JENNIFER STEINKAMP and JIMMY JOHNSON

_one saw; the other saw._
one saw; the other saw.

JENNIFER STEINKAMP
and  JIMMY JOHNSON
one saw; the other saw transformed Rice Gallery and its foyer into a high-tech playground. Sensitive to both the architecture of the building and the dynamic presence of visitors, one saw; the other saw. was fundamentally site-specific. Using advanced software, artist Jennifer Steinkamp created brilliantly-colored animated images which were projected from within a 30-foot tunnel onto a screen fitted to the center panel of the gallery’s front glass wall. The screen’s translucence allowed Steinkamp’s animation to be seen from inside the tunnel as well as from outside the gallery space.

Viewer participation was an integral part of the installation. The moving shapes of visitors in the tunnel interrupted the otherwise intensely luminous plane of colors with dark silhouettes of human forms. The interactivity of the piece was heightened by Steinkamp’s use of motion sensors in the gallery foyer, causing the abstract geometric forms of the animation to lurch and bounce in response to visitors’ movements. The movements of visitors also triggered bursts of electronic sounds that punctuated Jimmy Johnson’s mesmerizing electronic music composition.

I loved to watch people’s delight as they devised innovative ways to merge and interface with this new environment. Simple activities such as strolling with an umbrella, tipping a hat, or raising a small child onto one’s shoulders were lent a new theatricality that caused staff and students rushing to class to stop and stare. The piece was so irresistible that it even beckoned an entire bridal party to have a most unconventional wedding portrait taken inside.

Flutter Flutter, an earlier work by Jennifer shown in our small gallery, appeared bewitchingly simple at first glance, but like one saw; the other saw., it initiated a sophisticated play with perceptual processes.

I am grateful to Jennifer for inviting her colleague Gail Swanlund to design this catalogue and contribute her original short story, Ice Pod. In choosing to feature a work of fiction, Jennifer sought to “push the boundaries of what an art catalogue essay might be.” Gail and Jennifer each settled in sunny Los Angeles after Minnesota childhoods. Jennifer explains that Gail’s writing, “especially this particular story, comes from that very peculiar and cold place that formed my life, not to mention my desires and my art. I have built many ice-pods.”

one saw; the other saw. brought the latest in new media technologies to the gallery. Wires from the projector, sound system, and motion sensors were channeled to a terminal linked to Steinkamp’s computer in the gallery office. The contraption, which seemed more fitting for an airplane pilot than a visual artist, bespoke the technical complexity and sophistication of the installation. Steinkamp and Johnson’s coordination of space, sound, and software was truly prodigious, and all the more impressive for its seeming effortlessness and easy charm.

KIMBERLY DAVENPORT
Director
one saw; the other saw

was made in response to the large expanse of windows looking into the gallery. I considered that many of the viewers might be someone passing through. The piece is about looking, and shifting perspectives. The artwork responds to the viewer’s point of view by shifting as one walks by. The work is intentionally playful, it creates an experience where complex ideas about perception can be enjoyed on a physical level. The imagery and sounds were synthesized from software; they are not generated from anything real.

JENNIFER STEINKAMP
Flutter Flutter is a small nervously shaking grid projected into a corner. The grid traverses between one-point and two-point perspective. As the viewer walks around the piece the grid shifts and appears three-dimensional, as if the non-physical projection had physical substance.

JENNIFER STEINKAMP

LEFT: Flutter Flutter, 1996
Video installation, MOCA, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
Continuous, 2 feet x 2 feet x 2 feet
PHOTO: Paula Goldman, Courtesy of MOCA
ICE-POD

GAIL SWANLUND
a short story selected by
Jennifer Steinkamp

IN THE ICE-POD, I hear the muted clatter of something metal. Investigation is required. I crawl through a series of small rooms and up through the snow tunnel and emerge with only minimal head-abrasion.

There he is, my dad, wearing only his sorrels, his skin glowing like it’s radioactive, heading to the lake. He doesn’t see me, even though he could’ve almost stepped on my head. Excuse me, did I mention he’s wearing just boots, end of story~ It’s probably about a million degrees below zero. I’ve only caught a glimpse of him naked once before on a canoe trip, a split second’s worth.

He’s got my mom’s skis over his shoulder and is, no doubt, going down to the lake to throw them in. He heaves our stuff into the lake when he’s on a jag. Our dog, Crappie, is running along side him, then in front of him, almost tripping him. Dad’s butt is streaked muddy from where she jumped up on him. It’s barely morning, the sun isn’t even up yet, and the light is grey and dim.

I set my alarm for four o’clock so I can work on the pod before school. It’s indestructible: dug in, with an underlying lumber skeleton, and iced to a hard-as-bricks finish. Ice is, I’ve read, a crystalline lattice. White light, when refracted through the internal symmetry of the crystal, is split into millions of rainbow-colored sparkles. I haul my parent’s vomit-smelling sleeping bags out here to sleep, four times now.

THE NEIGHBOR KIDS call my dad Hurl, but not to his face. His name’s Earl. I can hear him down at the shore of the lake, yelling, “Ruh! Sh! Fuh!” It isn’t as if I can tell exactly what he’s saying but I have a good idea. Dad, Earl, usually doesn’t say much at all, let alone raise his voice, so it’s kind of strange to hear him out there. Even at suppertime, he doesn’t talk. If he wants something, he just looks at whatever it is he wants until we catch on and pass it to him. He’s not impatient about it or pissed that we don’t read his mind. He just doesn’t say anything. He sits, he eats. He looks at his plate. When I’m alone with him pensive hunting or driving, he talks. He goes on about his job, about the ladies at work who reported him for being insensitive to their feelings, that bugs him. Hunting stories, and shit. Earl has one great story about deer hunting that I like to get him to tell because I like hearing him talk about nature things. The story is he’s out hunting alone up on Long Prairie River, near Brainerd. He shoots a doe and is dragging it back to the car. It’s snowing and starting to get dark. After an hour of walking—with a deer!—he comes to a boulder he knows he passed earlier and he sees his own footprints and the deer drag marks. Of course everything’s snowier by then. He stashes the doe and sets off in the direction he thinks the car is parked, but now he carves marks in the tree with his bowie so later he can find his way back to the carcass. Long story short, he ends up back at the deer where, since it’s so dark, he spends the night.

TIME TO SEE what Earl’s up to. I pull myself out of the snow tunnel and get to my feet. My toes have been frostbitten so many times, they buzz when I stand, especially after being in a crouch so long. It’s probably best to leave Earl alone right now, but I skulk along the perimeter of the yard, down into the trees. I am one-hundred percent stealth, testing each step.
so the crust on the snow doesn't crunch and give me away. The treeline stops at the shore and I can see him standing at the edge of the lake. Earl's looking out at the skis on the ice. Maybe he forgot that the lake is frozen, that the ice is thick enough for skating and even driving. Crappie is dragging a ski back to him. She's fake-growling at the ski and keeps busting through the top crust of snow. Her ass disappears into the drifts. Crappie is cool. She climbs trees.

I break cover and nonchalantly stroll down to stand next to Earl. I stare at the skis now too. Earl doesn't look at me. I try not to look at him either. I feel a little over-dressed for the occasion in my down parka, scarf, long johns, and hunting snowpants. The frozen lake and snow smell like coldness, like winter, a little like a rock. I yawn and watch my breath puff and dissipate.

"What are you doing out?" he asks after a moment.

"Nothing. Working on my pod," I say. "Are you going to work today?" I wonder because, one, he's seriously not dressed for work and two, he usually leaves for work around six and judging from the light, it's after seven. I should be ready for school and waiting for the bus which is always too early. Crappie sees me, drops the ski, comes bounding in and almost knocks me over.

I sometimes think about what it would be like to be inside my dad or my mom. What would the world look like seen from their heads, their eyes, and operating their brains? I'm almost as tall as my dad, so the actual view from the eyeballs would be the same as what I've got now. It's the other stuff I'd like to see, like sex and the hospital things my mom does. I do kind of understand why Earl doesn't talk much when he's home. My mom cries sometimes at the dinner table and Earl just looks at her sitting and crying at the other end of the table. He has a look on his face like something smells weird. His expression means she's really embarrassing herself. I try to not take sides but it kind of embarrasses me to see her cry. But he makes her do it. One night he broke the vow of silence and said he didn't want the neighbors coming over to our house anymore because it's such a garbage pit and if the house had been cleaner my older brother wouldn't have gotten sick and died. My two living brothers and I just looked at him while my mom got into her car and drove off. She told me later she checked in at the motel out on Highway 12. Last summer he threw a bunch of her clothes in the garbage can because they were on the floor in their bedroom. Then there was the time out of the blue Earl asked me in front of my mom, "How'd you like to have Roy for a dad?" Roy is Jason and Nick's dad from down the road. He asked me that the day after I saw my mom throw a raw pot roast at my dad. He was just sitting in the living room watching TV. Mom said, "Shit," and went back into the kitchen and slammed cupboard doors around. Earl and Mom never say "shit" or even "damn." I kind of know what Earl was getting at with the Roy-Dad thing, but even so, I don't want to let on that I know what's up with them.

"Well, I'm going to go get ready for school. I'll drop you on my way, OK?" That's a joke I use on Earl. I want to drive. I really want to drive. I'll be fifteen next summer and then I can sign up for training the spring after that. I've practiced driving. Earl took me out on County Road B a couple of times and let me cruise a ways.

Earl doesn't comment on my joke. If he were going to work he'd probably not be down here at the lake. He works for the Scotch Tape company, 3M. Everyone in the entire state works for 3M. We have a whole closet of Post-Its and tape. Our cat is even named Scothtape in honor of Earl's work, but it's an apt name anyway because the cat sticks wherever he's put. Earl's a chemist; he invents adhesives, usually ones that don't work. He brings home big wads of reject glue; at night my friend Gabe and I wait in the ditch by the road, light the sticky-bombs on fire, and lob them at cars. Cars always screech to a halt and sometimes a guy will jump out—some of them have baseball bats ready—and try to run us down. But blindfolded we could navigate the terrain of the woods and pastures, so it's like we vanish into thin air. It's pretty amusing.

I trudge up the hill to the house to get ready for school. That's when I notice that Earl's car is running, with the driver's side door open. It would be brilliant if I could drive into town to buy some groceries and make a really great breakfast for everyone. My brothers too. My mom won't be up for hours, but if I made food, maybe she'd get up and eat with us. My mom works nights at the hospital where she's a neonatal nurse. She takes care of the preemies. They look like shriveled sick monkeys.
A lot of them die because they don’t have fully-developed brain stems or spinal cords or the esophagus isn’t attached. She tells me about the really bad-off ones. Sometimes she pulls double shifts, so I make supper while she’s working.

I go inside and look at my mom in her bed. She’s sleeping on her side. Her face looks like it’s been folded and some of her hair has glued itself with spit around her mouth. The room smells like bad breath and armpits. Her purse is on the dresser. I tiptoe in, snap it open and snag a twenty out of her billfold. I say very softly, ’I’m going into town to get some groceries, OK? OK. Glad that’s OK with you.”

My brothers are up. Steve must be in the bathroom. The shower’s running and there’s a lot of wall-banging and thuds. I know it’s Steve, because he’s singing something really dumb in there. It’s not even a tune. Steve and Karl share a room and I get my own bedroom. Their door is closed and KDWB is blasting from inside. Karl busts out of his room wearing jeans and a plaid flannel, no shoes. He’s the only one of our family with brown hair and it’s really curly. He sneers and breathes open-mouth at me, “Huh-huh-huh,” like he’s pretending he’s me and I’m incredibly stupid. Then he goes back in and slams the door. From behind the door, he says, “You’re late for your buu-uuus, little girl.” Steve and Karl have their own car so they don’t have to take the bus. They never give me a ride to school and sometimes when I’m walking out to the stop, they drive slowly alongside me and stare at me through the windows.

SCOTCHTAPE IS CURLED up sleeping on the kitchen table. I grab him and go. He yawns in my face and his catfood breath almost kills me.

Here is where I make the understatement of the century: Earl will not be ecstatic if I take his car.

In a way, I can’t believe I’m doing it. I don’t usually do things that I’m not supposed to do. I’m good, good in school and so forth. But it’s like I’m not really thinking. I don’t have anything in my head at all; I just watch myself walking to the car from somewhere in the darkness inside my skull. This numbness has the obvious benefit of not having to be responsible for my actions. In any case, I’m covered because Earl can take my mom’s car, it’s here.

I put Scotchtape on the passenger side. Then I get in and yank the door shut. The car is warm inside and the heater is full-on. It’s blowing a smell that’s like cooked dust. I roll down the window to look backwards, throw the car in reverse and back out of the driveway.

Out on the road, the wheel, the shifter, even the seat, feel stiffer than they did when I was driving with Earl. Even the “click, click” of the blinkers is overly loud and too crisp. But the engine is smooth and surprisingly quiet.

Scotchtape stands up and puts his paws on the passenger armrest to look out. I heard that cats really only see motion. Like when a mouse runs, they see the movement, but if the mouse is still, they can only smell it, not see it. So, to a cat, do the houses look like they’re moving? I watch the white fields go by, the black trees against the horizon, and the snowy road unwinding in front of the hood of the car. The barb wire of the fences loops up and down as we pass. We are in a private glass and metal capsule speeding through space.

At the store maybe I’ll buy some supplies for the ice-pod stockpile. I feel like some tunes on the radio. When I switch the radio on, Earl’s lame public radio morning show blasts out. The morning DJs are playing polka music.

I don’t mean to shut my brain off while I am tuning the radio to KDWB, but I must have because when I look up, Mrs. Loftsgaarden is at the paperbox getting her paper. She is too far out in the road. Her jacket thumps on the car door and I hear the zipper of her parka scraping and more knocking along the side of the car. When I look back in the rearview mirror, I can’t see her at all.

I go cold and icy. My heart is pounding so hard I think I am going to throw up. At the grocery store I park. From the sign on the door, I discover that the store doesn’t even open until eight-thirty. I sit in the car and wait for a long time. Scotchtape is meowing and pacing back and forth on the dashboard. I open the window for him and he jumps out. I don’t even care. A guy unlocks the door of the store, sticks his head out and looks at me sitting in the car. He goes back in.

Gail Swanlund is a Los Angeles-based designer and writer.
I built large floor to ceiling monoliths; I imagined them as a forest of tall figures or trees. Monoliths have a mysterious long lost ritual or memorial significance; in addition, their practical use as sundials or calendars intrigued me. All these possibilities imbued them with incredible significance and openness. Ultrasonic sensors were used to track the viewer, causing the image to speed up and envelop the body. Other sensors sent the image and sound into a chorus. As a result, the monoliths sang together in unison.

The TV Room, 1998
Public Works, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, CA
Video Installation, 18 x 13 x 60 feet
AUDIO COLLABORATION: Andrew Bucksbarg
PHOTO: Jennifer Steinkamp
I built three wall strips stretched horizontally across a room in the museum; animated water streams were projected on each strip. The wall behind was filled with a multi-colored waterfall. The back surface and the wall strips interlaced to form the image, somewhat akin to the scan lines on a television set. Further shifting occurred as the animated imagery tilted. Consequently, the architecture, virtually destabilized, felt as if it were shifting as well. By making the half wall difficult to decipher, I wanted to give the viewer an enigmatic, ambiguous experience.

X-Room, 2000
X-Room, 2000
Wonderland, The Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, MO
Video Installation, Images 4.5 x 12 feet, room 35 x 31 feet
AUDIO COLLABORATION: Andrew Bucksbarg, PHOTO: Peter Marks
I constructed two red cross-creased passageways with carved corners inside the gallery space. Vertical projections of spinning, undulating meshed cylinders created optical moire effects. The sound, space and the visual created an experience simultaneously mechanical and sensual.

Other works by
Jennifer Steinkamp
WITH HER COMMENTS.

Loop, 2000
Somehow, I created an underwater feeling in the space, a virtual camera floated through a sea of multi-colored particles. The same animation was projected twice: one horizontal and from the front, the other vertical and from the rear. The large projections enabled the wall surfaces to dematerialize convincingly. This piece happened to work well with many viewers, as they could watch each other play and perform with their shadows. The apparent solidity of both projections was disrupted when a viewer would step in front of the rear projection.

Anything You Can Do (Swing Set), 2000
Made in California: NOW
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA Lab, Los Angeles, CA
Interactive Video Installation, Screen 7.5 x 10 feet, room 20 x 40 feet
AUDIO COLLABORATION: Jimmy Johnson
PHOTO: Jennifer Steinkamp
An interactive swing set. As viewers swing on one of two swings, a projected video image and soundtrack changes or swings along. While on the other side of the screen, visitors may respond to the ambient pulse of the piece by casting their dancing shadows upon the screen.
ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

Rice University Art Gallery, Houston, TX, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, curator Kimberley Davenport, 2001

ACEM., Los Angeles, CA, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, 2000

Front Street Experience, Los Angeles, CA, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, 2000

Williamson Gallery, Pasadena, CA, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, curator Stephen Nowlin, 2000

Henny Art Gallery, Seattle, WA, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, curator Cheng Cao, 1999

greengrasstr, London, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, 1999

ACEM., Los Angeles, CA, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, 1998

In One Gallery, Chicago, IL, soundtrack Grain, 1997

Bravin Post Lee, New York, NY, soundtrack Grain, 1997


ACEM., Santa Monica, CA, soundtrack Bryan Brown, 1995

Bravin Post Lee, New York, NY, soundtrack Grain, 1995

Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, LACE @ LACE, Hollywood, CA, 1994

ACEM., Santa Monica, CA, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, 1994

FOOD HOUSE, Santa Monica, CA, 1993

The Santa Monica Museum of Art and Bliss House, Santa Monica and Pasadena, CA, 1989

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Parallels and Intersections, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA, curators Diana Burgess Fuller and Jochen Lenet, 2002

Beau Monde, SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, curator Dave Hickey, 2001

COLA, City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Award, The Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA, 2001

One Wall, Orange County Museum of Art, New Port Beach, CA, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, curator Christopher Milles, 2001


Wonderland, Saint Louis Art Museum, MO, soundtrack Andrew Buckberg, curator Rachelle Steiner, 2000

Videodrome, New Museum, New York, NY, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, curator Dan Cameron, 1999

Works on Paper, ACEM., Los Angeles, CA, 1999

POSTMARK, SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM, curators Bruce W. Ferguson and Louis Grachos, 1999

Local Color, University of La Verne, La Verne, CA, curator Virginia Rutledge, 1999

L.A. on Paper, Galerie Kringenberg, Vienna, Austria, curator David Muller, 1998

Ultra Lounge, Diversesworks Atospace, Houston, TX, soundtrack Andrew Buckberg, curator Dave Hickey, 1998

PUBLIC WORKS

Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, CA, soundtrack Andrew Buckberg, curator Carrie Ann Alm-Klarrström, 1998


Spot Making Sense, Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO, curator David Paget, 1997

Club Media, 47th Biennale of Venice, Venice, Italy, 1997

Sunshine & Noise, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, curators Lars Nittve and Bente Cremon. Travelled: Kunstverein Wolfsburg, Germany, 1997; The Armory Show, New York, 1997

A&A, Odegardskallest Bildgalleriet, Lyngby, Germany, curator Michalis Kapinos, 1997

TRUE.BLISS., Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Hollywood, CA, curators Ken Riddle and Mike Mehrling, 1997


Videonale 7, Bonn Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany, curators Rosamund Altman Catrin Bachska, 1996


A Drawing, Bravin Post Lee, New York, NY, 1995

Digital Mediations, Williamson Gallery, Pasadena, CA, curator Stephen Nowlin, 1995

Video-Forum, Art Zeit, Basel, Basel, Switzerland, 1995

Quarters, Bravin Post Lee, New York, NY, 1995


Photography and the Photograph, California Museum of Photography, Riverside, CA, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, curator Amelia Jones, 1994

Bad Girls, UCLA Witt Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, curators Maria Tucker and Marica Iannone, 1994

Sugar 'n Spice, LAX 94 @ LACE, Hollywood, CA, 1994


Performance and Screenings

Elevation Tour, U2 international concert tour, 2001

On the Edge, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, soundtrack Jimmy Johnson, 2000


TRITE, SITE Santa Fe, with Micro International, Santa Fe, NM, 1997

PDpport, U2 international concert tour, 1997-98

Circa06, with Grain, Grand Olympic, Los Angeles, CA, 1996

PUBLICATIONS


Rochelle Steiner, Wonderland, (Saint Louis, MO: Saint Louis Art Museum, 2000).


Dave Hickey, David Pagel, Artprice, CDROM/Artjournal (Houston, TX: Prop Foundation, 1999).

Bruce W. Ferguson, Louis Grachos, POSTMARK (Santa Fe, NM: SITE Santa Fe, 1999).

Dave Hickey, Ultra Lounge (Houston, TX: Diversesworks, 1998).


David Pagel, Spot Making Sense (Kansas City, KS: Grand Arts, 1997).

Roxanne Assatlian, Catlin Backhaus, Visible Man 7 (Bonn, Germany: Bonn Kunstverein, 1996).

FELLOWSHIPS

COLA, City of Los Angeles Individual Artists Fellowship Award, Los Angeles, CA, 2000-01

City of Los Angeles Arts Commission Grant, Las Vegas, NV, 2001

NEA Project grant, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, CA, 1998

NEA grant, Henny Art Gallery, Seattle, WA, 1997

Art Center College of Design, Digital Media Grant, Pasadena, CA, 1997

Getty Individual Grant, Los Angeles, CA, 1996

Art Matters Inc., New York, NY, 1996

NEA, New Langton Arts Grant, San Francisco, CA, 1996

Art Matters Inc., New York, NY, 1994

FAR Resources Grant, Los Angeles, CA, 1994

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

EMP, Experience Music Project, Seattle, WA

Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

EMP, Experience Music Project, Seattle, WA

Staples Center, Los Angeles, CA

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA

Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL

JENNIFER STEINKAMP

Music Published as Grain

True Zer0s, Fragrant Music, 1998.


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One song: the other saw., 2001

Curating of Jennifer Steinkamp and Jimmy Johnson Commission, Rice University Art Gallery

Flutter Flutter, 1996

Courtesy of Jennifer Steinkamp and ACEM., Los Angeles

RICE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

is located in the Sewall Hall on the campus of Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005, and on the web at www.rice.edu/rag

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Woosumie and Armstrong

perform and record with the electronic group Elinair, which has released numerous recordings on the label Fragm.

Composer Jimmy Johnson works in the fields of music and sound production, remixing and editing. Johnson

An experimental and interdisciplinary performer, Johnson is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Design | Media Arts at UCLA.

Art and media, and the 1987 Venice Biennale. His is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Design | Media Arts at UCLA.

Gwen Steinkamp works with new media and video to explore aesthetic and spatial motion.

Artis Jennifer Steinkamp

Her work is in the permanent collection of several museums including

the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, CA and the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

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