



OSO BAY BIENNIAL XV

WEIL ART GALLERY

Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi
January 31–March 14, 2008

Patricia Olynyk and Claire Todd:
In-Disciplinarity and Emerging Media

Viewers Navigate Pathways and Perspectives

We must look at, across, up, down, through, under, over, among, between. They are suspended, protruding, flat, placed, pinned, projected. We are invited to listen, touch, discuss, ask, draw, read, respond, write. Through this exhibition, *Patricia Olynyk and Claire Todd: In-Disciplinarity and Emerging Media*, we are invited to navigate pathways and perspectives not only in terms of how the individual works of art encourage us to engage our intellect and senses, but also how this particular presentation calls us to perform the exhibition¹. By performing the exhibition I hope that viewers² actively engage their senses, their selves, their histories, and their knowledge of disciplines and narratives with this space and beyond. Such engagement, and my intention for *Oso Bay Biennial XV*, is in alignment with a rejection of modernist tendencies to prioritize sight over sights and sites and authoritative curatorial cite over cites³. Subsequently, “what does this exhibition want from me?”—as opposed to only asking “what can this presentation give to me?”—is a question I asked viewers to contemplate.⁴

Similarly, in conversation with artists Patricia Olynyk and Claire Todd about the content and form of this exhibition, we wondered, how do we transform and become transformed when engaging with a particular site in a certain context? What are the possible intersections, intertexts or rhizomes that emerge in the process of transformation including sight, site, cite, media, disciplines, personal and cultural histories, experiences and narratives? How do we inscribe and how are we inscribed with exhibitions through all of our senses as well as with our bodies, memories, interests, and futures? Indeed, as Olynyk observes, “my work calls upon viewers to expand their awareness of the worlds they inhabit, whether those worlds are their own bodies or the spaces they occupy.” In order to provide my own reflections as curator to those questions, let us first explore the individual works of art and then examine the installation as a whole.

Each artist's works of art differ greatly in many of their formal appearances and media: Olynyk's works are huge black and white images either on paper or silk created using a camera, powerful microscope, and computer imaging program; Todd's works of art vary from hand-sewn costumes with ceramic pieces adhered on material to color photographs to drawings and paintings to films and performances. While these visual differences kept many visitors confused, insightful investigation reveals numerous intersections among the works of art.

Both of the artists construct layers of images, places, experiences, suggested sounds, and especially textures with their art. Both Todd and Olynyk use their work to call into question traditional ideas about the isolation of disciplines, space, time, linearity, location, sight and site. Both artists provide micro- and macro-views of their ideas and reflections for us to decode and make our own. Toward that end, we encounter Olynyk's enormous-scale photographs that present layers of macro photographs from Japanese gardens with magnified images of various microscopic sensorial cells. These six-foot-plus images are stacked two stories high and suspended on silk from the ceiling like a floating jellyfish of sorts. Olynyk's works are in juxtaposition to Todd's projected film of performances near an installation of her costumes and multimedia 2-D works that document the planning and processes leading up to the performances. Moreover, in order to illustrate Todd's priority with process, she spent a month as an artist-in-residence in the Department of Art at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi responding to South Texas through creating more drawings, another costume and a performance that literally became part of the exhibition. Also added to the exhibition are a drawing created and photographs taken during a drawing demonstration with University students. With these juxtapositions and evolving exhibition in mind, let us now examine the works of art as encompassed into a single work, installation, and/or narrative.

As I often contemplate what educational theorist Michael Apple refers to as the content and form of a meaningful experience—that is,

the method or *how* the information being presented matches the content or *what* that it is presented—many possibilities for this exhibition surface: it is not by accident that much of this installation is contrary to a traditional art display. Here viewers are invited to explore works of art from the ground as well as from a second-story windowed hallway; from art that is as large as your hand to as large as your car; from inches away looking at one work to across the space seeing through and over other works; from processes that include drawings with pencil to images captured with a high-powered microscope; from looking down on top of works to looking up onto ones; from art in direct dialogue with science and culture to art that illustrates planning and process; from watching a projected film on the wall to having the film projected on your body; from reading artist and curator information and questions to reading and writing your own ideas and musings; from looking at the art to making art with the artist; from seeing the works of art one day to seeing new, added works of art the next; from watching a college athlete adorn a costume and throw an aluminum disc on Friday to finding evidence of that performance in the gallery on Monday.

As purposefully presented here, the art of Claire Todd and Patricia Olynyk permits numerous perspectives—both conceptual and literal—to be explored, examined and contributed. It is anticipated that this is a site/sight/cite where viewers from different backgrounds discover layers of meaning not only in art, but also in themselves and one another. These verbal and visual dialogues are vital because exhibition viewers can then use these experiences as a catalyst for how we engage not only with art exhibitions, but also with the world in which we live. I believe that art and exhibitions, including *Patricia Olynyk and Claire Todd: In-Disciplinarity and Emerging Media*, that engage layers of ideas and interpretations enable diverse audiences to navigate numerous pathways and perspectives among individual works of art, exhibition narratives, themselves, and, perhaps most important, to one another.

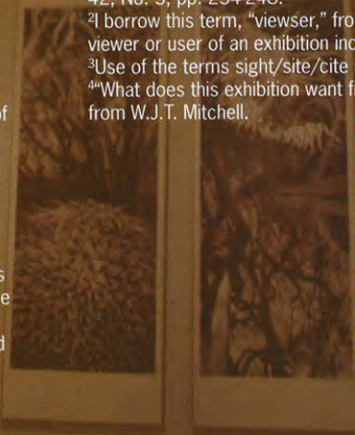
Elizabeth B. Reese, Ph.D.
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¹In 1997-1998 I worked with Charles Garoian to develop a pedagogical strategy on performing the museum. For more information see Garoian, C., *Performing the Museum in Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 42, No. 3, pp. 234-248.

²I borrow this term, “viewer,” from Patricia Olynyk to denote any viewer or user of an exhibition including artists, staff, and public.

³Use of the terms sight/site/cite is from the work of Jan Jagodzinski.

⁴“What does this exhibition want from me?” is a question I embrace from W.J.T. Mitchell.



Welcome to *Oso Bay Biennial XV*: a multi-faceted event of exhibitions and symposium that provides the general public, University students and faculty, artists, and others evocative experiences with various forms of established and emerging media. Historically, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) Professor of Art, Greg Reuter, created the Biennial to bring high quality and diverse art and artists from Texas and beyond that otherwise might not be available in this region.

Again in 2008, *Oso Bay Biennial* occurs at both University galleries while also connecting to local institutions including the Art Museum of South Texas, KSpace Contemporary Gallery and People's Street Photo Project. The Weil Gallery presents installation, video, photography, drawings, ceramics and other multimedia forms of art by Washington University, St. Louis, MO, Professor of Art Patricia Olynyk, and Amsterdam, Netherlands-based artist Claire Todd. The Islander Art Gallery features an installation by TAMU-CC Professor of Art and Clay, Louis Katz; an installation by TAMU-CC alumni John Medina; and new media from Connie Vallie's Flour Bluff High School students and Sue Uteley's Wynn Seale Middle School students. Other exhibitions present regionally and nationally recognized contemporary artists working in a multitude of media.

On behalf of the Department of Art faculty, staff, and students, we extend our gratitude to financial supporters of *Oso Bay Biennial XV*, including TAMU-CC, LandLord Resources, Arts and Cultural Commission of Corpus Christi, Texas Commission on the Arts, Humanities Texas, and Friends of University Galleries. We also thank the art faculty for their encouragement and support: Jack Gron, Chair; Mark Anderson, Bruno Andrade, Carey C. Rote, Amanda Garcia, Mack Gingles, Louis Katz, Greg Reuter, Barbra Riley—as well as the assistance of administrators including: Richard Gigliotti, Dean, College of Liberal Arts; Arturo Bayarena, Michelle Cervantes, Jan Geyer, Zava Kuklinski, and Julie Rodriguez. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to the 2007-2008 Gallery Staff for their hard work both behind the scenes and within the gallery: Eva Cantwell, Graduate Research Assistant; Trey Andrade, Sarah Alvarado, David Fuentes, and Catrina Phillips-Garcia. Additionally, we thank Jason Feriend and Gary Gorton for their expertise with handling and installing the art, as well as Teri Alaniz for her reception assistance. Finally, to the artists and visitors who contribute both literally and conceptually to every exhibition, we thank you for your creative energy and commitment to engage in the ever-evolving visual dialogue.

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