SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK
2001 EMERGING ARTIST FELLOWSHIP EXHIBITION
SEPTEMBER 23, 2001 – APRIL 14, 2002

KATRIN ASBURY & SHAWN GREENE
SANFORD BIGGERS
THE E-TEAM
LARS-ERIK FISK
FRANK J. MEUSCHKE
ALAN WIENER
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INTRODUCTION

The Emerging Artist Fellowship Program, initially proposed by Eve Sussman and Maria Mingalone, was established by Kathleen Gilrain in 1996 as an extension of the Park’s Exhibition and Studio Programs. The Fellowships were made possible by a generous grant from the Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund of the New York Community Trust who, with the Jerome Foundation, have continued to be sustaining supporters of the EAF Program.

As a sculptor, Kathleen recognized that most emerging artists have little or no access to the space and facilities required to realize large-scale public installations, especially with the challenges of New York City’s expensive real estate market and high cost of living. The EAF Program was founded as a means to support young, New York based sculptors in the creation and presentation of their work. The Fellowships include a financial grant, as well as studio space and an exhibition opportunity in the Park.

In the past, the works that the Fellows created during their residency at Socrates were included in one of two general group exhibitions that the Park has mounted each spring and fall. With the opening of this exhibition, Socrates introduced the first step in a restructuring of the Exhibition Program. Rather than including the Fellows’ works in large thematic group shows, the EAF exhibition has become its own annual show – scheduled to take place each September—to better showcase the talents of artists whose careers are in the early stages of development. The EAF recipients now have access to the outdoor studio throughout the spring and summer, allowing them more time and better working conditions to prepare for their exhibition.

Socrates Sculpture Park is grateful to the many people who have contributed to the development of the Emerging Artist Fellowship Program. Their dedication and support have allowed us to give artists a chance to experiment and take risks with their work, realize innovative and ambitious projects, work within a community that is supportive and encouraging, and exhibit in an open, professional forum. Their partnership has made the evolution of this program possible, has sustained many artists at critical points in their careers, and has helped make Socrates one of the most vital art centers and artist residency programs in the world.

EMERGING ARTIST FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS 1996 – 2000

1996
Renee Kildow
Sol Sax
Suzy Sureck
Kazumi Tanaka & George Mansfield

1997
Chakaia Booker
Luisa Caldwell
Esperanza Cortés
Karl Jensen
Monika Kulicka
Nina Levy
Ian McLaughlin
Margie Neuhaus
Michael Richards
Marsha Trattner

1998
David Baskin
Miggy Buck
James Huang
Wendy Klemperer
Christopher Lesnewski
Vallessa Monk
Alissa Neglia
Ward Shelly

1999
Mathieu Borysevicz
Nancy Goldenberg
Sook Jin Jo
Yoshiko Kanai
Douglas Ross
Howard Schwartzberg
Dread Scott
Kazuaki Sugi

2000
Robert Caldwell
Beth Campbell
Peter Gould
Susan Griswold
Tom Kotik
Abby Pervil
Eliza Proctor
Augustine Romero
THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE

by Valerie Smith

In a city bursting with gallery opportunities for artists, the chance to make a sculpture or create an environment outdoors is rare. Ever since its inauguration in 2001, the Emerging Artists Fellowship Program at Socrates Sculpture Park has given young artists an occasion to try their hand at designing a work for the open, and if there is one thing that most artists want it is an invitation to make new work for an exhibition with all expenses paid! It doesn’t get much better than that.

One year into my tenure in Queens I was thrilled to join the team of advisors for the first fellowship recipients at Socrates. Well conditioned by years of reviewing slides for the Selections exhibitions from Artists Space’s Slide File and watching their success grow in gallops, I am a big advocate of the slide (now CD and DVD) review process and take up all invitations to review. Akin to art fairs in sheer quantity, only democratic, it is still one of the best concentrated ways of seeing what is out there. The proof: the EAF Program has nearly quadrupled since 2001. From a judge’s point of view, to share a little free lunch with some new found friends, gossip about the absurdities of the art world and exercise your eyes and strong opinions, to say nothing of the weird and wacky proposals, but always interesting ideas you will see, is a wonderful way to spend the day.

In the end, you have done a great service and accomplished more than you might have had you stayed in the office. The sense of satisfaction knowing you have given a coveted spot to a newly discovered talent has its benefits. Years later, when that talent becomes rich and famous, Socrates will love you for the choices you made and forget what a pain in the butt the artist was, especially when he or she returns to their humble origins on the banks of the East River to lend their brilliance and hopefully their wealth to the place, simply because Socrates was the first to recognize their genius. This is the best scenario. Better still, the Emerging Artist Fellowship Program builds community around Socrates. From a selected emerging artist emerges a Socrates devotee, then acolytes and groupies follow—a fertile family of friends who will apply next year to try and get lucky, too!

After the judges have done their jobs and gone home, the real work begins. Behind the scenes, an enormous network of connections and favors, research and returns is set in motion. Outside, in the Park, the artist meets the challenges and reconciles inevitable opposing forces: the idea and its realization. Diplomatic skills come in handy as compromise is key to a solution. The weather wins the argument over materials used. Finally, the context in which the work is placed, for instance, on the grass, up a tree, in the air, on the water or in the earth present just a few of the experiential problems that have an effect on the reading of the work. For the EAF artist, these are considerations most artists will never have to confront and ideally a new confidence in the public realm is achieved.

When we celebrate opening night at Socrates we toast, above all, the process: the exchange of ideas, the problem solving, the debate over materials and methods. People will whisper that some concepts are more "successful" than others, and they will have missed the point. Socrates is a haven for the learning curve, for risk taking, for the discussion about site and situation. This is what we should expect from sculpture in the Park. Far from the austere atmosphere of the gallery system, tucked away in a secluded part of Queens, Socrates was proud to be a pioneer on the fringes of the art world when it was founded on the social principles that guided many an artist initiated alternative space before it. Now, 20 years into its history it has emerged, along with many of us, as one of the hot spots to show in New York.
Situated on a landfill surrounded on one side by the East River and a mixed zone neighborhood of early public housing and industrial use on the other, the Park is more than a stop on the circuit for artists. It is a little paradise for residents and workers seeking temporary refuge from the rectangles that tend to box in all of our lives. What they will find unique at Socrates should instantly put them at ease, for the funkiness of the site—the absence of manicured lawns, the lack of fences on the Riverside, the rustic edged flower beds are signs of the causal and relaxed atmosphere of the Park. In 2001 we voted for a Christmas tree farm, a greenhouse, a formal object, a common object molded as a sphere, a Russian Space station, a break dancer's Mandala matt (a lot of round sculpture).

For many visitors, Socrates will be their first encounter with contemporary sculpture, let alone sculpture in the open air. The conceptual aspect of contemporary art can be abstract and intimidating to newcomers. Yet the interactive nature of many of the sculptures quickly dispels the necessity of an insider's perspective. The annual hut-like structures often produced by EAF awardees become regular teenager hangouts. Students identify with the surprise of what artists come up with next. The work may even inspire. Families arrive with their Lilliputians in tow, who crawl all over whatever volume is available to them. And, the odd couple uses the relative solitude of the Park to hide behind a sculpture for an occasional smooch or two. What better way to experience sculpture?
Assembled from decidedly non-high tech materials, such as plywood, vinyl, and roofing felt, this simulated Russian space capsule appears to have crash-landed in the Park. Inside this whimsical craft, are small personal objects—souvenirs that refer to the Russian and American collaborations in space—including a Matryoshka doll and black and white photographs. This is a homespun and remarkably poignant interpretation of the experience of living in space and returning to earth.
Made from a poured rubber surface most commonly used for city playgrounds, this installation serves as a performance space or stage for breakdancing. The form is based on a Buddhist mandala—a circular floor pattern used to establish a sacred space for meditation. Biggers' work often references hip-hop culture, Eastern spiritualism and urban culture.
This piece began in September as a neatly planted grid of 64 Douglas-fir trees. In December, the artists offered the trees for sale and were on site to assist and record their clients in the process of choosing and cutting a Christmas tree. After the trees were cut, the resulting installation of 64 stumps in a 60 x 60 square remained on view until the close of the exhibition.
Slum Ball is the most recent in a series of Fisk's works that celebrate the transformation of everyday forms. Here, he has compacted the functional and ornamental features of the distinctive Brooklyn brownstone into a concise sculpture that has been poised on raised ground near the water's edge.
A functioning greenhouse, this sculpture reflects the artist’s relationship to landscape, self and work. Meuschke filled this miniature tropical conservatory with common houseplants and tended to them throughout the duration of the exhibition, allowing tropical plants to thrive in the winter landscape.
This sculpture has been created by molding and pouring concrete to make both organic and geometric forms. These components are then assembled as interlocking parts similar to traditional woodworking joinery. The artist transfers the textures from the mold onto the surface of the object, creating a contrast between the solidified liquid pours on the interior and hard edges of the exterior.
EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

1. KATRIN ASBURY & SHAWN GREENE  pgs 6-7
   Soft Landing, 2001
   Plywood, vinyl, roofing felt, mylar and mixed media
   8' x 11' x 8'

2. SANFORD BIGGERS  pgs 8-9
   Terra Mandala, 2001
   Rubber and plastic
   30' in diameter

3. THE E-TEAM  pgs 10-11
   Christmas Tree Farm for Self-Cutters, 2001
   64 Douglas-fir trees
   7' x 56' x 56'

4. LARS-ERIK FISK  pgs 12-13
   Slum Ball, 2001
   Concrete and steel
   7' in diameter

   John Deere Ball, 2000
   Steel and cast iron
   54" in diameter

   UPS Ball, 1997
   Steel
   4' in diameter
   Collection of Chris Sharp

5. FRANK J. MEUSCHKE  pgs 14-15
   Husbandry (Interior Landscape), 2001
   Redwood, polycarbonate, bricks, potted plants, lighting and heater
   10' x 12' x 8'

6. ALAN WIENER  pgs 16-17
   Untitled, 2001
   Reinforced concrete
   27 1/2" x 96 3/4" x 34 1/2"

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Valerie Smith is the Director of Exhibitions at the Queens Museum of Art. From 1981-89, she served as curator for the groundbreaking alternative gallery, Artists Space (New York). From 1991-93, she directed Sonsbeck-93 in Arnhem, Holland.

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