



INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARCH 26, 2007



Phoebe Washburn, *Minor In-House Brain Storm* (detail), 2006-07
Installation view, Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria
Courtesy: Zach Feuer Gallery, New York
Photograph: Adam Reich

NEWS RELEASE:

PHOEBE WASHBURN

APRIL 20–AUGUST 5, 2007

EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH WITH PHOEBE WASHBURN AND ASSISTANT CURATOR ELYSE GONZALES
THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 5–6PM, ICA MEMBERS ONLY
OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 6–8PM

PHILADELPHIA, PA

A new Ramp Project by Phoebe Washburn (b. 1973, Poughkeepsie, NY, lives in New York City) goes on view this spring at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) at the University of Pennsylvania. The 12th in a series of temporary works commissioned for the ramp, Washburn's project can be seen April 20–August 5, 2007.

Using massive amounts of collected scrap wood, Phoebe Washburn transforms ICA's ramp by constructing an environmental installation that is both accumulative and regenerative. Working on site off of the existing architecture, she turns the windowed ramp into a makeshift terrarium/aquarium. Viewers wander amidst a variety of water plants and underwater scenes housed in fish tanks nestled in a darkened wooden tunnel. These miniature living landscapes are sustained by pumps and other necessary accoutrements in this green environment.

Her structures are typically enormous, architecturally-based, organic in nature and complex. They are constructed out of bits of collected refuse. Having witnessed routine building processes evidenced in neighborhood construction she is drawn not so much to the method by which a structure goes up, but rather to the more methodical acts of sorting, stacking and organizing materials. She has said of her collecting process "I select objects that have already been worn, already marked and already discarded because then they are already in the state I want them to be. They are what they are already."

Washburn's work touches on notions of recycling and environmentalism. She culls her materials—including masses of collapsed cardboard, newspapers, stone, plastic cups and scraps of wood she encounters while out and about from local loading docks, alleyways and recycling bins. She then stacks, binds, and nails together her discoveries. She organizes and even paints some according to her own complex color-coding system. Washburn sees the dichotomy in the materials she gathers which are so prevalent in our consumer culture—cheap, lightweight, adaptable, and disposable. They are invaluable and worthless at the same time. This notion of recycling pervades her practice beyond collecting the materials in that each installation's materials are re-used and re-assembled into an entirely new and unique work.

Sprawling and ambitious her work has a strong physicality. Many of her structures are held by wooden poles or supports either propped on folding chairs and phone books. She refers to her works as "spontaneous architecture." "My sculptures depend a lot on the spaces where they are shown because they often are anchored into the wall but chance is definitely more of a factor in the final product than is any predetermined design. I just let the structures evolve by repeating the same action again and again. The process has a slightly neurotic element in that it involves adding little behavior habits. As silly as it sounds, I often feel as if my assistants and I are bea-

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*Images available upon request

GENERAL INFORMATION

ICA is located at:

118 South 36th Street at the University of Pennsylvania.

ICA is open to the public, except during installation, from 12:00pm to 8:00pm on Wednesday through Friday and from 11:00am to 5:00pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Admission is \$6 for adults; \$3 for students over 12, artists, and senior citizens; and free to ICA members, children 12 and under, PENN card holders, and on Sundays from 11:00am to 1:00pm.

For more information, call 215-898-7108/5911, or visit www.icaphila.org.

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Founded in 1963, the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania is a leader in the presentation and documentation of contemporary art. Through exhibitions, commissions, educational programs, and publications, ICA invites the public to share in the experience, interpretation and understanding of the work of established and emerging artists.

vers building a dam. The shapes are less about form than they are about the activity involved in amassing and assembling the forms.”

Unlike other artists known for scrounging, hoarding, and recontextualized found objects—such as Katie Grinnan, Thomas Hirschhorn, Jason Rhoades, Dieter Roth, Jessica Stockholder, and Sarah Sze—Washburn does not scour the streets for eccentric or personal treasures. Instead, the raw materials Washburn finds are unassuming and uneventful throughout their functional life spans. Jerry Saltz for the *Village Voice* writes “Washburn appears to be generating systems that generate formations she can’t predict. This ties her with seemingly unrelated artists such as Sol LeWitt, Jackie Windsor, Barry Le Va and Matthew Ritchie—four other systematizers who, despite seeming on top of everything, allow their art to take them in unexpected directions.”

Every season ICA commissions an artist to create a new site-specific temporary installation for the ramp that links the first and second floor galleries. A transitional space, the ramp is 52-foot long and is visible from the street through architecturally-scaled picture windows on the building’s façade. Especially when it is illuminated at night, each of the commissioned works is a window onto ICA’s innovative program of contemporary art. Since the series began in 2000, the ramp has been a site for a diverse range of creative approaches, including wall paintings by Ingrid Calame, Arturo Herrera, and Amy Sillman; environmental installations by Virgil Mari and Judy Pfaff; a light and sound piece by Nadine Robinson; an on-going conceptual project by Alexandra Mir; street photography by Zoe Strauss; a mental garden by Irene Fortuyn and most recently an exploration on velocity and flight by Luca Buvoli.

Phoebe Washburn received her MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York and her BFA from Newcomb College, Tulane University in New Orleans. Her work has been shown in solo and group exhibition in the United States and Europe, including The Whitney Museum at Altria, NY, NY, Kantor/Feuer Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, Rice University Art Gallery in Houston, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA and LFL Gallery in New York. Her work was also included in “Greater New York 2005” at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City, New York; “The Bench” at the Kunsthalle St. Gallen in Switzerland; and “Make It Now” at the Sculpture Center in Long Island City. She is represented by Zach Feuer Gallery in New York.

This project is organized by Elyse Gonzales, Assistant Curator, and is accompanied by a brochure publication.

ICA acknowledges primary sponsorship of the William Penn Foundation for this project. Additional funding has been provided by The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Dietrich Foundation, Inc., the Overseers Board for the Institute of Contemporary Art, friends and members of ICA, and the University of Pennsylvania. ICA is also grateful for in-kind support from Loews Philadelphia Hotel. (Information complete as of 3/8/07.)

All programs subject to change. Please visit the ICA website, www.icaphila.org, for more information on programs in conjunction with Phoebe Washburn.