



Making the Making

Curated by Charles Goldman

January 5 - February 3, 2001

Polly Apfelbaum
Torie Begg
Yvette Brackman
Ann Chiu
Tim Clifford
Reed Danziger
Deborah Davidovits
Matt Harle
Klindt Houlberg
David Ireland
Richard Jackson
Micah Lexier
Gerhard Mayer
Kathleen McShane
Nehal Mirra
Gay Outlaw
Rosy Paine
Joyce Peisato
Jack Prospan
Richard Rezac
Tom Sachs
Joe Scanlan
Bob Seng
Michele Valerio
Allan Wexler

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David Ireland
Untitled, 1999

Making The Making

This exhibition is not about what you are looking at right now. It is not about the images of artworks arranged in columns along this page. It is about that empty white space surrounding the objects and that which is not there. Nothing metaphysical or theoretical, I assure you -- it is much more concrete than that. It is about the multitude of apparatuses used in the creation of these artworks. It is about the tools -- their fleeting quality and their absolute significance. It is about everything that came before the pictures that you are seeing and making that absence present.

Tools are simply a means to an end. The tool is an idea and (as Levitt would have it) the idea is a tool. The tool is a ticket. Tools allow and they enable. Just as a house can't be built without a saw and a hammer (and a dumpster), artworks can't be made without their own set of tools. Artists, being makers, often involve themselves with the making of things that are not commodities. These things do not leave the studio, yet they cultivate the production of objects that do. Their studios are full of various tools -- found, made and manipulated. These tools allow for a crude form of mechanical reproduction and of mechanized production. They allow for movement and repetition not possible with the human hand and provide a smoother segue between the brain and the action in question. Art does not just happen. There is no transformation, no elevation of material. It is a dirty and uncertain process. The artworks you see on this page all stand on a scaffold of trial and error, as has all artwork throughout time.

At the turn of the 21st century a great deal of attention is being paid to the effect of the technological revolution on the arts. The computer is thought of as an extension of the mind. Earlier last century the camera was seen as an extension of the eye. The century before that the machine was seen as an extension of the hand. Conversely, Marx and Engels saw the hand as becoming an extension of the machine. Their musings on production, industry and labor are at the heart of this exhibition. As is Walter Benjamin's investigation into changing methods of artistic production. There are industries that exist solely in order to sup-



Richard Jackson
Big Time Ideas, 1986-91



Matt Harle
Untitled, 1998



Gerhard Mayer
Untitled, 2000



Micah Lexier
A Minute of My Time..., 1997



Deborah Davidovits
Landscape, 2000



Gay Outlaw
Limb, 1998



Helen Mirra
Untitled, 1997



Roxy Paine
Bad Lawn, 1998

port other industries. The artist's studio presents an infinite array of mini-examples of this phenomenon. The contemporaneous quality of the artists in this exhibition comes from their resistance to the industrialization and interdependence of the modern world. The tools they use have been in use long before there were any industrial or technological revolutions.

In art making, just as in any industry, there is pre-production, production and post-production. There are tools for every stage of the process. David Ireland's gloves are tools that allow his hands to be a part of the production process, while the resulting *Dumb Balls* are a record of his concurrent thought process. He said to me that he has always thought that "the hands are the molds." For him, the body and the machine are one. Joyce Pensato's stuffed animals provide the initial inspiration for the making of her paintings, yet they also collect the detritus of their making in blobs of paint and charcoal fingerprints. They are proof of the connection between the hand, the eye and the brain.

Allan Wexler's *Vinyl Milford House* explores conversation as the centerpiece for living. Looking at his oeuvre, it is clear that he believes communication is at the heart of all human understanding. Not only is his maquette a tool for the final structure but the house itself becomes a tool -- enabling shelter, contact and belonging. Tim Clifford's maquette of a thick fence turns the typical American white picket fence into something more akin to the walls of a stone fortress. Clifford presents a xenophobic alternative to Wexler's idealism.

Polly Apfelbaum's chart was made in preparation for her piece *Ice*. The chart is a simple mechanism designed to prevent mistakes, repetitions and mismatches of which the unassisted brain is capable. Tom Sachs' tool holder exists in service of his sculptures. It, like his sculptures, is made by hand with cardboard and an exacto-knife yet it needs nothing but its own use-value to serve as its subject. Richard Jackson's jig was made to produce the 1,000 clocks for his *Big Time Ideas*. Jackson's clocks refer back to themselves, to their production and to the notion of how the artist spends his or her time. Matt Harle's preliminary tape on Mylar drawings for his sculptures work like projected tracing paper, yet the scale, unlike a maquette's, does not represent anything out-



Anne Chu
Bear Head, 1996



Jack Pospisil
River Rock, 1999



Klindt Houlberg
Untitled, 1990



Kathleen McShane
Filmic, 1999



Helen Mirra
Untitled, 1997



Reed Danziger
Untitled (00-4), 2000

side of the artist's will. The resulting works could be as large as a house or as small as a needle.

Many of the other works on display are pulled directly from the center of the artists working process. Gerhard Mayer's stencil was fashioned to be used directly against the wall. It is a cumbersome mechanism that allows only for a delicate line. Micah Lexier presents a negative stencil, as opposed to Meyer's positive. Only the marking of the negative space delineates the line, which represents one minute of the artist's time. Deborah Davidovits' carbon paper drawings are created via tracing, not dissimilar to the act of using a stencil. The layered images left on the used carbon paper contain an even more complex narrative than do the resulting works.

Casting is an ancient method of mechanical reproduction invented by the Greeks. Gay Outlaw's tree limb mold is made from gluing together wooden dowels. A natural product of the original tree is manipulated to create a pixilated, hyper-real version of itself. Roxy Paine, on the other hand, uses high-tech methods and materials to recreate the humble cast-offs of nature. The molds he presents look like fossils, hundreds of thousands of years old, yet the specimens that they produce would be the first to be plucked from the garden.

Ann Chu's bear sculptures are akin to life sized Greek statues. Both produce characters from a specific mythology -- Chu's are personal while the Greeks are collective. Jack Pospisil's brain mold offers an unsettling alternative to human cloning. Like "Blade Runner," they present an archaic version of the future. As with other works on view, the method of production is part of the resulting work's subject matter. Likewise, Klindt Houlberg's tool is a handmade template created to replicate the image of a hand. The wooden hand was then inlaid into a table, also of the artist's crafting, thus celebrating its own making.

Exploiting Gutenberg's invention, Kathleen McShane's printing plates and their accoutrement allow the mass production of a product that varies slightly with each pass. Helen Mirra creates a bass harmonica and then, in her performances, improvises with it like a jazz musician. Both artists use pattern, repetition and the subtle variations available within a set of strict limitations. Reed Danziger does the



Richard Rezac
Untitled (98-09), 1998



Torie Begg
Apparently Grey, 1997



Yvette Brackman
A Lie Down, 2000



Bob Seng
Large Stack, 1996



Michelle Valerio
Tower and Lean, 1997



Joe Scanlan
Product No. 2, 1999

same. Her paintings combine chaos theory and fabric design. Her simple store bought tools, when used together, create patterns of infinite variety.

Richard Rezac presents three tools he used to make *Untitled (98-09)*. The tools were made to manipulate wax before casting it in bronze. For him, the work and the tools used to make it are two sides of the same coin. Torie Begg's kit is made up of the various accoutrement needed to make her *Apparently Grey* paintings. Her installations use the monochromatic variations of seemingly similar paintings to highlight the difference within sameness. In Yvette Brackman's bed project the responsibility of making is handed from the artist back to the viewer, thus collapsing the distance between the two. Bob Seng's jig was made for the production of a crutch. A crutch is a tool in itself and, like all tools, it provides invaluable assistance. It is, literally, a poignant tool - a tool for a walk.

Like the dumpster, there are also tools for post-production. Michelle Valerio presents mixing bowls for mixing concrete and paper mache. Her detritus transforms a mass-produced bowl or jar into something that resembles a Native American stone mortar. Joe Scanlan is the one artist in this exhibition that truly flips its premise onto its side. Most of the artists in this exhibition are using tools made from some sort of raw material to create their artworks. Scanlan is using his artwork to create the facsimile of a raw material. He brings us back to where we started.

When I grow old I know that I will be one of those men who hang around the perimeter of construction sites watching the cranes, concrete mixers and bulldozers -- as well as the carpenters, electricians and masons -- do their jobs. Once the building is complete I will walk past it, not looking up, onto the next construction site. I have always preferred the backs of buildings to their fronts, spaces in the process of being filled to the ones already full, construction to completion. This exhibition is about those spaces and the processes and materials that fill them. It is about the fact that there is no center without a periphery, no now without a then and a when. Finally, it is about the time spent in creating timelessness.

Charles Goldman
© December 2000



Joyce Pensato
Hallwalls Donald, 1998



Alan Wexler
Vinyl Milford House, 1994



Tim Clifford
Maquette for Untitled, 2000



Polly Apfelbaum
Ice (Installation view), 1998



Tom Sachs
Christy's Trash..., 1995

The blue numbers correspond to the tools in the exhibition.