

# LISA SETTE GALLERY

2007-2008

FALL/VOLUME 10



# Matthew Moore

At close to the rate of a crop of carrots, housing developments and shopping centers grow on the desert floor surrounding Phoenix. The seemingly infinite harvest of streetlamps and parking lots permanently alters the horizon, making sparkling new suburbs and strip malls out of what was once agricultural land and uninhabited stretches of desert scrub, and often, aside from the brief notice of the commuters, these massive changes go without official notice. The artist and farmer Matthew Moore seeks to document these changes, using the transformed landscape as his medium.



*Rotations: Moore Estates #6, 35 acre project, sorghum, wheat, c-print facemounted to Plexiglas, 24" x 30" or 52" x 60"*

Moore's earthworks, crop art, and video installations reconsider the easy narrative of the American Dream as it sprawls and stretches into the deserts of the Southwest, questions of history and sustainability neatly ignored. His experience as both artist and farmer, Moore remarks, feels simultaneously "tragic, hopeful, and urgent."

Moore has created his own fast-growing neighborhoods, down to the winding storybook streets, houses of eerily similar sizes and shapes, and immaculate patches of yard. His building materials are wheat and sorghum, and the "developments" take place on the land that Moore's family has farmed for four generations—much of which he still cultivates for crops, even as it is gradually parceled out to other commercial interests.

In the aerial photographs Moore makes to document these works, one can observe suburban growth advancing on the periphery — new freeways, razed desert ground, and red trenches encroaching by acres and sometimes square miles on the edges of agricultural parcels. At the disorienting center of these landscapes, Moore's crop neighborhoods are strangely beautiful, mimicking the prefab communities that spring up around them, but in bucolic hues of ocher and green.

Moore, who recently learned that half a square mile across from his childhood home (once surrounded by his family's farm) will be turned into an auto mall, says that his artwork is "the translation of a personal story." Both Moore's own sentiment for the land, and that American Dream-promise of a house of one's own, originates "from the idea of a sense of place, a sense of home. But when our visual or emotional landscape changes so drastically and so quickly, there will be an impact."

Both through his crop work and video installations, Moore isolates these moments of transition, slows them to give us a closer look. Like the seasonal rhythms of a farm, building developments happen at their own pace—days and months of small changes result in structures rising from the ground—but when Moore shows us the actual accretion of moments, captured on film, "the clouds of dust moving around and the roaring of machines," his films describe a poignant and poetic environment, changing at heartbreaking speed.

Moore hopes to initiate a dialog about these changes, rather than lead people to blame or to easy answers. He points out that there is a historical precedent for the exhaustion of resources in the Phoenix Valley with archeological evidence from as far back as the ancient Hohokam tribes. In the 20th century it was again agriculture that gave the impression of Phoenix as an oasis, a place of paradisiacal bounty in the middle of the desert, fed by an unending water supply from the Colorado River.

Implicit in Moore's work is the question of whether these overnight neighborhoods, with their brand new houses, perfectly planned streets and symmetrical backyards, truly offer a sense of home and community. Can preconceived societies, created in places previously thought uninhabitable, truly offer the lasting sense of place and spiritual fulfillment of "home"? Or, even, for that matter, the sustenance of a crop of carrots?



Matthew Moore

Above left: *Rotations: Single Family Residence #3, 20 acre barley field, c-print facemounted to Plexiglas, 24" x 30" or 52" x 60" edition of 7*  
Cover and Above right: *Rotations: Moore Estates #3, 35 acre project, sorghum, wheat, c-print facemounted to Plexiglas, 24" x 30" or 52" x 60" edition of 7*



Mark Klett

*.357 dusk 10/10/04, 2004, toned gelatin silver print, 7.5" x 9"*

Kim Cridler

*Still Life with Queen Anne's Lace (detail), 2007, steel, fresh water pearls, glass, silver, brass, 36" high*

# Binh Danh

Born in Vietnam in 1977, just two years after the conclusion of the American conflict there, artist Binh Danh and his family fled the wounded country via boat and emigrated to the U.S when he was a small child. Throughout his upbringing, Danh's family continued to observe traditional Vietnamese customs, and much of their Buddhist worship centered on honoring ancestors. Thus, says Danh, he grew up "meditating on death and its influence on the living."



From Buddhist ritual to artistic process, this meditation continues in Danh's artwork. His serene and radiant photo portraits, the faces of deceased men, women and children, are printed on living tree leaves using a botanical process of the artist's own invention, called chlorophyll printing. After poring over archives of the dead and creating photo negatives from his selections, Danh finds the leaves that will serve as his canvases, fits his negatives over their surfaces, and places them on his roof to help along the process of photosynthesis. Those areas of the leaf that are exposed to sunlight continue to generate green chlorophyll pigment, and those beneath the dark parts of the negative image do not. Danh must ensure that the leaves stay alive during this process, and so he places their stems in bags of water and tends to them every day. Vulnerable to the

whims of climate and biology, only a small percentage of the prints are usable—those Danh deems successful are encased in clear resin to preserve the hue and texture of the living plant matter.

Danh's leaf-images are so compelling in part because they are haunted by the fate of their subjects: the tragic and unthinking violence of war. It is hard to pull one's eyes away from the visages, which float ethereally against the arterial network of the leaves. These are people whose lives ended shortly after their portraits were taken; each face, whether adult or young child, expresses vitality and self-awareness, along with the unavoidable presence of loss and devastation. Perhaps because of this fragile and essentially human nature, each seems oddly familiar. In choosing the photographs, Danh finds himself looking for that familiar quality. "I chose to use the image if that person looks familiar to me—like friends or family." But, says Danh, "After working with these images for years, the images are all very recognizable, even if the portraits haven't come into my work yet."

For a series of work entitled *The Botany of Tuol Sleng*, Danh chose images to reproduce from the archives of Cambodia's Security Prison 21 (or S-21), a former school in which nearly 17,000 Cambodians and ethnic Vietnamese were imprisoned, tortured, and eventually murdered by agents of the Khmer Rouge. Each of the victims was photographed, and those images, now in the collection of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, speak of thousands of carelessly discarded souls.



Danh remarks that *The Botany of Tuol Sleng* series is intended both to venerate those victims, and to reflect on the nature of death and photography.

In a more recent series, *Life, Times, and Matters of the Swamp*, Danh uses the photographs of the "One Week's Dead"—the 242 US soldiers killed in Vietnam between May 28 to June 3, 1969. In discussing this body of work, Danh compares it to the subject of a comic book printed in 1971: *The Swamp Thing*, in which the scientist Dr. Holland, a casualty of heartbreak and injustice, is seemingly revived from death as a being composed of organic matter. It is revealed in the course of the story that the Swamp Thing is not in fact a human life resurrected, but the plants of the swamp become conscious. The swamp "mimicked Holland's body in plant form and believed itself to be him, having his thoughts and memories," says Danh, "His memories dissolved into the water and then ascended in plant form."

Similarly, while Danh's portraits show the faces of lives abbreviated, they are also small green mementos that transcend human violence and death. Danh creates a space for these victims, engraved on a living thing and resurrected in spirit. And while the poignant metaphor that compares the victims of human violence to the tens of thousands of leaves on a tree is frightening, it is also a poetic and reassuring insistence that our lives are part of a large and interconnected network, singular but never isolated or meaningless. Says Danh, "the leaf and by default the land absorbs our history, both good and bad. I've come to the conclusion that history is not something of the past, but it's alive and present in our cellular structure and landscape."

Binh Danh

Left: *Found Portrait: Man 28*, chlorophyll print and resin, 12.5" x 12.5"

Above left: *Meditation on Transmigration #2*, chlorophyll print and resin, 13" x 10"

Above right: *Specimen of the Underworld: Man 3*, chlorophyll print and resin, 15" x 11.5"



Angela Ellsworth

*Alex*, black thread on paper napkin, 7" x 4"

Carrie Marill

*Duke and Duchess Series*

1874: A white work embroidered set of bed linens embroidered with the word "Pugs" below a royal coronet. c. 1955, paper, gouache, walnut, ribbon 14.25" x 12"

William Wegman

*Show of Shadow*, pigment print, 34.5" x 28.5"



# Mayme Kratz

When we look, for a moment, around the edges of our human travails, we find other forms of life laboring to survive. Insects traverse vast distances and undergo extreme physical changes to become their ultimate selves, roots twist up from the ground in a singular attempt to expand into plants or trees. The artist Mayme Kratz is particularly attuned to these other struggles, and her cast resin pieces speak of the wildness of existence as a whole: the asymmetrical grammar of a fallen tree-limb, the dry language of the cicada, leaving its skin, and at the same time its skeleton, behind.



A collector of biological odds and ends, Kratz winnows metaphorical value from the discards of the natural world. The artist finds her specimens, often parts of dead creatures or fallen flora, while rambling in the high deserts of the Southwest, a place in which life defines itself against the heat. She encases these items in sculptures and wall pieces of rich, deep resin, creating startlingly beautiful reliquaries.

Kratz possesses a biological sixth sense, an understanding of how material she finds can become a line of poetry in the hardscrabble narrative of survival. In her works, bones, broken quail eggs and seedpods, buried in layers of translucent resin and thus transformed into a metaphysical realm, finally surrender their inherently mysterious and magical quality. Kratz sometimes feels that subjects of her artwork discover her rather than the other way around. “Sitting on the desert floor, digging the toenails out of a dead bobcat,” she explains, “You think, ‘there must be a good reason for me to be doing this!’”

Five Weeks in Sunlight, Kratz’s recent collection of work, refers to the miraculous life cycle of the cicada, a creature with which she has recently become obsessed. Kratz notes that for the past year, she’s been storing boxfuls of the insects and their husks in her studio. In her recent work, cicadas flicker and swarm in bottomless oceans of striated resin.

“The cicada serves as a metaphor for our own transitions,” says Kratz. The desert cicada found in Phoenix lives alone, buried in the soil for several years before “magically, some internal clock tells them it’s time,” and the insects burrow up to the surface to become fertile, winged creatures, and live out their final five weeks aboveground.

The more Kratz considered the life of a cicada, the more she noticed measures of five weeks in other applications. When she sets the corpses of plants, insects and animals out to dry, “in Phoenix, it takes about five weeks in the sun before they’re done.” Similarly, she’s begun to recognize emotional intervals of five weeks in her own life and in the lives of her friends and family.

For Kratz, the meaningful transition is not simply the cicada’s brief spree of flying, mating, and sunshine, but in the way that our physical selves measure out periods of time, the intuitively allotted measurements of light and dark; “We all spend time dwelling in darkness and introspection, and then there are moments when we know it’s time to come into the light.”



Mayme Kratz  
Above: *Gesture of Change #5*, resin, snake, wood, 13” x 13”  
Left: Artist in Studio 2007



Kahn / Selesnick, *Cardgame*, 2007, archival digital print, 12" x 86"

## EXHIBITION SCHEDULE 07/08

<b>2007</b>	
October 4 – November 10 Opening November 4, 7 to 9 pm	Einar and Jamex de la Torre
November 15 – December 29 Opening November 15, 7 to 9 pm	Mayme Kratz / Timothy McDowell
<b>2008</b>	
January 3 – February 2 Opening January 3, 7 to 9 pm	Mark Klett / Carrie Marill
February 7 – March 1 Opening February 7, 7 to 9 pm	Matthew Moore
March 6 – 29 Opening March 6, 7 to 9 pm	Kim Cridler / Julie Heffernan
April 3 – 26 Opening April 3, 7 to 9 pm	Kahn/Selesnick / Jessica Joslin
May 8 – June 28 Opening May 8, 7 to 9 pm	William Wegman

## ART FAIRS 06/07

<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>photo MIAMI</b> The International Contemporary Fair of Photo-Based Art, Video, & New Media December 4 - 9, 2007 Wynwood Art District NW 31st Street & North Miami Avenue Miami, Florida	<b>Los Angeles Art Show</b> January 23 – 27, 2008 Barker Hangar Santa Monica, California
	<b>AIPAD</b> Association of International Photography Art Dealers April 10 – 13, 2008 Park Avenue Armory, New York, New York

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Tuesday - Friday 10 am to 5 pm  
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Saturday 12 to 5 pm

Closed Thanksgiving,  
Christmas and  
New Years Day  
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