



Working in Wonder

curated by Edward Stapley-Brown, Erin Gray and Danielle Schallom

**This catalogue accompanies the exhibition
“Working in Wonder,” on display at the Walsh Gallery
January 18 through February 11, 2011**

All measurements are in inches, height by width

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Lasse Antonsen
Paul Baumann
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Tracy Heneberger
Heidi Jensen
Susan Napack
Roberto Osti
Lisa Perrin
Michael Sherwin
Paul Stout
David K. Thompson
Bill Westheimer
Kimberly Witham

According to Samuel Taylor Coleridge “art...is the mediatress between, and reconciler of, nature and man. It is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into everything which is the object of his contemplation.” Working in Wonder celebrates the age of wunderkammer, kunstkammer and the curiosity cabinet, a dynamic and historic period of collecting that occurred in Europe between 1500 and 1700. A product of the Renaissance and Age of Exploration, the cabinet endures as an influence on contemporary culture and artwork -- affecting the way we view, process and classify the world. Curiosity cabinets were displays in which kings, connoisseurs, and collectors juxtaposed natural and artificial objects to re-create the world in miniature as they understood it. A predecessor of the museum in the Western World, the cabinet was a place of discovery and enrichment where books, art, tools, specimens, and other objects came together to tell a story.

The curators encourage the viewer to consider the relationship between people and the environments in which they live, by presenting a variety of artists and media. Each artist uses his or her own experiences and associations to create a unique commentary on the present, which reflects the historical influence of the cabinet. Thus, the exhibition acknowledges the magnitude of the contributions made by explorers, collectors, and scholars of that period. Working in Wonder concurrently demonstrates the continued potential of the curiosity cabinet as an inspiration for contemporary artists. By examining themes in several subject areas; art, science, culture, and philosophy, artists create a complementary web of connections between artworks without detracting from the unique process, composition and attributes of each.

Susan Napack’s work is a visual treatise on collecting, an exploration into the deep emotional connections that exist between collector, objects and display. In *Proof of Life*, it is apparent that Napack possesses a powerful bond with the individual objects in the work, which become vessels imparted with her experiences and notions of self. Her creative process involves meticulous layering in both the physical and metaphorical sense, a balance between control and the relinquishment of it.

Tracy Heneberger and Michael Sherwin apply patterns and order, uniting with the natural world. Heneberger’s systematic approach is particularly evident in *Moon*, in which the cumulative affixture of raw materials in a repetitive circular pattern instills a powerful sense of movement and completeness. Captivated by the omnipresent compulsion to make sense of the universe, Michael Sherwin analyzes and dissects his subjects, switching between

artistic and scientific methodology. Using photographic means and deliberate display arrangement, he questions the human necessity to manipulate and classify.

Scientific fact and organization are not absolute though they provide authenticity by association. The reality of this is emphasized by Heidi Jensen's *Brush* series, which effectively blurs the line between the natural and artificial worlds, providing shrewd observations on the nature of taxonomy. Jensen's brushes are intentionally unclassifiable, an excellent commentary on the inherently arbitrary nature of taxonomy. Influenced by the cabinet's natural curiosities, the macabre anomalies in Lisa Perrin's drawings are presented in a scientific context to provide a sense of familiarity and legitimacy, existing as manifested fears of and obsessions with the environment which surrounds her.

In *Naturalia, Artificialia*, Roberto Osti's drawing employs similar contextual exploitation in order to create the appearance of truth. Osti's choice of aesthetic, as well as his academic approach to process and methodology allows him to create a spectacular fabrication within a framework of objectivity and fact. David K. Thompson forms analogous comparisons in *Compendium: Ceci n'est pas une Coquille*, which expose the farcical nature of truth and fact. Like Osti and Perrin, Thompson works subversively, with "official language" to convey his message.

Kathy Goodell's sculptures address the "complex and paradoxical" elements inherent in humanity's connection to our surroundings. Her work incorporates elementary forms as an expression of the divide between human creation and natural existence. These concerns are manifested in a process that, as with the work of Heneberger, produces a carefully and methodically stratified result.

The vibrant photography of Kimberly Witham captures striking juxtapositions. Like Goodell's work, Witham's photographs investigate the tense relationship between people and nature. Especially in *Still Life with Steak and Fox*, Witham's seemingly dissimilar arrangements channel elements of informed interplay and outright eclecticism found in the curiosity cabinet.

Significantly influenced by the content and display of the cabinets of curiosity, classical museums of natural history and more specifically, the human perspective of the natural world, Lasse Antonsen's work exists in defiance of the incredulity of contemporary society. In *Space of Emplacement (for Galileo Galilei)*, armadillos represent the human population perched precariously atop an unsteady surface, bombarded by disturbing stimuli, and left metaphorically and literally trapped in that position. An embodiment of the cabinet's legacy, Antonsen's work succeeds in evoking a strong sense of nostalgia for the classic age of exploration and

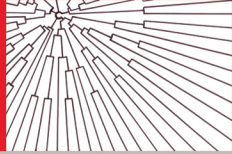
and discovery by exhibiting a unique natural curiosity from the New World. Likewise, Paul Stout's systematically ordered *The Twenty States of Desire: The Postures of Deer, Antelope and Goat Nostrils from Ennui to Ecstasy* is heavily influenced by the classical display techniques of the curiosity cabinet. Stout's motorized micro-climates challenge the traditional relationship between the microcosm and macrocosm. Stout is intrigued by the development of hyper-real environments, products of the contemporary human perspective on the natural world. As a result, pieces like *The New American Landscape* take the form of "robotic vignettes," incorporating superficially dissimilar objects into a functional mechanical simulation.

Paul Baumann's *Taxonomy 23, white: Progressions 2000-2011* is born out of fundamental concepts which deal with human consciousness. Realizing the relationship between the objects, Baumann creates a shared event, avoiding representation or simulation. Informed by painting, despite its structure and volume, Baumann's work also conforms to certain limitations, namely the narrow use of tonal values. Under the facade of the traditional relationship between collecting and display, Baumann presents an escape from the notion of the curiosity cabinet as a replicated environment, producing an immersive experience made up of artifacts, both found and created.

Historically the cabinet and its collections came together to create a portal, a conveyance which brought the world to viewers and allowed for personal reflection. Today its influence continues to permeate art, as artists combine core concepts and empiricism in a relevant and innovative way. *Working in Wonder* presents a body of contemporary art that displays the unwavering significance of the curiosity cabinet while challenging the direction in which the concept has progressed.

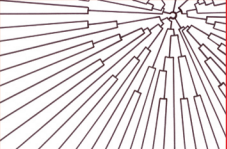
Edward Stapley-Brown
Erin Gray
Danielle Schallom

Lasse Antonsen



Space of Emplacement (for Galileo Gallilei)
pedestals, wood, three armadillos, 3'x2'x2', 2009

Antonsen presents a set of three armadillos; pure meets synthetic as the taxidermied animals rest on man-made structures. He positions the natural with the manufactured playfully and dramatically, producing a strong connection between the materials.



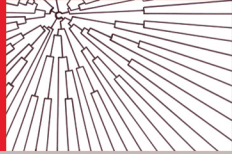
Paul Baumann



Taxonomy 23, white: Progressions 2000 - 2011
mixed media, 84"x282"x35 ½", 2011

Painting is the beginning of the process. Baumann creates a monochromatic installation that seeks to rediscover and re-present the familiar; classifying each object in his own taxonomical cabinets.

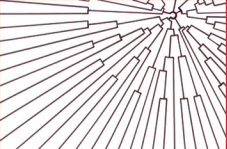
Kathy Goodell



Venus, Ab Uno

dammar resin, fiberglass, beeswax, glass, wood, 8"x19"x10", 2010

The space between mental and physical lies within the architecture of *Venus, Ab Uno*. Goodell makes a connection between the two states by relating what is present and what is absent.



Tracy Heneberger

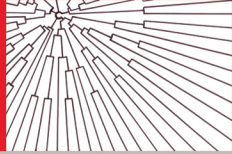


Moon

sardines, epoxy, shellac, resin, 23"x23"x1 ½", 2006

Heneberger works with natural materials; his work epitomizes iterations of shape and pattern. *Moon* displays five layers of sardines, carefully selected and methodically positioned, creating an elegant lunar form.

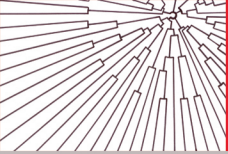
Heidi Jensen



Brush #5

graphite on Arches hot press watercolor paper, 14"x10", 2009

The word brush can take the form of either a noun or verb, Jensen blurs this definition as well as the line between the artificial and natural worlds. This series, *Brushes #1- #5*, intends to blend “high art with commodity” in a sophisticated yet jesting manner.



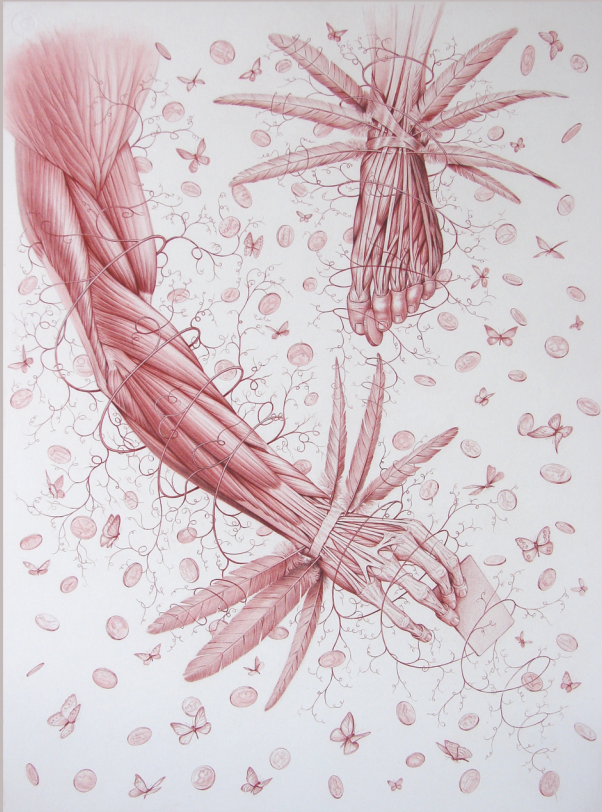
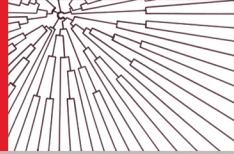
Susan Napack



Proof of Life
mixed media installation, 9 ½'x13'x7', 2011

Napack asks herself "What if?" while creating memory driven installations. She divulges a fascination with collecting and organizing which provides the opportunity for infinite possibilities in the arrangement of parts that create a whole.

Roberto Osti



Naturalia, Artificialia

colored pencil on paper, 22"x30", 2009

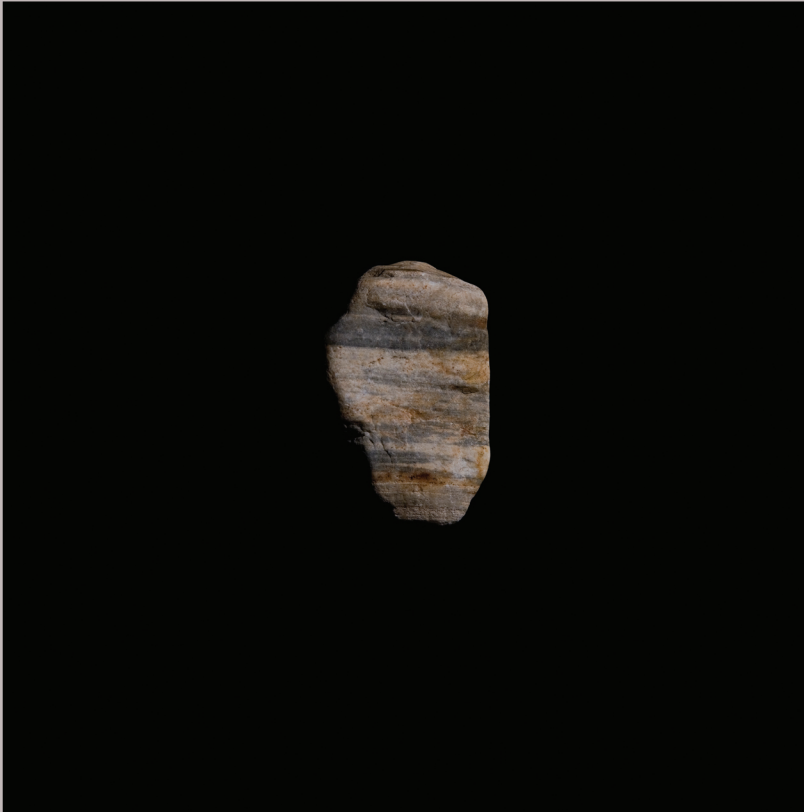
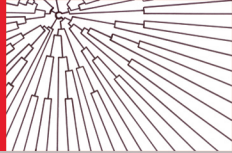
Osti gives life to the fantastical creatures that populate our myths. In his work, he examines the body and mind in the dissection and investigation of such mythical beings.



Lupus Floreris,
pencil on paper, 10"x13", 2008

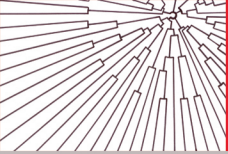
Science, history and "freaks" intermingle in Perrin's drawings, where unrelated natural forms join together. Her work occupies the space between the familiar and the bizarre.

Michael Sherwin



Untitled 13
pigment print, 20"x20", 2010

Sherwin portrays the unknown in his *Minor Planets* series; his images evoke the feeling of wonder towards that which exists beyond what is present. The prints suggest the idea of the celestial, but upon a closer look the objects are found to be inextricably bound to the earth.



Paul Stout

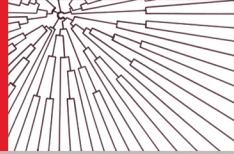


The New American Landscape

plastic, glass, brass, steel, flower petals, butterfly chrysalis, 14 ½"x6"x6", 1997

Where mechanics and wildlife meet, Stout presents this intersection in *The New American Landscape*. He gives the flower new life through movement found within a fabricated micro-environment.

David K. Thompson



Compendium: Ceci n'est pas une Coquille
one-color silkscreen on Rives BFK paper, 15 ¼" x 11 ¼", 2010

Thompson deliberately misuses the scientific and political aesthetics. The unusual combinations look at a deeper meaning in the relationship of the objects depicted, stating that things are not always what they seem.

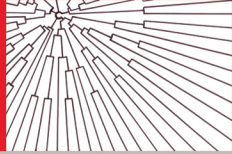
Bill Westheimer



Dragonfly 6
tin type, 6"x8", 2010

"Art should ask questions." In his work, Westheimer presents elements that are often overlooked. He emphasizes their imperfections, bringing new associations to what has been dismissed and allowing the imagination to create a new idea.

Kimberly Witham



Still Life with Steak and Fox
digital C-print on Fuji metallic paper, 17"x22", 2010

Witham draws on the inspiration of natural history dioramas and still-life paintings, creating jarring dualities. Her photographs are a commentary on the tension between humans and nature, personal comfort and excess consumption.

The Walsh Gallery extends its gratitude to those who made this exhibition possible:

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