

HANA HILLEROVA

SUPER SPACE



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

APRIL 1 - MAY 6, 2006

AUSTIN, TEXAS

HANA HILLEROVA
BETWEEN COLLAGE AND CHAOS

Collage and chaos are things. Yet Hana Hillerova deploys them as if verbs. No mere condition, each becomes catalytic, sometimes the trigger of an event and at others performative like the “words” of J. L. Austin’s “speech-acts.”¹ They are objects that biomorphically breathe; they are objects that pose a promise.

An inhabitable installation replete with food, candles and a bright orange sofa, *Octopus’s Garden* (2004) came alive, its candy-colored cardboard mini-steps well peopled and surrounding floors gurgling and sticky with bubbling gunk from a food fight. A flat helical geometry made from Contra, a plastic used in packaging, *Systems of Space* (2003) tumbles onto the floor, its flatness offering a temporary parquet for the new millennium. Far different from the felicitously soupy play of *Octopus’s Garden*, *Systems of Space* is a cool exercise in clean form resulting from Hillerova’s manipulation of a digital photograph – a shot of a three-dimensional sculpture to be precise. Hillerova works through two fields of action doubled over then again: between the event and the performative object on one hand and the happening and flat representation on the other. The differences in form, from event to object, belie a shared ethic: a common world-view rooted in the aesthetics of collage and chaos theory combined.

There is a symbiosis of these forces – event/performative object and happening/flat representation – in the room-scaled installation and photographs of *Super Space* at Women & Their Work. The mixed-media landscape, itself titled *Super Space*, registers a post-apocalyptic economy of explosion, destruction, rebirth, and creation in 3-D. Recycled from the event-sculpture-installation *Heydays* (2004), an ad hoc cardboard landscape sits on stilts and a piecemeal

armature as though urban infrastructure in miniature in the center of the gallery. On top and below, there emerges an archipelago of life form in shades of orange made from bits and fragments of toys, green straws, plastic diamonds, and organic pasta. Inflected by avant-gardes past, the Russian Constructivists of the teens and 1920s, Kaprow, Rauschenberg and Cage’s collaborative happenings of the late 1950s and 1960s, and Carolee Schneeman’s performances of the 1960s, the topography of *Super Space* offers a lesson in the relation between disorder and order that is central to chaos theory. The nuclei of urban life forms emerging from the desolate cardboard landscape of *Super Space* are evidence that “order and organization can actually arise ‘spontaneously’ out of disorder and chaos through a process of ‘self-organization’.”² This Pandora’s landscape tells us there is hope after catastrophe, possibility after depletion.

Lining the walls are seven digital prints that offer a planar and incisive template for this landscape of life before and after a calamitous event. *Aftermath 1* and *Aftermath 2* show an ersatz Chinese city in slightly off-kilter Rorschach form. Hillerova has constructed these city images from “borrowed” photos of a real place in China. In almost-mirrored bifurcation, two halves of a would-be port city face one another. This is the landscape, the urban mise-en-scène, which hosts the tragic event. The acid hues of green and orange in *Green Mountain* suggest a chemical spill. *Island*, *Brown Mountain* and *Victorian* betray scenes of sunlit palm trees and verdant hills discordantly colored as though radioactive waste permeates streams and the air. The photos hiss in synaesthetic splendor like a hot liquid being poured on a motherboard.

Though in putrid and bright technicolor and palpably fake, there are traces of paper structure in the digital prints that line the room where sits the ginger-spotted fiber-

board topography of *Super Space*. There is evidence of being constructed and made by hand. Torn strips of white constitute the peripheral area of the once-edenic landscapes. They are collaged images digitally photographed with colors bumped up and then formally manipulated on a computer desktop.

Hillerova shows traces of constructed images – torn paper, bleeding color, photographic image next to a strip of blank field – not solely to revalorize craft and the hand of the maker but equally to activate a politics of collage. There is a dialectic of composition and social consciousness lying invariably at the core of collage, both act and thing. Another razor-sharp artist like Hillerova, the German dadaist Hannah Höch knew well that collage was more than mere image making. Juxtaposing the magazine pictures of a machine and wig, the body of a leggy lass and head of a light bulb in *The Beautiful Girl* (1920), Höch made a fragmented image of the modern woman that fortified the emancipatory powers of mechanization and technology. As with Hillerova’s work, the power of the collaged image lies not so much with iconic representation but the relation of parts and, perhaps even more potently, that they are disparate and stolen fragments mis-placed and re-placed into a new context.

The placement of seemingly unrelated parts in a foreign setting is perceptually jarring, as with Hillerova’s photo fragments and castoff cardboard and Goodwill plastic toys. With *Super Space*, the ambient body wanders around a many-headed and panoramic heap of stuff. The great power of this would-be architecture is in its process and site: that Hillerova cuts and glues together a mass at once subterranean and otherworldly in order to perform a critique of our own contemporary life-world. She sets in motion collage as a “language of rupture” with the present.³



Super Space. 2006, Installation. Side View. Mixed media construction.

To make collage is to cut: it is to operate and, in so doing, to perform a critique. Criticism and collage are intimately related by way of process and etymology. The verb “to critique,” meaning “to judge” comes from the Greek word “krinein,” meaning to separate, divide and cut. To cut paper and suture together an odd-body structure as Hillerova has done is to reflect upon our current political condition. As the Constructivist Vladimir Tatlin began to productively invade the viewer’s space with his *Counterreliefs* of 1914-15, Hillerova invades our real space.⁴ To make collage as such is to interact with the space of workaday reality. It is to comment on a haphazard political administration that is at the helm of an often and otherwise benevolent superpower. Hillerova’s landscape and photos are testament to a world turned topsy-turvy by way of newfound global interrelatedness. The landscape of *Super Space* promises world decimation, whether through ecological crisis, terrorism, or war, and an aftermath of new growth.

Yet, there is a temporality of the at-once coursing through Hillerova’s installation. Certainly we can find a lesson on causality before our bodies when walking through

the galleries of *Women & Their Work*. We understand that if we continue to confront the world at this pace – using fossil fuels while developing no alternative sources and heedlessly antagonizing the world in what appears to be a power-play for oil in the guise of spreading democracy – then this decimation is our future wrought before our eyes. However, *Super Space* is also concerned with the present, our own immediate moment that strikes before causality has had a chance to wreak havoc. Hillerova tells us that chaos is now and, in turn, order forms itself inherently in the fullness of mayhem. We need not await destruction to find hope in the aftermath. There is hope in the action of the present.

It must be said, though, that Hillerova is artful in the exploitation of the medium of collage. Collage punches while not hitting you over the head with literalisms. Though using common imagery and objects, it never belittles the viewer. The medium is in fact the message, to call upon yesterday’s doyen of technology, Marshall McLuhan. Inasmuch as the beauty of the politics of collage is its combination of pointed tactics and subtlety, Hillerova communicates a message of collapse and

renewal through a clever play of allegory and abstraction. In the 3-D geography of *Super Space* and 2-D images hung on the wall, Hillerova strikes an elegant formalism by way of translating chaos theory into process.

Avowedly influenced by the blobs, warps and animated form of the architect Greg Lynn, Hillerova makes form that is in flux. The landscape of *Super Space* “is a system where a point change is distributed smoothly across a surface so that its influence cannot be localized at any discrete point.”⁵ As with the works of Lynn, Hillerova translates the ideas of chaos theory into practice that in turn creates form. In keeping with chaos theory, her process and resultant forms are based on a non-linear dynamic wherein “small fluctuations on the microscale could, under appropriate conditions, quickly propagate through the system, resulting in large-scale instabilities and reorganizations.”⁶ That said, the seemingly biomorphic root of this interrelatedness is itself always already a political proposition as it is but a mirroring of non-linear world-scale processes of global communication, economic exchange, and far-reaching ecological effect. As

the scholar Hayles explains:

Between 1960 and 1980, cultural fields were configured so as to energize questions about how stochastic variations in complex systems affected systemic evolution and stability. It is easy to see how the political movements of the 1960s contributed to this interest. Also important was the growing realization that the world itself had become (or already was) a complex system economically, technologically, environmentally.⁷

In short, the splines and morphotic displacements of Greg Lynn's architecture, the Port Authority Gateway or Yokohama Port Terminal for example, give life to autonomous form that replicates global social networks. As such his formalism, like that of Hillerova's work, is political without being literally so. Hillerova's media-play of digitized information offers an allegory of the present and the near future. She manages to give life to a kind of new social realism that is at once autonomous and embedded, equal parts art, techno-form and sociopolitical commentary.

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¹ Austin, J. L., *How To Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975) 6-7.

² Toffler, Alvin, "Foreward," *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*, Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers (New York: Bantam Books, 1984) xv.

³ Perloff, Marjorie, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1986).

⁴ Perloff, 69.

⁵ Lynn, Greg, *Animate Form* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999) 29.

⁶ Hayles, N. Katherine, *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990) 5.

⁷ Hayles, 5.

HANA HILLEROVA

*Born in Prague, Czech Republic
Resides in Austin*

EDUCATION

- 2005 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine
- 2004 University of Texas at Austin, Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art, Department of Art and Art History, Minor in Convergent Media at the College of Communication
- 1998-2000 Humboldt State University, Independent Studies in Studio Art, Arcata, CA
- 2000 Charles University in Prague, Master of Teaching Art and Master of Teaching English as Other Language, Magna Cum Laude with departmental honors, Czech Republic

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2006 *Super Space*, Women & Their Work, Austin, TX
- 2005 *Ein Kessel Buntas*, First Street Gallery, Eureka, CA
- 2004 *Octopus's Garden*, Fresh Up Club, Austin, TX

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2005-2006 *22 to Watch: New Art in Austin*, Austin Museum of Art, Austin.
Touring to Galveston and Dallas, TX
SLOMO Video Festival, Slow Motion Videos, world tour, curated by Ryan Junell, San Francisco, CA
- 2005 *Debut*, Mighty Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Pool, Reese-Bullen Gallery, Arcata, CA
Dense, Project Row Houses, Houston, TX
- 2004 *Heydays*, Creative Research Laboratory, Austin, TX
Electricity and Me, Gallery Lombardi, Austin, TX
Stray Show, Chicago Art Fair, Chicago, IL
Domino Effect: Analog / Digital, Santa Fe Art Institute, Santa Fe, NM
- 2003 *Cinematekas - Terra Cognita*, Creative Research Laboratory, Austin, TX
Austin Powers, William's Tower, Houston, TX
Digital Showcase, Austin Museum of Digital Art, Austin, TX
Superstring, Creative Research Laboratory, Austin, TX
Secret Furniture, Gallery Lombardi and the Design Center, Austin, TX
- 1999 *Vr Galerie*, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic
- 1998 *Honors Alumni*, Reese Bullen Gallery, Arcata, CA
- 1997 *Czech Printmaker's Guild Annual Juried Show*, Prague, Czech Republic

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

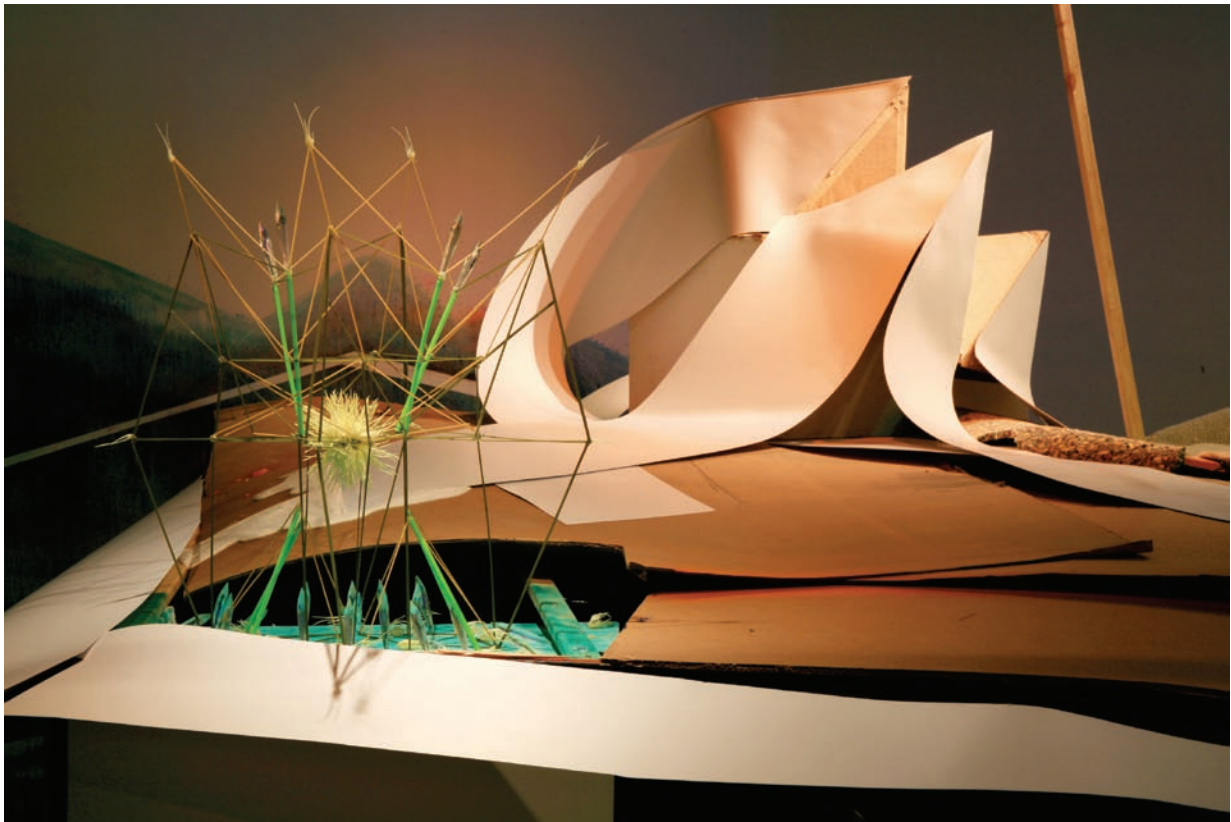
- 2005 Female Artist of the Year, Austin Critics Table Award, Austin, TX
Texas Prize Nominee, Arthouse at the Jones Center for Contemporary Art, Austin, TX
- 2003 Graduate School Continuing Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin
- 2002 College of Fine Arts Continuing Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin
- 2001 College of Fine Arts Recruitment Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin
Graduate School Pre-emptive Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin
- 2000 Agon Prize for the Master's Thesis, Charles University in Prague
- 1998 President's Purchase Prize, Students' Juried Show, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA
Reese-Bullen Gallery Prize, Humboldt State University, CA
Merit Scholarship, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic
- 1997 Best Print of the Year 1996, student's category, Czech Printmaker's Guild, Annual Juried Show

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2004-2006 Director, Creative Research Laboratory, Department of Art and Art History, University of Texas at Austin
Lecturer, Department of Art and Art History, University of Texas at Austin
- 2003-2004 Exhibition Director, Austin Museum of Digital Art, Austin, TX
- 2003 Digital Showcase Visual Art Coordinator, Austin Museum of Digital Art, Austin, TX
- 2001-2003 Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Art and Art History, University of Texas at Austin
- 2000 Printmaking Lab Assistant, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA
- 1997-1998 Coordinator, University of Pennsylvania Summer School in Prague, Czech Republic
- 1997 Art Teacher, Gymnazium Jana Keplera High School, Prague, Czech Republic



This Panel: *Super Space*. 2006, Installation. Front View. Mixed media construction.
Cover Panel: *Island*. 2006, Digital Print. 36" x 63".



Super Space. 2006, Installation. Detail. Mixed media construction.

WOMEN & THEIR WORK

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Now celebrating its 28th anniversary, Women & Their Work presents 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 1,762 artists in 237 visual art exhibitions, 102 music, dance, and theater events, 13 film festivals, 19 literary readings, and 290 workshops in programming that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in *Art in America*, *ArtForum* and 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 2,500 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.



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