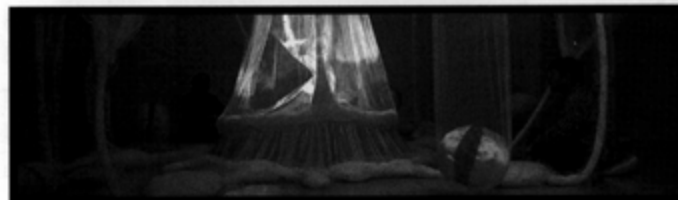
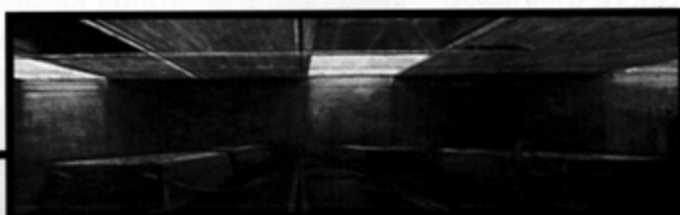


MFA THESIS EXHIBITION 2003

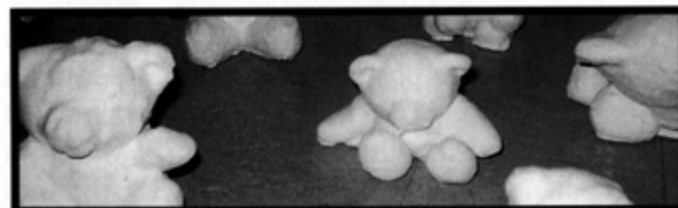
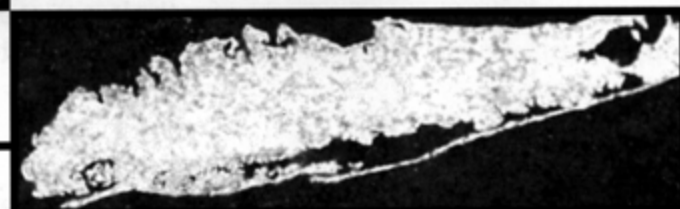
February 1 - 22, 2003

SARAH BIELSKI



MAKIKO MIYAMOTO

JEFFREY ALLEN PRICE



RAYMOND PRUCHER

GLENN WEBB



University Art Gallery
Staller Center for the Arts
Stony Brook University

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition is the fifteenth in a tradition of shows by students graduating from the Stony Brook Art Department's Master of Fine Arts Program. Now in its seventeenth year, the program has attracted top students from across the country and around the world. Of course, the location near the excitement of New York City is one factor in this success. That proximity (and a direct train connection), without the daily pressures of study in the City, makes Long Island's North Shore the best of all geographical worlds for artists. Our outstanding, internationally-known faculty has undoubtedly been attracted by similar features, as well as by the opportunity to teach highly qualified and motivated advanced students. Any graduate program is a partnership of professionals—some younger and less experienced who have come to learn, and others, older and more practiced, who engage them in a dialogue from which all emerge strengthened.

Any MFA curriculum combines rigor with freedom, but Stony Brook is unique in several ways. First, it is connected with the Art Department's slightly older and also unique program in the history of art, theory and criticism. Nowhere else are advanced studio and art history and criticism students able to benefit from each others' courses and ideas. Second, proximity to New York City makes it possible for our students to do internships in practically any area of the art world and to immerse themselves in it during their course of study. Finally, Stony Brook's MFA offers opportunities for students themselves to be teachers. That experience requires a level of articulateness and sharing that can only sharpen communicative skills which by definition underlie the artistic enterprise.

The students in this year's exhibition exemplify the range and quality of the Stony Brook MFA program. They are from different backgrounds and different parts of the world. Their artistic concerns differ just as widely. They have succeeded in a rigorous program, yet each presents a clear direction and a strong personal consistency and presence. It is almost hard to imagine that they all pursued the same course of study. Yet the point is precisely that Stony Brook's MFA can foster and strengthen remarkably diverse and distinct individuals. Within its framework, students are able to grow to a level of maturity, and their work reaches toward a quality that poises them on the threshold of the professional art world. It is here that they develop the coherence and resilience so necessary to compete in that world, qualities that build upon the talent and interests that are their own. The purpose of an MFA program is thus no better embodied than by the first success an exhibition such as this one reveals. For where else can an ambitious young artist be both challenged by demanding teachers, discussion, and projects, and yet obtain the extended period (two to three years) for the intellectual concentration and protracted artistic effort necessary to pursue one's own artistic path effectively? Thus, while congratulating our students who are graduating, we may also take pride in Stony Brook's contribution. The success of that partnership can be witnessed in this year's show. May it prosper!

James Rubin
Chairman
Department of Art

Sarah Bielski



Hallway/Doorway #1, oil on canvas, 2002



Hallway/Doorway #2, oil on canvas, 2002

My work is an exploration of the socio-psychological underpinnings of public space, specifically the institutional interior. The intent to expose the politics behind its economy of construction and neglect of the human spirit is second only to my interest in our collective disavowal of, and underlying anxiety within, our surroundings. I have long been interested in the insidious formal aspects of this built environment which often go ignored: the general visual monotony, the relentless push/pull of hallways and corners, the cadence of fluorescent lights on tile or carpet and the omnipresent rubber baseboard. These visual hallmarks not only reassert our function within the space by navigating the body, but compromise our emotional comfort as well. Negative emotions are amplified through and reverberate within this minimal architecture. I offer my work as a unique way of re-examining spaces that are largely ignored: a way that urges the viewer to confront discomfort registered on a corporeal unconscious and re-registered on an unsettled mind.

Makiko Miyamoto



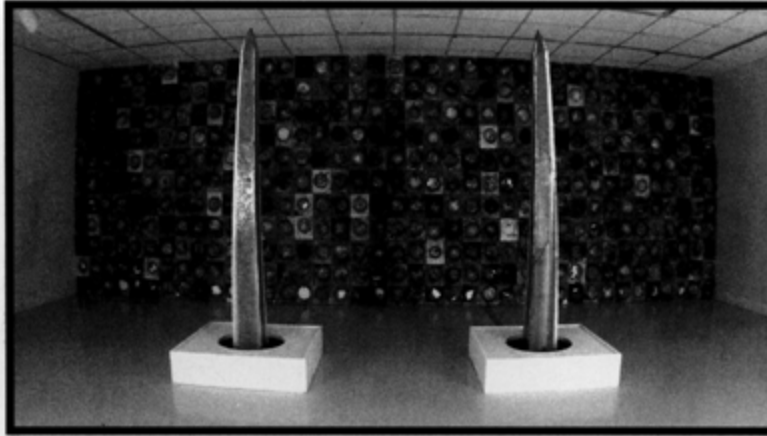
Sheathing, mixed media installation, 2002



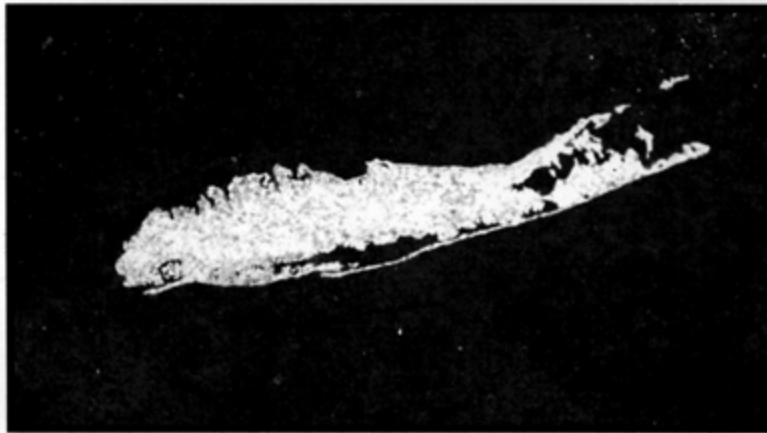
Alpha, mixed media installation, 2002

My work communicates with audiences through visual and physical means. The childhood experience of my brother's sudden death prompted my artistic exploration of life and death. Reflection upon this experience provides me with an appreciation of life and sensitivity to the fragility of the body. My works are completed by audience participation. Their sensual and tactile forms encourage a physical sensitivity and give rise to a thoughtful awareness of the living body.

Jeffrey Allen Price



Brand-New Obelisks with Built-In Obsolescence, installation view, 2002



Long Island Landscape (stage 1), aerial view, powdered limestone on lawn, variable dimensions, approx 25' long, 2002

A major theme in my work during the last decade has been an emphasis on process. I emphasize ephemerality, temporality, and entropy in my work because I believe this to be the natural order of all things. For me, focusing on process implies a transformation of the self (during the act of making/doing), transformation of the viewer (through engagement with the work, thinking/dialoguing), and transformation of the work itself (changes occurring in the work during/after making). By incorporating living, decaying, or time-based elements in my work, I invoke the idea of natural cycles, which implies transmogrification through regeneration.

Raymond Prucher



teddies of Pompeii, mixed media, 2002



stuffed dog, oil on canvas, 2002

My work addresses a definition of selfhood that is relative to physical and psychological relationships of an individual to his or her surrounding environment. I am interested in the imprints that objects make on our psyches, and how they affect the development of our memories and ultimately a sense of who and how we are in the world. This is explored through memory and its representations; as objects encapsulated in paintings, drawings, objects and photographs in an effort to both isolate and preserve experience.

Glenn Webb



The Alligator Boy's Little Mermaid, video still, 2002



Wish You Were Here, video still, 2002

I use the Alligator Boy as my unsavory alter ego. I employ the monstrosity of this figure in performances and installations to explore themes of humanity within marginal subject positions. Sometimes I humanize the perceived 'monstrous other' and sometimes I play with its transgressive power. My use of reptile skin acts as both my weapon and protection against a hateful and misunderstanding homophobic culture. Skin is also the means of shifting my physical body into many shapes. With sexual ambivalence as a theme, the Alligator Boy allows me to easily slip into giving birth, having breasts and generally morphing back and forth across the sexes, and all in spectacular visual form. As a narrative performer I place the Alligator Boy in pursuit of queer love despite a patriarchal culture of conformity. Ultimately, I queer conventional narratives by shifting their frames of reference to the excluded.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Most of all, I wish to thank Sarah Bielski, Makiko Miyamoto, Jeffrey Allen Price, Raymond Prucher, and Glenn Webb for an exciting MFA exhibition.

Rhonda Cooper
Director
University Art Gallery

Catalogue design: Glenn Webb

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