

Curators' Incubator

(N.) [KYOO-REY-TERZ IN-KYUH-BEY-TER]

SEVENTH ANNUAL PROGRAM
MARYLAND ART PLACE
BALTIMORE

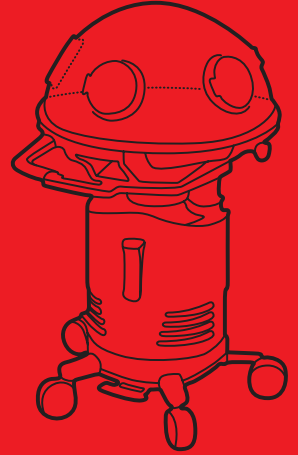


Figure 1. INCUBATOR

1. a creative space in which aspiring art curators **SHELLY BLAKE-PLOCK**, **RACHEL SITKIN** and **MARGARET WINSLOW** are encouraged to present their concepts.

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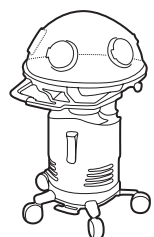
2. a mentoring environment where the probability of success is optimized.

.....

3. a communal platform for three inventive exhibitions.



figure 11.
Kim Beck
GO!!!
found boxes, acrylic
2009
dimensions varied



OUR SEVENTH ANNUAL CURATORS' INCUBATOR PROGRAM renews the opportunity for Maryland Art Place to become a working laboratory for aesthetic experiments.

Curators' Incubator provides a creative space for the region's aspiring curators to develop and present their concepts. MAP guides the process, beginning with an open call that encourages proposals and ending in the presentation of selected projects. Along the way, MAP establishes a mentoring environment that optimizes the experience. MAP's Program Advisory Committee took on the review and selection of this year's curators and MAP staff facilitated the production of the exhibition and companion catalogue.

In 2009, we offer a communal platform for three inventive projects, including our first-ever sound art exhibition – *The Art of the Set-Up: Sound Objects as Artifacts*, curated by Shelly Blake-Plock. Rachel Sitkin conceived *In Our Nature: Artists Reflect on the Altered Landscape* to feature artists who mine the outfall of urban development. Margaret Winslow's idea materializes in *Soft Space: Architecture in Contemporary Art*, a set of drawings and installations that explore physical and psychological nuances in the built environment.

We hope that participation in the Curators' Incubator program will enhance the potential of these new curators. Congratulations, Shelly, Rachel and Margaret. Here's to your present and future triumphs!

CATHY BYRD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SEPTEMBER 2009

Curators' Incubator

(N.) [KYOO-REY-TERZ IN-KYUH-BEY-TER]

SEPTEMBER 15 – OCTOBER 24, 2009

04 SHELLY BLAKE-PLOCK

ART OF THE SET-UP:

SOUND OBJECTS AS ARTIFACTS

Assemblages consider the archeology of sound.

**Peter Blasser. Alessandro Bosetti. Andy Hayleck.
Bonnie Jones. Melissa Moore. Mike Muniak.**

14 RACHEL SITKIN

IN OUR NATURE:

ARTISTS REFLECT ON THE MANMADE LANDSCAPE

Art finds beauty in eco-systems.

**Kim Beck. Laura Cooperman. Michelle Hagewood.
Alex Lukas. Igor Pasternak.**

22 MARGARET WINSLOW

SOFT SPACE:

ARCHITECTURE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Silhouettes and constructions enter domestic space.

Ronald Longsdorf. Janell Olah. Stephen Ruszkowski.

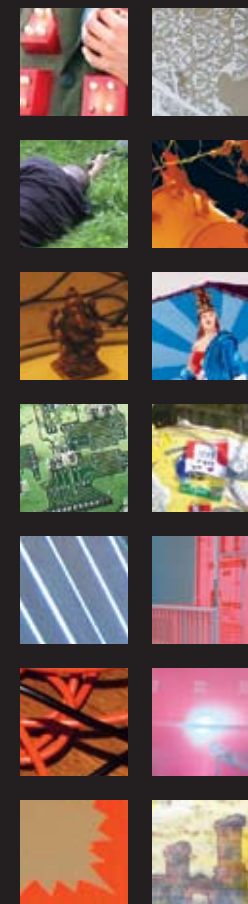


figure 7.
Mike Muniak
SET-UP
mixed objects and electronics
2009
dimensions varied



SHELLY BLAKE-PLOCK

ART OF THE SET-UP: SOUND OBJECTS AS ARTIFACTS

It is the problem of Essentialism that clouds our view of the beautiful. In social situations where speech must be scripted to be literature, automobiles serve only the function of transportation, and kitchen utensils are nothing more than potential murder weapons, one finds a lack of appreciation for the possibility evident in all created things.

For though we live in a post-Essential world – A world of design and useless wonder... Wonder for its own sake... Wonder as process ... As divine ... As uselessly necessary and therefore necessary and vital and life-giving – nonetheless we tend to allow our preconceptions of purpose to cloud even our ability to Be.

To Be Heard . To Be Viewed .

And thus to be analyzed and to further human thought. Unless not. But, we can look nonetheless.

This, for example, is an exhibition where we shall look at things made to make sound . Not to hear, but to look. For what are ears if not the best way to see things and what are eyes if not ...

This is an exhibition for / of viewing. Viewing artist-created and imbued objects, devices, and ritual formulations that otherwise would essentially be understood primarily as sound production objects; that is, as the instrument and not as the art. But, as any fair luthier would have you recognize: the instrument is art itself. And the artist is the instrument. Even, or perhaps especially, when the instrument is more a device, a third arm, a purveyor of familiar / alien speech, grunts, love, and fortitude and the artist is something / someone who makes something that makes something. SOMETHING MADE TO BE PLAYED BY ITS OWN CREATOR. SOMETHING CREATED TO BE CREATOR.

Wholly able (and why not?) to stand in a room silently. Oh, ears tempted by eyes!

The goal here is not to focus on the sound product as the most crucial aspect of the sound art creation / creating-device, but rather to present something of the anthropological context of utility while maintaining the true focus of the audience on the visual aspect of the assemblage itself.

And so these six artists – **Peter Blasser, Alessandro Bosetti, Andy Hayleck, Bonnie Jones, Melissa Moore, and Mike Muniak** – each share an appreciation for the way in which the essential is assumed. Primarily as sound artists, each one creates his or her own instrument, assemblage, or technique of devices and sonic situations – one’s set-up, if you will – which in and of itself can be considered and understood as an aesthetic object in its own right. That is, as a physical object not unlike any sculptural assemblage.

PETER BLASSER ►

Just as the Stratocaster represented the Futurist-consumer idea of the 1950s Era of Plastics, surely do Blasser’s intuitive circuit-bending contraptions represent the present idea of what he calls ‘magic’ and which surely we recognize as the synergetic relationship between modern electronics and post-Duchamp-via-Beuys vision and environmental awareness / post-Schoenberg-via-Lou Harrison sound and environmental awareness (fig. 2). But Blasser’s work is not idle art-war; it rather is a work of devices – devices to be used in ecstatic exercise. His works are utile decorative sound arts in the best sense. And they are alchemical objects in the real sense: they exist in reference to the above and the below and are meant to respond to the being / motions of the player and the environment in which they reside in real time. They are extensions of nervous systems. To view them in idle form is to look into a geometric dissection of the essential.

Bosetti’s development of devices and assemblages made for the purpose of reconfiguring language calls into question the necessity of essential communication just as his means of setting-up those questions through the creation of instruments and software often calls into question the essential meaning of how we are to relate to the art itself. Here, in his work using bees as sound producers, Bosetti redefines agriculture language and, in what can only be considered an ‘honest manipulation,’ reapplies aspects of landscape to the creation of sound art (fig. 3). Bosetti’s sound work disturbs in that it makes re-use of current experience; it takes the commonness of communication and distorts it to the point where sense is useless anyway. Used in such manner, the artifacts of his ephemeral sound situations – in this work, the hives – become ritual objects. They are artifacts of the making of sound art; set-ups defined by the purpose to which the environment was put.



figure 2.
Peter Blasser
DEERHORN TAPESTRY
mixed media
2009
dimensions varied



figure 3.
Alessandro Bosetti
BEE MEE (WHAT YOU SEE
IS WHAT YOU BEE)
single channel
video projection with
sound, beehive
2009
dimensions varied

figure 4.
Andy Hayleck
DRUM DRIVER
mixed media
2008
dimensions varied



ANDY HAYLECK ►

Demonstrating the process of the *set-up* most subtly is the work of Hayleck who displays a warts-and-all aesthetic ultimately as beautiful as an eloquent geometric proof or a serendipitous arrangement uncanny in its mimicry of particle physics (*fig. 4*). The blackboard is full of chalk and palimpsest erasures, but the beauty of the idea is ever more elucidated in its wake. So it is among the wires and percussive surfaces nudged by waves, urged by logo(s)-rhythms. The vibrations of vibration are the things of things. Were it not for the thing-i-ness of the things, Hayleck's work would be able to exist solely in the mind. But, his things do relate to, connect to, and observe other things. In this way, his is a worldly art.

Likewise, Jones' nodes and metal pens and scrapers and reconfigured delay-pedals suggest something of the physical more-so than anything but a drumstick or steak-knife ever should (*fig. 5*). The pedals themselves are mass-produced sound controlling objects which have been dissected, rearranged, and put to new purpose; the essential aspects of the original component now only seen in palimpsest as scars wrack the *set-up* and proffer the intent of individual artist as opposed to mass production 'purpose.' Her *set-up* suggests the items found in an office or an operating room where an indeterminable job bears itself out on a daily basis. It is the feeling of the practical being created by the sublime and in turn recreating the sublime into the necessary and obvious.

◀ BONNIE JONES

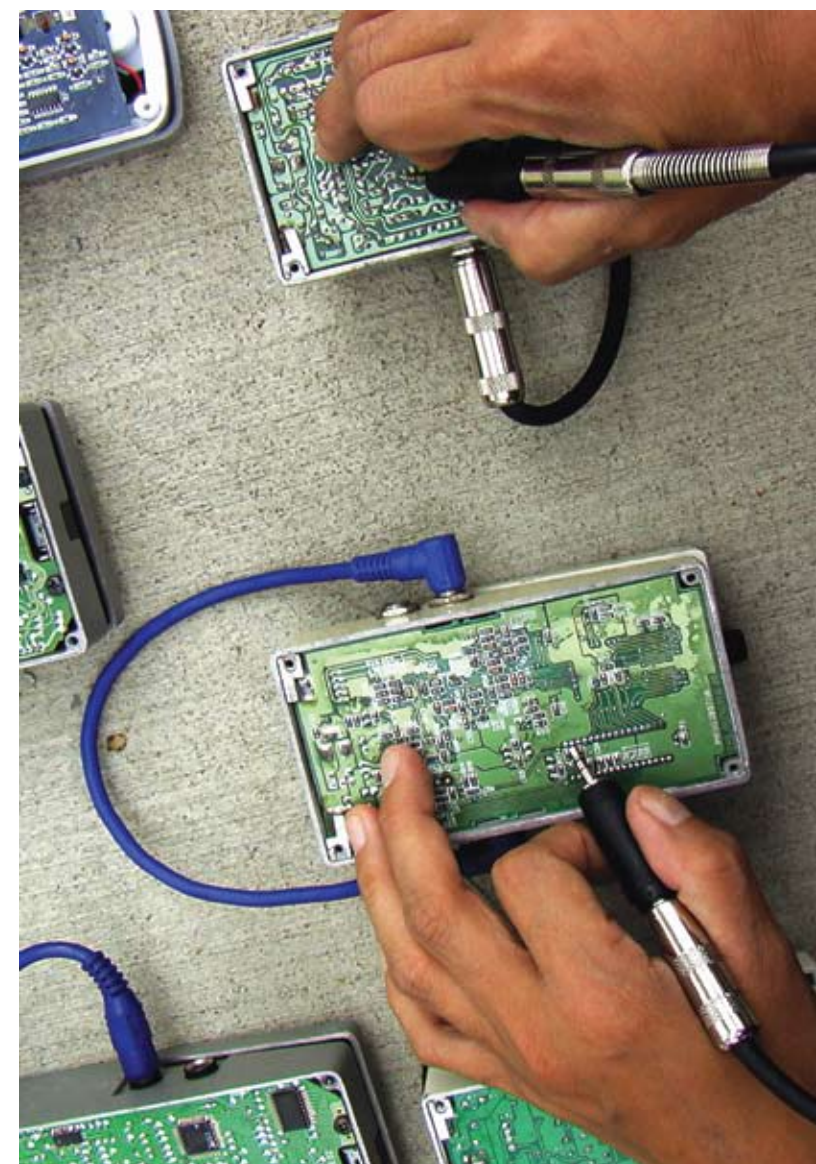


figure 5.
Bonnie Jones
DIGITAL DELAY PEDALS
electronics
2009
dimensions varied

Moore is the scientist, but she – like all of the others – has a bit of the alchemist in her. Creating useless yet necessary assemblages to produce sounds, her work is pure art: arbitrary in that it is entirely necessary. The empirical devotion of the essential disintegrates in the wash of Moore’s re-rendering of the microscopic and her jarring mash-up of genre-specific built instrument-environments (fig. 6). Here, Moore’s sound creating device takes on the sense of a bio-ecology in and of itself. Rather than create objects to create sound within an environment, she creates the environment itself.

figure 6.
Melissa Moore
PLMS (PATAPHYSICAL
LIFE-MIND SOCIETY)
STUDY SITE Q
mixed media
2009
dimensions varied



figure 7.
Mike Muniak
SET-UP (DETAIL)
mixed objects and electronics
2009
dimensions varied

On the other side of the spectrum is Muniak – the scientist who leaves his white coat in the lab and takes to the street, electronic daggers in hand. Literally an investigator of the auditory cortex, Muniak’s set-up is as designed and irreplaceable as customized lab equipment, yet is entirely comprised of mass-economy commercial objects (figs. 7, 8). Here he bends the rules of suggested usage – bending circuits and overloading what can only be overloaded because it was never meant to be overloaded. One hears a sizzle with the eyes.

◄ MIKE MUNIAK

All we know is set-up, really. From the urban grid to the plate-and-utensils, it is all a matter of intended consequences, and it all can be subverted. The devices of subversion we consider in this exhibit, though often prerequisite for art making, are to be analyzed in terms of how they comprise an / the Art itself.

Curator + Artist Biographies

Shelly Blake-Plock

CURATOR



Educated at Harvard and Johns Hopkins, Shelly Blake-Plock (b. 1974 R. Richard Wojewodzki) lives in a very old house along the Patapsco River with his wife and three children. Working at the intersection of the arts, organization, and education, Shelly has presented work widely in North America and Europe since 1995. He is an alumnus of Dala-Floda's Hagenfesten, and has presented at Peabody Conservatory, FFMUP at Princeton University, and Baltimore's Artscape. He is a member of the Red Room Collective and the board of the High Zero Foundation and since 2003 has taught at the John Carroll School where he is an instructor in the Department of Fine Arts working to merge social technology and education. As well, Shelly is an associate with Public Health Music, a Stockholm-based non-profit which combines experimental music and sound art with advocacy for children's rights.

Peter Blasser

ARTIST



Peter Blasser graduated from Oberlin College in 2002 and was awarded a Daniel Langlois Foundation grant for his project: "The Shinths: Intuitive Instruments for Touching Sound." His "Radio Windchimes" were featured in *The Marriage of Art, Science and Philosophy* at The American Visionary Art Museum and he has lectured and presented at RISD, MICA, Evergreen, CalArts, UC Davis, Wesleyan, Johns Hopkins, Marin County Waldorf School, and various charter schools in the DC / Baltimore area.

Alessandro Bosetti

ARTIST



Alessandro Bosetti is a composer and sound artist who was born in Milan, Italy in 1973. He works on the musicality of spoken words and unusual aspects of spoken communication. He has performed at the High Zero Festival and in numerous performance engagements worldwide and has been artist-in-residence at Amsterdam's STEIM as well as at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and EMS Studio in Stockholm. In addition to his interest in the musicality of communication, he is interested in travel. In 2006 alone, Alessandro worked and lived in West Africa, China, Taiwan, Holland, Scandinavia, the United States, Germany and Italy. In the future, he plans to be living and working between Berlin, Milan and Baltimore.

Andy Hayleck

ARTIST



A sound artist and musician living in Baltimore, Andy Hayleck worked as an assistant professor at MICA in the Video Department before joining the Imaging and Digital Arts MFA program at UMBC. He is a former artist-in-residence at STEIM, Amsterdam, Netherlands and has performed at the Seattle Improvised Music Festival, NoNet Festival, the High Zero Festival, the Olympia Experimental Music Festival, Sonic Circuits, and Brooklyn's I/O Festival. He is the creator of sound art pieces exhibited at DC's Warehouse Next Door and Baltimore's Artscape and has worked as a composer in

collaboration with Nicole Bindler, Bonnie Jones, Paul Neidhardt, and Jack Wright. Since 1999 he has produced several collections of recorded music and sound art including pieces for wire and gong and field recordings.

Bonnie Jones works with sound, text and performance. Born in 1977 in South Korea, she was raised by dairy farmers in New Jersey, and currently resides in Baltimore, MD. In sound performances, Bonnie plays the circuit boards of digital delay pedals. Her primary sound collaborators are Joe Foster in Korea (as the duet "English") and Andy Hayleck. She is also a member of the Performance Thanatology Research Society, an interdisciplinary performance group dedicated to the advancement of a higher histrionics brought on by imminent finalities. Bonnie has performed at the Kim Dae Hwan Museum, the Ontological-Hysterical Theater, the ErstQuake Festival, and the 14Karat Cabaret of Maryland Art Place.

Melissa Moore is a self-taught installation/sound artist and sculptor born in Washington DC in 1975. She is now based in Baltimore, MD. Awarded the 2008 Creative Baltimore Fund Individual Artist Grant, Moore has performed at the High Zero Festival and the Transmodern Age Experimental Performance Festival, and has presented work widely throughout the Mid-Atlantic with shows at Baltimore's AREA405 and Chesapeake Galleries, Richmond's Artspace Gallery, and both the Warehouse Gallery and Pyramid Atlantic in Washington DC. Her most recent pieces were included as part of Laure Drougou's *Radical Shacks* exhibition at Artscape and at SCarey Studios for the *Weirdo Nature Art Show* with Chiara Giovando, Jenny Graf Sheppard, Sejayno, and Erin Womack.

Mike Muniak is a neuroscientist earning his Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University. His research interests include the Auditory System, Auditory Cortex, Neurophysiology, and Neuroanatomy as well as Improvisation, Electronics, Feedback, and Photography. Since 2006, he has been working at the Ryugo Lab – Center for Hearing Sciences at JHU with Dr. David Ryugo, Principal Investigator in Neurophysiology on the anatomy of the awake rodent auditory cortex. He is also a musician and sound artist and has been a curating member of the *Red Room* concert series since 2001. He has performed at the High Zero Festival and the Transmodern Age Experimental Performance Festival and is a member of the Second Nature improvising orchestra.

Bonnie Jones

ARTIST



Melissa Moore

ARTIST



Mike Muniak

ARTIST



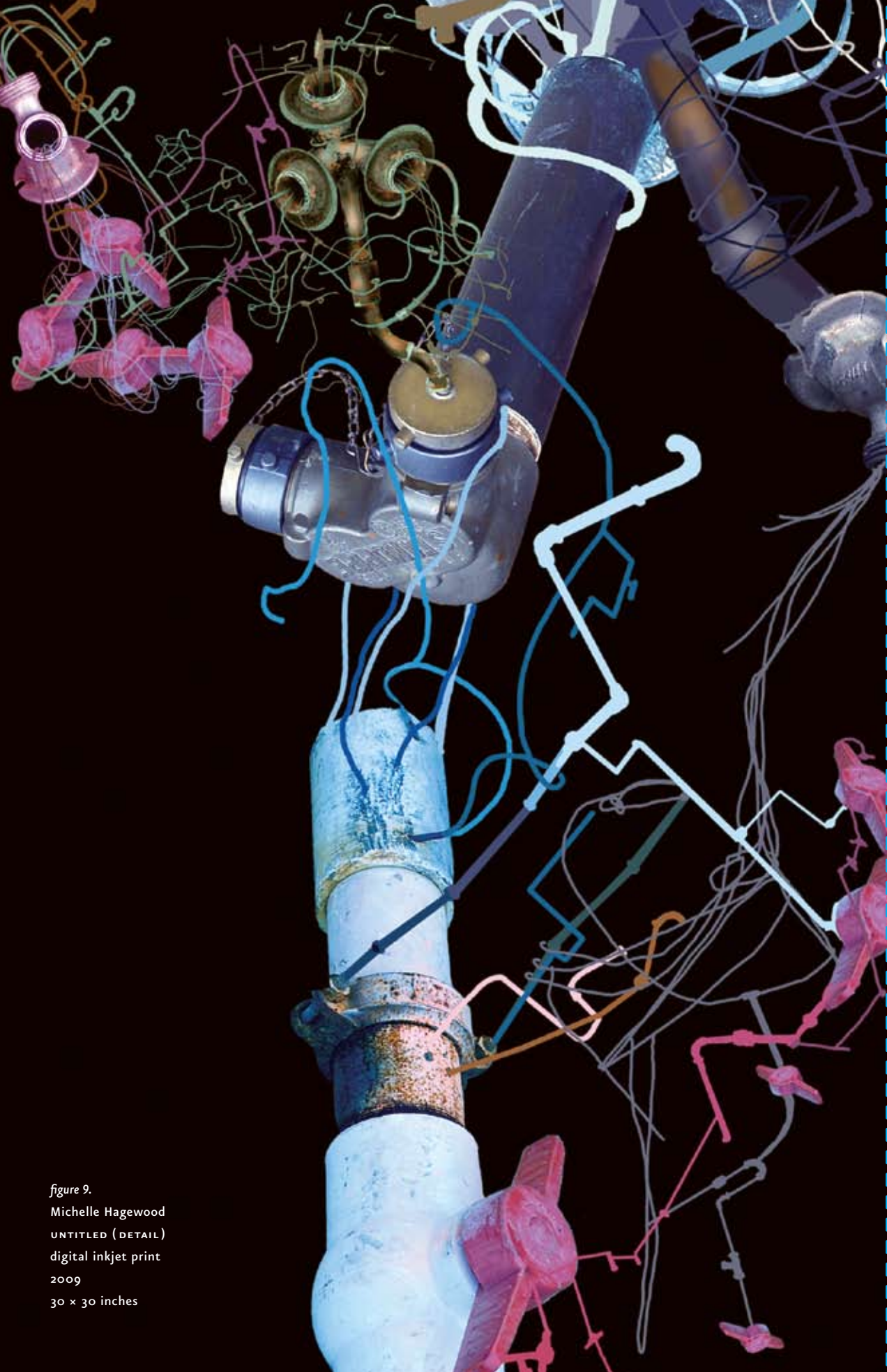


figure 9.
Michelle Hagewood
UNTITLED (DETAIL)
digital inkjet print
2009
30 x 30 inches

RACHEL SITKIN

IN OUR NATURE:

ARTISTS REFLECT ON THE MANMADE LANDSCAPE

Over the last few decades, the **climate change** phenomenon has become an increasingly important issue in our culture. The revelation that our day-to-day behavior is leaving an indelible mark on the planet – one that may result in an inhospitable world – has both heightened **anxiety** among our citizens and renewed our latent notions of obligatory stewardship.

Among visual artists, we see a revival of **landscape-inspired** work fed by the desire to explore our current relationship to the environment. They are **challenging** a culturally-rooted belief **in a pastoral ideal**, and applying new disciplines to approach what has traditionally been explored within the domain of painting. When we look at the world around us, we see that the modern American landscape barely resembles the idyllic scenes of 19th-century America depicted by the painters of The Hudson River School. Painters such as Thomas Cole and Asher Durand, along with their literary contemporaries, Ralph W. Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman helped to cement a “pastoral ideal” in the imagination of Americans. ▶

The landscapes that inspired those painters and writers – the dense deciduous forests of the Eastern Seaboard – were sacrificed long ago for the rolling hills of cultivated farms. By the 1960s, the farmland had made way for the sprawling suburban development now stretching uninterrupted from Washington, DC to Boston, Massachusetts. This is the landscape that pervades our collective psyche today.

As a curator, I found our altered landscape a rich theme – one in which I could explore eco-conscious content in contemporary art. The artists I selected for *In Our Nature* were born into a world already carved out by interstate highways and laced with billboards, strip malls, traffic lights and litter. This world holds their source material.

Though exploiting a range of media and processes, the work in this show stems from the tradition of romantic landscape painting. That painting genre emphasized the grandeur and simultaneous serenity of nature as a backdrop for human life. The Hudson River School painters were known for their exploration of Americans' individual and collective relationship to the land and for the questions they posed with regard to our moral direction as a society. Similarly, the five artists in this exhibition are depicting their local environments while looking critically at our contemporary relationship to the land.

Michelle Hagewood, Kim Beck, Igor Pasternak, Alex Lukas and Laura Cooperman share a desire to rewrite the existing narrative of eminent environmental disruption at the hands of man. These artists' conceptual images and objects offer unique critical commentary. Their vision is a world where man and land are reconciled, a place where the elements of industrialization are intrinsic to the land itself. Each of these artists presents the environment as they see it, revealing all of its man-made alterations. Yet their concerns do not manifest themselves in a purely cynical way. They show us the aesthetic value in what is often regarded as disruptive and offensive. They have found beauty in the parallel growth patterns of man-made structures and organic ones.

Long-time Baltimore-based artist Michelle Hagewood's recent series of digital drawings reveals miraculous possibilities. Informed by modern scientific techniques like gene splicing, grafting and robotics, Hagewood has imagined what could come of the intermingling of industrial materials and organic ones (figs. 9, 10). A familiar site in the back alleys of Baltimore is the telephone pole covered in hearty weeds, vinelike tendrils winding clear up the trunk then inching out along the power lines. Then, there is the vacant row home still sheltering the now dry pipes within its skeletal remains. In Hagewood's quirky yet elegant images, often overlooked components of the urban landscape are transformed into autonomous living creatures, stretching and growing into hybrid species with both organic and man-made traits.

◀ MICHELLE HAGEWOOD



figure 10.
Michelle Hagewood
UNTITLED (DETAIL)
digital inkjet print
2009
30 × 30 inches

Kim Beck's new work is a product of her recent residency at the Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation's Space Program in Brooklyn, NY. Inspired by the explosion of liquidation and for-sale signage that has decorated her neighborhood in recent months, *GO!!!*, 2009, illustrates how the contemporary landscape reflects cultural changes (fig. 11). In this instance, the change in scenery was immediate, as the merchants of Brooklyn were impacted by the economic downturn. The assemblage of found cardboard boxes painted with vivid symbols of the current economic crisis is not a literal depiction of the view out her window, but rather an interpretation of the mounting anxiety seen and felt around her.

Beck also creates observational drawings. The four panels that make up her *Parking Lot Island Series*, 2008, document the parceled segments of nature found in the commercial zones of suburbia (fig. 12). These delicate laser drawings use wood from the same trees that they depict. Considered suitable to the urban setting because of their small stature and decorative bark, birches in their native environment are found lining gentle waterways, streams and rivers. Here, we see them transplanted and given new purpose, installed as "nature" in an otherwise lifeless parking lot, a lot that had no doubt been paved after the removal of native growth.

figure 12.
Kim Beck
PARKING LOT ISLAND SERIES
laser cut on birch ply
2008
12 x 12 inches



figure 13.
Igor Pasternak
EL MUNDO DE LA BASURA
jumbo happy-face ball,
street trash, video
2009
dimensions varied

With *El Mundo de la Basura*, 2009, Igor Pasternak uses humor to make a statement about the aesthetics of litter and the public's tolerance of it as a characteristic of the urban landscape (fig. 13). On April 24, 2009, he and his wife, Sveta, inflated a Jumbo Happy Face Ball, covered it in clear sticky tape and began rolling it around their northwest Washington, DC neighborhood. The ball has become an archaeological artifact of its journey along a dozen city blocks, its surface now a painting made by the litter collected along the way. *El Mundo's* companion video illuminates not only the process of the ball's creation, but also various responses to the performative project by Pasternak's neighbors. Many people were pleased with his humorous approach to "trash collection." The piece was given its name when one Hispanic man called out "El Mundo de la Basura!" (World of Trash!) as the ball rolled by him. Along the way, several parents took the opportunity to give their children an anti-littering lecture and Pasternak experienced a rare occasion of people cheering and smiling at street trash.

ALEX LUKAS ►

On the other hand, Alex Lukas' paintings are definitively pessimistic. In his recent work, Lukas has chosen to explore the anxiety that many of us feel when we consider the fate of an ecologically doomed planet. He also explores the environmental devastation caused by war. His luscious mixed media paintings depict the aftermath of the battle lost; the waving grasses and distant dissipating smoke are indicative of our environmental abuse. Humans have fled the scene, leaving behind rusting vehicles, crumbling buildings, and deteriorating roadways (fig. 14). Lukas' paintings are warnings of what our once idyllic land could become if we continue to overlook our obligation to preserve what remains of our precious environment.

LAURA COOPERMAN ►

During the course of the last year, Laura Cooperman traveled extensively. In each new place, she created a collection of cut paper drawings depicting the specific architectural landscape she found there. For *In Our Nature*, Cooperman has assembled these cut paper elements into amalgamated landscapes of China, New York City and her current home, Cleveland, Ohio (fig. 15). These "drawings" reference the loss of localized meaning in contemporary landscapes as a byproduct of globalization. Designs as well as plants and commercial products from different cultures find themselves pieced together in a new environment with new meaning and purpose attached. In the combining process, Cooperman reveals a world that has grown smaller and more homogenized. There is a positive aesthetic outcome; these cultural mash-ups are quite stunning. The disparate elements are carefully connected by telephone wires, satellite signals and the artist's imagination.

There is no going back to the pristine American landscape of the 19th century. However, I believe that a notion of the pastoral ideal and a sense of obligation to protect and revere our natural resources remain a strong component of our cultural identity. As we struggle to find a balance between human progress and environmental preservation, these artists remind us of the myriad forms that our relationship with nature could take. The natural world can continue to be seen as a backdrop for human evolution or, instead, as integral to our existence and progress. Through expressions of beauty, invention, fear and humor, the artists of *In Our Nature* offer new ways of seeing our place in the landscape. They show that when we thoughtfully consider our relationship to the land, a panorama of fresh possibilities is illuminated before us.



figure 14.
Alex Lukas
UNTITLED (DETAIL)
ink, acrylic, watercolor,
gouache and silk screen
2009
38 × 50 inches

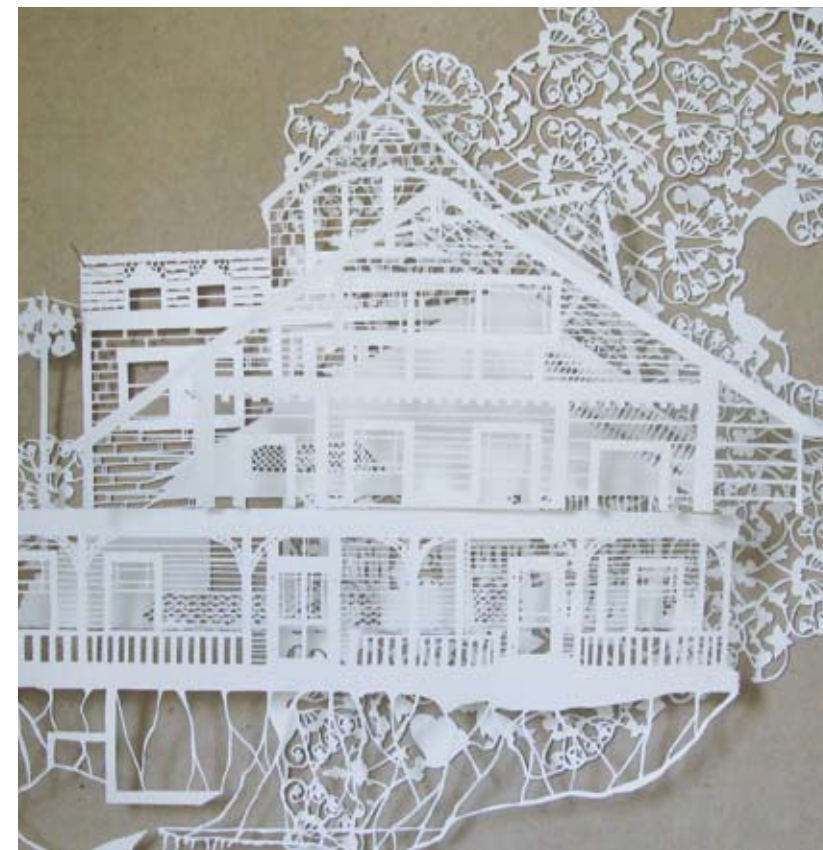


figure 15.
Laura Cooperman
UNTITLED (DETAIL)
hand cut paper
2009
37 × 44 inches

Curator + Artist Biographies

Rachel Sitkin

CURATOR



Rachel Sitkin was born in Dothan, Alabama and raised outside Philadelphia. She received her BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in 2002 and has been based in Baltimore since. With a cultivated appreciation for the outdoors, Sitkin focuses both her painting and curatorial practice on the relationship between the natural and the man-made, specifically man's imprint on the natural. The artist curator has exhibited her work in Baltimore, Washington DC, Burlington, VT, and Cortona, Italy. She was a founding member of Current Gallery, Baltimore, from 2004-2007. Sitkin was a semi-finalist for the 2009 Trawick Prize and a 2009 recipient of the Babs Van Swearingen Graduate Scholarship. She is currently working towards her MFA from American University in Washington, DC.

Kim Beck

ARTIST



Kim Beck grew up in Colorado and currently lives and works in Pittsburgh and New York. She has exhibited widely including at the Walker Art Center, the Carnegie Museum of Art, Smack Mellon, Socrates Sculpture Park, and Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center. During the Spring and Summer of 2009, she participated in the Space Program with the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation. She has held other residencies at Yaddo, International Studio & Curatorial Program, Cité Internationale des Arts, Vermont Studio Center, and VCCA. She has received awards and fellowships from ARS Electronica, the Pollock-Krasner, Thomas J. Watson and Heinz Foundations. Her artist's book, *A Field Guide to Weeds*, was published through the Printed Matter Emerging Artist Publishing Program and is in its second edition. She received her MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and BA from Brandeis University.

Laura Cooperman

ARTIST



Laura Cooperman was born in Cleveland, Ohio into a family of architects and raised a short walk from the buildings her father and grandfather helped to design. Since childhood she has been interested in the sculpting of living space and its affects on the human psyche. In 2004, she graduated with a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. She has received scholarships and grants to study abroad in Italy and China and participated in a studio program in New York City. She currently lives and works in Ohio.

Michelle Hagewood

ARTIST



Michelle Hagewood uses photographic, sculptural, computer-based, and traditional drawing mediums as a way to depict and navigate physical, theoretical, and imaginary visions of the world. These are often simultaneous explorations of worlds that are to come, that have passed, or that are in a state of being formed. Within the works, she uses line to refer to both organic and architecturally constructed growth and as a way to play

with linear and non-linear paths – labyrinths that the wanderer must follow in order to understand the spaces. Michelle grew up in Tennessee and currently lives and works in Baltimore. She received her BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in 2002 and her MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts in 2009. She is currently a resident artist at The Creative Alliance in Patterson Park, Baltimore.

Alex Lukas was born in Boston, Massachusetts and raised in nearby Cambridge. His imprint, Cantab Publishing, has released over 30 small books and 'zines since its inception in 2001. In 2005, Lukas won Tokion Magazine's "King of 'Zine" competition for his experimental 'zine *Smashy Smash*. Lukas' drawings have been exhibited in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, London, Stockholm and Copenhagen as well as in the pages of *Swindle Quarterly*, *Proximity Magazine*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Village Voice*, the *Drama*, and the *New York Times Book Review*. He has contributed writings to *Apenest*, *Juxtapoz*, Providence's *The Agenda* newspaper and *Swindle*, and has lectured at the Philadelphia Print Center and the Megawords Storefront. He recently authored the booklet *Underneath Providence, Findings Thus Far*, a history of the East Side Railroad Tunnel in Providence, Rhode Island, co-published with Free News Projects. Lukas is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of design and now lives in Philadelphia, where he is a member of the artist collective Space 1026.

Igor Pasternak was born in Odessa, Ukraine. He received his BFA in painting from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks and recently completed his MFA at American University in Washington, DC. Over the last two years he has expanded his practice from a focus primarily on painting and collage to include multi-media installations with elements of performance and high-level audience participation. His work utilizes the surface archeology of the city to create painting and sculpture and urges the viewer to reconsider the everyday materials we discard. In 2009, he was the recipient of the Catharina Baart Biddle Art Award and a Mellon Fund Travel Grant for research in Guatemala, Honduras and Belize. He currently lives and works in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Alex Lukas

ARTIST



Igor Pasternak

ARTIST



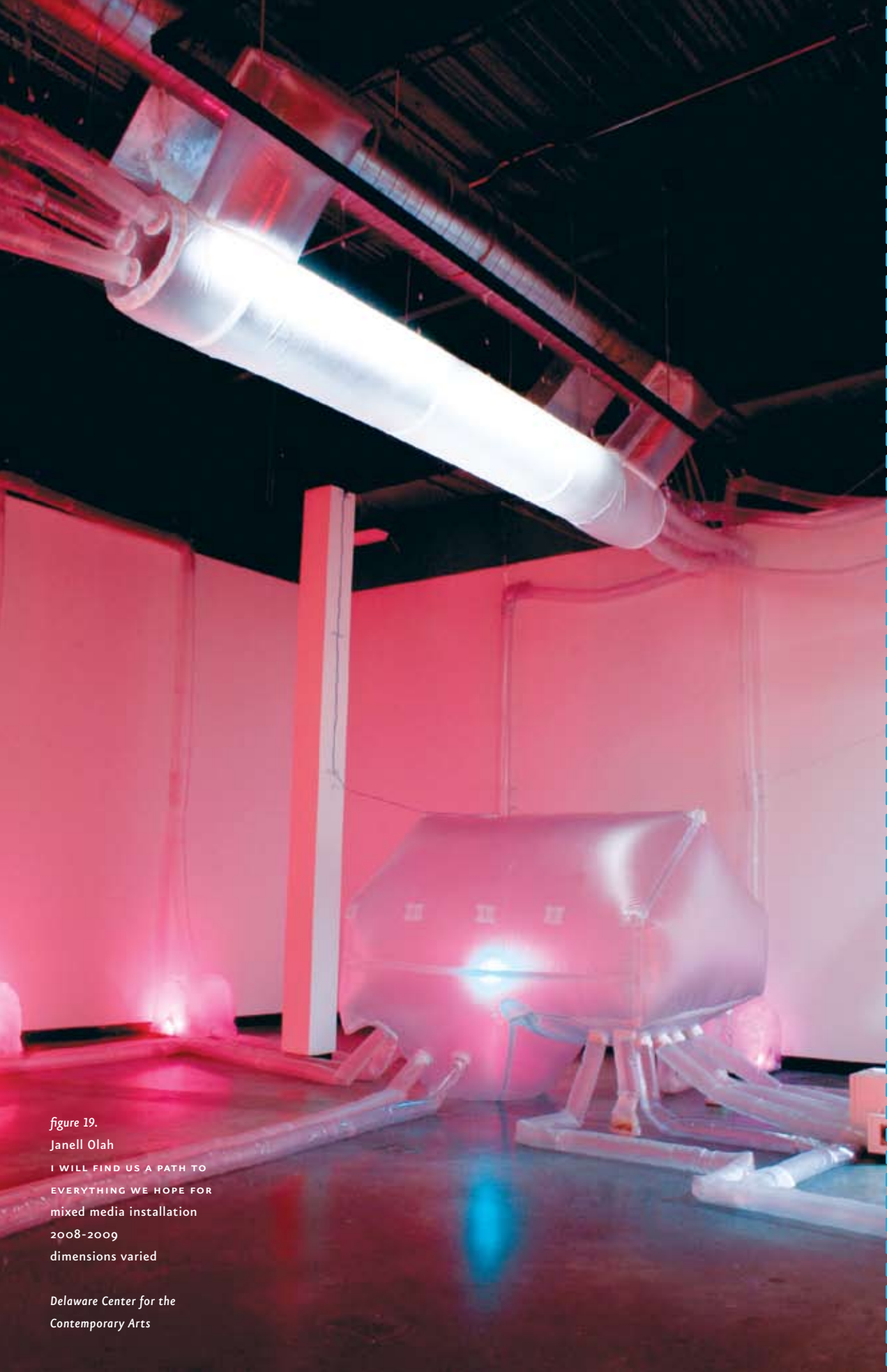


figure 19.
Janell Olah
I WILL FIND US A PATH TO
EVERYTHING WE HOPE FOR
mixed media installation
2008-2009
dimensions varied

Delaware Center for the
Contemporary Arts

MARGARET WINSLOW

SOFT SPACE:

ARCHITECTURE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Recent trends in the United States' economic environment have forced the population to focus on housing – its availability, its construction, its demolition – and the **meaning of home**. Topics of headline news and political debates, these issues have made their way through **popular culture** into contemporary artistic practice. For the summer 2009 exhibition at the Queens Museum, *Red Lines Crisis Housing Learning Center*, artist Damon Rich co-opted the 1964 architectural model *Panorama of the City of New York* to show the effects of subprime lending on neighborhoods throughout the city. Rich demonstrated the spread and socio-political implications of the recent crisis by placing colored triangles on foreclosed homes.

Soft Space traces a more recently observed movement in contemporary **art that incorporates** various aspects of **domestic and industrial architecture** into drawing, painting and sculpture. This exhibition is an opportunity to examine the space in which one lives or works can inform the themes, images and materials of artmaking .

Representations of this interest in the structure of personal space include **Stephen Ruszkowski's** painted silhouettes of historic Delaware homes, **Ronald Longsdorf's** use of construction materials, and the complex soft sculptures by **Janell Olah** that feed off the Maryland Art Place gallery's HVAC system.

STEPHEN RUSZKOWSKI ▶

Ruszkowski explores a sense of place in abstract paintings that recall the Dutch Baroque works of Jacob van Ruisdael and the English Romantic, J. M. W. Turner. His vibrant palette and gestural brushwork are paired with extensive research into historic Delaware homes and mills, those standing and some no longer extant (figs. 16, 17). A large part of his artistic practice occurs outside the studio; Ruszkowski spends time in centers for historical societies and in library archives, and investigates online photography databases. The images on which the paintings are based are, in fact, some of the only documentation of these homes, mills, taverns, barns, and outbuildings.

Ruszkowski explains that finding the photograph, appropriating and altering the image, and lastly, executing the painting affords him the opportunity to deeply understand the structure. In a sense, he is recreating the building – working with two-dimensional images of three-dimensional structures to re-envision how a building stood in the landscape. Ruszkowski addresses the loss of these historically significant structures – the impermanence of seemingly solid structures – by softening each building's architectural details. Formally, the paintings are reminiscent of film stills or blurry, sepia-toned photographs. That aesthetic aligns closely with the nostalgia imbued in the work. Ruszkowski notes his intent to “strike a balance between the psychology and romanticism inherent in this subject.”¹

While the incorporation of architecture into drawing and painting has occupied a traditional place in the visual arts, sculpture began to explore architectural tropes as recently as the mid-1960s. In her seminal 1979 essay on understanding post-modernist sculpture, art historian Rosalind Krauss references artist Bruce Nauman's installations. She writes about his narrow corridors with TV monitors at each end, as indicators of a shift in understanding the term “sculpture.”² Krauss begins to establish a classification of sculpture in the space between landscape, architecture and their negatives (not-landscape

and not-architecture) by outlining an expanded look at the historical definition of sculpture as commemorative monument or self-referential modernist form. When “sculpture reaches downward to absorb the pedestal into itself and away from actual place; and through the representation of its own materials or the process of its construction,” Krauss argues, “the sculpture depicts its own autonomy.”³ Her reasoning allows for a broader range of possibilities—for a practice “not defined in relation to a given medium – sculpture – but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium – photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself – might be used.”⁴ This is that space into which Longsdorf's and Olah's work falls – between architecture and not-architecture.



figure 16.
Stephen Ruszkowski
RICHARDSON HOUSE
acrylic, cut paper and
graphite on birch panel
2008
20 x 16 inches

Longsdorf makes use of common building materials – pink insulation foam, Tyvek, and wood – to alter existing objects and create sculptures that examine the intricacies of personal relationships. His medium recalls the incorporation of industrial materials such as concrete, steel, and wood by artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Artists including Robert Morris, Richard Serra, and Robert Smithson complicated the traditional connotations of “artist” by shifting from a focus on craft and technique to assemblage and construction. Longsdorf uses the same industrial processes to create forms that express the psychology of domestic spaces.

figure 18.
Ronald Longsdorf
I SAW OUR FUTURE THAT DAY
Polystyrene, wall studs,
floodlights, DMX lighting
system, MAX/MSP software,
motion sensor
2009
10 x 10 x 6 feet

This work is made possible by a grant from the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency dedicated to nurturing and supporting the arts in Delaware, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts.



Longsdorf's work is firmly rooted in his exploration of self, place and human interaction. His theatrical sculptures are mainly autobiographical and, like a character with a distinct personality, inhabit the gallery space. In his installation *I saw our future that day*, 2009, Longsdorf constructs a nonfunctional space. The pink front porch and projected path of the rising sun evoke a stage set that might represent the moment when one person imagines a future with another. Longsdorf notes that the work is “about that moment of sharing a sunrise with someone” and envisioning a life together.⁵ This work signals literally the optimistic start of a relationship. There is an implied invitation to climb the steps and stand on the porch. According to the artist, his “absurd situational sculpture” suspends time, and allows both spectator and artist to replay a moment from the past.⁶

Like Longsdorf, Olah is “interested in how surroundings affect their inhabitants, physically and psychologically.”⁷ Recalling Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures and Tim Hawkinson's transparent kinetic and organic forms, Olah's installations form symbiotic relationships with the rooms and buildings they inhabit – feeding off ductwork, air systems, or supporting structures (fig. 19). Olah's work occupies a domain between architecture and non-architecture. Hers are among those innovative structures that Krauss described; they intervene in the real space of architecture.⁸ Her seemingly living and breathing habitats highlight the building's often-disguised infrastructure. The pods, tubing, and soft light in the artist's installations create an incubative atmosphere. It is here that Olah begins to allude to what she calls the “personal navigation of one's own life.”⁹ The titles of her work – (*you might have to think about how you got started working*) *In your little room*, 2006, *I'm not coming out until this is all over*, 2006, and *I will find us a path to everything we hope for*, 2008-2009 – connect those individual narratives to the physical systems typically hidden inside the walls, ceilings or floors of an industrial complex. Olah's sculptures expose how the sometimes awkward paths through which heating, water and electricity pass might well represent the convoluted communication of thoughts and emotions.

The common thread that runs through Ruszkowski's, Longsdorf's, and Olah's art is the investigation of the physical and psychological sense of architectural space. There are a multitude of other realities that could be considered when looking at the artists' work, including the demolition of historic vernacular architecture for new housing developments and the gendering of domestic interiors. These concerns are undeniably part of the collective conscience and help to further locate the work within its social, political, and art historical context. At the same time, they stretch past this exhibition's effort to understand the artists' more basic intentions – their focus on architectural structures as a way to shape what Longsdorf describes as a “personal response to the world.”¹⁰ *Soft Space* reveals the inherent elasticity of personal and societal influences, motivations and manifestations in the place between art and architecture.

- 1 Stephen Ruszkowski, Artist Statement, 2009.
- 2 Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” October 8 (Spring 1979), 30.
- 3 Ibid, 34.
- 4 Ibid, 42.
- 5 Ronald Longsdorf, Conversation with the artist, May 5, 2009.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Janell Olah, Artist Statement, 2008.
- 8 Krauss, 41.
- 9 Olah, Artist Statement, 2009.
- 10 Longsdorf, Artist Statement, 2009.

figure 17.
Stephen Ruszkowski
ROOFTOPS
acrylic, pen and watercolor
on paper mounted on panel
2008
6 x 16 inches



Curator + Artist Biographies

Margaret Winslow is an independent curator and art historian. Her research and current area of focus is on art since 1945. She has curated for the Neuberger Museum of Art, assisted with exhibits for the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, worked previously at the Delaware Art Museum, and is the Curator for the New Wilmington Art Association. Margaret holds an MA in Modern and Contemporary Art, Theory and Criticism from SUNY Purchase College and a BA from Mary Washington College. She currently lives in Wilmington, DE and works at the Delaware Humanities Forum.

Margaret Winslow
CURATOR



Ronald Longsdorf is an artist and independent curator who lives and works in Wilmington, DE. His autobiographical sculptures explore a sense of self, place, and human interaction. He has exhibited in Delaware; State College, PA; Lexington, KY; Brooklyn, NY; Arlington, VA; Minneapolis, MN; and Berlin, Germany. In 2007 and 2008, Ron attended residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and Art Farm in Nebraska. In 2009, he received an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Delaware Division of the Arts and attended a residency at Elsewhere Artist Collaborative in Greensboro, NC. Ron holds an MFA from the University of Delaware and a BFA from Pennsylvania State University.

Ronald Longsdorf
ARTIST



Janell Olah is an artist who currently lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. Her installations form symbiotic relationships with the rooms and buildings they inhabit, and often reference the artist's personal life. She has exhibited in Delaware; Lancaster and Philadelphia, PA; Brooklyn, NY; London; and Italy. Janell attended residencies at the Vermont Studio Center in 2002 and the Cooper Union School of Art in 2007, and has received numerous awards and honors. She holds an MFA from the University of Delaware and a BFA from Millersville University.

Janell Olah
ARTIST



Stephen Ruszkowski currently lives and works in Wilmington, DE. His work is heavily informed by his extensive research of historic Delaware architecture. He has been the Exhibition Designer / Preparator at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts since 2005 and has previously worked at several museums in the region. Stephen has exhibited in Delaware; Virginia; Philadelphia, and York, PA. In 2009, he received an Emerging Artist Fellowship from the Delaware Division of the Arts. Stephen holds a BFA in Painting from the University of Delaware.

Stephen Ruszkowski
ARTIST



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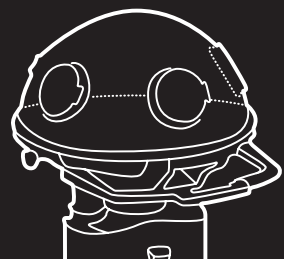
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Maryland Art Place (MAP) is a not-for-profit center for contemporary art established in 1981 to: develop and maintain a dynamic environment for artists to exhibit their work, nurture and promote new ideas and new forms, and facilitate rewarding exchanges between artists and the public through educational leadership. In addition to presenting an average of ten exhibitions annually in its downtown gallery space, MAP organizes traveling exhibitions, and offers a variety of educational and performance opportunities.

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