



UNWRAPPING THE WING DENVER

The mission of Denver's nomadic Invisible Museum is to make visible the invisible connections that bind communities. Free of an actual exhibition space, the Invisible Museum takes the entire city as its possible site. This approach has many looking at their city from a new perspective.

The Invisible Museum recently presented its first Curator-in-Residence exhibition, *Unwrapping the Wing* [October 5, 2006—January 31, 2007], organized by part-time resident and Denver native Devon Dikeou. Despite significant time, material, and thematic constraints, Dikeou, a conceptual artist who explores creative relationships by generating unpredictable exchanges around unexpected objects or actions, rose to the challenge.

The project's predetermined theme humorously and critically engages with Denver's changing institutional landscape. Last summer, as the Denver Art Museum unwrapped its new contemporary art wing's titanium tiles, some of the metal's protective plastic wrapping flew away, and hit the windshield of Invisible Museum founder Marian Graves' car. Graves and fellow member Randy Brown decided to turn the serendipitous collision into the show's theme and title, *Unwrapping the Wing*.

Dikeou accepted the six-week challenge and the imposition of the plastic sheeting as common material, and invited fourteen artists: Maria Antelman, Sebastiaan Bremer, Lucky de Bellevue, Mary Ehrin, Rainer Ganahl, Janine Gordon, Misaki Kawai, Andrew Kuo, Matt Murphy, Tracy Nakayama, Serge Onnen, Lawrence Seward, Lee Stoetzel, and Jay Stuckey. The exhibition was presented in temporary, two-room "galleries" in a converted office building owned by Dikeou's brother Pany, adjacent to the Dikeou Collection—a fitting location.

One artist, Rainer Ganahl, managed to dodge the project's thematic and materials constraints, and presented *Use a Bicycle*. A series of black cloth parking meter hoods imprinted with a simple white invitation to "Use a Bicycle," the hoodies were locked on to eighty-five parking meters throughout the city on the two consecutive opening weekends. Four were stolen, which may reflect the public's amused interest. *Use a Bicycle* literally took the exhibition to the streets by allowing drivers to park for free, while subtly suggesting bikes as a transportation alternative. Amidst inevitable incantations of the "Is this art?" question, Ganahl's work successfully stimulated dialogue, both humoristic and serious, about mass and individual transportation.

The other thirteen artists followed the project's material dictates. Starting off with the same material, these works beg to be judged on the basis of their ingenious use of the sheeting. Yet, looking at the exhibition as a whole, with its table top sculptures, paintings, objects, and video placed randomly throughout the small rooms, it became obvious that the artists had, for the most part, simply incorporated the fabric into their established practices.

Dikeou explained that, after initially conforming to the project's material constraints, she then backed off and "followed the artists' lead." Instead of allowing the medium to become the message, the show explored the multiple ways in which artists, even when constrained, pursue their individual practices.

Using the rectangular plastic sheet as a canvas, Tracy Nakayama painted a young, seductively posed, nude woman inside an oval shape. She then transferred a pale gray background to surround the nude, and painted the outside border in rusty brown. Reminiscent of 1970s soft

porn, *Daytripper*, 2006, makes good use of the plastic sheeting which adds a touch of kitsch to the provocative female image.

Masaki Kawai took an entirely different direction, creating a miniature, clay and felt tableau of a girl walking her dog in the rain. Working in the Japanese *kawaii* [cute] style, Kawai used the plastic material to create the character's rain outfit. The girl has Kawai's face, a photograph of the artist that, attached to the head, places her in the scene. Detailed yet amateurish, Kawai's jarringly sweet make-believe scenario invites us to question our versions of reality through the fantasies we willingly insert ourselves into.

Hawaii resident Lawrence Seward is out to Hawaii-ify the world. His work deals in part with the ways in which we personalize the impersonal. After many unsuccessful attempts to make the plastic sheeting conform to his island imagery, he smashed it underfoot. Behold, there was his work. Mounted in a Plexiglas cube, his sculpted running shoe stomps on a crinkled pile of plastic. Seward also appropriated Warhol's pop flowers, painting his set of four in various pastels, using the plastic as canvas.

Although Dikeou faced important time, conceptual, and material constraints, *Unwrapping the Wing* successfully fulfilled the Invisible Museum's goal to create a platform for critical engagement, social awareness, and innovative expression. In its way, it made visible the invisible creative will that binds a community.

—Julia Morton

ABOVE: Rainer Ganahl, installation view of *Use a Bicycle*, 2006, 85 parking meter hoods: acrylic with metal grommets, approx. 17 x 6 x 8 inches (courtesy of the artist and the Invisible Museum; photo: Randy Brown)