



JENNIFER McMACKON
imaginationsaft



Jennifer McMackon
Mohawk, 2003
36 x 48 in., ink jet on plastic

McMackon's background as a painter. It is not merely the framing, but the very selection of subject matter—in which elegant and specific forms move with fury, but within a pattern—that imparts a painterly aspect to the videos. The sweeping, curling and revolving imagery that dominates these works are not unlike a manic repetition of brush strokes or a rapid Spirograph pattern. Elegant and graceful, they still look as though they might come unhinged at any moment and fly off the "canvas" and into the ether.

McMackon's sculptural works—*Fudger House* and *Neopolitan*—are entirely distinct from the thrill rides, but share a sense of motion despite their fixed reality as objects. Their see-thru aspect suggests a quality of motion as McMackon expands the surface of the works to reveal a cacophony of internal logic. Each sculpture effectively has six surfaces, facing outward, inward, toward, and away from each other. The result is an implied limitless horizon, despite the fact that the works are literally boxed into a wooden frame. We not only see through them, but into them and around their goopy, delicious guts, a rich and hidden world revealed.

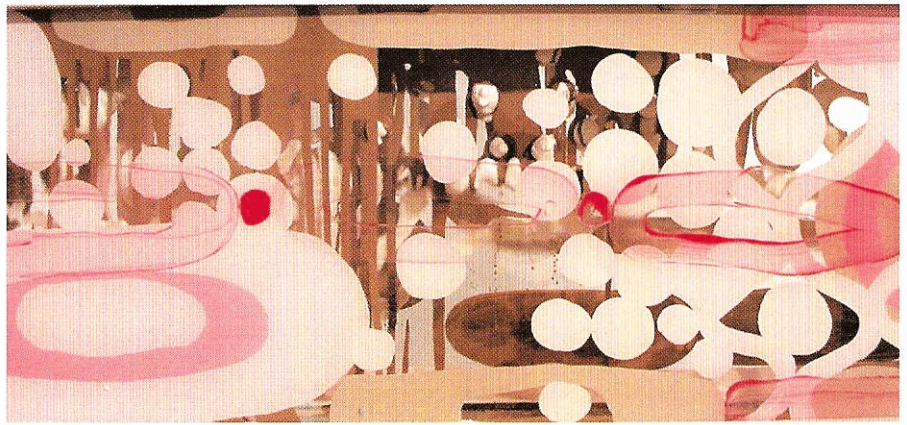
Suspended from the ceiling and jutting out from opposite sides of the same wall, they recall the photographic pieces (and the mirrored images in her *Double Swan* video), as though they are semi-identical twins not quite able to properly view each other—in this case, intentionally separated at birth. This suggested reflection and the multiple layering of surfaces within the sculptures brings an obvious question to mind: if the photos are two moments in succession, how many successive moments might be contained in the

Over the past several years, Jennifer McMackon has been utilizing the traditional genre of landscape in perpetually fascinating ways that manage to neither exalt nor undercut its long tradition. Instead, McMackon has treated the genre in the way genres should be treated by artists—as her own personal taffy, pulling it into forms not immediately recognizable and stretching it beyond the literal into the rich and malleable field of metaphor. For her 2003 Hallwalls' residency project *imaginationsaft*, McMackon makes the most of several distinct media—painting, sculpture, video and photography—to articulate this treatment.

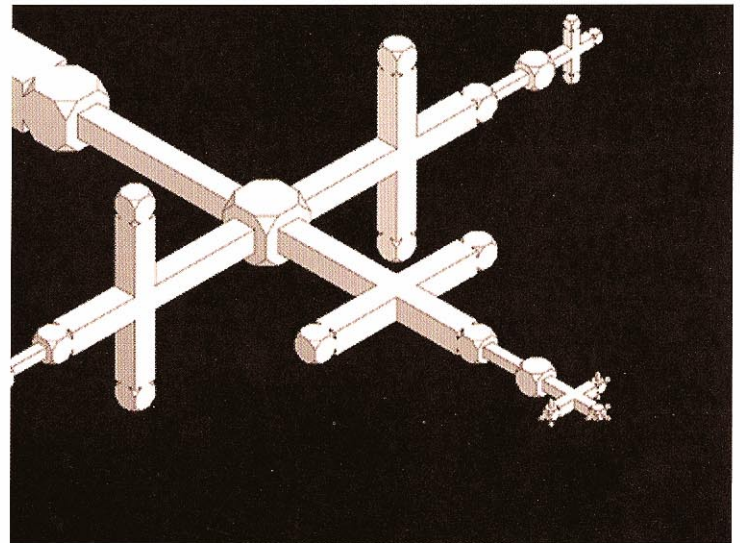
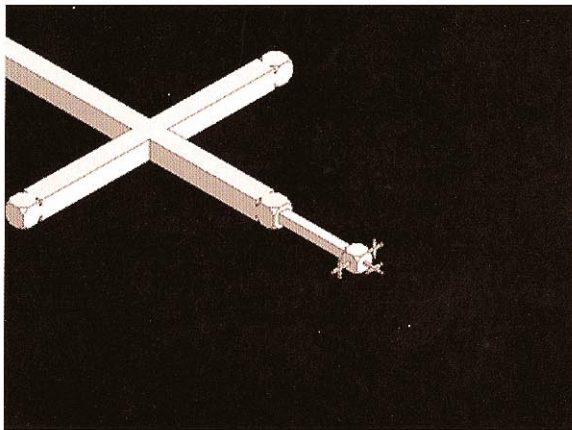
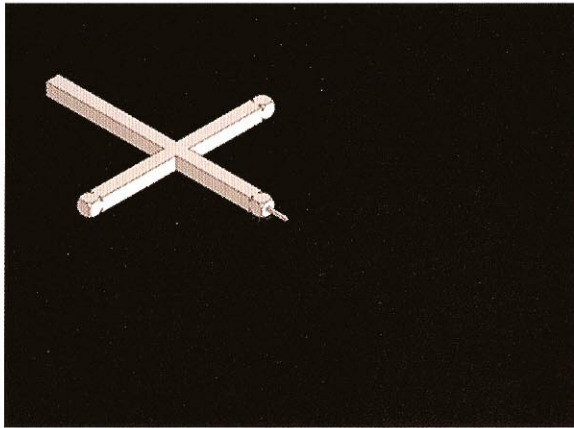
The formal gestures used by McMackon are often concise and used to maximum impact, the succinct gestures of a nimble practice. In the show's photographic works, it appears as though she has traversed the geography of Buffalo and merely doubled our pleasure by doubling her prints of the local landscape. These expansive vistas are revealed in innocuous, banal, and occasionally decrepit sites: an abandoned McDonald's, an old motel, and a long-gone donut shop. It appears that a cheap trick is revealing a thinly-disguised exoticism, but these works are commenting on more than beauty in banality.

There is a more subtle and powerful visual maneuver at play, revealed in her designation of these works as "now and next minute reversal photographs." They are successive rather than identical images. There is a lushness in this knowledge commensurate with the lushness of McMackon's images. On the one hand, the photographs innately allude to a plentitude of natural scenery—a thousand mountains reflected in a thousand lakes—while simultaneously altering the notion of such easeful panoramas. McMackon's photographs are not reflections; they are before and after, then and now, hindsight and foresight. Any photograph suspends a moment in time; McMackon's gesture butts these moments against each other in a subtle but emphatic repositioning—doubly placid and doubly alluring.

By contrast, the video loops that comprise the series of *thrill rides* operate as shots of audio-visual adrenalin. Ambient sounds and images depicting various old-style amusement park rides and milling crowds, the video loops—like the photographs—make use of a compositional awareness drawn from



Jennifer McMackon
Fudger House, 2003, (detail)
plexiglass, wokod, acrylic, gels, glues,
Playdoh, candy, caulking foam
6 ft x 1 ft x 6 in



David Brody
Stills for computer animation
for *Descent*, 2003

successive surfaces of the sculptures?

Painted on both sides of two sheets of plexiglass, *Phone Call with Cameras* alludes to the multi-layered treatment of McMackon's sculptures, though intentionally flat with very little depth suggested in its forms. Every portion of the plexi has been painted—so the work is not actually transparent—but with a fair proportion of pale mauve amid the brown and red, it appears transparent, as though the wall upon which it rests were the ground for the work.

In this way, *Phone Call with Cameras* looks like an enlarged detail from a portion of one of the sculptures and brings forth the question of whether this painting literally situates us within a metaphoric landscape, otherwise known as the gallery. Every work is a landscape and all works together are a landscape. Once we are in the space, we are the figure in the ground and we must recognize that while we exist in real time and space—in successive moments—we equally inhabit a perpetually metaphoric space.

The title for McMackon's project, *imaginationsaft*, is a tidily constructed term that uses the German term for "juice" as a suffix to the imagination, the mental residence of images. The colors, forms and methodologies situated in this mental residence have been mingled with an actual place and time, together comprising a pool of saft from which ideas and images can be extracted and distilled into a new configuration, a new landscape. Though situated, in this case, in a particular residency, the *imaginationsaft* is not bound by time and place, but is instead an endlessly-replenishing storehouse of possibilities.

Extracted from the mind's eye. Fresh from the grove. Full of pulp.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator

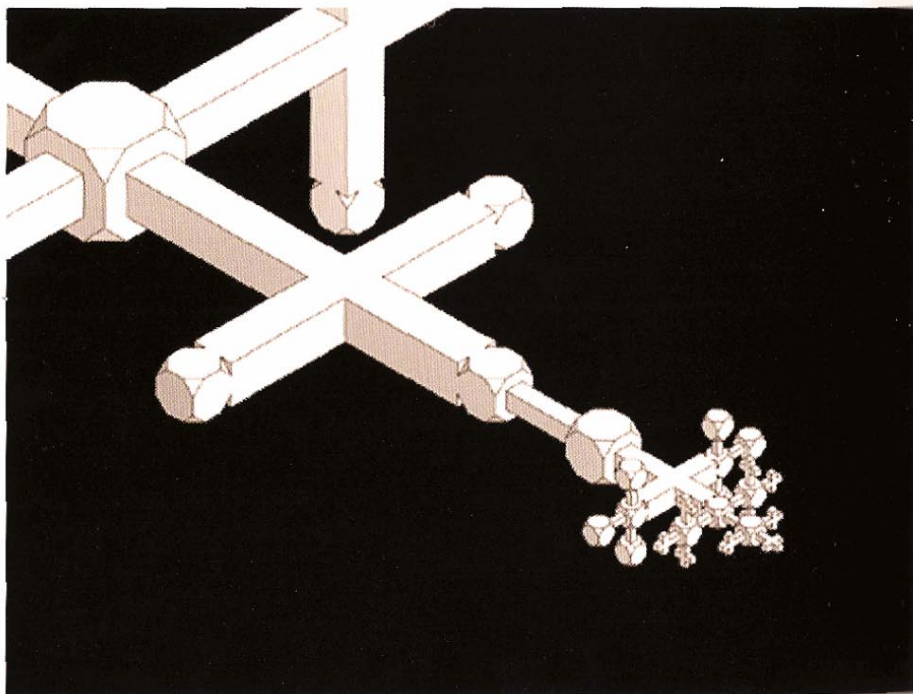
below: David Brody
Still for computer animation for Descent, 2003

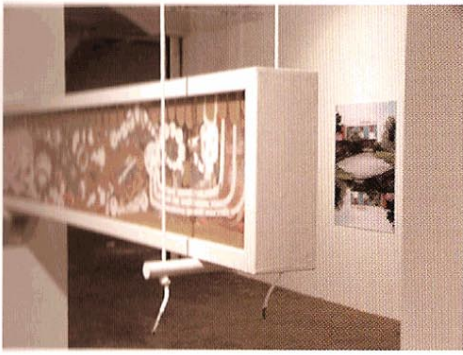
The title of David Brody's residency project, *Fragment of a Much Larger Thing: Descent*, sounds descriptive. And it is true that Brody's wall drawings and computer animations appear to descend, as ever-expanding configurations, infectious mutations endlessly blossoming into something unexpected. But in the two versions produced—set either against the white of the gallery walls or the perfect dark of a computerized background—there is no verifiable evidence of descent. There is movement within the forms, a discernible shifting of scale and form, but without something like a horizon line against which to view the drawings, Brody's forms could easily be seen as ascending.

A more salient detail is the notion that Brody's drawings comprise a metaphorical landscape. Ascending, descending, or merely spreading outward, they define a terrain of possibility as established within a particular set of conditions. These conditions grow from the concise component parts Brody is using—a combination of a simple cross form and an isometric grid—and the decisions he is applying in constructing these forms.

Brody's drawings appear at first to be comprised entirely of symmetrical components replicating each other at varying scales—and they are—but it is not symmetry as a static, predictable force. It is symmetry as a fluid, mutable entity. The "much larger whole" to which Brody's project refers does not have a final, singular form. It is described by the cumulative effect of different versions of compatible symmetries. His decisions about which points in the drawings become points of departure for new branches of the work are not entirely arbitrary, but also do not follow a predictable pattern.

This is apparent in his most detailed wall drawing, in which we quickly see the movement from the simplest cross to an ever-increasing complexity as each successive

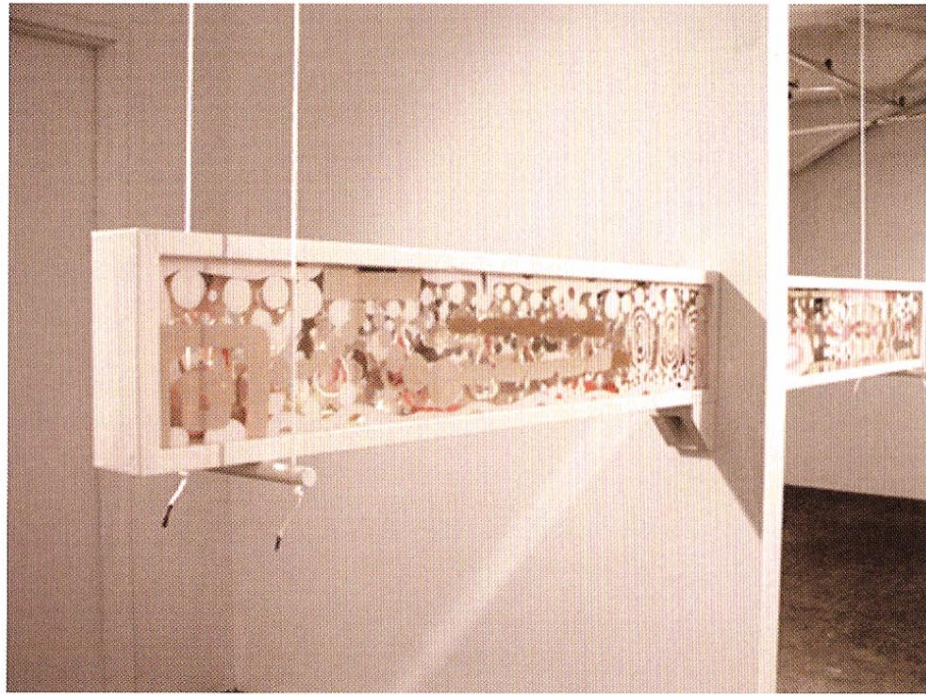




branch of the drawing continues its outward momentum. To the left and right of the drawing's central line, there is an obvious mirrored symmetry, although each pair of mirrored arms are distinct from all other pairs. The elements being reproduced are themselves highly symmetrical while still remaining distinct from each other. One pair of arms might branch out in two directions, another in four entirely different directions, a third in even more directions. But because all the elements are internally symmetrical, the final form presented to us retains a symmetry. In this way, Brody's process manages to collapse spontaneity with apparent predictability, giving emphasis to limitless possibilities over specific and constricted directions and dimensions.

Each drawing, in its own way, is a map of the unknown, drawing the viewer into unfamiliar places and addressing the viewer with similar formal qualities: modularity, mirroring and repetition are significant factors and reiterate the question of descent vs. ascent. Up, down, beginning, and end are only ever loosely defined or implied. Brody's wall drawings give the appearance of definition—they are hard, black lines drawn upon a wall—but in concert with each other, they emphasize their own irresolute presence. There are four wall drawings, but to consider one is not to consider "one of four" but rather one of a potentially infinite number. Drawing four of them is what's necessary to illustrate their fragmented nature.

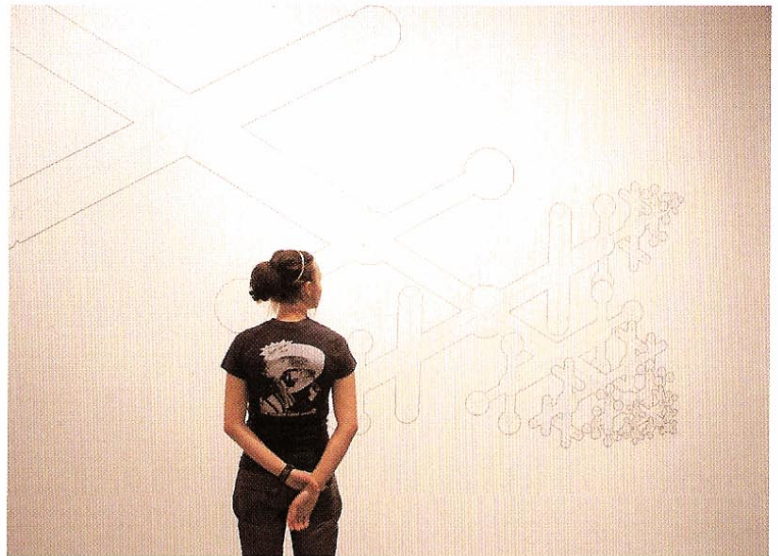
Similarly, Brody makes good use of the ordinary, building his work out from a simple geometric form and, in the wall drawings, realizing his concept with only black marker. There is the simplest distinction between lines—some thicker than others—but there is a delicate



above left:
Jennifer McMackon
Neopolitan(left), 2003, plexiglass, wokod, acrylic, gels, glues, Playdoh, candy, caulking foam, 6 ft x 1 ft x 6 in
Mohawk(r), 2003, inkjet on plastic, 36 x 48 in

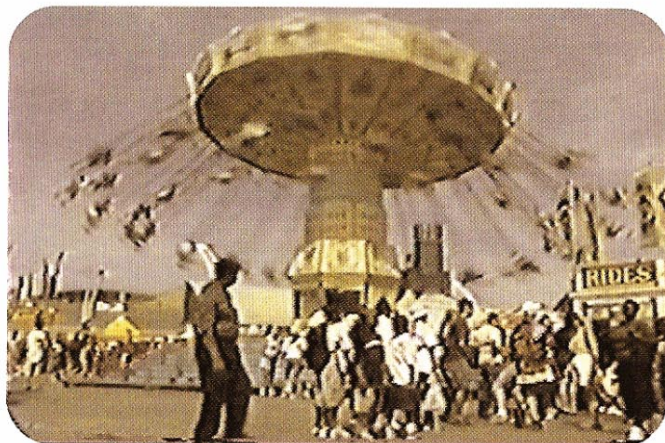
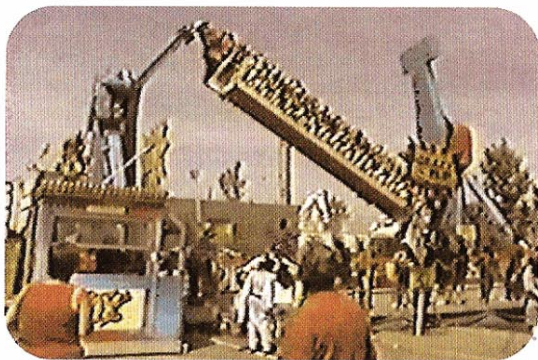
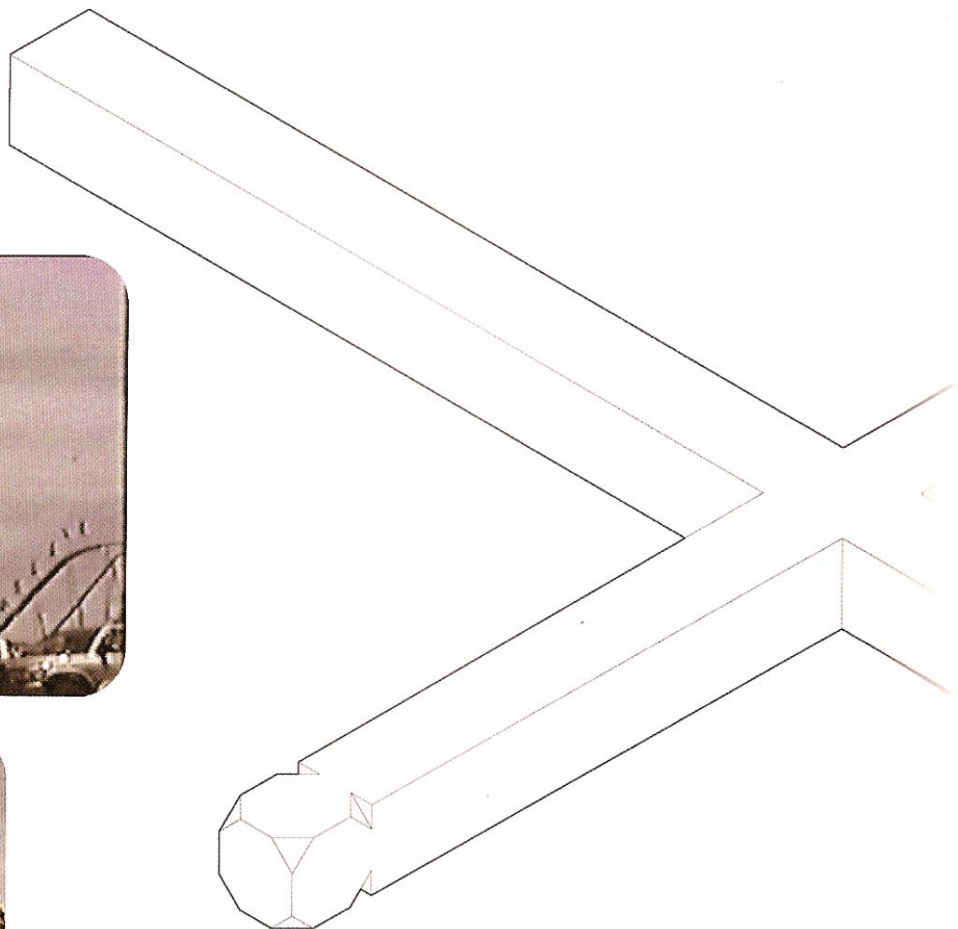
above:
Jennifer McMackon
Neopolitan(left), *Fudger House*(right)
2003, plexiglass, wokod, acrylic, gels, glues, Playdoh, candy, caulking foam, 6 ft x 1 ft x 6 in each

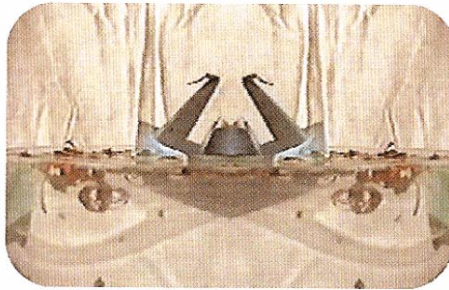
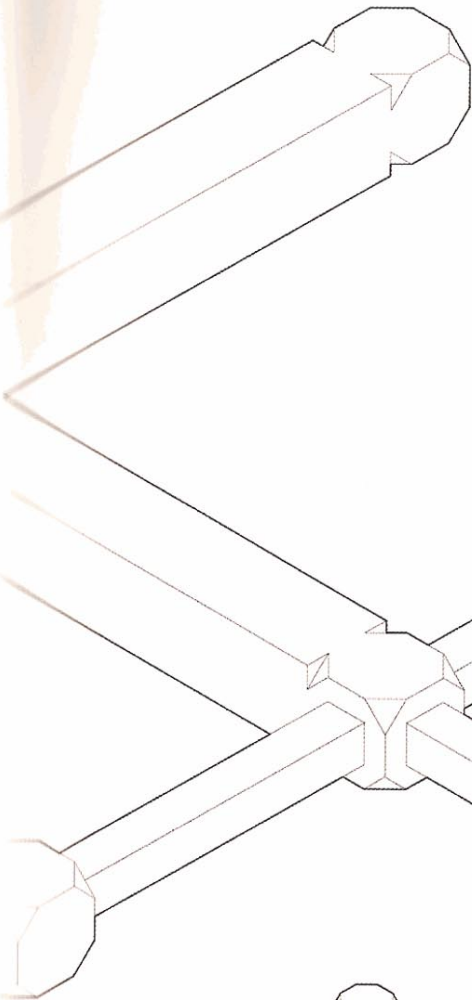
David Brody
Descent, installation view



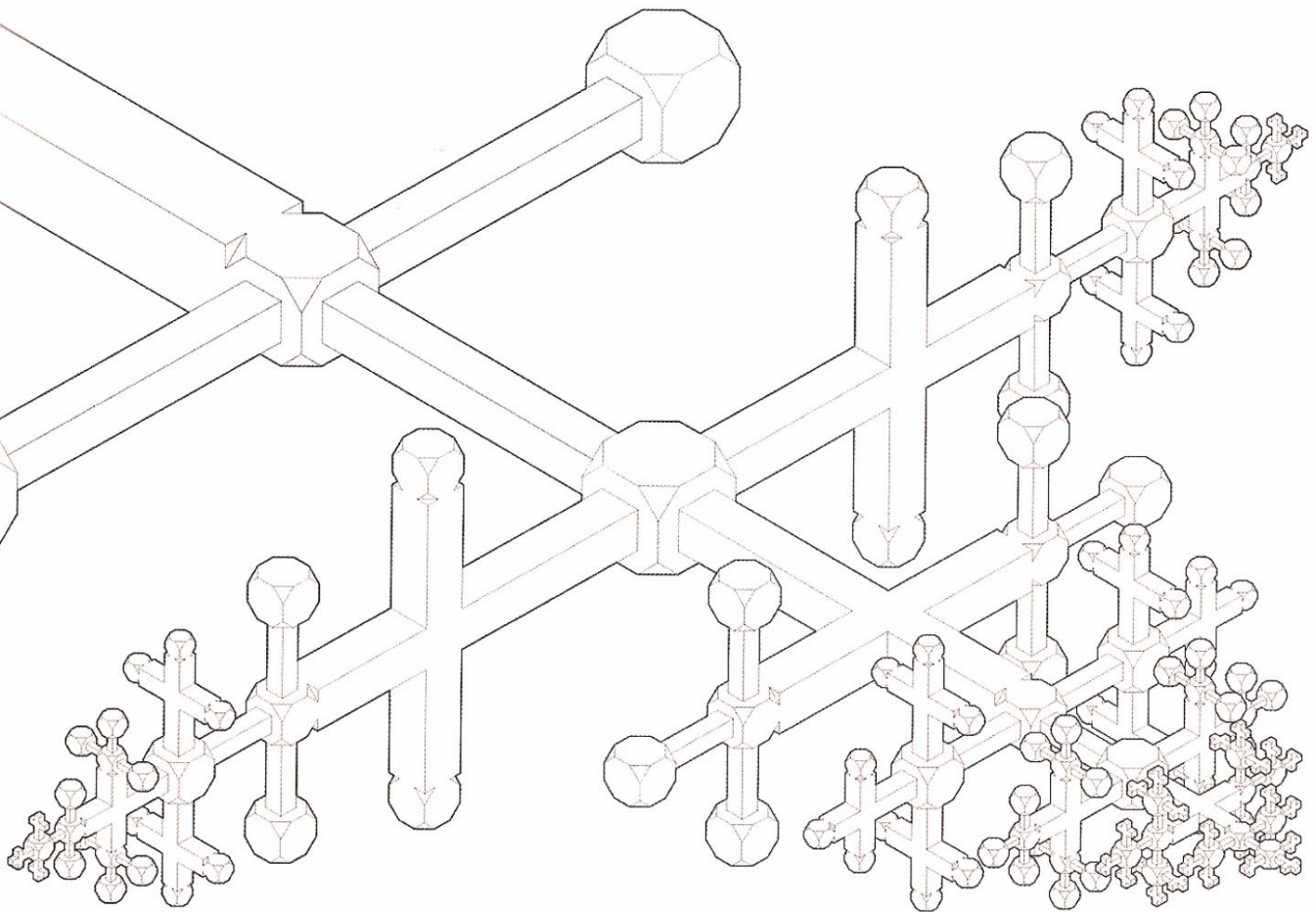
right:
David Brody
Fragment of a Much Larger Thing;
Descent, 2003

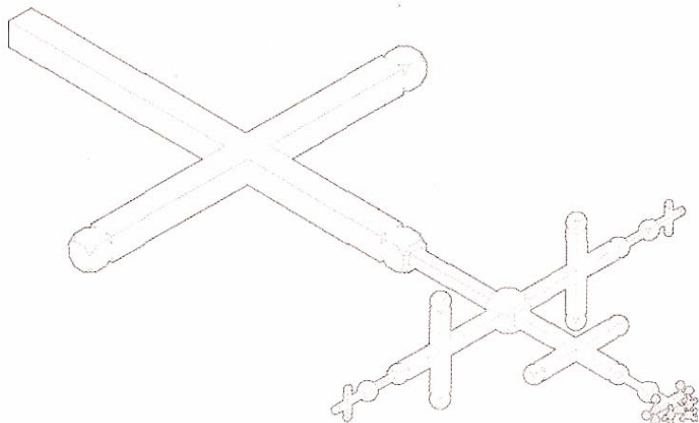
below:
Jennifer McMackon
thrill rides (nos. 1, 2, 6, 7), 2002
video loops





Jennifer McMackon
left: *Double Swan*, 2002, video loop
above: *Swan Lake*, 2001, video loop





above and below:
Jennifer McMackon
Phone Call With Cameras (installation and detail)
2003, acrylic on plexi, 8 x 8 ft

visual trick in this distinction. In the wall drawings, Brody's thicker lines serve to outline the overall form, a cartoonish maneuver that belies the drawings' own suggestions that they are three-dimensional. By contrast, his computer rendering removes the outline and inserts the appropriate shadows to indicate depth. And while Brody's drawings appear, at even a short distance, to be rigid mechanical manifestations, a closer viewer reveals them to be comprised of lines more tenuous than they at first appear. Viewed up close, Brody's drawings quiver gently with a hand-rendered aspect, the product of human application rather than the laser-guided compass we at first imagine to have produced them.

Brody's smooth, eloquent computer renderings operate as an emotive center to the project. Accompanied by the soundtrack of a persistent and undefinable roar, the liquid flow of his computer animation emphasizes the fluid movement contained within the entirety of the project. Within a few seconds, we clearly see his "asymmetrical symmetry" at work as the form branches out with expressive balance but—as with the wall drawings—no entirely predictable patterns. Emerging from a single point in darkness, and returning to that point a few seconds later as it contracts upon itself, the computer drawing seems to be revealing itself only briefly, an emphatic but passing allusion to the possibilities it portends.

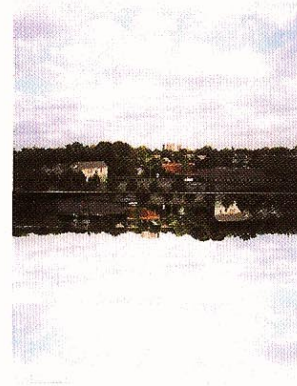
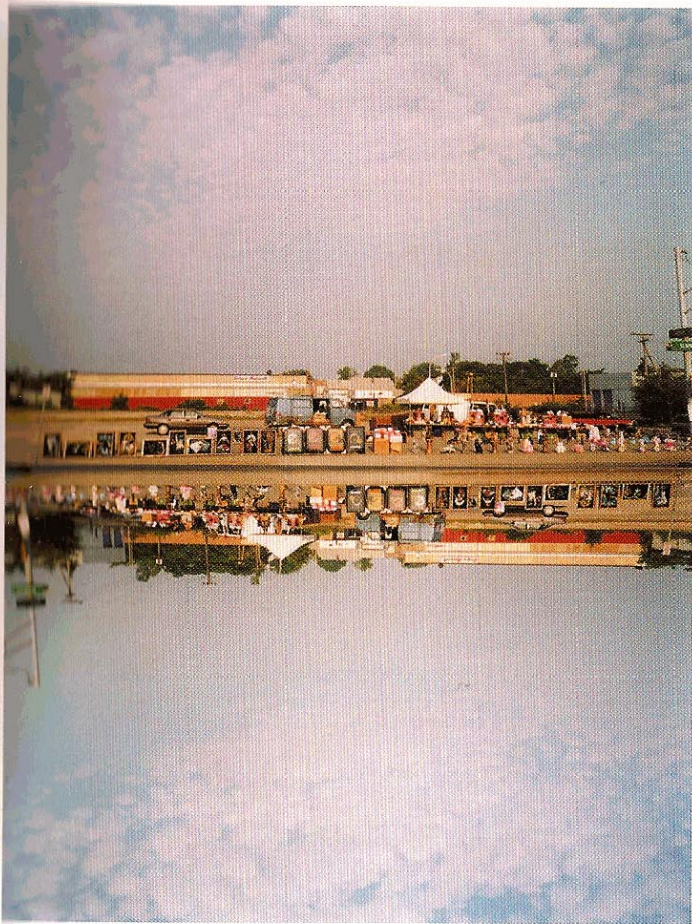
The notion of symmetry depends upon the fact that a given transformation or effect leaves an object essentially unchanged. This is true of the objects or things depicted within Brody's drawings—proportions appear, by all accounts, to remain consistent and shifts of scale occur in equal measure across shared center lines—but do the drawings themselves complicate this notion? Rendered as three-dimensional depictions, their symmetry is suggestive rather than actual.

Which is not to say that Brody is applying some new form of deceptive symmetries. He is only being as slyly deceptive as any artist. His drawings are not symmetrical, but the objects he has drawn are and the fact that both coexist so effortlessly is a signifier that this gentle visual torque has created the right effect.

Each fragment, as suggested, is a portion alluding to a larger and limitless whole.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator

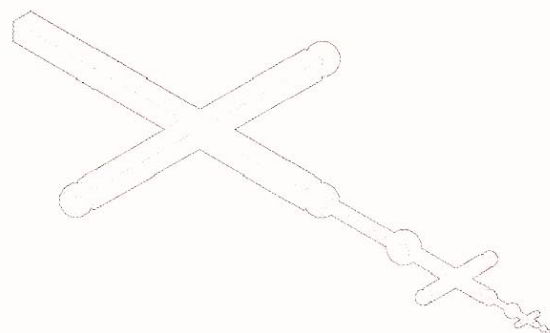




left to right
Jennifer McMackon
Venice Rose, Old McDonald's, View From Hallwalls, 2003
ink jet on plastic, 36 x 48 in. each



left: David Brody
installation view



David Brody
Descent, installation view, detail



David Brody

was born in Brooklyn, NY and received his BA from Harvard University and MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. He has been exhibiting regularly since 1991 in group exhibitions at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Brooklyn Union Gas Gallery, 450 Broadway Gallery, Ronald Feldman Gallery, Art Projects Int'l, the Brooklyn Museum, Holland Tunnel, Exit Art, Revolution (Detroit), 4 Walls, Vilma Gold Gallery (London), Pierogi 2000, Yerba Buena Center (San Francisco), Plus Ultra, Gorney Bravin & Lee, Ace Gallery, Cynthia Broan Gallery, Eyewash, Locks Gallery (Philadelphia), Bronx River Art Center, *Feigen Contemporary*, and The Sculpture Center. His work has been featured in solo exhibition at Pierogi 2000, Revolution (Detroit), and Bill Maynes Gallery. His work has been reviewed in numerous publications including *New Art Examiner*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *The Village Voice*, *Time Out*, *The New Yorker*, *Art on Paper*, and *The New York Times*. David Brody lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Jennifer McMackon

was born in London, Ontario and received her undergraduate degrees at The Ontario College of Art and Design and the University of Toronto and her MFA from the University of Victoria. She has been organizing curatorial projects and exhibiting her own work since 1990. Selected group exhibitions include *The Jennifer Show* (Oakville Galleries, 2002), *Grope for Luna* (64 Steps Contemporary Art, 2003), *Fuse* (York Quay Gallery, 2001), *TV Dinner With Landscape* (YYZ, 2001), *Nothing Much* (La Panaderia, 2001), *Compulsion* (Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, 1999), *Version City* (University at Buffalo Art Gallery, 1998), *Limousine* (Free Parking, 1996), *Body/Machine* (Big Orbit Gallery, 1995), *MUD* (Toronto, 1994). Her work has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions including *The Last Mind Mirrors* (64 Steps, 2001), *Metaphorms* (Harcourt House, 2001), *Kingdoms* (La Centrale/Galerie Powerhouse, 2000), *Saturation Test and Visual Purple* (The New Gallery, 1997), *U-Channel Test* (Gallery 101, 1995), and *Aphorisms and Fragments* (48 Abell St., 1992). Her curatorial projects have included *White Lily Presents* (Mercer Union, co-curated with Max Streicher, 1995), *Misrule at the Apollo* (12 Temperance St., Toronto, co-curated with Oliver Girling), *The Heliotropic* (Mercer Union, 1993) and *Aurathon* (1400 Dupont St., Toronto, 1990). Jennifer McMackon lives and works in Toronto.



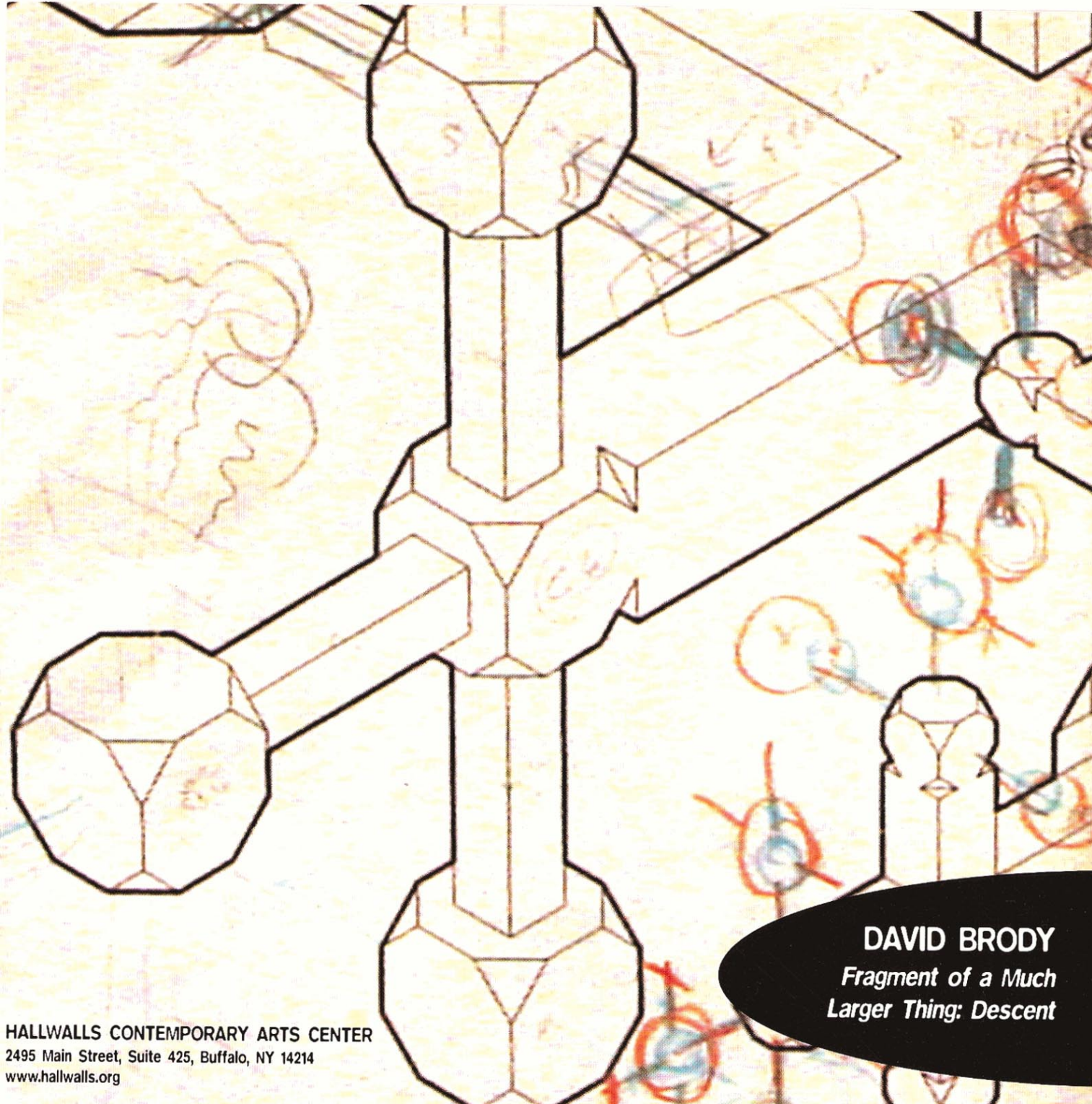
Jennifer McMackon
Always Open, 2003
36 x 48 in., ink jet on plastic

Jennifer McMackon gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Michael Bouquard, Melissa Dunfee, Neil Goodenough, Lee Goreas, Connie Han, Jake Kassay, John Massier, and Joanna Raczynska. *thrill rides* and *double swans* were generously funded by The Ontario Arts Council.

David Brody gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Michael Bouquard, Chris Coleman, David Kramer, John Massier, Jennifer McMackon, and Linda Nagoka.



The Hallwalls Artist in Residency Project (HARP) is made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from the Visual Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). Hallwalls is also supported by generous grants from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.



DAVID BRODY
*Fragment of a Much
Larger Thing: Descent*

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