

Marlborough

ALICE AYCOCK DENNIS OPPENHEIM

on view from 10 December 2020

Appointments encouraged, mask required for entry

PRESS RELEASE

For press inquiries please contact
Lukas Hall at (212) 541-4900
or hall@marlboroughgallery.com

NEW YORK. The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to present a special exhibition featuring several large-scale works by Alice Aycock alongside an installation by Dennis Oppenheim. The exhibition will be viewable on the ground floor of our newly renovated space located at 545 West 25th Street. This two-person exhibition follows Aycock's highly successful summer exhibition in Stockholm at the Royal Djurgården hosted by the Princess Estelle Cultural Foundation. With memories of the Mudd Club, the Odeon, Debby Harry and 'Heart of Glass,' we take a moment to reunite two kindred spirits in a play of synergistic works that have long and deep histories of particular resonance with the downtown scene in New York.

ALICE AYCOCK's works are intriguing because of their resistance to easy explanations. An early influence was Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. She studied with Robert Morris and the art historian Leo Steinberg at Hunter College where she received her MA. Aycock's first large-scale architectural work *Maze* (1972) was created upon finishing her studies at Hunter College in 1971. Her subsequent early show at 112 Greene Street and her association with Gordon Matta-Clark put her solidly in touch with many of the prominent downtown artists of the seventies, such as Mary Miss and Jackie Winsor. Aycock entered into an intense relationship with Dennis Oppenheim and remained lifelong friends, and along with Vito Acconci, were frequently associated by their mutual interests and even greater differences, as shown in the 1979 three-person exhibition at the ICA in Philadelphia entitled 'Machineworks.' For a brief time, they even shared a common visual repertoire. By the late eighties, Aycock began to initiate a new phase of 'shape shifting' with monumental and permanent pieces such as her work at Storm King entitled *Three-fold Manifestion II* (1987). Works in this presentation are drawn from *The Turbulence Series* along with several recent large-scale drawings referencing waves, wind turbulence, turbines, gyroscopes, and vortexes of energy.

Regarding **DENNIS OPPENHEIM**, Lóránd Hegyi wrote: '[he] is a creator escaping any kind of classification or system. Following this meeting with Robert Smithson, he first concentrated on realizations of Land Art (*Annual Rings*, 1968), then on Body Art (*Reading Position for Second Degree Burn*, 1970). In these various practices, using landscape or body, the central question for Dennis Oppenheim remains the question of sculpture. After these first forms of experimental "sculpture," through the marking of a place or a body, the artist's practice is turned toward the manufacturing of hybrid objects, monumental structures, or surprising combinations and installations. As a kind of engineer, Dennis Oppenheim then starts imagining complex and poetic machineries; often informed by preparatory drawings done afterward. Sculpture still, but caught in a dynamic movement, transitional, unsure. He uses fireworks, sound, light. He shows and mixes popular figures, animals, objects of everyday life, bringing to sight puzzling combinations and sets of scales.'¹

The installation here presents three unique variations from the series 'Architectural Cactus' (2008). For the cacti works, Oppenheim drew on characteristic forms of artworks of the 1950s and a kind of identification with the cacti's compelling yet repelling status, also apparent in *Iron/Cactus* (1994) and *The Last Dance* (1994), which used nails as cactus spines. For a permanent work on a site with a forensics laboratory, he drew on the attachment of cacti spines and the fitting together of clues. In *Garden of Evidence* (2008), six cacti were set within the artist's landscape plan, which included colored glazed fingerprints on low walls and plantings in the form of DNA strands. All twelve unique variations were presented as a gallery installation, 'Architectural Cactus Grove' in 2008, the three here have not been presented since.

Further, installed remotely at our new facility in Buchanan, New York, we are pleased to present Oppenheim's *Snowman Factory* (1996), a rare installation not seen since it was first shown at Ace Contemporary New York in 2001. Oppenheim wrote in 1995,

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The Snowmen produced by the "Factory Complex" (which qualifies as an installation, or site sculpture) are generic monolithic sculptures not unlike what one usually sees throughout the world in sculpture parks and public spaces. Usually represented by a man or a house, these "conventional" sculptures occupied these spaces, and still do, and serve as the layperson's conception of outdoor permanent sculpture... The origin of these images is their genesis, and in this way, the "Factory Complex" is a metaphor for the artist's mind.

Aycock contributed a eulogy excerpted from *ArtForum*, May 2011: 'Dennis was a trickster, a shape-shifter, a flimflam man, a snake-oil salesman for art, and a rascal. He was highly intelligent, charismatic, and witty... Along with antique cars and motorcycles, Dennis loves dogs, Jackson Pollock, Bruce Nauman, birdhouses, dollhouses, papier-mâché, jack-o-lanterns, Halloween, tramp art, prison art, carnival art.'

ALICE AYCOCK's recent major exhibitions and installations include a retrospective at the Sprengel Museum in Hanover, Germany (2019); *Park Avenue Paper Chase* (2014) in collaboration with Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin; a Sotheby's exhibition at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, UK (2013, 2014); a traveling retrospective of her drawings and small sculptures at the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, NY, coinciding with the Grey Art Gallery, New York, NY (2013-14); *Whirlpools*, an 80-foot long entrance sculpture for MGM National Harbor, MD (2016); a permanent outdoor installation at Pier 27, Toronto, Ontario (2017); and *Blickachsen 10*, a contemporary sculpture exhibition in Bad Homburg, Germany (2015).

Aycock has completed numerous private and public installations such as: *50 West*, New York, NY (2017); *Passion/Passiflora Incarnation*, Coral Gables, FL (2016); *The Game of Flyers Part Two*, Washington-Dulles International Airport (2012); *Ghost Ballet for the East Bank Machineworks*, Nashville, TN (2008); *Maze 2000*, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (2002); *Star Sifter*, Terminal One, JFK International Airport (1998/2013); a suspended work for the Sacramento Convention Center, Sacramento, California (1996); *Functional and Fantasy Stair* and *Cyclone Fragment*, San Francisco Public Library (1996); *East River Roundabout*, East River Park Pavilion at 60th Street in Manhattan (1995/2014); *The Solar Wind*, Roanoke College, Roanoke, NC (1983/2010); and *The Miraculating Machine in the Garden*, Douglass College, New Brunswick, NJ (1982/2018). A permanent reconstruction of *A Simple Network of Underground Wells and Tunnels* from 1975 was sited in 2012 at Omi International Arts Center, Ghent, NY. Aycock's work is held in numerous major collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, NY; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita, KS; and Sprengel Museum, Hanover, Germany. A traveling retrospective was organized by the Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart (1983) and a retrospective was held at Storm King (1990). She has exhibited at the Venice Biennale, Documenta VI and VIII and the Whitney Biennial. Notable books include a monograph authored by Robert Hobbs (MIT Press, 2005); her drawing retrospective catalogue *Some Stories are Worth Repeating* (2013); and a comprehensive catalogue from her 2019 retrospective at the Sprengel Museum. Aycock was a commissioner on the NYC Design Commission from 2003 to 2012. The International Sculpture Center presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award in Contemporary Sculpture in 2018, and she received an Academy of the Arts Achievement Award in Visual Arts from Guild Hall in March 2019.

DENNIS OPPENHEIM

A pioneer of Earthworks in the late 1960s beginning with early showings with Dwan Gallery and John Gibson, Dennis Oppenheim pursued an adventurous career in sculpture and installation, film and video, and body and performance art, but he never stopped making outdoor work. During his last ten years, Oppenheim concentrated almost exclusively on

¹Fiz, Alberto and Lóránd Hegyi (eds). *Dennis Oppenheim*. Saint-Etienne: Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne Métropole, 2011.

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public art before his death in 2011.

Some people would say the age of experimentation in art has ended, but if it has, it's also created an opening for a new camaraderie of artists working in architecture and public space, making work with people in mind. Functionality and design—once problematic for fine artists—are now where exciting things are happening. It's a natural progression, but there's still some resistance. I have fond memories of operating in a studio as a pure scientist, with absolutely no agenda other than to brainstorm art theory and develop new methods. I miss that. My public art does demand similar responses on my behalf to make it successful, but not at the level of penetration that studio work offers: what art can, should, and can't be—all these heavy questions.²

Oppenheim's works are included in over 100 prominent museum collections throughout the world and the following are selections for further reading on the artist:

Oppenheim, Dennis. *Dennis Oppenheim*. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1974.
Parent, Alain (ed). *Dennis Oppenheim: Retrospective – Works 1967-1977*. Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal, 1978.
Ammann, Jean-Christophe. *Dennis Oppenheim*. Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, 1979.
Rose, Barbara. *Parallel Realities: The Drawings of Dennis Oppenheim*. La Difference, Paris, 1992.
Heiss, Alanna and Thomas McEvelley. *Dennis Oppenheim: Selected Works 1967-90*. Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1992.
Eccles, Tom. *Dennis Oppenheim Land Art 1968-78*. Vestjællands Kunstmuseum, Soro, 1996.
Celant, Germano. *Dennis Oppenheim*. Venezia Contemporaneo/Edizioni Charta, Milan, 1997.
Levy, Aaron, Vito Acconci and Aaron Betsky. *Public Projects*. Edizioni Charta, Milan, 2009.
Fix, Alberto and Lóránd Hegyi (eds). *Dennis Oppenheim*. Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne Métropole, Saint-Etienne, 2011.
Larence, Nora R. *Dennis Oppenheim: Terrestrial Studio*. Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, 2016.
Kaye, Nick and Amy Oppenheim. *Dennis Oppenheim: Body to Performance*. Skira, Milan, 2017.

Marlborough New York follows New York State's guidelines for physical distancing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Appointments are encouraged. To schedule an appointment, please call (212) 541-4900, or write gichan@marlboroughgallery.com. It is essential that visitors wear a face mask and observe the six-foot social distancing rule at all times when interacting with our staff or with other visitors. For further information, contact dkwalla@marlboroughgallery.com.

² Celant, Germano. *Dennis Oppenheim*. Venezia Contemporaneo/Edizioni Charta, Milan, 1997.

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