UPPER MANAGEMENT

Upper Management
MFA Thesis Exhibition
March 20-April 18, 2009

March 20, Fri
6-8 pm:
Reception

March 27, Fri
Noon-1 pm:
Artists' Talks

Starting at Miller Gallery, 3rd floor
Over the past three years in the Carnegie Mellon University MFA my work has evolved from studio-based kinetic sculptures to collaborative and interdisciplinary public works that integrate natural systems into the built environment. Currently I am investigating ecologically productive, cost effective and culturally catalytic urban renewal strategies in the Wilkinsburg borough of Pittsburgh. Inspired by nature, these strategies reframe crises as opportunities, destitute as resources and restore significance to the land through a heightened environmental consciousness.

My photographs are mere suggestions of Pittsburgh. In making them, I’ve searched for some undertow of spirit—a psychology of place. These un-peopled images of object, scene and landscape are meant to be more poetic than encyclopediaic, where hope and neglect share the same space. While the subjects of individual images are often abstracted to the point of “anywhere-ness,” when gathered together as a whole, I hope the viewer experiences a sense of place that is identifiable and unique to Pittsburgh.

In this work I am investigating ‘place’ and its intersection with testify memory. I appropriate media depictions of war-torn places such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq as a starting point. Through a transformed language of aerial cartography I create subjective mappings of an ambiguous location of trauma. I invent these fictional sites and alter histories in order to release time and bodily experience. Through this work I aim to bring attention to viewers about mediated representations of misery and its impact on individual and public memory.

I find simple solutions to enormous problems, sensibly misguided but solutions none-the-less. I bring my “what-ifs” into fruition and paste together scraps of reality in an attempt to contend with it. Underneath the veneer of my simplicity, my work seeks to reckon with absurdity.

Forming something like tangential extensions of the mostly normal stuff that is often their basis, my recent sculptures portray familiar but unlikely versions of specific subjects. Employing processes and materials from carpentry, robotics and video, I aim to create closed systems within which built instances of everyday things can function on their own.

A WORD FROM OUR C.E.O.: The deceptively simple poetic interventions of Jennifer Goody, vividly capture a delicate and rare twist in contrary, the private and the public. Joey Hays proposes a playful approach to environmental and social concerns through small kinetic experiments and participatory sculptures. With her innovative aerial views of fictional locations, Samina Mansuri substitutes media-generated images of war zones with a haunting psychological terrain. Michael Nixon uses photography to perceptually represent the post-industrial state. In the spirited fabric of Pittsburgh, Gregg Witt invents digitally and mechanically impassant machines which intrigue, entertain and delight with their winsome, inscrutable clunkiness.

I wholeheartedly support their artistic ambitions and would recommend them to you highly. Managing to complete the graduate program at Carnegie Mellon, has them well suited for success.

John Carson, Professor of Art and Head of the School of Art.