

KATHRYN KELLEY

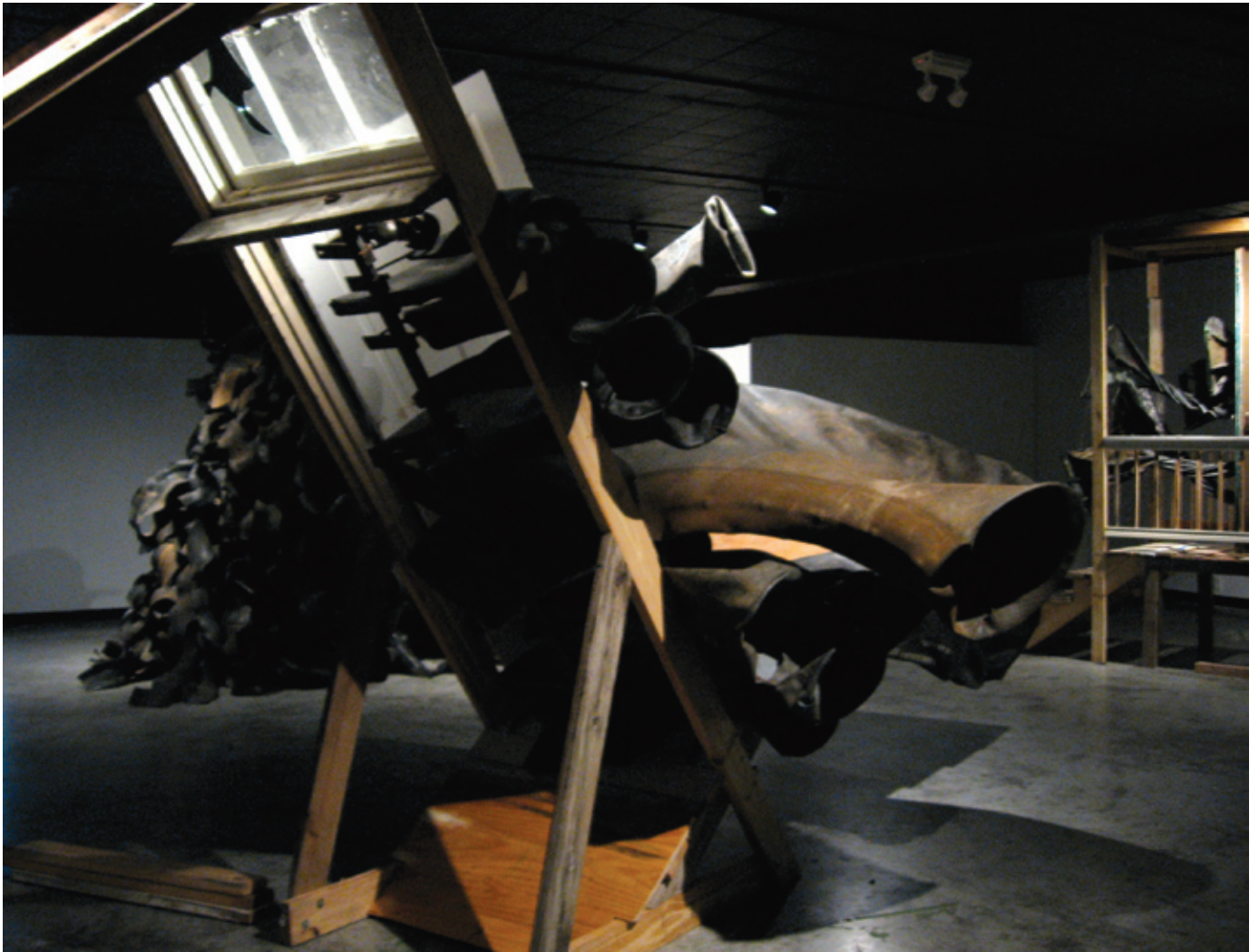
treading where no one hears the echo of her foot fall



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

MARCH 6 - APRIL 15, 2010

AUSTIN, TEXAS



"When I shut up love..." by Kathryn Kelley, remnant tires, wood and metal, 2010.

Cover Panel: *"As the ache..."* by Kathryn Kelley, remnant tires, wood and metal, 2010.

KATHRYN KELLEY

*treading where no one hears
the echo of her foot fall*



"When I shut up love..." by Kathryn Kelley,
remnant tires, wood and metal, 2010.

Being in the same space with Kathy Kelley's art is like a visit to the elephant house: one marvels at the enormity, the textures, and the smell. Her work is excessive. In the five years she has been working as a sculptor, she has produced a shocking bulk of enormous pieces. Too big to lift, too dirty to handle, too ephemeral to keep, the exterior yard of her studio in Houston is fringed with hulking mounds of slowly degenerating rubber. What's impressive about Kelley's work is her frightening intensity of effort.

Kathy Kelley's materials are quintessentially trash: corroding inner tubes, blown-out tire treads, peeling boards and soggy mattresses. Like Rauschenberg's rumpled packing boxes, these unappealing remnants are the background noise of contemporary urban experience. Kelley's earliest works used materials with a functional utilitarian modesty: rough rope, galvanized pipe, cinderblocks. For Kelley, these objects represent an honest alternative to the mediated, hyped consumer culture against which she is rebelling. As her work evolved, her materials became more emphatically trashy. Black and

ugly, dirty, crusted and odorous, Kelley's works evoke a blasted apocalyptic landscape of post-consumer entropy. Describing her process as "a visceral reaction against the cult of the instant, the new, the forever young, forever fertile with its pushed up breast and swollen lips," Kelley's works carry a moralistic condemnation of waste, yet at the same time, offer redemption; salvaging utterly undesirable material and creating gnarly beauty.

What is the human body but a rubbery tube? Kelley's tire works have an appalling sensuality, with skins bound, squeezed and pierced by rusty baling wire. Deflated and flabby, Kelley's tubular forms are sagging corseted breasts and flaccid, elephantine phalluses, withered by age, and black with sin. From the slimy toxicity of tiny invertebrates to the scabrous callosities of the rhinoceros, Kelley's galumphing creations suggest the unpleasant side of living creation. Though they have the same flabby grunge as early Oldenburg soft sculptures, Kelley's sculptures are utterly lacking in cute. The automotive origin and monumental scale of her truck-tube pieces is more like John Chamberlain's formalized car-wreck sculptures, in which an aloof abstraction struggles with pop garbage. It's tempting to assign Chamberlain and Kelley contrasting male/female takes on the same boundless ocean of automotive waste. Chamberlain's pieces are tense and energetic, lifting and thrusting angular fragments into space; Kelley's pieces yield to gravity, flop and sag, falling easily into the tradition of feminist body-critique with Eva Hesse and Lee Bontecou. In *My own lies swallow me*, 2008, three roughly human-sized columns stand shrouded in dusty black rubber. Loops of baling wire pinch them painfully inwards at what might be necks, busts, waists, and ankles. Anonymous figures like standing mummies or body bags, they speak powerfully about constraint and regret.

Kelley's work is a workout: wrestling with heavy sheets of flabby rubber, scrawling

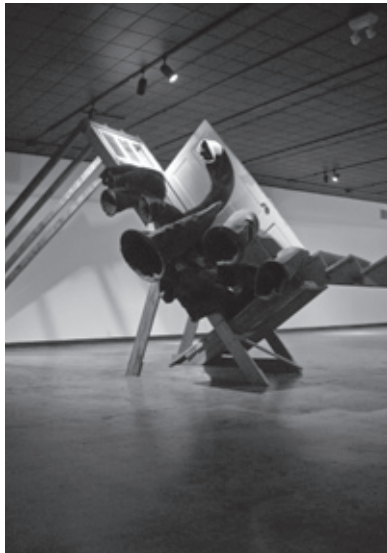
closely-written text on 30 feet of blackboard, Kelley throws herself into her work in a literal, physical way, testing her limits both physically and spiritually. In 2006, she described hammering twenty-seven pounds of nails into tar-covered wood for her first painting: "Tar. Nail. Tar. Nail. Tar. Nail. Tar. Nail. Tar. Nail. Tar. Nail. Tar and nails for ten days straight, four to six hours a day, my physical limit." In struggling with her work, Kelley externalizes an inner struggle with a dark world of repression and guilt; battling, prodding and constraining her ugly materials into metaphors for difficult emotional situations, using her art as a battering ram to push open the door to a new identity. Accustomed to continuous self-analysis, Kelley began a blog at about the same time she began thinking of herself as an artist. Tellingly, her first post, on December 17, 2006 is titled "Becoming unsafe." The more-than-daily torrent of words and images (304 posts in 2009) that follow chronicle her headlong emergence. Then a graduate student in graphic design at the University of Houston, Kelley described her growing mania for raw experience. As she studied contemporary art, she says:

"I found myself unable to simply respond to those works intellectually. I was compelled to make, and make is what I did. My first bastardization, a Pollock-de Kooning in under 5 minutes. Bad painting, combines, first generation feminism. Fast, freely. Pink—discovered spontaneously. House paint flying everywhere. Ruined pants. Ruined shirts. Ruined shoes. The sacredness of art demystified. It was OK to make bad art. I didn't have to make something beautiful or meaningful. I just had to make. And I did. Making good. Making bad. Making. Concerned design professors averted their eyes from the accumulating pile of paintings in my small studio space."

Four solo shows in as many years, each crowded with enormous sculpture, three large-scale outdoor projects, and twenty

group exhibitions since 2006 show the extent to which Kelley is still driven by the same manic impulse.

Kelley's rubber-inner tube works have always relied on a more-or-less revealed substructure, usually of rusting steel, that give her amorphous rubbery elements form. In these new works, Kelley replaces some of the steel framing with wood: evocative weathered bits of old houses that not only support her pieces physically, but also place rubber forms in a domestic context, encouraging one to read them as metaphors for family life. Kelley's titles frame her work in terms of emotionally fraught relationships: two pieces hung back-to-back in a recent show were called: "*Without your forgiveness I am still bound to what happened between us. Only you can set me free.*" and "*Betrayal is not so very far away; it comes from within me; does it come from within you.*" In *treading where no one hears the echo of her foot fall*, old doors symbolize escape or entrapment, floorboards from a half-dozen houses are pieced together to create an archetypal American home, a stage setting within and around which Kelley's tire-tube actors can gesture and squirm.



"When I shut up love..." by Kathryn Kelley, remnant tires, wood and metal, 2010.

KATHRYN STIRLING KELLEY

EDUCATION

- 2006 *Master of Fine Arts.* University of Houston, Houston, TX.
- 2003 *Associate of Applied Science Degree, Interactive Media and Web Design* The Art Institute of Houston, Houston, TX.
- 1985 *Bachelor of Science.* TX. A&M University, College Station, TX.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *The grey area, (with Devon Moore),* UTSA Satellite Space. San Antonio, TX.

- 2009 *I breathe.* Kingwood Art Gallery, Lonestar College, Kingwood, TX.
- 2009 *Feet of shadows.* G Gallery, Houston, TX.
- 2009 *In the space of absence.* O'Quinn Gallery of Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX.
- 2007 *Modes of conformity: Solo Exhibition.* Bunker Hill City Hall, Bunker Hill, TX.

PUBLIC ART

- 2009 *Human nature planted.* Russ Pitman Park. Houston, TX.
- 2008 *Green Valentine: Suckling Is Continuous.* Freed Park, Houston, TX., sponsored by BBAP and Heights Beautification Project and Woodland Heights Civic Associations.
- 2008 *Sculpture Vision XVI: Time marker/Time keeper.* Lone Star College North Harris, Houston, TX.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 *Texas Biennial 2009* [Juror: Michael Duncan]. Austin, TX.
- 2008 *Hasta La Basura Se Separa [artcrush] (Even The Trash Separates Itself).* Centro Cultural de Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.
- 2008 *unBOXed.* Crazywood Gallery. Huntsville, TX.
- 2008 *BOX 13: Cohesive discord.* space125gallery, Houston Arts Alliance, Houston, TX.
- 2008 *Shredded: Reuse refuse: when trash becomes art.* As a member of H7. Houston Community College East Campus, Houston, TX.
- 2008 *EXPO 2008 Juried Show* [Juror: Terri Thornton]. 500x. Dallas, TX.
- 2008 *Oklahoma Centerfold, Seven-State Biennial Exhibition.* [Juror: Paul Medina] Leslie Powell Foundation and Gallery. Lawton, OK.
- 2007 *ArtCrawl Houston 2007.* CSAW, Houston, TX.
- 2007 *Seven-State Biennial Exhibition.* Selected Best of Show. [Juror: Paul Medina] University Of Science And Arts of OK Art Gallery, Chickasha, OK.
- 2007 *Folds and Stacked: An exercise in restraint.* CSAW, Houston, TX.
- 2006 *Unhinging the distant. Curated by Kathryn Kelley.* CSAW, Houston, TX.
- 2006 *ArtCrawl Houston 2006—CSAW curator and artist.* CSAW, Houston, TX.
- 2006 *University Of Houston MFA Thesis Exhibition.* Blaffer Gallery, Houston, TX.
- 2005 *ArtCrawl Annual* [Juror: Jennifer Jankauskas] *University of Houston Sculpture Show* CSAW, Houston, TX.

- 2005 *Show Us Your Feminism*. [Jurors: Terrie Sulton, Michelle Barnes, Lynn Randolph] Vine Street Studios, Houston, TX.
- 2005 *No Parking Exhibition*. Aerosol Warfare Gallery, Houston, TX.
- 2005 *Cultural intonations, Consumptive rhythms, Mechanical ringing, The societal din*. Audio performance. Mercy Street, Houston, TX.
- 2005 *Hung: University of Houston Sculpture Show*. CSAW, Houston, TX.
- 2005 *The Big Show*. [Juror: Michael Olijnyk, The Mattress Factory] Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX.
- 2005 *The Jock Strap: A Group Exhibition*. [Curator: Che] Women's Studies Center, University of Houston, Houston, TX.



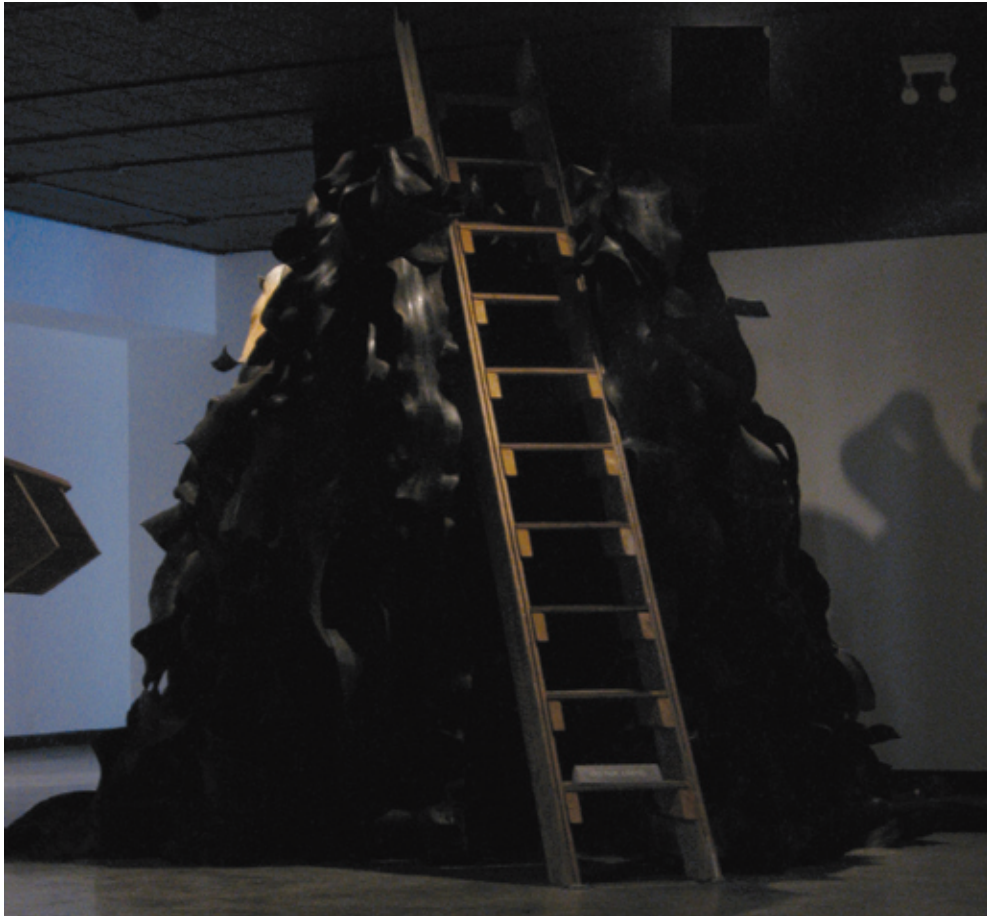
"When I shut up love..." by Kathryn Kelley, remnant tires, wood and metal, 2010.

REVIEWS

- 2009 *Review: CAMH's No Zoning suffers from, well, zoning*. Douglas Britt. Houston Chronicle Fine Arts, September 24, 2009 Edition.
- 2009 *John Chamberlain influence is seen around town*. Douglas Britt. Houston Chronicle Zest, June 21, 2009 Edition.
- 2009 *Kathy Kelley Living Arts Interview 90.1 KPFT* Michael Woodson and Marcela Descalzi. Houston, June 12, 2009.
- 2009 *Kathy Kelley finds her niche: discovered sculptures in grad school*. Douglas Britt. Houston Chronicle, June 6, 2009 Edition.
- 2008 *New Doors: Green scene, clouds on canvas, and crocheted taxidermy*. PaperCity, November 2008 Edition. Houston, TX.
- 2008 *ArtSlant: Rackroom—Interview with Kathy Kelley by ArtSlant Team*. www.ArtSlant.com/global/artists/rackroom, May 5, 2008 Edition.
- 2008 *MyArtSpace featured artists of the week*. www.myartspace.com/weekly/week080621.html June 21, 2008 Edition.
- 2008 *Art goes green in Houston* by Tria Wood. ArtsHouston Magazine April 2008 Ed.
- 2008 *Of wallpaper & other repeating patterns* by J R Compton. DallasArtsRevue.com.
- 2008 *Seven State Biennial* by Kelsey Karper. Art Focus Oklahoma, Volume 23, No. 1
- 2007 *For whom the bell crawls* by Bill Davenport. Glasstire.com—Houston Artletter/blog.
- 2007 *Mixed-media wall hanging wins competition*. John Brandenburg. The Oklahoman November 4, Chickasha, Oklahoma
- 2007 *Local artist gets lost in beauty of found objects* by Andrea Sutton. Memorial Examiner News Online, Friday, January 19, Houston, TX.
- 2006 *Graphic design students challenge trends* by Dusti Rhodes. The Daily Cougar, Volume 71, Issue 128, Houston, TX.
- 2005 *KUHF Front Row review with Dr. Elizabeth Gregory and Alison Young*. Show Us Your Feminism Exhibition, Oct. 21, 2005, Houston, TX.
- 2005 *KUHF Front Row interview with Alison Young*. The Big Show, Lawndale Art Center, July 18, 2005, Houston, TX.

HONORS/AWARDS

- 2008 *Emerging Artist Fellowship*. Houston Arts Alliance [Grant].
- 2007 *Best of Show. Seven-State Biennial Exhibition*. Juror: Paul Medina University of Science And Arts of Oklahoma Art Gallery, Chickasha, OK.
- 2003–2006 *Honors Associated with Master of Fine Arts*: Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Houston, College of Art Bunker Graduate Fellowship in Art.
- 2003 *Spring 2003 Portfolio Best of Show*. The Art Institute of Houston, TX.
- 2003 *Ebby Award*. Campaign Artwork for Sermon Series.
- 2001 *National Association of Photoshop Professionals, NAPP* Guru Award Finalist for General Photoshop and Web Design.
- 2010 *Visiting Assistant Professor* Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX. WASH (Workshop in Art Studio and History-Foundations Program).
- 2008–2010 *BOX 13 ArtSpace founding member and president*. Houston, TX.
- 2006–2007 *CSAW Main Gallery Coordinator*. Houston, TX.
- 2003–2007 *Affiliate Artist (2007), Teaching Fellow (2003-2006)* University of Houston.
- 2003–2007 *Interactive Media Instructor*. The Art Institute of Houston, Houston, TX.
- 2-D Animation [Flash], Interactive Web Design [Flash], Presentation Authoring.



"i breathe..." by Kathryn Kelley, remnant tires, wood and metal, 2010.

Women & Their Work

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Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 32nd anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,845 artists in 262 visual art exhibitions, 111 music dance and theater events 14 film festivals, 23 literary readings and 413 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, ArtForum and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from

the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 1,800 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



women and
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Photos by Eric Hester.

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