

The New Museum

OF CONTEMPORARY ART

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News

Media Preview
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A LABOR OF LOVE

Works by Fifty Contemporary Artists

In today's fast, technology-driven, ultraconsuming society, time and labor are diminished. Handcrafted objects--and the materials and processes often associated with them--have remained intrinsically tied to tradition, beautiful relics of pre-industrial memory.

A Labor of Love, on view at The New Museum of Contemporary Art from January 20 through April 14, 1996, assembles the work of fifty contemporary artists drawing from folk, craft, "outsider," decorative, and fine art traditions. Organized by Director Marcia Tucker, over 100 works which incorporate a wide variety of skills, including beading, glassblowing, painting, woodcarving, embroidery, dollmaking, and drawing, are featured in all galleries.

"The title refers to a phrase which describes a task--often arduous, lengthy, and complicated--whose doing is its own reward," explains Tucker. "This exhibition of handcrafted, often labor-intensive work by American artists from varied cultural and artistic backgrounds is an investigation of some of the ways art and the everyday are inextricably interwoven. The work in A Labor of Love harnesses traditional techniques of artmaking not to return to the past, but to analyze, critique, and understand the present world we live in."

Conveying visual pleasure with a critical edge, many artists in A Labor of Love combine slow, repetitive processes with simple materials such as clay, fibers, beads, and soap. **Liza Lou's** five-year construction of a full-size kitchen where every square inch is covered with colorful beads pays tribute to "women's work" with poignancy, humor and irony; a ceramic vase of flowers by **Michael Lucero** comically clings to its craft roots; **Pier Consagra's** lamps illuminate his self portraits and satiric figures; **Chuck Genco's** illusion machine, in a cabinet of oak, brass, and mechanized parts, and **Kazumi Tanaka's** intimate wood furniture assemblages metaphorically change objects beyond purely functional purposes.

Raymond Materson's embroideries of unraveled sock threads envision a world through two-inch narratives; in an ironic commentary on the nature of gender stereotyping, **Richard Rule's** needlepoint affirms quotidian gay life; **Kukuli Velarde's** ceramic angels derive

from Peruvian folk art idioms to become powerful spiritual guardians. Miniature worlds come alive through **Michael Harm's** elaborate carved chairs made of soap, while **Richard Notkin's** teapot, embodying menacing military imagery, defies the ordinary use of such a vessel. Artists working in glass--**Robin Winters, Dale Chihuly, and Josiah McElheny**--employ the medium in unpredictable and innovative ways, resulting in complex forms which resist categorical definition.

Calling into question boundaries between folk, craft, "outsider," decorative, and fine art, the paintings and drawings by "self-taught" and trained artists invite comparison for commonalties and distinctions. **William Copley (Cply)** employs a bold graphic style, rendering highly personal, sexualized subject matter in non-didactic ways. Drawing on a Mexican folkloric painting style, **Carmen Lomas Garza's** chronicles attest to contemporary conflicts involving such issues as class, race, and feminism. Other artists like **James Hill** and **Kevin Sampson** combine found materials with more traditional art media, crossing the borders between sculpture, bas relief, and painting.

Among the most labor-intensive works in the exhibition, **Jacob El Hanani's** ink drawings use repetitive techniques in curious, intricate ways to produce an overall, elegantly formal effect. Detailed pencil drawings of plant roots by artist **Willie Wayne Young**, an artist who has focused his life's work on a single object, resemble studies by Leonardo da Vinci; the fantasy figures and fashions colorfully rendered in **Chelo Amezcua's** detailed ballpoint pen drawings explore Mexican stereotypes of the feminine. Cuban American artist **Manuel Pardo** uses scratch-board painting techniques and unusual framing styles to recast traditional ideas of gender.

A Labor of Love has been installed in quasi-domestic settings to encourage visitors to spend time looking and enjoying, while making themselves at home. Music plays a pivotal role in the exhibition. As a contemporary museum committed to presenting interdisciplinary exhibitions and programs not usually found in art museums, live and recorded programs of traditional music are provided for visitors' listening pleasure, and to complement the display of material objects. A brochure offers notes on the five separate music programs on labor and laborers of the field, mine, railroad, prison, and mill, deriving from Anglo, Latino, African, Asian, and Native American traditions.

A Labor of Love is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with a critical and historical essay by Marcia Tucker; a photograph of each artist's work; a selected bibliography; and concise biographies in narrative form written by the artists. A catalogue cover, with installation views and edited symposium proceedings, will be produced in March.

Artists: Chelo Amezcua, Imogene Jessie Goodshot Arquero, Alan Belcher, Robert Brady, Darren Brown, Bette Burgoyne, Larry Calkins, Rene David Chamizo, Dale Chihuly, Pier Consagra, William Copley (Cply), Jacob El Hanani, Tom Emerson, Dianna Frid, Carmen Lomas Garza, Chuck Genco, Nöle Giuliani, Michael Harms, Bessie Harvey, Mary Heilmann, Oliver Herring, James Hill, Indira Freitas Johnson, Jane Kaufman, Larry Krone, Paul Laffoley, Dinh Q. Lê, Charles LeDray, Liza Lou, Michael Lucero, Raymond Materson, Josiah McElheny, Sana Musasama, Richard T. Notkin, Manuel Pardo, Elaine Reichek, Faith Ringgold, A.G. Rizzoli, Diego Romero, Richard Rule, Alison Saar, Kevin B. Sampson, Beverly Semmes, Judith Shea, Kazumi Tanaka, Kukuli Velarde, Margaret Wharton, Robin Winters, Willie Wayne Young, Daisy Youngblood.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

all programs take place at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 583 Broadway
unless otherwise indicated

ARTIST TALK: Liza Lou talks about her beaded "kitchen." Saturday, January 20, 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.. Free with Museum admission.

CORPOREAL CRAFTS: Body crafts are performed for (and on) willing visitors in the Window on Broadway featuring Nail Art by Nails & Designs by Gee Gee & Co., Inc., Saturday, January 20, 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m., and Razor haircuts by Astor Place Hairstylists, Saturday, February 17, 1:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.. Free.

PANELS: Distinctions and Beyond. Artists, critics, and museum professionals explore the complex interrelationships among folk, craft, and fine art discourses. *Mary Jackson, April Kingsley, Bruce Metcalf, John Perreault, Mary Shaffer*. Monday, January 29, 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., at the American Craft Museum, 40 West 53rd St. Free with Museum admission.

Tied to Tradition. Artists and cultural critics investigate how class issues and racial and ethnic traditions are distinguished among folk, craft, "outsider," and fine art. *Joanne Cubbs, Michael Cummings, Harryette Mullen, Joanna Osburn-Bigfeather*. Thursday, February 1, 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 583 Broadway. Tickets \$7 general, \$5 students, seniors, members.

DOLL WORKSHOP FOR ADULTS: Multimedia artists *Lisa Bradley* and *Larry Krone* conduct workshops demonstrating craft-oriented skills and traditions. Participants are requested to bring in small objects for doll making. Dolls made in the workshops will be displayed in the gallery and, when the exhibition ends, donated to children in hospitals through social service organizations. Saturdays, February 10 & 24, 12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.. Free with Museum admission.

EDUCATORS' WORKSHOPS: Curator of Education Brian Goldfarb and teachers from the Museum's High School Art Program facilitate workshops with a selection of artists from A Labor of Love on developing innovative methods of teaching contemporary art within and across a range of disciplines. Saturday, March 9, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 583 Broadway. Saturday, March 31, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., at the Jewish Museum, 1109 5th Ave. Saturday, April 21, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 583 Broadway. All workshops are free with Museum admission.

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The New Museum of Contemporary Art is located at 583 Broadway between Houston and Prince Streets in SoHo. Hours are Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday: Noon to 6:00 p.m.; Saturday: Noon to 8:00 p.m., 6:00-8:00 p.m. free; Monday and Tuesday, closed. Admission is \$4 general; \$3 artists, students, seniors; members and children under 12, free. For recorded information, please call 212.219.1355.