



3 SOLO 3 PROJECTS

JESSICA RATH // LYNN ALDRICH // CARRIE UNGERMAN

OTIS Otis College of Art and Design

BEN MALTZ GALLERY





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PASADENA ART ALLIANCE

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FOREWORD

3 Solo Projects is the second in a series of exhibitions highlighting the work of Southern California artists. Lynn Aldrich, Jessica Rath, and Carrie Ungerman each created new site-specific installations using common materials in quantity: dozens of metal and plastic rain gutters, gallons of liquid latex, and thousands of plastic water bottles to make tactile and poignant experiences that are poetic metaphors of abundance, scarcity and growth.

The pairing of these three artists and their work brought a complexity of emotion and spirit into the gallery. It was an inspiring confluence of texture, light, and implied sound with a dash of melancholy and thwarted desire. Rath's tree, Aldrich's downspouts, and Ungerman's landscape presented a multifaceted reflection of urbane nature. The synthetic and grand use of materials through quantity, repetition, and scale of each artistic gesture captured a sense of nature as monument, while simultaneously emphasizing mortality, demise, and the growing absence of the organic. A paradise perpetually lost, remembered, and reinvented.

A project like this requires a slew of people working behind the scenes, and I do want to call out a few key contributors. John O'Brien has written three insightful essays about the artists' work. Brooklyn Brown is to be commended for her thoughtful design of this publication that was made possible by the generosity of the Pasadena Art Alliance. Lastly, the gallery staff Jinger Heffner, Kathy MacPherson, and Phil Weil once again offered their unwavering dedication, expertise, and good humor in making the exhibition sing.

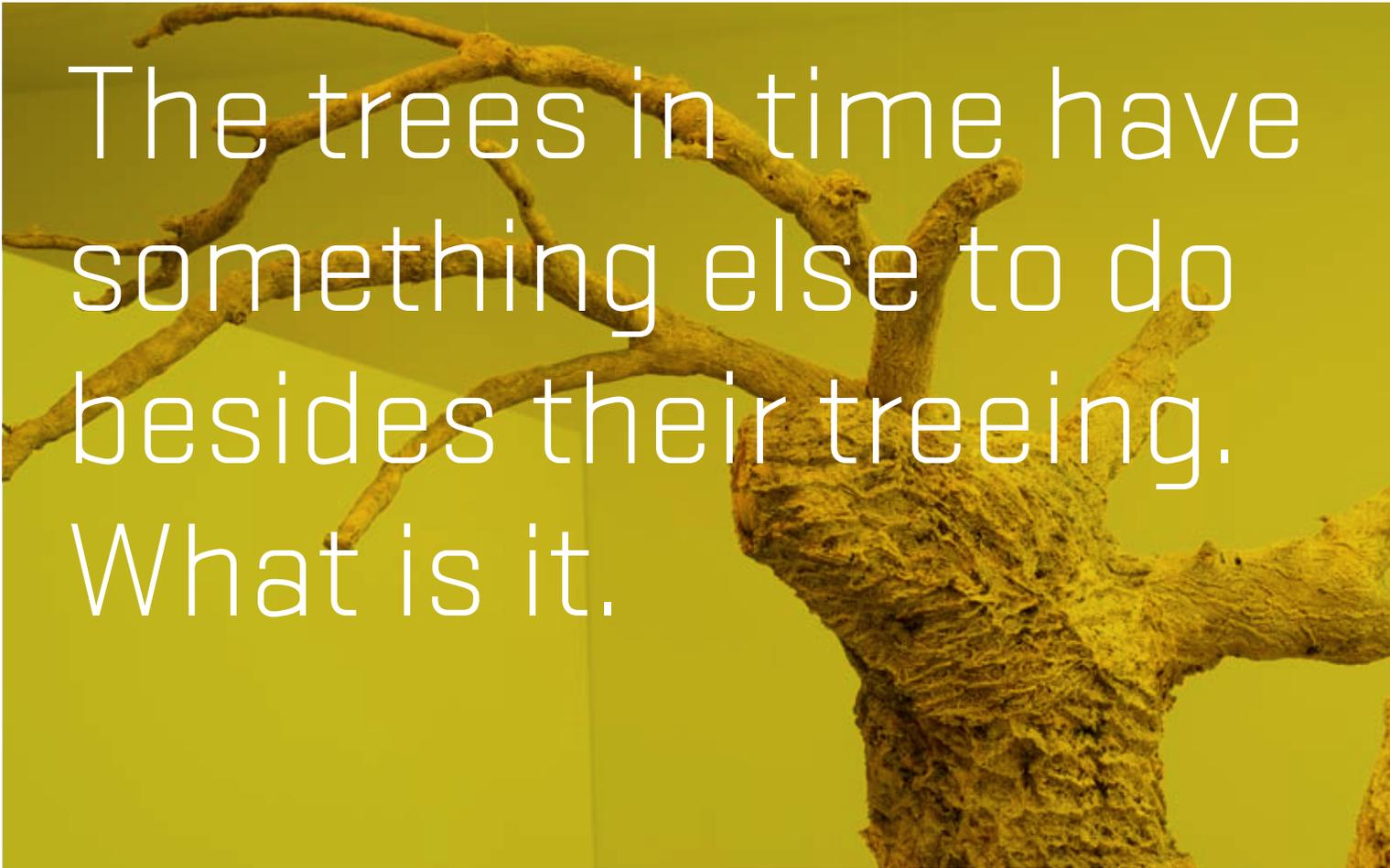
A final thank you goes to Lynn, Jessica and Carrie for creating this body of work and sharing their thoughts, energy, and objects with us.

Meg Linton

Director of Galleries and Exhibitions
Ben Maltz Gallery
Otis College of Art and Design



JESSICA RATH



The trees in time have
something else to do
besides their treeing.
What is it.

Fragment from the poem
On Looking for Models by Alan Dugan
© 1983 by Alan Dugan

JESSICA RATH

Tree Peel, 2009, Latex, cheesecloth, ground rubber, cotton, wire, steel

Jessica Rath's installation *Tree Peel* is focused on the process of reproducing a single, life-sized tree from her own backyard. The resulting art is both forlorn and hopeful. Her project is an exercise in mapping out the survival of an organism; akin to the way monumental sculpture memorializes the past. It is also a palpable demonstration of what physical cost survival exacts on a living thing.

Cast from the surface of a grisly, dying and overgrown apricot tree, the latex skin that she has pulled from her model is remarkably captivating. The texture of the rubber surface is very sumptuous, like some Leonardesque parchment drawings of wrinkled old faces. The residual chunks of bark, fragments of bugs and other bits of embedded detritus in the rubber actually function as though they were a painterly effect. The industrial yellow color of the latex has a sallow pallor and seems both sickly and slightly romantic.

Once she cast the tree, Rath subsequently sutured the skin back together, inside out, over a metal structure bearing the same forms and disposition of the original plant. This inside-out tree was then placed in the middle of the gallery floor, turned toward the light coming in a skylight and facing toward the trees beyond. The tree itself is wizened and the look of the branches, ravaged by time and unsuccessful pruning, resembles a root system turned upside-down. Similar to the rhizomatic philosophy traced out in the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Tree Peel* is opposed to an arborescent or unidirectional conception of knowledge. The tree of *Tree Peel* is barely alive. It is stunted and without appeal as a

model of the traditional family tree. Yet its growth and patterns of survival are more attuned to what really goes on in the so-called civilized world. Ideals have been pared away to make space for the dignity and suffering of survival in a dense urban environment.

Tree Peel is related to the themes and processes that Rath has explored in the past. In her 2006 *Drop Garden* installation, she used a massive accumulation of scrap fabric to create, ex novo, a draped garden-like set of hanging works that emulated branches, tendrils, thickets, ersatz blossoms and crusty pods. The tweaked hanging garden was both luscious and uncanny. Traditional western art has always represented nature in pictorial and sculptural forms. What interests Rath is how to extend the moral values projected over artfully construed landscapes to include the prerogatives of domesticity and create a metaphor for perseverance. Her twisted tree is, after all, still here and its clutch at the sky has echoes in floral and garden arrangements that go from the Victorian to the Colonial to more modern compositions. It is up to the viewer to deduce what meaning is at the core of her choices for sources. Clues can be found in another series of artworks from the 2006 two-person exhibition titled *Call Japan!*

JESSICA RATH

in which Rath created and photographed a combination of natural branch fragments and an assortment of art materials. These works were construed to look like highly improbable or even highly sexualized ikebana-inspired found object arrangements. Split between the high culture of flower arranging and the more common collecting of salacious souvenirs, the viewer is forced to acknowledge her paradox. The point of her hybridization is to indicate how far acculturation seeps into nature, as we know it through art.

For *Tree Peel*, Rath has cored the pith out from her tree. The soft cast husk is all that is left and she has hanged that loose epidermis on a steel skeleton. In an elaborate ritual of reconstruction, Rath has offered up the mangled existence of a single tree in order to make it into a work of art where the remains stir a viewer's feeling of piety towards the planet as a whole. *Tree Peel* is a participatory sacrifice for all of us and elaborates a re-definition of the beautiful as the outcome of natural processes more aptly than as the imposition of unchanging ideals.





Captions???





Jessica Rath

Rath received her BA from the University of Missouri in 1990 and an MFA from California Institute of the Arts in 1996. She creates lyrical, uncanny sculpture and installations from her unsettling interpretations of nature. Her work has garnered her an Arts Bridge Residency at Headlands Center for the Arts in San Francisco, a Los Angeles MTA commission and two grants from the Durfee Foundation, and was most recently exhibited at Glendale Community College, Kellogg Gallery (Cal Polytechnic) and in the solo show "SONG TO SNORE" at the Torrance Art Museum.

<http://www.jessicarath.com/ART/Home.html>



LYNN ALDRICH



(it's scaffolding) (it's supposed to be temporary)
(the domino effect) (had been forgotten about)
(it was in storage) (nobody knew where)
(that's a logging road) (you can see its gutters)
(they leave handprints) (they shudder with dolor)
(nobody could settle on any particular color)
(they meant different things to different people)

Fragment from the poem Blue Oxen by Dara Wier
Copyright © 2005 by Dara Wier.

LYNN ALDRICH

Silver Lining, 2009, Galvanized steel downspouts, primer, spray paint

Desert Springs, 2007, Galvanized steel downspouts and gutter parts, enamel

Bouquet, 2009, Galvanized steel downspouts, enamel, roof shingles, tar paper

Lynn Aldrich's installation is a paean to the power of the ordinary as it leans into the extraordinary. In its entirety, the installation is comprised of three inter-related but distinct artworks. She has put a collection of galvanized steel rain gutters through slight but significant modifications and then arranged them in different compositions to hone in on her creed. Her sleight of hand is an invitation to look more carefully at things oft overlooked and to reflect on how to notice significant aspects of the world surrounding us. Without cajoling or berating the viewer, Aldrich entrances and beckons forth the power of the imagination.

The first work a viewer encounters in the gallery is *Silver Lining*. The humorous twist of this title is immediate: soft tones of blue emanate from the open end of a large array of shiny metal gutters that appear to be raining down from above, suspended just below the gallery skylight. The assortment of blue lined pipes is set at varying heights above the ground, lending it the air of a set of floating organ pipes or of stylized streaks of rain. The soft pastel hues give the cascading tubes of sheet metal an unexpected air of reed-like fragility. It is as though water colored light were pouring into the gallery from the sky outside. It is as if the sound of gentle rain could be heard flowing through the downspouts if only a viewer would hold their ear just so. Whatever sense it plays off of, her key is to induce an expectation in the viewer with an implied presence and conspicuous lack.

Just visible beyond *Silver Lining*, *Desert Springs*, is arranged in a rough ellipse on the floor. This group of upright gutters is balanced on little footings and the curving permutations of the tubes have been utilized to their utmost advantage, accentuating the apparent upward movement. The tubes seem to spring up actively from the ground while being rooted to something below the floor. Twisting this way and

that, they resemble a garden of restless and quizzical eyestalks, turning every which way, possibly seeking photosynthetic nourishment. The inside of the shafts are painted a dull matte black and the outsides are all the color of sand. In the midst of the upright shafts, one is lying down with a single mesh screen covering one end. It seems to be the ringer, the interloper in the garden or the one that didn't spring up.

The final work of the threesome is hidden around a back corner. It consists in a smaller cluster of downspouts that are framed against a black tar paper covered wall. The jutting shelf on which they are collected reveals it self, in turn, to be a fragment of a shingled house roof. *Bouquet* mimics the traditions of still life like that of a painting by Morandi or a pastel sketch by Chardin or maybe even that of a formal flower arrangement. The stately composition and incongruous colors instill the metal tubes with an unlikely beauty and dignity.

Aldrich has been modifying household objects and domestic products for use in her artwork for some years now. Overall, the beauty and eloquence of her art is forged by balancing the recognizability of these things with the elusive artifice her modifications have

LYNN ALDRICH

affected upon them. From the series of waves-like structures composed of garden hoses to the group of almost minimal shapes comprised of green plastic outdoor furniture coverings, Aldrich has made the viewer aware of how little we see forms in space, once we have assigned those forms a function. Who can see or would imagine a thin corrugated tube as the embodiment of a near miraculous luminous shaft of light? She does and by creating art works that restore the simple obviousness of how our memory necessarily overrides our appreciation of beauty in the service of usage, she reminds us of how what we see is in large part determined by what we are looking for. Aldrich's use of real things to reflect on how the extraordinary can be located in the everyday. She allows these known entities to retain their functional humility and yet allude to a more transcendent significance without excessive grandiosity. Slyly humorous and profoundly thoughtful, Aldrich's installations remind us of just how many preconceptions we constantly and heedlessly inhabit.





Captions???





Lynn Aldrich

Aldrich is a visual artist who loves text and ideas but makes sculpture. She received an MFA from Art Center College of Design. Her work has been exhibited internationally at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York Art Affairs in Amsterdam, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Santa Monica Museum of Art, UCLA Hammer Museum of Art, and the Kampa Museum, Prague. Her work is held in many prominent private and public collections including the Calder Foundation; the Robert and Jereann Cheney collection; the Peter Norton collection; and the Alain Servais collection. Aldrich has received awards from J. Paul Getty Trust Fund Individual Artist Fellowship, City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowship, and LACMA Purchase Award.

<http://www.carlberggallery.com/artists.php?artist=laldrich>

CARRIE UNGERMAN



...there will be three parts that first appear separate but then form a connection of liquid silver. breathe deeply. in through the nose, out the mouth, release your metal breath into the air. control your emissions within the limits of law. the power plant incinerates coal and gold in particulate mist that is your breath. the volcanoes spike the atmosphere. you've come to a house of exploded debris...

Fragment from the poem Mercury Rising
(A Visualization) by Jena Osman
Copyright © 2008 by Jena Osman

CARRIE UNGERMAN

silverflow, 2009, Plastic water bottles, plastic food wrap, Mylar

Carrie Ungerman's installation *silverflow* melds a fascination with light reflective surfaces to a depth investigation of the underlying sources that make those surfaces so paradoxically striking. Not by chance, she uses mirroring surfaces that reflect back a viewer's own fractured countenance as they look at (and maybe don't look enough into) the tangled mass of plastic in front of them. I associate this oscillation between surface and ground with Mercury or Hermes, the ancient figure of the quicksilver messenger.

Mercury has always been linked with both communication and with dissembling. Represented by quicksilver, a constantly changing and highly poisonous shape shifting mineral, light beguiling techniques have been a mainstay of Ungerman's work over recent years. In her installations, the modernist dream of a purely visual phenomenon are carried to such an extreme that they begin to bend back against a viewer's comprehension of the overall pattern and head into optical overload.

In past works, such as *4:50a.m.* (2006), *Orange Surround* (2006), and *Pink and Silver Construction* (2005), everything evolved out of what appeared to be an impulse to carry elementary physical tasks out to their furthest possible consequence through willful repetition. The careful hanging of individual colored threads, the meticulous stringing of glittering forms and the lengthy uncoiling of spool after spool of vinyl tape all can be conducted back to an everyday gestures like cleaning, preparing or storing. These sets of often unnoticed domestic calisthenics are thrown into relief by Ungerman's choices of raw materials and by the over-extension of the recurrent workload until it reaches almost epic proportions. If she had been sewing normally with thread rather than carefully

draping it over thread pinned to the wall, the heroic sense to this work would have been nearly invisible.

The majesty of mountain ranges has long occupied a central position in the visual lexicon of romanticism. Singing the praises of the towering pinnacles that span the continents is a cultural stereotype as much as it is real sentiment. Romanticism can be blinding without a sustained measure of critical assessment, but irony is not the only available tool for critically assessing these myth constructs. The sprawling range of accumulated plastic mountaintops that have been painstaking built up by Ungerman offers a viewer a look at the different sides of this mythologem. It is a gloriously shiny array of peaks and valleys; a funhouse of bouncing light and meandering trails. It is also a huge pile of synthetic debris, the residue of petroleum by-products in the forms of castoff and relatively clean drinking bottles.

In all her installation work, the setting is paramount. In order to frame the modernist fascination with pure surface and light texture in the context of a broader understanding of what that fascination occludes, Ungerman uses the spatial envelope surrounding the work.

CARRIE UNGERMAN

Frequently, she has set up her installations in corners or near glass paned windows. The corner works are provided with an inherent duration that is determined by the corner's dimensions and the incoming light from windows maintains the wall works in a state of constant perceptual flux. In the Otis gallery, the "silverflow" masses are positioned below a large skylight that is, in turn, a highly trafficked upper story walkway. This means that differentiated light spills in at all times of the day and as the students, faculty and staff come and go from their classes or offices, they literally transform the work with their shadows. Whether from above or from within the gallery, the viewer is held fast between two opposing sentiments. Captivated by the visual allure and repelled by the base materiality of this landscape study, it isn't possible to simply side with one part of the equation. As anyone who has been to a landfill (or dump as they were once called) knows, there is something oddly gorgeous about the interminable expanse of the discarded. It reflects who we are and is frighteningly interesting and monstrously majestic.







Carrie Ungerman

Carrie Ungerman was born and raised in Dallas, TX and lives and works in Los Angeles. As a visual artist who makes sculpture, installation and works on paper, she has participated in many artists residencies in the US and abroad. Ungerman was awarded the California Community Foundation (CCF) Visual Arts Artist Fellowship in 2005 and the City of Los Angeles (COLA) Individual Artist Fellowship in 2006. She received a BA from Brandeis University, a BFA and MFA from California Institute of the Arts and attended Showhegan School of Painting & Sculpture.

<http://www.carrieungerman.com/>

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This book has been published in conjunction with the exhibition *3 Solo Projects: Lynn Aldrich, Jessica Rath, Carrie Ungerman* at the Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design, April 18-June 13, 2009 and sponsored by the Pasadena Art Alliance.

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ISBN # 0-930209-18-4

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Publisher: OTIS Ben Maltz Gallery

Designer: Brooklyn Brown

Printer: BookSurge.com

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