EAF 03

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK
2003 EMERGING ARTIST FELLOWSHIP EXHIBITION
SEPTEMBER 7, 2003 – FEBRUARY 8, 2004

JANE BENSON
ROB DE MAR
LILAH FREEDLAND
WADE GUYTON
CORIN HEWITT
MCKENDREE KEY
ROSS KNIGHT
SARAH OPPENHEIMER
HALSEY RODMAN
TREVOR STAFFORD
CONTENTS

3. INTRODUCTION by Alyson Baker
5. ESSAY by Shamim Momin
8. JANE BENSON
10. ROB DE MAR
12. LILAH FREEDLAND
14. WADE GUYTON
16. CORIN HEWITT
18. McKENDREE KEY
20. ROSS KNIGHT
22. SARAH OPPENHEIMER
24. HALSEY RODMAN
26. TREVOR STAFFORD

29. Exhibition Checklist
30. Acknowledgments
32. Notes on Contributors
   Credits

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INTRODUCTION

by Alyson Baker

The annual Emerging Artist Fellowship Exhibition was established in 2001 as the culmination of the Fellowship term and a way to highlight the work of young generations of artists. Each year, ten artists are awarded a grant and provided with the space and resources necessary to realize a new work for presentation in the Park.

The fellowship artists are selected through an open application process and their submissions are reviewed by an advisory committee. This committee changes each year, but is always composed of an artist who received an EAF grant during the previous year; an established artist who has shown a commitment to mentoring younger artists; as well as writers, curators, and gallerists who have particular interest in, and special knowledge of, contemporary art. The committee works in collaboration with the Park’s Executive Director and, together, they select artists on the merits of their past work and the potential of their proposed project. In many instances, the Fellowships are given to artists who have never made work for an outdoor space and, in some cases, artists who are making sculpture for the first time. Fellowships are awarded with the understanding that Socrates is willing to afford first opportunities, and that may mean that a painter, photographer or video artist is expanding their practice to sculptural installations that can be best realized in the Park’s unique urban setting.

The EAF program has a very successful history of allowing young artists to pursue an open artistic exploration thereby introducing new and inventive sculptural practices and pioneering work in the field of public art. The Park fosters an environment of experimentation and innovation that allows the Fellows to work beyond conventional notions of sculpture – particularly the conventions of outdoor sculpture. This makes Socrates a very unusual sculpture garden, a place where the boundaries of sculpture are expanding to include a broad array of media and art making techniques.

The Emerging Artist Fellowship Exhibition does not have an overarching theme or a particular curatorial message, but can be thought of as a series of individual projects. Each installation represents a singular vision within a community of artists that have worked together at the Park during residencies that range from two to six months.

The EAF Program has been generously supported by the New York Community Trust and the Jerome Foundation with additional financing provided by the Lily Auchincloss Foundation. This year, the Park also received a grant from the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation. These donations, along with ongoing partnerships with many benefactors, has made the Emerging Artist Fellowship Program one of the most important initiatives at Socrates Sculpture Park and a hallmark of our visual arts programming.
THE TIME IS NOW

by Shamim Momin

Since the expansion of sculptural parameters in the late 60s and 70s, pushing outside and past the galleries into urban and natural landscapes, the traditional cast of modernist public sculpture—unappealingly termed “plop art”—began to shift. Perhaps most critically, the “responsibility” for creating the experiential space of the artwork shifted from that of the artist exclusively to include, even depend on, that of the viewer. This precipitated a fundamental shift in the understanding of the individual sculptural object, dissipating the notion of a self-contained object that exists consistently regardless of its context or those who interact with it. As artists looked to integrate characteristics of land art with more accessible institutional spaces, and as the repertoire of media continued to expand exponentially into the popular arena, local landscape became an increasingly attractive platform.

Though still fraught with logistical difficulties, the historically conservative mode of “art in the public sphere” has of late—somewhat ironically—begun to provide a more fluid and open engagement with the public than that of the institution. While this private/public distinction used to favor the former sector, allowing for greater experimentation within its “safer” open space, in the past decades it has effected the opposite, increasingly impacting museum programming decisions as they’ve come to rely more and more on attendance income (pursuant to the withdrawal of federal and government funding). From another angle, “public art” or artistic intervention in spaces that were created for or continue to serve other functions, has had to respond to the exponential expansion of the art world—its accelerating cycle of international biennials and art fairs, which now typically incorporate large programs of temporary commissions in the local town/city. While positive in many ways, in particular their recognition of the merging of disciplines, genres, and fields previously defined by their difference from one another, they also suffer from a problematic embrace of “global practice,” ostensibly unmoored from place, eternally mobile and easily co-opted by a disparate range of political, ideological and rhetorical avant-gardists agendas. The appeal of infinite mobility (freed from provincialism, looking beyond isolationist cultural practice, and other commendable goals) also sacrifices in time for the art to exist, to be integrated, and to be used.

By and large, spectacle-oriented global art tourism has overtaken recent biennials and maximal international exhibitions, which tend to instrumentlize art into ambassadors of a globalized politics that cite above all the self-congratulatory liberalism of its curators. Conversely, innovative public art commissions that has at least a temporary life beyond the brief influx of opening day receptions has the chance to insert itself into the local patterns of movement and are often allowed more subtle interventions that reveal themselves slowly. An ongoing public practice as embodied by Socrates occupies what might be construed as the very opposite: insistence on locality, presence, and time, and an unavoidable—and admirably embraced rather than hidden—awareness of process.

In this cultural landscape, numerous major public arts organizations have emerged both domestically and internationally, which over time have gained enormous legitimacy through projects that challenge these conditions. Unlike objects in the gallery, no matter how interventionist and architecturally sensitive, public art arguably now maintains the most evolved version of site specificity. No matter how global a practice, the local can never be overlooked—is in fact inherent—in public work, where with a gallery project, it must be, with more or less success, deliberately applied upon the situation. While such organizations have offered unprecedented and innovative opportunities for artists to explore new modes and audiences, rarely is the situation as offered by Socrates—a disused urban space transformed into one specifically designed to celebrate process, audience, technical challenges, and local/urban community. Typically, it is the artist and project that must adapt to the site (which admittedly has its own appeal and benefit), rather than a site designed to embrace the dialogue between to the artists and project.
In recent decades, endeavors such as Socrates have become one more suited to the evolution of sculptural practice than a closed gallery space, or the more remote extremes of the 70s anti-form practice. It is not as much a project of direct resistance to the institutional/private space, but rather one that seems to parallel the type of experiential, navigatory practice that has emerged particularly in the past decade. In recent years, one can track a prominent strain of artists using sculptural form to construct a kind of “theater of the moment” where the lexicon of formal, particularly minimalist, practice can be re-integrated with the investigation of time and process of the post-minimalists. The idea of theater provides a framing structure to think about this development, where it has been transformed to mean the staging of time through the props and backdrops of those processes, and implies a temporal activity and movement within a static construct, the object or objects that the artists create.

In art history, a derogatory view of the theatrical was most clearly explicated in Michael Fried’s infamous 1967 text “Art and Objecthood.” A denunciation of the phenomenological staging typical of Minimalist sculpture, Fried’s essay was based on the notion that art must have purity of presence. “Art degenerates when it approaches the condition of theater,” Fried writes, thus ingratiating itself with the viewer. Yet artists who followed the Minimalist moment often strove to achieve this precise quality in their time-based, process-driven, performative practices that deliberately engaged the viewer’s presence and agency in constructing meaning. The very thing that Fried cautioned against—Theater, defined (pejoratively) as what lies between the discrete arts—was what these artists tried to capture. This interstitial place, according to Fried, is “pervasive”; pure form constructs its own meaning, thus the slippage between the arts is its ultimate corruption.

Ever more so for many contemporary artists, it is exactly this infection of forms and ideas that defines their work. The preoccupation with time that characterized seventies post-minimalism (in a situation, for the situation) has been brought back and inserted within the object itself. Rather than remaining mute and inert, form has become part of a vocabulary that might at times produce a language, mobile and fluid by definition. Within this work, one need not choose between a formal conversation (art about itself) and content; those same structures of meaning reflexively inform each other. The dialogue, slippery and tense as it may be at times, is altogether possible, and it can enrich the viewer’s own (literal) activation of the work. The staging of these objects can imply a kind of ritual enactment that suggests new ideas about belief and agency—requiring the viewer to participate in the construction of their meaning. This mode is paralleled by the evolution from an earlier idea of “installation;” in which this practice is now more a verb than a noun. That is to say, rather than a single static compendium of objects in an environment, it is a set of works installed in a space, that in that assembly have discourse with one another. When transmuted to the external space such as Socrates, this idea of “installation” becomes even more disperse an activity, uncontained by the four walls of a gallery.

The practice of Robert Smithson wherein “time must have coordinates in space...inhabit as well as contain the material world” has been arguably one of the strongest influences on this type of contemporary practice. The idea of time as process, as the viewers’ perceptual experience with the work, as the object/installation itself capturing a sense of its own making as well as larger ideas of cycles of time (destruction and regeneration, and systemic, entropic collapse, in particular) figures prominently in work most commonly embraced on the Socrates site (and in most successful public art), recognizing the specific attributes of the site as well as embracing the prevalence of that thinking in contemporary work. Overall, the dematerialist impulse of that post-minimalist moment is no longer the only option, and artists look to a strategy of “anti-form into form.” Their practice is equivalently
invested in the investigation of materiality and formal ideas (Minimalism in particular) as in conceptual investigations of time, process, and often aggressive, even ecstatic transformation (via the performative, time based practice). It is work riven with deliberately constructed internal contractions and collisions, searching for those precious, transient moments of liminality, and “in-betweeness.”

The Socrates program is ideally suited to embrace these central thematics of recent practice: the increasingly complex investigation of social, domestic, and public space—interpreted as “temporal space”—and their translation into form, often sculptural, but also photographic, cinematic, and so forth. Conversely, these concretized forms then serve as a catalyst for social practices that extend beyond the gallery, museum, and arts organization. These often tend towards an ephemeral, event-based character, that is difficult to capture in an institutional space without eviscerating the very quality that vitalizes it, but within the Socrates structure can obtain an equivalency to the physical components of the project rarely possible. That much contemporary practice is often additive, metamorphic, and fragmented, both conceptually and physically, poses the question of source: have these practices in part been informed by the expansion of types of presentations, spaces and formats in the past decades, or have these spaces been discovered and adapted to the emergence of those interests? In the end, it is perhaps unimportant, providing that as artists continue to seek ways to complicate and expand beyond the present condition, the organizations that proffer their support are nimble enough to move and adapt along with them.


The Waiting Room is an interior environment sited outdoors. The room has all the familiar appearances of a waiting area including uncomfortable seating, vinyl-tiled floor and artificial plants. These fake plants have been altered to accentuate their man-made quality - their leaves have been cut into geometric shapes.
For the installation entitled *Some Bird's Paradise*, Benson has placed modified artificial trees in planters along the Park's waterfront. In contrast to the real trees in the Park, they remain green and lush through the winter as the natural landscape around them changes with the seasons.
This sculpture, entitled Labor, is a 240' long steel fence that stands just two inches tall and weaves through the shrubbery at the north side of the Park. Along its route, the fence occasionally lands on intricately crafted miniature landscapes.
Glow H.O.G. is a 7 1/2' pillar modeled on a Corinthian column at The Temple Mount in Jerusalem, a central intersection between the Dome of the Rock, Via Dolorosa, and Kotel. Glow H.O.G. is coated with a high tech phosphorescent pigment that absorbs sunlight during the day, allowing the sculpture to glow at night.
At the center of Wade Guyton's installation is a plywood facsimile of a sculpture by Antoni Milkowski. This sculpture, exemplary of a school of '70's abstract steel sculpture, has over the years been located in several different public areas in Midtown Manhattan. At Socrates, Guyton copies it and displaces it again, complicating its retrospective style with historical memory and a shift in materiality.
Corin Hewitt’s *Tarbell's Tantrum* is a life-size simulated crash of his grandmother’s kitchen into a stone retaining wall in the Park. The piece contains an enlarged photograph taken from the artist’s 1/15-scale model of the kitchen as it existed on the day his grandmother died in 2002.
Hallett’s Cove is a sculptural installation made of 10,000 green balls that form 16 structures floating in the cove to the west of the Park. These forms are tethered, but free to move with the currents of the water and the wind. They evoke strangely artificial rock or coral formations that appear to have a life of their own as they swim in the river.
Ross Knight’s *Litlter* stands 22’ high by 21’ long, and is clad with iridescent, mirrored Plexi sheets creating a patchwork surface that interacts with light. The structure appears recognizably functional, solid and heavy, yet flat and incomplete.
The walkway that encircles Socrates Sculpture Park guides pedestrians past many possible destinations. *Parallel* deflects this guided walk by twisting the top bar of an aluminum handrail out of plane, diverting it through the branches of nearby trees, and creating an impossible alternate path.
*K's Ship Crash Landed on the Planet of Mist (Part IV)*

is a series of three platforms built around a pre-existing tree, a void, and a mirror. Adjacent to the platforms is a drawing made of bent steel representing the shadow of a sculpture of the tree. This installation operates as an observatory for transitional states, changing seasons, frozen moments, and passing time.
*What Was Once* brings together different aspects of Socrates’ site history, suggesting the shape and gesture of one of the original piers. This sculpture is a recreation that exists in the shade of trees growing from the landfill that now covers the original pier.
EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

JANE BENSON  pgs 8-9
The Waiting Room, 2003
Aluminum, artificial plants, vinyl, plastic
7' 9" x 12' 10" x 11' 1"

Some Bird’s Paradise, 2003
Artificial trees, concrete planters
(4) 10' 5" x 3' x 3'

ROB DE MAR  pgs 10-11
Labor, 2003
Steel, flocking, model trees
5' x 240' x 36" 

LILAH FREEDLAND  pgs 12-13
Glow H.O.G., 2003
Hydrocal, phosphorescent pigment, rebar, Plexiglas
Column: 7' 6" x 1' diameter
Overall dimensions variable

WADE GUYTON  pgs 14-15
Untitled Sculpture, 2003
Wood, dirt, rock
Dimensions variable

CORIN HEWITT  pgs 16-17
Tarbell’s Tantrum, 2003
Backlit inkjet vinyl print, wood, cast earth
12' x 25' x 18'

McKENDREE KEY  pgs 18-19
Hallett’s Cove, 2003
10,000 plastic balls, steel, concrete
Dimensions variable

ROSS KNIGHT  pgs 20-21
Littler, 2003
Aluminum, acrylic, Teflon
22' x 21' x 11'

SARAH OPPENHEIMER  pgs 22-23
Parallel, 2003
Anodized aluminum
9' x 36' x 17'

HALSEY RODMAN  pgs 24-25
K’s Ship Crash Landed on the Planet of Mist (Part IV), 2003
Wood, paint, steel, acrylic
5' x 62' x 31'

TREVOR STAFFORD  pgs 26-27
What Was Once, 2003
Wood
3' x 14' x 65'
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Programs at Socrates Sculpture Park are made possible by the dedication of our volunteers, patrons and friends and by the generosity of:

- Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc.
- Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, Inc.
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- The Cowles Charitable Trust
- Mark di Suvero
- Fifth Floor Foundation
- The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
- Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro
- Jerome Foundation
- JPMorgan Chase
- Richard and Ronay Menschel
- Ivana Mestrovic
- National Endowment for the Arts
- New York Community Trust
- New York State Council on the Arts
- The Pincus Charitable Fund
- Brooke Kamin Rapaport and Richard A. Rapaport
- Rev. Alfred R. Shands III
- Mr. & Mrs. Thomas W. Smith
- The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

Exhibitions at Socrates Sculpture Park are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Special thanks to the City of New York, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Queens Borough President Helen M. Marshall, City Councilmember Eric Gioia and the Department of Parks & Recreation, Commissioner Adrian Benepe.
The artists and Socrates Sculpture Park wish to thank the following people for their support, friendship and hard work during the preparation and installation of this exhibition:

Mark di Suvero
Chris Baker
Elizabeth Berger
Thi Bui
M. Byrum
Isami Ching
Claire Corey
Brooke Costello
Jennifer Curry
Bilyana Dimitrova
Matthew Donny
Jacob Dyrenforth
Russell Gands
Christy Gast
Zach Hadlock
William Hall
Nazim Hamid
Marc Handelman
Alexis Hubshman
Garrick Imatani
Kent Johnson
Joe Jones
Justine Kalb
Matt Keegan
Sonja Kroop
Benjamin Landers
Peter Lundberg
Gareth Mahon
Trisha Mainiero
Matteo Martignoni
Lowell McKegney
Ivana Mestrovic
Charles Mister
Lisa Mordhorst
Steven Mosier
Robert Nachimson
Margaret Noel
Priscilla Piervincenzi
Jock Pottle
Peter Rodman
Jonathan Schipper

Dr. Shalev
Mark Shunney
Slaveya Starkov
Allie Tsypin
Kenneth Wachtel
Claudia Wagner
Thomas White
Christine Whittaker
Chris Yockey

Socrates Sculpture Park is grateful for generous contributions made by:

- Harold H. Anthony, Inc.
- Eric Romeo at Auric Construction
- Bedrock Industries
- Bracci Fence & Ironworks, Inc.
- Clementine Gallery
- John P. Corrieri, Inc.
- Donjer Products Corp.
- East River Apprenticeship
- E&T Plastic Manufacturing Co., Inc.
- ENetFurniture
- Extech Industries, Inc.
- Glow, Inc.
- ImageKing Visual Solutions
- Long Island General Supply Co., Inc.
- Materials for the Arts
- NY Wa$teMatch
- Plant Specialists
- Mike at Sculpture House
- Spacetime C.C.
- Steelcase Inc.
- Supercreator
- Team Gallery
- UVR Studio
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Shamim M. Momin was appointed Associate Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2004, and has been Branch Director and Curator of the Whitney Museum at Altria since October 2000.

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Text: Alyson Baker and Shamim Momin
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Photographs: Alyson Baker, Chris Baker, Steven L. Cohen, Stephanie Diamond, Bilyana Dimitrova, Robyn Donohue, McKendree Key, Sarah Oppenheimer, Halsey Rodman, Socrates Sculpture Park archives
Design: Steven Mosier
Typeface: MetaPlus
Printing: The Studley Press, Inc., Dalton, Massachusetts

Published September 2007
Texts © 2007 by the authors
ISBN: 9780979795329

This publication was made possible by a grant from
THE ANDY WARHOL FOUNDATION FOR THE VISUAL ARTS
with additional funding provided by
THE GREENWALL FOUNDATION