

October 13 - November 13, 2004

Acconci Studio / New York
Krzysztof Bednarski / Poland
Barbara Bloom / New York
Zvi Hecker / Germany and Israel
Vittorio Messina / Italy
Anila Rubiku / Albania
Micha Ullman / Israel

curated by
Amnon Barzel

apexart
291 church street new york, ny 10013
t: 212.431.5270 f: 212.431.4447
info@apexart.org www.apexart.org
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PLACE FOR THE SELF

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This exhibition is about the meaning of a home, and a home within our own selves. A home where existential reflections and anxieties are accumulated through the dramatic events which characterize recent times.

Micha Ullman has created a home deep in the earth as a shelter for the self, while Vito Acconci addresses the self-in-body protected by the skeleton in *World in Your Bones*. Barbara Bloom defines her *Mood Ring Home* as a "tool for reflection" and as a "house that talks back, a house which constantly raises questions." Architect and artist Zvi Hecker combines the need for poetry and precision in his *Spiral*, a contemporary Tower of Babel—the archaic model of multiculturalism—where all languages are integrated to create one whole.

The ascetic room installation of Vittorio Messina, with its video projection of dream-like images, is accompanied by his words, "A home is done from the measures of his space, and the events of his past." The works of Polish artist Krzysztof Bednarski and the young Albanian artist Anila Rubiku refer to issues of identity and memory in our era of displacement, in which people and their cultures are moving from south to north and east to west. Their search for the essence of the self within political and cultural situations brings to mind the influential thinker of the middle ages Hugues De Saint-Victor who said, "Perfect is the one for whom the whole world is like a land of exile."

—Amnon Barzel

SEWN DREAMS

Time, dreams, home, and drawings...my world is composed of 24 embroideries. The process I've used is different compared to my other art work and I've used the circle as a frame—a representation of the perfect sign. While I sew with my hands, time, dreams, home and my world, I ask different questions regarding the home, my present existence and the future. Where am I going? Will I ever have a home? What do we need stairs for? I go on asking questions in most of the embroideries. This sewing is my entire world: my time, my poetry, my culture, my past and many other dreams for the future. It is an artwork made up of 24

drawings/embroideries, statements, and poetry dreaming of travel. In one of my embroideries I ask the question, "What do we need time for and how can we measure it"? You need time to draw, to dream, to come on this journey, to sew, to chat; you need time for a Turkish coffee. Being away from home and not in contact with my culture, I discovered that I like sewing. I rediscovered this tradition that has been passed on from one generation to another in my family. The imagery of the drawings is very strong while the technique is soft and feminine. Both the strong drawing and the delicate sewing are mine. I know where I come from but I don't know where I'm going.

—Anila Rubiku

MOOD RING HOME

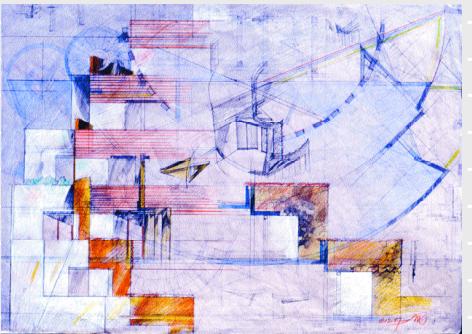
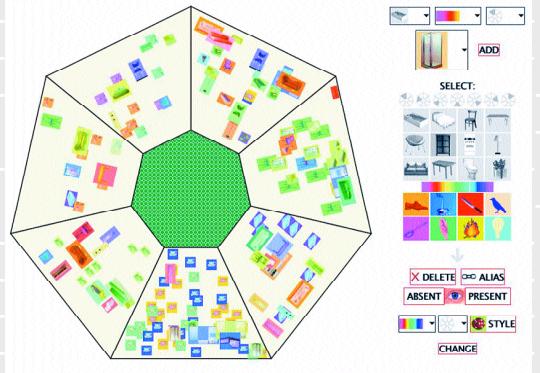
Imagine an elevator with only one "random" button that leaves someone at an unknown location. The door opens and voila you're home: a room containing all the amenities for living: a bed, a table and chairs, a kitchen, a couch, a bathroom, etc. Essential to the project is imagining a sense of comfort at the prospect of being at home and having everything one needs, coupled with never knowing exactly where one is. Could the not knowing exist without the usual accompanying panic or discomfort?

It is said that a house is a machine in which to live. A distinction should be made between a machine and a tool. The machine is expected to fulfill a task for you. A tool is to be used. This house is a tool. It provides an exercise in being comfortable with uncertainty, an exercise in flexibility. It is an invitation to continually adapt your immediate surroundings to your shifting needs. It is an architectural mood ring.

This is not a place to escape reality. It is a place where one's relationship to the world is heightened through becoming increasingly aware of everyday choices. The house is not some utopian structure, a model or an ideal, nor is it a case house. Maybe it's a learning center or a tool for reflection. Like a meditation whose possibilities become apparent when they are activated by use. A rehearsal hall. A practice room. The CD is a game, a design tool, and a screen saver.

—Barbara Bloom

These notes were derived from an ongoing conversation with Linda Taalman and Alan Koch of OpenOffice while working on the exhibition *Houses X Artists*.



images from top to bottom: Barbara Bloom, *Mood Ring Home*, 2002, installation with colored walls, furniture, colored vinyl, computer with CD, Program Design: Douglas Repetto, Project Originators: OpenOffice (Alan Koch and Linda Taalman – architects); Acconci Studio (Vito Acconci, Luis Vera, Dario Nunez, Azarakhs Damood, Thomas King), *World in Your Bones*, 1998, iris print, 36" x 48"; Zvi Hecker, *Spiral, Study of the Entrance*, 8/26/89, color pencils on blue print, 27.5" x 39"

WORLD IN YOUR BONES

The understructure of this microenvironment is screwed into your bones, like a prosthetic skeleton. It lives on your back, on your limbs, on your head; it moves as you move, you barely notice it as you go about your business. When you feel some need, the plot thickens: the tubes slide, pivot, telescope out—you become your own chair, your own bed, and your own vehicle. A micro-shell fans out, over your head: your head becomes your office. A macro-shell fans out, over your body: your body becomes your house. Visitors enter your house, as if coming in under your clothes. Your house leeches onto a building: you own your own apartment; you move your apartment from building to building. Your house leeches onto a plane, a train, a ship, and a car: you ride for free. —Acconci Studio

THE SPIRAL

The *Spiral* is a work of incomplete precision, which can't be completely finished. The *Spiral*'s incompleteness is also its poetry, because poetry is the most precise expression of our need for precision. Expressive as it is, the *Spiral* can't be fully understood. It speaks too many languages at once and at the same time. It speaks Arabic about human condition. It argues in Hebrew for the sheer necessity to bring the muscles and materials together, but it is quite fluent in Russian when construction becomes architecture. Its Italian is very Baroque, as spoken in Piedmont by Guarino Guarini. The *Spiral* is a tower of Babel in miniature. —Zvi Hecker

I AM BRUNO SCHULZ

The suitcase in this exhibition belongs to my family—it has traveled through history and countries: coming from Lvov, a Polish city and today Ukraine. My family and the suitcase together have changed cities: Cracovia, then Warsaw, and today ending in Rome, where I live. The land of my family's roots was a region of many cultures and religions that coexisted together. My grandmother's stories spoke of Catholic churches next to synagogues and mosques. All of the culture in the world was in one place.

Bruno Schulz, the great Polish and Jewish writer and artist, killed during WWII by the Nazis, is a symbol of that cross-culture which has now disappeared and is impossible to rebuild. It would be nonexistent now if it were not for memory and art. The image of Schulz is based on his famous self-portrait, which has always struck me—the large eyes full

of fear—as if they had always known their actual violent end, and the end of the world of tolerance.

I have always dedicated my work to the people who have been important in my life like Dylan Thomas, Joseph Brodskij, Jerzy Grotowski and many others who never had an actual house, and always lived with a suitcase. Perhaps this is the way of the artist, it is their place, closed but mobile, always true to them, place by place. —Krzysztof Bednarski

THE OTHER SONG

"...The other song is that I am not destined to live a free life; I know my time is measured, and I must not here dismiss the infinite, but when I want or am tired of this life there is someone that, so to speak, calls to me, an invitation I will not know to resist..."

The inhabitant of a certain home has left, now uncovered, but watches the front door of his or her house. For days and days they remain to observe. The idea is not to stay right in front of the house, but ahead of it. It seems almost like sleep—or more simply, one is able to do this—deeply neglected in the recess but more secure, and at the same time watching over oneself. Now, this is a great privilege: to be before the phantoms of the night with the unconscious abandon of sleep—but without noticing, to look with clarity and vigorous caution at the evening vigil. —Vittorio Messina

HOUSE

I have been digging since about 1970. My main form is the pit, and my main working field is the earth, the ground, the floor or the street according to the situation. The work exists always on the surface, and many times underneath. As an environmental sculpture, the work is always a dialogue with the site.

The indoor sculptures are mainly done from red sand from the place where I live in Ramat Hasharon, Israel. The drawings or works on paper accompany my work. Without any help of brush, just the flowing liquid according to slopes achieved by movements of my hand and body, the language hints of quiet and in many cases of negative forms reminiscent of the pit. In the drawing *House* a missing white house can be seen possibly representing a missing person which is typical of my work with "signs" for human beings, never the real figure. —Micha Ullman



images from top to bottom: Krzysztof Bednarski, *I am Bruno Schulz*, 1983, mixed media; Vittorio Messina, *Una Città Visibile*, 2004, mixed media; Micha Ullman, *House (no.453)*, 1996, sand on paper, 27.5" x 39"