



ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH by Walter Robinson

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Denver is one cow town that's got it all goin' on. The central city is an urbanist's dream, with gleaming skyscrapers, a neo-classical city hall, plenty of parks and a free 16-block tram down the main shopping street. All three sports stadiums -- Mile High Field for the **Broncos**, Coors Field for the **Colorado Rockies** and the Pepsi Center basketball arena for the **Nuggets** - are located right downtown, just like **Rudy Giuliani** wanted when he tried to put the **New York Yankees** on Manhattan's West Side.

Dikeou Collection, Invisible Museum

No tour of Denver's contemporary art scene would be complete without mention of the great artist and Denver native **Devon Dikeou**, long known to art-world insiders for her own works -- old-fashioned lobby signboards with moveable white letters spelling out the announcements for all the group shows she was in -- as well as for *Zingmagazine*, the densely avant-garde publication of contemporary art projects that she oversees from offices in New York.

In Denver, Devon has teamed up with her brother **Pany Dikeou**, a real estate developer, to assemble the **Dikeou Collection**, a presentation of art by more than 20 artists whose works "challenge questions of space, tangible reality and the collaboration of ideas." Open to the public since 2003, the collection is installed in downtown Denver on the fifth floor of the Colorado Building, a renovated seven-story structure originally built in the 1860s and featuring considerable Art Deco-period glazed terracotta. Or, as the directions usually put it, upstairs from **Jamba Juice**.



Momoyo Torimitsu's *Somehow I Don't Feel Comfortable* (2000) at the Dikeou Collection

The art in the Dikeou Collection is pleasantly underground, consisting of artists as yet undiscovered by the lemming-like herds of contemporary collectors who run up the prices at **Christie's** and **Sotheby's**. Exemplary of the collection is **Momoyo Torimitsu's** pair of 16-foot-tall, inflatable pink bunnies, titled *Somehow I Don't Feel Comfortable* (2000) -- *Through the Looking Glass* hallucinations for the 21st century. "Daily life," the artist explains, "consists of a 'reality' in which one never encounters anything authentically real."

Another signature work is **Wade Guyton's** *The Room Moved, the Way Blocked (Stage 1)* (1998), a parquet wood "floor" that has swelled up, so to speak, into a kind of neo-Minimalist folly -- a five-foot-tall rectangular volume, of the same proportions as the Colorado Building, that speaks not of gestalts but rather of the illusions of Minimalism.



Devon Dikeou with Lawrence Seward's sculpture in the Dikeou Collection

Among the new pieces in the collection is a suite of black-and-white photographs by **Janine Gordon** taken within a mosh pit; a giant-sized sculptural self-portrait by **Lawrence Seward**, an artist who lives in New York and Honolulu, complete with a tiny island landscape within the figure's slightly open mouth, and Dikeou's own *Once Upon a Time*, a room installed with tin ceiling on the floor, so that the antique patterns are gradually flattened out as visitors walk through the exhibition.

Another Denver organization devoted to new art is the **Invisible Museum**, which specializes in "the exchange of ideas." One plan of the fairly new group -- it formerly published a periodical called *Eyelevel Magazine*, which

was co-founded by artist **Marina Graves**, its first editor, and put out six numbers between 1999 and 2002 -- is a series of exhibitions organized in nomadic spaces. The plan is to bring curators and artists to Denver from elsewhere.



Masaki Kawai in "Unwrapping the Wing" in an installation sponsored by the Invisible Museum

For the first exhibition, however, the Invisible Museum tapped Dikeou to organize a show in a pair of office spaces next door to the Dikeou Collection. The result is "Unwrapping the Wing," an exhibition by 14 artists who were invited to make art using the protective plastic sheeting that covered the titanium panels of the new Libeskind building at the DMA. One of the works, by **Masaki Kawai**, is a papier-mâché tableau of a girl walking her dog in the

rain, wearing waterproof gear made of the DMA sheeting.



One of Rainer Ganahl's "Use a Bicycle" parking meter covers, installed in Denver by the Invisible Museum

The Invisible Museum also sponsored a public artwork by **Rainer Ganahl** that was no doubt much appreciated by Denver drivers. Dubbed *Use a Bicycle*, the piece puts black cloth shrouds over several hundred downtown parking meters, covers that are emblazoned with the pro-environmental motto, "Use a bicycle." Of course, the shrouded meters also allow free parking, as if to suggest that social engineering doesn't always deliver the intended results.