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INTRODUCTION

Socrates Sculpture Park’s 20th anniversary year, from September 2006 to September 2007, offered an opportunity to celebrate and evaluate the Park’s remarkable history and set goals for the coming years. This assessment propelled many notable improvements to the organization, its operating capacity, and programs—particularly the Emerging Artist Fellowship Program.

Each year, at the end of their residency, the Fellowship artists are asked to provide a candid critique of the EAF program and an evaluation of their experience working and exhibiting at the Park. This process, along with the knowledge gained from ten years of managing the program, has allowed Socrates to refine the administration and implementation of the Fellowships as well as enhance the services, working space, and resources that we offer. The artists have helped us identify what makes this program unique and valuable and have also helped define those areas where improvements must be made. For the 2007 edition of the Emerging Artist Fellowship program, Socrates implemented several major changes that were direct responses to feedback from the artists-in-residence.

Many past EAF artists had cited the escalating cost of building supplies as the most significant challenge that they had faced while creating work for exhibition in the Park. The engineering and construction of large-scale outdoor works require many resources and the rates for these materials and services have grown considerably over the last few years. With greater patronage for the EAF program, Socrates was able to significantly increase the amount of the fellowship grant, the first raise in grant monies since 2002.

In 2006, to mark the Park’s 20th anniversary, Socrates awarded twenty Emerging Artist Fellowships—double the traditional number. Having more fellows and artwork enlivened both the studio and grounds while fostering relationships between the participating artists that continue to present new collaborations and opportunities. To maintain this dynamic, Socrates has implemented a five-year plan to expand the number of fellowships by two per year in order to build to twenty fellows as an annual number by 2011. Socrates awarded twelve fellowships in 2007, and will award fourteen in 2008, sixteen in 2009, and eighteen in 2010. This planned and phased development will allow us to enhance the program at a sustainable and measured pace.

In September 2007, Socrates Sculpture Park produced the first six editions of the Emerging Artist Fellowship Exhibition catalogue. Now an annual publication, this tremendous asset to the EAF program was made possible by a generous start-up grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. The catalogues provide much-needed documentation of the exhibitions and, since many of the installations are site-specific, they are an essential archive of the works that are created at the Park. In addition, they offer a framework for presenting the full scope of Fellowship projects—allowing the sculptures that are commissioned for the EAF show to be seen as both individual artworks, and within the greater context of the ongoing program.

The consistent and dedicated support of the Emerging Artist Fellowship’s founding patrons, the Jerome Foundation and the New York Community Trust, have been essential to the ongoing development and improvement of the program. In 2007, the program was also supported by continued funding from the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, the Elaine Dannheisser Foundation, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and Starry Night Fund of Tides Foundation. Socrates is also grateful to the newest EAF benefactors, the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, The Dedalus Foundation and the Harpo Foundation whose contributions were crucial to the Park’s ability to respond to our artists’ incisive and constructive feedback, allowing Socrates to produce a dynamic, vital and productive residency and exhibition program.
TAking the Plunge

By jeFFreY Kastner

For more than a decade, Socrates Sculpture Park has provided annual fellowships for a select group of artists to support the creation of new temporary works at the park’s East River site. The primary criterion for selection, beyond the quality of their individual practices, is that the artists must be “emerging.” This concept of “emerging” is a bit of shorthand familiar to everyone in the art world, but like most shorthand, it is an imprecise stand-in for a wide and rather amorphous set of characteristics. It doesn’t mean young, nor does it necessarily connote a brief career—artists can emerge after years at work, or after only months. An artist with several shows in the galleries of a small city may be considered emerging, but another with only one show at a blue-chip New York space might not. To paraphrase Potter Stewart, the art world may not be able to exactly define “emerging,” but it knows it when it sees it.

As it turns out, the word emerging actually is derived etymologically from the Latin mergere, which means to dip or plunge. To emerge, then, is to return to the surface after such a plunge, but I actually like the sense of the root form that lingers there, as well. Support for emerging artists, especially for projects created in public space, is often a kind of chance-taking leap of a proposition on all sides. It’s a safe bet that every artist will have produced work for gallery spaces, but opportunities to make projects outdoors are few and far between, especially in New York City, where available real estate is rare and always in high demand. Staking out and preserving a space to work (both physically and intellectually) and making it available to artists and viewers is, of course, Socrates’s raison d’être. And so in the EAF program, everyone dives in together: The park takes a chance on artists, many of whom are making their first outdoor artwork; meanwhile, the artists are taking a chance on a new way of working, one with its own very particular set of demands and a corresponding set of rewards. This shared risk is what allows the EAF program to remain continually vital—everyone has something on the line.

Looking back at this list of the last eleven years of the EAF program—initially proposed by the Park’s then-director Eve Sussman and her assistant director, Maria Mingalone, it was officially initiated in 1996 by Kathleen Gilrain, who succeeded Sussman—it’s easy to play alumni bingo with names of former EAF recipients. Chakia Booker, Beth Campbell, Sanford Biggers, Wade Guyton, Ross Knight, Sarah Oppenheimer, Isidro Blasco, Orly Genger, Hank Willis Thomas: these and more are all names familiar to those who follow the contemporary art world, and all have gone on, after their “emergence,” to distinguished careers. Interestingly, few if any have turned out to pursue what would be really thought of as a site-specific practice—most are known first and foremost for their studio work—but the EAF program was never meant as vocational school for outdoor art. Instead, the fellows are recognized by the selection panel for a certain impulse toward or affinity for the kind of materials, scale, context, or modes of address that make work function successfully in the open matrix of visual and physical dialogue that art in public space—and in particular, the unique public space represented by Socrates’s Long Island City location—provides. (Indeed, a rich research opportunity awaits the scholar who would track the influence of this early opportunity on the rest of the EAF participants’ careers.)

The same things that give Socrates its own singular sense of place also mark it as a quintessentially New York location. Water and land; nature and industry; old buildings, reclaimed and altered space, new construction; decay and renewal; indifferent function and a kind of raw grace—all of the things that characterize the body of the city are there, because the park is part of that body, not some sacrosanct precinct designed to shut the world out. This, too, is a gift to artists as they begin to develop their careers. The physical and contextual unpredictability they encounter at Socrates—the whims of weather, the shifting play of light, the relationship of the works to the 360-degree views in which they can be seen, the vagaries of installation and maintenance—is a primer in adaptability, one whose lessons are not confined to working in the out-of-doors but rather will be called on again and again.
This year's large fellowship group (at a dozen, the most of any year save for the specially expanded 20th anniversary class) produced work that refused to be summarized and this, of course, is also part of the plunge that Socrates takes with the EAF each year. Like the physical park—open every day of the year, completely free, and welcome to all comers, whether there to see art, stretch their legs, or take in the Manhattan skyline views—the program is founded on a willingness to embrace the plural and the differentiated, to risk unexpected adjacencies, to make a statement about the virtues of diversity. Yet there are common threads, even within this heterogeneous crowd. To me the greatest of these is the working environment for the Fellows at Socrates, one that mirrors the creation of the Park itself. All the works are fabricated on the site, for the site, and in full view of visitors; they grow out of the location and via a process that is particular to it. This negotiation of an open process is, I think, perhaps the biggest risk of all, because it forces a certain directness in working that, especially for artists at the beginning of their careers, tends to strip making to its salutary essentials—study, conceptualization, technique, problem-solving, execution.

"I believe there are 'forms' to be found within the activity of making as much as within the end products," wrote Robert Morris in "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making." "These are forms of behavior aimed at testing the limits and possibilities involved in that particular interaction between one's actions and the materials of the environment. This amounts to the submerged side of the art iceberg." Socrates's Sculpture Park's EAF program takes both artists and viewers into that submerged realm, where the often hidden "forms" of making (and, by extension, the end products of that activity) can be better seen and understood. It is a salutary plunge we all take together, and one from which we cannot help but emerge with a new appreciation for both risks it represents and the rewards it promises.
This piece consists of four elements: a narrow white brick building, a thirty foot flagpole, a flag printed with the letters “NON” and an action that was performed during installation. Over the course of a day and without an audience, the artist dug a tunnel under the brick structure, emerging into a small space between its walls; he then knocked a few bricks from under the eaves and, putting a rope through this opening, raised the flag from the inside of the building. Exiting the crawl space, he tied the rope to a small stake and filled in the tunnel, covering his means of access.
A tribute to the manufacturing and architectural history of Long Island City, this series of large scale cast cement tiles combine to form a pattern reminiscent of a carpet. The intricate design is made up of forms representing products that were once made in LIC factories including silk tassels, bread, Model T bodies, and staplers. The neighborhood’s infrastructure and architecture are referenced with railroad tracks, trolley poles, docks, and cement silos.

Linda Ganjian received a 2007 Dedalus Foundation Emerging Artist Fellowship
Jain’s work often addresses issues of corporate branding by transforming the distinctive designs that represent some of the world’s most iconic companies. Here, she uses the context of a city park to address the intersection of public space and corporate identity. The John Deere insignia has been translated into a bridge, giving the logo dimension, scale, functionality and purpose.

Vandana Jain received a 2007 Dedalus Foundation Emerging Artist Fellowship
Set on a small hill, enclosed in thick plexiglass, and complete with its own ventilation system and lights that automatically turn on at dusk, this smallest of luxury waterfront living spaces is an inviting but entirely inaccessible space. The king size bed contained in the box is perfectly appointed in lavish white Pratesi linens and, with the covers turned back, it entices the viewer while remaining pristine and untouchable.
Based on the network and growth pattern of root systems, this installation uses the most artificial of materials and colors to create an aberrant configuration through a cluster of trees in the Park. Combining natural biological patterns with distinctly man-made products, the artist creates a beautiful yet menacing structure that seems to both augment and threaten the trees that support it.

Caroline Mak received a 2007 New York Community Trust Emerging Artist Fellowship
Seen from across the water from a fixed telescope, this installation spans the East River, visually and narratively connecting Roosevelt Island to the Park's rocky waterfront. The hand built boat that appears to have washed in on the tide is part fact, part fantasy – both physically present and drawn from the imagination. It is a small portal, a peripheral component, of the artist's film-based work also entitled Blackwell's Patience.
Meant as an homage to the guitar, which figures prominently in much of modern art, this over-scale instrument perches delicately in the branches of a tall tree. Unreachable, exotic and freed from the constraints of its function, it is visible only to the most diligent and observant viewer.
A fountain and anti-monument for the post-industrial landscape, this installation is inspired by the mysterious and complex underground infrastructure that exists beneath New York City's surface. Here, it bursts up out of the ground, spilling water from a large steel pipe and offering a perch to a portentous black bird that appears both ominous and sorrowful.

Rachel Owens received a 2007 Harpo Foundation Emerging Artist Fellowship
Like a Hollywood movie set, this full scale front elevation of a "McMansion" exists as a façade – incomplete in its dimension, and abandoned in mid-construction. It stands as a monument to the escalating scale of the American home, and the ubiquitous, but unsustainable, building boom that has transformed the suburban landscape.
Based on the coop jump, which is a three dimensional triangular structure traditionally inserted over split-rail fences on fox hunting courses, this sculpture is installed at the edge of the Park, facing the water. In combination with a second component, a steel trough and a hedge row, it creates a visual leap over the water towards Manhattan.

Shane Aslan Selzer received a 2007 New York Community Trust Emerging Artist Fellowship.
A crop of steel stalks rise from the ground bearing clear cast basketballs that contain raw pink cotton. This installation combines natural, industrial, and high-tech materials into an agricultural phenomenon for the urban landscape.

Changamire Semakoko received a 2007 New York Community Trust Emerging Artist Fellowship
Quirky and poetic, this sculpture uses a few disparate elements to hint at an elusive and open narrative. Part surrealist assemblage and part garden architecture, it implies a process and movement that seem cyclical and purpose-driven, yet its function and meaning remain mysterious.
EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

TIM CLIFFORD
Absenta, 2007
Mixed media
Building: 156” x 38” x 156”; Flagpole: 25’
Special thanks: Michael Easse and Level 3
Construction, Richard Carter

LINDA GANJIAN
Bountiful LIC Memorial Carpet, 2007
Cement, sand, steel frame
2’ x 14’ x 10’
Special thanks: Danielel Frazier, Rachael LaPolla,
Cynthia Chang, Trenton Duersken, Michael DiPietro,
David Johnson, Juliana Mei

VANDANA JAIN
Deere Crossing, 2007
Wood, sintra
12’ x 17.5’ x 3.5’
Special thanks: Glen Einbinder, Mike Estabrook,
Brian Higbee, Manny Migriño, Mirelle Zacharis

KEN LANDAUER
King, 2007
Mixed media
90’ x 94’ x 86’
Linens provided by Pratesi
Mattress provided by 1800Mattress.com
Special thanks: Priscilla von Muehlen, Andreina
Gonzalez, Jordan Smith, Pat Sheeley, Jim Palmatier

CAROLINE MAK
Root Architecture, 2007
4000’ latex tubing
Dimensions variable
Special thanks: Primeline Industries, my family and
friends for being so understanding; pretending its
okay when I show up covered in dirt; for offering a
vehicle and a helping hand when necessary. And
thanks to Antonio for his support.

GREG MARTIN
Blackwell’s Patience, 2007
Here: lauan, poplar, epoxy, fiberglass tape,
polyurethane, paint pen
There: aluminum, steel, glass
Here: 8’ x 3’ x 18’; There: 5’ x 18” x 6”
Special thanks: Roosevelt Island Operating
Corporation, Hi-Spy Viewing Machines, Judith Birdie,
Laura Peyton, Nicole Martin, Marie Lorenz, Deborah
Fisher, Rikke Dau, Julie Bordonaro

OHAD MEROMI
Together, 2007
Cherry plywood, mahogany, plastic string
13’ x 5’ x 1.5’

RACHEL OWENS
Groundswell, 2007
Steel, rubber, wood, pump, water
Dimensions variable
Special thanks: Dave Lewis, Alyssa Wendt, Matt Lusk,
Joel Holub, Tricia McLaughlin, Harpo Foundation

RICKY SEARS
Waterfront, 2007
Vinyl, building materials, reclaimed lumber
30’ x 26’ x 14’
Special thanks: Michael Shields, Chanho Yoon, Kent
Johnson, Karl Friedrich, Deborah Fisher, Dave Lewis,
Ted Reiderer, Noah Loesberg, Steven Bindernagel, Jae
Youn, and the staff at SpaceTime and Socrates for
their generous support

SHANE ASLAN SELZER
Outcross Bend, 2007
Steel, autobody enamel
Dimensions variable
Special thanks: Bear Steel, Air Form Mechanical
Corp., Serino Hot Rod, Plant Specialists

CHANGAMIRE SEMAKOKIRO
Mama I wanna do the damn thang B fresh to def N
let my balls hang, 2007
Steel, wood, cotton, urethane resin
Trees: 8.5’ x 1.5’ x 1.5’; Basketball: 9” diameter

BRIAN WONDERGEM
In Advance of a Woodpile, 2007
Steel T-Frames, arbors, firewood, chain, mixed media
Dimensions variable
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:

• Altria Group, Inc.
• Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc.
• Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation
• Carnegie Corporation of New York
• The Cowles Charitable Trust
• The Dedalus Foundation
• Mark di Suvero
• Foundation for Contemporary Arts
• Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation
• Hugh J. Freund
• The Greenwall Foundation
• Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro
• Harpo Foundation
• The HWG Fund, Inc.
• Jerome Foundation
• The Peter T. Joseph Foundation
• Gabrielle H. Reem M.D. and Herbert J. Kayden M.D.
• Richard and Ronay Menschel
• Ivana Mestrovic
• The New York Community Trust
• Ralph S. O’Connor
• Brooke Kamin and Richard Rapaport
• The Ross Foundation
• Rev. Alfred R. Shands III
• Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Smith
• Starry Night Fund of Tides Foundation
• Ursula von Rydingsvard and Paul Greengard
• The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts
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
Daisy Calderon
Irma Calderon
Yousef Dawud
Nathan Diana
Bilyana Dimitrova
Katie Janwich
Kent Johnson
Millar Kelley
Georgia Koutsoupakis
Rainy Lehrman
Sophia Leung
Dave Lewis
Matteo Martignoni
Ivana Mestrovic
Steven Mosier
Someng Olsen
Natalie Pelham
Chris Van Doren
Claudia Wagner
Leonard White
Chris Yockey

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, and by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

This exhibition is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency.

Special thanks to the City of New York, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Queens Borough President Helen M. Marshall, City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn, Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, City Councilmember Eric Gioia, and the Department of Parks & Recreation, Commissioner Adrian Benepe.

Socrates Sculpture Park is grateful for generous contributions made by:
- Harold H. Anthony, Inc.
- Build it Green! NYC
- John P. Corrieri, Inc.
- Garlock East
- R & R General Supply Co., Inc.
- Materials for the Arts
- Plant Specialists
- Spacetime C.C.
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Design: Steve Mosier
Typeface: MetaPlus
Printing: Ruder Finn, Long Island City, NY

Published August 2008
Texts © by the authors
ISBN # 978-0-9797953-6-7

THIS PUBLICATION WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE ANDY WARHOL FOUNDATION FOR THE VISUAL ARTS