

Artist Bios

Emily K. Ambs
Born 1981, New Orleans, LA, lives in Boston, MA
2007 Master of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA
2004 BS Design in Architecture, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Samantha Fields
Born 1973, Brockton, MA lives in Avon, MA
2005 MFA, The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
1996 BFA, Fibers, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA

Emily Katrencik
Born 1975, Pittsburgh, PA, lives in New York, NY
2001 Master of Science in Visual Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA
1997 BFA, Sculpture, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

Sally Moore
Born 1959, Roanoke VA lives in Jamaica Plain, MA
2000 MFA, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA
1988 BFA, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA
1981 BA, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

Kirsten Reynolds
Born 1972, Richmond, VA lives in Newmarket, NH
2004 MFA Maine College of Art, Portland, ME
1994 BFA, Magna Cum Laude, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Joel Ross
Born 1966, Port Arthur, TX, lives in Ludlow, IL
1992 MFA, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield, MI
1990 BFA, Tufts University, Medford, MA
1990 Diploma, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Christopher Wawrinofsky
Born 1980, Salt Lake City, UT, lives in Jamaica Plain, MA
2006 MFA Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA
2003 BFA Utah State University, Logan, UT

Image Checklist

Cover Image: Joel Ross, *Sundown Town*, 2007
color photograph, 40" x 70"
Courtesy of Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago

a. Sally Moore
Drop-off, 2006
wood, paint and wire
32 x 7 x 16 inches
Image courtesy of Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston

b. Emily Katrencik
Consuming 1.956 inches 3 each day for forty-one days
DVD (Projection)
performed at LMACK project, Brooklyn, NY, 2005

c. Kirsten Reynolds
Excerpt 6 from the Probability Series, 2007
digital photograph, archival pigmented ink, 161/2" x 11"

d. Emily Ambs
Museum of Architectural Taste, 2006
box of candy with edible ink jet prints, 12" x 6"

e. Christopher Wawrinofsky
*The Great Molasses Flood of 1919:
Rudolf Diesel Got Offed, Jed Headed For The Hills, but Ellie May Drowned at The Big Dig Fell Down*, 2007
burnt sienna oil paint, Boston subway T steps, forged steel, silicone caulking, rubber tire,
blow-up pool toys, water pump, vintage snowblower, wood studs, plexi-glass, rope, canvas, enamel,
paper and graphite, 192" x 68" x 96"

f. Samantha Fields
Framed, 2007
wood, 30" x 30" x 40"



a.

Concurrently In the Mills Project Space

History Re-Visited New Photographs by Oscar Palacio

Curated by Laura Donaldson



Plymouth, MA, 2007
archival inkjet print, 42" x 50"

Oscar Palacio is interested in photographing the seemingly invisible, the overlooked and the familiar. He is also interested in the human need to create boundaries and control nature in order to delineate property and privacy and to instill protection. This new series of photographs continues his investigation of public space in the United States by shifting emphasis from anonymous prosaic scenes of everyday life to popular historical sites, which have both an embedded meaning and assumed historical narrative. For the past year he has been photographing in and around historic sites where the dividing lines between nature and the constructed, and between public and private space, are apparent. What we as a society choose to memorialize, and how the representational roles of both architecture and photography shape and form experience, are among the many questions he addresses in his work.

Oscar Palacio (Jamaica Plain, MA) holds an MFA in Photography from the Massachusetts College of Art (Boston, MA). Recent solo exhibitions include *Unfamiliar Territory* at the Addison Gallery of American Art (Andover, MA) and *In-Between* at Howard Yezerski Gallery (Boston, MA).

Oscar Palacio work courtesy of Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston

BOSTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS

539 Tremont Street | Boston, MA | 02116

ABOUT THE MILLS GALLERY

The Boston Center for the Arts' Mills Gallery is dedicated to presenting exciting contemporary works by established and emerging local, regional, national and international visual artists and curators. The Mills mounts 5-6 group and solo exhibitions a year, and concurrent exhibitions in two smaller project spaces, one of which is dedicated to new media/video work. During each exhibition, the BCA provides multiple opportunities to engage with the artwork and artists through Artist's Talks, Curator's Talks, and other related events.

ABOUT THE BOSTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS (BCA)

Boston Center for the Arts is an urban cultural village, incubating and showcasing the performing and visual arts and artists of our time. Occupying a city block in the historic South End, the BCA provides a creative home for artists, a welcoming destination for audiences, and an arts connection for youth and community in the South End and across Greater Boston. For more information, visit the BCA online at www.bcaonline.org.

Libbie Shufro, *President & CEO*

Laura Donaldson, *Director, Mills Gallery*

Nate McDermott, *Manager, Mills Gallery*

Hank Pinkowski, *Catalogue Design and Production*

Joel Ross's work courtesy of Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago
Sally Moore image courtesy of Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston

Dina Deitsch wishes to give special thanks to Winnie Wong and Chaya Deitsch for their well-timed suggestions and insights.

www.bcaonline.org

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of the BCA's urban cultural village



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(un)Building

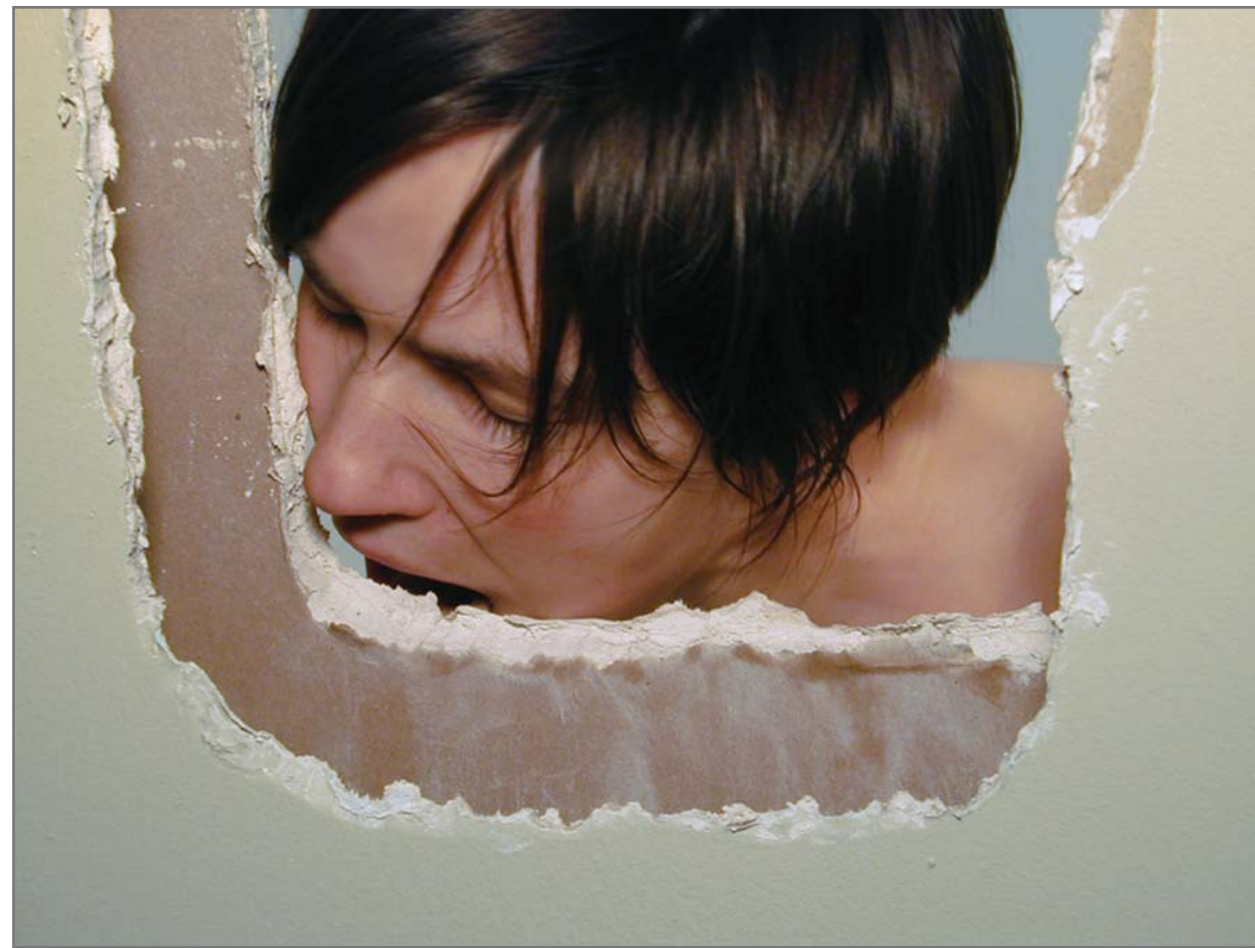
June 8 - July 29

Emily Kiersten Ambs, Samantha Fields, Emily Katrencik,
Sally Moore, Kirsten Reynolds, Joel Ross, Christopher Wawrinofsky

Curated by Dina Deitsch

BOSTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS

MILLS GALLERY



b.

How can we measure the force of architecture? Built to house, protect, and sustain us, it determines the conditions of our daily lives. We eat, sleep, work, walk, and live where it tells us. We reward its shelter by repairing, decorating, and loving our spaces, treating our buildings as extensions of ourselves. Given its ubiquity, how can we evaluate the impact of architecture on our self-perception? The seven artists in *(un)Building* investigate the social, historical, economic, political, and symbolic implications of architecture by deconstructing the materiality of building in their work. Beams, nails, walls, floors, models, and even architects themselves are dismantled and reformed through installation, sculpture, photography, and video. In doing so, each artist re-presents building—as both an object and concept—as a complex site of cultural formation and exchange.

“Unbuilding” was also the term Gordon Matta-Clark (1943 – 1978) used for his “building cuts”: sculptural conversions of abandoned buildings produced by cutting into architectural sites.¹ His interventions transformed architectural refuse through art, critiquing, in part, the oppression of enclosed urban (and modernist) space. *(un)Building* continues Matta-Clark’s response to the built environment through a series of revealing deconstructions, but, as the title indicates, with an updated twist. His reuse of buildings was a reaction to—and made possible by—a particular moment of urban decay in the 1970s in which buildings and factories were left abandoned.

It now seems, however, like an impossibly distant, even quaint, past in our current hyperactive state of urban renewal. There is hardly a factory left in New England that has not been converted into luxury lofts, nor a city in America without a “starchitect” building in the works. On a national scale, terrorism has propelled the symbolism of buildings (and their vulnerability) into yet another realm of our collective awareness. In a post-9/11 society, a skyscraper can no longer just be a skyscraper.

Therefore, when we speak of “unbuilding” today, as opposed to 30 years ago, we are speaking of a new endeavor defined by our current economic and political climate, one that, unfortunately, is also fraught with anxiety and fear. Humor, like a nervous giggle, seems an appropriate response, as

do the tools of fantasy, the body, memory, language, and history, in addition to the chainsaw. In their different approaches to building(s) as both metaphor and practice, the artists in *(un)Building* acknowledge our ever-changing and multifaceted relationship to architecture

Mass-produced consumer culture had long been the target of twentieth-century art. From the “ready-made” to more recent social interventionist techniques, such work disturbs and critiques the normative patterns of commodity consumption.² Architecture, in the hands of the artists in *(un)Building*, usurps consumerism as the hegemonizing cultural force. With the recent real estate bubble and rapid growth of costly vanity projects across the globe, it has surely joined the ranks as a fungible commodity. **Emily Ambs’s** *Museum of Architectural Taste*, 2006 (MoAT) directly addresses this explosion of designer-label building by emphasizing the broad commercialization of architecture. Consisting of a box of fancy chocolates with edible images of iconic modern buildings (and a flavor ‘key’ of faces that include starchitects Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry) MoAT accuses these candied buildings of being nothing more than their elaborate surfaces, akin to a bold, quick sugar rush. As a museum in name, Ambs’s project equally critiques our institutions of display as confining and commercially motivated structures.

Taking the consumption of architecture one step further, **Emily Katrencik** was inspired, or perhaps infuriated, enough by modernist architectural history and theory—particularly that of Le Corbusier—to literally eat it. Realizing his credo that the user must define a space to its absurd extreme, Katrencik blurs the boundaries between her body and buildings by ingesting the latter. In the video documentation of *Consuming 1.956 Inches Each Day for Forty-One Days*, 2005, she systematically gnaws a hole in the



c.



d.

wall between a public gallery and the gallerist’s apartment, using part of the debris to bake bread for visitors. **Katrencik’s** gustatory perforation between public and private spaces speaks to a complex relationship between architecture and our bodies that is on the one hand intimate and nourishing, and on the other invasive and violent.

Samantha Fields addresses the gendered body in space, specifically domestic space, as a socio-historic construction through dollhouse-scale sculptures. Much as we build houses out of raw materials, so too do we draw on cultural norms and habits to construct ideas of home, family, identity, and gender. In *Framed*, 2007, she peels back the walls of a toy house to reveal structural beams that are not only arranged in the typical modernist grid but in elaborate, highly wrought patterns reminiscent of the Victorian era. Decorative elements are embedded into the very frame of Fields’s miniature home, commenting on the depth to which historically repressive notions of domesticity still fix and support our lives. But her critique is not exactly damning. While the dollhouse speaks to an early girlhood during which these fantasies of home become indoctrinated, it equally revels in a sense of childlike play and airy nostalgia freed from restrictive structures.

Sally Moore also uses a small scale to draw in her viewers. Like that of Fields’s, her work recalls architectural models. But these smaller sculptures are designs for psychological spaces rather than prototypes for physical buildings, a nod to the socially constructed nature of real space. Moore’s deconstructed rooms understand architecture as the physical manifestation of rational thought—a (futile) human attempt to control and order nature. Familiar spaces are ripped apart as they are thrust into the realm of the psyche or a dream world. In their fragmented state, her partial walls and floors eerily delineate the bare boundary between two colliding worlds of rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious, and inner and outer experiences.

Similar spatial renderings are addressed in **Kirsten Reynolds’s** photographs. An installation artist, Reynolds always builds small-scale models of her work that address particular real architectural sites. In *(un)Building* she presents, through photography, a miniature rendering of the Mills gallery torn apart in the fantastical manner of her constructions. The transformations of size and dimension distort Reynolds’s ambiguous narrative of brightly colored, obviously fake structures collapsing over vaguely organic creatures. Architecture appears here as a model, a form that refers to but does not replicate the material world, and like the scene before us, fluctuates between the real and imagined. As viewers (standing in the Mills gallery captured twice over in the image), we are left with a thorough sense of uncertainty, that for the artist reflects the unfixed nature of experience and knowledge.

The open-endedness of Reynolds’s narrative has analogues in architecture: like the basic components of a story, a building has a beginning (doorway), middle (room), and end (exit). But in moving from one space to the next more than one option is available for the next step. **Christopher Wawrinofsky’s** installation is the explosive result of the collision of four separate narratives. It begins with two historical moments in which Boston’s cityscape was visibly deconstructed: the Big Dig and the 1919 Molasses Flood (which razed a portion of the North End by coating it



e.

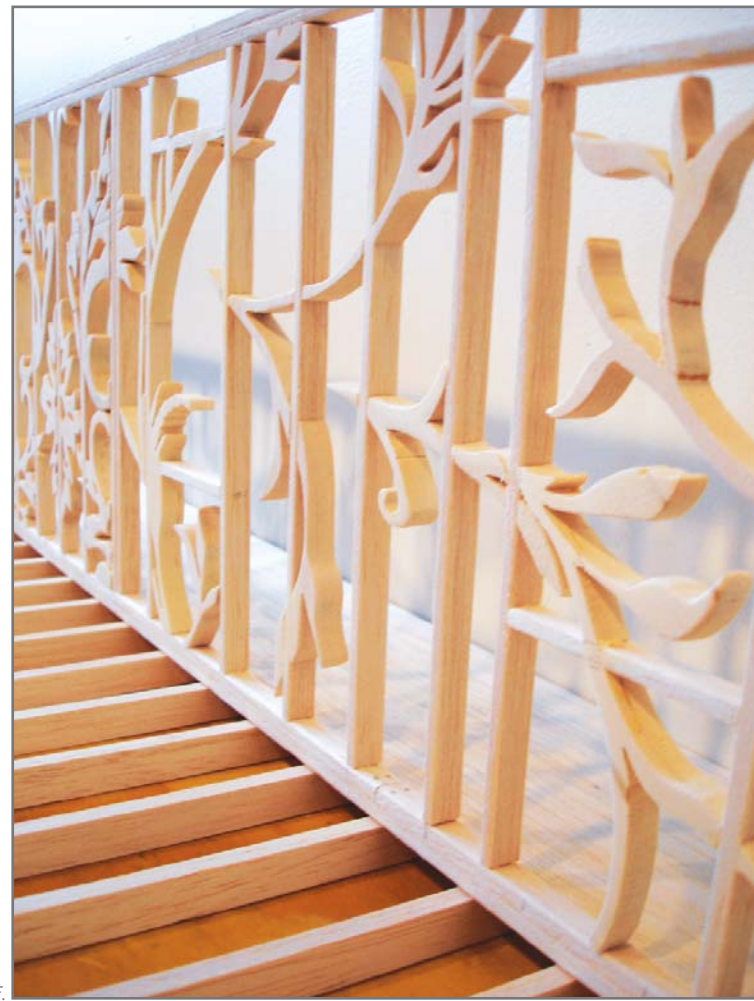
in a tide of molasses). The tacky syrup (slated for alcohol production for military use), rendered here in brown oil paint, pours out of a scene of destruction that is grafted onto a car crash; we see a mess of tires and a broken bumper. Into this chaotic tableau, Wawrinofsky injects two more episodes: that of the 1960s rags-to-oil-riches TV show *The Beverly Hillbillies* (with Jed and Ellie May strewn about the scene); and the mysterious death of Rudolf Diesel. As his name suggests, Mr. Diesel was the inventor of the eponymous engine, which was originally designed to run on bio-fuel, and whose 1913 death is surrounded by rumors of oil companies seeking to suppress his invention. An underlying link of oil, conspiracies, and war is at play in this installation, drawing parallels to today’s oil crisis and the Iraq war—an event similarly derived from a blending of fictive and quasi-paranoid narratives. Swirled in this fantastical installation, bodies, machines, and buildings are broken apart and re-fused into a single entity, underscoring their painful interconnectivity.

The historical and often difficult narrative embedded in architecture is further teased out by **Joel Ross**. In an almost surgical maneuver, he cut out seven-foot-high letters from a barn outside of Chicago to spell out “Every Day at Six.” The phrase hints at illicit after-school activities that might take place behind such a building, ubiquitous in the Midwest. It also however references a historical fact specific to that location: a whistle that blew at 6 p.m. daily to inform day laborers, who were black men, to leave the all-white town. The title of the piece, *Sundown Town*, was commonly used to imply this racist policy, referring to signs at city limits that read “Whites Only After Dark.” Although banned in 1968, such rules still leave a legacy in a handful of all-white towns in Illinois. Ross’s larger-than-life “signage” nods at the powerful role of both language and architecture in enforcing and preserving disturbing social mores. He destroys and transforms this building in order to unearth the deep-seeded racism that once pervaded the town. The building is unbuilt to literally retell its secret.

Dina Deitsch is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University where she studies contemporary American and European art. She received her MA in Art History from Williams College and was recently a curatorial fellow at the DeCordova Museum. She currently resides in Cambridge, MA.

¹ Pam Lee, *Objects to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000, pp. xii, xiii.

² Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol are the most famous artists of this ilk but the group expands well into the 1990s with collaborative groups such as The Yes Men and Critical Art Ensemble whose projects aim to intervene with business and scientific practices.



f.