



Brian O'Connell: Palomar

Laure Genillard London 27 February to 16 April

The eponymous hero of Italo Calvino's last novel, *Mr Palomar*, 1983, is a keen and fussy observer of the world around him for whom looking shades into philosophical thought. Whether he is examining waves breaking on a shore, a gecko waiting to catch a gnat or the moon in the afternoon sky, Palomar seeks out underlying structures that, for all his concentration, tend to elude him. Mirroring his protagonist's fastidiousness but playing it in a gently ironic key, Calvino offers the reader an 'Index' at the end in which he accords numerical values to Palomar's three central concerns – visual experience (1), anthropological inquiry (2) and speculation as to the nature of things (3) – and outlines their distribution across the chapters of the book.

Brian O'Connell's show is named after Palomar and reprises some of Calvino's themes. The works on display are titled after chapters in the book and demonstrate an obsessively quizzical attitude towards natural phenomena that recalls Palomar's painstaking curiosity. *The Loves of Tortoises*, 2011, for instance, is named after a chapter in which Palomar observes 'with a cold attention' the awkward motions of mating tortoises and speculates on the erotic satisfaction available to creatures with bony shells. It consists of a pair of ceramic objects modelled on gömböc, which are near-spherical forms that return naturally to a single point of equilibrium when tipped over. Gömböcs were mathematically described in 2006 by two Hungarian scientists, Gábor Domokos and Péter Várkonyi, who studied tortoises at Budapest Zoo and postulated that some can right themselves when toppled on account of the gömböc-like proportions of their shells. *The Eye and the Planets*, 2016, named after a chapter

in which Palomar gazes at Mars, Saturn and Jupiter through a telescope, is a series of prints made using a mid-19th-century process to render the positions of coloured steel balls in a hoop. Long predating the invention of colour photography, the process is a cumbersome one that exploits the properties of gum arabic and bichromate salts to fix colours in succession, each colour requiring a new exposure, in prints that resemble watercolours as much as photographs. In these pieces, O'Connell's eagerness to ground his work in Palomar's habits of observation is complemented by a taste for technological and scientific arcana and a view of technical difficulty as its own reward.

The show's central exhibit is a 12-minute 2015 film of a solar eclipse, shot on Mount Wilson, near the artist's Los Angeles home, and titled, simply, *Palomar*. Again, the making of the work is a technical feat, the artist attaching a box to a telescope and using a 16mm camera to record the veiling of the sun as projected onto the bottom of the box. Shooting on black-and-white reversal film, O'Connell then coloured passages with the help of one of the few analogue colour timers still active in Hollywood, using one colour at a time. The colours are keyed – so the press release informs us – to the three central concerns highlighted in Calvino's 'Index', with red for visual investigation, green for anthropological inquiry and blue for far-ranging speculation. Technically complex as it is, the film has a DIY look, with its shortish takes, shifting angles and scratchy celluloid, but it is also remarkable for the starkness and economy of its imagery and in this it seems to look back to the experiments of Bauhaus artists like László Moholy-Nagy and Walter Peterhans. But the crucial precedent remains *Mr Palomar*. O'Connell not only adapts the coding in Calvino's 'Index' and assimilates Palomar's interest in planetary motion, he also mimics Calvino in playing slyly on Palomar's name, which echoes that of the famous Californian observatory, as Calvino acknowledges at just one point in the book when he notes that Palomar 'can boast some friendships among astronomers', perhaps 'because he bears the same name as the famous observatory'. Just visible on a clear day from Mount Wilson, Palomar Observatory houses a telescope that was in Calvino's day the world's largest.

This is on the face of it a dispiritingly well-behaved exhibition, with its pastel-coloured prints, its small, near-spherical forms sitting tidily in a corner, its tinted crescent shapes shimmering on screen. Thankfully, this tasteful air is a red herring in a show that is lifted by the artist's obtuseness as he resurrects obsolete technologies and embraces unnecessary technical difficulties. He is like Palomar chiefly in the expansive, inexpedient character of his curiosity, that inexpediency giving the presentation something of the 'atmosphere of spacious and buoyant reverie' that Seamus Heaney admired in Calvino's book. ■

MARCUS VERHAGEN is an art historian.



Brian O'Connell
Palomar 2015

Mark Wallinger: ID

Hauser & Wirth London 26 February to 7 May

Mark Wallinger's exhibition effects a discernible power shift, whether this is through the Vitruvian-dimensioned paintings in the North Gallery or the silently turning triangular sculpture *Superego*, 2016, in the South (which, although stripped of all text or meaningful signifiers, is instantly recognisable as the revolving

art ltd.

DIALOGUE: "Made in LA"

by george melrod

Jul 2014



Untitled (U)

1989

Tony Greene

Mixed media (oil on photo mounted on board)

28 1/2" x 32 1/2" Private collection

Photo: courtesy of David Frantz

How does one conceive a regional survey exhibition for a diverse, increasingly international metropolis that's always searching for community and constantly in flux? Perhaps by defining it right up front as a diverse, increasingly international metropolis that's always searching for community and constantly in flux. That's one of the canny insights of the new 2014 "Made in LA" biennial at the Hammer Museum, co-curated by Connie Butler and Michael Ned Holte. Although the Hammer has been staging a (roughly) biannual group show for a decade and a half, this marks only the second version of the "Made in LA" biennial; the inaugural sprawling take in 2012 was organized by five curators and spread out across two separate venues. In launching this year's iteration, Hammer director Ann Philbin turned to two very different figures, who in working together as a team, provided the yin to each other's yang.

Connie Butler had been a well-respected curator at MOCA for a decade, before heading east in 2006, as curator of drawings at the Museum of Modern Art; among the many exhibitions she has organized are "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution" at MOCA, and "Greater New York," a 2010 survey at MOMA's PS1. Last July, she returned to LA as the Hammer's new chief curator. By contrast, this is the first major museum exhibition for Michael Ned Holte, a critic and teacher at CalArts, who sparked debate in 2012 with his less-than-gushy review of the previous "Made in LA" in *ArtForum*. To begin, he questioned the very purpose of such a "determinedly local biennial," and the implicit boosterish tone that propelled it. Philbin invited Holte to come on board in September 2012, just weeks after the previous show had ended. "I actually told her to hold her invitation until she had read it," Holte laughs. "I think in terms of planning the show and in writing my essay, and the conversations I had with Connie, the criticisms I had of the first show were an inevitable starting point in thinking about the second."

"We thought of it as a core sample, or—a snapshot of a moment in time, taking the pulse," Butler explains. "I'm not sure it was by design, but I think we're both very happy with the fact that it really holds together as an exhibition. It's not thematic, but partly because each of the artists were given very generous spaces, each room has its own coherence and logic, I think."



The Pollinators

2014

Sarah Rara

Video still, sound, color. Running time not yet determined

Sound by Luke Fischbeck, courtesy of the artist

One of the things that gives the show its coherence, despite the wide range of practices, and mediums, on display, is the emphasis on artistic collectives and collaborations. Among them are Public Fiction, an unmarked storefront space in Highland Park, founded by Lauren Mackler in 2010, that “is less a finite space than a social context for critical, discursive, and aesthetic experimentation.” Others include LA Museum of Art (LAMO), a platform created by sculptor Alice Konitz in 2012 in the driveway of her Eagle Rock studio; KCHUNG Radio, “a creative hub of artists, musicians, philosophers and tinkerers broadcasting live on 1630 AM from a studio above a pho restaurant in Los Angeles’s Chinatown”; and James Kidd Studio, a dance platform founded by a multivalent dancer/choreographer and costume designer in 2011. As Holte notes, most of these groups are new additions to the LA scene, having only started in the last 2-3 years.

“I think what Public Fiction does, or what KCHUNG does, is extremely important, and very well-known to a certain generation of artists in Los Angeles,” Holte says. “And they’re all things that have emerged, not since the last ‘Made in LA’ but, close to that... So they seem really relevant and incredibly dynamic.” That they represent a kind of localized, self-created network of artistic dialogue already going on in the city—outside the traditional frameworks of museums and even art schools—makes them uniquely reflective of the current zeitgeist in LA. It also exemplifies a phenomenon Holte calls “microclimates.” As Holte explains, “There are a lot of social connections in the show, and those won’t be obvious to every viewer who comes to see the show. They’ll be very obvious to a number of younger artists in Los Angeles who are very aware of Public Fiction and KCHUNG, and how those collectives operate socially. But I think there’s so much in the show that it doesn’t need any explication for people to appreciate and enjoy.”

By inviting these collectives, the curators are also expanding their curatorial rubric to allow for shows-within-the-show, with their own, dynamic programming. “I think, in a way, it opens up the authorship of the exhibition,” Butler says enthusiastically. “We didn’t know what KCHUNG would do, but they made a proposal, and they’re doing it. It’s something we couldn’t have imagined. And I think the same is true of Lauren Mackler and Public Fiction, even Alice Konitz and LAMO. We knew we wanted to represent that project, but what she actually has done in the gallery is something that’s completely her own invention.”

In a sense, the emphasis on alternate conduits of cultural discourse also provides a corrective of sorts to the marketplace orientation that tends to dominate the larger cultural capitals. “Even in New York, with... the art market, the part of it that exists on steroids and this kind of global consumption... you see artists just completely turning away from that,” Butler says. “Because most artists have nothing to do with that, you know? So you could say that it’s a political rejection, but it’s actually just like—if that art market’s not going to be a part of what we do, and isn’t going to pay attention, let’s do something else. And coming together to make spaces, to make collective practice, to make whatever, in response to that.”



Polytope Soap

2013

Channing Hansen

Handspun and dyed Merino, Corriedale, Cheviot, holographic polymers Romney, and Teeswater Locks, yak down, silk nolls, commercial thread, cotton, viscose, polyamide, and cedar

58" x 56"

Photo: Joshua White, courtesy of the artist and The Hammer Museum

If anything, the show evidences an eagerness to see LA's art world from the inside out, in terms of both how it functions and why it's so appealing, and conducive, to newcomers. "One of the things we've talked about is our own interest in trying to see the art world in the way that artists are seeing it. And especially artists who are recently arriving in the city," Holte explains. Butler adds, "You can be anywhere in the world, but—people are talking about coming to LA. There is a real interest in what's happening here. And a real international community." Continues Holte: "One of the things that makes Los Angeles attractive, even more than real estate, or you know, any of those kind of pragmatic or economic considerations, is the idea that things are still being defined and redefined. That it's a place where an artist can actually come and have an impact."

Among the numerous newcomers and emigres in the show are Gabriel Kuri, who was born in Mexico and lived 10 years in Brussels; Brazilian-born Clarissa Tossin, whose work addresses the utopian modernism of Oscar Niemeyer's capital city of Brasilia; and Piero Golia, who was born in Naples and arrived in 2005, whose best-known artwork in Los Angeles is a light atop the Standard Hotel in West Hollywood, which goes light or dark depending on if he's in town. So the show makes a conscious effort to represent a "regional global biennial" in Holte's words, starting from the premise that "the fluidity of the Los Angeles art scene has always been one of its most reliable characteristics," as Butler explains.

Yet within these parameters, it also makes pains to engage a gamut of diverse practices, some with potent visual impact, from Channing Hansen's elaborate, multi-colored "knitted paintings" derived from scientific and mathematical formulas, to Brian O'Connell's handsome gum bichromate photographs, which seem at first glance to mimic abstract modernist paintings. Born in Belgium, O'Connell has lived in Germany, Amsterdam, and New York, and was a participant in the 2010 survey "Greater New York." Beyond the recent grads and immigrants, older generations are represented by ceramicists Magdalena Suarez Frimkess and Michael Frimkess, photographer Judy Fiskin, represented here by a new video work, and 86-year old Marcia Hafif, who creates her seemingly monochromatic paintings as a form of installation art.

One of the more potent segments is another show-within-a-show, curated by David Frantz, on Tony Greene, who died of AIDS in 1990 at age 35. Also highlighted in the recent Whitney Biennial, and a new show currently at the MAK Center, Greene's work is contextualized here with an exhibit documenting the queer art community of the era, amid other, related artworks. As Holte observes, of Greene, but perhaps as well of countless other artists, and the quixotic, yet implicitly hopeful vision that impels shows such as these: "I think there's a kind of an important lesson in thinking about how quickly an artist, who might seem so central to his or her moment, and his or her community, can actually be forgotten."

"Made in LA" runs June 15 — Sept 7, 2014, at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. www.hammer.ucla.edu

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Los Angeles

Made in LA at The Hammer

This wonderful exhibition curated by Hammer chief curator, Connie Butler and independent curator, Michael Ned Holte showcases 35 Los Angeles artists who are either under-recognized or emerging, featuring new work in all media for the show. I had heard such great things about the first Hammer Biennial two years ago. But at the opening I heard the criticism that it was overhung, had too many artists and was spread out at different venues all over town. The work this year is all in one space, there are fewer artists by almost a half, and there was plenty of room for art to breathe.

The focus of the Hammer Biennial is an interest in highlighting communities of artists in LA, both now and in the past. One very interesting way to do that was with the show within the a show: *Tony Greene: Amid Voluptuous Calm*. Greene died of AIDS in 1990, and Curator David Frantz selected five of Greene's paintings to showcase in the context of his friends and peers in LGBT community.

This biennial introduced me to some new artists and displayed new work by others I love and have followed for a few years. On view until September 7, 2014



Brian O'Connell

Brian O'Connell's piece includes not only the final works hanging on the wall, but also the structures used to make them. This was one of my favorite galleries in the show. He used a gun-bichromate photographic technique in which a wooden structure is laid onto photographic paper that is laid in the sun which develops the pieces. The work is gorgeous. He often used outdated processes in the creation of his works because he is interested in creating conditions that increase the difficulty of producing a final artwork. Therefore, it is not just the final outcome but the entire effort and process that make up his artworks.



Made in L.A.

Hunter Drohojowska-Philp talks about the Biennial exhibition at the Hammer Museum.

Jul 03, 2014

FROM THIS EPISODE

Biennials, those exhibitions organized every two years to show case a range of contemporary talent, are always a mixed blessing and this year at the Hammer is no exception. In this case, the Hammer curator Connie Butler and independent and writer curator Michael Ned Holte, focused on a very real and very L.A. development: artists working as collectives. In addition to individual artists, they invited collectives to participate. The entrance lobby features a temporary studio for KCHUNG, better known for its open radio forum in Chinatown, and for Public Fiction, artists and writers present related works throughout the course of the exhibition. And James Kidd Studio has set up a stage in the courtyard for regular albeit casual performances by dancers. Among others including L.A. Museum of Art's riff on Frederick Kiesler's gallery designed for Peggy Guggenheim.

But what about the solitary and inspired vision of the individual artist? However out of fashion that idea is at the moment, I still found that to be the most memorable work in the exhibition.



Brian O'Connell

Photo by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp



Brian O'Connell

After Before Present/April 28-29, 2014
 -64 BP (VI, Brilliant Pink, 9:26 AM), 2014
 Photo by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

Brian O'Connell goes to great lengths to apply the techniques of gum bichromate process, usually associated with early modern photography, to achieve radiant abstractions of soft light and rainbow colors. The grid mechanism that he used to create the pieces is hung horizontally in direct relation to how the pictures were made but the pictures really speak for themselves, eloquently.



February 10, 2012 Written by Catherine Wagley

L.A. Expanded: Notes from the West Coast

A weekly column by Catherine Wagley

A grad school classmate of mine, one of the more resourceful people I've met, had a studio that looked like a carpenter's shop. Though not clean per se, it was functional and organized, with shelving units and a storage loft above a small couch. When he got stuck or couldn't decide why he'd gone to art school or wondered whether there was any use in having a "critical discourse" around his work, he'd build something useful: a surf board, a book shelf, a cabinet.

One late evening, I walked past his studio, and from a distance, it looked like everything was gone. Then from the doorway, I could see that he'd piled it all — his old paintings, the surf board he'd crafted, his metal shelving unit, wood, his office chair — up against the back wall. I sort of loved it. It seemed more like piled up frustration than outright anger, and the pile itself spoke the language of the art world it reacted against: two painted rectangles on the floor and the small, perspective-driven paintings at the base led into a towering triangle of stuff, all the trappings of a studio breakdown built up into a handsome structure. It was a not-quite-rejection, a sculpture made by someone who really just wants to make stuff, but can't quite get out of the realm of art-as-idea even if it frustrates him ("Then, They Told Me That The Most Current Theory is About a Rejection of Theory. . ." is what he titled the pile, once he'd decided it warranted a title). The New Museum's *Unmonumental* show in 2008 grappled, I think, with a similar problem: can you be unheroic, unambitious and still genuinely thoughtful?

Not-quite-rejection art has popped up from time to time these past few years but, right now, it seems suddenly rampant in this city. For Overduin and Kite's current exhibition, *Il Regalo*, the artist Math Bass made a series of overturned and sideways wood frames that look like easels, chairs or sawhorses and covered them in canvas, painted with picnic-umbrella-worthy stripes. "Body No Body Body" these sculpture/paintings are called. In Brian O'Connell's exhibition *Ways and Means*, on view at Redling Fine Art, the artist combined balsa wood and cement in oak frames, and the balsa and concrete butt up and over the edges like they're uncomfortable in their allotted space. At Carter and Citizen in Culver City, David McDonald's Self-Portraits are all strangely structural hodge-podge combines of netting, cement, re bar, paint, Palm Tree wood.



Brian O'Connell, "Concrete Painting no. 17," 2011. Courtesy Redling Fine Art.

There's an essay by jack-of-all-trades feminist Katie Roiphe that appeared in the Sunday Review of Books the first week of 2010. Roiphe was writing about how the male novelists of today (David Foster Wallace, Michael Chabon, Dave Eggers) have given up on that charged, power hungry sexuality of the male writers of previous generations (Roth, Updike, Mailer, etc.), and I think of her argument in relation to art surprisingly often (certainly, art's got its own great army of former chauvinist kings). If you take out the words "male" and "sex," you're left with something pretty generalizable. "Even the mildest display of . . . aggression is a sign of being overly hopeful, overly earnest or politically untoward. For a character to feel himself, even fleetingly, a conquering hero is somehow passé," she writes. To her this should be taken negatively, as evidence that we've lost real resolve and desire has been replaced by perpetually replenishing ambivalence. But I guess I think being a conquering hero is passé, and I'd rather look at art that's trying to find a new model even if that means swimming around in ambivalence a little longer.

**AROUND THE
GALLERIES**

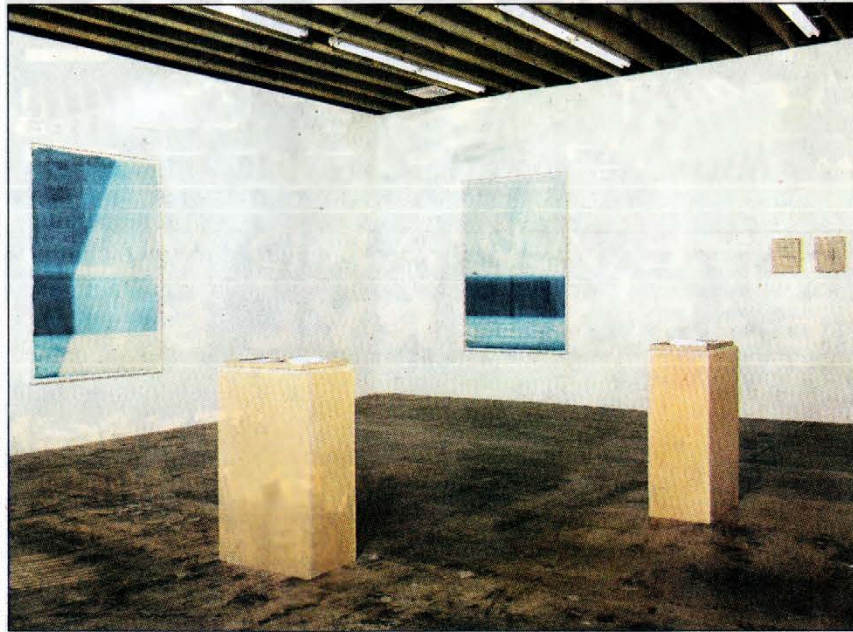
Attend to the process

SHARON MIZOTA

In his exhibition at Redling Fine Art, **Brian O'Connell** creates mysterious objects and images that hark back to the Process art of the 1960s, a movement that encompassed the work of Robert Morris, Eva Hesse and Richard Serra. What united these disparate artists was their emphasis on process, not in terms of skilled artistic techniques, but in exploring the fundamental nature and behavior of materials.

In this vein, O'Connell uses concrete, cyanotypes (otherwise known as blueprints) and non-carbon transfer paper to convey a fascination with the basic forces of weight, pressure, light and sequence. To create a series of small wall pieces — reliefs, really — O'Connell poured concrete onto thin strips of wood laid side by side. The strips bowed under the weight of the concrete to different degrees, creating a variegated surface composed of arcs of various heights. Turned up sideways on the walls, some with bits of wood still attached, the pieces are mysterious protrusions but are literally a concrete record of gravity at work.

The works in another series look like large gestural abstractions in various shades of blue. Their angular shapes suggest deep shadows falling across stairs, or the horizon of the ocean. But they're actually rather like sun prints of a particular architectural space: a James Turrell installation at the Museum of Modern Art's PS1. Known for such "skyspaces" — serene rooms with part of the ceiling left open — Turrell's work becomes a kind of cam-



BRICA WILCOX Redling Fine Art

BRIAN O'CONNELL'S "Ways and Means" exhibition at Redling Fine Art recalls the Process art of the 1960s. Material used includes concrete and blueprints.

era in which O'Connell exposed the paper, brushed with photosensitive chemicals. In this sense, blueprint technology that is traditionally used to plan the structure of a building is used to make an impression of its skin instead.

The third body of work in the exhibition comprises piles of drawings on non-carbon transfer paper, a substance that deposits pigment from one layer to the next when pressure is applied, much like the triplicate forms used for handwritten purchase orders and receipts.

O'Connell uses it by the stack, drawing on the top layer with a stylus that leaves no mark but whose impression creates a drawing on the next layer. He then turns the page and augments that drawing, the result of which appears on the third page, and so on.

As the drawings progress down the stack — they're displayed as loose leaves to flip through in linen boxes — the uppermost images gradually fade from view as new ones emerge and disappear. This is a neat process, and O'Connell has even designed a fancy custom table with spring-loaded compartments that keep the top

sheet of each stack level with the tabletop. But the drawings themselves — abstract shapes, architectural drawings and writings — are nothing much. The piece is more about the process of thought: how one thing leads to another and another, until the initial idea that started it all is unrecognizable, or simply gone.

O'Connell's emphasis on process may be retro, but it's a timely reminder to pay closer attention to the elemental forces that surround us.

Redling Fine Art, 6757 Santa Monica Blvd., (323) 230-7415, through March 3. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.redlingfineart.com

It's a strain to hear murmurs

To say that **Antonio Vega Macotela's** first solo exhibition in the U.S. speaks softly is to miss the point. The Mexican artist's spare installation at Steve Turner Contemporary highlights acts of communication that occur just below the surface of everyday life, in particular

a distorted writing system used by Mexican drug traffickers, and the secret dreams of soldiers. The results are intriguing, but in the end, perhaps a little too quiet.

Macotela placed ads in Mexican newspapers using an anamorphic writing system: The letters in the ads can be read only from an extreme angle. In the exhibition, the papers are pinned to the wall, so reading the ads involves kneeling (cushions are provided), and pressing your body uncomfortably against the vertical surface. Macotela succeeds in manipulating the viewer into a penitent posture, but the reward for our submission is slight. The messages, still rather difficult to read, are all versions of the same sentence in Spanish, translated: "Here, this way even, I murmur." There is no secret to be learned, only the recognition that another level of communication exists beneath the public babble of the news.

The show's sole video work is similarly frustrating: a series of close-ups of lips mouthing inaudible words. We're told the speakers are soldiers in the Mexican military recounting their dreams, but why can't the

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MODERN PAINTERS

Brian O'Connell

Protocinema // September 14–October 20



Openings to the water..., 2012.

O'Connell's 23-foot-long sculpture *Openings to the water...*, 2012, overwhelms the unused ground-level shop it occupies in Tophane, a neighborhood

with an industrial history. The artist bought an old boat, covered it with concrete, and subsequently removed the wooden skeleton. The sculpture still hosts the remnants of the original vessel, complicating our perception of the object as a sculptural form, an anti-monument, or simply trash. The unfinished aesthetic of the piece mimics that of the temporary exhibition space. —OE



Tophane'nin ortasında beton bir tekne

MÜGE BÜYÜKTALAŞ

sergi



O'Connell,
20 Ekim'e
kadar H.M.K.
Sokak'ta

Betondan bir tekne, Tophane'nin ortasında. Sardığı ahşap omurganın etrafını inatçı bir tavırla kaplayan beton, kalıbından kurtularak Brian O'Connell'ın 'Suya Açılan Delikler' isimli heykel çalışmasına hayat ver-

miş. Tophane'deki mekânda (Hacı Mimi Külhani Sok. No. 1/1 Tophane, Depo'yu biraz geçince) Protocinema aracılığıyla gerçekleşen gösterim, **Brian O'Connell'in Türkiye'deki ilk sergisi**. Heykel toplamda üç aylık bir atölye çalışması sonucu inşa edilmiş. Çalışma aynı zamanda sanat öğrencilerinin katılımıyla yürütüldüğü için bir yandan da bir nevi ders niteliğinde geçmiş. Ortaya çıkan sonuç bir heykelin anatomik ve varoluşsal sürecinin haritasını çıkarırken, kalıp olarak kullanılan ahşap teknenin geçmişi adeta betondaki çizik ve oyuntulardan okunur hale gelmiş.

Sanatçı, teknenin metaforik olarak birçok insansı özelliği kendinde barındırmakta olduğunu söylüyor. **İnşa sürecini doğuma, eskiyerek yok olma halini ölüme gönderme yapan, omurgası ve derisiyle insansı bir bütünü temsil eden tekne** bir isme ve hatta insansı sıfatlara da sahip olabilmekte.

Heykelin kalıbının alındığı tekne, 1960'larda terk edilmiş bir balıkçı teknesi. Sanatçı heykelde, dokuz yıllık araştırma sırasında rast geldiği terk edilmiş tekne üzerinden Bizans'tan bu yana İstanbul'dan geçen hikâyelerin arkeolojisini de irdeliyor.

Brian O'Connell ile Söyleşi "Suya Açılan Delikler..." Üzerine

NEW YORK VE İSTANBUL'DA SERGİLER DÜZENLEYEN BİR DENEY OLARAK TANIMLANAN PROTOCINEMA SANATÇILAR İÇİN İMKÂN ÜRETİYOR, FARKLI ALANLARDA HEM YENİ HEM VAR OLAN PROJELERİ, SANATÇIYA GÖRE BELİRLENEN GEÇİCİ VE/YA DA KULLANILMAYAN MEKÂNLARDA GÖSTERİYOR. SANATÇI BRIAN O'CONNELL DA "SUYA AÇILAN DELİKLER..." ÇALIŞMASINI İSTANBUL'DA ÜRETTİ VE 14 EYLÜL-20 EKİM 2012 ARASINDA TOPHANE'DEKİ GEÇİCİ BİR MEKÂNDA SERGİLEDİ.

MİNE HAYDAROĞLU BRIAN O'CONNELL

Fotoğraflar | Potographs: Sanatçı
ve Protocinema izniyle | Courtesy
of the artist and Protocinema

Mine Haydaroglu: SUYA AÇILAN DELİKLER... başlıklı işiniz iki açıdan ilgimi çekiyor: Matematiksel yanı; heykel formunun kendisi; ve kültürel yanı, çünkü İstanbul'un tasvir ettiğiniz cinsten teknelerle yakın ilişkisi var. Elbette, İstanbul teknelerin "sahibidir" demiyorum, bu tür imaların tümüne karşıyız, ama bildiğiniz gibi tekne bu şehirde ya da bu coğrafyada neredeyse arketip bir nesne. Bu nesneyi neden seçtiğinizi ve en çok hangi özelliklerinin sizi ilgilendirdiğini anlatır mısınız?

Brian O'Connell: SUYA AÇILAN DELİKLER... çalışmaların pek çoğu gibi, form ve kültür, malzeme ve tarih arasındaki sınırdan varoluyor ve tarifleniyor, çok bire bir anlamda. Bu işimi yapmak için kullandığım tekne şeklinin bir genellemesi, bu işin dış formu. Tekneyi Kumkapı'da bırakıldığı yerde bir tekne ustasından hurda olarak satın aldım. (Avrupa'nın en geniş ahşap tekne arkeolojik kazılarının yapıldığı alandan çok uzak olmayan bir yerden). İşin içyüzeyinde, eski teknenin dış yüzeyini bir kalıp olarak koruyor, bir negatifi gibi, detaylarıyla.

İçerisi orijinal teknenin tarihini yansıtıyor; denize açılan bir tekne olarak geçmişinden çok şeyler anlatıyor (ufak tamiratlar, doğayla ve ticaretle olan her türden karşılaşmalar). Benim kalıbını döktüğüm türden ahşap tekneler Boğaziçi'nde çalışan ve çok sık rastlanan balıkçı tekneleri. Basitçe *tekne* deniyor bunlara; tekne yapan ustadan ustaya geçen bir marangozluk ürünüler, böylece her bir tekne standart bir formu benzersiz şekilde tekrarlıyor denebilir.

Sorunuzda matematikle heykel formunu birleştirmeniz çok uygun; çünkü bu tür formlar kodlanmış planlar yerine orana dayanan matematik bilgisine dayanır. Bunlarda kullanılan yöntem, belirgin ama şaşırtıcı biçimde küçük orantısız değerlere dayalı pratik ve estetik bilgisinin bir birleşimidir. *Tekne* sanki bir fabrikadan çıkmış görünse de –ilk bakışta o kadar benzerler birbirlerine– her bir bitmiş teknede sayısız ufak farklar vardır. Bu farklar her birinin üretildiği dönemi ve o dönemin ekonomik, malzeme ve estetik koşullarını yansıtmamanın yanı sıra Boğaziçi'nde kullanmak üzere

Brian O'Connell
Suya Açılan
Delikler...
|Openings to the
water...
2012
Enstalasyon
|Installation,
Protocinema,
İstanbul.
Courtesy
Protocinema,
İstanbul/New
York, Redling Fine
Art, Los Angeles
Foto | Photo:
Batu Tezyüksel



yapıldıkları yeri ve onu inşaat edenleri de işaretler.

Böylece, bu tekne bu şehre ve bu coğrafyaya bağlı. İstanbul uluslararası konumu açısından o kadar çarpıcı ki. Global taşımacılıkla ilişkisi bildiğim başka hiçbir şehre benzemiyor. Şehrin içinden geçen sulara Suezmax tankerlerinin yanında ufakık deniz taşıtlarını gördüğümde hep hayran kalıyorum. Belki benim bu teknelere duyduğum ilgi, daha doğrusu bunlardan biriyle yaptığım iş, bir ticaret merkezinden diğerine seyahat ederken yaşadığım bir deneyimden kaynaklanıyordur.

Bu projeyi ilk kez, birkaç yıl önce New York'un havalimanı JFK'de otururken düşündüm; bir arkadaşın gelmesini beklerken, karşımdaki mimarı Eero Saarinen olan TWA terminaline bakıyordum. Yaklaşık on yıl önce terk edilen bu ikonik terminal şimdi restore ediliyordu. Yapının beton kavislerine bakarken orijinal

Mine Haydaroglu: Your piece OPENINGS TO THE WATER... is intriguing to me in two aspects: The mathematical side of it; the sculptural form itself; and the cultural side since Istanbul has an intimate relationship with boats such as the one you depict. I am certainly not saying that Istanbul "owns" boats, we are against any such implications of course, but as you know the boat is almost an archetypal object from this city or from this geography. So could you please elaborate on why you chose this object and what aspects of it were you most interested in?

Brian O'Connell: OPENINGS TO THE WATER..., like much of my work, exists at and is defined by the border between form and culture, and between material and history, in a very literal way. The outer form is a generalization of the very specific shape of the boat from which it was made – a boat I bought as scrap from a shipwright

who had left it grounded at the harbor in Kumkapi (not far from the site of Europe's largest archeological excavation of wooden ships). The interior of the piece preserves, in negative detail, the old boat's exterior surface – as a mould. The interior reveals much of the original's history as a seafaring vessel (brush-ups, encounters of all kinds with nature and commerce). Wooden boats like the one I cast are common working and fishing boats along the Bosphorus. Called simply *tekne*, they are the result of carpentry and maintenance passed down from boat-builder to boat-builder, so that every boat reiterates a standard form uniquely.

That you combine mathematics with sculptural form in your question is apt because such forms are the result of a mathematical knowledge-base that relies on a rote use of proportion rather than a codified plan. The method employed is a



Brian O'Connell
Suya Açılan
Delikler...
|Openings to the
water... (detaylar
| details)
2012
Enstalasyon |
Installation,
Protocinema,
İstanbul.
Courtesy
Protocinema,
İstanbul/New
York, Redling Fine
Art, Los Angeles
Foto | Photo: Batu
Tezyüksel





TWA-JFK.jpg
Eero Saarinen
TWA Uçuş
Merkezi | Trans
World Flight
Center, yapımı
| build. 1962
Foto: Brian
O'Connell,
Temmuz | July
2001

combination of practical and aesthetic know-how reliant on a specific yet surprisingly small set of proportional values. Though *tekne* might look as if they come off a factory line somewhere – they're that similar at first glance – there are countless subtle differences in each completed boat. These differences reflect the era in which each is produced and the economic, material, and aesthetic conditions of its time, as well as the precise location along the length of the Bosphorus for which it is intended, and the inclinations of the builders who make it.

So this specific type of boat is bound to this city and this geography. Istanbul is so striking for its intercontinental location. Its relationship to global transport resembles that of no other city I know. I often marvel at the way small wooden craft ply the same waters as the Suezmax tankers that cut directly through the city. Maybe

formların ne kadar muvakkaten yapıldığını daha önce hiç fark etmemiş olduğumu anladım. Dikdörtgen inşaatlar için kesimler yapmaya alışkın marangozların, rastgele görünen ahşap tahtaları kesip garip çizgiler boyunca yerleştirmelerini görebiliyordum. Büyük ihtimalle artık hayatta olmayan işçilerin hem maddi hem manevi emekleri, yaklaşık elli yıl önce inşa edilen bu bir zamanların fütüristik yapısının muazzam heykelsi formunda kazılıydı.

2009 yılında, Los Angeles'a çok uzak olmayan bir plajda yaptığım beton kayığı düşünmeye başladım. Bu 4 metre uzunluğundaki kayık Bas Jan Ader'in 1975'te denize açıldığı ve sonrasında kaybolduğu kayığa benzer bir kayıktı. 1970 tarihli *Whole Earth Catalog*'da beton kayık yapımı tarifi bulmuştum, ama güçlendirilmiş betonun kullanıldığı ilk patentli kayık yapımı aslında 1855'e tarihlenir ve Joseph Lambot'ya aittir. Ağırıklı

olarak 2. Dünya Savaşı sırasında askeri nedenlerle kullanılan beton tekneler 1950'li yılların egzantrik yat yapımcılarının sıradışı bir hobisi oldu. Diğer büyük boy modernist formlar da benzer bir yol izlemiştir. (Bu noktada aklıma Tacita Dean'ın aynı isimli filminde belgelenen "Sound Mirrors" geliyor; bunların teknolojisi ve formu Saarinen'in terminaliyle bir tür akrabalık taşır.) Beton tekne yapımının geç-1960'lı yılların karşı-kültürü tarafından pratik olmasa bile işlevsel uygulamaları araştırmak istediğim bir konuydu. Tabii ki, form aracılığıyla tarihsel göndermelerin yeniden konumlandırılmasıyla da ilgileniyordum. Bunun için Ader'in teknesini yeniden ama daha farklı bir sonuca varmak için kullandım. Tekne tamamlandığında, Los Angeles'ta halka açık bir marina suya indirildi. Bir grup insan –çoğunluğu arkadaşım ve başka sanatçılar– o günü marina tur atarak geçirdiler.

Brian O'Connell
Concrete Boat
Project [Beton
Tekne Projesi]
2009
Portland betonu
ve plaj kumu |
Portland Cement
and Beach Sand
Los Angeles, CA
yaklaşık
4x1.7x1.7 m.



Bu önceki tekne projesinde cevapsız kalan (daha doğrusu fark edilen) şey malzemenin yüzeyi ile onun üretim yolunun ilişkisiydi. Bu soru restore edilmekte olan TWA Terminali'ne bakarken tekrar aklıma geldi. "Alternatif" inşaat yöntemlerini ele alan sonraki projelerde, örneğin *rammed-earth* (beton ile toz-toprak karışımı) bina yapımında, işçilerin inşaa yöntemleri ile emeğin oynadığı rol –hem benim hem de çalıştığım yerde eksiden yaşayanların rolü– daha merkezi bir konuma geldi. Böyle, eski modernist ikondaki görünürde şişirme zanaata bakarken, büyük formlar peşindeki bir zanaatkârın verdiği kararların –bir mimar tarafından dikte edilen, örneğin– nasıl bir nesnenin tarihi boyunca devam ettiğini merak etmeye, düşünmeye başladım.

Kullanılmış, yıpranmış, tamir görmüş ve güçlendirilmiş ahşap tekne örneğinde; hem nesnenin, hem onu yapanların hem de onu kullananların

it's fitting that my interest in these boats, or more accurately what I have done with one of them, arose out of an experience I had while traveling from one trade hub to another.

The origins for this project came from sitting at JFK airport a few years ago, with Eero Saarinen's TWA terminal ahead of me as I waited for a friend to arrive. Abandoned some ten years earlier, the iconic terminal was now being restored. Staring at the cement curves of the structure, I realized I had never paid adequate attention to just how provisionally the original forms had been made. I could see carpenters accustomed to rectangular construction cutting and fitting what seemed like haphazard wooden boards into place along strange lines. The labor, both material and mental, of workers now most likely dead was imbedded in the enormous sculptural form of this once futuristic building some fifty years later.

I began thinking about a cement boat I had made in 2009 on a beach not far from Los Angeles. This boat, about 4-meters long, was a rough approximation of the boat sailed by Bas Jan Ader in 1975, in which he disappeared at sea. I had discovered concrete-boat-building instructions in a copy of the *Whole Earth Catalog* from 1970, but boat building was actually the first patented use for reinforced concrete, by *Joseph Lambot in 1855*. Used primarily for military applications in WWII, cement boats became a hobby for eccentric yacht builders in the fifties. Other large-scale modernist forms had followed a similar path (I'm reminded of the "Sound Mirrors" documented in Tacita Dean's film of the same name, whose technology and form seem to show a sort of kinship with Saarinen's terminal). The countercultural appropriation of concrete boat-building for functional if not practical application by the

late-1960s was something I wanted to explore. I was also interested in the transposition of historical reference through form – re-using Ader’s hull to a very different and less tragic end. When complete, the boat was placed in the water at a public marina in Los Angeles. A group of people – mostly friends and other artists – spent the afternoon touring around the marina.

One thing that remained unanswered (that is to say, discovered) by this earlier boat project was the relationship of the surface of the material to the means of its production, and this question arose for me again as I stared on at the TWA terminal under restoration. In subsequent projects that similarly took up ‘alternative’ construction methods, such as rammed-earth building, the role of material indications of the works’ construction methods as well as the role of labor – both my own and that of past occupiers of the spaces in which I work – became more central. So as I sat looking at the seemingly shoddy craft of a Modernist icon I began thinking about how the pragmatic decisions made by a craftsman in pursuit of larger forms – those dictated by an architect, for example – are maintained over the course of an object’s history.

In the case of a wooden boat, which is used, damaged, repaired, and augmented over time, traces of the working history of both the object and its builders and users are preserved on its surfaces as in almost nothing else. Capturing the distance between such a history and my own production became something of great interest to me, and it is the space that OPENINGS TO THE WATER... represents. For my Istanbul work, I could not pretend to have the know-how acquired by Istanbul’s boat-builders in their apprenticeships. So instead of the carpentry workshop of a *tekne* boat-builder, I set up a concrete-boat-builder’s workshop, and with the help

izleri başka hiçbir materyalin yüzeyinde olmadığı kadar korunuyor. Böyle bir tarih ile benim üretimim arasındaki mesafe bana çok ilginç gelmeye başladı ve işte bu mesafe SUYA AÇILAN DELİKLER...’de temsil ediliyor. İstanbul’daki çalışmamda, İstanbullu tekne yapımcılarının çıraklıkları döneminde öğrendikleri bilgiye sahip olduğumu söyleyemem. Dolayısıyla, bir tekne yapımcısının marangoz atölyesi yerine beton tekne yapımcısı atölyesi kurdum. Sabancı Üniversitesi’nde çalışmalarını bitiren sekiz sanatçı arkadaşın yardımıyla tekne formunda bir kayak heykeli yaptım. 2012 yılının yaz aylarında, sonunda adı SUYA AÇILAN DELİKLER... olacak çalışmayı yaptık. İç yüzeyi ile dış formu arasındaki birkaç santim beton, teknenin maddi tarihi ile bizim yaptığımız büyük boy heykelsi sonuç arasındaki mesafeyi ölçüyor.

M.H.: Protocinema gibi bir mekânda çalışmayı sergilemenin avantajları ve deavantajları neler? Bu tür bir çalışmanın, burada düşünülen, araştırılanların ve beklentilerin son kertede, bir süreliğine bulunduğu yerle kısıtlanmadığına inanıyorum; Protocinema’nın sanata yaklaşımıyla benzerlikler taşıdığınızı düşünüyorum. Bu nedenle, siz sınırlarınızı, bir sanatçı olarak alanınızın sınırlarını nelerde görüyorsunuz? Belki buradaki iş ve deneyiminiz üzerinden bunu açabilirsiniz.

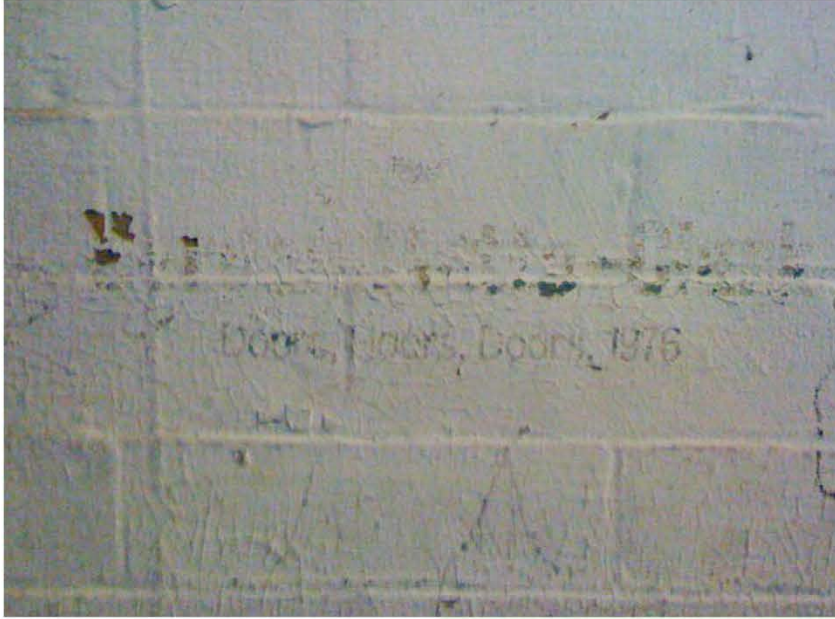
B.O.: SUYA AÇILAN DELİKLER... gözlem, bağlantı ve tesadüflerin oldukça benzersiz bir şekilde bir araya gelişiyse oluştu. Bu kesişmenin merkezinde Mari Sprito’nun 2011 yılında Protocinema’yı başlatmaya karar vermesi ve benim son dokuz on yıldır İstanbul’a yaptığım seyahatler var. Mari ve ben uzun bir süredir, New York’tan tanışıyoruz; dolayısıyla İstanbul’da birlikte çalışmak fikri bize çok doğal göründü. Ama sizin sorunuzun daha derin bir konuya işaret

ettiğini anlıyorum: Üretici, izleyici ve nesnenin kendisi açısından sanat nerede başlar, nerede biter?

Ben sanatın ağırlıklı olarak, belki de tamamen konudan konuya atlayan bir pratik olduğuna inanıyorum. Bu demek değil ki sanat bazen nesneleri içermez, hatta arada bir fetiş haline getirmez; ama bunu konuşma esnasında, tartışırken yapar; malzemenin ve hatta disiplinler açısından sınırlarının ötesine uzanarak yapar. Protocinema ile ben buna inanıyoruz ve aynı düşünüyoruz. Bu ne demektir: Sanat; yeri ve zamanı sorgulamak için yer değiştirmeye/yerinden edilmeye bir strateji olarak bağlı, iletişimsel, eleştirel bir mecra olabilir. Teknenin, yer değiştirmeye bire bir alakalı bir vasıta olduğunu söylemek yaptığımızın metafor olarak anlaşılmasında belki biraz aşırıya kaçabilir, dolayısıyla başka bir vakanın gerçeklerine değineceğim ve bunu aklımda tutarak SUYA AÇILAN DELİKLER...’e döneceğim.

2010 yılında New York’taki MoMA_PS1’de bir iş üretmeye davet edilmişim. Binanın 1970’lerden bu yana ve daha öncesinde de bir devlet okulu olarak sanat sergileri ve atölyeler açısından önemli tarihi aklımdaydı. “Kunsthalle” adı verilmiş büyük açık mekânın içindeki bir oda bana çalışma mekânı olarak verilmişti. Bu oda yaklaşık 5 x 5 metrelik bir kutuydu, iki dizi kolonun duvarların içine gizlendirilmesiyle inşa edilmişti. Benzer kolonlar büyük mekânda görünürdeydi. Bina tarihinin, mesela Alanna Heiss’in 1976’daki ünlü “Rooms” (Odalar) sergisinde Gordon Matta-Clarke gibi sanatçılar tarafından sadece mekân olarak değil malzeme olarak da kullanıldığını bildiğim için, o dönemle, binanın tümünde o dönemden kalma izlerle oynamaya karar verdim. Mesela, Matta-Clarke’in işindeki duvar yazısının izi duvarın boyasında silik de olsa hâlâ görünüyordu; ama sanırım daha sonra üstü boyandı.

1976'da "Rooms"
(Odalar)
sergisinde Gordon
Matta-Clarke'in
işinden kalan iz.
MoMA PS1,
New York.



Benim katkım, mekânın içinde aynı oranlarda iki kolon yapmaktan oluşuyordu; bunlar mekânın içinde yaklaşık 1.5 metre kaydırılmıştı. Bu kolonlar *rammed-earth* (beton ile toz-toprak karışımı) kullanılarak yapıldı. Ticari olarak satılan ve bitki ekiminde kullanılan Miracle-Gro adında toprak karışımı kullanıldı bu sefer, çünkü New York'ta, Queens'in orta yerinde yerel toprak demek, yerel bina-yapım zincir mağazasından satın alınan toprak demektir. Önemli bir detay; benim inşa ettiğim kolonlar tavana kadar varmıyordu, 2 inç – yaklaşık 5 cm– kısaydılar. Bu yolla, mekâna özgü, sanat tarihsel referanslı müdahalemin mantığı tersine çevriyordu ki böylece benim desteksiz kolonlarım (NOT)ARCHITECTURE FOR THE KUNSTHALLE, PS1 (2010) olarak (işin adı da buydu) aslında Rosalind Krauss'un 1979 tarihli mimari ve peyzaj karşıtlığını birleştiren heykellerdi, ne bir fazlası ne bir azı. Bu kolonlar sergi süresince, yani 6 ay boyunca, varoldular, iklim gibi koşullarla zaman içinde değişim gösterdiler. Nihayetinde sergiden kaldırıldılar ve müzenin zemininde bitki alanlarını doldurmakta kullanıldılar.

of eight fellow artists (completing their studies at Sabancı University), sculpted a boat based on the *tekne* form. Over the summer months of 2012, we produced what became OPENINGS TO THE WATER... The few centimeters of concrete between its internal surface and its external form measure the interval between the material history of the boat that it had been and the large-scale sculptural result of our labor.

M.H.: What are the pros and cons of exhibiting this work in a space like Protocinema? I do believe that the final manifestation of a work like this, all the ideas and research and the expectations that go into it are not restricted to the space it inhabits for a while; I am quite certain your and Protocinema's approach to art bear resemblances. So where do you see the limits, the boundaries of your space as an artist, maybe you can explain this via this particular piece and exhibition.

B.O.: OPENINGS TO THE WATER developed from a rather unique set of intersecting observations, connections, and accidents. The central

intersection that made it possible was Mari Spirito's decision to begin Protocinema in 2011 and my own travels to Istanbul over the past nine or so years. Mari and I had known one another for quite some time in New York so the idea of working together in Istanbul seemed natural. But I feel that your question gets at a deeper point, namely, where does a work of art begin and end, for its producer, for a viewer, for an object?

I'm a strong believer that art exists primarily, perhaps solely, as a discursive practice. This is not to say that it does not involve, even at times fetishize objects, but that to the extent that it does anything it does so in conversation, in debate, and through extension beyond its material and even disciplinary limits. This is a belief that I think Protocinema and I share. It means that art can exist as a communicative, critical medium that relies on displacement as a strategy to interrogate place and time. To say that a boat is a literal vehicle of displacement is perhaps going a bit far toward a metaphorical understanding of what we have done, so I'll stick to the facts of another case and return to OPENINGS TO THE WATER... with this in mind.

In 2010 I was asked to participate in MoMA_PS1's Greater New York. I could not avoid the fact of the building's important history as an art exhibition and workspace since the 1970s and as a public school before that. I had been given a space to work which was a room built within an otherwise large open space called the "Kunsthalle." This room was a box approximately 5 meters by 5 meters, constructed by concealing two sets of columns within its walls. Identical columns were visible in the larger space. Knowing the history of the building not only as the site but the material used by artists such as Gordon Matta-Clarke in Alanna Heiss's famous 1976 "Rooms" show,

I decided to play on that era, the markings of which remained throughout the building. For example, the impression of the wall text for Matta-Clarke's piece was still just visible in the paint on the wall, though I think it has now been painted over.

My contribution consisted of building two columns of the same proportions, which were displaced by about 1.5 meters inside the space. These columns were made using rammed earth – a mixture of cement and dirt. In this case, the dirt used was a commercially available planting mix call Miracle-Gro, since the notion of using local soil in the middle of Queens, New York seemed answered most directly by purchasing bags from the local building-supply chain. Importantly, my columns did not reach the ceiling. Rather, they ended about 2 inches – about 5 centimeters – short. This way the logic of site-specific, art-historically referenced architectural intervention was inverted so that my non-supporting columns were in fact nothing more, and nothing less, than sculptures made by conflating Rosalind Krauss's 1979 opposition of architecture and landscape as (NOT)ARCHITECTURE FOR THE KUNSTHALLE, PSI (2010), which was the title of the work. These columns remained through the six-month duration of the show, changing over time due to climactic, among other, conditions. Ultimately they were removed and used to fill planter-spaces on the museum's grounds.

So, returning to OPENINGS TO THE WATER... and the similarities between my own practice and Protocinema, I think it is fair to say that we share a logic. We both assume that research and reference become manifest within finite periods. However, exhibitions extend both back through the specificities of the work done and the locations chosen,

SUYA AÇILAN DELİKLER...’e ve benim pratiğimle Protocinema arasındaki benzerliklere dönersek, sanırım benzer bir mantıkla çalışıyoruz. Her ikimiz de araştırma ve kaynakların belli sürelerde geçerli olduğuna inanıyoruz. Ama sergiler için özelliklikleri ve seçilen yerler aracılığıyla hem geri tarihlere uzanıyor, yapıma devam edilip yer üstüne yer bildirildiği için ileriye gidiyor. Bu tür sergilere yer bulmak dış ekonomik koşullara ve Protocinema’nın çok çalışmasına bağlıdır. Bu da herhangi bir sanatsal prodüksiyon gerçekleştirme ya da alma girişiminin geçici ve zamansal doğasına güç katar. Benzer bir şekilde, orijinal teknenin önemli parçaları yerlerinde duruyorlar; serginin temsil ettiği geçici ve uzamsal askıda olma halini göstermenin bir yolu bu. Herşey gibi bu parça da zamanın ve uzamın akışı içinde sadece geçici olarak şu halinde. Protocinema da bu tür projeleri anlıyor, destekliyor ve bu gerçeklikten besleniyor.

M.H.: Şu metni anlatabilir misiniz; bu işin ve serginin nasıl bir parçası? *Kapadım suya açılan delikleri / Aradım tamir ettiğim çatlakları ve eksik parçaları / İnşa edenin kızı tarafından satılmış bir tekne, bir balıkçının teknesi / Onu oraya bırakan gemi yapımıcısına.*

B.O.: Kayıklar, özellikle de tekneler, garip bir biçimde heykelsiler ve hem oran hem de onları tariflediğimiz kelimeler açısından bedenle alakalılar: Kayıklar “yaşar”, “ölür”, “omurgaları”, “derileri” vardır, “şişman”, “sıksa”, “zayıf”, “güzel”dirler ve tabii ki isimleri vardır. Teknelerin yasal isimleri, bunun yanı sıra, onlara isim verme, denize indirme ve emekliye ayrılma törenleri vardır. Bu hayatlarla hikâyeler doğar. Babil duvar yazılarına kadar geri giden bir tarihte, denize indirilen gemilerin hikâyeleri hep yazılmalıdır.

Benim işimin tam ismi bir hikâyeler hikâyesi, bir makro-anlatı,

bir destan, hatta karakterleri destansı. Gılgamış’ın (MÖ 1150 civarı) 11. tabletindeki hikâyenin daha eski bir versiyonunda Utnapiştım, Ubartutu’nun oğlu Şuruppak’ın hikâyesini anlatır, ona “Evi yık ve tekne inşa et” denmiştir; benim seçtiğim alıntı Robert G. Skerret tarafından hazırlanan 1919 tarihli *The Rudder* başlıklı kitapta “The Why and Wherefore of the Christening of Ships”ın ilk iki satırı. Skerrett, bu parçayı Pere Scheil’in MÖ 2140’ta tercüme ettiğini yazıyor ve içinde “*Kapadım suya açılan delikleri / Aradım tamir ettiğim çatlakları ve eksik parçaları*” geçiyor.

Bu parça Gılgamış metnine çok benziyor ki o da üzerine önceki hikâyelerin üzerine yazıldığı bir parşömendir. Ancak, ben buna gemilerin denize indirilirken şampanyanın kullanımını açıkladığını iddia eden online şecerelerin dışında bir referans bulamadım – bunu ABD Deniz Kuvvetleri referans vermeden kabul ediyor. Diğer bir deyişle, bu sözcükler bir rivayetin parçası; ağızdan ağza geçerek ve spekülasyonlarla sürüyor, tıpkı beton teknemi yapmak için kullandığım orijinal kayığın kaynağı gibi (“*İnşa edenin kızı tarafından satılmış bir tekne, bir balıkçının teknesi, Onu oraya bırakan gemi yapımıcısına*”).

Mitolojik tekneleri ve haklarında az şey bildiğim tekne gövdelerindeki çizikleri aktaran çivi yazısı yazıtlar, hikâyeler sadece. Kendisinden hurda halinde tekneyi satın aldığım tersanecinin bana anlattığı tek şey o tekneyi yapan kişinin kızı tarafından alındığıydı. Bunların bir parça da olsa malzemenin üstüne kazılması (biri dilbilimsel diğeri dizinsel olarak), her ikisinin de bu deniz aracının üretimine ya da bir şekilde tamirine gönderme yapması ve her ikisinin de eldeki nesnenin ötesine işaret etmesi, uygun bir başlık sundular sanki; çünkü hepimizin bildiği gibi, anlatının gücü sadece anımsamayla değil yansıtmayla da alakalıdır.

and forward through continued engagement, building one location upon another. Siting such exhibitions is dependant on outside economic and real estate forces, and a lot of hard work on Protocinema's part. This seems to reinforce the temporary and temporal nature of any attempt to produce or receive artistic production. Similarly, significant parts of the original boat remain lodged in the piece as a way of indicating the state of temporal and spatial suspension that the exhibition represents. The piece is, like everything, only temporarily in its state, within a flow of time and space. Projects like Protocinema seem to understand, support, and thrive on this reality.

M.H.: Can you talk about this text; how is it a part of the piece and the exhibition?

Openings to the water I stopped / searched for cracks and the wanting parts I fixed /

A boat sold by the daughter of its builder, a fisherman, / to a shipwright who left it there

B.O.: Boats, and *tekne* in particular, are sculptural in a strange way and very much about the body in scale as well as in the terms we use to describe them – boats “live”, “die”, have “spines”, “skins”, are “fat”, “skinny”, “ugly”, “beautiful”, and, of course, carry names. Boats are not only considered persons under law but there are elaborate rituals used in naming, launching, and retiring them. With these lives come stories. Such traditions are evident as far back as Babylonian tablet inscriptions recounting the preparation of a ship for launch.

The full title of my work is a story of stories, a macro-narrative, an epic, even, concerning characters. Said to be an earlier version of the story on tablet XI of Gilgamesh (c. 1150 BCE), in which Utanapishtim recounts the story of Shuruppak, son of

Ubartutu, who is told, “Tear down the house and build a boat!”, the text from which I took the first two lines of the title comes from a 1919 publication, “The Why and Wherefore of the Christening of Ships” by Robert G. Skerrett in the *The Rudder*. Skerrett cites Pere Scheil as having translated a fragment, dated to 2140 BCE, which includes: “*Openings to the water I stopped / searched for cracks and the wanting parts I fixed*”.

This fragment is very similar to the text of Gilgamesh which is known to be a palimpsest of previous stories. However, I have been unable to find reference to it outside of the repetitive cycles of uncited online genealogies that purport to explain the use of champagne in ship christenings – an account that the US Navy adopts without citation. In other words, these words are a thing of rumor, maintained by conversation and speculation just like the origin of the boat I used (“A boat sold by the daughter of its builder, a fisherman, / to a shipwright who left it there”) to make my concrete boat.

The cuneiform inscriptions recounting mythological boats and the scratches in the hull of a boat, about which I know so little, are but stories. And the shipwright from whom I bought a boat as scrap could only tell me he had acquired it from the daughter of the fisherman who built it. That these are histories partially inscribed in material (one linguistically and one indexically), that they both refer to the production of and in some sense repair of a vessel, and that they both point beyond the object at hand seemed to offer an appropriate title because, as we know, the power of narrative is not only that of remembrance but of projection.



Back



Greater New York 2010

P.S.1. Contemporary Art Center, New York, USA

'Greater New York 2010' presents the work of 68 artists and collectives who have been active in the five boroughs of New York over the last five years. Curated by Klaus Biesenbach, Connie Butler and Neville Wakefield, the exhibition runs the length, breadth, floors, walls, ceilings and cafeteria of the museum. Arriving hard on the heels of the Whitney Biennial and last year's 'Generational: Younger Than Jesus' at the New Museum, its task is to identify paths through the as-yet-unwritten terrain of New York now. Needless to say, we are not in the grip of a paradigm shift. There are familiar trails that flag perennial if not current moods: ethnographic identity politics meet hangover radicalism, painterly post-Minimalism shares the walls with photographic portraiture, and sexuality via the dressing-up box, served with some obligatory *outré* moments – courtesy of an artist who photographs his mother in *Basenote delirio*.

Ryan McNamara
Make Ryan a Dancer
2010
Performance
documentation

Heaven forbid that my tastes have become more refined with age, but, given the sheer volume here, there is less to like than should be expected. It is perhaps best to approach 'Greater New York 2010' like a graduation show, finding succour where you can. If you can separate them from the beaten tracks of curatorial narrative, there are works here that sustain prolonged viewing or, failing that, irk enough to prompt a response.

Many contributions signpost their critical intent. Take, for example, *Laberintos (after octavio paz)* (2003-9), William Cordova's collection of 200 vinyl records 'appropriated' from an undisclosed Ivy League college, which are presented in symbolic 'redress' for the institution's refusal to return Peruvian artefacts. The idea is going somewhere – Jean Genet, after all, made theft literary, political, even satirical – but unfortunately this feels undernourished in wit, presentation and purpose. Besides, wouldn't a Yale frat party – summary research reveals it be

and Donna Summer? Just return them William, it's OK, no questions will be asked! *Laberintos* shares space with Hank Willis Thomas' painstakingly digitally de-sloganeered advertising posters, 'Unbranded' (2010), which remind us that, yes, we're all targets of incessant capitalism. In short: ad man you're a bad man.

Identity politics take a more curious and engaging turn in Liz Magic Laser's video of a mechanized and remote dissection of her handbag (*Mine*, 2009). It's an intriguing and sinister ballet, guided by unknown hands, in which two robotic claws examine and slice through the bag's contents as red lipgloss splurges and dollar bills are reduced to confetti. *Mine* works where the others don't, in that it allows the mind room to wander, to engage in the complicated matter of the subjective self, eschewing textbook enquiry or teacher/student relations. In the same gallery, Brian O'Connell's (*Not*) *Architecture for the Kunsthalle, P.S.1 2010* (2010) records its own production, as compacted Miracle-Gro Potting Mix and cement form what at first glance appear to be supporting columns to the gallery. Upon closer inspection the columns fall short of the ceiling. Inverting Robert Smithson's idea of site-specificity, they appear like plinths, claiming the building itself as a found work.

There are many moments in which potential relationships between works are quickly closed down, pieces that repeat or cancel each other out or simply aren't strong enough to compete with the narrative floating in from the adjoining room. Good examples are the vivid psychedelic images of fashion photographer David Benjamin Sherry, diluted both conceptually but, more pertinently, through competing colour, with Amy Yao's vividly painted doors-to-nowhere. The two are read as one. Yao fairs better in the adjoining room, where her brightly coloured hairpieces and painted batons (*Anarchist Clowns Protesting at G8, no. 1-10*, 2010) are placed next to Kalup Linzy's camp soap opera, *Melody Set Me Free (the series)* (2010). Shot between 2004 and 2010, Alice O'Malley's black and white portraits of New York underground icons are unremarkable photographs and too easy to dismiss when considered in relation to K8 Hardy's Cindy Sherman-lamprooning self-portraits. Elsewhere, and plumbing a similarly playful approach to Hardy, A.L. Steiner's *Angry, Articulate, Inevitable* (2010), photo-documentation wallpapered from floor to ceiling, depicts queer-shitk posturing and could be viewed as a riposte to the likes of Terry Richardson as heaps of naked flesh sprawl in presumed satiric awe of an Yves Klein body painting.

Mike Bouchet

Of the small number of sound works in the exhibition, two appeal. Brody Condon's *die20* (2009), a 20-sided green die, of the sort used in role-playing games, rattles away in a glass cup, an off-beat click-track that provides the soundtrack for further works by the artist that deal with digital gaming culture and role-play. In one of the gallery stairwells, Darren Bader has stuck M.I.A.'s 2007 single 'Paper Planes' on repeat, with its gunshot-punctuated refrain 'All I want to do is ... and take your money.' It's a reminder of both empty pop-radicalism and M.I.A.'s recent fall from critical grace, a satirical appropriation that speaks to its context in this exhibition. Bader's work is secreted throughout P.S.1: a fake Peter Halley painting in the museum café, and elsewhere a laptop perched on a stool, sporting a cutesy picture of a dribbling, giggling baby.

Another highlight is the work of Ryan McNamara. With a title that is gloriously to the point - *Make Ryan a Dancer* (2010) - it consists of a grueling 104 days of public dance classes held in and outside P.S.1. At the end of the exhibition McNamara will present his grand finale, a multi-styled romp through each and every room of the museum. In the meantime, visitors to the museum can watch as a dance coach, clad in archetypal oversized scoop-neck T-shirt and open-tongued Nikes, puts McNamara through his paces. Moving from rudimentary hiphop through to pop-diva moves, a clearly uncomfortable McNamara attempts to mirror the fluid moves of his instructor. Though clearly awkward, the resulting spectacle is engaging, brave and makes for compulsive viewing. As each move is layered on top of the next it becomes apparent that the transitions between moves are really where the dance and its choreography take shape; how foot connects with hip connects with shoulders and ultimately the thinking part of the cerebral cortex that defines bodily rhythm. Sometimes it's mannered and occasionally it finds its grace and fluidity. It could stand as a coda for 'Greater New York 2010' as a whole.

Mark Beasley



Mike Bouchet
Sir Walter Scott
2010
Mixed media
Dimensions variable

Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

There is something very peculiar about the American way of building houses. An entire suburban home might be casually transported on the back of a truck. Or perhaps it arrives on flat-packed pallets, to be screwed together like IKEA furniture. While natural catastrophes have a calamitous effect on these lightweight structures, the consequences of their human demolition could be seen in the recent solo exhibition of American-born, Frankfurt-based artist Mike Bouchet.

The show's central motif was *Sir Walter Scott* (2010), a sculpture in 15 parts. It was made from an Internet-ordered, single-family home, which Bouchet ferociously chopped up and carefully re-layered into a parody of the house in its pre-built state. The stacks of materials were placed on brand-new rugs, which, along with the pediment atop the first pile, hint at the materials' original functions. The 15 carpets, which would more usually lie beneath a television or a coffee table, act as the most minimal of pedestals, their bright colours and distinctive 'new' smell contrasting with the discolouration and mouldering destruction undergone by the once-dignified 'Sir Walter Scott' (the structure's actual designation in the vendor's 'American Values' series).

The home's visible water damage alludes to its history: before hacking it to pieces with an axe and chainsaw, Bouchet floated the assembled house on pontoons as part of the 53rd Venice Biennale, for a piece entitled *Watershed Venice* (2009). Consistent with the artist's self-described signature of bad luck, it promptly sank. The work was salvaged but the evidence of its life underwater remains: tiny molluscs obtrude alongside bent nails, while scraps of seaweed happily co-exist with shards of aluminium. A spider's web and dangling tree leaf were perhaps gathered during transport, a sense of accident - even serendipity - that is also a signature. Not only was the real *Sir Walter Scott* in deep debt

Bouchet has maintained a consistent practice of action-based work since the early 1990s, when he was still living and working in his native Los Angeles. His aim is to reveal the dark and farcical side of America's cultural and societal obsessions and possessions, to evaluate the very national issues of image, manufacturing and distribution of wealth that pertain to the consumer world as much as the art world. The house, in fact, could have been dismantled carefully, screw-by-screw, but the deeply physical and purposeful act of demolition allows us to disengage from the finished product and question the concepts of what we might consider 'home'. It also underscores how intensely fascinated we can be by destruction and catastrophe.

This latter theme was picked up in the show's next section, an ersatz estate agent's office whose major art work was *Upside Down Pacific* (2010), a large-scale oil painting depicting a massive fireball with flying shards - a replica of a film poster with the text removed. Close by, *Interior Crush* (2010) was a set of USM Haller shelves - the decorating accessory of choice for any realtor or art collector's office - crushed at a scrap metal yard, along with designer objects, art books, golf clubs and DVDs. Bouchet also displayed *Rob Roy* (2010), eight framed coloured-pencil drawings of the orderly packed housing material, stacked neatly on a transport dolly (another act of serendipity: Bouchet was unsure how to show them and simply left the works as they were delivered). *Front and Back* (2010), a stainless-steel replica of one of *Watershed Venice's* anchors with its front door key cast in bronze, asks whether the purchase of a home is an act of freedom, the ultimate American dream, or a form of imprisonment. Two additional works alluded to the desperate desire for refined living: the tragic ensemble *Ivanhoe* (2010) →



Foreground:
Amy Yao
Entryways to Exit Strategies
2010
Prefabricated doors with custom hardware, wood, Acrylic gouache and dye
Dimensions variable
Background:
David Benjamin Sherry
2008-10
All: c-type prints

Kristic, Jelena. "Exploring Greater New York 2010." Huffingtonpost.com. (May 24, 2010)

Exploring Greater New York 2010

Jelena Kristic

Greater New York 2010 could only ever be a blockbuster, showcasing three capacious floors of new and recently validated art. The third and smallest incarnation of this quinquennial exhibition, born in 2000 at MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Center, aims to "be an inclusive, artist-driven exploration of New York City now" by presenting 68 lesser-known artists who live and work in the greater metropolitan area.

The assumption that artists who work in the city are necessarily inspired by it is questionable, as is the ability of curators to capture such an influence. Nevertheless, it is fun to see them try, and there is really no better place for such an attempt than PS1's versatile and storied building. As the third sibling to the two previous GNY shows, GNY 2010 differs in its substance and context. Back when the art market was frothing, GNY 2005 was criticized for facilitating the commercial frenzy for young art, often not yet graduated from its MFA nest. GNY 2010 does a better job transcending the grip of blinkered art-buying passion, helped by the slackened economy, but mostly by its own efforts.

The show's curatorial backbone is solid, if unsurprising, and manages to harmonize the diverse approaches of its three curators — Klaus Biesenbach (PS1 Director and MoMA Chief Curator at Large), Connie Butler (MoMA Chief Curator of Drawings) and Neville Wakefield (PS1 Senior Curatorial Advisor). Many works are performative, with film and digital video pieces dominantly represented. The features of performance – the props, the narrative, the specified length of time – most easily realize GNY 2010's stated curatorial focus "on the process of creation and the generative nature of the artist's studio." Videos and multi-media site-specific installations proved mostly enticing and hilarious. Standouts include Sharon Hayes' gay rights rally installation with helium balloons, Deville Cohen's theatrical recontextualization of the soul-crushing office grind, and Dani Leventhal's painful footage of a baby's face as it shifts between crying and screaming.



It was refreshing to see so much femaleness – a hearty 43% percent of artists are women, many of whom explore their sex in their work, and much wall space is dedicated to vaginas, notably A.L. Steiner's queer – femmie room. Works centered on themes of gender and race avoided pedantry although the vintage kitsch of William Cordova's record labyrinth or Hank Willis Thomas' photographs verged on cloying. Brian O'Connell's meticulous columns of compressed dirt, nearly unrecognizably organic, complemented David Brooks' concretized trees and operated as a neat olfactory and visual index of its production. Paintings – a rarity among the moving machines and images – became unexpectedly welcome, especially Tauba Auerbach's trompe l'oeil "fold paintings" and Caleb Considine's soft and serious portraits.

Some of the other works felt stunted or trite. But an absence of egregious missteps and a much slimmer artist list – GNY 2005 packed in nearly thrice the number of artists in GNY 2010 – renders the exhibition cohesive and tart. More like a tourist guide than a revelatory time capsule, GNY 2010 has its highlights.

Photos:

1. Brian O'Connell (Not)Architecture for the Kunsthalle, PS1, 2010 Rammed earth: Miracle Gro Potting Mix and Portland Cement. Courtesy the artist and Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles.

NEW YORK



Mariah Robertson's 88, on view at P.S.1.

ART

Sincerity and Irony Hug It Out At P.S. 1's "Greater New York," a new union of opposing attitudes.

BY JERRY SALTZ

I'M NOTICING A NEW APPROACH to artmaking in recent museum and gallery shows. It flickered into focus at the New Museum's "Younger Than Jesus" triennial last year and ran through the Whitney Biennial, and I'm seeing it blossom and bear fruit at "Greater New York," MoMA P.S. 1's twice-a-decade extravaganza of emerging local talent. It's an attitude that says, *I know that the art I'm creating may seem silly, even stupid, or that it might have been done before, but that doesn't mean this isn't serious.* At once knowingly self-conscious about art, unafraid, and unashamed, these young artists not only see the distinction between earnestness and detachment as artificial; they grasp that they can be ironic and sincere at the same time, and they are making art from this compound-complex state of mind—what Emerson called "alienated majesty."

The best of the work at "Greater New York" pulses with this attitude. The worst of it is full of things that move, light up, or make noise, all frantic enough to make you feel like you're at a carnival rather than a museum. I yearned to see more art here that demands that you stop and be still, like painting, of which there is very little. Instead, the curators—Connie Butler, Neville Wakefield, and Klaus Biesenbach, the museum world's unofficial czar these days—favor things that are "about" painting, like Dave Miko's canvas propped on a little shelf with drips painted on the wall behind it, carrying the heavy-handed title *Lonely Merch Guy*. (When will everyone get over the ossified idea that painting's particular alchemy is suspect? Bad dogma!)

But let's look on the sunny side. I counted thirteen artists whose work I really like and twelve others whose work I'd like to see again. Like Liz

Magic Laser's *Mine*, a secret-life-of-women video in which she and a surgeon perform an operation, with medical robots, on her purse (tiny tools snipping the face out of a \$20 bill, for example); the artist simultaneously dismantles and creates, remaking her purse into a Rauschenberg combine. This weirdly familiar otherness goes green in Brian O'Connell's funny-strange architectural columns composed of potting soil, which make you feel like you're occupying a very large sand castle. Or David Brooks's section of real forest mummified in concrete, a sad comment on turning the natural world into doomed playgrounds. Leigh Ledare's pictures of his mother having sex bring us to the dark heart of the human drive for connection; the sweet sight of Ryan McNamara being taught to dance in the building's corridors speaks for artists compelled to strip themselves naked (metaphorically or literally) in public. Saul Melman's gold-leafing of the giant double furnace in the building's basement may be just another labor-intensive process piece, but it's also an ancient sarcophagus, a moving memorial to the dead. Equally serious, particularly in their strangeness, are Matt Hoyt's tiny carved clay objects, which look like sculptural-biological forms and dead rodents. They hint at the innate connection between creating form and creating life.

Much of the most effective work in "Greater New York" also involves the artists' leaping from medium to medium in madly unexpected ways: Sculpture, music, video, and photography get mashed up; techniques like collage and assemblage are combined with unusual materials like mud, magnets, stolen record albums, and art reviews (even one of my own, in Franklin Evans's walk-in installation-painting). Mariah Robertson's long strip of photographs looping along the ceiling and across the floor is photography as sculptural installation, so smudgy and phantasmagoric and unruly that it looks like drawing, a painting, and a filmstrip all at once.

Giant group events are distorting organisms: You can like and hate them in rapid succession. In the 2005 edition of "Greater New York," there were 162 artists on view, which was ridiculous. In 2010, there are a manageable 68. More critical is what's *not* there: a by-now-familiar genus of cynical art that is mainly about gamesmanship, work that is coolly ironic, simply cool, ironic about being ironic, or mainly commenting on art that comments on other art. I'm glad to see it fading away—sincerely and otherwise. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SEPTIMUS/COURTESY OF MOMA P.S.1

GREATER
NEW YORK
MOMA P.S. 1
THROUGH
OCTOBER 18.