

Rydel

VISUAL ARTS FELLOWS

2010
2011



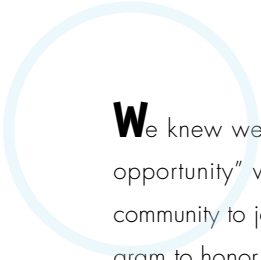
Art is community

Andrea **Borsuk**

Tim **Craighead**

Victoria **May**

Andy **Ruble**



We knew we had a “once in a lifetime opportunity” when we invited the local arts community to join us in 2002 to create a program to honor the legacy of Roy and Frances Rydell and their lifelong commitment to the arts.

Seventeen years earlier, the Rydells established the first donor-advised fund at the Community Foundation. When Frances passed away in 1988, followed by Roy in 2000, they bequeathed their entire estate to the Community Foundation, with the proceeds added to their fund—now worth over \$2 million.

Working with Ian McPhail, their friend, trusted estate planning attorney and our founding board president, we had two directives: the fund would be held in perpetuity, and it would be used to enrich the local visual arts.

Roy’s vision of art as “beauty in the home, in the garden and in the community” makes clear their belief that art in all its forms should be available to the broadest possible audience and not just for museums.

With the help of many, two programs were created to reflect the artistic spirit and wishes of the Rydells. One is grants for local visual arts organizations, and the other is fellowships for individual

visual artists in Santa Cruz County for one year, without restrictions.

Since 2006, the first year grants were made, the Rydell Visual Arts Fund has awarded nearly half a million dollars—\$215,000 to eleven separate arts organizations and \$240,000 in fellowships to twelve local artists.

Today, the reaction I get most often is one of amazement that we have a permanent program in Santa Cruz County to support individual artists.

I know Roy and Frances would be pleased their gift helped further the artistic careers of our 2010-2011 fellows, Andrea Borsuk, Tim Craighead, Victoria May, and Andy Ruble.

Since its inception, the fellowship program has been guided by our program director Christina Cuevas and managed by Jack Walsh, project director for the Rydell Visual Arts Fellowship Awards.

Thanks go out to the panel charged with selecting the fellowship recipients: Doryun Chong, associate curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; Chris Cowden, executive director of Women and Their Work in Austin; and Michael John Garcés, artistic director of Cornerstone Theater Company in Los Angeles.

Thanks are also due to the 26 arts organizations that nominated 57 artists and the 46 who applied and were considered for awards.

Roy and Frances would be overjoyed to see what their generosity has created for all of us.

Lance Linares

Executive Director

Community Foundation Santa Cruz County

In Memory of Roy and Frances Rydell



Rydell Fellows 2010 — 2011

Here in Santa Cruz County, art is a way of life. Creative expression is part of the air we breathe, and there's an expectation that every day will bring an opportunity to make, share, and create.

The Rydell Visual Art Fund is a rare gift that honors this impulse and cultivates creative work in even the most challenging economic times. The Fellows presented in this catalogue are exemplars of their craft, and it is a pleasure to be able to celebrate, showcase, and support their work.

No artist is an island. While each of these artists is a strong individual, all of them share the ability to inspire creativity throughout Santa Cruz County. The Rydell Visual Art Fund Fellows are leaders in the region—educators, innovative thinkers, and members of a passionate network of professional artists. Working with organizations like the Community Foundation and The Museum of Art & History @ the McPherson Center, these artists are able to push their work forward and amplify their reach.

Like Roy and Frances Rydell, we at The Museum of Art & History are dedicated to supporting a strong ecosystem of art and culture for



Roy and Frances Rydell, 1985

Santa Cruz County's visitors and residents. We are honored to be part of the Rydell Visual Art Fund program because it enhances our ability as an institution to inspire, educate, and cultivate creativity at all levels.

I see art as a kind of public service and the museum as a vehicle to amplify the impact of that service. Every budding young artist who participates in a hands-on museum workshop, every hobbyist painter who picks up this catalogue, and every curious person who explores the Rydell Fellows exhibition is part of this creative ecosystem.

I want to express thanks to everyone who keeps this ecosystem thriving. Here at the Museum, thanks to Susan Hillhouse, who directs this exhibition and catalogue project, Marla Novo, who supports the exhibition's creation, and Ashley Adams, who translates the Rydell Fellows' work into inspiring educational programs for schoolchildren and families. We gratefully acknowledge Christina Cuevas and the team at the Community Foundation, for shepherding the Fellows process and supporting the creation of this publication. We appreciate the authors, photographer, and designer who have filled

these pages with inspiration: Marc D'Estout, Susan Hillhouse, Karen Kienzle, Cathy Kimball, rr jones, and Susan O'Malley. And finally, we thank the artists whose work and brilliance inspires us all.

Nina Simon

Executive Director

The Museum of Art & History @ the McPherson Center

Andrea
Borsuk



Andrea Borsuk's Ornamental Being(s)

Andrea Borsuk's ornate paintings offer big impact in small packages, monumental meaning in tiny details. These works reward careful viewing, divulging more intricacies the closer one looks. Like a jewelry box, her works are jam-packed with visual bling—unique trinkets, strange amulets, bizarre baubles. And, like individual treasures in a jewelry box, each detail promises the triumph of a discovery, the satisfaction of a rich story, the intrigue of a forgotten history.

Inspiration, for Borsuk, comes from diverse and divergent sources. She works as a cultural sampler, weaving together imagery from popular culture, history, and fashion. Jewelry—Cartier, mourning jewelry, even dime store charms—offers rich source material and symbolic value through its associations to seduction and intimacy. Artistic traditions from India, Africa, and China—particularly the depictions of feminine forms—also provide creative fodder for the artist.

Borsuk's signature paintings invite viewers to experience richly bejeweled landscapes. Against a painterly backdrop of swirling skies, dramatic sunsets, and a usually hinted-at horizon line of trees, Borsuk creates her own dangling compositions inspired by jewelry designs. Within these “jewels

in the sky,” it's all about the ladies—the feminine forms that adorn the pendants, necklaces, and chains. While the background landscapes are intended to merely set the stage, they do play an important, albeit secondary, role. They firmly root her work her Santa Cruz environs, and in their loose and ephemeral depiction, provide a delightful contrast to the precisely painted foreground elements. In combining landscape and female form, Borsuk highlights the two elements perhaps most frequently associated with beauty in both art and culture. She also deliberately plays with the power of sex to sell—literally and figuratively—through a lush landscape, an attractive woman, a shiny trinket, or, in the case of her work, all three.

Deeper and darker metaphors also abound in these works. The artist often highlights what is outside the frame of her compositions, the force that is “pulling the strings” of her chains and necklaces. A recent source of inspiration is the Moirae or Fates from Greek mythology who were thought to control destiny—one was believed to spin the thread of life, one measured each thread, or life, and one was responsible for cutting each thread and therefore determining death. And memento mori, those visual reminders of the fleeting nature

*"Not on one strand are all life's jewels strung."
—William Morris, The Life and Death of Jason*

of life, appear throughout Borsuk's work in the form of clocks, flowers, and birds. After Katrina, the artist began to incorporate the depiction of wind in her compositions, and other visual references to disaster and danger followed—life preservers, orange safety cones, etc. As if to counter these more ominous references, Borsuk prefers to include a good dose of lucky charms, like rabbits' feet and eight balls.

The feminine in Borsuk's paintings is beautifully articulated as a variety of familiar characters and roles. Some are what the artist calls "feminine archetypes," others are drawn from history or popular culture. The artist develops a motley cast of pin ups, dominatrices, damsels in distress, acrobats, synchronized swimmers, and some Josephine Baker and Venus of Willendorf thrown in for good measure. To create the figures, Borsuk makes stencils that allow her to replicate each form in cookie-cutter fashion throughout her paintings. She delights in playing with these paper dolls, bestowing each individual figure its own costumes and decorations. But seeing so many identical figures is unsettling: the women appear to have discarded their individual characters for a collective one. While encouraging us to revel in the beauty

of her little women, Borsuk also plays up their creepiness, challenging us to consider our own culpability in a culture and media landscape that continues to objectify women.

Visiting Andrea Borsuk's studio is like stepping into a life-size jewelry box. Enticing eye candy is everywhere, compelling you to explore. And like with any jewelry box or closet—collections of personal items worn on the body—the contents are intensely personal, imbued with private meaning. Torn between states of voyeurism and fascination, you find yourself attracted, then slightly repulsed by your own responses. It's a tricky tension, one that Borsuk employs in all of her work to highlight the very complicated nature of how we view—and how we respond to—femininity, sexuality, and beauty.

Karen Kienzle

Director

Palo Alto Art Center, Palo Alto, CA



Instructions Not Included, 2011

Oil on wood panel

30 x 40"



Rabbit's Foot Brings Good Luck, 2011

Oil on wood panel

24 x 36"





Above: *The Weight of Starlight*, 2010, oil on wood panel, 12 x 12"

Opposite: *Safety in Numbers*, 2011, oil on wood panel, 24 x 30"



(Brooches) Thunder from Above, 2011
Oil on wood panel
33 x 24"



(Brooches) An Overnight Transformation, 2011
Oil on wood panel
33 x 24"



(Brooches) Prevent Seasonal Hazards, 2011
 Oil on wood panel
 33 x 24"



(Brooches) Low Pressure Cycle, 2011
 Oil on wood panel
 33 x 24"



This Segment of Chance, 2009
Oil on wood panel
36 x 48"

Preserve, 2010
Oil on wood panel
12 x 12"





You Are Thousands, You Are One, 2010

Oil on wood panel

30 x 40"

Collection of Christian Schneider



Thousand Points of Light, 2011

Oil on wood panel

30 x 40"



The Over, The Under II, 2010

Oil on wood panel

30 x 40"

Statement

My work explores archetypes of beauty and femininity through a map of invented fantasies. I play with a matrix of contrast and disjuncture that both celebrates and critiques the diversity of feminine prototypes. I am interested in the cultural interpretations of the female form as a composite of historical and popular cultures.

Wind, sky, weather, and the decorative device of jewelry are central to my work. Various ornaments and charms from pop culture create new visual repetitions of familiar patterns. These seductive yet common images hold profound, fleeting histories. They become "memento mori" that both distract and entice one's gaze into formal, confounding and satirical new narratives with each other.

The most recent work explores the voices of the Moirae, the three sisters of fate from Greek mythology. These goddesses spin, weave, measure and ultimately cut the strings of destiny. Depending on the winds, these fateful "jewels in the sky" reveal our histories as a grab bag of trinkets. They represent the ancient and everyday, the demure, and the brazen.

My work invites the viewer to explore these relationships to one another, and, most vitally, to invent a new story.

Andrea Borsuk





Metaphorically Painting...

When I look at a painting by Tim Craighead, I feel as though I've just awakened from a dream, the details of which are rapidly dissipating, and what's left is fragmented residue that continues to swirl around in my head. It's that nebulous place between the tangible and the intangible, the known and the unknown, the physical and the metaphysical.

Craighead's work inhabits that precise space between the objective and the nonobjective world. His paintings are a unique mix of abstraction and an acute attention to representational detail. And it is this dichotomy and tension that drives his work. He does not comment upon specific events, but instead transcends current political, social, religious, and economic situations and embraces the timeless universality of the human condition. His practice is focused on an investigation of self-exploration, but not just of his inner self, but of our collective self. He sees his paintings as depictions of life—the duality of existence in the physical and metaphysical world.

Craighead is interested in the physicality of paint and its expressive potential. Despite recurring proclamations of its demise, paint seems to present the most tenacious and stubborn

resistance to the digital age. And, contemporary painting is part of a continuum older than most records of civilization. He finds the language of paint to be encyclopedic. He says things with paint that he cannot express in words. He pushes, pulls, wipes, scrapes, and smears paint on canvas, often revealing his process of editing and refining. To him, it is important to make mistakes and have that history embedded in the painting—"like lines on a face." He tries to paint what he believes in "eliminating any marks or images that feel disingenuous, listening to what the painting is telling me to do, rather than imposing my will on the work."

He draws upon a wide range of sources for his imagery, including biological and architectural structures, organic forms, an appreciation for a variety of religious symbols (both Eastern and Western), and a long-standing conviction in the power of paint as metaphor, able to convey meaning, whether it's depictive or non-depictive. His visual vocabulary is diverse, but relatively finite. Shells, vessels, scribbles, knots, polygons, DNA fragments, and other representational and abstract gestures are repeated from canvas to canvas. However, each of these glyphs assumes

a new presence in each composition, making the use of repetition a rather subtle aspect of the paintings. A key element of his compositions is the autonomous mark—a mark that does not serve to depict anything. The value of these marks is purely subjective to both the artist and the viewer. But, for Craighead, they must feel genuine, not mediated through any cultured screen. According to Craighead, “The language I am using in a combinative way, non-objective marks and objective marks, is an attempt to create a new optic. I use systems that are organized, both organic and inorganic, to operate metaphorically.”

The paintings often evoke a sense of place without geographic specificity, and there is a push and pull between two- and three-dimensional space. There are passages in the paintings that make us feel we are grounded in a landscape. However, from another vantage point, we are thrown back out into the real world, looking at a flat surface filled with symbols and scribbles—imagery that seems to be arbitrarily arranged. As Craighead explains it, “I use that sort of segmented, spatial-zone where you slip from being very close to being very far... You feel like the figure-ground relationship is recon-

ciled, and then your eye moves to another part of the painting, and you slip into another kind of space.”

Craighead provides an entry to a compelling and provocative space that blurs the distinction between the content and the composition, the recognizable and the mysterious. “I would like the paintings to operate as an aperture through which the viewer can pass and set themselves adrift with visual language that they find provocative.”

As T.S. Elliot surmised, what falls between an idea and reality, bridging the inevitable gap between the physical and the metaphysical, is the shadow. In the case of Craighead’s work, I would suggest that it’s the paint.

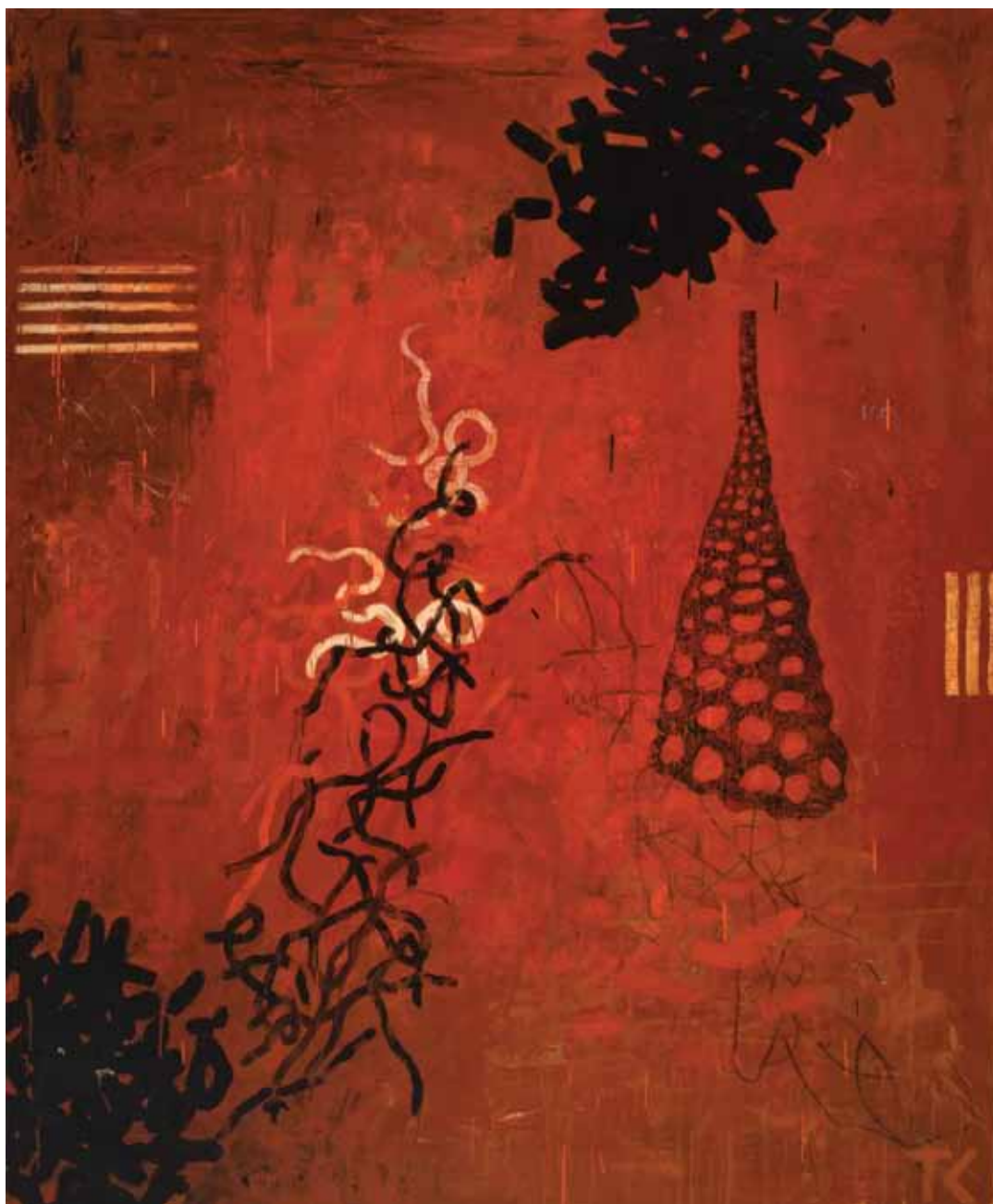
Cathy Kimball

Executive Director

San José Institute of Contemporary Art



Tonight at Seven
2011
Oil on canvas
40 x 30"



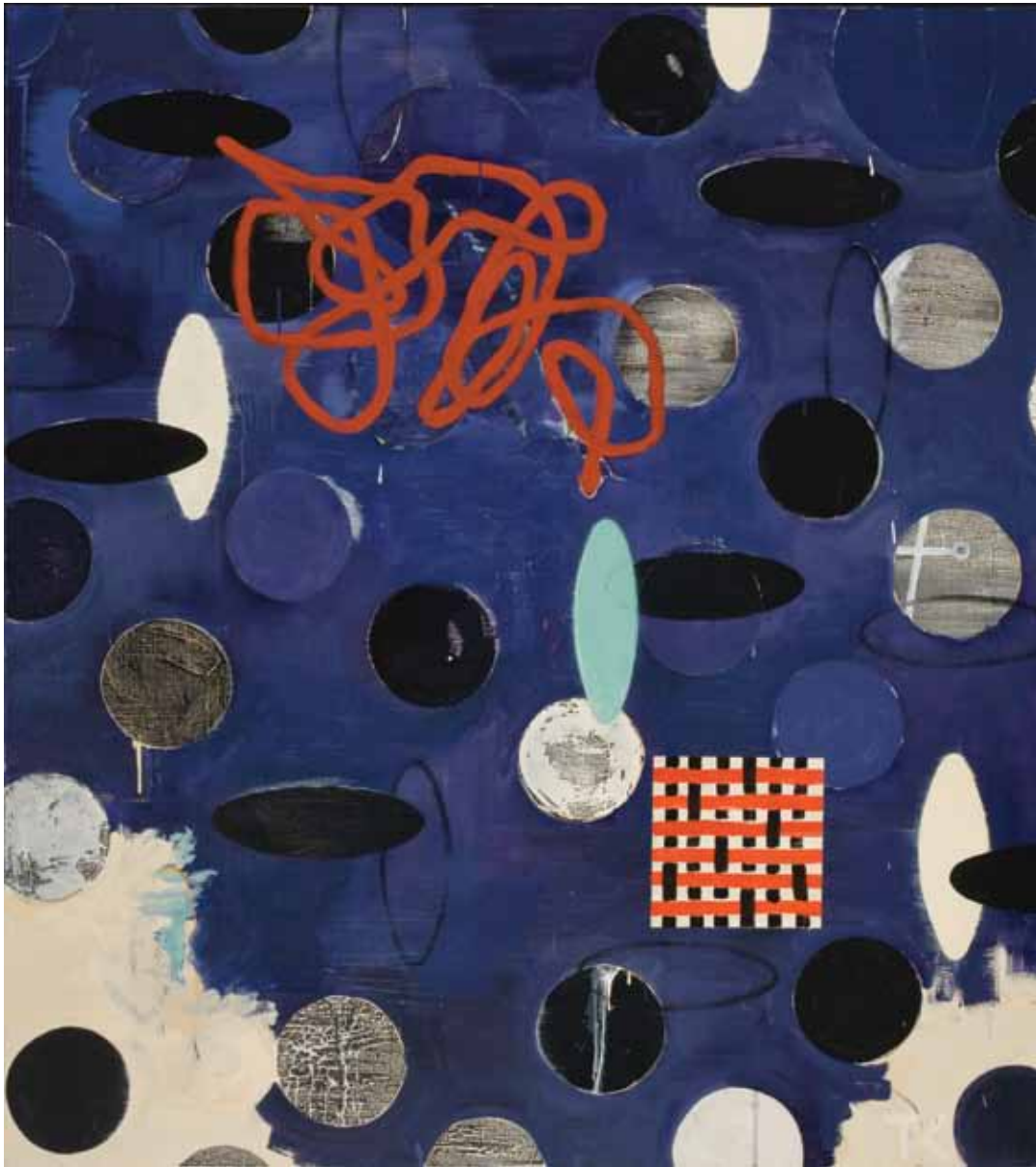
Madremanya
2011
Oil on linen
72 x 60"



La Selva, 2011
Oil, alkyd and casein
on linen
40 x 30"

Opposite:
Espina, 2009
Oil, alkyd and casein
on linen
72 x 66"





Coda, 2011, oil and casein on linen, 60 x 54"



Nightfall, 2011, oil, alkyd and casein on canvas, 72 x 66"



Drift, 2009
Oil, alkyd and
casein on linen
72 x 60"

Spring, 2009
Oil on linen
40 x 30"

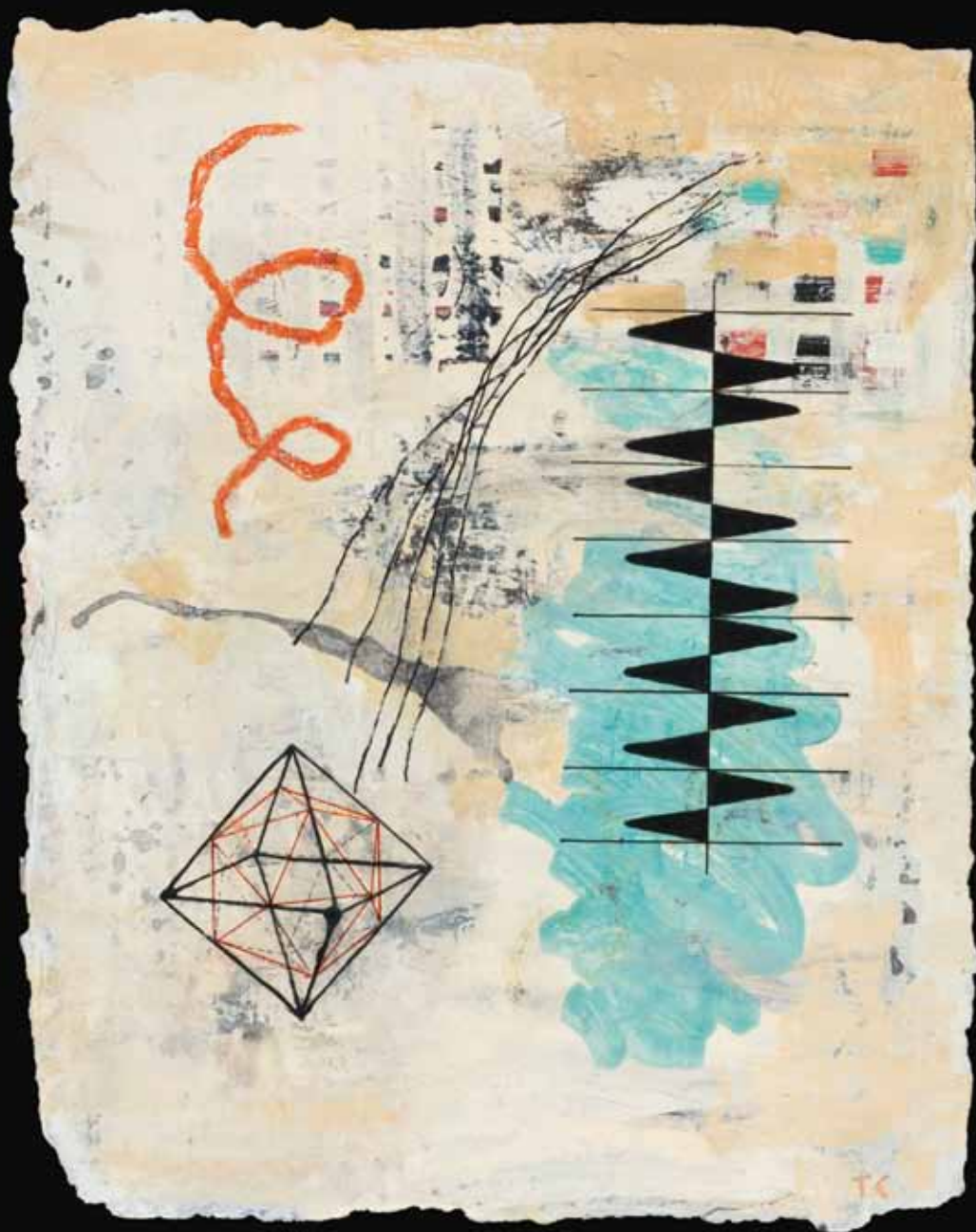




Opposite:
August, 2007
 Oil and alkyd on linen
 46 x 36"



Madremanya Series 1
 2011
 Monotype, casein and
 ink on paper
 12.5 x 9.75"



Trace Series 42

2009

Monotype, casein
and ink on paper
12.75 x 10.25"

Statement Between the Objective and the Nonobjective

I am interested in the symbolic potential of the objective world and the possibilities abstraction presents in suggesting the unknown. The combination of these two worlds serve as a matrix for what are essentially autobiographical works that seek to comment on the fragility of our relationships to the world we inhabit, and our emotional and spiritual connections to it.

The content of the work can be broken down, in its simplest form, into three categories. One category is autonomous marks, i.e., marks that do not serve to depict. The assignation of value to these marks is purely subjective as there is no pictorial reference for one to consult. These marks must feel genuine, not mediated through the screen of the intellect. In some way the motive behind these marks mimics those of the abstract expressionists.

The next two categories of content explore structural forms, both biomorphic and architectural. Forms found in biology and in architecture constitute an important part of the visual language of the paintings. The organic forms found most often in the work are structural in nature; they are the residues of a life once lived. For me they suggest

the temporal. In their infinite variations they have provided an inexhaustible reservoir of fascinating forms. As the metaphor of structures that support life forms was extended, my research led me to the works of Frei Otto and Buckminster Fuller. Both architects looked extensively at models found in nature to develop the ideas surrounding their work. Their drawings detailing structural models like cable trussed tension forms and the structural nature of soap bubbles, plant forms and like, have made for a fascinating and rich arsenal of forms that have found their way into the visual language of the paintings.

After 25 years of painting, I feel like I know less about what I am doing than ever before. I find that both terrifying and exhilarating.

Tim Craighead

Victoria

MAY



Exhaustively Effortless: The Artwork of Victoria May

Growing up in the suburbs of Los Angeles, Victoria May's creative life sparked at the age of ten when she learned how to make her own clothes. Part drawing and part sculptural construction, sewing requires incredible patience and an obsession for detail. This labor-intensive process, however, is ingrained in May. In every body of work, her instinct returns to it, and textiles, thread, mending, stitching, layering, unraveling, etc. serve as material, process and metaphor in her sensitive multi-media works. "Sewing has always stayed a part of my practice. Any problem I have I ask, Can I sew it? Can I use thread?" Engaging her masterful hand with the soft and malleable fibers, May creatively untangles the personal and cultural associations of her materials through her art and process.

In her *Blouse* (2000-2006) and *Headgear* (2001-2004) series, she created delicate garments and accessories constructed of transparent silk organza and embedded with menacing objects like shards of glass, human hair, thorns, and razor-blades. Rows of sand are impeccably stitched inside *Comfort* to provide both weight and warmth to a see-through shirt; chicken vertebrae stitched down the back of *Exposure* suggest

fragility; and in the *Worrier*, small pebbles suspend inside a head cap, like cancerous growths. While we wear clothing to identify who we are or who we aspire to be, May's skin-like garments externalize the unconscious communication contained in the body itself, complete with its scars, sadness, imperfections, and stunning beauty.

May's conceptual and material vocabulary deepen in her next body of artwork, *Residuum* (2009). In these richly layered sculptures and wall pieces, May responds with poetic force to the collateral damage of war. She asks, "At what point do institutional contortions to defend and protect begin to degrade our environment both inside and out?" May again combines familiar materials, but in this case, it is to provoke a sense of anxiety, ambiguity and urgency. Works like *Spare*, *Collateral Damage* and *Artery Study* are held tenuously together by blood-red thread, as if on the brink of falling apart. In *Artery Study*, the red thread crawls outside of the perimeter of its concrete quadrant, either to escape the suffocation of the dense material or perhaps to spread and proliferate. Made of materials like mud-stained organza, poured concrete, silk thread, army blankets, and industrial detritus, the works in

Residuum hover with haunting uncertainty between life and lifelessness.

In her most recent body of work, *Designed for General Use* (2010) May inserts a healthy dose of levity to her practice and shifts her observations to the systems, objects, and minutiae of our everyday lives. With their neat construction of straps, buckles, chords and pockets, the *Utility Panel* series appear deceptively familiar and functional. *Utility Panel #3: The nature of public health risks has changed* includes canvas straps to hold first-aid bandages as well as cases for a gun and ammunition. The formal absurdity of its design (do we even want to think about the circumstances that would require it?) is only heightened by the meticulous William Morris-inspired floral stitching on the back of the panel. Other works are seamlessly integrated into the architecture of the gallery space, only to serve unknown purposes: a metal tube juts out of a wall to spew long intestinal forms made out of silk organza. In *Less consequential leak*, and in *Open Cage*, wire spirals out of a wall in the shape of a hoop skirt or slinky toy. Together, these odd and disparate elements comment on the infinitely bizarre things “designed for general use” that we have managed to pro-

duce in our post-industrial world. Along with the diagrams and mass-produced found objects she presents, however, May still revels in the hand-made imperfections of things, as if yearning for a simpler time. In presenting her assemblages, objects and architectural interventions, May seems to be winking at us and saying isn’t all of this so wonderfully beautiful and strange?

From garments to abstract assemblages and to formal “utility panels,” May’s tactile works evoke a sense of effortlessness and familiarity. Inspired by her everyday observations of the world around her, she combines humble materials like hard concrete with supple thread, or the transparent weave of silk organza with the cold surface of steel to illustrate a palpable tension. Life is a balancing act and May distills its moments, emotions, and complex systems into objects of oppositional fields. Vibrating between vulnerability and strength; darkness and light; or femininity and masculinity; the works ultimately speak to the tender predicament of the human condition.

Susan O’Malley

Curator and Print Center Director

San José Institute of Contemporary Art



Cover the Earth, 2010

Reclaimed wood, found trowel, thread, pins, ink
13 x 15 x 6"

Complication, 2010
Found tie rack, found fabric,
hose clamps
40 x 23 x 5"





Take only as needed

2010

Found box, army blaket,
found cotton fabric,
stones, thread

10 x 4 x 4"

Bed, 2008

Steel coils, buried silk organza, thread, cord

56 x 24 x 8"





Less consequential leak, 2010

Steel pipe, rust-stained silk organza, thread, wire
38 x 6 x 13"

Collection of Carlos Magana

Self-contamination in a closed system, 2010
Found and fabricated steel, rust-stained silk
organza, wire, thread
72 x 20 x 20"





Growth Study, 2008

Concrete, fabric, thread, graphite

9 x 6 x 2"

Collection of Ralph and Sheila Pickett



Artery Study, 2008

Concrete, thread, graphite, pins

9 x 6 x 1"

Collection of Nora Dougherty



Utility Panel #2: "...for the motor does all the work and the light illuminates the goods."

2010

Canvas, thread, hardware,
light bulb, mop head
36 x 24 x 4"

Utility Panel #3:
The nature of public health
risks has changed
2010
Canvas, thread, hardware,
bandage
36 x 24 x 3"





Open Cage, 2010–2011

Spring-tempered steel

wire, cotton, pins

144 x 36 x 36"

(Work in progress)

Statement

An interest in tension and dichotomy fuels my art work. Continually I attempt to merge the delicate with the strong, to seduce and repel, to obscure and reveal, and to combine the hand and the machine. A conceptual tension arises between beauty and darkness in my work, alluding to the fundamental struggles inherent in the human condition. By pitting the organic against the mechanized, the visceral against the institutional, I seek to reveal a dark humor as well as a tender fragility in the seeming contortions that often underpin our lives.

Using the framework of cultural constructs, such as abstraction, codification, circumscription, my work highlights the absurdity they often impose. There is a presumption that through the complexity of constructs we can contain, organize, and control our minds, our bodies, our lives, even natural forces, yet in most cases that attempt at order is a tenuous one at best. Chaos inevitably threatens, both physically and psychologically, our perceived control or sense of order.

I often rely on raw materials and found objects to function as text or imagery, allowing the history,

function, metaphorical value, and sensibility of each element to contribute to the work's intent, along with my own investment of labor. Meticulous handwork transforms humble materials into the precious, mirroring how our own ephemeral lives become precious through our own personal toils.

Victoria May

R **A** **n** **d** **y**
Rubble



Andy Ruble's Balancing Act

I first became aware of Andy Ruble's work just before leaving for Burning Man in 2006. Ruble's ceramics stayed with me as I drove out to the desert. During that dusty, creative-infused week, the visual memories of his work combined with the "lived" experience of seeing *Uchronia*, a cathedral-like structure with elements that read as arches, naves and radiating apses. Designed by Arne Quinze and constructed by his 90-person Belgian team for the Playa installation, this architectonic art piece cemented my initial reaction that Ruble is an artist of extraordinary merit: being inside the massive structure gave me the same feeling of looking at one of Ruble's cave-like, pod-latticed, cactus-spined pieces.

Like *Uchronia*, named after a Belgian art movement centered on the idea of a world without concept of time, Ruble's work is timeless. It could have been made yesterday or a thousand years ago; it could have taken ten minutes or a lifetime to produce. What enhances the aesthetic of Ruble's vessels and sculptures is his ability to fire into his work a passionate investigation of art, science, architecture, and nature. Within the sensibility of the surface lies the ancient Greek thought that a person should be able to look at a building or

sculpture, shrink it down to fit into one's palm, and take inspiration from its timeless vitality, elegant rationality, and the intrinsic mathematical beauty of its structural elements. However, make no mistake, as ageless as his work is, this artist is in the present—getting gritty, being inspired, continuing to improve his already formidable skills, and making a difference in the lives of potential artists.

It is always interesting to know how people come to their life's work. Although he grew up in an environment conducive to creative exploration (his father, Gary Ruble, is a photographer and his stepfather, David Middlebrook, is a sculptor and professor of art), it took a teacher to lead him on his way. Before he ended up in Ralph Aguayo's ceramic class at Los Gatos High School in 1990, Ruble says he "didn't have any interest in art at all. I just wanted to play the drums."

Aguayo understood Ruble's emotional and physical connection to music. While a music major at UCSC, Aguayo was encouraged by professor Al Johnsen, co-founder of the Big Creek Pottery School in Davenport, California, towards ceramics. Johnsen told Aguayo he had the hands of a potter and asked him to try clay. In turn, Johnsen's student became Ruble's teacher. Today, Ruble carries on

that tradition through his teaching and mentoring.

In his pre-ceramics period, playing the baritone saxophone or drum set and tramping around in nature drove much of Ruble's interest. Growing up at the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains and having access to remote property bought by his great grandfather in the Mt. Hamilton area, Ruble was always intrigued by the natural world. As a youngster, he went for walks on the property looking for old bones which he brought back to the cabin where he and his brother, sister, and friends rearranged them into different shapes. Ruble recalls "I was particularly enamored with the complex shape and form of various vertebrae I found. I was mesmerized by the plant life and the large man-made structures that made me think." Connecting this early aural and visual imagery was an all-present rhythm that would eventually play a role in his art making.

After high school, Ruble made functional ceramic instruments and pottery before attending the Kansas City Art Institute. Prior to earning an MFA from Louisiana State University, he spent a year in Bend, Oregon making production pottery. This gave his work an easy surety. While refining his art techniques at LSU, Ruble began referencing the organic

and architectural structures of floor plans for Anasazi Indian ruins, bridge forms, and various natural organizations that have long inspired him. These enthusiasms informed his 1999 thesis exhibition, *Hybridization of Organic and Architectural Structures*. Now, Ruble spends most of the academic year balancing his own work with that of teaching the next generation of artists about mass, volume, and the chemistry of creating ceramic objects. As the Director of Ceramics at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, he continues to add to the legacy of Johnsen and Aguayo. Out of the classroom, his studio time yields work that represents the manifestations of his soul, work that is part of this exhibition and catalogue.

Since encountering his work five years ago, I have only become more confident that Andy Ruble is an artist of great dimension and sensitivity. I rather think Frances and Roy Rydell would have thought so, too.

Susan Hillhouse

Curator of Art and Collections
The Museum of Art & History @
the McPherson Center
Santa Cruz, CA



Confessional Vessel, 2010

Ceramic with glaze

40 x 22 x 22"

Opposite: Detail





Rocking Structure with Cube, 2011
Ceramic
14 x 23 x 8"

Eroded Vessel, 2005
Ceramic
22 x 23 x 23"
Collection of the Museum of Art & History, Santa Cruz





Structural Relic, 2010

Ceramic with steel stand, 12 x 63 x 10"





Ritual Vessel, 2008

Ceramic with 24k gold leaf

16 x 24 x 14"

Inset: Gold leaf detail





Structure with Tablet, 2010

Ceramic

18 x 24 x 10"



Rublestructure, 2008

Ceramic

21 x 15 x 9"

Structural Relic with Growth, 2011

Ceramic

22 x 24 x 10"



Rocking Structure with Lattice, 2011

Ceramic

20 x 23 x 8"



Statement

I create sculpture that explores the hybridization of organic and architectural structure. By observing and referencing details of our universe, which range from the microscopic (dividing cells, mushroom spores, pollen, and bone structure) to the mammoth (large-scale bridges, refineries, and ships), I gather ideas for surface and form.

I have always been interested in how objects in nature form and how man made objects reflect these same intractable laws. Quite simply, the hybridization of structural references has expanded the possibilities for nature's pure and perfect geometries. By reducing the sculpture to its pure essence of structure, the work simultaneously conveys the grace of natural arches and cathedral naves. Every structural link becomes an integral part of the piece's survival as a whole. Much like Buckminster Fuller's idea of tensegrity, the minimal amount of material for maximum strength drives me to push the ceramic material to the threshold of its tensile strength.

I become overwhelmed when standing at the base of a suspension bridge, and marvel at the hollowed-out remains of a Cholla cactus. How

is a simple lattice pattern so strong? How is an eagle wing so rigid yet flexible? These are the questions that fuel my sculptural inspiration.

Andy Ruble

Rydell 2010 - 2011 Visual Arts Fellows

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