny piano. Thus, photographic fact and constructed fiction mingle in dynamic tension, evoking an imagined narrative. Eric Araujo's *HOUSE (if you lived here you'd be home by now)* is also a constructed object, but in a scale that allows inhabitation. The artist built a small, useable wooden shelter in the shape of a classic A-frame home, placed it in a public space under a freeway in San Francisco, California, and documented the process in photographs and video. The house was used as a sleeping space for one night, then disappeared.



Meghann Riepenhoff

Eric Araujo

Mark Blaisdell

Michael Krouse

Sarah Klein

Liena Vayzman

Today, artists work in a context of government-produced fear around "homeland security," skyrocketing real estate prices, housing crises in US cities, migration and population displacement, and gentrification. Increasingly, residents of the San Francisco Bay metropolitan area cannot afford the price of a median single-family home here, which in 2006 was $749,400, according to the National Association of Realtors. Michael Krouse's painting of a San Francisco house, emblazoned with the word "Unaffordable" in neon light, points to the lack of affordable housing in cities. Investigating the alarming divide between rich and poor, Donna Wan photographs lavish California estates in the *Dream Homes* series. Isolated against the background and installed as light box transparency, Wan's untitled image suggests the isolation, gaudiness, and lack of social connectedness of home-as-conspicuous consumption. My own artistic work included in this exhibition, from the series *Shelter*, presents photographic portraits of individuals experiencing homelessness and health care challenges. I photographed people I met at Matthew House, a daytime shelter providing supportive services on the South Side of Chicago. The portraits make visible individuals experiencing homelessness. The title *Shelter* refers to both the location and to the process of sheltering individual voices through photography. Ronit Bezalel's documentary *Voices of Cabrini* addresses the disparities in access to housing in Chicago. The 30-minute film documents the organizing of community members in response to the dismantling of the Cabrini Green public housing project, raising issues of economics, racism, and politics.

Chris Thorson

While most of the exhibition artists reside in the San Francisco area, many speak of distant homelands, real or imagined. Originally from Scotland, Jan Blythe uses a lace tablecloth as a template to create a poetic floor sculpture from fireplace ash *(Yer Tea's Oot)* – a ghostly remnant of the past. Blythe's melancholy, subtle work denotes the fragility of memory. Putting the sculpture in conversation with Sanjay Vora's painting, with its gauzy pale tones obfuscating an images of the artist's childhood home, opens up vectors into the tenuous hold we have on memories. Derek Haverland's *6322*, reproduced on the cover of this catalog, refers to the address of his grandmother's house. The artist uses needlework as a kind of drawing to depict the house on chair fabric from the home's interior, unearthing layers of memory. The use of thread as medium further resonates with the passage of time.

Brian Stinemetz

Originally from Kansas, Brian Stinemetz constructs geographical and cultural landscapes in simplified forms: yellow blocks and green felt connote the flatlands of the Midwest and mountains of California. Isolated under glass cake display domes, the pixelated fabric landscapes remind us that every region on the Earth is constantly monitored by satellite imaging, broken down into a grid, and increasingly accessible through the interface of the computer screen. Geographically distinct regions become the flattened into the same data stream. This is the crisis of regional specificity in the face of Google Earth's all-encompassing scopic regime.

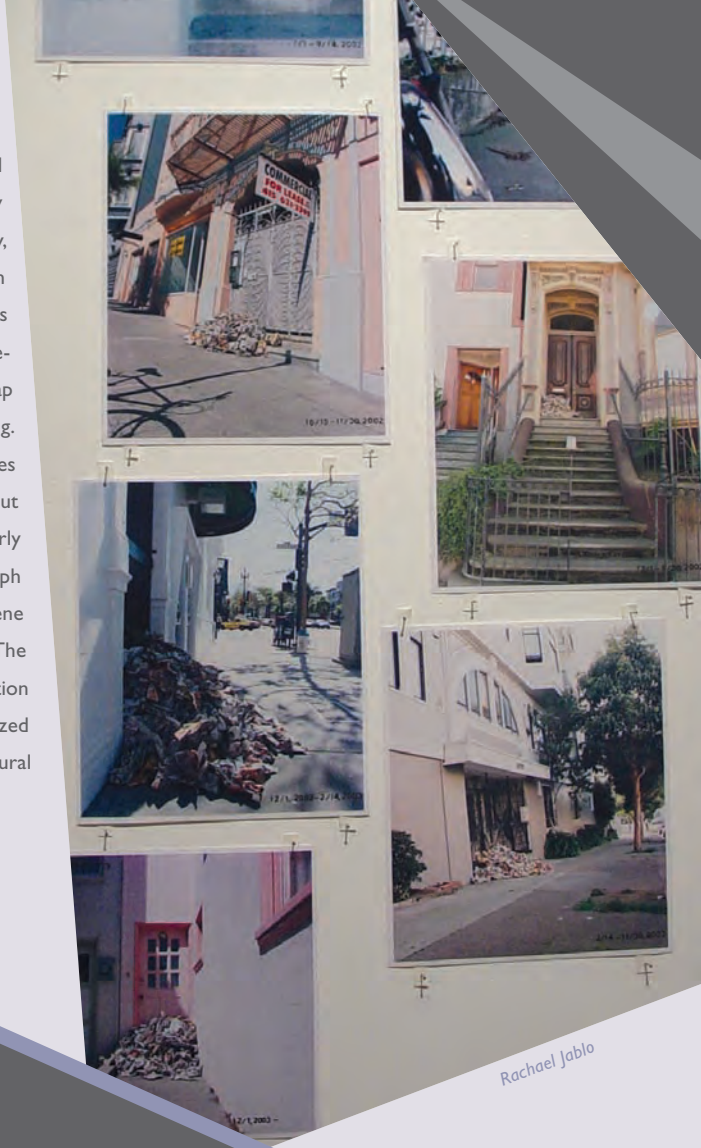
Unapologetically regional, Ben Venom's suspended banner *Georgia Politics* refers to speedway racing flags in the South as well as to the controversy about the redesign of the state flag in his native state of Georgia. Similarly making work about a distant home is Hannah Pearl Walcott, a native New Yorker now living in San Francisco. Walcott's collages piece together historic imagery of New York City architecture with vintage photographs of her relatives in vibrant celebration of growing up in the urban center.

In a panel discussion in conjunction with this exhibition, *"Home"* artists articulated the paradox of the city as crucible of inspiration. Artists are pushed out of workspaces by development catering to economically privileged classes drawn to cities for its cultural vibrancy. The lack of stable affordable housing for artists in the very cities that claim art as cultural capital – like New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles -- creates damaging effects. What happens to artistic communities when warehouse studio spaces are converted to multimillion-dollar condos? Is Moira Murdock's idyllic *Houseberg* slowly melting? This exhibition showcases a range of responses to this paradox by artists, who both are used as agents of gentrification and particularly vulnerable to its effects.

Hannah Pearl Walcott

Donna Wan

For some artists, home is not encapsulated by a house or residential dwelling but by more intangible feelings of safety, security, and personal boundary akin to Gaston Bachelard's meditations on nests and shells in *The Poetics of Space*. Chris Thorson's large-scale painting depicts a camping tent, flap open in welcome, in a bucolic natural setting. However, the painting's jarring high key hues and uncanny lack of human presence undercut the initial assurance of safe harbor. Similarly unsettling, Meghann Riepenhoff's photograph *Night Light* depicts an eerie nighttime scene of a bathroom in a domestic interior. The nightlight's symbolic promise of protection from imaginary nighttime horrors symbolized is subverted by the photograph's unnatural color and asymmetrical composition.



Rachael Jablo

Liena Vayzman

The disruption of safety in childhood permeates Serena Wellen's video *Goodnight Nobody*, here installed as a projection in a darkened space. A voice-over intones the text of the classic children's bedtime story *Goodnight Moon* in an ominous amplified hush over a sequence of still images including illustrations from the book and a crumpled-up drawing of house fading in and out. The video refers to the disturbance of a child's carefully constructed sense of safe home by abuse. Similarly menacing, Torreya Cummings' *Security Blanket* is a functional object designed to swaddle the body in warmth and security. At the same time, the fact that the work is made from an army blanket suggests being far from home and in peril. The bindings on the blanket threaten to immobilize, heightening the work's disquieting edge. Constructing a mobile personal space is the goal of Sasha Petrenko's *Pocket House*, a design prototype of a portable pod for living, filled with cozy sleeping bag, pillows, and a green plant. The pod invites inhabitation and offers a haven of rest, comfort, and refuge. The project is utopian in nature, yet practical in imagining a portable housing solution.

Sasha Petrenko

"Home" artists explore the concept as structure and lived experience. From architectural motif to idealized arena for subversion, the concept of home resonates for emerging artists: as object of memory, site of identity, and marker of domestic (in)security.

HOME

July 13 - 28, 2007

Verda Alexander, *Lakeshore Apartments,* colored paper, pipe cleaner, cardboard, 30" x 20" x 2", 2007
Eric Araujo, *HOUSE (if you lived here you'd be home by now),* DVD, photos, dimensions vary, 2005
Ronit Bezalel, *Voices of Cabrini: Remaking Chicago's Public Housing,* digital video, 30 minutes, 1999
Mark Blaisdell, *Untitled #1, #2 and #3,* c-prints, 20" x 24" each, 2005 and 2006
Jan Blythe, *Yer tea's oot!,* ash and spray paint, 77" x 60", 2007
Alexander Cheves, *Gone With and Away With,* acrylic and wood, 8.5' x 2.25' x 1.5' House: 2'2" x 10" x 1'2", 2007
Elizabeth Chiles, *Everyday Portal and Pleasures,* c-prints, 4" x 4" each, 2004-2005
Teri Claude, *Inside Bernal Hill,* photographs and found objects, 4' x 5', 2007
Torreya Cummings, *(Homeland Security Device) Security Blanket,* wool army blanket, thread, hardware, 5' x 6' (variable), 2005-2006
Derek Haverland, *6322,* needlework on cloth, 24" x 36", 2004
Jessica Hayes, *John and Aaron,* inkjet prints, 77" x 60", 2007
Sarah Talia Himmelfarb, *Untitled (from the Uncertainty Princliple Series),* ink jet prints, 28" x 36", 2007
Rachael Jablo, *Domestic Disturbance (Home, 2002-2003),* c-prints, 9.5" x 11" each, 2002-2007
Ian Kimmerly, *Toy Houses,* oil on canvas, 38" x 48", 2007
Sarah Klein, *Dirty Work,* video, 2005
Michael Krouse, *My American Dream,* oil on panel with neon, 48" x 36", 2006
Seth Lower, *White Towels,* c-print, 30" x 40", 2006 and *Notes From 111 W. Reardon Street,* Post-It Notes, 19" x 10" 2007
Moira Murdock, *Houseberg II,* foam, joint compound and acrylic polymer, 23" x 30" x 14.5", 2007
Sasha Petrenko, *Pocket House,* mixed media, 7' x 5' x 5', 2006-2007
Meghann Riepenhoff, *Night Light,* c-print (1/5), 24" x 30", 2007
Dan Rule, *Belly of the Snake,* screen print, 18" x 16", 2006
Jana Rumberger, *The Cage Project (Personal History),* calendar/journals from 1987-1998. scotch tape, dimensions vary, 2007
Nadim Sabella, *Piano,* c-print, 30" x 45", 2005 and *Miniature I,* wood, plastic, paper, 7" x 10.5" x 9.5", 2006
Brian Stinemetz, *The Four Continents,* mixed media, 40" x 40", 2007

Chris Thorson, *Tent,* oil on canvas, 72" x 84", 2006-2007

Liena Vayzman, *Untitled Series from Shelter,* digital light jet photographic prints, edition of 5, 2006 and *#1, #2, #3, #4 and #5 from Shelter,* digital light jet photographic prints, edition of 5, 20" x 16", 2006

Mr. Ben Venom, *Georgia Politics,* fabric, thread, rope grommets, 5' x 7', 2007

Sanjay Vora, *Yard Work,* acrylic, paper and pencil (on canvas), 45" x 55", 2006

Hannah Pearl Walcott, *Mimi and the Ladies,* artist photos, family photos, collage on masonite, 8" x 8", 2006

Donna Wan, *Untitled #1 (Dream Homes),* digital photograph in light-box, 30" x 30", 2006

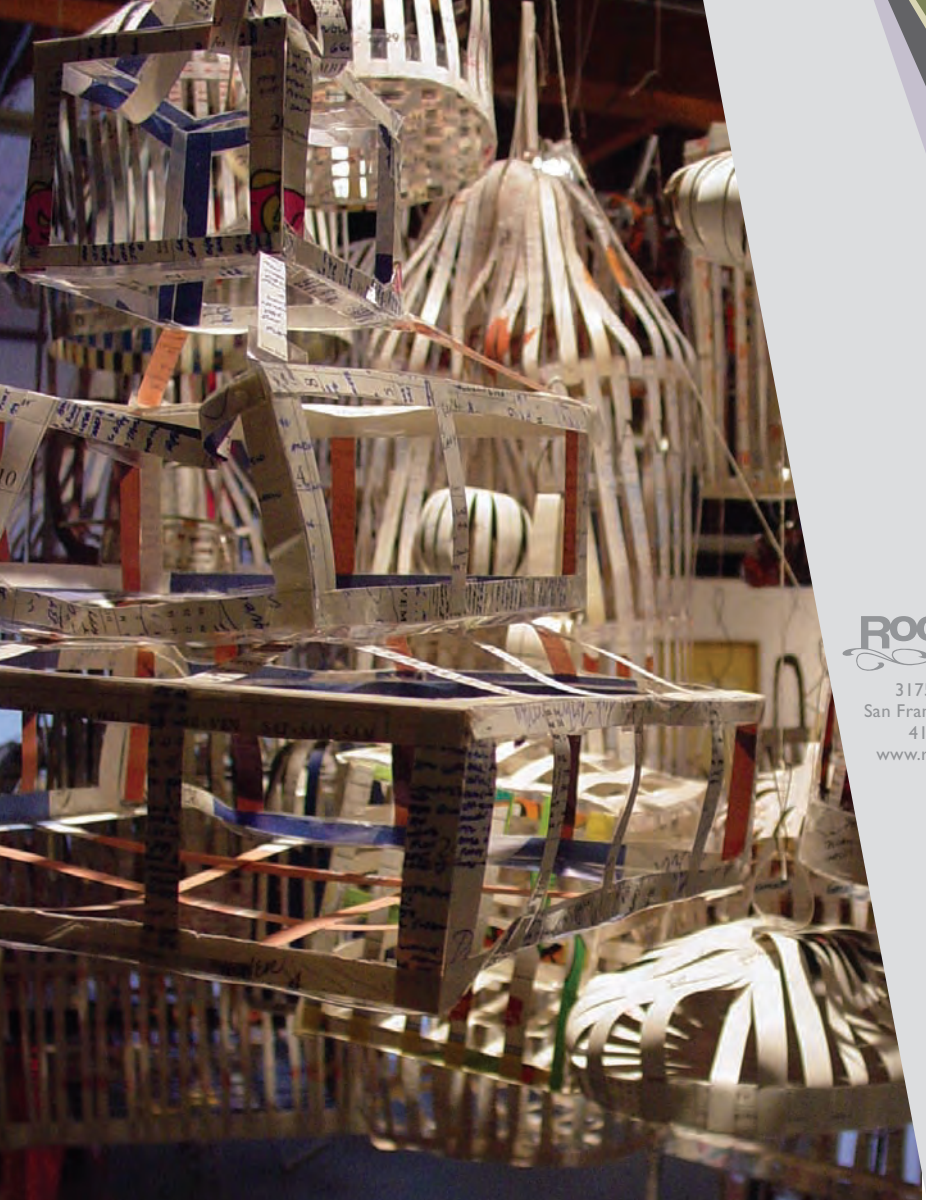
Serena Wellen, *Goodnight Nobody,* digital video, dimensions vary, 2006

Guest Curator: **Liena Vayzman**
Catalog Design: **Brian Stinemetz**
Installation & Exhibition Coordinator: **Selene Foster**

This catalogue was produced as a collaborative project between Root Division and the artists in the *Home* exhibition

Root Division is supported in part by grants from the San Francisco Foundation, the Walter & Elise Haas Sr Fund, and by a charitable gift from the Kanbar Charitable Trust administered by the Jewish Community Endowment Fund. The Second Saturday Exhibition Series is sponsored by the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

Back Cover Image: *Jana Rumberger*



Root division

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SWITCH

Online Journal of New Media

In Fall 2008, I co-curated a one-night exhibition and performance event on the theme of chance. In this essay, I describe the projects in the show and present documentation, focusing on the innovative use of media and approaches to chance as structure. The project took place at the Climate Theater in San Francisco's SOMA neighborhood and was organized by the Climate Curatorial Collective, which for this project included co-curators Victoria Heilweil, G. Cole Allee, Jen Cohen, Brendan Leonard, Kaliisa Conlon, and Liena Vayzman. "Chance Operations" presented 14 projects that engage the theme of chance in practice, process, motif, presentation or execution. As we approached the US presidential election, the artists in this one-night exhibition and performance event interrogated the line between the random and predetermined through video projection, interactive sculpture, multi-media performance and visual art.

Chance as a structural operation in art spans a renowned modernist history including the Surrealists' passion for the 'chance encounter of an umbrella and sewing machine on a dissection table' and love of randomly generated works such as the exquisite corpse and automatic writing, Dada linguistic games, Marcel Duchamp's found objects, John Cage's sound compositions and the postmodern dances of Merce Cunningham and Yvonne Rainer. The Chance Operations exhibition injected a technological update into this history by creating a space and time for 21st century work to unfold in the intersecting arenas of digital video, live human movement, social interaction, cell phone divination, live capture video loop, and other innovative permutations of human-technological chance encounters. The fact that the event took place for one night only intensified the ephemeral and unrepeatable nature of the projects and social interactions. An atmosphere of excitement and chance interaction permeated the various rooms of the Climate Theater and adjoining Gallery Nine spaces.

Chance Operations artists' raw materials spanned from the low-tech stuff of daily life — recycled paper, social rituals, physical interactions, card games — to the high-tech — multimedia digital processing and manipulation using the latest in digital technology. From Luis Delgado's loteria card performance and Double Vision's randomly generated dance to Victor Cartagena's interactive video and Lynne Marie Kirby's chance-spurred "Meltdown," the artists in the show played with elements of chance, probability, or divination

Double Vision's "Veritable Vicissitude" performance used chance elements to enable the audience to create a dance work in real time. One performer lead a game of Connect Four for attendees. By playing the game, attendees were given a winning card to apply to the dancers. Audience members with winning cards were be able to move individual dancers to a certain cell (i.e. A3) and then present them with a game card marked with a symbol for the phrase the dancer then performed. In this way, audience members collaboratively or independently create new choreographic works by directing location and phrasing of all the dancers. Both the audience and the dancers thus engaged in chance operations.

Similarly engaging visitors as active participants in the creation of experience, Kathleen Quillian and Gilbert Guerrero's "Open Composition for an Indeterminate Social Ensemble" imbued an element of chance into the social ritual of drinking wine at art gallery events. Prior to the event, the artists placed stickers containing one word each from an undisclosed body of text onto the plastic beverage cups used to serve wine at the Chance Operations event. Throughout the night, as beverages were served and people moved around the galleries, the words on the cups took on new linguistic and social meanings in response to the random configuration of the words and the changing contexts of the word possessors.

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In Tim Thompson's "Captured Accidents," a handheld security camera was attached to a game controller, which let the artist start and stop the recording of video and allowed the overlay of up to four video loops, which are processed and projected live. Moving among the Double Vision dancers and audience members, Thompson captured, overlaid, and digitally processed video of chance images and movements. The video post-processing was affected in random ways by pressing buttons on the game controller, resulting in a live interactive fusion of chance and choice. Marguerite Harris and Louis Rawlins' immersive video environment, installed in the stairway where visitors entered the space, pivoted on a time-lapse delay between video input and output, allowing a playful interaction with the technology and chance immersion in the resulting projection.

Mary Franck's "Anomaly" is an interactive adaptive sculpture/installation that acts as a sound generator and controller. The sculptural component is large tree made of welded and bolted scrap bicycle parts and pipe. Bike wheels in the horizontal plane, suggesting branches, are fitted with magnets and sensors, allowing them to act as the giant knobs of a huge electronic instrument. The sensors on the wheels connect to a MIDI controller, which connects to a computer. Max/MSP patches manipulate sounds entirely sampled live at the event, responding to the aural texture of the sampled environment and controlled in a complex way by individuals' voices and physical manipulation of the bike wheel 'branches'.

Kirkman Amyx explored the mathematical dichotomy between chance and predictability in "10,000 Dice Rolls." The artist photographed the outcome of 10,000 individual rolls of a single dice. Each dice was allowed to fall from a predetermined height, landing randomly. Utilizing the 10,000 resulting digital images as data, Amyx compiles various photographic composites and a 6-minute video as visual manifestations of the experiment. The result is an engaged metaphorical inquiry into chance and probability in all aspects of life, from the prosaic to the cosmic. Working with the chance elements and interruptions of the sleep cycle, Valerie Mendoza's photographic installation "Insomnia: 279 Days" presents flat bed scans of the artist's face and body parts, reenacting sleepless nights. Each image is numbered sequentially, as if imposing a numerical order and control on an otherwise disordered system of logic. Besides each number appears a word or phrase from the artist's journal.

Alan Disparte's "Stenograft" sculptural/video installation with sound documented the motion of a three-dimensional wire armature holding a stick of graphite and driven by a series of sounds to create a two-dimensional drawing. As the sounds deepen, the resulting drawn line becomes symmetrically replicated. The evolution of image and sound create visual and auditory complexity, referencing cell division and time compression.

In the recycled paper installation "the air we breathe.. a prelude to FREE " Niki Shapiro invoked chance through strict parameters following string theory model to transform pages of colorful consumer catalogs into airy abstract sculptural forms. The resulting cluster of air balls and wall of paper shapes appears biomorphic at a distance, but reveals traces of the source media on closer inspection. In addition, Shapiro made and distributed recycled catalog-page flower boutonnieres, functioning as time capsules and fortunetellers at once. Beth Lilly's "Oracle @ Wifi" (the title is a pun on the ancient Greek Oracle at Delphi) intersects fortunetelling with the ubiquity of cell phone cameras. Lilly has created a system of visual divination using her cell phone to create images in response to anyone who calls in and requests a reading for a particular question – on the seventh day of every month. Instead of shuffling a deck of Tarot cards, chance imagery is created by the artist's constant shifting of location. Callers keep their question secret until after the artist takes three photographs and emails them to the asker, who then reveals their question.

- Liena Vayzman

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Submitted to Switch, SJSU online journal, Oct. 30, 2008

Chance Operations

Written by **dsiembieda**.
Posted on **January 12, 2009**.
Filed under **Articles**.
Tagged as **art**, **exhibitions**, **liena vayzman**, **new media**.
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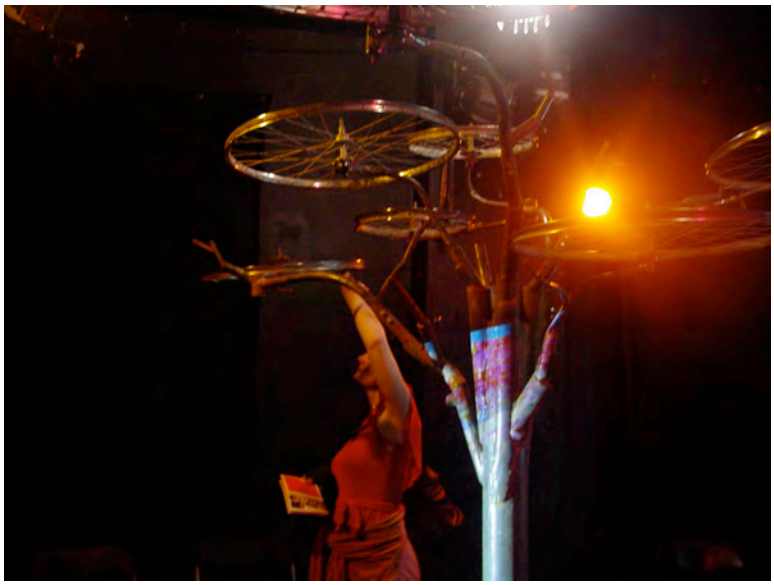
CHANCE OPERATIONS

One night exhibition of contemporary projects and performances
utilizing chance as an organizing principle

Organized by the Climate Curatorial Collective (Victoria Heilweil, G. Cole Allee, Liena Vayzman, Jen Cohen, Brendan Leonard, and Kaliisa Conlon)

Climate Theater, San Francisco, CA
October 25, 2008

Exhibition Essay by Liena Vayzman



Mary Franck/Heavy Industries, "Anomaly" installation view, Chance Operations

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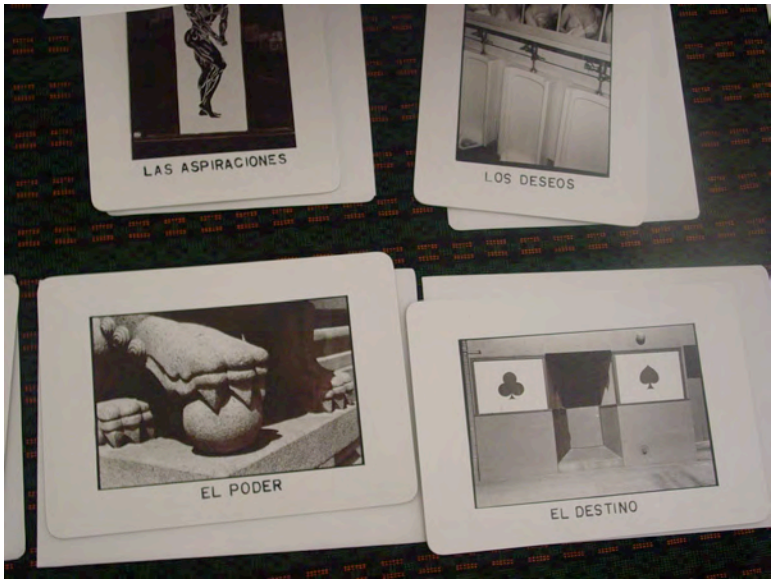
Luis Delgado, *Loteria Cosmological*, detail during reading/performance



Luis Delgado, *Loteria Cosmologica,* detail of cards during a reading

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plastic beverage cups used to serve wine at the Chance Operations event. Throughout the night, as beverages are served and people move around the galleries, the words on the cups will take on new linguistic and social meanings in response to the random configuration of the words and the changing contexts of the word possessors.

Gilbert Guerrero and Kathleen Quillian, *Open Composition for an Indeterminate Social Ensemble,* detail of empty wine cups placed randomly on shelves by exhibition guests

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Tim Thompson, Loopy Cam (security camera/video game controller hybrid) used as input and controller in *Captured Accidents"*

Tim Thompson, single still capture from live video looping projection/performance *Captured Accidents* at Chance Operations. Dancers from Double Vision and audience members are visible.

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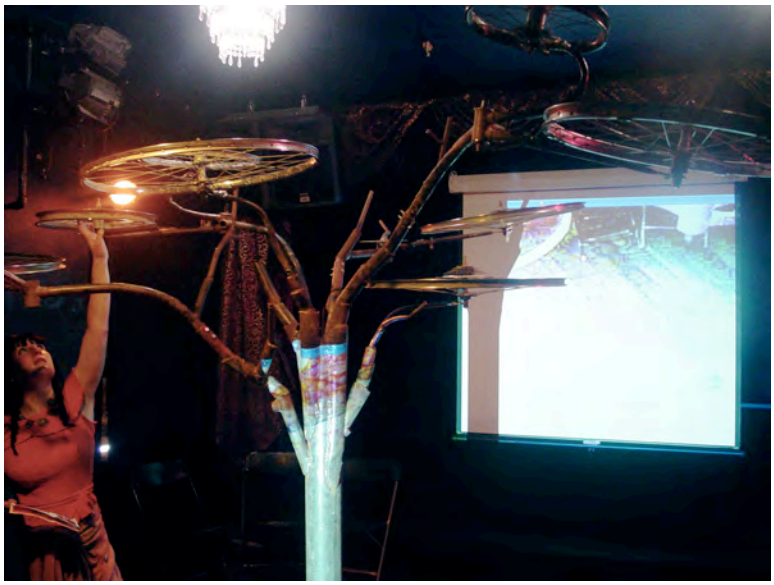

Mary Franck/Heavy Industries, *Anomaly*, installation detail showing audience interaction with wired sculptural components to control Max MSP/Jitter parameters for sound and video processing

Kirkman Amyx explores the mathematical dichotomy between chance and predictability in "10,000 Dice Rolls." The artist photographed the outcome of 10,000 individual rolls of a single dice. Each dice was allowed to fall from a predetermined height, landing randomly. Utilizing the 10,000 resulting digital images as data, Amyx compiles various photographic composites and a 6-minute video as visual manifestations of the experiment. The result is an engaged metaphorical inquiry into chance and probability in all aspects of life, from the prosaic to the cosmic.

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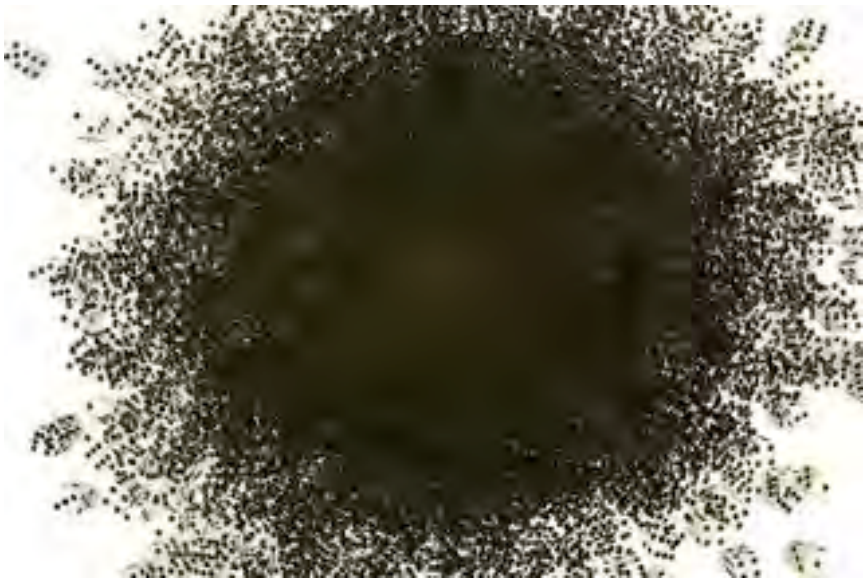

Kirman Amyx, *10,000 Dice Rolls*, detail

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Valerie Mendoza, *Insomnia: 279 Days*, detail

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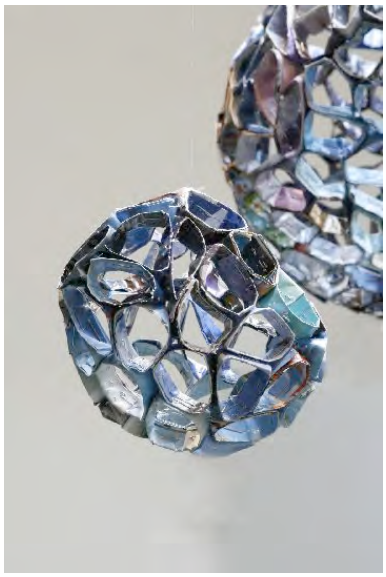
Niki Shapiro, *Free*, recycled printed matter, detail

Beth Lilly's "Oracle @ Wifi" (the title is a pun on the ancient Greek Oracle at Delphi) intersects fortunetelling with the ubiquity of cell phone cameras. Lilly has created a system of visual divination using her cell phone to create images in response to anyone who calls in and requests a reading for a particular question – on the seventh day of every month. Instead of shuffling a deck of Tarot cards, chance imagery is created by the artist's constant shifting of location. Callers keep their question secret until after the artist takes three photographs and emails them to the asker, who then reveals their question.

Beth Lilly, Oracle@WiFi, Detail ("What Will the Earth Be Like In Fifty Years?"), cell phone camera divination project, ongoing.

Dancer from Double Vision ensemble in prior performance

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Contact: liena_vayzman@hotmail.com, www.lienavayzman.com

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Crystal Palace: 1st Annual ArtSpace Film/Video Festival, Oct. 20

Registration Closes : Friday, June 15, 2012
Starts : Saturday, October 20, 2012
Ends : Sunday, October 21, 2012

Crystal Palace is an experimental film/video festival curated by Liena Vayzman for ArtSpace's 15th Anniversary, its crystal anniversary, which calls for crystal-themed, crystallizing, and multi-faceted video and film. Non-narrative and experimental narrative work created in any film/video/digital media format is welcome. Projections will be accepted in DVD format only. Crystals include snowflakes, diamonds, ice crystals, gems like amethyst, and salt. We call for work that explores these references in abstract or narrative form, or takes as a starting point the scientific, chemical, cultural, or mathematical aspects of crystals. Additionally, submissions are encouraged to interpret the theme structurally by applying the metaphor of a crystal—as a geometric shape of flat surfaces with specific, characteristic orientations—to the structure of the film/video project. Cultural investigations might included crystals as luxury and kitsch (Swarowski crystal swans, chandeliers); serious or tongue-in-cheek healing artifacts (healing crystals, crystals as magical objects, x-rays of crystals and their photographic/filmic permutations). Like the Crystal Palace plate-glass building, a marvel of engineering constructed by Joseph Paxton for the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, ArtSpace's Crystal Palace aims to illuminate and amaze. Broad interpretation is welcome—send us your crystalline creations and multi-faceted video gems! The film/video festival will take place over two days, Oct. 20–21, 2012, in conjunction with ArtSpace's City-Wide Open Studios festival, and will also be promoted with screenings at Krowswork Gallery in Oakland, California (http://www.krowswork.com/) and other venues. CWOS is a convening of visual artists from across Connecticut in temporary studios and spaces throughout New Haven; the film/video festival is open to all artists, national and international. We welcome non-narrative or experimental narrative work playing on the theme of transparency, multiple facets, and processes of crystallization, or anything related to crystals or the Crystal Palace theme.

Technical details: Single channel, two-channel, or three-channel/installation work is possible. Silent or sound work welcome; any length is welcome. Sculptural and non-DVD projector projections are possible, but artist must be able to provide all equipment and be present to install and screen their projection on Sat Oct. 20- Sun. Oct. 21, 12-5pm.

To submit: send (1) DVD or online link of entire film/video; (3) title, length, and date of work, (3) name, email, website, contact info, phone number; (4) Artist or Project Statement (100 words), and (5) submission fee of $10 by check made out to ArtSpace. Send to Artspace c/o Crystal Palace Film/Video, 50 Orange Street, New Haven, CT 06511. Materials other than the check may be sent via online to Liena@artspacenh.org. Deadline: June 15, 2012.
Small honoraria may be available to cover artist's local travel. For more information about ArtSpace exhibitions, programs, and the annual Open Studios festival, please see http://artspacenh.org/

For a PDF of the call go to http://cwos2010.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/crystal-palace-2-call.pdf

IGNORE THE LOGIN INFO BELOW

Registration for this opportunity is closed. Thank you for your interest.

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