

Artists Space New York
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Unnaturally Yours
Selected by Willie Cole

Alejandro Berlin
Nicole Carstens
Daniel O. Georges
Wendy Lewis
Ben Jones
Peter Whitney

Artists Space's tradition of artists selecting artists continues with an exhibition selected by sculptor Willie Cole. Selected from The Artists File, this multi media exhibition reflects the diverse scope of work that continues to be the File's greatest asset. Willie Cole participated in *Selections from the Artists File* in 1989.

Air. Earth. Water. Fire. These four natural elements are all in some way or another individually utilized by the artists assembled in this exhibition. The focus on natural elements is not one of the environment perse but rather it is used as a point of departure for further investigation into personal ideologies and aesthetics. Alejandro Berlin uses fabricated materials to mimic an involuntatry bodily function; breathing. The presence or absence of air therefore becomes the is the substance Wheter something swells, gurgles, flowers or radiates it attemptsto juxtapose a common experience; one of nature and and the man made.

Alejandro Berlin

My work deals with the human body. Dissecting the figure, I focus in on certain points of interest: heart, lungs, stomach, tongue, the brain... The commonplace materials I use in are not traditional in sculpture. I often go through painstaking efforts in adapting than to my pieces. Far from being capricious, my considerations are based on an interest in exploiting the ability of the medium to inform the content of the art. The materials and elements that are chosen become the foundation on which my artistic ideas unfold. They provide the entryway into my work. By manipulating this "stuff" I attempt to develop to develop a communication that penetrates viewers far beyond their rationality. Satin, lace, a tablecloth, a piece of canvas, to name a few, are elements that for many of us have very specific meanings. Viewers often recall past experiences, by way of associations made with the materials. Their memories become part of the works, thereby drawing them into the creative process of making sense out of the visual elements offered.

Sound and movement, via motors and other electronic and mechanical devices, are two important factors that have come into play. These body parts are meant to amuse, startle

or tease, and to provide ground for debate through ironic humor. It is my hope that my sculptures will contribute to the sensuous experience and enjoyment of art.

Nicole Carstens

Plastique or plastic, pantyhose or gardenhose, sink on in sync, I work with the elements of my life. My sculptures come out of the commodities we take for granted. I use impersonal matters for the making of personal happenings. I keep rearranging a work until it finds a standing in space and time.

Who on earth doesn't drink coffee or tea daily? Teabags are, we can say, super-commodity. Just think of these functional objects that, once used, we dispose of by picking them up by their tails as if they were dead mice. They performed their service, but personally I have always had trouble throwing them out. As a result, once in a while, I feel compelled to make a tea-piece. I love tea, yes, but it also has to do with my personal memories around tea.

Growing up in Holland, I remember how my three siblings and I awaited every day the rattling of the waterkettle: three-thirty punctually...then, the warm porcelain of the teacup between my two hands, the delight of blowing in the damp air and the time that passed until the exact moment that one would carefully take the first small sip. Ideally, I'd sit on the big wooden trunk behind the house in the garden, legs dangling and eyes half closed in the afternoon sun. Teatime marked a total release for my otherwise ever-tense family. A break. A teabreak, that is. My life. They can be looked at for their physicality when saturated. Or, as in *Great Drain*, a quilt like wall piece made of paper napkins, we can look at the stains and imprints they have left behind.

In my family, everybody loved tea. As children we tried to stretch this time for hours by pouring each others rounds of tea from thinner and thinner brews. We each had our own cup. As it happened, I also had my own spoon. I named it 'Kreukje, Dutch for 'the dented one', which nobody else wanted it. After some time, I noticed to my surprise that the others started to secretly, use Kreukje also. It had become desirable...something insignificant, like a spoon, had become significant. Objects that we take for granted have this potential for revaluation. They can be spirited, or spirited away. Placement, arrangement and care all exert their influence and can bring the most common things to life.

When I was four years old I mixed the contents of a forgotten tube of facecream in a muddy rainpuddle near our house. Had my mother found out, she would have screamed at me. Instead, all the kids from the neighborhood came over to sniff. They reveled in the unexplained phenomenon. Quite a day for a puddle, I thought.

In my present work I am continuing my explorations in various realms. *Dig Drop* is an almost formless black floor piece made of household vinyl cover. Like the rainpuddle, it lays pathetically on the floor. On it sits a few showercaps filled with water. Upon closer inspection, however, something else is going on. Underneath its elastic-rimmed border, the piece has a small mechanism that moves the border slightly while it makes a muffled, scraping sound.

In *Out of Line* I employ another approach. A common cord of fish-shaped lights is taken from its usual location at a restaurant's ceiling and plugged in near the gallery floor. There the fish hang suspended, all in a row. A glass filled with water stands under each fish. They seem to have jumped up to the light and stopped, unable or unwilling to return to their former element.

Going up is an issue in my work and landing is another. Opposite forces inform my work. In *Time Decides* an ordinary, white, plastic bucket filled with earth forms the setting for a bunch of small, pink balloon poles. They define slowly, despite their visible exuberance and joy.

By rearranging familiar elements into new settings, I establish in my work the possibility for a narrative. I release the objects' potential to tell a story - about me, about the viewer and about the objects themselves.

Daniel Georges

There is a struggle going on between the understanding of the human body as a slave of outside forces and internal drives to which it must respond mechanically as opposed to a concept of our body as agent of one's mind and spirit with some measure of spatial and existential freedom. Without presuming to have the answer, my work explores the terms of the conflict through the forces both physical and metaphorical which generate form.

The work in the Inflation Series contains shapes created by inflating a balloon within a wire structure. The balloon itself is only surface, its volumes are as transient as the air within unless steps are taken to ossify their voluptuousness. My activity as artists activates the materials, but the forms are determined by a balance of forces. Surrendering the artifice of design to physics, releases unexpected geometries which correspond to unexpected sensibilities in the beholder.

Ben Jones

For the past several years I have been making kinetic sculptures using motors and various electronic devices. My sculptures attempt to relate serious subject matter in a humorous

way. This is usually done by extracting elements from popular culture and using them as metaphors to infuse the works with meaning.

Wendy Lewis

From early age mechanical motion both intrigued and intimidated me. Movement seen in toys, at carnivals, in advertising, and special window displays reinforced my anthropomorphic, fantastical view of the world I had formed by reading comics and children's books and seeing cartoons. I developed a strong imagination, which could be expressed through art, and was later supported by discovering surrealism and abstract or non-objective modes of working. Large machines with their rhythmic humming, such as those in factories possessed a seductive power but also represented a technological rational position that I questioned. Upsetting this "perfect system" is partially my motivation with my recent work. Using motors and water, I began mischievous tinkering to create fountains and machines that departed from the conventional. I choose household objects and give them new meaning by focusing on them in a new context. I also take materials intended for specific purposes, such as plumbing pipes and free them from their usual service, or exaggerate that purpose to the point of absurdity. Simple objects are exalted to lofty significance by concentrating the viewer's gaze on them.

My first impetus for using water came from living in Europe and seeing the ubiquitous fountains and gardens there. Water has some common implications in these fountains. Water's transcending property parallels the function of barely perceptible lines in my drawings. The lines, thin as type-ropes, stress our vacillation between the physical and spiritual world. Besides mystical connotations, allusions to the body fluids, bathing and ablution are present. The potent, destructive, lucid and tranquil aspects of water find expression in the various sculptures. The sounds of the motors and water amplifies the intended effect.

Peter Whitney

The outer walls of the house are covered with a wallpaper of flowers, caterpillars and butterflies. The air shimmers as the phallic butterflies pollinate the vaginal flora. The croak of toads in a thunderstorm on a summer night, the cries of birds and insects. The origins of life, the cycles of nature, the visual alchemy of collage mimics the morphology of nature, which mimics itself in diverse forms and repetitive patterns.

Insects which live for only a few days, mate and die. Plants that flower in the summer are pollinated by the insects and die in like manner. The soil is rejuvenated with organic matter. Death and decay are the essence of new life.