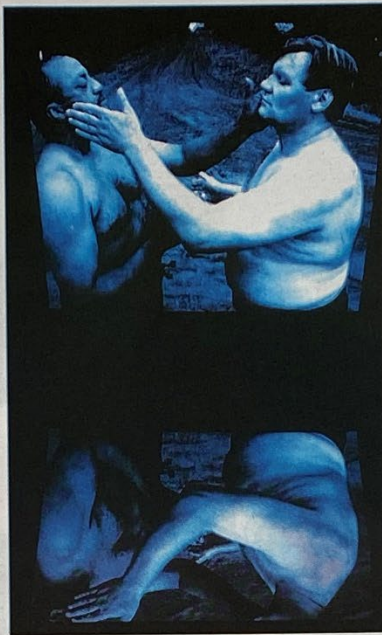
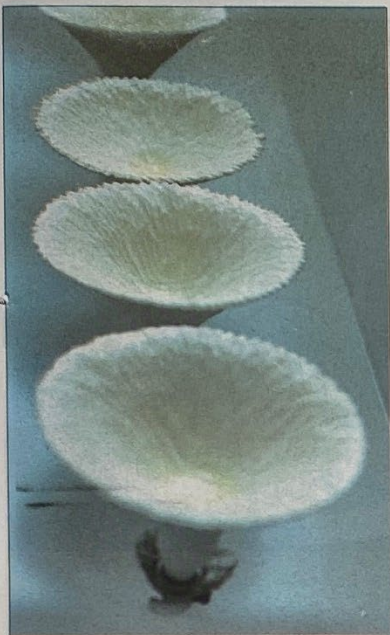


REVIEWS



Installation details: Judi Ross, *Homo Faber*; Frank Sander, *Human Nature: Race Relations*; Anne Lindberg, *breathing*.

Seven Installations Awaken Sedalia

Kathleen Desmond

Awakenings

Daum Museum of Contemporary Art
September 28 - January 12

Awakenings features the work of seven artists, who prepared solo installations in galleries at the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art in Sedalia. Anne Lindberg, María José de la Macorra, Cork Marcheschi, Judi Ross, Frank Sander, Peter Sarkisian, and Jim Woodfill. María José de la Macorra, an artist in residence at the Daum Museum, created much of her work on site.

Peter Sarkisian's *Manifold*, a video installation commissioned by Rodney and Rebecca Hartman and the Daum, made its world premier at the exhibition opening on September 28. Sarkisian is in some ways the "star" of this show, having the most extensive and impressive international solo exhibition record. His work has been featured in shows at museums and galleries around this country and in Europe — from New York (including the 2002 *Whitney Biennial*) to San Francisco to Sante Fe; from Berlin to Edinburgh to Paris. The 35-year-old artist studied film and photography at the California Institute of the Arts and directing at the American Film Institute, and now lives in Sante Fe.

Sarkisian began working with video as a sculptural medium in 1994, engaging it in a manner intended to exploit the moving image's potential more fully than the standard narrative models filmmakers — and most video artists — were using at the time. Driven by personal and philosophical concerns more than didactic communicative intentions, Sarkisian typically explores treatments of isolated figures and the forces that act upon them. In this treatment, the body image is approached spatially. For instance, inside a cube that isn't theoretical but rather physical and fully dimensional, a body hints at the essence of "being." It is this issue of "being" that seems to consume him most — the intersections between science and spirituality, the divisions between subject and object, and where those divisions collapse.

Sarkisian's new piece, *Manifold*, addresses the notion of a "tangled hierarchy" — a concept that positions the viewer between two apparent "truths" or systems, seemingly at odds. The work consists of two elongated pyramids, their tips touching in the center. Upper and lower halves of nude figures are projected onto the surfaces; figures fighting their way in and out of the space, sometimes clawing and scratching outward; at other times they are pulled toward the center, where they are sucked in, swallowed up, and disappear. Sometimes, an upper half of one figure matches up with the lower half of another, creating the semblance of an

entirety across the surface.

The eleven minute loop of images can be viewed on two of the three sides of the pyramid simultaneously if the viewer stands in the right place, with each side offering a different perspective. The images are compelling — fellow viewers seemed captivated, unable to look away — and the work continues to resonate on a philosophical level beyond the context of the gallery.

María José de la Macorra traveled to the Daum from Mexico City, where she lives and where she studied visual art, ceramics, photography and dance — lots of dance — which may explain the references in her work to space and movement and the nature of the body and the corporeal. In her installations, she manipulates organic and inorganic materials, ceramics, found objects, and graphic elements, as she strives to create what writer Erik Castillo Corona, in a catalog essay for her exhibition *De las Geografías al Norte Interior* at Galleria de Arte Mexicano in 2001, describes as "a metaphorical code of the genetic and vital processes that a fictitious corporal entity experiences."

María José de la Macorra focuses on the essential history of the inseparable relationships between, as Corona writes, "biomatter and the breath that gives it life" — the connection between physical consequence and the forces underlying and indiscernible within it. One of the pieces installed at the Daum incorporates long latex tubes and rubber ear syringes, hung from the ceiling and resembling the aveoli in human lungs. Another wall of her installation features porcelain casts of different sizes and shapes, mounted on the wall. Each piece loosely resembles a body part. These works exemplify her ongoing fascination with the corporeal, and pursuit, both philosophical and physical, of the forces it is bound to.

Frank Sander brings an international presence to *Awakenings* as well. Born in Hamburg, Germany in 1949, Sander's interests in art and in the consequences of human behavior were shaped by growing up in a town that had been heavily bombed during WWII. His intense memories of rubble and people scavenging, combined with an early captivation with his neighbor's collection of works by Emil Nolde, Otto Dix, and Franz Marc — rescued from Nazi seizure — inform work characterized by a seriousness of intent and wealth of imagery.

In the mid-80s, Sander accepted an American friend's invitation to visit Minnesota and experience the Boundary Water Canoe Area and the north shore of Lake Superior. Sander stayed and strives now to make "American" art that speaks specifically to his time and place. He learned

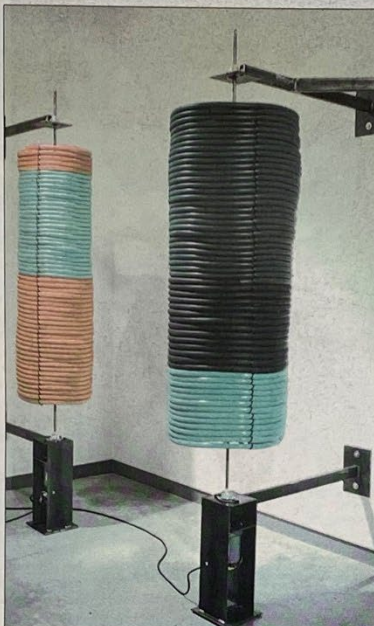
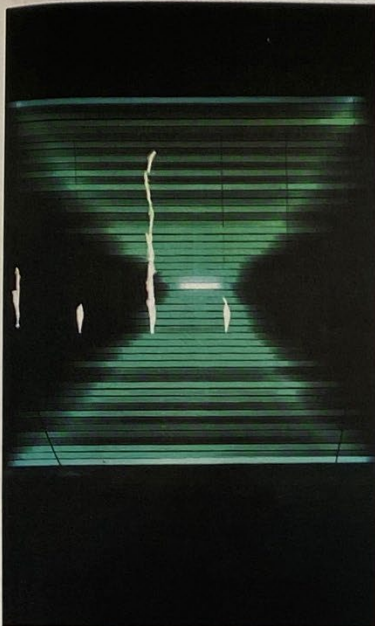
that living simply, connected to nature, brings freedom. This is apparent in his life and his work, which manifests an understanding of nature as an interconnected matrix, of which man is one part.

Sander presents three room-sized sculptural installations. *Human Nature: Race Relations* is a full-scale slate house inside of which, visible through a small, open window cut into one side, is a pool of water reflecting a video of Sander, who is white, and a friend, who is black, playing a game like patty cake. These two represent two races engaging in serious play in a natural outdoor setting — bringing together ideas about harmony in nature and harmony of human nature. In another piece, a wall of government issue file drawers, bearing photographs and containing objects that look more ominous than images of concentration camps, are presented as way of pointing out the dichotomy between harmony and disharmony, of both nature and humankind. Sander's philosophy echoes that of American ecologist and philosopher David Abraham, who talks about the enduring wisdom of oral cultures and the contributions made in the field of phenomenology to our current understanding of nature. Adam explains that reciprocity, not hierarchy, is the dynamic of life. Frank Sander incorporates that idea into his installations.

The slate house features a scattered arrangement of smoked herrings, golden in color, spread across its roof, which can only be seen as the viewer travels to an upper gallery of the museum. Still connected to nature, but by a different philosophy than Sarkisian and Macorra, Sander's work echoes Germanic cultural themes of nature and mythology, and recalls the environmental performances of shamanic artist Joseph Beuys.

Cork Marcheschi is the only artist in the exhibition whose work is in the permanent collection of the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art. Educated in California — he earned an MFA in sculpture at the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1969 — Marcheschi lives in the Bay Area, where he teaches both at the University of California, Berkeley and the San Francisco Art Institute. Since the early 70s, the artist has earned international recognition for sculptures that manipulate and expose raw electricity.

Mystery and humor are at the core of the work. Marcheschi equates his process to jazz music in the way he gathers materials and constructs a "melody" with them. "The process of creating something with those materials is like soloing," he says. Marcheschi strives to make his sculpture in as simple a way as possible. "This is very brutal," he has said of his earlier spark works. "Wires, transformers, and the electrical apparatus



Installation views: Cork Marcheschi, *When Clouds Are Like Headlines on a New Front Page Sky*; James Woodfill, *Tone Spools*; Peter Sarkisian, *Manifold*. Below: María José de la Macorra, *Dendra 1*.

ratus were all nakedly exposed." An example of his early electrical work, and a current piece of a more gentle nature, are on display at the Daum.

James Woodfill has exhibited in Missouri extensively, completed commissions for Avenue of the Arts 2001, the Missouri Bank and Trust, Kansas City International Airport Project, and the Freight House District; and was a Charlotte Street Fund recipient in 2000. In *Awakenings*, Woodfill shows *Tone Spools*, a series of sculptures constructed of coiled garden hose. Rhythmic patterns and color relationships emerge as the spools rotate at different speeds, while their ceaseless sound and motion create a "constant sense of duration within the space," as Woodfill describes it. The scale of the piece creates a one-to-one relationship with viewers who enter the space as well, such that, as he intends, "they become part of an ongoing event rather than bystanders viewing the work."

Judi Ross earned her MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art and her BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute. An associate professor of art at the University of Illinois Urbana Champagne, she formerly lectured at the Kansas City Art Institute and the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and worked for a semester at the Horizons School of Craft in Mitla, Oaxaca, Mexico. She has had several solo and group exhibitions, mostly in Missouri and Kansas, and was awarded a Charlotte Street Fund grant in 1999.

Ross explores aspects of geometry, repetition, rhythm, color, scale, space, and the body, as she constructs and manipulates structures "to create compositions that abstractly speak of a collective form." As she further explains in her artist statement, "These constructs function as surrogates or extensions of our bodies, providing abstractions of various emotions and experiences and becoming expressive of the human condition."

Ross' installation consists of 20 elongated flowerbox-looking objects, on thin legs, constructed of transparent plastic material with green lights pulsing underneath each one. All the mechanics — wires and coverings — are clearly visible on the floor, leaving the piece open to observations of its internal workings. This openness is appealing and quite beautiful when viewed as part of the meaning... part of life. A very soft auditory beat, suggesting the beat of a heart, reiterates the on and off glow of green light. The entire space is transformed by the expansive piece, with the viewer becoming part

of the pulsating green space, part of the whole — a breath, a heartbeat, a pulse. The space Ross creates indeed provides, as she notes, "only as much life as the viewer will lend it."

Anne Lindberg's iteration of "marks... a rainstorm... breathing..." may indeed be the most spiritual of all seven installations. "This is a web of many possible meanings, a layered haze, a full horizon, a breathing wall," she says of *breathing*, a 42-foot expanse of thousands of finely arching, graphite-colored wires set into the wall, each weighted with a narrow, smoothed pine wood form. The overall piece resembles waves of grain on a Kansas prairie or, as Lindberg suggests, "flocks of birds, a moving cloud, animal or human hair, a gust of air, dust in a corner, a view of rain, a spider web, or the falling branches of a tree — all references and phenomena made out of numerous microscopic parts and conditions that change, move and reorder themselves over time." The massive surface seems to shift continuously. Each wire filament marks the wall and creates hundreds of tiny shadows, with the pattern formed by the repetition of elements across the wall changing in density, slowly dissipating at one end, just as the color of the wooden forms gradually shifts from dark graphite to a warm white.

This *breathing* wall gives way to *Mendings*, three slightly concave

panels of thin birch plywood with matrices of intricate stitch-marks swelling to circular forms of varying tones of black and white. A carefully worked surface pulls forth a form by piling up stitches. The sheets of wood curling slightly off the wall hint at the process of passing a needle back and forth through the wood screen. The intimacy involved in the process of creation — two people were required to complete these pieces — can be likened to a confessional, as hours and hours of passing the needle back and forth suggest a spiritual/intimate/private dialogue.

Round is more analytical. It is a six-foot-diameter circle constructed of tooled sycamore branches and a single, taut steel arch. These two different materials pair the natural and the industrial, and speak to the tension and duality between scientific and spiritual truths, which seems to be a philosophical underpinning of this entire exhibition. In all three parts of Lindberg's installation there are two materials in play, seemingly opposed to each other yet, in fact, holding each other in place, "each allowing the other to determine its path," as Lindberg writes.

Lindberg earned her MFA at Cranbrook and her BFA at Miami University in Ohio. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions in Chicago and Kansas City as well as Notre Dame, Indiana; Tyler, Texas; and Royal Oak, Michigan, and in many group exhibitions around the country and internationally. Lindberg received a Charlotte Street Fund grant in 1998, has lectured at a variety of university art departments, and was a professor in the Foundation department of the Kansas City Art Institute from 1991-1998. Since 1997, she has been co-owner and office manager of Derek Porter Studio for architectural lighting design.

Awakenings indeed awakens the intellect and the soul. Themes of nature, science, spirituality, technology, and the human body emerge repeatedly, with many of the artists exploring spiritual "truths" within the context of biological matters. Working in installation formats, all of the artists — though in different manners — address scale, movement, and the space within and around their pieces, and engage the viewer as participant. As James Woodfill said in a panel discussion at the exhibition opening and other artists agreed, there is only one "rule" for approaching this work and that is to look. Take the time to drive to Sedalia between now and January 12 and take the time to look.

