

Long Beach Museum of Art

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IMAGES AVAILABLE

LONG BEACH MUSEUM OF ART, NEW EXHIBITION

Novel Constructions: Artists Create Monumental Books

May 1 – August 16, 2009

Novel Constructions: Artists Create Monumental Books at the Long Beach Museum of Art presents mixed media installations and sculptures by six artists inspired by the idea of “the book” which they expand and enlarge in multiple dimensions from six feet square to over 30 feet long. Selected by guest curator Jean Clad, works by Edith Abeyta, Beatriz Mejia-Krumbein, Mary Ellen Long, Carol Shaw Sutton, Genie Shenk, and Cheryl Sorg are installed at the Museum this summer from May 1 to August 16, 2009. Each artist is inspired by some aspect of “bookness” and the exhibition is unified by the oversized scale of their works, amplifying the traditional intimate scale of books to emphasize their meanings. *Novel Constructions* is full of encompassing environments that engage and hold visitors in ways that humans engage and hold books.

Most of Edith Abeyta’s work is informed by literature. *208*, the title of her work for this exhibition, was the French Royal Marie Antoinette’s prison cell number. Abeyta gives us a recreation of the historic woman’s cell whose walls are made of printed text pages from Antoinette’s journal.

Black and White by Beatriz Mejia-Krumbein expresses the pain of physical and emotional abuse in a series of burlap pages of forcefully applied, layered paint in stark black and white. The artist confronts the universality of violence and insists that physical violence as well as the emotional trauma inflicted by hate and racism are enemies of all humanity. The scale of the book involves the reader and emphasizes her message.

Detritus, the title of Mary Ellen Long’s installation, includes a forest of cast paper trees. Every year for the past 18 years, Long has stacked her handmade paper outside just before the winter snows. The paper is marked by the process of decay and transition during its winter hibernation. The appearance of the paper changes with the seasonal changes. Long recovers the paper in the spring and actively collaborates with nature to make her books.

The size of Cheryl Sorg’s books result from the painstaking deconstruction of long texts like *The Odyssey*. Sorg uses books to



Images (top to bottom)

-Edith Abeyta, *208*, 2007, Book pages, fiber, strips of old sheets, straw, ceramic, found objects, onions, bed frame, mattress, blanket, pillow, sideboard 10 x 10 x 10 feet

-Beatriz Mejia-Krumbein, *Black and White*, 1996, burlap, paper, cardboard, charcoal, acrylic, 72 x 108 x 5 inches

-Mary Ellen Long, *Detritus*, 2009, nature-altered paper, leaves, cut logs, kozo-abaca fiber, and polymer. Books: 18x24x7 inches, cast trees: 1 to 7 feet tall

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create large and elaborate constructions in which the viewer can be transported just as literature transports the reader in a well-told tale. Sorg sets up a requirement for her studio practice in which she lessens her guilt over cutting books apart. She requires of herself that she use every word of the destroyed book. Using two copies of each title, she is able to cut the pages apart, line by line, sometimes, word by word, letter by letter, and reassemble them into a new construction that is inspired by the literary content.

Genie Shenk has been described as the Richard Serra of book artists. Her meditative sculptural structures utilize the ideas of books in carefully constructed sewn signatures that speak without text about the symbolic qualities of the traditional book form. A seemingly simple circle of folded paper on close examination maps a complex spiral motion within two concentric circles. Comprised of 150 books sewn from 6,000 sheets of industrial tarred building paper, the quiet strength of the books suggests complex concepts of symbols in Navajo mythology or Jungian psychology.

Carol Shaw-Sutton responds to the dissonance and violence of our times in her work, *Longitude*. A large scroll-like book, *Longitude* contains images of hands from the artist's family, neighbors, friends, students, and workers that serve to represent the universality of human hopes amongst distinctive individuals. The text is a prayer for peace and healing. The form and scale of *Longitude* suggests a measurement in hands of humanity's desire for peace worldwide.

Over the course of *Novel Constructions* there will be opportunities to explore the field of artists' books and to make your own book. In the first project, "Accordion Books", on May 17th from 1:00 – 3:00 PM, participants will work together to create an accordion book that tells a story about their family through text and visual elements.

Over the course of the exhibition, Director of Collections Sue Ann Robinson will give two presentations about artists' books on Free Fridays, May 29 and August 7, 2009, featuring books from the Long Beach Museum of Art permanent collection.

***Exhibitions and programming at LBMA are supported by the B.C. McCabe Foundation and the Rudolph J. and Daphne A. Munzer Foundation.

About the Long Beach Museum of Art

Located on a magnificent bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the Long Beach Museum of Art features a historic mansion and carriage house, expansive galleries and gardens, oceanfront dining at Claire's at the Museum and a unique Museum Store. The galleries and store are open Tuesday – Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Claire's at the Museum is open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday – Friday and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission is \$7 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors age 62 and older, free for Museum members and children under 12, and free for everyone on Friday. For more information, call (562) 439-2119 or visit www.lbma.org.



Images (top to bottom)

-Cheryl Sorg, *Metamorphoses*, 2007, Paper, clear tape, Mylar, 30 ft long
-Genie Shenk, *Ring*, 1990 and 1999, Tar paper, 20 inches x 11 feet
-Carol Shaw-Sutton, *Longitude*, 2004, mixed media, 8 x 6 feet x 40 inches