

# THE NEW MUSEUM

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## In A Pictorial Framework

PHYLLIS BRAMSON (b. 1941) "Myths of Inspiration"

"Myths of Inspiration" is Phyllis Bramson's first attempt to realize her concepts as an installation piece. The expressive and narrative nature of Bramson's work links it to the Chicago Imagists; she has made her home there for more than fifteen years. She shares the Imagists' use of personal subject matter, sense of surreal occurrence and interest in kitsch, but her works are less harsh and do not have a tendency toward abstraction. She explores ephemeral contrasts of dark and light, the richness of theatrical color, and odd perspectives of observation.

Each tableaux in this installation explores Bramson's personal or fantasized myths concerning art-making. We follow Bramson's confrontation with the elements of art-making, becoming involved with the process and actual space of the work as well as sharing in her theatrical and illogical world.

Some of the distance between the viewer and the private metaphor of the artist is bridged by Bramson's use of words. Since the statements help her to focus and delineate the subject matter of her work, they act as mottos in the finished piece, encouraging viewers to orient themselves within her particular world. The irrationality in Bramson's work might be traced to dreams, yet the manner in which she structures and highlights various aspects of it corresponds to theater, especially to absurdist theater. Art, Bramson believes, "has some kind of magical property which fascinates, but not necessarily entertains." For her, the compelling power of art is its humanism, its exposure of emotions, strengths, and vulnerabilities. Her myths are not just tales, but function as purges for herself and she hopes, the viewer. Her convictions, as well as her intoxication with the theatrical and sensual, enable Bramson to probe the many facets of her own interior dramas. She describes her own work as, a constant stream of spectacle and activity, "like Burlesque."

ROBERT A. CLARK (b. 1948) BRUCE GUNDERSEN (b. 1948) Gundersen Clark "Dagar  $\wedge$  ne"  
Bruce Gundersen and Robert A. Clark's performance work, "Dagar  $\wedge$  ne," is the fruit of a nine-year artistic collaboration. The underlying impetus of their work is a unique, dual form of communication.

"Dagar  $\wedge$  ne"--a typically cryptic title which the artists adamantly refuse to discuss--is staged on and around an elaborate structure: an intricate, well-crafted, architectural sculpture. The performance involves an intense ritual, incorporating violent, symmetrical body movement and obscure sounds. Their use of elaborate costuming, staging, lighting, sound and live action are dramatic and theatrical and are geared to elicit audience reaction.

Beyond the materiality of the set the personal memories of an intangible, unrepeatable life experience remain. Connections and associations, if any, are few and vague, being obliterated by an overall feeling of magic. This magic is the dominant characteristic of the performance--an elusive quality reflecting the complexity of the decision-making process; in this case, it is informed and confounded by the confrontation and amalgamation of two unique individual sensibilities.