

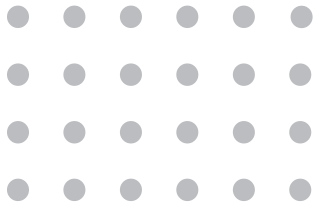
New Work in the Carriage House



Site Specifics '08

June 7 - July 27, 2008 . Curated by Karen Shaw

Islip Art Museum



Site Specifics '08

June 3 - July 27, 2008

Bill Cravis

Susan Leopold

John Monti

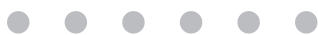
Margie Neuhaus

Lindsay Packer

Mia Pearlman

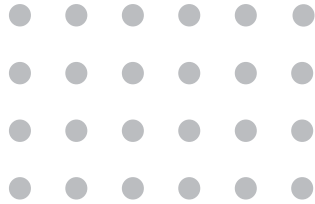
Sheri Wills

Curated by Karen Shaw



New Installations at The Carriage House

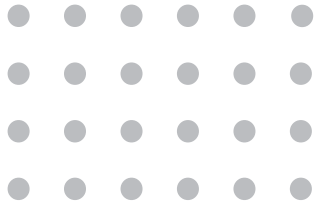
Site Specifics



For the past 16 years, the Islip Art Museum has invited emerging artists to create innovative installations in our Carriage House workspace. This wonderful relic of the past, filled with architectural curiosities, allows our residents, who live on site for several weeks, to set their imagination and energy free. The oddities and obstacles of each individual room produce artistic challenges, yet the raw space also provides opportunities to work in ways that more ordinary galleries and museum settings would prohibit. Within the constraints of time, money and safety, the seven artists in *Site Specifics '08* have been permitted to make any statements they wish or experiment with any ideas or mediums the space and place might inspire.

To begin the Carriage House summer season, Karen Shaw, the senior curator at the Islip Art Museum, has selected artists who work in various ways and use diverse mediums. Few of the artists knew each other before coming here, yet many of their projects are complementary. This year, more projects than usual consider climate change and human impact on the environment. As if pre-planned, two projects by artists who had not met before both replicate tornadoes. Another asks visitors to think about their carbon footprint—literally. Some projects integrate parts of the building to comment on the ways in which architecture shapes history and memory. Others use familiar materials in new, inventive ways. Though the works vary in style from severe minimalism to over-the-top Baroque, all are thought-provoking.

To draw attention to the way in which memory distorts the past, and visa versa, **Susan Leopold** has constructed a mixed media sculpture in Gallery #1. She has affixed three-dimensional replicas of ladders and modernist habitats to a large mirrored column that rotates slowly in the center of the room. Projected images of ornate moldings and chandeliers that remain in the historic Brookwood Hall mansion merge into the tower structure. The fusion of old and new, of past and present, bounces back and forth among mirrors in the corners of the room, obliterating all sense of time and place. The distortion recalls both the gaiety of carnival fun-houses and mental states associated with madness.



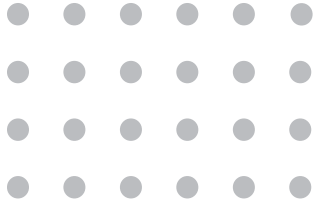
John Monti's installation in Gallery #2 is a paean to adolescent fantasy and our culture's current fascination with kitsche. For *Teen Meditation*, Monti decorated the gallery with neon-colored cartoon flowers that coalesce into saccharine mandellas, including one with a huge Valentine heart at its center. The imagery refers to 60's pop culture, with its idealistic, omni-present peace signs and "Flower Power" sensibility. Although the components seem to be mass produced, like the work of Takashi Murakami, Monti has painstakingly crafted each of the hundreds of flowers that form his installation. Though the blossoms appear to be made by machine, no two are alike.

Lindsay Packer's installation in the Carriage House stairwell blends the cautionary and the whimsical in equal measure. In a scene that borrows from *The Wizard of Oz*, the artist has created a miniature drama in which a parade of toy animals seek shelter from whirling tornadoes that bear down on the landscape. The simple technology that animates the piece—holiday lights, chicken wire, some fabric and a small motor—is entirely visible, yet does not detract from the magical illusion. According to the artist, the mechanism she used to create her menacing storm is the same one filmmakers used to transport Dorothy from Kansas in the classic film.

Bill Cravis's witty *Pitter Patter* considers the effects of consumer habits on the environment. In Gallery #3, the artist has constructed oversized sandals with stamp pads on the bottoms that contain the words "want" and "need." Cravis wants visitors to put the shoes on, walk around the canvas-covered floor and contemplate the message their footprints leave behind. As the exhibition continues and participation grows, imprints will grow denser and denser until all blank space disappears. The canvas, like our global resources, will be consumed by human action.

Mia Pearlman's has fashioned a stunning cut-paper tornado that swirls ambiguously out of, or into, the Carriage House ceiling in Gallery #4. Streaked with India ink and starkly lit, the sculpture fills the room with its wild and awing presence like some great animal in a cage.

In *Scanning Viscera*, **Margie Neuhaus** has constructed a cloth labyrinth



that twists and turns through Gallery #5 and refers to the ancient practice of reading animal entrails to predict the future. In the center of the maze, a vertical bank of lights move across an abstract sculpture, recording its different parts like an X-ray scanning the body for evidence of disease. Equating quaint superstition with current science, the artist examines the basis for knowledge and certainty in different societies at different times in history.

Sheri Wills's installation reflects filmdom in her multi-screen projection in Gallery #6. A shower of images flash in a blur, like the views from speeding trains. Individual frames are tantalizingly familiar yet unidentifiable: perhaps train tracks, perhaps vegetation, perhaps bones. Certainty is out of focus. An electronic sound track drives the pace of the work, in the same way film scores shape the action in blockbusters. Using all the devices associated with popular movie-making, the artist presents a compelling cinematic drama minus a narrative.

With its emphasis on architecture, the environment and contemporary culture, Site Specifics '08 is serious fun. We thank our artists and welcome our visitors to the Carriage House and our 16th season as Long Island's center for experimental art.

Mary Lou Cohalan/ Director/ August 2007

Artists' Statements

Bill Cravis

Pitter Patter

There is much talk and concern these days about global warming. The realization that we are all part of the collaborative destruction of the Earth has prompted an examination of individual and corporate “carbon footprints.” Environmental indiscretions are aestheticised through this process, in hopes of inspiring us to act.

The size of my carbon footprint reflects the amount of greenhouse gasses I am personally responsible for. This astonishing calculation mingles with the myriad factoids that epitomize our Age of Information. If the size of my carbon footprint is to become more than mere data, I must make drastic changes in my habits of consumption, in favor of Planet Earth.



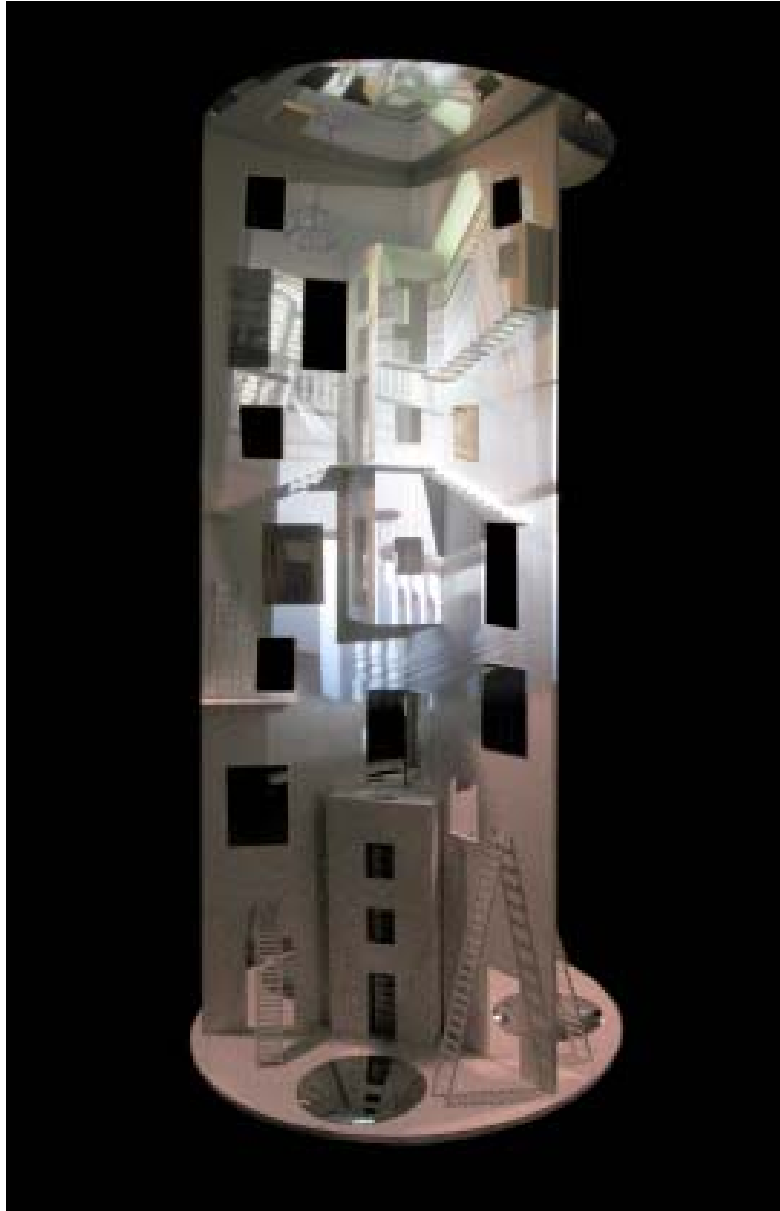
Bill Cravis
Pitter Patter
Detail
Location: Gallery #3

Susan Leopold

Yellow Wallpaper

Inspired by Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gillmore's 19th century short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, this installation reflects the illogical conception of space that someone suffering mental anguish might experience. The installation is composed with an eight foot turning tower that is embedded with mirrors and small architectural models of stairs, ladders, doorways and other passages. Interior views of the nearby 1903 mansion are projected onto the slow moving tower, causing the images to distort, bend and bounce across the construction and surrounding walls.

The buildings captured in my work are abandoned structures, though still magnificent in their decrepitude. I strive to capture the poetry of decay found in one once proud buildings slowly being reclaimed by time. When seen from a single position the pieces appear static, but the viewer's movement makes the sculpture come alive. The illusion of space is achieved by embedding photographs into sculptural forms lined with mirrors. The work acknowledges how human interaction personalizes architecture, but people rarely appear in my pieces. Rather, the fractured panoramas evoke the past use of the buildings, allowing viewers to create their own historical narratives through memory and personal associations.

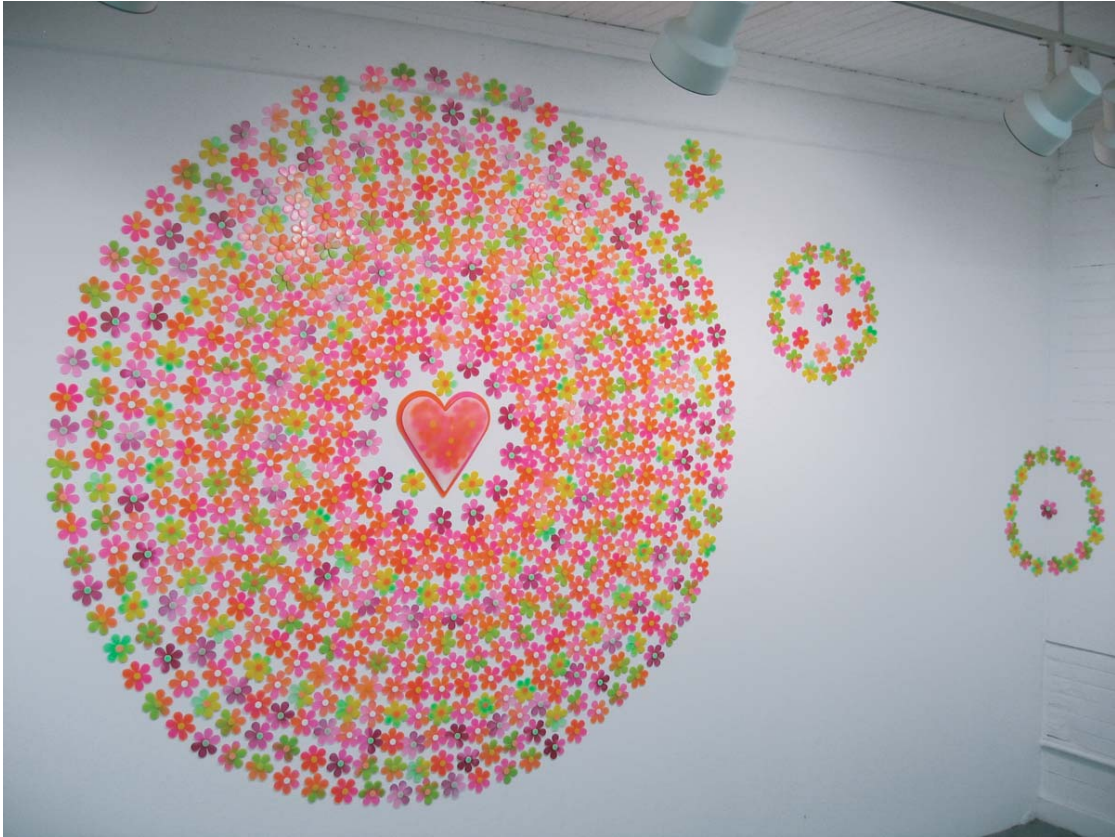


Susan Leopold
Yellow Wallpaper
Detail
Location: Gallery #1 (cage room)

John Monti

Teen Meditation

My work represents a belief that a world of brightly colored plastic things represents a utopian vision that is sustainable and unchanging. It is a utopia where there is a “happy” future facilitated by beautiful, seductive and brightly colored objects. This installation titled, *Teen Meditation*, is sincerity laced with naivete. One can be lost in its exuberance and passion while recognizing the familiar tropes tugging at our shirt tails.



John Monti
Teen Meditation
Detail
Cast pigmented rubber
Location: Gallery 2

This work is made possible thanks to the Faculty Development Fund of Pratt Institute.

Margie Neuhaus

Scanning Viscera

Scanning Viscera alludes to the analyzing of the internal organs of the body, instinctive responses and intuitive understanding. It also refers to the ancient practice of looking at animal intestines to predict the future. Historically, the complex shape of intestines influenced labyrinth design; this is echoed in the labyrinth of fabric. It is also informed by the idea that things outside are projections of what is inside us and what is inside is a projection of what is outside.

The gathering of specimens informs the shape of the elements that cast shadows. The forms are held together with a structure of copper rods that are braced and interconnected. The structure holds the parts together and suggests ways a specimen from an archeological site might be held in place to move it for further study. Labels used to assemble the sculpture are left attached, suggesting the kinds of tags put on at a site that reference the location in the pit or place of connection between parts. The use of light and screen aspires to an alchemy in which the visceral is transformed into an abstraction.



Margie Neuhaus
Scanning Viscera
Detail
Location: Gallery 5

Lindsay Packer

Show the Effort it Takes to Defy Gravity
Behavior in Escape: Emergency Migration

*“On stage he grapples with a grizzly bear
the deadlier for not really being there”
from Bodybuilder’s contest by Wislawa Szymborska*

Using popular imagery, found objects, light, toys and text, I investigate the line between what we know and what we suspect about the things we see. Inspired by a year of study and travel in India, my most recent body of work focuses on translation, communication and first encounters. Informed by fairy tales, science textbooks and language primers, my paintings, collages and light-based installations examine entry-level curiosity. Children, animals and other “beginners” attempt to understand the world, each other, difference. In my work, complex structures, simple mechanics and elementary linguistics, scientific vocabularies, all help question the relationship between object and shadow, cause and effect, original and translation.



Lindsay Packer

Behavior in Escape: Emergency Migration

Detail

On Cover:

Glow Barn

Detail from *Show the Effort it Takes to Defy Gravity*

Location: Stairwell rooms

Mia Pearlman

Gyre

Gyre appears to emerge from the ceiling of the Carriage House at the Islip Art Museum, coiling out of itself. From every angle, the unseen is unpredictable: what is on the other side is not what one expects.

I make site-specific cut paper installations, ephemeral drawings that inhabit space in both two and three dimensions. To create them, I first make complex line drawings on large roles of paper in India ink. Then I cut out selected areas to create a new drawing, made of positive and negative space, on the reverse. Once they are pinned into a sculptural form, these forms create a drawing in space. And finally, their shadows produce a wholly new drawing on and around the three dimensional drawing.

My work is a meditation on chance, control and the ephemeral nature of reality. It is a reaction to the overwhelming knowledge we now have of every aspect of our world, from the tiniest nanoparticles to the incomprehensible vastness of the universe, and the way this hyper-awareness is simultaneously awe-inspiring and soul-crushing. They evoke environmental chaos, physical instability, and infinite destructive forces beyond our control.

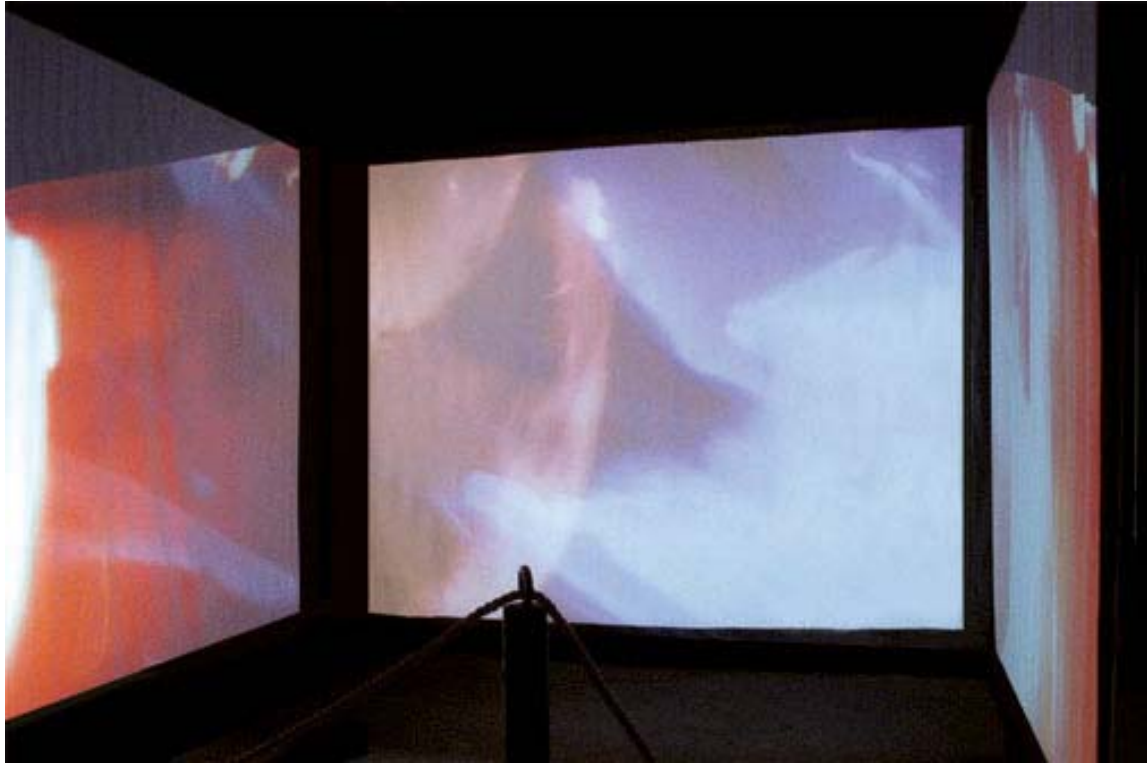


Mia Pearlman
Gyre
Detail
Location: Gallery 4

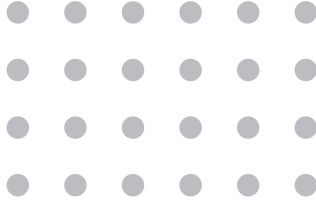
Sheri Wills
Flutter Arrhythmias

Sound by composer Charles Norman Mason

Flutter Arrhythmias, at the outset, is inspired by the sounds you hear around the Carriage House: the train in the distance, and the many bird calls—a combination of mechanical and natural sounds. Charles Norman Mason (the composer of the soundtrack) and I are both interested in the place where electronic rhythms and natural rhythms blur, where they overlap and become indistinguishable. When a mechanical or electrical rhythm or motion take on an idiosyncratic, human yearning—or when a natural rhythm becomes nearly perfect, like a machine—tension develops, creating a poignant counterpoint between ecstatic imagery and an underlying pathos.



Sheri Wills
Flutter Arrhythmias
Detail
Location: Gallery #6



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