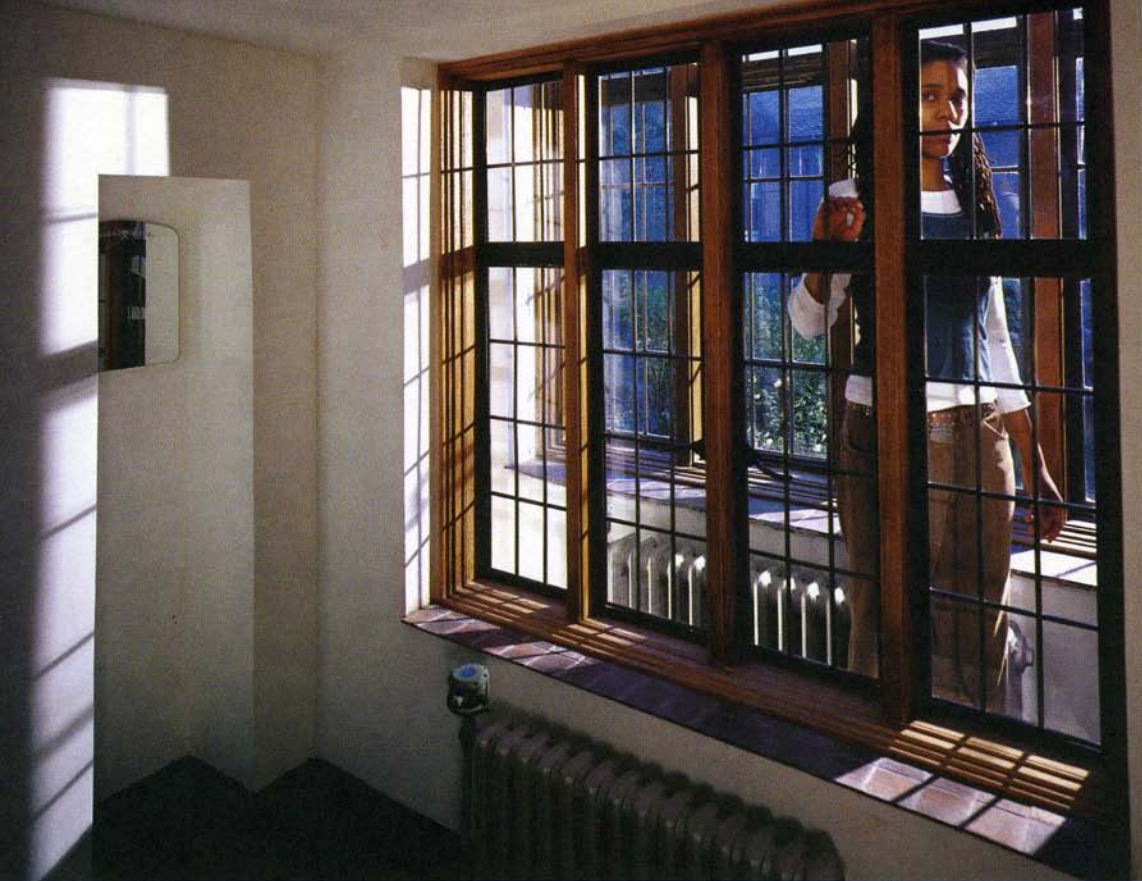


KARYN OLIVIER

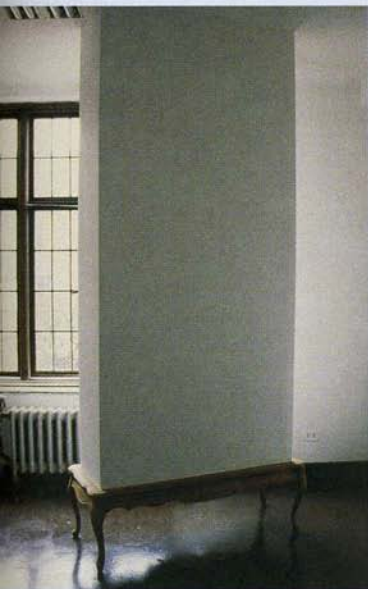




Lane Relyea: *Before graduate school you were involved in ceramics, which I figure means you made objects. But as part of your move toward installation work it seems like you decided not to make art objects anymore. Where did the object go? And if there's no object, where's the art?*

Karyn Olivier: My first semester at graduate school was paramount in shifting my perception of art making. Although I had entered a ceramics department, something was decidedly different. The material choices were made secondary to the "idea." With clay's tactility, its necessitating a haptic experience, one is dictated on some level by the medium's characteristics—the medium calls for objects and I had up until then obliged. I began experimenting with other materials in the context of site-specific installations. As the work shifted in scale, my

interest in the ceramic object as a site to explore now became an interest in architecture as site—a new jumping-off point. My physical and sensorial experience in an architectural site is quite different than with a ceramic object. Though both a ceramic vessel and an architectural space are in fact containers and can engage us intimately, the disparity lies in my body's relationship to them. Architecture invites not only physical but psychological, emotional and social engagement. I don't think the object has disappeared in my art: I incorporate objects in my installations, but when I do I want their object-ness to dissipate, become part of the architecture. I want the object and space to be inseparable. I don't want the viewer to register, "Oh, look at those stairs over there" or "there's a radiator." I want fluidity, seamlessness between the architecture and the alterations, additions, inversions



and displacements I impose on it. I want the art to be the space where the mind stretches to reach the imagination. Where the imagination becomes tactile like the objects in a room.

LR: *The idea of seamless interchange between spaces and objects has a familiar ring to it, given the increasing presence of technology in our environments. Architecture and objects are both vaporizing into data networks, spectacles, events and effects. At the same time, everything gets closer to the body; you drive buckled-up in a car outfitted with a TV wearing a phone headset that's voice-activated and can retrieve emails and football scores. Perhaps this pertains to the emphasis your work places on the body, that the body now becomes our only home, our primary material site; it's the only place where architecture and objects become real, where they interface and register their effects.*

KO: Though technology changes how my body experiences and understands three-dimensional entities, I do not believe it can ever render me numb, nor detach me from my senses. Our bodies are powerful; they house imaginations, memories and dreams. I believe that this power will prevail, independent of technology. I do agree that our bodies are homes, self-contained containers; but like most animals, we yearn for "home." Birds create their own nests, houses built by and for their bodies. We are not much different. Gaston Bachelard spoke of our need for a physical house—a shelter for imagining. There is a co-dependency between architecture/objects and our bodies. These objects/architecture are storage units, our own personal zip disks, ready to unleash all of the visceral and tactile experiences we attach to them.

LR: *You often bring art and architecture not only into dialogue but physically close together, as in the chainlink pen you filled with balloons, or the little coffee table on which you placed not a tea pot and cups but a wall. If art is often thought of as visual, iconic and mesage-like, and architecture is distinguished as more bodily and surrounding, you seem to enjoy reducing that distinction, equating the figure of art with the ground of architecture, body with home, contained with container, object with envelope. But the more snugly you compress the two, the more uncanny the experience becomes. Perhaps the work awakens an inadmissible memory, opening within the cultural space of art and architecture repressed libidinal attachments to a sensual world outside of language, society and self—namely, the molten, oceanic world we all existed in as infants.*



KO: With the caged balloons, I think the uneasiness is the result of two actions. The close physical placement of two familiar but incongruent materials and the possible recalling of repressed human desires and fantasies of the womb, which Freud coined infantile complexes. Maybe our memories are jarred of that primal experience as we enter the cage engulfed by balloons, feeling at once exhilaration (similar to the glee witnessed in Ikea's Ball Room) and suffocation. But I also think the uncanny occurs when the distinction between imagination and reality is erased. We can dream of a column emerging from a coffee table, but to actually see this "real fiction," the "imaginary reality" before us, is unsettling. In *Untitled (Studio inside Studio)*, I attempted to rid the separateness of art and architecture and use repetition as a tool to fabricate a fiction that challenges the realness of the original. This fake room becomes the new reality, leaving one uncertain of how to exist in what was once familiar but is no longer.

Clockwise from top

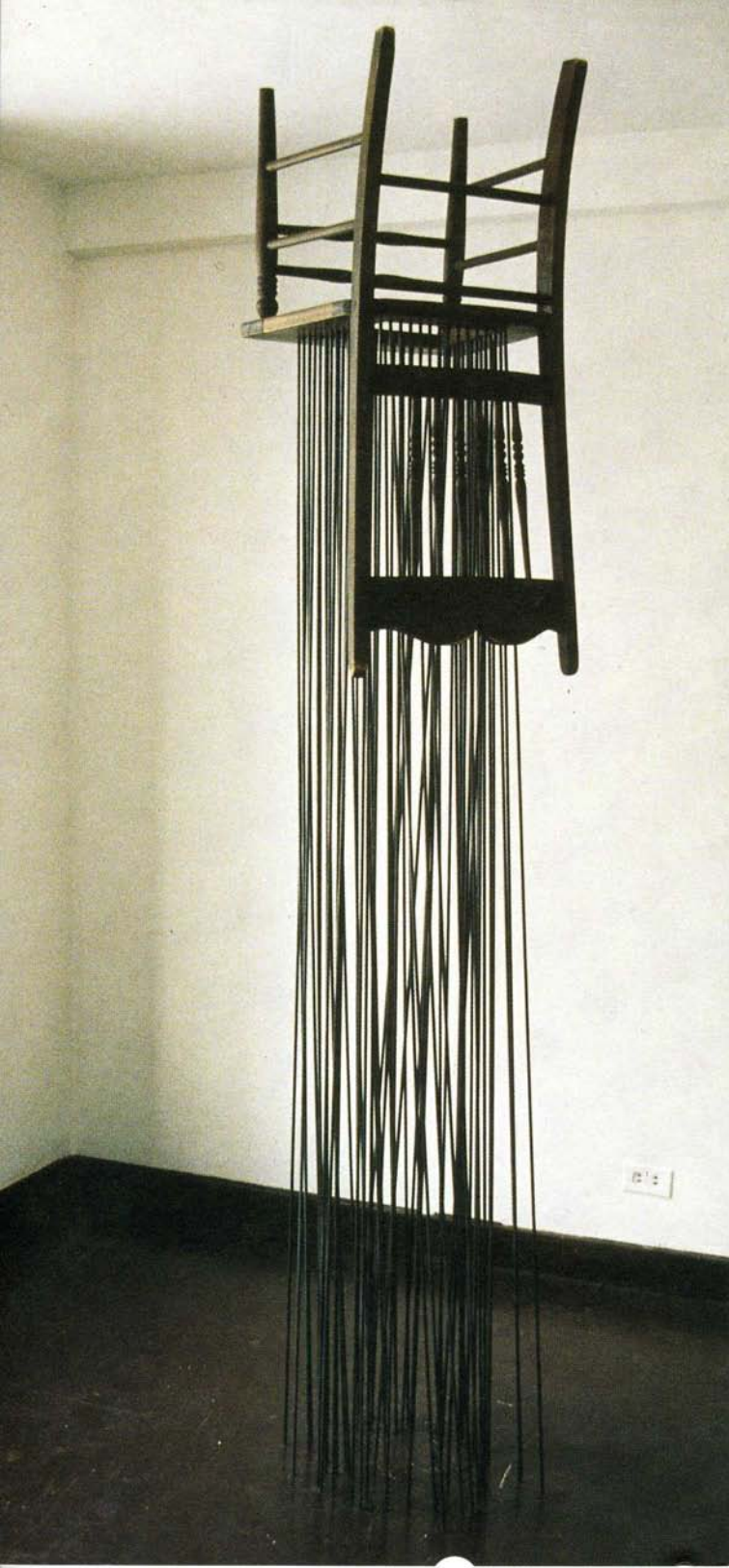
Untitled (Studio inside Studio) (detail), 2001
mixed media, installation

Untitled (Coffee Table), 2000
wood, foam board and latex paint
9'x45"x18"

Whispering Domes (detail), 2001
mixed media, installation
8'x20'x12'

Success Ladder (detail), 2001
mixed media, installation
9'5"x42"x6'6"





Karyn Olivier

- 1968 Born Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
1989 B.A. (Psychology), Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
2001 M.F.A., Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2002 *Group Show, Project Row Houses*, Houston, TX
2001 *Function: Drop It*, Function Variable Artists' Projects, Houston, TX
Wall Works (curated by Hiram Butler), Genesis Park, Houston, TX
Summer Show, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI
Degree Show, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI
2000 *Blue*, Forum Gallery, Bloomfield Hills, MI
Erotics of Dislike, Forum Gallery, Bloomfield Hills, MI
1999 *Thesis Exhibition*, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA
Juried Summer Exhibition, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA
Annual Juried Student Show, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA
1998 *Annual Juried Student Show*, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2001 Gavin Morrison, "Wall Space: Wall-works at Genesis Park, Houston,"
Glasstire: <http://glasstire.com>

On cover

Untitled (Studio inside Studio) (detail), 2001
mixed media, installation

On flap

Untitled (Chair with cone seat), 2001
wood and steel
8"x16"x16"

2002 CORE YEARBOOK CORE.MFAH.ORG

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