

March 16, 1994

NEW WORK GALLERY
MAY 6 - AUGUST 14, 1994

CINDY TOWER, *WESTWARD EXPANSION INWARDS*

Organized by Laura Trippi, Curator

Cindy Tower has adopted what she calls a "raw and rugged" painting style, a style typical of rustic folk genres of the Western United States, to address audiences and areas of experience that traditionally lie outside the confines of fine art. The colors are crude; the technique rough; and the subjects common even to the point of cliché. On found or discarded objects, from pantyhose stretched over small frames to cardboard tubes, bottles, logs, tree slices, furniture fragments, and saw blades, Tower paints landscapes and portraits, but, above all, she paints trees -- not generic trees, or imaginary trees, but portraits of trees from nature, individual trees. Tower is also a sculptor, employing an obsessively additive approach to gathering found materials and transforming them into paintings, ultimately transforming the spaces they inhabit through the sheer mass and intensity of accumulation. *Westward Expansion Inwards* represents just such an obsessive accumulation, dealing with intertwining narratives that are at once personal, political, and environmental. Tower's own history as an artist becomes entwined with that of her great-great grandfather, Gaylan Clark, who along with John Muir and Fredric Law Olmstead helped to found Yosemite National Park. Combining wallsize photomurals with a multitude of *Tree Paintings*, *Forest* groupings, and painted *Wood Pile Sculptures*, along with other elements, Tower transforms The New Museum's New Work Gallery into a dense forest in which two eco-systems are superimposed: a Western Redwood forest and a Connecticut deciduous forest. At the same time, past overlaps with present as natural forest gives way to painted debris and the life of the late nineteenth century itinerant naturalist and woodsman prefigures that of the young postmodern feminist painter. Obsessive accumulation comes to suggest overproduction, overpopulation, and domination of the environment. As Tower says: "Unlike most Americans, I'm interested in Westward expansion, but inwards." An exploration of personal and cultural legacies, *Westward Expansion Inwards* is also an inquiry into assumptions that underlie ideas of American individualism and the frontier.

Installation components

Back wall b/w photomurals w/figures facing each other:

Gaylan Clark @Mariposa Grove in Yosemite

Cindy Tower in highway pillar forest

Columns (2) converted into ghostly redwood trees

using theatre scrim material, and hoops top and bottom

top is hoop, bottom is fluted as base of tree w/root structure

left unpainted and semi-transparent: ghosts of ancient trees

North wall: family tree w/portraits on wood cuts, vines as connective branches:

Gaylan Clark (CT great, great grandfather) on acetate (faux silver print)

11 children as generic baby heads in oil paint

intervening generations as direct line only

CT in color xerox

Tree paintings simulating a forest (paintings on pantyhose etc. stretched on small frames)

Forest #1- 40, tree paintings on cardboard tubes, bottles, jars, etc. anchored in hammered copper covered deciduous tree stumps (on the floor)

Lumber Jack Woodpile, chainsawed, burnt, and painted pine, 1993-4

Lumberjack team portrait, black-and-white photograph

Daisy Pile, chainsawed, burnt, and painted pine, 1993

Flemish Pile, chainsawed, burnt, and painted pine, 1993

Sawdust on floor? w/floor mats at entry to NWGallery

Optional additional installation components

Self-portrait as a madonna running through a field, wood pile piece, 1993

Yosemite painting on large wood cuts

Valence painting

Wood stump table and chair for reading