

TEMPORARY STRUCTURES: PERFORMING ARCHITECTURE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum • Lincoln, MA • www.decordova.org • Through December 31, 2011

The DeCordova has a surprise up its sleeve, so to speak. And no, it has nothing to do with the infernally third-rate Harry Potteresque whimsy of Andy Goldsworthy. Spinning off a quote by Winston Churchill, "We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us," curator Dina Deitsch has assembled an astonishingly broad look at how we live, and more specifically, what we choose to live in.

This timely exhibition comes on the heels of a housing crisis here in the United States that exposed the detailed corruption of financial institutions and undermined our economy significantly. Deitsch surveys the surrounding New England landscape, assumed by many to be a puritanical construct, and discovers the rebel aesthetics of the likes of Walter Gropius and Henry David Thoreau, near neighbors to the DeCordova.

Gordon Matta-Clark's seminal work from the 1970s is the cornerstone of the exhibition. Matta-Clark famously took apart buildings to create sculptural objects. Two of these films, together with *Clockshower*, in which he bathes

and shaves atop the Clock Tower building in New York City, are on view.

Vito Acconci's *Instant House* is an icon of Cold War-era folly. It is a participatory sculpture gerry-rigged on pulleys that transform the splayed American flags (walls) laid at the viewers' feet into a small house adorned with the hammer and sickle when someone sits on a swing at its center. The simplicity of this object's illuminative power cannot be overstated, both as damning indictment and historical artifact.

Wall climbing collaborators Ward Shelly and Douglas Paulson explore the architecture of the DeCordova itself, making their way through the museum by constructing temporary



Vito Acconci, *Instant House*, 1980, flags, wood, springs, ropes, and pulleys, 96 x 60 x 60". Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Museum Purchase. © Vito Acconci 1980. Photograph by Pablo Mason.

catwalks that sometimes snake high overhead. The idea here, as the artists start in the lobby and perilously make their way up the main staircase before heading to the fourth floor, is of adaptation, both to habitat and circumstance.

Additional work by a roster of artists is also on view and most of it is notable as well. What's striking is the vision of the curator. The intellectual underpinnings of the show are so elegantly constructed, so foundational and supportive of the work chosen, that here the

curator becomes a true artistic collaborator.

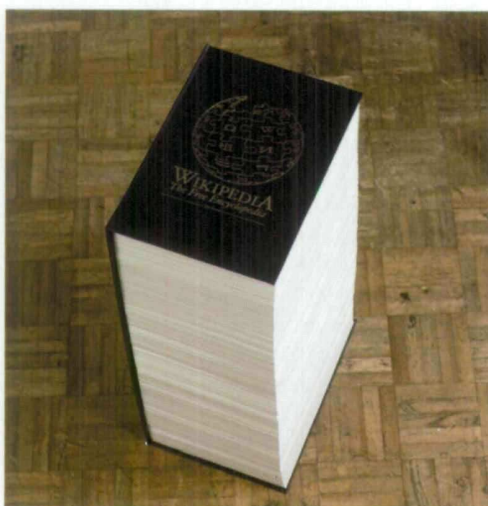
—Robert Moeller

MEMERY: IMITATION, MEMORY, AND INTERNET CULTURE

Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art • North Adams, MA • www.massmoca.org • Through January 31, 2011

Every season or so, MASS MoCA hands over the curatorial reigns to graduate students of Williams College's History of Art program, allowing them to organize a modestly sized group exhibition. The results are often thoughtful and refreshing, if a little thematically heavy-handed. *Memery* showcases artworks that deal with the relationship between Internet ephemera and cultural memory. Many of the works play with the novelty of their subject matter, and some are no more than conceptual one-liners. The show has its share of empty, trivial, even cynical works, but amongst the shallow bits are surprisingly layered and challenging pieces.

Both of Oliver Laric's inclusions exemplify the best of a new generation of artists using the web as medium. *50/50* collages together hundreds of YouTube videos of people singing along to rapper 50 Cent's hit *In Da Club*. *Versions* is a fascinating and open-ended visual essay on the cultural history of the copy, from Roman sculpture to Photoshop.



Rob Matthews, *Wikipedia*, hard-bound book. © 2010 Rob Matthews.

Another standout is *Berserker*, a sculpture by the Berlin-based artist collaborative AIDS-3D. Here the duo takes a page from Jeff Koons with a kitschy plastic sculpture of an alien, the

kind you might expect on a black light poster. The figure, classically posed, carries a USB drive that contains the digital model for its own fabrication. It's an appropriately campy, ugly metaphor for the future of near-instantaneous production, and what it spells for aesthetic integrity. It is hard to tell if the artists are making a statement in praise or in mockery.

Penelope Umbrico may be best known for her *Suns from Flickr*, on view. The work is a wall-sized grid of hundreds of photographs of sunsets found by the artist on the image hosting site Flickr. Installed nearby is a new work, *People with Suns from Flickr*, a collection of images of people posing in front of Umbrico's *Sunsets* in various galleries. This, better than any other work in the show, illustrates what the curators of *Memery* are suggesting, that the web has not only sped up the visual cultural feedback loop between art, commodity, and the public, it has in many ways reversed or confused its accepted course.

—Evan Smith