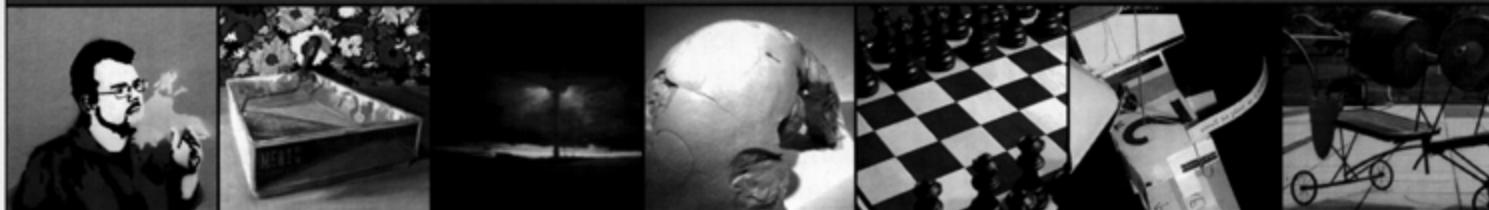


MFA THESIS EXHIBITION 2004

FEBRUARY 28 - APRIL 3, 2004



KATE DIAGO
DAN KITCHEN
BRYAN LAUCH
DAVID LUKE
DAVID NELINSON
SANG-AH SUH
KENTARO TOTSUKA

UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY
STALLER CENTER FOR THE ARTS
STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY



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KATE DIABO

DAN KITCHEN

BEVAT LAUCH

DAVID LUKK

DAVID NEUBORN

SANG-AN PHU

KENTARO TATEYAMA

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition is the sixteenth in a tradition of shows by students graduating from the Stony Brook Art Department's Master of Fine Arts Program. Now in its eighteenth year, the program has attracted top students from across the country and around the world. Of course, the location near the excitement of New York City is one factor in this success. That proximity (and a direct train connection), without the daily pressures of study in the City, makes Long Island's North Shore the best of all geographical worlds for artists. Our outstanding, internationally-known faculty has undoubtedly been attracted by similar features, as well as by the opportunity to teach highly qualified and motivated advanced students. Any graduate program is a partnership of professionals – some younger and less experienced who have come to learn, and others, older and more practiced, who engage them in a dialogue from which all emerge strengthened.

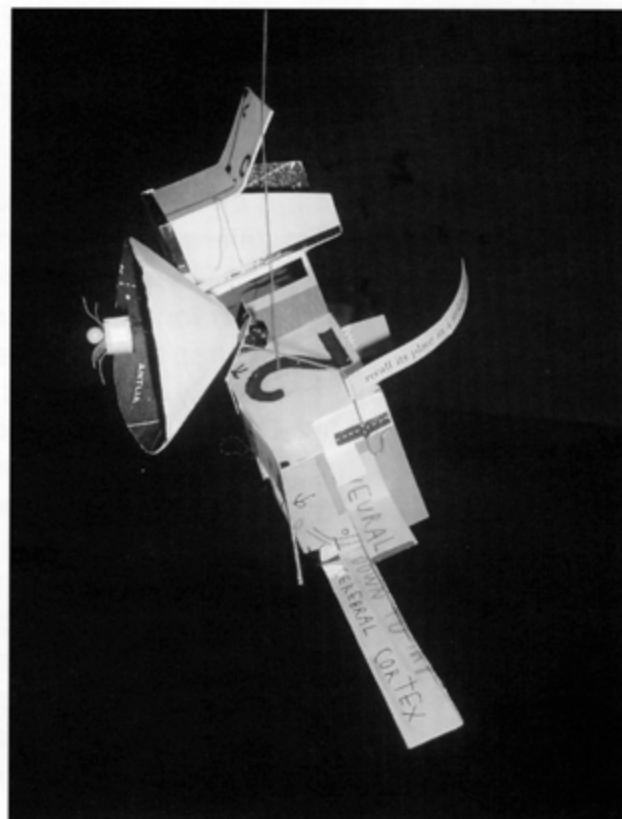
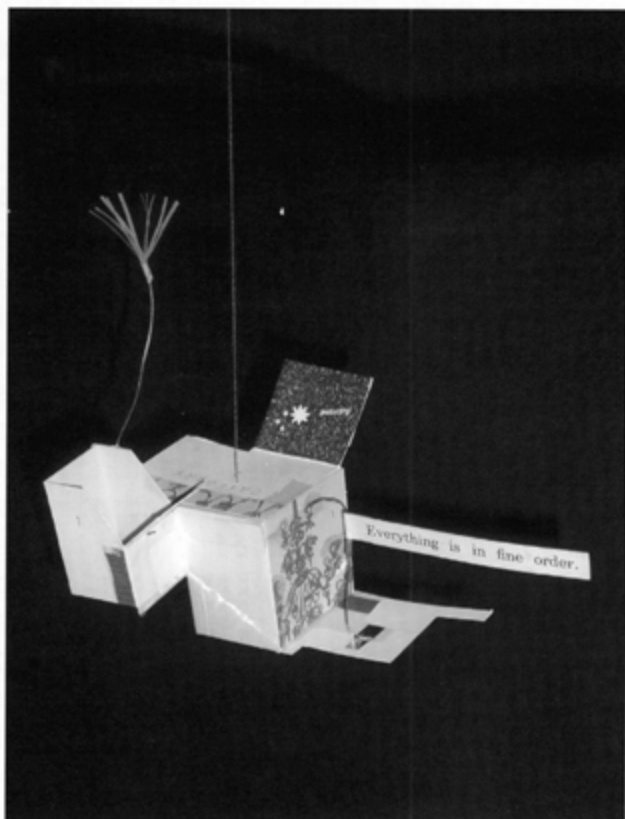
Any MFA curriculum combines rigor with freedom, but Stony Brook's is unique in several ways. First, it is connected with the Art Department's slightly older and also unique program in the history of art, theory and criticism. Nowhere else are advanced studio and art history and criticism students able to benefit from each others' courses and ideas. Second, proximity to New York City makes it possible for our students to do internships in practically any area of the art world and to immerse themselves in it during their course of study. Finally, Stony Brook's MFA offers opportunities for students themselves to be teachers. That experience requires a level of articulateness and sharing that can only sharpen communicative skills which by definition underlie the artistic enterprise.

The students in this year's exhibition exemplify the range and quality of the Stony Brook MFA program. They are from different backgrounds and different parts of the world. Their artistic concerns differ just as widely. They have succeeded in a rigorous program, yet each presents a clear direction and a strong personal consistency and presence. It is almost hard to imagine that they all pursued the same course of study. Yet the point is precisely that Stony Brook's MFA can foster and strengthen remarkably diverse and distinct individuals. Within its framework, students are able to grow to a level of maturity, and their work reaches toward a quality that poises them on the threshold of the professional art world. It is here that they develop the coherence and resilience so necessary to compete in that world, qualities that build upon the talent and interests that are their own. The purpose of an MFA program is thus no better embodied than by the first success an exhibition such as this one reveals. For where else can an ambitious young artist be both challenged by demanding teachers, discussion, and projects, and yet obtain the extended period (two to three years) for the intellectual concentration and protracted artistic effort necessary to pursue one's own artistic path effectively? Thus, while congratulating our students who are graduating, we may also take pride in Stony Brook's contribution. The success of that partnership can be witnessed in this year's show. May it prosper!

James Rubin
Chairman
Department of Art

KATE DIAGO

I am fascinated by the actual and imagined physical places where memories, facts, and thoughts reside in my brain, as well as by how they are stored and retrieved. I create enigmatic drawings in various media of these imagined locations and their contents. My drawings involve a process of diagramming using labeling systems (assigned within an imagined framework related to structures of the brain) and short personal narratives sometimes based on fact, often times imagined. My work is ultimately an attempt to communicate the impossibility of having control over what I choose to think, what I have repressed, what I remember, and how these are interrelated. It is the combination of all of these beautifully complex functions that allows the mind to become such a visually active playground.



Penumbrae: Thought Constellations, Multimedia installation, paint, paper, tape, wire, string, sound, LED lights, 2004

DAN KITCHEN

My past work has been a mixture of two and three dimensional objects. Recently, I began exploring the use of kinetic sculptures that destroyed or altered two dimensional images. The movements these sculptures performed on the image changed the content of images for the viewer.

As I began to explore kinetic sculptures more and more issues of maintenance arose. Pieces needed to be cleaned, adjusted, and tuned to work. These activities created the need for the character of the Custodian. The character appeared first in documentation videos of these past kinetic works and showed him preparing and working alongside these machines. The Custodian's interaction activated the pieces and provided a fuller understanding of the machines.

The Custodian was a construction of experience and necessity. He developed in subsequent documentation and in imagery of him that began to appear in my work. The Custodian persona construct is still being developed as his own experiences of the work grows. The works in this show chart some of the Custodian's development as a persona through his interaction with his environment, his work, and my artwork.



Cigarettes, Beer and Pizza, 22" x 22", Spray paint on MDF, 2003

BRYAN LAUCH

Material conglomerations provoke a questioning of existential meaning. Performative sculptures unearth unseen energies in a process of opening onto the world. A vast spectrum of invisible force shifts life direction. To sew a lived memory onto a memorable path fuses what is known in the conscious to what is contemplated in the unconscious. Art is the bridge.



Scroll Barrow, clay, steel, wood, oxides, 2003

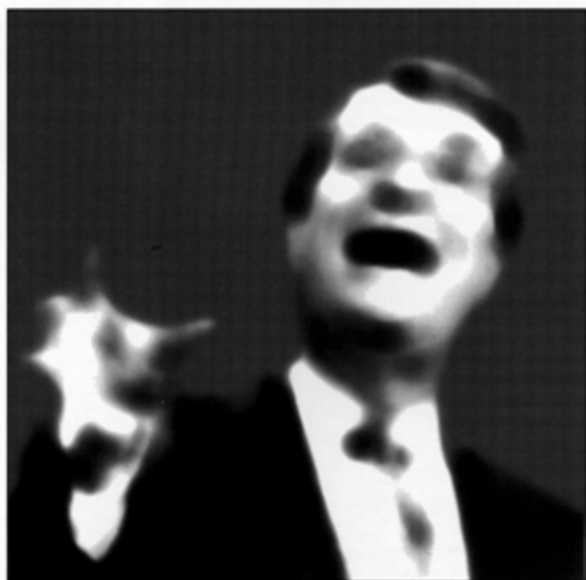


Drawing Machine Installation, clay, steel, wood, oxides, motors, glass, 2003

DAVID LUKE

Over the past several years my work has undergone a shift from what might be called "cultural" to overtly political. Inherent in all the work is a desire to analyze and then visually point at contradictions in an ever changing political landscape. Though most of the work addresses the global spectrum, the focus is particularly American.

Pieces in general have been concentrated on two general forms. The first of these is that of "the game." I have used card games, chess, checkers, and golf as vehicles to analyze global and corporate politics and particularly US involvement in these policies and situations. Several of these pieces have been positioned publicly, whether it be in a courtyard or on the web, in an attempt to heighten the social relevance of art in times such as these. The second group is specifically concerned with the idea of gesture relative to politicians. Photography plays an important role in both the collection of images from various media sources and in final presentation. A combination of digital manipulation and traditional darkroom printing is used to reduce figures to simple characteristics and features. The effect is a visual lie that points back at the manipulative nature both of the figures and photography itself.



Politics of Presentation, 28" x 28", C print, 2003

DAVID MORRIS NELINSON

My current interest as an artist is the consumption and digestion of the object through paint. I am interested in both rediscovering and visually experiencing these objects. It is not my intention to represent a restored vision of reality. On the contrary, I create invented environments based on my relationship with the presented entities. These spaces are to be reminiscent of a familiar place, biographical or fictional. They serve as a means of skewing our comprehension of the object and reintroduce the common as something peculiar or alien to our senses. They are intended to force both the viewer and myself to reevaluate our immediate relationships.

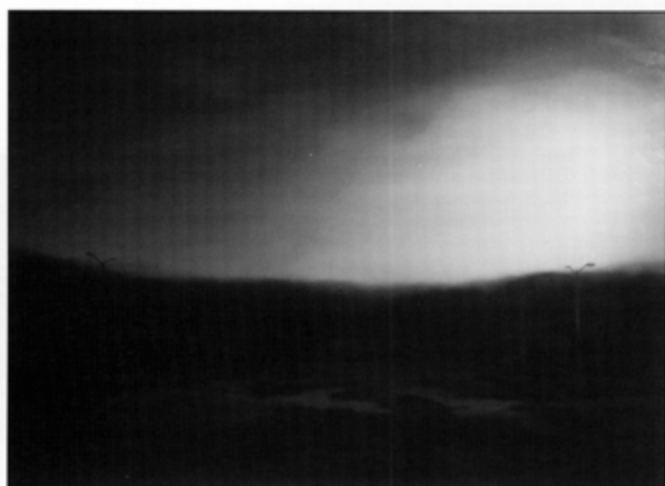
The object with the assistance of man has become increasingly more synthetic in its relationship to nature. However, no matter how much we synthesize or camouflage our surroundings, all things remain accountable by the laws of nature's systems. Both my ethic and aesthetic embrace this notion as an autonomy of artificiality and reality.



Family Portrait, 35" x 52", Oil on canvas, 2003

SANG-AH SUH

I examine a concept of Vanitas in the tradition of representing the image of death in the genre of landscape. I will describe how I make this traditional element the central motif in my monochromatic paintings. In this series titled 'Totalerei-lifeless paintings', eloquently referring to grisaille paintings in 15th-century Germany, I will show the ruined sceneries and abandoned landscape with atmospheric surfaces in large scale. They will evoke a deep sense of meditation on the transitory nature of life as a category of modern Vanitas paintings. And considering gray or monochromatic surface as one of primordial vocabularies in my paintings, although gray is deceptively simple, I intend to reveal its complexity; spanning extremes such as from impersonal objectivity to spiritual representation, from rigorous tonal constructions to the painterly concealment of a bleak nothingness.



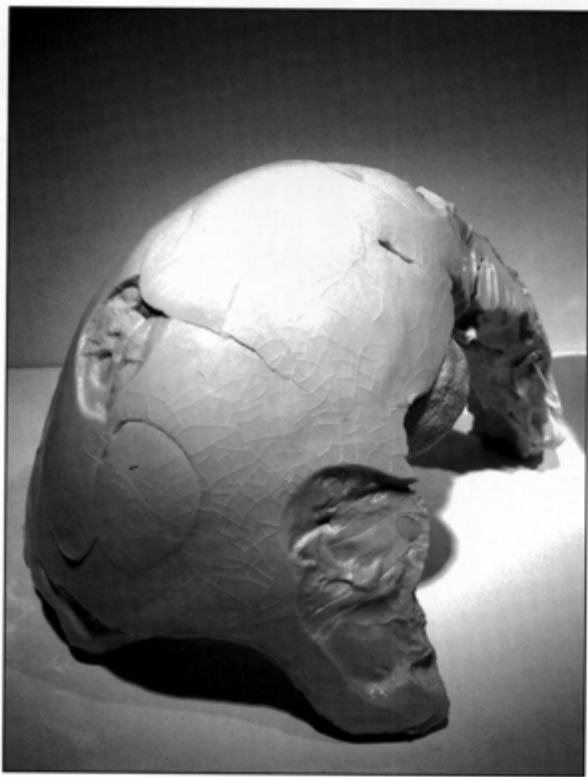
Mnemonic Painting: the (no)-more-sight
72" x 96", Oil on canvas, 2003



...Wherever there will be nothing, read that I love you...
72" x 192", Oil on canvas, 2003

KENTARO TOTSUKA

Sculpture is created to experience and visualize a sense of existence. Integral components to my sculpture are the materiality of objects and a sense of space. My challenge in the creative process has been to find and produce a purely visual language that speaks without the use of words.



Fragments of the Warrior, Porcelain, dimensions variable, 2003

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Special thanks go to the donors of the following equipment and materials: Dr. J. R. ...
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Most of all, I wish to thank Kate Diago, Daniel Kitchen, Bryan Lauch, David Luke, David Morris Nelinson, Sang-Ah Suh, and Kentaro Totsuka for an exciting MFA exhibition.

Rhonda Cooper
Director
University Art Gallery

Catalogue design: Kate Diago

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