



organic

:: SUSAN BEINER DISSOLUTION



ORGANIC DISSOLUTION

CLAY ART CENTER :: OCTOBER 13 – NOVEMBER 21, 2012

ART LEAGUE HOUSTON :: MARCH 21 – APRIL 26, 2013

As we continue to negatively impact the environment, in ways both known and unknown, by depleting the earth's natural resources and elements of color, plant structures are adapting and their energy of color is being released causing sterility.

In trying to balance these changes, we are controlling the growth and characteristics of plant life by promoting hybrids and germinating new plant species in laboratory controlled environments. The results of experiments in these artificial environments, which are reproduced repeatedly for our commercial needs, create a flora rich in color, but are artificial and sterile.

Because of our destructive greed and genetic engineering, the chemical makeup and nutritional value of our foodstuff is being altered. This raises concerns about the negative short and long term effects on the fragile ecosystem of humans, animals and plants. *Organic Dissolution* is a sign to us that plants' loss of pigment foreshadows future disruption of our ecosystem.

SUSAN BEINER

COVER :: LEFT :: TOP :: *Organic Dissolution*, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2013

RIGHT :: Opening reception with Susan Beiner and Leigh Taylor Mickelson at the Clay Art Center; 2012





ON THIS PAGE :: *Organic Dissolution*,
detail installation; porcelain, acrylic,
kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2012 and 2013

OPPOSITE PAGE :: *Drawing 5*;
graphite and watercolor on paper;
20 x 21 inches; 2012





TOP :: *Organic Dissolution*, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2012 and 2013
 OPPOSITE PAGE :: *Drawing 4*; graphite and watercolor on paper, 38 x 37 inches; 2012

WHITE THAT DOES NOT SIGNIFY PURITY ‘ORGANIC DISSOLUTION’ IS AT THE CLAY ART CENTER

NEW YORK TIMES

BY SUSAN HODARA, NOVEMBER 3, 2012

The centerpiece of *Organic Dissolution*, Susan Beiner’s solo exhibition at the Clay Art Center here, emerges from the floor like an unfolding porcelain garden. Curling leaves reach out like fleshy tongues. Spiky blossoms explode from barnacle-like buds. Everywhere, petals, stamens and other floral forms, along with sporadic ceramic screws and bolts, shoot up from the work’s depths like grasping fingers and screaming mouths.

This elaborate installation, also titled *Organic Dissolution*, covers a platform, 8 feet by 8 feet, in the center of the gallery. Weighing more than 600 pounds, it rises into a mound about three and a half feet tall. It is a tumbling array of exotic growth, but except for daubs of faded purple, the entire work is white.

This absence of color is an expression of Beiner’s concerns about the effects of human development on the natural world. “I was thinking about genetic engineering and cloning,” she said. “We have new plant species being germinated in laboratories, and at the same time, we are depleting the earth’s resources. I started imagining what might happen to plant life that has been processed to the point of becoming sterile.”

“I’m grounded in ceramics,” she said, “but I’m interested in plastics and other commercially made oil-based materials because they are so incredibly artificial.”

Beiner said that lack of color makes *Organic Dissolution* her most ominous work to date. “I have used color for years and years,” she said. “I don’t really like white. I don’t wear white. I don’t even own a white T-shirt.”

Nevertheless, white seemed an appropriate option for a commentary on the effects of manipulating nature through cloning and cross-pollination. “This piece, which is made of an organic material, is about that artificiality. At some point, there’s just bleakness; there is no more pigment.”

In addition to the porcelain, another white element is present in *Organic Dissolution*. Strewed across its top and around its edges are nearly 1,000 small, flower-like white foam cones, their excessively long tufts of thread trailing behind them. “They are the blooms that are the result of all this,” Beiner said, gesturing toward her work. “They have died and dropped to the ground. If I could, I’d have filled the whole space with them, so you’d be stepping on them and falling over them.”

... but its two-dimensional representation can be seen in five drawings on the gallery walls. Done with graphite and purple watercolor, the drawings were another first for Beiner.

... I drew these while I was in the process of making the piece, and they became a translation of the sculpture into something flat and graphic.

The exhibition also includes eight smaller sculptural works. While similar to “Organic Dissolution” in their mix of organic and inorganic forms, these pieces are glazed with color.



Each of the other small sculptures, none measuring more than five inches in any direction, is titled *Remnant*. They are whimsical constructions partially wrapped with wire; some include bits of mortar and those foam cones. All were built with porcelain scraps from *Organic Dissolution*, and they mark yet another first for Beiner.

“I wanted to push myself with this project,” she said. “I decided to use the leftover pieces that came off the installation as I was making it. I like their sloppiness — they look like things that shouldn’t exist and be so beautiful.”

Beautiful yet sloppy. Organic yet inorganic. Fertile yet devastated. Dichotomies like these suffuse Beiner’s vision.

In her sculpture, she said, “I think the overabundance and obsessive quality enable me to incorporate both perspectives.” She described the results as “cohesive chaos.”



CLAY ART CENTER

BY LEIGH TAYLOR MICKELSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Clay Art Center in Port Chester, NY presented Susan Beiner's Organic Dissolution in October 2012. Beiner presented a large floor installation "landscape" with the familiarity and character of the natural, but injected with geometry, human order, and overtly manufactured materials. Scattered amidst the hundreds of white and off-white botanically inspired ceramic forms, were pure white hand-sewn foam flowers. The simple flower forms, made out of one of the most unnatural substances widely used today, drew us in with their beguiling beauty and then boldly begged us to consider whether the natural exists.

Dissolution is a word that can apply to many things; usually government, businesses, relationships and partnerships. It refers to what is left once something is broken up, dispersed or undone. Susan Beiner's wonderfully chaotic ceramic and mixed media sculptures explore the resulting state, or dissolution, of all that was once natural, but is now genetically modified or altered, manufactured or processed, manipulated or cloned. The floor of our gallery was transformed, creating a natural/unnatural environment that encouraged us to ask whether our industrial practices and culture of convenience has created a sterile, unhealthy environment for us to live in. Only in the asking can answers be found.

CLOCKWISE STARTING TOP LEFT ::
Remnant 7, 3, 2, 1, porcelain, kanthol
wire, mortar; 5 x 5 x 5 inches; 2012



INTEGRATION OF THE ARTIFICIAL AND THE NATURAL

BY JENNY ASH, VISUAL ARTS DIRECTOR, ART LEAGUE, TX

The hyper-colors that were present in Beiner's earlier installations, signifying a sense of life, had been totally bleached out and sterilized into varying shades of white, leaving behind a bleak, almost skeletal landscape of what once was, which explored the negative effects of biochemistry and genetic engineering on the natural world. In contrast however this white also evoked a sense of purity and innocence, as if nature had found a way to free itself from years of over-manipulation, wipe the slate clean and start again.

The integration of the artificial and the natural was also present in the materiality of Beiner's installations, combining the organic characteristics of clay with materials such as plastics and other commercially made oil-based materials. These combinations not only created an exciting, yet somewhat unnerving friction between the known and the unknown, it also tapped into a larger conversation about the potential impact of cross pollination on the world and it's future generations.



TOP :: RIGHT :: *Organic Dissolution*, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2012 and 2013



OPPOSITE PAGE :: *Drawing 6*;
graphite and watercolor on paper;
84 x 42 inches; 2013

TOP :: *Organic Dissolution*, detail
installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol
wire, foam, thread; 2013

BOTTOM :: Susan Beiner sketching
Drawing 5; graphite and watercolor
on paper, 20 x 21 inches; 2012

WITH APPRECIATION

SUSAN BEINER

Organic Dissolution was a year-long project, which took form by many hands. The repetition and scale of various parts came about through the efforts of several people.

Foremost, thanks to Leigh Taylor Mickelson from the Clay Art Center in Port Chester, NY, and Jennie Ash, The Art League, Houston, TX for the opportunity to exhibit a new installation in their gallery spaces.

Thanks to Alecia Zirignon and Nora McGinnis for sewing thousands of white foam pieces, and Caitlin Applegate of the Clay Arts Center for her assistance in the NY installation. Special gratitude goes to Evan Pomerantz for his long hours of assistance with the TX installation and for continuous support on so many other projects. Special thanks to Heather Le Fur, my associate and friend for designing this catalog.

Finally, I would like to thank Nevin for his belief in my vision along with friends and family for their constant support.

So it is with renewed energy and focus of mind that I challenge myself and enter into my new studio lab to continue my pursuit of the answer to the critical question of how “human-engineered” or so-called hybrid plant life can offer sustainability to our fragile planet, the only hope of mankind everlasting.



CLAY
ART CENTER



SUSAN BEINER :: 951.805.4567 :: SBBAROQUE@YAHOO.COM