

## Art in Space: The Sequel



**Photo by Warwick Green**

presents a group of energetic and inventive artists who are bringing their visions to this, the second Jerome Installation Art Commissions in 1997. Performative acts and materials set the stage for the installations of Rollin Marquette, Cynthia Morgan and the collaborative team of Gerald Smith and Bernhard Huwiler. These artists responded to a call for proposals earlier in the year with a written one page proposal, slides of past work and a budget for the work that is included in this exhibition. We are pleased to have had an opportunity to assist these visionary and committed artists.

I also would like to thank the departing artist committee members who have participated on the Art in Space selection committee for the past two years and have made an important contribution to this program. Both Lourdes Cue, also a former Jerome installation award recipient and sculptor and Raveevarn Choksombatchai, who recently joined the architecture department of University of California, Berkeley, and is currently working on a Women's Suffrage Memorial to be installed on the State Capital grounds late summer, have made a significant impact on the changes included in the installation award program over the past two years. I thank them for their commitment, insight and creative vision.

Lynn Wadsworth a sculptor and virtual space creator and Diane Mullin, writer, teacher and curator will serve on the committee again next year. Diane has already made a significant contribution this year to the exhibition by writing essays for each exhibition and will participate in the second Artist Talk, 7 - 9 p.m., Tuesday, June 3. Please attend this informative evening for what will sure to be lively discussion and dialogue about the current exhibition.

We look forward to the coming year and welcome any suggestions or ideas about how to continue to make this program visible and challenging and how we may contribute to being a catalyst that builds understanding among people through art.

*Suzanne Kosmalski, Program Coordinator*

### Art in Space: The Sequel Three Jerome Installation Art Commissions

*Essay by Diane Mullin*

**Bernard Huwiler and Gerald Smith: Drawing Visions of Space**



*Photo by Warwick Green*

Conventionally, a line is defined as a path that a point takes freely in its movement through space. In drawing, the point may be at the tip of a pen or a pencil. In the discourses of mathematics and physics, this route between two points can be understood as path independent or path dependent. Path independence is concerned only with the terminus points of such a route. Path dependence takes into account not only the points of terminus, but also information about the journey from point to point.<sup>2</sup> Because performance is central in this work, Huwiler and Smiths *Drawing Visions in Space* is path dependent. For this work the artists, leaving a trail of blue pigmented sand behind them, drew a line that crosses a section of the city through and over streets, yards, and a frozen lake. Smith, holding a long stick with a video camera strung to the end, followed the trail of sand that Huwiler left in his wake.

The artists describe this work as a drawing and an experiment which takes into account such abstract and contingent aspects as duration, distance, location, and their subjective experience. Viewing the videotaped trace of their walk through the urban environment, we become aware of the ways our spaces are marked, regimented, and mutable. We see snow, ice, pavement, a fence, more snow. In describing the work as drawing, the artists also focus on the problem of drawing itself. With this piece, we are made aware of drawing as a cognitive performance that involves both psychological and bodily components. Similar to the way the blue line literally describes, or even indexes, the movements of Huwiler's body as he treks across the wintry landscape, a drawing marks the movements — both voluntary and involuntary of the hand making the mark.

At Intermedia Arts, a trace of this performance a video projection of the line being made is shown on the floor where viewers can move into the image, walking around and on the line as it appears to move across the frame of light. Also in the space, a recording of the artists' footsteps and the noises of the urban environment plays continuously, connecting the abstract image of the line beautiful and isolated with the action of its making. High up in a corner of the room, filmed fragments of the action are projected onto the wall. This film, like the sounds, is a trace or memory of the action, not a documentation. It is fleeting and fragmentary as in memory and suggests rather than describes the processes of drawing, moving in space, and remembering.

### Rollin Marquette: Closet



*Photo by Warwick Green*

The word "closet" is defined as a small compartment, cabinet, or room for storage or sometimes study. The philosopher Gaston Bachelard has mused on the closet, or wardrobe.<sup>3</sup> For Bachelard, while the closet is ordinary and useful, its inner space is deep and intimate. He claims that only an impoverished soul would put just anything, in just any way, into a closet. He states, "In the wardrobe there exists a center of order that protects the entire house against uncurbed disorder. . . Order is not merely geometrical; it can also remember the family history."

Rollin Marquettes Closet appears unassuming from its exterior, but once entered it takes on an air of the un- or even extra-ordinary. The walls, lined in deep black neoprene the material of wet suits and the coldly beautiful metal tables surround what becomes a narrow passage for the body of the visitor. Atop each table lies a slab of white material. Concocted by the artist in collaboration with chemists, this filmy, waxy material is meant to recall or suggest ordnance or ballistic gelatin a substance which approximates the human body and is used to test the effect of bullets and explosives. The artist describes the look of the slabs as "ghostly" because the whiteness of the material becomes translucent as the edge is approached.

The tabletop slabs are littered with small objects made by hand from ordinary materials. Each one includes a small vial filled with another concocted liquid sitting on top of a handmade tripod. Two legs of the tripod are pencils and the third, a candy stick. The candy sticks rest in small dishes holding varying amounts of water and made simply from broken baby food jars. Because the candy will slowly dissolve in the water, the small tripods will eventually collapse, one by one, over the course of the exhibition. Seemingly magical, as if ghosts were in these machines, each tripod collapses over time. The contents of the vials spill onto the slabs and begin dissolving that substance, leaving marks, or scars, in the surfaces.

These uncanny objects are in fact quite simple devices that could potentially be used as munitions. The spilled contents would ignite explosives, according to a postwar army handbook on the improvisation of munitions in the field. Fascinated by this strange, "darker side" of creativity, the artist set out to explore how such objects would appear and might exist outside of their context as weapons. Curious, absurd machines, that move themselves toward their own logical, destructive conclusion, these objects fill the space with an ambiguous but beautiful eeriness. As Bachelard asserted, here order reigns, but what sort of order? In the very transformation of the closet itself and the objects within, the artist creates ghosts — traces of past existence — and invites us in to dwell with them.

#### Cynthia Morgan: Lull



*Photo by Warwick Green*

In Lull, references to lullabies and stars, and even by the sound of the word lull itself, reminds us of childhood, even infancy a time before we master language and our physical domain is small. Seemingly a time of simplicity, this is also the period when we come to know ourselves through the acquisition of language, we become aware of our surroundings and we learn of our place within a larger environment and social structure. This moment pondered, as if in pause or repose pajamas hanging from silver threads speaks to the acts of locating and articulating oneself.

Location: Gazing at the stars to locate oneself is the stuff of folklore and history. In the Andes in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Incans gazed downward into small pools of water to look upon the stars. In the 17th century, at the height of the "scientific revolution" astronomers such as Sir Isaac Newton and Edmond Halley looked upward to the heavens to help locate the earth and to help draw lines on our maps that would aid in the navigation of the seas. The new testament tale of the birth of Jesus tells of magi following a star to the baby.

Calling up the magic and the science, as well as that which lies in between, Morgan's piece includes seven tubs of water arranged as the Big Dipper, arguably the most recognizable constellation in our culture. The pajamas speak of the intimate spaces of our homes and even our bodies. From the gigantic to the small, the piece reminds us that we must constantly negotiate our positions, and even postures, in order to maintain a sense of place.

Locution: A performance of signed "singing" and music activates the space of Morgan's piece, but only for a specified time. The signers sign lullabies. In pajama-like costumes, each containing a germinal object, such as a seed or an egg, these silent singers draw on the body to communicate. The music that also fills the space pushes us to consider all language including that of music as a code.

With this awareness, we come to realize that all language is incomplete, difficult, and even private at some level. Language is characterized by disruption and discontinuity in Morgan's space, but nonetheless maintains a level of both utility and the poetic. Ultimately then, Lull ponders how we make sense of what we take in from the world around us and how we communicate with others through our sense of place, bodies, and articulation.

- *These brief essays were written with the aid of project proposals and conversations with the artists about the works in progress.*
- *I am indebted to David Wulfman for introducing me to these concepts and for checking my usage of the terms.*
- *Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, Boston, 1964.*

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