



SEEKING HIGHER GROUND INSTALLATION BY PATTE LOPER

SUYAMA SPACE, SEATTLE



PATTE LOPER SEEKING HIGHER GROUND

SUYAMA SPACE, SEATTLE | MAY 23 – AUGUST 19, 2016

PREFACE

Beth Sellars, Curator

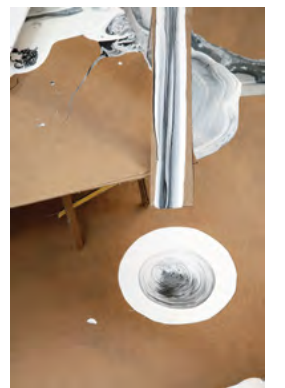
Patte Loper is a painter who has for years created fragmented structures as a framework for her paintings. As the sculptural elements became more pronounced, her focus shifted somewhat from the painted canvas to the actual sculptural structure. At this juncture, we entered into conversation regarding the possibility of the structures evolving to the size of monumental site-specific installation. This spring, the notion took physical shape in the overwhelmingly demanding interior volumes of Suyama Space.

For a month Patte toiled in the space, fabricating and responding to what the architecture demanded. Combining overriding concerns referenced in Nova Benway's essay and Patte's artist statement in this publication, with the physical creation made of cardboard, sticks, papier mache, and hot glue, the sited installation ascended high into the open-trussed ceiling and crept across the floor. Soon, the gallery visitor was immersed in many levels of dimensional "paintings."

Born in Colorado, Patte grew up in Tallahassee, Florida. She lived for a short time in the Northwest while teaching art at Central Washington University in Ellensburg. Patte currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY and Boston, MA where she is on the faculty of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She has an MFA in Painting from San Francisco Art Institute, 1997; a BS in Graphic Design from Florida State University, 1990; and Post-Baccalaureate Study in Painting and Printmaking at the University of Florida, 1994-1995.

She has shown her work in numerous solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally, including The Drawing Center, New York City, The Licini Museum Ascoli, Piceno Italy, LMCC's Art Center on Governor's Island, New York City, The Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas, and the ISE Foundation New York. Her work is in the collections of the Rene di Rosa Foundation, the Microsoft Corporation, and the Hirshhorn Museum. She is currently represented by Platform Gallery, Seattle, and Massimo-Carasi, the Flat, Milan.

We greatly appreciate Patte's dedication, insights and cheerful persistence. We are grateful for the capable fabrication assistance of Ashleigh Robb, Megan Harmon and Matthew Sellars. And thank you to Stephen Lyons for introducing Patte's work to us through Platform Gallery. Suyama Space is constantly indebted to the continued support from 4Culture/ King County Lodging Tax Fund, and our deeply significant Suyama Space Friends.







PATTE LOPER'S SEEKING HIGHER GROUND

Nova Benway

The trouble with Utopia has always been that everyone has different, often conflicting, ideas of what it means—it's a “no-place” full of warring neighborhoods. In her installation “Seeking Higher Ground,” Patte Loper confronts this inconvenient truth head-on, creating a boisterous Babel of utopian and dystopian imagery. A sprawling structure of cardboard, wooden dowels, paint, and allusive images, the work intertwines architecture, urban planning, and activism to create an unholy alliance between aesthetics and ideology. The artist works from the assumption that politics never plays out on neutral ground: in the words of political theorist Chantal Mouffe, “What is at a given moment considered the ‘natural’ order—jointly with the ‘common sense’ that accompanies it—is the result of sedimented hegemonic practices...there are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated.”¹ Loper’s rickety construction proposes contingency as a useful—indeed, necessary—lens for political thought and action.

At the center of Loper’s inquiry is the figure of the artist herself. To build a structure that is as intentional as it is provisional is to articulate the role of the artist, and the arts, in contemporary culture. Though her installations might initially appear haphazard, each piece is carefully considered and bears the marks of its own making. Loper is dedicated to the possibility of agency through spectatorship, despite—or perhaps because of—the inherent reflexiveness of perception: whenever we gaze at something, we also see

ourselves. Her installations often forego a sense of internal cohesion in favor of invitations to viewers to contribute to the work during the exhibition. Loper has never pretended to offer an objective, comprehensive view; in “Seeking Higher Ground” she pushes this to an extreme, through inclusion of a series of paintings inspired by Percival Lowell’s observation of the planet Mars in the late 19th century. Lowell caused a sensation when he seemed to have discovered “canals” formed on the planet that pointed to evidence of intelligent life; it was later found that, through a fluke of a lens, he had been carefully tracing the superimposed image of his own cornea. This collapse of science and solipsism, of the external and the internal, is at the heart of the Loper’s work.

Throughout her complex structures, Loper deploys various artistic media to delightfully perverse ends. Drawing is often used as a tool for planning; Loper, however, often continues to draw *as she builds*, problematizing the distinction between schematic and real space. Sculpture is usually distinguished from architecture through the latter’s adherence to function; Loper’s structures feel emphatically architectural, yet are too big to be models and too small for practical use. Painting’s role is similarly reinvented: Loper places a series of canvases at various confusing locations throughout the installation, interrupting the structural flow. This feels startling even in our jaded age: Loper uses this most formal of media, so associated with aesthetic expression, to quite simply gum up the works. For the artist, the individual is both a cog in the machine and a wrench in the gears, and perhaps, paradoxically, this is where our agency lies. “Seeking Higher Ground:” in Loper’s world, this Utopian notion is ruefully comic, which makes it no less urgent.

¹ Chantal Mouffe, “Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces.” *Art and Research*, Volume 1, No. 2, Summer 2007. p. 2.

Nova Benway is the Co-Curator of Open Sessions Program and Assistant Curator of Exhibitions for The Drawing Center, New York City.



Video stills

ARTIST STATEMENT

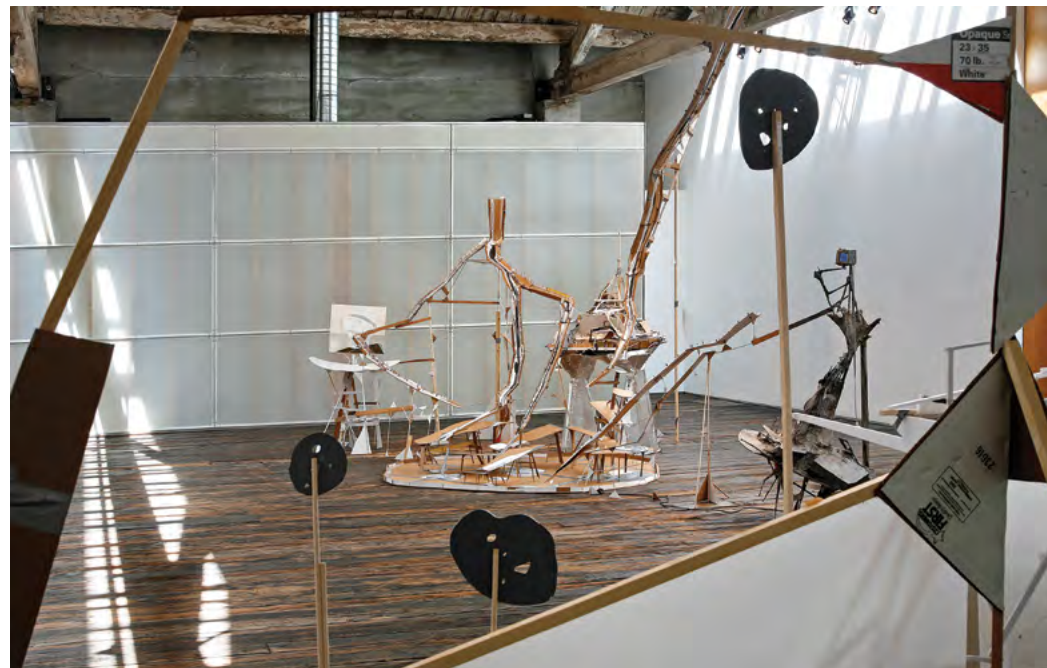
Patte Loper

Seeking Higher Ground investigates, in installation form, the confluence of the structure of Suyama Space and the topography, history, and urban design of the landscape surrounding it. Even though it may appear provisional, this installation has been developed over time - built with objects that have been constructed, then intentionally damaged or dismantled and reused in new configurations to allow the objects' experiential history to be an integral part of the form, structure, and conceptual meaning. The title, "Seeking Higher Ground", alludes to not only the spectre of rising sea levels, but also to the ethical and psychological ramifications of the built environment as laid out by the visionary architect, Lebbeus Woods. Woods, who died in 2013 in Manhattan during Hurricane Sandy, wrote about architecture, war, and the body, as well as envisioning radical free spaces and impossible-to-build structures.

The installation takes the infamous 1912 Denny Hill Regrade as a jumping-off point. During the regrade, the massive hill that overlooked the waterfront and held some of the west coast's architectural jewels, was razed to make way for speculative economic development. At Suyama Space, resting in the upper beams of the gallery - beams that harken back to Seattle's early days as a logging town - are small scaffold-like pedestals holding models of houses attached to chutes. The chutes carry paint from the upper beams to the floor, where paint collection platforms have been constructed. These constructions consider the last property owner holdouts during the regrade, when homes were isolated on tall pedestals of dirt during the dig-out. The paint is meant to follow the path of dirt sluiced from Denny Hill into Elliott Bay and into the waterfront neighborhoods, including Bell Town.

On the south side of the gallery, a hill-form represents a "ghost", a sort of structural mourning for the hill and its inhabitants. A video contained within the structure is designed as a psychological re-presentation of the SR 99 machine currently digging underneath Seattle's waterfront. This large, unpopular urban redesign effort could be seen as a contemporary version of the Denny Hill Regrade. Instead of depicting the SR99 literally, another kind of machine is working and churning underground, producing images originally created by historically disenfranchised groups during times of oppression and isolation from the mainstream. The images are redrawn, and intuitively placed deep within the thought-map of the represented terrain, again, as a plan, or wish for something new.

www.patteloper.com



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibit and publication are made possible through funding from 4Culture/King County Lodging Tax Fund and the Suyama Space Friends. Artist travel support was provided by a Faculty Travel Grant from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and an Emergency Grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Art in New York City.

Edition of 500 published by Suyama Space; all rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher.

Exhibition Dates: May 23 – August 19, 2016

Suyama Space
2324 Second Avenue
Seattle, WA 98121

www.suyamaspace.org

Director: George Suyama
Curator and Publication Coordinator: Beth Sellars
Photographer: Mark Woods
Video stills: Patte Loper
Graphic Design: Sarah Shapiro Design
Printer: Litho Craft

DONORS TO SUYAMA SPACE
1998 – 2016

4Culture/King County Lodging Tax Fund
Paul G. Allen Foundation for the Arts
ARRA (American Reinvestment & Recovery
Act)/ 4Culture
Benaroya Foundation King County Arts
Commission/4Culture
Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation
Experience Music Project
Graham Foundation
Seattle Arts Commission/Office of Arts
and Cultural Affairs
Seattle Foundation Give Big
Jon + Mary Shirley Foundation
George & Carlyn Steiner Family
Foundation
Thurston Charitable Foundation
Washington State Arts Commission

Kirk Albert Vintage Furnishings
Jeff + Judy Altman
BJ + Steve Anderson
Joshua + Katherine Anderson
Richard Andrews + Colleen Chartier
Natalie Angelillo
Henry Aronson + Anne Traver
Peter + Barbara Aschheim
Claudia Bach
Avantika Bawa
M.C. Bellan Construction
Michael + Susan Bellan
John + Shari Behnke
Wyn Bielaska
Charlotte Bird
Greg Bishop
John + Nancy Blackham
Dennis Braddock + Janice Niemi
Bob Breskovich + Barbara Terry
Elizabeth Brown
Jim Brown
Will Bruder + Louise Roman
Catherine Brunner + Eric Riedel
Lisa Buchanan
Maryika Byskiniewicz/Spaces
Craig + Sharon Campbell
Kathryn Cardenas
Lorrie Cardosa
Humphrey Carey

Bokgi Choi + Hunter Wessells
Magdalena Cieslak
Ted + Megan Conklin
Cathy Conner
Contemporary Arts Council, Seattle
Art Museum
Chip Cressman
Sam + Elizabeth Davidson
Tom Dawes
Pat DeCaro
Lanny DeVuono
Mary Frances Dondlinger
Jim Dow
Pamela Ebsworth
Nancy Edelstein
Tyler Engle
Heidi + Mark Epstein
Frank Everett
Roger + Astrid Feldman
Anne Focke
Carole Fuller FUEL Gallery
Helen Gamble
Gwendolyn Gaudefroy + Patrice
Demombynes
David Geise
Jacqueline Genge + Brian Perry
Linda Gerrard
Peggy Goldberg
Layne Goldsmith
Barbara Goldstein
Steve + Jennifer Good
Piper Greenberg
Gerald Greenfield
Larry + Denise Grimes
Gail Grinnell
Carolyn Grinstead
Lauren Grossman + Masao Everett
Patty Haag
Chris Haddad
Tod + Barbara Hamachek
Kay Hardy
Alison + Michael Harris
Jim Harris + Carlos Garcia
Marlow Harris
Blake Haygood + Rebecca Jaynes
Juliana Heyne
Grant Hildebrand + Mariam Sutemeister
Catherine Hillenbrand
Bruce Hinckley + Maria Sanchez/Alchemie
Melissa Hines

Moira Holley + Scott Wasner
Burton Holt
Terry Hunziker
Rob + Mary Hutchison
Chiyo Ishikawa
Marcia Iwasaki + Stan Lokin
Wendy Jackson
JJ Jacobi
Tina Jacobsen + John Kucher
Barbara Johns + Richard Hesik
Brian Jonas + Jennifer Loomis
Fay Jones + Robert Jones
Susan Jones
Lorna Jordan
Maryann Jordan + Joseph McDonnell
Susan + John Joyce
Stephen Kafer
Nancy Karason
Kathleen Kelton
Jack + Layne Kleinart
Lucretia Knapp
Krekow Jennings, Inc.
Bennet + Aileen Krohn
Greg Kucera + Larry Yocum
Greg Kucera Gallery
Susan Kunimatsu
Alida + Christopher Latham
Elizabeth Leach Gallery
Lead Pencil Studio/Daniel Mihalyo +
Annie Han
Carson Legree
Michael Levin
Marjorie Levy + Larry Lancaster
Mireya Lewin
Tim Lewis
Phyllis Lindsey
Stephen Lyons + John Jenkins
Ed Marquand + Michael Longyear
Beverly + George Martin
Bruce + Coco McDougal
Paul + Anna McKee
Holly McKinley
Kevin + Elizabeth McMahan
Wendy Franklund Miller
Allison Mills/ Inform Interiors
Robert Mittenthal + Lynn Thompson
Neuhoff Gallery
Stephen Nguyen
Mary Ann Peters
Plane Space

Platform Gallery
Jessica Powers
Pat + Sherri Roe
Kermit Rosen
Marian Sample
Cathy Sarkowsky
Catherine Sasanuma
Norie Sato
Brenda Scallon
Schuchart Corporation
Alex Schweder
Rand + Lynn Sealey
Seattle Academy of Arts & Sciences
Francine Seders
Beth Sellars
Matthew Sellars
Tricia Sellars
Sarah Shapiro
Ann Shure
Joanna Sikes
David + Catherine Skinner
Jym Snedeker
Somelab/Ed Andrews
Allison South + Cris Bruch
Rob Spooner
Boris Srdar
Stephane Stebich
George + Carlyn Steiner
Les + Carolyn Stephens
Mariam Sutermeister
George Suyama
Kim Suyama
Swenson Say Faget
Lara Swimmer + Robert Zimmer
Akio + Vicky Takamori
Ernalee + JE Thonn
Mark Tilbe + Dwayne Epp
Judy Tobin + Michael Baker
Timothy Tomlinson
Deidra Wager
Patti Warashina
Carol Warren
Frida Weisman
Scott + Shirley Wilson
Adian Woods
Lynne Yamamoto
Ruri Yampolsky
Bruce Yawitz



CULTURE
KING COUNTY LODGING TAX