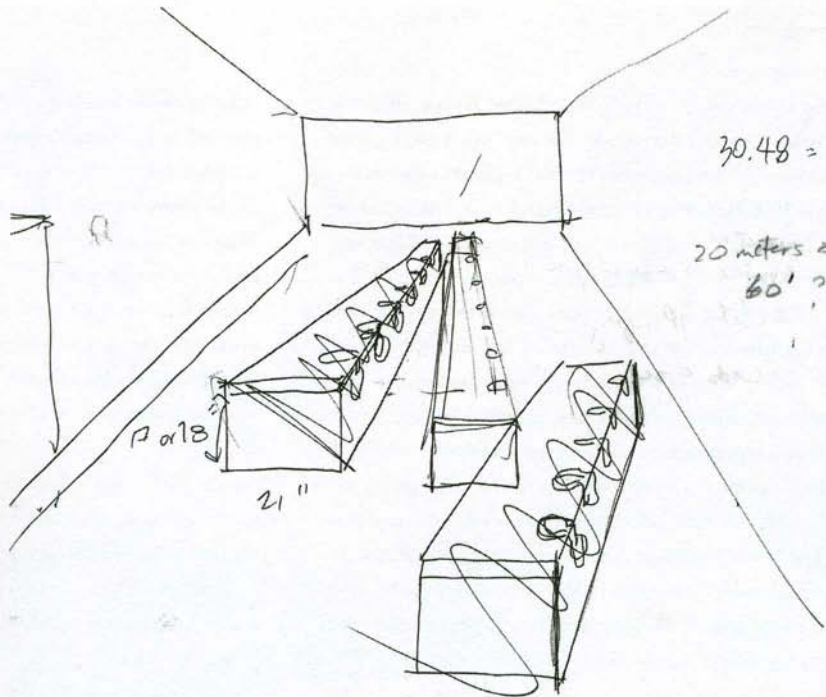


WANÅS 2006
Insight Out



30.48 =

20 meters or
60'?

Karyn Olivier
Depending how long the space,
would like about 20 opening

Surface

April 18

need to know

- dowels
- foam core
- balsa wood
- model surface



Karyn Olivier

A prominent strain of New York-based artist Karyn Olivier's practice yokes together vernacular forms – often pulled from the playground or the fairground – and high-art references, especially to Jene Highstein's organic, hand-milled Minimalism or David Hammons's sophisticated, gesture-based Conceptualism. Another strain features perceptual reversals, such as converting the private into public (and vice-versa) and rendering visible the invisible; it's the kind of art that has an afterlife in how differently we see what surrounds us on a day-to-day basis. For a recent solo exhibition, Olivier rendered idiosyncratic versions of playground equipment, including a monkey-bar made of finely wrought poplar, a forty-foot-long steel seesaw, and a tetherball pole with 120 balls adhered with gray pigment and clay powder. They were exercises in formalism and craftsmanship that did not necessarily renounce their functionality, and their placement in the gallery underscored the sculptural attributes of the myriad outdoor originals on which they are based.

It's Not Over 'Til It's Over (2004), a schematically rendered carousel, does little to mimic the fairground rides on which it is based: it has only one plain seat and rotates so slowly that one would be hard-pressed to describe riding it as “fun” Installed two summers ago at the Socrates Sculpture Park, a non-profit venue along New York's East River, sitting on the chair enforced a scrutinizing of the surroundings – other sculptures dotting the weedy grass, the industrial buildings nearby, the anonymous Upper East Side apartment towers across the river, its own unadorned construction – that most park visitors, no matter how dedicated to the art-viewing experience, would forego. One's emotional response to the sight of such a familiar object was arrested by the somewhat bedraggled circumstances in which the sculpture existed; despite a cheery, primary-color coat of paint, the interminably circling chair had a slightly forlorn air.

Two other recent works likewise shifted viewers' perceptions of the spaces in which they were exhibited. *Ridgewood Line BQE Ghost No. 6064* (2004), a set of trolley tracks set seamlessly into a low cement plinth on the Sculpture Center's lower-level floor,

referenced the building's former use as a trolley repair shop and implied a permeability between then and now; the sculpture is a physical manifestation of a past that likewise bubbles up in the minds of many. *Untitled (Coffee Table)* (2005), included in “Greater New York 2005” at P.S. 1, is a low, wooden coffee table from which a simple, white column, similar to those found in artists' lofts and galleries, stretches to the ceiling. The uncomplicated intervention, which renders both objects dysfunctional, underscores how a shift in context from private to public inevitably modifies an object's meaning.

So too with *Toilet*, Olivier's contribution to *Insight Out*. It is a sixty-foot-long, concrete Minimalist sculpture in the newly renovated Stable. Its form, when placed in the long, low room, cannot help but echo the seemingly endless rows of aluminum sculptures that Donald Judd has placed in renovated artillery warehouses in Marfa, Texas. But its direct inspiration comes instead from the public toilets common in ancient Rome; the holes that regularly puncture its surface are ostensibly to be sat upon. *Toilet* likewise possesses a formal relationship with the pens corralling the cows in the nearby Wanås farm. This merging of phenomenological concerns and decidedly baser ones not only highlights the contradictory forces embodied by Olivier's objects, but also the manner in which acceptable behaviors change across time and cultures.

Toilet (prototype), Karyn Olivier, 2006 >
Toilet (process), Karyn Olivier, 2006 (page 52)



