

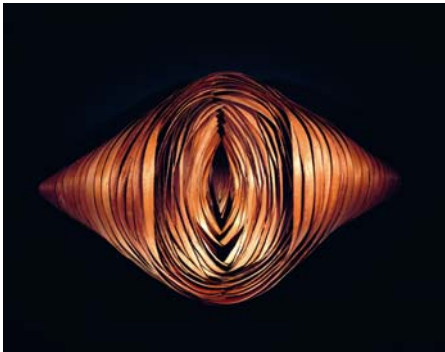
PRESS RELEASE

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Bellevue Arts Museum presents

Barbara Cooper re:Growth

January 16, 2007 through April 22, 2007

Barbara Cooper, Oculus, Courtesy of Alfedena Gallery Photo credit: Eileen Ryan

Bellevue, WA- The exhibition *Barbara Cooper, re:Growth* features a dozen of the artist's most daring sculptures and mesmerizing drawings, highlighting Cooper's artistic path over the last decade. The Chicago-based artist makes use of scraps of wood veneer discarded by furniture factories and milling plants, and by gluing layer by layer, returns the wood to an organic form. Cooper creates imposing organic shapes which populate the gallery space with a mysterious life-size sculptural forest. Out of flexible and fragile veneer, the sculptures seem to grow into sturdy structures that call to mind a representation of tree trunks, tree stumps, bodily forms, and other natural structures. "I want to mirror the efficiency I find in nature by recycling waste product into a new generation of form" says Cooper. "My focus is on how a form records its growth process of evolving from one condition to another as it responds to its environment. This process of transformation is an essential aspect of life."

Cooper's marred and twisted trunk-like forms are iconic and powerful; for their very existence addresses both the resilience of nature and the regenerative power of art. Crafted through the repetitive process of amassing by slowly layering materials, the works are imbued with the very time the artist invested in their creation: as in nature, time is the literal and metaphorical measure for growth and re-growth in new directions. With titles such as *Surge*, *Span* and *Mast*, the pieces convey the sense of a constant state of change and out-reaching growth.

“We chose the title *re:Growth* because it joins the two moods that form the exhibition both structurally and conceptually” says museum curator Stefano Catalani. “From one side, the viewer feels the artist’s intellectual fascination with the process of *growth*, as observed in nature and as reflected in the accumulation of layers of cast-out veneer, and from the other find the implications of the prefix “re-” in *re-growth*, associated with the ebb and flow of trauma and recovery, nature’s foundational state of resilience, and the flurry of allusions to concepts such as reuse and recycling.”

By implying material adaptation and rejuvenation, the artist forces us to look at the concept of returning us to what has been called waste—the left-over and the cast-out that constitute the base of much of Cooper’s art. In this light, Cooper’s life-size sculptures do then resemble trees and natural structures. The artist vision pursues not a mere imitation of the forms of life and nature, but rather mimesis of the process by which any life form takes its own shape, responding to outside stimuli. “To encounter Cooper’s works firsthand is to experience a heightened awareness of the torques, turns, and contours so symbolic of unfailing growth and change. Both visually and in the material tension is held in equilibrium, so that in the open interiors we sense an invisible energy that fills and extends the visible form.” says museum chief curator and executive director Michael Monroe “The artist’s commitment to the evolving shapes of natural processes like birth and growth invites her audience to pause and contemplate these moments”

The exhibition *Barbara Cooper, re:Growth* investigates the elemental importance of process in giving substance to an art object. The *process* that is: a series of actions, steps, or changes taken

in order to achieve a particular end calls performance into discussion a facet of both art and craft that is often overlooked in favor of the finished, object-driven experience of art.

Cooper's work is in many permanent collections including the Smithsonian National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois. Cooper recently had a solo exhibition at the Cultural Center in Chicago, Illinois and is featured in the December issue of Sculpture magazine . She has exhibited individually and in groups shows in numerous galleries and museums across the country as well in Iceland. She holds a BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art. The exhibition is accompanied by a full color catalog with essays and observations by John Brunetti and Stefano Catalani and will be available in the Bellevue Arts Museum Store. The publication of the catalog was made possible by a generous donation from the Alfedena Gallery in Chicago, IL.

Educational Program:

Friday, January 19, 2007

Sculpture and Drawing: A Development of Process and Ideas

Lecture by Chicago-based artist Barbara Cooper

Barbara Cooper will be discussing her work covering a span of 30 years, with slides illustrating works in wood, steel, cast metals and drawing, as well as the sources in nature for her forms and ideas. Cooper will also share "process" shots of how various drawings and sculptures developed, offering additional insight into her exhibition, re:Growth.

8:00 PM

Museum Auditorium

\$5 Members/ \$7 Non-members

Or to attend two lectures, \$7 Members/ \$10 Non-members

Jan 5, 2007 (Free First Friday)

5:30 PM to 7:30PM

Saturday, Feb 10

1:00PM to 3:00PM

Saturday, March 10, 2007

1:00PM to 3:00PM

Woodturning Demonstrations at Bellevue Arts Museum

Join the American Association of Woodturners (AAW)- Seattle Chapter and Bellevue Arts Museum for LIVE woodturning demonstrations at the Museum. Come and watch as master turners mount wood on a lathe (a machine tool which spins a block of material so that when abrasive, cutting, or deformation tools are applied to the block, it can be shaped to produce an object). Each artist will explain the esthetic richness and depth achieved by turning wood. The demonstrations will show viewers how the objects in the exhibition Turning Wood Into Art: The Jane and Arthur Mason Collection are created. Artists participating throughout the demos are: Mehrdad Azarpay, Michael Werner, John Swanson, Les Dawson, and Jack Wayne.

Museum Forum
Free to the public

Bellevue Arts Museum

Bellevue Arts Museum is the Pacific Northwest's center for the exploration of the fine art of craft and design through exhibitions, partnerships and education activities with an emphasis on regional craft artists as part of the national and international conversation on fine craft and design. Bellevue Arts Museum is located at 510 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue, WA 98004. The Museum's main information line is 425.519.0770 and website is www.bellevuearts.org. For more information: Renate Raymond, Bellevue Arts Museum, 425.519.0754 or renater@bellevuearts.org

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