

# Art in America

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The Climate Crisis Demands That We Collaborate with Other Species. These Artists  
Are Showing Us How.

By *Emily Watlington*

December 6, 2023 7:00am

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Anne Duk Hee Jordan: *Disembodiment*, 2012.  
COURTESY ANNE DUK HEE JORDAN

**IN THE EARLY 1980s**, artist Garnett Puett “kind of ran away,” as he told me on Zoom, from his life in rural Georgia, where his family had kept bees for four generations. He set his eyes on the New York art world, arriving as an MFA student at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Up North, he was disinclined to talk about his childhood beekeeping, assuming

the artsy sophisticates he rubbed elbows with would find it hickish. In his sculpture class, however, Puett found a new use for his knowledge when he was introduced to a traditional bronze technique called lost wax casting. Wax was a material he knew well. But put off by the plasticine waxes sculptors typically use, he started working with beeswax instead, undeterred by a professor's warning that it would be trickier to control.

Soon enough, he started sculpting with beeswax instead of using it to make molds. And shortly thereafter, he began collaborating with bees directly. He built steel and wooden armatures, then covered them in beeswax, which naturally attracts honey bees. The insects then deposited wax and honeycombs of their own, building up the surfaces and forms. He had bees sent to him in the city, and told me that "before 9/11, you could ship 20 pounds of live bees by US Mail." He called the finished works "apisculpture."



Garnett Puett: *Mr. Zivic*, 1986.  
COURTESY HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Before he could even finish his MFA, the apisculptures made a splash. Works he showed in a 1985 group exhibition at Grace Borgenicht Gallery received a glowing review from legendary critic Gary Indiana, a write-up in *People Magazine*, and then, in 1987, had the honor of landing snapshots in a rare *New Yorker* issue to include photographs. The second apisculpture he ever made, at age 26, titled *Mr. Zivic* (1986), was promptly acquired by the Hirschhorn Museum. Gallerygoers were perhaps somewhat overexcited; a visitor took a bite out of a sculpture at that 1985 opening, hungry for honeycomb.

Now this was the hyper-commercialized and sensationalist art world of the 1980s. There was little room for work so subtle and sincere. “The gallery system ... was like a treadmill,” Puett recalled. His dealer helped him figure out how to make the works more archival, more market friendly: once the bees were done sculpting, he started freezing and sterilizing the wax forms, then showing them in glass cases, where no one would mistake them for snacks. Suddenly, they were collectible. But still, Puett was showing and lecturing alongside peers like Jeff Koons and Anish Kapoor, who made big shiny sculptures that gobbled up the art world’s attention.

When Puett’s dealer pushed him to work on the larger scale popular among his peers, he had to explain that that isn’t how bees work. A swarm of 100,000 bees is the size of a mini fridge, he told me. “That’s a lot of bees. That’s a lot of energy. Those little brains are, collectively, doing a lot of work.” Even if you get “a swarm the size of a Volkswagen Beetle, they won’t necessarily make something bigger or better.” He was also pressured to make the works more attractive—“they really do look like pieces of chicken,” he admitted—and to cast them in bronze. But this ran against the spirit of the project. Bees were his collaborators, not tools. “They might just swarm out and go somewhere else,” he said, and that’s their choice. Besides, these weren’t sculptures for the human eye alone. “They’re not meant to be beautiful.”



Garnett Puett: *Soul Spur*, 1996–2016.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK

All the attention had seemed encouraging at first: Puett hoped that it might benefit the bees, and finally correct their reputation as vicious stingers. (This was before they'd been declared endangered, before they became a species to save.) Honeybees, he said, "are nice, fuzzy little animals" who sting far less frequently than people think. They are also the only insect that humans have domesticated, besides silkworms. He hoped too that his work might encourage urbanites to reconnect with nature. His apisculptures often took the shape of human figures because he wanted to create an image of the hive overtaking the individual, nature overtaking humans.

But then Puett learned that all the while, his art dealer had been getting "someone to fly over his whole [residential] compound and spray insecticide every spring ... even as he was promoting a bee artist!" And with that, he left the commercial art world, participating only in the occasional museum project. In 1995 he gave up on New York, leaving his \$400 per month waterfront Williamsburg loft for full-time beekeeping in Hawaii. He now operates



one of the largest certified organic honey farms in the United States, caring for 2,000 colonies.

**UNTIL VERY RECENTLY,** interspecies artistic collaborations have been few and far between. If such collaborations made headlines, it was for the shock factor, and more often than not, constituted outright animal abuse. The most notorious examples have enlisted not insects, but furry friends. In 1974 Joseph Beuys locked himself in a room with a coyote for three days for a performance that became iconic, titled *I Like America and America Likes Me*. Three years later, Tom Otterness shot and killed a shelter dog for a film before reinventing himself as a whimsical sculptor whose plump bronze figures now bumble about New York's 14th Street subway station. Then, in 2007, Otterness apologized and called *Shot Dog Film* "indefensible." The 2003 video *Dogs That Cannot Touch Each Other* by Sun Yuan and Peng Yu shows dogs harnessed on treadmills, trying to run toward one another; it was removed from a 2017 exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum after protests led by animal rights activists. And Eduardo Kac claimed, in 2000, to have had a rabbit named Alba genetically engineered using extracted green fluorescent protein from a jellyfish to make her glow. Alba was never seen publicly, so some are skeptical. Still, Kac was accused of "playing God."

These works aren't so much collaborations as efforts to enlist animals as artistic materials or playthings, as symbols serving human-centered narratives. But as the climate crisis lays bare the devastating consequences of this anthropocentric approach to nonhuman life forms, artists like Jenna Sutela, Beatriz Cortez, and Candice Lin choose methods more like Puett's and other eco artists': they invite other species in as contributors or collaborators who might add their own perspectives. They are working with other species in order to ask how we might ethically and responsibly collaborate and cohabitate.

Evolutionary biologist Lynn Margulis tends to get the credit for helping artists and thinkers understand just how urgent interspecies collaboration really is. She argued against Darwin's theory of evolution—which hinges on the survival of the fittest—and showed that instead, life-forms have coevolved interdependently. We humans, for example, don't make our own food the way photosynthesizing plants do. We rely on and enable the thriving of other species; we don't just compete and conquer. Margulis was dubbed the "patron saint" of a recent exhibition at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, "Symbionts: Contemporary Artists and the Biosphere," by cocurator Caroline A. Jones. In the catalogue, Jones asked: "If we are dependent on other living entities to survive, how should we acknowledge and honor that affiliation? How shall we live with responsibility and reciprocity in mind?"



Exhibition view of “Symbionts: Contemporary Artists and the Biosphere,” MIT List Visual Arts Center, 2022.

PHOTO DARIO LASAGNI/COURTESY MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER

“Symbionts” is one of several recent landmark exhibitions ushering in this new era of interspecies art. It joins blockbuster shows by interspecies artists like Tomás Saraceno and Pierre Huyghe. Anicka Yi’s breakthrough exhibition in New York at the Kitchen in 2015 involved bottled fragrances that the bio art icon made from swabs taken from 100 women in the art world. Yi merged bacterial cultures with high culture. And for the grand finale of the most recent Venice Biennale’s main exhibition, kudzu and sugarcane slowly enrobed sculptural figures in an installation by Precious Okoyomon that grew throughout the course of the show.

**HUMANS HAVE BEEN OBLIVIOUSLY** shaping the evolution of other species for millennia. Aurochs, the progenitor of modern cattle, are extinct, ironically due to diseases introduced by domestic livestock (not to mention hunting). Domestic felines learned to meow in order to catch the ear of human caretakers. And though lantern flies are labeled an “invasive species,” it is humans who, by cargo boat, brought them to the United States, where they now threaten trees and crops. Interspecies relationships enable life at all scales: each human carries around 10–100 trillion microbial (nonhuman) cells; they are our symbionts. Margulis and other scientists have argued that multicellular beings (such as humans) exist today thanks to ancient symbiotic relations among single-celled organisms that, by merging, created new species. This process is called “endosymbiosis.”

Which is to say that we are constantly collaborating with other species, whether we realize it or not. Interspecies relationships are scientific fact, but, being relationships, they are

cultural and social too. That is why we need artists to help us navigate and model these emotional and relational terrains fraught with imbalance.

Among these artistic models, Anne Duk Hee Jordan's stand out. Her work draws attention to the ways other organisms inhabit our everyday life. Growing up, Jordan "was always with animals," she told me on Zoom. Now based in Berlin, she was adopted from Korea and raised in the German countryside, where she "didn't like people so much, especially in the area I grew up in ... they were really racist, and I was the only Asian person besides my brother." Kids called her "rice-eater" and "slits." So she hung out with the family dog and the chickens, and even befriended an injured wild crow. At 27, she enrolled in Berlin Kunsthochschule, where she studied under the climate artist Olafur Eliasson.



Anne Duk Hee Jordan: *Culo con Papa*, 2021.  
PHOTO THETA.COOL

Before art school, Jordan, whose Korean name means "goddess of the sea," worked as a rescue diver. Underwater, she grew fascinated by the sea cucumber—a scavenger that isn't considered very intelligent, but is, in a sense, immortal. This is true in that there is no evidence that sea cucumbers die of old age, but only from accidents or disease. They have come to form symbiotic relationships with certain fish, who hide from predators in the sea cucumber's anus. (Usually, the fish knocks before entering.)

Jordan was inspired by this kind of symbiotic relationship when she started her project "Disembodiment" in 2012. But instead of a fish, she chose to open her own anus to another species with whom she felt a kind of kinship: the potato. The crop, like the artist, thrives in, but is not native to, Germany. Spanish conquistadors brought the Incan crop to Europe, and during a 1774 famine, Prussian King Friedrich II introduced the root vegetable to the Germans; now, it is a dietary staple. Wanting to deepen their relationship based on shared



experiences, Jordan made an animation that shows a potato growing in her butt. This followed a 2011 collaboration called *Compassion*, for which she grew potatoes that she watered not with H<sub>2</sub>O, but with her own blood.

In 2021 Jordan was invited to do a project at the reopening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. Like many others, she had serious reservations about the museum, which houses looted objects from around the world in an Imperialist palace, so she proposed a site-specific version of “Disembodiment” with a budget she said was “like three times higher” than the one allotted. She figured they’d turn it down, and was surprised when they agreed to the version she titled *Culo de Papa*, or ass of papa—in Spanish, *papa* can mean “father” or “potato.” She scanned and 3D-printed 33 copies of her own butt, then turned them into potato planters displayed outside the Humboldt Forum. She chose 33 because it is the most butt-shaped number.



Anne Duk Hee Jordan: *Culo con Papa*, 2021.  
PHOTO THETA.COOL

The Humboldt Forum is housed in a palace once home to a number of Prussian kings, including King Friedrich II, aka the “Potato King” or “Frederick the Great.” Jordan’s project was a cheeky retort to the colonial histories of both the crop and the institution. At the end of the procession of potatoes was a kiosk that distributed postcards detailing the potato’s colonial history. “Visitors were shocked, and they started to scream at me!” she told me on Zoom. “They were like, how dare you! Don’t you know where you are?”

Jordan’s projects cleverly respond to a tendency in art and academic circles to privilege those creatures we consider worthy based on qualities valued in humans, like intelligence and productivity. Tuomas A. Laitinen, for instance, collaborates with puzzle-solving octopi, and Agnieszka Kurant made a series of sculptures with mound-building termites, in a gesture meant to highlight their collective intelligence—and to ask how we humans might learn from their cooperative model. Jordan, by contrast, takes care to honor species like sea cucumbers and potatoes that are regularly dismissed as banal, but are nevertheless worthy of care and attention.

Jordan, whose debut US museum show opens at The Bass in Miami December 4, is inspired, like many interspecies artists, by writer Donna Haraway. In 2019 Jordan made a video installation titled after Haraway’s book *Staying with the Trouble* (2016). The artist’s version tells the speculative story of a five-generation, symbiogenetic relationship between monarch butterflies and humankind. Jordan’s communing with other species is echoed in Haraway’s influential 2007 book *When Species Meet*, where the author critiques philosophical, theoretical, and overly intellectualized accounts of interspecies relations that forgo everyday acts of care. She notes that in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offer a theory of “becoming animal,” then add that “anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool,” as if interspecies care were too sentimental to be serious. She also pokes fun at Jacques Derrida, who once wrote a philosophical essay about his fear of being naked in front of his cat.

In an art world where interspecies collaborations get framed as intellectual or scientific endeavors, Jordan’s humble care for ordinary species stands apart. Her work is that of someone who has spent time with other creatures in everyday ways, like Puett with his bees. As it happens, Puett has decided to return to the art world. He has a new dealer—Jack Shainman Gallery—and plans to show new work next year at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, as part of the sprawling, multimillion-dollar Getty-funded initiative called Pacific Standard Time, with the theme “Art & Science Collide.” He’ll show 3D-printed armatures, and visitors will be able to watch the bees work throughout the show’s run, as they fabricate sculptures depicting humans carving sticks and making clay pots. “You know,” he said, “humanity before the algorithm.”





© GARNETT PUETT. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK



JACK SHAINMAN THE SCHOOL / KINDERHOOK

### A CHANGE OF PLACE: FOUR SOLO EXHIBITIONS

OPENS 22 MAY

Jack Shainman hosts its sixth exhibition in the gallery's upstate space in Kinderhook, New York. The show, celebrating the second anniversary of The School, includes four artists, all of whom explore subjects of memory, conflict, tragedy and nature. Included in the exhibition are Pierre Dorion's realist paintings which use colour and shadows to create a striking level of depth and spatial awareness, and Garnett Puett's beeswax 'apisculptures' (*apis* is the Latin word for bee) which are produced by letting tens of thousands of the insects live on structured metal frames, covering them in wax. The other two

artists are thematically connected in terms of their references to conflict and war: Hayv Kahraman uses sirens to encourage the audience to empathize with her memories of war, whereas Richard Mosse's infrared photographs of soldiers in the Eastern Congo add a surreal pinkness to the landscape of violence.

Bio: Jack Shainman Gallery opened its third space—30,000-square-foot 'The School'—in upstate New York in 2014. Its aim, as with all the Shainman spaces, is 'to exhibit, represent and champion artists from around the world, in particular artists from Africa, East Asia, and North America'.

Something else you should know: Garnett Puett is a fourth-generation beekeeper.

Quote: 'Congo is regarded as one of the first places in which photography became a powerful humanitarian force'—Richard Mosse. [jackshainman.com](http://jackshainman.com)

**Top left**  
Garnett Puett  
*Honey Scoop*  
Beeswax, wood,  
steel and found  
object in glass box  
on a steel base  
16.5 x 35.6 x 35.6cm

# ARTNEWS

## BEE SCULPTURES AND PSYCHEDELIC LANDSCAPES: A DAY AT JACK SHAINMAN'S UPSTATE VENTURE, THE SCHOOL

BY *Robin Scher* POSTED 05/25/16 1:47 PM



Jack Shainman: The School.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

"I feel so blessed to be able to do this each year," said gallerist Jack Shainman this past Sunday, during a tour of The School, his 30,000 square-foot exhibition space inside a former high school in Kinderhook, New York. The scattering of press followed Shainman as he led us into the building for a trip around this summer's assemblage of art, "A Change of Place," the third seasonal show to grace the gallery's upstate annex since its founding in 2014.

Glass enclosures housing honeycomb-encrusted metallic shapes occupy the school's foyer. These so-called "apisculptures" are the work of Garnett Puett, a beekeeper with 2000 active hives in Hawaii. "I'm four generations into beekeeping so it comes naturally to me, working with the bees," Puett said. Later, Shainman would take us to a room upstairs where Garnett had two pieces, each a "collaboration" with 30,000 bees. "They all get along in harmony, they're all women, they never fight," Shainman offered as reassurance.



Installation view of Garnett Puett's  
"Geometric Arm 1", 1989.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

Puett coats his geometrical structures in beeswax, provides some sugar-water and a queen for the colony, and then lets nature do the rest. I asked him how he knows the bees' work is complete. "It's sort of like baking bread," said Puett. "Sometimes it's a few weeks, sometimes a month." One of these works, a cabinet with three guns inside of it, was already half-engulfed in honeycomb after just a week. A rogue bee on the wrong side of the cabinet inspired my next question: Has your art ever killed anyone?

"No," Puett nervously laughed.

Downstairs from the bees, Irish-born artist Richard Mosse's photos were on prominent display. The first of two bodies of Mosse's work on show is a series he completed in 2009 showing members of the US-military within the former palaces of deposed Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein.

"I'm starting to feel like I'm in Charlie and the Chocolate factory," said Shainman, continuing to lead the tour with a spirited step as we whizzed past these images, stopping briefly to admire another wall of portraits by Malian photographer Malick Sidibe, before making our way down to a large atrium, which formerly housed the school's gymnasium.



Installation view of Richard Mosse's "Everything Merges With the Night", 2015.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

A massive photograph of a sprawling valley in the Eastern Congo region takes up most of the atrium's back wall. Masked in psychedelic hues of pink, Mosse created this image along with the rest in the series, titled "Infra," with Kodak Aerochrome, a discontinued infrared film used by the military for reconnaissance missions.

Mosse explained his use of the film as an attempt to capture something "otherworldly." In this instance, the history of violence baked into the land after decades of political turmoil and outbreaks of the Ebola virus. "You can't see the traces of it," said Mosse. "So it's really about the topography but [the image] also highlights the shortcomings of the camera and my frustration with myself."

In a later conversation with Mosse, he told me more about his experience taking the work back to the Congo last year as part of the Salaam Kivu International Film Festival. "It was a completely

different set of value judgements to what we'd been used to in the West," said Mosse, recalling the reactions. "A lot of people also were very unsatisfied because it didn't show a positive side to the Congo and [they] wanted to know why the fuck I did them." This seemed like a fair question to ask. "That's the thing about my work," he said, "it's got a vague purpose but it's not trying to spoon feed you information. It's about asking questions rather than answering them."

The final stop on the tour found us facing paintings commissioned specifically for the space by Canadian artist Pierre Dorion. In lieu of any actual physical descriptions of The School, I'll defer to Dorion's paintings, which the artist himself described to us as being in "dialogue" with their surroundings, "not only pictorially, but in terms of mood, atmosphere, colors, and everything."



Installation view of Pierre Dorion's "Screen I & II", 2016.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY



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ART WORLD

## The Week in Art: The Frick Garden Party and ArtsConnection Honors Lena Dunham

Sarah Cascone, Saturday, May 28, 2016

### Celebration for "A Change of Place" at Jack Shainman the School

Jack Shainman welcomed the public to his 30,000-square-foot Kinderhook, New York, outpost on May 22. "A Change of Place" is the sixth show in the space, which opened in a converted high school in 2014. The exhibition offers solo shows from four artists: Richard Mosse, who shoots pinked-hued photos with Kodak's discontinued infrared Aerochrome film; Garnett Puett, who enlists bees to complete his sculptures; Hayv Kahraman, who draws on 13th-century Baghdadi illuminated manuscripts for inspiration in her paintings on linen; and Pierre Dorion, who creates illusionistic painting based on photographs of the School.

On hand for the occasion were guests including the Glenn Lowry, director of New York's Museum of Modern Art; JiaJia Fei, the director of digital of New York's Jewish Museum; collectors Nancy Olnick and Giorgio Spanu; and artists Barkley L. Hendricks, Brad Kahlhamer, and Hank Willis Thomas.



Work by Richard Mosse at Jack Shainman: the School opening celebration for "A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions." Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery/ BFA, Zach Hilty.



# The New York Times

## Luxury Foosball, a Spicy Cocktail, and a Revised Carry-On From Armani

By ALEX TUDELA MAY 5, 2016



Credit Jeremy Lawson

### Field Trips

## Kinderhook Calls

It seems almost unnatural, to go to school when the weather heats up, but the [Jack Shainman Gallery](#), which has two locations in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, hopes you will consider the idea. The gallery's far-flung annex, in a large brick public-school building constructed in 1929, in Kinderhook, N.Y., will kick off its new season this month with a show called "A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions." The featured artists are the photographer [Richard Mosse](#), the sculptor [Garnett Puett](#) and the painters [Pierre Dorion](#) and [Hayv Kahraman](#). On May 22, the day of the opening, the gallery will provide round-trip transportation by bus, leaving from 513 West 20th Street. [Reserve your seat](#) early.

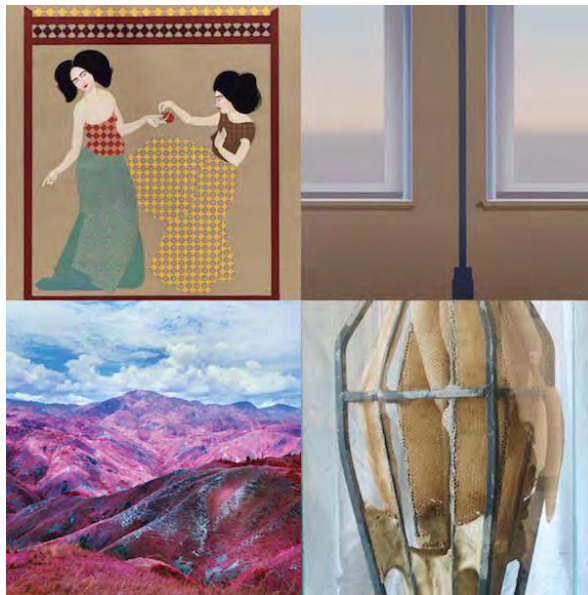
*"A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions," from May 22, at Jack Shainman Gallery: The School, 25 Broad Street, Kinderhook, N.Y.*

# NEW YORK OBSERVER

## Weekend Edition: 7 Things To Do in New York's Art World Before May 23

By Ryan Steadman • 05/19/16 4:00pm

SUNDAY, MAY 22



A sampling of the four artists that will be on view at The School in Kinderhook, NY. Photo: Courtesy of Jack Shainman

### Opening: A celebration for “A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions” at The School

In honor of two fine years in existence, Chelsea dealer Jack Shainman's 30,000-square-foot brain baby known as The School will host a Sunday celebration, complete with food, drink and plenty of adorable artists. You'll also be able to see four very interesting shows in this renovated Kinderhook, N.Y. schoolhouse from artists Pierre Dorion, Hayv Kahraman, Richard Mosse and Garnett Puett. And the best part? Admission is free and the event is open to the public! I can't think of a better way to spend a Sunday, can you?

The School, 25 Broad Street, Kinderhook, New York, 2-6 p.m.

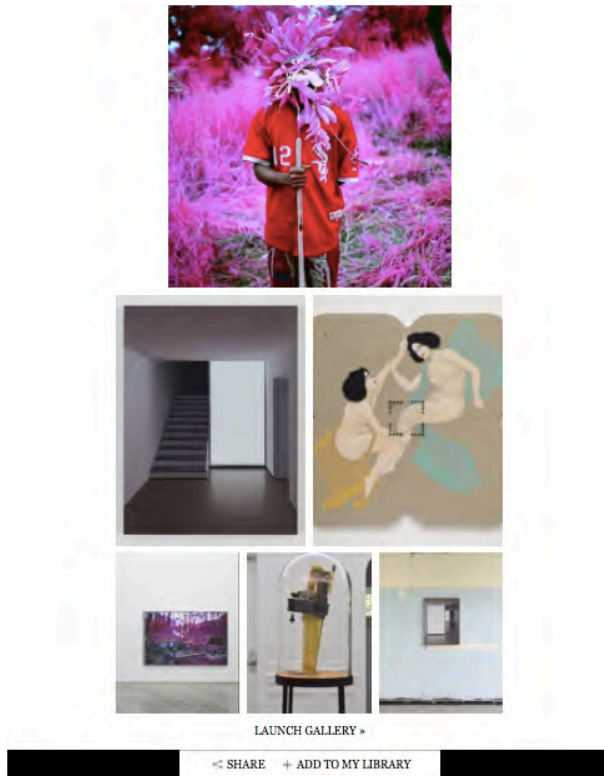
# Interview

FASHION

## *ALTERING SPACE AND FORMING PLACE AT THE SCHOOL*

By *HALEY WEISS* Published

05/23/16



Initiating a dialogue between four artists of diverting origins and mediums, "A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions" opened yesterday at Jack Shainman Gallery's The School, a converted schoolhouse two hours outside of Manhattan in Kinderhook, New York. With works ranging from Pierre Dorion's quietly evocative, minimalist site-specific paintings to Richard Mosse's surreal infrared photographs of the Democratic Republic of Congo's scarred landscape, the four-fold show covers vast territory, but its atmosphere remains constant: introspective, unselfish, and challenging.

To call the practice of each included artist (Dorion and Mosse, plus Hayv Kahraman and Garnett Puetz) unique would be accurate, albeit an oversimplification. As a painter keenly aware of formalism, Dorion has created works based on the exhibition spaces in which he shows for the

last 10 years. After photographing the space, he reconstructs each image with his brush and a canvas, intimating how space forms experience. Through sculpture, audio, and painting, Hayv Kahraman elicits her experience as a refugee who fled Iraq as a child. Her recent paintings—perhaps most aptly classified as sonic shields—depict nude women and are delicately pierced, allowing pyramids of acoustic foam to poke through the surface, altering and absorbing the sound of the surrounding space. The results pose a formidable counterpoint to the sirens of war. Mosse's photographs also emerge from the violence of war, as he shot in Iraq during its occupation by the United States military, as well as among sectarian violence in the Congo for the last five years. For Garnett Puett, a beekeeper by trade, the show marks a return to the art world and an opportunity to revisit his "apisculptures," sculptural armatures upon which bees have worked, forming their signature geometric comb. Puett also allows bees to enter and exit beehives inside the gallery through holes in the wall (he will technically be working throughout the show's duration). As a whole, the varied works and artistic practices suggest a multifaceted understanding of place and, furthermore, how it may emerge out of space.

Prior to the opening, we spoke with each artist to learn more about their origins.

**PIERRE DORION** BORN: 1959 in Ottawa, Canada

BASED: Montreal, Canada

**SPACE AS SUBJECT:** My subjects are always the spaces in between, those kinds of spaces that are easy to overlook because you're going to a gallery to focus on the art object, the installation, or whatever is there. I'm looking at the absence of the art object and the space that's in between in [those] visits, like the architecture.

**MY FIRST PAINTINGS WERE BASED ON...** photos from the 19th century, from Nadar. They were historical figures borrowed from that body of work. This was almost 40 years ago, but I think it's quite close to what I do now. I was interested in some abstract approaches to figuration or images, and also the presence of the history of painting or the history of making images and photographic practices, and those concerns are still pretty present in my work. At the time I was using portraits—the human figure. Now the figure is absent but its [absence] is still perceptible in those spaces.

**BECOMING SITE-SPECIFIC:** A long time ago, 30 years ago, maybe more than that, I was creating installations using the whole architectural setting I was exhibiting in as support material. At that time I would really invest the whole space with paint, with my work, my paintings, but I would also paint on the walls, the ceiling, and everything, creating a kind of fictional, cultural space—a fictional art gallery or maybe a fictional artist studio. It was more postmodern and in tune with the kind of art that was happening at that time, and it was also a distanced way to approach painting with a bit of irony but without dwelling too much on the practice. From those installations, I started to work very closely every time with the space that I was going to have an exhibition at.

**THE SCHOOL:** I was very intrigued by the fact that there are these two classrooms that have been more or less been left in their original state. They moved all the accessories, all the blackboards and everything, but you can see the traces of the past of those rooms. It's in contrast with the very designed, white cube, contemporary architecture look of the rest of the space. I wanted to have those two aspects cohabit in my installation.

**REMEMBRANCE...** is a constant interest in my work—a strange presence of absence, in a way.

**HAYV KAHRAMAN** BORN: 1981 in Baghdad, Iraq

BASED: Los Angeles, California

**THE SIRENS:** The trigger was this sonic memory I have of growing up in Baghdad, and that was the sound of the sirens. The siren is basically a warning for an air raid. Whenever we'd be hit by air raids and bombs, etcetera, the siren would start. This was during the Gulf War in Iraq, so in 1991. Come to think of it, I've heard that sound throughout my life and childhood because the Iran-Iraq war actually started when I was four. My parents, when I asked them about the sound of the sirens, they recall having me as a little baby driving in the car in Baghdad and hearing that sound, and just completely panicking and driving into an alleyway, ducking in the back seat of the car holding me underneath them, waiting for it to go away. My experience, I wouldn't say was that traumatic. I was nine, 10 years old and heard it and remember running inside and we would just take cover, basically.

**RESISTANCE:** Sound waves shift around the surface of the [foam] pyramids and then they disperse. I started incorporating the foam into the canvas work by cutting the linen and having the foam penetrate from the back to the front. That act of surgically slicing through the linen was cathartic. There was a resistance there to the whole idea of war. That action was really significant. The paintings became objects that would alter the sound of the space they're in; they're not just paintings hanging on the wall.

**SEEING HERSELF IN HER WORK:** My work is very, very personal and autobiographical. Being a refugee going to Sweden—that's where we fled to during the [Gulf] War—I felt that I had to somehow assimilate and leave myself behind in order to be able to survive, to blend in, and become one of them. When you do that, you lose yourself somewhat and these are teenage years, so add that to the mix, all the hormones and everything. I've also been through an abusive marriage and I think the violence in the way that the body is dismembered [in my work] probably also stems from that. I remember when I first moved to the U.S. and I was still married in that abusive relationship, I started painting these figures. The subject matter was female genital mutilation, honor killings, and beheadings—really violent things—and my mom would call me from Sweden and say, "Hayv, are you okay? What's going on?" I'd say, "Well, yes, I'm fine, I just feel an affinity with these women, with their stories." At the time I was in denial about what I was going through and a lot of it surfaced in the work and still does. The dismemberment is very personal in that sense, but a lot of the subject matter and the theories are very research-based.

**THE IDEA OF PLACE...** obviously is very loaded, especially for me having left my home, moved places, and being of this nomadic [experience]. It carries a lot. If you were to ask me where my home is, I wouldn't know what to answer. I would never be able to say I'm an American; Iraqi-American does not feel right; I'm almost more comfortable saying an Iraqi-Swede but that's also incorrect at this point in my life. If I say I'm Iraqi, how Iraqi am I? It's really problematic. My parents left at an older age so they have a sense of an archive of memories from that place and that time that I don't have—mine are very limited. In a way, that's probably why I obsess about them in my work. My work deals with memories, archiving them, and reliving them. I miss [Iraq] but I'm a foreigner and I would be a stranger in Iraq. And what do I really miss? It's really a memory that I miss.

**RICHARD MOSSE** BORN: 1980 in Kilkenny, Ireland

BASED: Brooklyn, New York



BEING A "CONCEPTUAL DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHER": I do think conceptual art tends to be very dry, and sometimes even approaching emotionless; there's no space for emotion. It's almost like emotion is a very dirty thing. That's the only place I think that the term "conceptual documentary photographer" may not be the most accurate [way to describe me]. But at the same time I wouldn't want to be called a romantic, either.

THE LAST TRIP, FOR NOW: This show is sort of a finishing point, a summing up. I wouldn't say a conclusion, but it's a final show in some respects, at least emotionally for me. I went back to Congo last May, June, and July to bring [back] *The Enclave*, which is a multi-screen video installation that I made. I'd shown it around Europe at various museums and at a few museums in the U.S. and Australia, so it had a good run, but I didn't feel like I could really say I'd finished the project or completed the circle until I brought that work back to Congo. It was a very symbolic thing to do, really, but it was also the right thing to do—to bring the thing back home and show the subjects the work that I'd made of them in their landscape. It was not without risk as well, as you can imagine in a place beset by war crimes, intimidation, and all kinds of conflict; the war in eastern Congo [makes it] quite an unstable place. In the end, it worked really well and no one got killed, no one was hurt, it was very well received—not by everybody, there was a lot of criticism from certain people, but a lot of people responded well to it. We had visits from groups of former child soldiers who recognized it and had fought in the remote locations where we'd shot. There was a real sense of catharsis for people like that and even moto-taxi drivers just came in, they'd heard there was a free show, and they were overwhelmed emotionally when they came out. I'd love to go back in 10 years on a holiday, but my heart is in a different place. It does feel like a while ago, Congo, for me; it feels like it's in the past even though it's not that long ago since I was there.

8 X 10 CAMERA: It's still my best friend. It's the person I go to when I'm feeling my most blue and it knows all of my inner secrets. [laughs] It's a very beautiful tool, like a fly fishing rod. It's very simple, in a way, very pure. I'm never letting that go.

THE HUMAN CONDITION: I've met a lot of war criminals in Congo, shook a lot of hands with blood on them, and everyone's got a side, everyone's got a story to tell; even the ones that are deeply suspicious of photographers or the press, and who are regarded as pariahs, even they have their side of the story, their historical narrative. We're talking about people who carried out the Rwandan genocide, who live deep in the bush in Congo or are hiding from their own acts and have nowhere to go. The victims of conflict tend to have this extraordinary sense of not just gregariousness but also a sense of the world that we in the West don't understand—a sense of the absurd. That sounds very flippant, I don't mean they have a great sense of humor, I mean that they understand the world in a very different way than people who are not used to living with tragedy. In the most miserable refugee camps, kids are completely overwhelmed with joy, and it's amazing, actually, how much survival instinct there is, how much people can deal with.

**GARNETT PUETT** BORN: 1959 in Hahira, Georgia

BASED: Kona, Hawaii

NUMBER OF BEES ABUZZ: 30,000

A RETURN: I pulled out of the art gallery scene in the mid to late '90s. For this show I worked on several pieces that I never finished in the '90s that I've had stored. I had a chance to finish them and repair a couple that got damaged in transit years ago. [I've] re-birthed them actually—that's sort of what this show is all about. It's great to finally get the time to come and do this.

**A FOURTH GENERATION BEEKEEPER:** We were beekeepers in south Georgia during the gold rush of queen breeding. The queen is very essential to the hive and my great-grandfather started producing queens at about the turn of the century, around 1910 or 1920. I got my first hive for my birthday at five years old. I'd go out there and get startled—it was an adventure. Once you work with bees and have been stung hundreds of thousands of times, you have no fear and it's just like a boxer getting punched; one punch isn't going to do it. I learned that immediately, I think the four generations bred that into me. I tried to get away from it after working with bees all of my childhood and teenager years; I went to college and threw the whole bee world away for the art world, but obviously I couldn't get away from it. I went through the process of doing hundreds of pieces and that whole process just got me back to my innate knowledge of bees from when I was five years old. I sort of went full circle in my life.

**DAY-TO-DAY:** I'm doing 95 percent honey production. We produce probably 400,000 pounds of honey per year. When I get time I go and work on the sculptural work.

**THE HIVE:** Once they're installed with the queen and the feed in the [sculptural] form, they want to go out and forage to bring in pollen and nectar. They'll fly just a few feet at first, and then a few yards, and it'll end up being maybe half a mile that they'll fly and come back. They navigate themselves and want to come back to that queen, that's one of the keys to it. I design for the scale of the sculpture so I know what kind of comb building they'll do and where they're going to do it, so I lead them that way. They go their natural way but with direction—just like with a normal hive, you have wooden frames that you can pull out of the hive. It's the same technology; we're leading them into a form that they do their natural work on.

**NATURE IN MIND:** I wanted people to be aware that these bees are out there—they're living, they're dying. I knew this was a way to get people focused on the environment. I was interacting with the bees in this collaboration, and I wasn't doing it for honey production or the commercial aspects of bee keeping. I was actually working with them very closely and giving them a nice place and a good notoriety, and making people more aware of how fascinating bees are.

*"A CHANGE OF PLACE: FOUR SOLO EXHIBITIONS" IS CURRENTLY ON VIEW AT [THE SCHOOL IN KINDERHOOK, NEW YORK](#) AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC EVERY SATURDAY.*

# ARTNEWS

## BEE SCULPTURES AND PSYCHEDELIC LANDSCAPES: A DAY AT JACK SHAINMAN'S UPSTATE VENTURE, THE SCHOOL

BY *Robin Scher* POSTED 05/25/16 1:47 PM



Jack Shainman: The School.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

“I feel so blessed to be able to do this each year,” said gallerist Jack Shainman this past Sunday, during a tour of The School, his 30,000 square-foot exhibition space inside a former high school in Kinderhook, New York. The scattering of press followed Shainman as he led us into the building for a trip around this summer’s assemblage of art, “A Change of Place,” the third seasonal show to grace the gallery’s upstate annex since its founding in 2014.

Glass enclosures housing honeycomb-encrusted metallic shapes occupy the school’s foyer. These so-called “apisculptures” are the work of Garnett Puett, a beekeeper with 2000 active hives in Hawaii. “I’m four generations into beekeeping so it comes naturally to me, working with the bees,” Puett said. Later, Shainman would take us to a room upstairs where Garnett had two pieces, each a “collaboration” with 30,000 bees. “They all get along in harmony, they’re all women, they never fight,” Shainman offered as reassurance.



Installation view of Garnett Puett's  
"Geometric Arm 1", 1989.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

Puett coats his geometrical structures in beeswax, provides some sugar-water and a queen for the colony, and then lets nature do the rest. I asked him how he knows the bees' work is complete. "It's sort of like baking bread," said Puett. "Sometimes it's a few weeks, sometimes a month." One of these works, a cabinet with three guns inside of it, was already half-engulfed in honeycomb after just a week. A rogue bee on the wrong side of the cabinet inspired my next question: Has your art ever killed anyone?

"No," Puett nervously laughed.

Downstairs from the bees, Irish-born artist Richard Mosse's photos were on prominent display. The first of two bodies of Mosse's work on show is a series he completed in 2009 showing members of the US-military within the former palaces of deposed Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein.

"I'm starting to feel like I'm in Charlie and the Chocolate factory," said Shainman, continuing to lead the tour with a spirited step as we whizzed past these images, stopping briefly to admire another wall of portraits by Malian photographer Malick Sidibe, before making our way down to a large atrium, which formerly housed the school's gymnasium.



Installation view of Richard Mosse's "Everything Merges With the Night", 2015.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

A massive photograph of a sprawling valley in the Eastern Congo region takes up most of the atrium's back wall. Masked in psychedelic hues of pink, Mosse created this image along with the rest in the series, titled "Infra," with Kodak Aerochrome, a discontinued infrared film used by the military for reconnaissance missions.

Mosse explained his use of the film as an attempt to capture something "otherworldly." In this instance, the history of violence baked into the land after decades of political turmoil and outbreaks of the Ebola virus. "You can't see the traces of it," said Mosse. "So it's really about the topography but [the image] also highlights the shortcomings of the camera and my frustration with myself."

In a later conversation with Mosse, he told me more about his experience taking the work back to the Congo last year as part of the Salaam Kivu International Film Festival. "It was a completely

different set of value judgements to what we'd been used to in the West," said Mosse, recalling the reactions. "A lot of people also were very unsatisfied because it didn't show a positive side to the Congo and [they] wanted to know why the fuck I did them." This seemed like a fair question to ask. "That's the thing about my work," he said, "it's got a vague purpose but it's not trying to spoon feed you information. It's about asking questions rather than answering them."

The final stop on the tour found us facing paintings commissioned specifically for the space by French-Canadian artist Pierre Dorion. In lieu of any actual physical descriptions of The School, I'll defer to Dorion's paintings, which the artist himself described to us as being in "dialogue" with their surroundings, "not only pictorially, but in terms of mood, atmosphere, colors, and everything."



Installation view of Pierre Dorion's "Screen I & II", 2016.  
COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY



# MUSÉE

VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

MAY 25

## A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions at The School

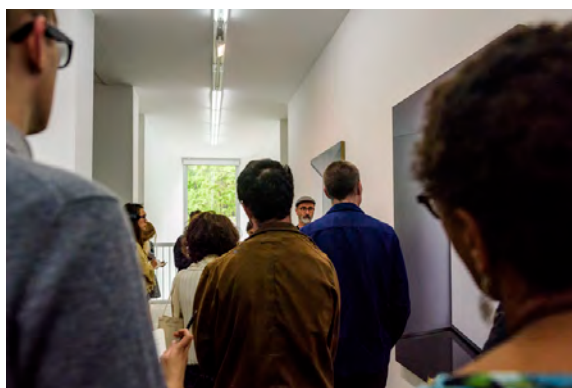
By Karolina Sotomayor



*Image above: © Fernando Sandoval, The School*

On May 22, 2016, Jack Shainman Gallery celebrated The School's second anniversary with the opening of *A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions*. The former high school building's interiors have been reimaged by Spanish architect Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas into white cube-style galleries currently featuring the works of four separate artists whose works revolve around themes of transformation, environment and memory.

The artists accompanied the first visitors on a brief tour through the gallery, speaking of their present and future projects. Nonetheless, it was not all work and no play. After roaming the interiors of The School, visitors enjoyed the sun on the former playground accompanied by music, food and drinks served by whom I discovered to be former students.



*Image above: © Fernando Sandoval, The School*

If you find yourself looking for excuses to get out of the city, the exhibition is worth the two and a half-hour ride from Manhattan. Suffice to say it features Richard Mosse's colossal and breathtaking images of striking magenta landscapes from his ongoing project in Congo, which appear truly sublime and as the artist himself described them, "other-worldly."

The rest of the space is occupied by Garnett Puett's metal structures enveloped in honeycombs, Hayv Kahraman's female nude paintings recalling her childhood memories of the war in Iraq and Pierre Dorion's perfectly symmetrical portraits actually inspired by The School's interiors.



*Image above: © Fernando Sandova, The School*

Despite working with four different mediums, Puett, Mosse, Kahraman and Dorion's works interact and share the exhibition space with unique fluency and coherence.

The School is open on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by appointment. I highly recommend taking a day trip to Kinderhook and experiencing this collective exhibit available throughout all of Summer 2016.



*Image above: © Fernando Sandova, The School*

*Photographs © Fernando Sandova*

*Article © Karolina Sotomayor*

# ARTFORUM

## Bee Season

KINDERHOOK, NEW YORK 05.31.16



Left: Carlos Vega, dealer Jack Shainman, artist Barkley Hendricks, and Susan Hendricks. Right: Antwaun Sargent and Jiajia Fei. (Photos: Zach Hilty/BFA.com)

**TO THE FATHER** of a four-year-old embroiled in the scramble for public pre-K slots, the idea of traveling two hours out of the city on a moist but still promising Sunday morning to attend an exhibition opening at a school felt distinctly masochistic. Should I be packing medical forms and trip disclaimers? A lunchbox filled with nutritious, peanut-free snacks? The press bus waiting outside Jack Shainman Gallery in Chelsea, into which we were shepherded by a knot of clipboard-wielding PR peeps, did little to dispel the feeling that this was to be an excursion with a nostalgically pedagogical cast. Had the popular kids really gathered conspiratorially at the back? And was the driver really playing *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* soundlessly on the vehicle's suspended monitors?

Fortunately, once we arrived at Shainman's Kinderhook, New York outpost, such anxieties were largely dispelled. The School is splendid indeed, a flawless, light-filled, 30,000 square-foot minimuseum that since 2014 has inhabited a 1929 federal-revival building that once served as Martin Van Buren High School. Sensitively converted by the late Spanish architect Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas and set in five acres of rolling lawn, it aims to take its place among a phalanx of other upstate beacons that includes the Clark Institute in Williamstown and, at some future date, the Marina Abramović Institute in Hudson. Today, the venue was hosting four solo exhibitions, by Pierre Dorion, Hayv Kahraman, Richard Mosse, and Garnett Puett, and the extended area's great and good had gathered for an afternoon garden party that suggested a food-truck takeover of an East Hampton manse.



Left: Artist Pierre Dorion. Right: Artist Hank Willis Thomas. (Photos: Zach Hilty/BFA.com)

Shainman and helpers showed us around and three of the four artists took turns introducing their relative practices. Puett was the first and most compelling of these, if only for the irresistible fascination of his process—a fourth-generation beekeeper, he drafts thousands of the beleaguered insects to help build wax “apisculptures” that he preserves and displays under glass. A couple of the works also feature live bees at work, in one instance commuting from the building’s exterior via a long, clear tube. I quizzed Puett—who has the bluff manner and actual knowledge of a genuine specialist—on his charges’ current population woes and came away somewhat reassured (in short, it is all Monsanto’s fault, but the damage may yet be reversible if they can stand to dial back the toxins a bit). Shainman’s take on Puett’s method? “He’s collaborating with thirty thousand bees that all get along in harmony. They’re all women, but they never fight!”

Next up was Mosse, who was showing lush, eerie, and often very large color photographs taken in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in the former palaces of Saddam Hussein. A soft-spoken Irish New Yorker, he put me in mind of a buff Ardal O’Hanlon. Finally, Canadian painter Pierre Dorion narrated—with characteristic precision but at some length—a set of flawlessly rendered canvases based on photographs of the School’s interior. But by this time, those food trucks were gathering and as the sun streamed in, we streamed out to offload the pair of tickets that came with our tote bags. As an off-the-leash terrier just barely held itself back from attacking my smokehouse burger, I clocked a few known names—artists Jason Middlebrook, Barkley Hendricks, and Brad Kahlhamer, MoMA director Glenn Lowry, and “Peggy Guggenheim of the Internet” Jiajia Fei—among a great number of contented-looking locals. In the words of Kin Hubbard, “a bee is never as busy as it seems; it’s just that it can’t buzz any slower.”

— *Michael Wilson*



Left: The School. Right: Jack Shainman and MoMA director Glenn Lowry. (Photo: Hunter Abrams/BFA.com)



## The School Opens Its Third Year With Four Solo Shows



*Jack Shainman and MoMA director Glenn Lowry. (Hunter Abrams BFA.com, courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery)*

**By PAUL LASTER, MAY 2016**

The School, Jack Shainman Gallery's upstate outpost, opened its third year with four solo exhibitions of artwork in a variety of media by Pierre Dorion, Hayv Kahraman, Richard Mosse and Garnett Puett.

Nearly 1000 visitors — including Museum of Modern Art Director Glenn Lowry, Brooklyn Museum Curator Rujeko Hockley and Jewish Museum Director of Digital JiaJia Fei — viewed the quartet of shows unfolding throughout the 30,000-square-foot exhibition space in Kinderhook, New York. Formerly the Martin Van Buren High School, which moved into the Federal-style building in 1929, the structure was redesigned as an exhibition space by Spanish architect Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas and opened to the public in May 2014.



*Richard Mosse discussing his photographic exhibition. (Zach Hilty BFA.com, courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery)*

"A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions," which runs through the summer, features Canadian painter Pierre Dorion's realistic renderings of details from the School's actual space, Irish photographer Richard



Mosse's vibrant color photographs of conflict zones, Iraqi émigré Hayv Kahraman's paintings and sculptures referencing the military's utilization of sound as a weapon and American sculptor Garnett Puett's assemblages of found objects that have been altered by the action of bees.



*Jack Shainman director Elisabeth Sann talking about Hayv Kahraman's painting and sculpture show. (Zach Hilty BFA.com, courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery)*

Dorion photographed the interiors of two of the School's unfinished classrooms and their surroundings, which he then skillfully transformed into sublime, paintings on linen that flirt with the look of minimalism. Contrastingly, Mosse dynamic images, which dominate the galleries, are bursting with color as they surrealistically capture war-torn Iraq and the Democratic Republic of Congo through infrared film.

Equally concerned with issues of military intervention, Kahraman's canvases depict Middle Eastern women affected by the piercing sounds of sirens penetrating their bodies and minds, while her sculptural pieces echo the reference through cutouts taken from cross sections of a 3D scan of her body. Relatedly, Puett uses an army of collaborative bees to beautifully construct beeswax and honeycomb structures over the armatures that he adds to everyday objects.



*Pierre Dorion discussing his painting exhibition. (Zach Hilty BFA.com, courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery)*

Outdoors, on the grounds of the School, the lively celebration continued throughout the afternoon. Food trucks provided a tasty feast of local fare and the drinks seemed to never stop until the urban dwellers finally poured back on the buses to head back to the city and the local guests trekked home. **WM**

## THE BLOG

# Artsy Day Trips Outside NYC

🕒 08/03/2016 10:59 am ET | Updated Aug 03, 2016

**Madelaine D'Angelo**

Founder and CEO of Arthena, she is a specialist in the merger of Art and Technology [www.arthena.com](http://www.arthena.com)

## 1. Jack Shainman's The School



Photo courtesy Jack Shainman

Address: 25 Broad Street, Kinderhook, NY 12106

Hours: Saturdays from 11am - 5pm, and by appointment.

120 miles north of Manhattan, The School (which was opened in 2014 by dealer Jack Shainman) is celebrating its second anniversary with *A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions*. Pierre Dorion, Hayv Kahraman, Richard Mosse, and Garnett Puett come together to present themes of transformation, environment, and remembrance through painting, photography and sculpture.



## 7 Summer Getaway Shows to Visit from New York

ARTSY EDITORIAL  
BY MEREDITH MENDELSON  
AUG 8TH, 2016 8:45 PM

Even for the most devoted urbanite, one of the best things about the city in the summer is getting out of it. When the open road (or rail line) calls, there are all kinds of art destinations that merit a day trip. We rounded up some of the best summer shows within a few hours of New York City, from the Parrish Museum's exhibition of Ross Bleckner, Eric Fischl, and David Salle's early efforts to turn painting on its head, to Walter de Maria's 10,000-square foot installation at Dia: Beacon.

### The School | Jack Shainman Gallery KINDERHOOK, NY



Installation view of Hayv Kahraman's work on view in "A Change of Place: Four Solo Exhibitions." Photo courtesy of The School.

The vastness of The School, a renovated 30,000-square-foot elementary and middle school built in 1929, has allowed its founder, New York dealer

Jack Shainman, to put together exhibitions that might not fit in his two Chelsea galleries. This summer—the space’s third—Shainman is showing seemingly disparate bodies of work by four artists: Pierre Dorion, Hayv Kahraman, Richard Mosse, and Garnett Puett. Longtime gallery artist Dorion photographed architectural elements of the exhibition space, then painted the resulting images, abstracting them and stripping them of their context. Kahraman, an Iraqi émigré, is represented by eerie new paintings of fragmented or otherwise afflicted women in her singular style, which brings to mind Arab manuscripts and Japanese scroll painting. Mosse, meanwhile, addresses the subject of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo in panoramic photos using infrared film that yields such super-charged color the images seem unreal. For his part, Garnett Puett, an expert beekeeper, created metal armatures and covered them in beeswax, and then set up a system behind glass where bees can fly in and add their own honeycomb to the structures during the duration of the show.

—Meredith Mendelsohn



Van Biema, David H. "To Bee or Not to Bee? Sculptor Garnett Puett has the Answer: He's Got 90,000 Buzzing Helpers", *People Magazine*, August 12, 1985: pp. 97-100, illustrated.

# People

Arts

## TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE? SCULPTOR GARNETT PUETT HAS THE ANSWER: HE'S GOT 90,000 BUZZING HELPERS

by David H. Van Biema





**T**here are thousands of them. Tens of thousands. In the darkened box bees crawl over an inert human form. They swarm under one armpit and down the arm, cluster two deep on the side of the face, creep over the passive lips and up toward the nostrils. The keeper of the bees looks at the figure, what there is left to see, and notes laconically, "I think I'll take them out by the end of the summer. It ought to be ready by then."

This is not a nefarious torture device from some new thriller. ("Ah, Mr. Bond, I see you've met my little friends.") It is, rather, a work in progress, showing at a new gallery in New York City's East Village. The figure in the box is wax, not human. The bees are building on it, not stinging it. And when it emerges again this fall, it will be a unique example of what beekeeper-turned-artist Garnett Puett calls "bee-art" or "apisculpture," worth upwards of \$4,000.

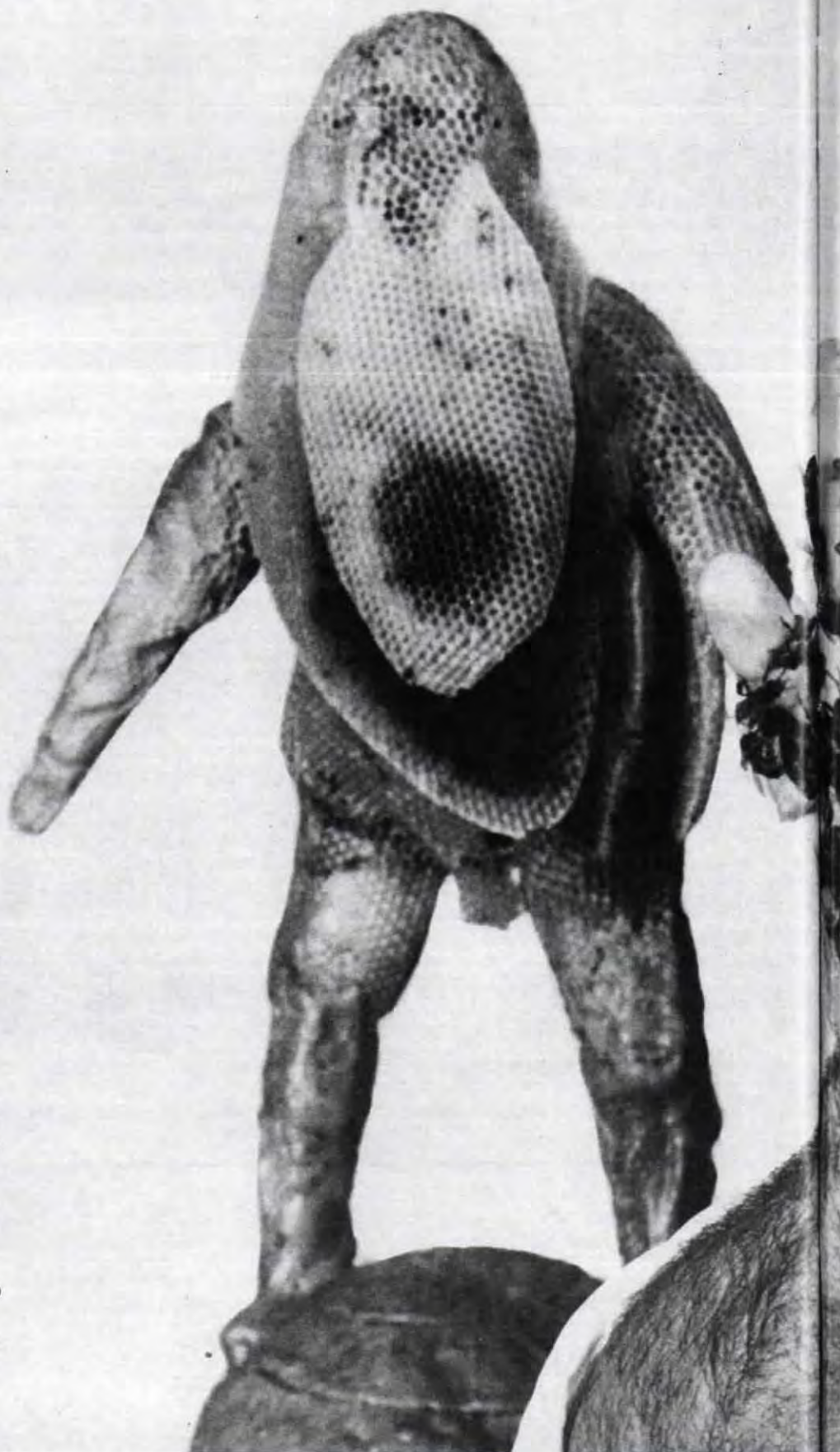
Some artists use a brush, while others prefer the sculptor's chisel. Puett, a 26-year-old, fourth-generation beekeeper, uses *Apis mellifera*, the honeybee. Working in his sweet-smelling lower Manhattan studio, he creates wax sculptures of the human form. Next he builds a box around the figure, complete with entrance/exit tube and sugar-water or honey dispenser. Then he introduces as many as 90,000 bees from a hive he keeps on the roof of his building.

The bees make the sculpture their home. Swarming on the figure's overhanging features—often the face, arms and genitals—the tiny artists supplement Puett's waxwork with their own honeycomb. The figure Puett removes from its box three weeks to two years later will have been transformed. What was once a realistic human form has become an abstract sculpture of flowing, organic shapes, gridded in familiar hexagons. The distortion is beautiful—and disturbing.

"For centuries," says Puett mildly, "bees in beehives have been a symbol of man on top of nature, making it work for him. In my art it's different; it's bees building organic forms on top of man." This novel turnabout of the usual order of things, combined with the sculptures' striking appearance, has

CONTINUED

**"If a person is nervous they smell it, and it excites them," says a calm Puett, with an untitled work and his insect colleagues.**







**Puett's 16-figure "Group Exposure" housed 20,000 bees for four weeks, then sold to a private collector for \$1,500.**

attracted admirers of Puett's work in art's airiest reaches. "It's fascinating and frightening and different from anything I've ever witnessed," says Philip Yenawine, director of the Department of Education at the Museum of Modern Art. "Puett is in the American tradition of the idiosyncratic wacko genius."

Bees have been working for Puett's family for a long time. His father, Garnett George Puett Jr., was a beekeeper, a breeder of queens, who in his spare time wrote short stories about the honeybee and human inhabitants of his native Hahira, Ga. After Garnett's father died, his mother married James Powers, one of the largest independent honey producers in the United States. Twelve-year-old Garnett joined them in a seminomadic existence, moving every two or three years and learning to tend company hives in Florida, Idaho, Arizona and Hawaii.

"It was a great thing for an adolescent," he says, "going to Hawaii and working in the jungle. And I was a natural." Like everyone in his stepfather's firm, he worked the hives with his bare hands, giving up the traditional beekeeper's gloves to gain an added sensitivity to the insects' moods. He collected as many as 20 stings a day. "But after the first few," he says, "your body produces so much antitoxin they feel like mosquito bites." (This does not apply to people who are severely allergic to bee stings; Puett advises them to stay away from his works in

progress.) By 18, Puett had already received informal invitations from prominent apiculturalists in Brazil, Rhodesia, Iran and West Germany to advise their honey industries.

He declined because he wanted to go to college. "A beekeeper's life can be pretty narrow," he says. "I wanted to do something more creative." Midway through the University of Washington, Puett changed his major from biology and management to fine arts, in hopes of "getting away from beekeeping and into art."

He was only half successful. Several years later, while experimenting with a technique for casting bronze sculptures with wax, Puett began to think about sculpting in wax itself, a durable substance that can last for thousands of years under proper conditions. That led, inevitably, to his next question, "Why not let the bees onto it?"

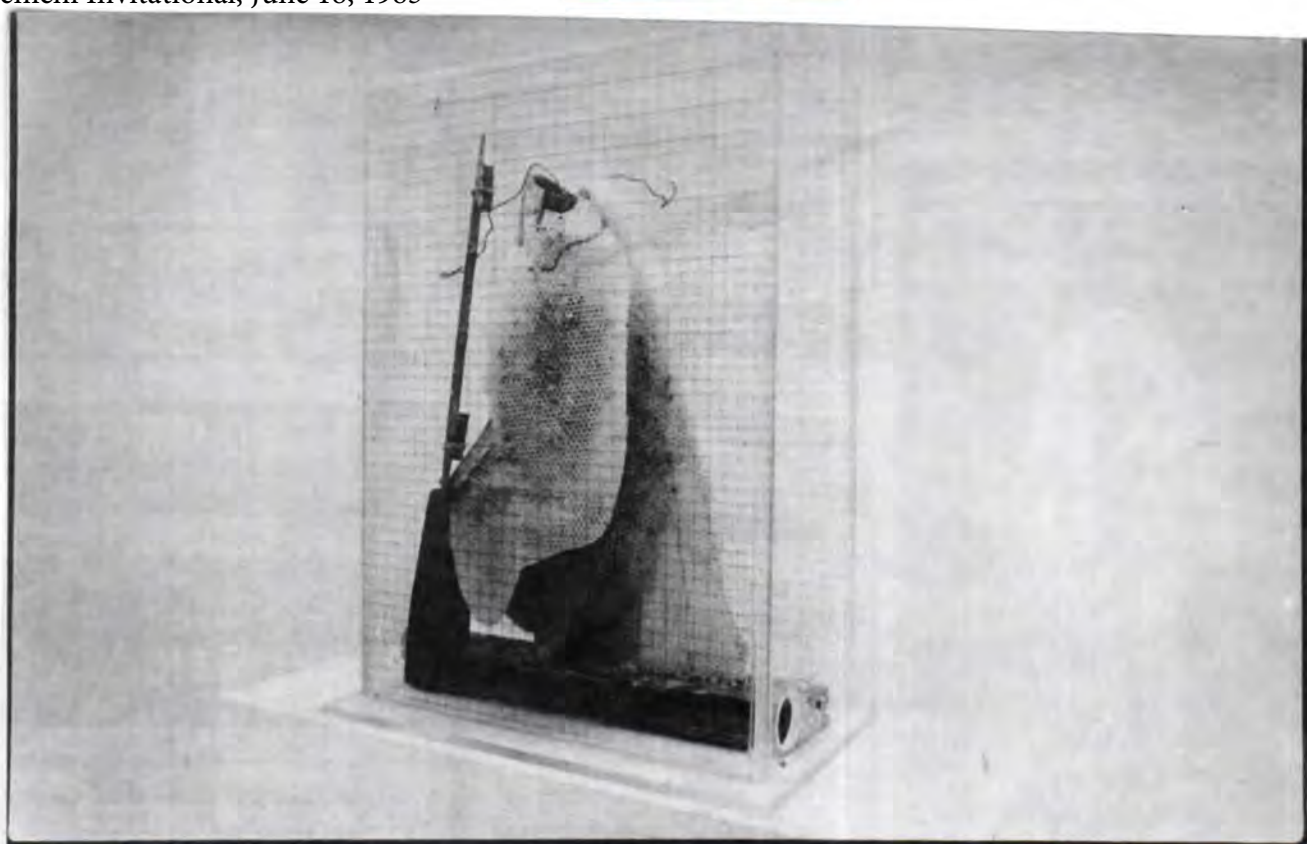
Since then, there has been the occasional mishap. Puett's Italian bees, which he buys at \$25 per 10,000, have been known to express their artistic judgment by flying off into Greenwich Village, abandoning their work. Once they took off toward Brooklyn, and he never saw them again. (The *New York Times* did, however, and reported the news under the headline "15,000 Bees Found Swarming on a Car.") Another time Puett acted out an unintentional piece of performance art when he took up the beekeeper's veil and smoke machine to retrieve his charges

from a street construction site in a neighborhood that probably saw its last swarm in the 19th century.

Puett is currently involved in packing the art in his studio for a move to more spacious digs in Brooklyn. One of his favorite pieces is a male figure 34 inches high, to which the bees added ovals of comb from waist to shoulders. "They put wings on him," the artist points out. Indeed, Puett's identification with his co-workers is so strong that he sometimes seems eager, like the statue, to sprout wings and become one. Although his buzzing works have been barred from art shows by a few phobic gallery curators, he claims that bees offer much more to emulate than to fear. "It's marvelous," he says. "They have a sense of being alive, of living to work and working until they die, creating, building and fending off destruction."

But what if an art lover, perhaps even a potential collector, should be stung while trying to observe one of his pieces in progress? If Puett the Artist would defend the motive of the bee, wouldn't Puett the Ambitious Young Man shudder at the bad publicity? New York City's premier artistic beekeeper grins. "I'd rather someone got stung at an opening," he says, "than just walked by and didn't notice the art at all." □





Garnett Puett: untitled (1985), wood, steel, beeswax

ROBIN HOLLAND

## Honey, Pollen, and Garnett Puett

By Gary Indiana

At the opening of Grace Borgenicht Gallery's invitational exhibition, someone took a bite out of a Garnett Puett sculpture.

A novel could begin that way with little disgrace.

A swarm of bees still working on another sculpture was removed the following day, out of deference to a gallery employee traumatized in childhood by a wasp sting. As Garnett Puett was later anxious to explain, honeybees are not avid stingers. The bees Puett works with are so intoxicated by the presence of "queen substance" that, even if you threw a hive on the floor, they would gravitate pacifically to the debris without stinging you. "They're like junkies," Puett observed.

Garnett Puett is a fresh-faced, well-spoken 26-year-old sculptor from Georgia whose family has been in the bee business for four generations. He kept bees before deciding to become an artist, and continued beekeeping to support himself through art school. When he made conventional abstract and figurative sculptures, he didn't like to finish them. His works always seemed to need something. Puett moved to New York in 1983 for graduate study at Pratt, already mulling the idea of merging his two professions. In fact, once he got here he decided making bee art would be more fun than going to Pratt. Early results were vandalized by kids in Puett's Loisada backyard, who "got off on watching the bees get wasted." Now Puett works indoors.

The artist sculpts plaster forms, then paints their interiors with melted beeswax, removing the plaster when the wax dries. Puett then coats the pre-sculpture

with honey and installs a small cage containing a queen bee somewhere on the surface. The queen cage and its occupant are shipped from the bee farm in a wooden box, accompanied by a substantial bee swarm. The swarm nourishes the queen en route, and would gladly perish to keep her alive.

The sculpture-in-progress, then, is placed in a protective container. Glass walls of the container are usually covered with removable light baffles—bees, like birds, become confused by light coming through glass. The honey coating on Puett's sculpture persuades the swarm that the template is a suitable location for hive-building. The bees then set about liberating the queen, whose cage is sealed by a little block of candy. Worker bees commence fabricating comb structures in the queen's vicinity, molding the wax manufactured in their bodies by chewing it with their powerful mandibles and patting it into shape with their thread-thin legs.

After the queen buzzes forth, she flies about the construction site, soon mating, for the first and last time, with one of myriad "huge, fat, ugly" drones. She stores up a lifetime supply of sperm from this single encounter, releasing tiny amounts of it when fertilized eggs are needed to produce female worker bees, withholding it when the hive requires more drones. The queen regulates the population of the hive according to the availability of food: pollen for the baby bees, honey for the adults. The bees glean both substances from flowers. They collect pollen on their hind legs and roll it into balls, winging huge amounts of it back to the hive. They extract nectar

from flowers with sinuous sucking tongues, store it in their stomachs and regurgitate it as honey.

While Puett supplies honey to promote hive expansion around the works-in-progress, the bees have access to the outer world through openings in the box. They forage freely throughout the city. The bees travel up to 10 miles to gather food from windowboxes and scraggly tenement gardens, fructifying trees and flowers, returning from as far as New Jersey at the end of the day. They navigate by sunlight, undaunted by traffic, skyscrapers, and industrial pollution. (Our environment must be less toxic than we imagine, since Puett says that his bees would all drop like flies if the air were heavily poisoned.)

### ART

The construction and maintenance of a hive require an incredible degree of sophisticated interbee communication. In the backyard of Art Mart, an East-Village gallery where two of his pieces were recently shown, Puett showed me a hive developing along the surface of a human head-and-body cast containing "at least 80,000" bees. Countless little amber bodies hovered around the combs, wagging their feelers and legs in an apparent frenzy. The bees were, in fact, dancing. The vibrations produced by every movement of the bee dance communicate the precise distance of a food source, its quantity and quality, and the amount needed for a specific purpose. Information about the environment is passed among thousands of bees incessantly. They also talk by rubbing each others' feelers. The bees put in a very full day, stocking and maintaining the hive, cleaning it, removing the dead. If a foreign object is introduced into the hive, the bees quickly quarantine it with a thick seal of wax.

Puett has allowed the bees to obliterate some of his figurative sculptures, but he's learning how to manipulate their comb-building patterns for particular effects. When a work seems finished, he

stops feeding the bees. The hive population drops and the survivors use up stored food, thereby cleaning the work and removing material that would decay unpleasantly in a gallery situation. Since the bees spread the comb along the walls of the containment box, Puett heats the surface before pulling off the glass. This prevents the wax from shattering. The bees will quickly repair the resulting deformities in the stretched wax, creating a uniform cellular surface. This done, the bees can be coaxed away from the completed work of art by moving the queen to a fresh sculpture base.

Puett's collaboration with the bees has produced several eerily beautiful sculptures, five of which can be viewed at an invitational exhibition at Grace Borgenicht (724 Fifth Avenue, through June 21). They are artifacts partially overtaken by nature, manmade forms articulated or completed by natural processes, the fleshy residues of thriving ecosystems. Their tactility has a certain repulsiveness, similar to the feeling of uncooked tripe on the tongue, as well as a powerful sensuality. They resonate with the presence of life and also exude an aura of death and abandonment, like a shed snakeskin or an empty tortoise shell.

One highly appealing aspect of Puett's work is its lack of brutality: in recent years, people calling themselves artists have sometimes inflicted hideous suffering on animals used in films, performances, and art works, supposedly to draw attention to the violence we've come to accept in human society: "How can you care about a dog if you don't care about other people?" A work like Tom Otterness's *Shot Dog Film*, in which the filmmaker kills his own pet, answers its own question: anyone would rather see the dog shoot Tom Otterness. Puett manipulates the populations of his beehives, but maintains the integrity of their organic environment and the natural progression of the bees' lives. His work involves nature as a friend and collaborator rather than as an antagonist, animal husbandry instead of animal exploitation.

## Hive Art

### Sculptor Puett Starts A Design, Then Tricks Bees Into Finishing It

October 28, 1991 | By Nancy Stetson.

To bee or not to bee, art is the question.

When fourth-generation beekeeper Garnett Puett decided to leave the family business and go to art school, he never suspected that years later he would be incorporating living bees into his sculpture.

"I grew up in a honey-producing family," he says. "Our four generations go through the whole system of beekeeping in America, either raising queen bees for shipping or working bees for honey production. Different generations did different things. I was being groomed to be another honey producer, but I broke off and went on my own with art."

As a foundry major at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, N.Y., Puett worked with bronze and metal. But he grew more interested in the molds he poured them into and began working exclusively with wax.

"I started thinking of other artists that were working conceptually or environmentally," he says. "I liked the idea of making something that would last only for a period, that wasn't just another object to clutter up the environment. I wanted to make something that could be a short-lived piece, kind of like making sand castles.

"So I got the idea that maybe I could work these wax sculptures into an environment for bees. I wanted to construct something that people could actually go up to and watch evolve and sense the strength that a bee colony has."

In Puett's view, the art was the process, not the finished product. It was a kind of performance art by bees. But people wanted to collect his work, so Puett began marketing and exhibiting most of his sculptures without the bees, just their handiwork, the honeycombs.

He decided to call his work apisculpture (apis is the Latin word for bee). "I know bee history quite well," he says, "and no one has ever done anything like this anywhere. I've kind of cornered the market on apisculpture. "I regulate the bees' environment, so they can live on my work," he says. "Some people think I take the bees and throw them in a box with an object and just see what happens, but that's not what I do. It's very planned and structured."

After creating a design on his personal computer, Puett makes the sculpture, covering armatures and various found objects with wax. Then, he coaxes the bees into building their hive on the sculpture by painting sugar water or honey on certain areas. Another trick is to move the queen bee to the area where he'd like the bees to work.

"Maintaining the bees is a complex process. There's so many little steps that it really is time consuming-and sometimes painful," he says, noting that he still gets stung on occasion. "Sometimes there are situations where you have to get in there and just get involved with them, manipulate the piece. I have to move the bees around and stir it up a bit. So they naturally protect their hive. But I use a bee that's fairly gentle, an Italian stock bee."

When he determines that the piece is finished, Puett smokes out the bees. He then cleans the hives of pollen, honey and babies. "Then I put the piece in a glass case, to keep other insects from taking up residence in it."

His earlier work was representational: heads, figures. His work lately has been more abstract. Some viewers were repulsed by the sight of a swarm of 50,000 bees covering a life-sized figure.

Curt Marcus, owner of the Curt Marcus Gallery in New York, which exclusively represents Puett, remembers when he first learned of the artist and his work. "The concept of sculpture being made out of beeswax, then introducing a hive and having bees finish the sculpture, would spark anyone's curiosity," he says.

Marcus quickly signed up the 25-year-old for a group show. Over the last seven years, Puett has had a number of solo shows and has also exhibited in Europe.

"I get all extremes of reaction to my work," Puett says. "Some are frightened or disgusted by it. The great thing about doing art in the public eye is that you're able to stir up all kinds of emotional responses-especially when you're dealing with something like insects that can sting or kill."



"They create a miniature, waffled surface, a hexagonal grid. It's a surface that can't be reproduced outside of nature. Once the bees are removed, you can see that they've altered the sculpture to a degree that no human could do. For some, (the honeycomb) is so beautiful that they can't even begin to describe it."

As part of the Visiting Artists Program, Garnett Puett will discuss his work at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the School of the Art Institute Auditorium.



Vol. 16, no. 2  
April/May 2013

# Hana Hou!

THE MAGAZINE OF HAWAIIAN AIRLINES



## Garnett's Gold

Story by Julia Steele  
Photos by Jack Wolford

**Garnett Puett has spent** his entire life among the honeybees. He was born in Georgia, the fourth generation in a family of apiarists, and he had his first hive by the time he was five years old. From the bees, Puett began to learn some of the more delicate, beautiful aspects of life: the way community could lead to purpose and hard work to nectar. Away from the bees, life was not so magical. Civil rights battles were raging in the South, and Puett's father, who supported desegregation, watched the family's prized bee yards burned to the ground during the strife. He died a year later, done in, says his son, by the heartbreak of it all.

Puett's mother moved her children north to Idaho and married another beekeeper, Jim Powers, one of the largest honey producers in the United States. Powers had beehives all over the country, and in 1972 he pulled a trick "out of thin air," says his stepson, and expanded his honey harvesting operation to Hawai'i. Puett, who by this time was a teenager, came to the Islands during the summers. Hawai'i offered a less taxing experience than the "grueling, torturous" six-days-a-week, ten-hours-a-day harvesting schedule in Idaho, and it was in the Islands that Puett truly "got mesmerized by bees." Foreshadowing what was to come, it was the bees' physical creations that inspired him

"I was fascinated by how the bees constructed their homes," he recalls today. "I loved the tactile quality of the wax. I loved watching them create these beautiful structures: How do they know to do it? How do they do it so perfectly?"

As much as he loved the bees, Puett was still ready, by the time he was headed for college, to leave the honey business behind him for a while. He wound up at the University of Washington where he studied art— sculpture, specifically, though if you'd asked him at the time whether that decision was down to the bees, he wouldn't have made the connection. More likely he would have said it was because of his biological parents, who were not just apiarists, but artists: his mother a painter, his father a writer.

At UW, Puett worked in wax, then cast in bronze. But by the time he graduated the appeal of bronze had lost its luster, and toiling in wax Puett had found himself missing his childhood companions. "Maybe I'd just been stung too many times," he laughs. "After a couple hundred thousand stings, you kind of miss it." He'd also started studying "more esoteric artists, people working with the earth and natural processes," and that too had inspired him to head in a different direction.

Degree in hand, Puett took off for New York City to continue his studies at the renowned Pratt Institute. It was the early 1980s, and "everything in the art world was happening in New York City," he shrugs. As he drove east across the country to Pratt, he couldn't stop thinking about doing "something radical and innovative." By the time he arrived in Brooklyn, he'd figured out what that was. So he ordered a few thousand bees to join him in the Big Apple and once again started working with his old friends, this time collaborating on pieces with the planet's most accomplished wax workers.

Puett found a 1,500-square-foot art space for \$400 a month and installed an apiary with ten hives. He put rubber tubes through the walls to the outside world so the bees could come and go as they pleased ("My bees were all over Brooklyn!") and began his experiment. Puett would start by crafting a piece—perhaps a wax casting or an edifice of found objects — and then cover it in a simple sugar syrup, put it in a wooden box and turn it over to the bees. They, in turn, would swarm all over it, building cells and shaping it with their own distinctive architecture. Suddenly rather than working solo, Puett was one of a pullulating multitude—not the queen bee, but perhaps the king—a director literally working with a cast of thousands, à la Attenborough on Lawrence of Arabia or Mankiewicz on Cleopatra.

Puett's work quickly became a phenomenon in Manhattan's art world, featured everywhere from The New Yorker to People magazine, which marveled at his "miniature Michelangelos." He dropped out of Pratt and graduated from "little figurative things to full-size castings to more abstract pieces. I'd start with a simple form and let it grow," he says. "You had to find the proper scale. For larger pieces you need large swarms. For a two-and-a-half-foot piece, for example, I'd work with twenty thousand to forty thousand bees. A six-foot piece might be a hundred thousand bees." Puett would leave his collaborators on a piece anywhere from a few days to a couple of weeks, letting them "soften" it. It was all a sort of orchestration, as he calls it, that involved watching the bees' creation and feeding them sugar syrup every day to inspire them.



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Success continued throughout the ten years Puett spent in the East Coast art world. He had an agent and sold his pieces for as much as \$10,000 each. One sculpture was featured on the cover of a Susan Sontag book; others were displayed in the Hirshhorn Museum—though there was always a risk any time the work went on exhibit, especially in the early days: Viewers, possibly overcome by memories from the breakfast table, would try to break off pieces of the beeswax and eat them.

At the height of it all, Puett, by this time married with children, bought Powers' place in South Kona and left his self-described life of "playing Picasso" behind him. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that he began to make art of a different sort: Over the last twenty years, since moving to the farm in 1993, he has transformed it into the largest organic honey operation in the United States. These days, rather than letting his bees loose in Brooklyn, Puett takes them all over the Big Island: into groves of macadamia nut trees, into forests filled with 'ohi'a lehua trees, into bush land dominated by Christmas-berry trees. The varying flavors of the trees' nectars ensure that the honeys that result are distinct and unique.

At its zenith Puett's operation, Big Island Bees, had 3,900 hives, and because each hive is home to some 50,000 bees, that meant 195 million bees. As busy as they proverbially are, the bees were producing more than a million pounds of honey for Puett each year. But that was in the good old days—and anyone who has been following bees in the twenty-first century knows that the story was taken a sharp turn. Bee populations are crashing around the world, and Hawai'i, sadly, is witnessing the same devastation. These days Puett is preoccupied with doing everything he can to help the bees survive varroa mite and hive beetle infestations, which have thus far claimed more than half of his 3,900 hives. "You just want to walk away and cry," he says of the experience of opening up a hive and finding all of the bees within it dead. "It's carnage." Last year his production was down to a quarter of its high: 260,000 pounds of honey.

Puett has had offers to sell, to propagators who would transform the farm into a queen bee breeding operation. He's been sorely tempted to take them, he says, and leave behind the "war zone." He is 54 now, his children are grown and he finds himself yearning to return to his "severe passion to make art" and go back to sculpture. And yet at the end of the day, he hasn't been able to sell. He doesn't know, he says, if he has the emotional stamina to stay—or how he could live with himself if he left. "Bees are extremely compelling, and once you get a connection with any animal ..." He trails off. "When I open the hives, the bees are not aggressive. I think they know I'm there to help." These days the bees teach Puett not so much about purpose and reward as about survival and adaptation— lessons they themselves are learning as fast as they can. For the time being, Puett is working with "the survivor stock," the bees that have best been able to resist the beetles and the mites.

And so instead of leaving, he has just opened a small museum at the Big Island Bees headquarters in South Kona. There he has collected a history of the bees and his own life: Some of his New York sculpture can be found, and a framed portrait of his grandparents across the street from the White House in 1937 for an international beekeepers convention. The history of how honey has been collected over the years is laid out, and there are a few bee-related gewgaws, like an antiquated tea set made with a honeycomb pattern. Best of all are the latest collaborations between the apiarist and *Apis mellifera*: differing honeys collected across a vast, volcanic island, representing millions of miles flown and millions of flowers decanted— another creative triumph for Puett and the bees.



## GARNETT PUETT'S APISCUPTURE: UNITING THE BEE TO THE TASK OF ART

TIMOTHY COHRS

Garnett Puett, Untitled, 1985. Mixed media. Courtesy ArtMart.



Anyone regularly visiting the East Village galleries in any of the last three years has witnessed a catalogue of indignities performed on the human figure. It has been mutated into a gawking two-limbed beast with dangling intestinal tract (Jonathan Ellis), decapitated and informed with a horrible psychological intensity (Betsy Rosenwald), tapered and scratched into a nightmare of angles (Peter Drake), and in the hands of less accomplished artists it has generally had the hell beaten out of it. But only Garnett Puett, in his process apisculptures, has come up with a variation that is legitimately frightening.

My introduction to Puett's work was a life-size human figure from the waist up. Cast in plaster and covered in wax, it was set at waist height in a tall black box with one glass wall. Inside it, the sculpture was obliterated by a roiling, buzzing swarm of very live bees.

There were so many bees, so many *thousands* of bees, that they stacked up two and three and four deep, dripping from the mass like magma turned into a lifeform. The figure, once it could be identified as such, seemed frozen with shock, stung into a paralysis that at any moment could break and send it and the box and the glass sheet smashing to the ground. The sight of something so primeval, so vital, and so terrifying thrust into the cocoon of the gallery scene was more than surprising—it actually stunned the crowd of art-weary art-watchers at the ArtMart opening into a uniform silence.

Puett's live, untitled piece was planted outside in the gallery's courtyard. It contained over 80,000 honeybees all furiously involved in the process of constructing a hive on the surface of the wax figure. The ceaseless and truly inhuman energy of the piece-in-process contrasted sharply with a finished, bee-less sculpture inside the gallery. First, the finished piece was absolutely static—no hum, no wild pulse of life, no horrifying vision of a ghastly insect-covered death. Second, it was revealing; without the circus of activity blanketing the live piece, it was possible to get a glimmer of Puett's serious intentions, intentions much at odds with the immediacy of the live sculpture.

This second piece was composed of three parts: a foot-high figure atop a conical wax beehive atop a pair of mail-order bee cages. Only the figure had been worked on by bees prior to inclusion, and their combs covered its head, shoulders, and torso. Drooping like weird biomorphic wattles, the combs transformed the little figure into a cross between the elephant man and a sci-fi monster. The obvious metaphor here is that mankind is so out of whack with nature, and its perception of nature so screwy, that simple natural products and processes register as horrible deformations. This figure also brought to mind a 1958 ban-the-bomb film starring Robert Vaughn and yoked with the ridiculous title *Teenage Caveman*. This rather tiresome caveman-meets-cavewoman story ends when Vaughn shoots an arrow into a creature very reminiscent of Puett's foot-high figure. Covered with barnacles, seaweed, and sweeping biomorphic shapes, the stricken monster reveals itself as no monster at all, but instead a human who has hidden in a radiation suit for decades watching the survivors of World War III degenerate to a cruel Stone Age existence.

In much the same way that 80,000 live honeybees swarming over a human form produce an image laced with terror (at least to the non-bee-farming population that tends to dominate at Manhattan galleries), Puett's comb-laden figures evoke the metaphor of biological deformity resulting from a fatal lack of environmental integration. But both of these are only by-products of his actual intention. A close look at the structure of the combs and an equally close look at other Puett apisculptures on view in the Grace Borgenicht Gallery's annual Invitational reveal this quite clearly.

Though the silhouette of the drooping combs that cover Puett's pieces tends to be wattle- or paddle-shaped, the combs are in fact composed of myriad rigid hexagons. Space grids, Buckminster Fuller domes, and any number of 4th grade science texts all attest to the amazing precision and adaptability allowed by the bee comb's underlying geometry. A close examination of any of Puett's pieces will reveal this mathematical underpinning as a matter of course—layers and rows of the same little shape all snapping together and adding up into a mighty system. Yet any system built solely on a mathematical plan and indefinitely extendable butts itself at once against the random. It



Garnett Puett, *Four Couples Erased*, 1985. Plexiglass, wood, and wax, 20 x 19 x 8".  
Courtesy Grace Borgenicht Gallery.

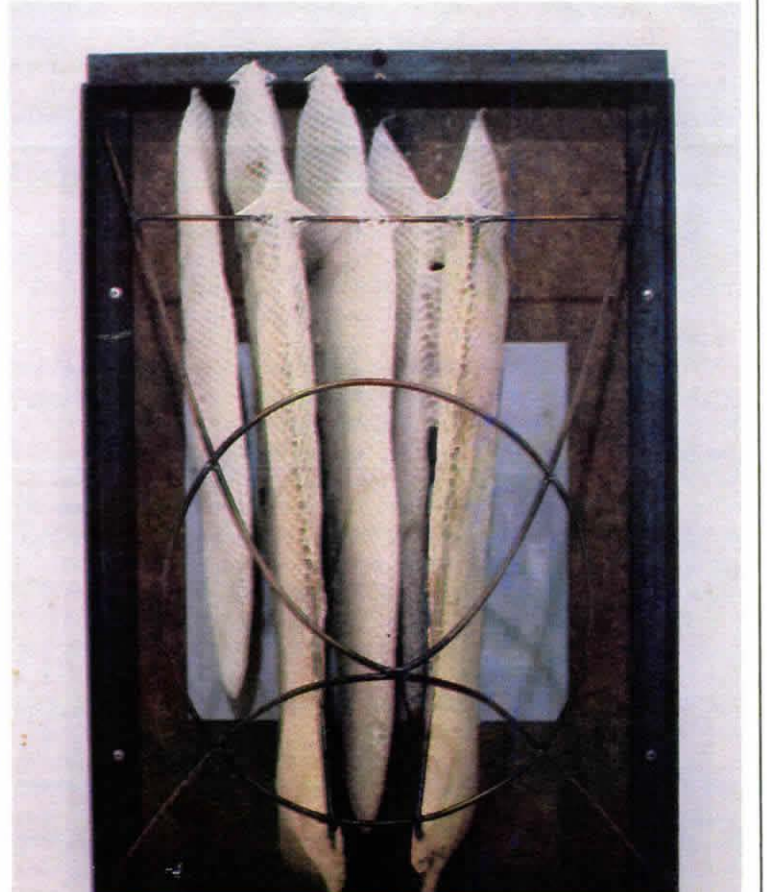
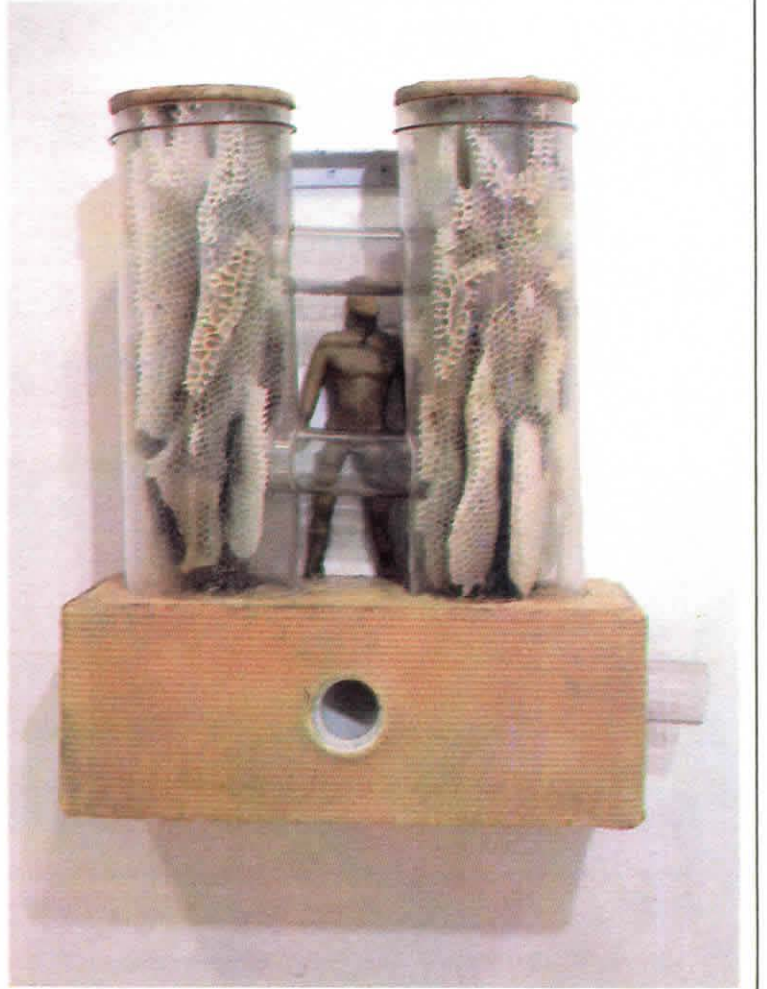
will and individual expression—these are the issues Puett has chosen to address. Oddly enough, this places Puett squarely beside artists such as Sherrie Levine, Barbara Kruger, Alan Belcher, and Mike Bidlo, artists who have all attacked the traditional concept of individual artistic expression via image appropriation.

In the group show at Borgenicht (co-curated by Ann Philbin, who also curated the ArtMart exhibition), Puett's *Four Couples Erased* and *Ommatidium—Perception* show best his orientation. In the first of these, two Plexiglass cylinders capped with beeswax rise from a rectangular base that is covered with a thin layer of nascent comb building. Tubes lead through the base into each of the cylinders where full-blown combs were constructed. What these combs have completely obliterated are four pair of small beeswax figures. In effect, the figures, in this case literally the handiwork of the human artist, served as an armature of the bees' creation. The individual, handmade object, the accepted artist's product, has been erased. To remind us of this fact, Puett has placed one unaltered figure outside the cylinders.

In *Ommatidium—Perception* Puett presented his bees with a simple structure of elliptically curved copper rods arching from a base. The insects constructed a series of parallel combs drooping from the rods, and in the process they blocked from view an intaglio plate affixed to the base of the rod structure. The plate depicts an as yet unbuilt apisculptural system. The visual double-entendre is clear: what is fascinating to Puett is the random but systematic erasure of the traditional art object, not its construction.

Puett is a 27-year-old fourth generation beekeeper, and the sheer novelty of his medium has generated a small flood of critical attention. But the risks of producing this sort of work reside in the very thing that is also creating the interest—the strange non-human surface of his sculptures. Little human figures or cages or tubes or other objects covered with honeycombs may be compelling at first viewing, but they also run the danger of becoming pleasant decorative *objets*. Nothing could be further from the promise of these early pieces. However, in *Wings—Wax* that promise is undercut by a cuteness visible in none of the other apisculptures. Here a pair of wax enlargements of a bee's wing are hung on the wall—one flat, one perpendicular. The one jutting into the room is covered with a shallow comb surface; the other is plain. The idea seems illustrational, with a science fair mentality. In fact, what is of interest in this piece is that someone actually took a bite out of the comb at the opening.

What remains most significant about Puett's work is that it has opened a crack in the near monolithic facade of the appropriationists (Levine, Belcher, et al.). Puett has revealed an alternative to their scavenging of art history plates and television screens and glossy magazines. In order to create objects of visual interest that mock, upset, or obfuscate the *role* of the artist in the creation of either individual objects of visual interest or individual objects that also mock, upset, or obfuscate our appreciation of themselves as such, thousands of live bees have now been enlisted. What is most striking about Puett's apisculptures is ultimately not his medium, but the very conceptual direction he has chosen for such a visceral and organic technique.







Garnett Puett: *Mr. Zivic*, 1986, wax, glass, wood, wire mesh, 78 by 36 by 18 inches; at Dart.

## CHICAGO

### Garnett Puett at Dart

Enlisting the aid of thousands of honeybees in the production of his extraordinary sculpture, Garnett Puett must maintain a delicate balance between collaboration and control, between their instinct and his artifice. His safety-glass vitrines containing assemblages of wood, metal and beeswax are actually abandoned apiaries, where bees have deposited lacy networks of honeycomb on the objects Puett offered them. Through his expert knowledge of their patterned, predictable behavior, he can direct the bees, manipulating their amazing skills to his own ends. He provides them with a prefabricated hive, some honey or sugar-water and a queen to inspire them; they obligingly set about covering his sculptural armatures with hundreds of hollow hexagons, an organic-geometric tracery that is genetically coded, at once random and regular. Puett determines the color of the combs they produce (from white to yellow to brown) by adjusting the bees' food supply. Moreover, he retains ultimate authority over the forms they build; exercising critical judgment, he can melt their constructions and induce them to begin again.

The nine "apisculptures" shown in Chicago included two demonstration pieces, or works in progress, which the bees were still building during the first few weeks of the exhibition. Provided with an exit through the gallery window, foraging bees could come and go, but most stayed with the queen, who was embedded somewhere at the center of what they had wrought—nine parallel lobes of waxworks drooping from the top of the shallow display case. The bees formed a seething mass on the honeycomb, gradually obliterating the drawings Puett had inscribed on the back wall of their temporary home. The project seemed to comment on

the ability of nature to overtake art, to undermine human achievement, inevitably, through time. Indeed, in the face of the bees' urgent, collective activity, human individualism and self-expression suddenly seemed maladaptive quirks in a social system lacking the cooperative base and supreme integration of bee populations.

The demonstration pieces, in which the artist's intervention was at a minimum, were immediately engaging—like ant-farms, or incubators that hatch baby chicks in science museums. More successful on an esthetic level are the figurative sculptures, where the waxworks assume narrative as well as formal significance; in these Puett takes the viewer beyond curiosity, and transcends the sheer novelty of his technique. Some of his wax statues, static as *kouroi* or Egyptian portrait busts, seem mummified in their honeycomb cocoons. Others, on which the deposits are spotty and irregular, look like victims of skin diseases or hosts to monstrous parasitic growths. To the fascination of nature and art is thus added the melancholy beauty of pathology—a vision of decad-

ence eating away at the ideal.

In the piece titled *Group #6*, however, Puett departs from such grotesque imagery to make explicit the social ramifications underlying his esthetic. Here he assembled a number of faceless figurines, which the bees then linked together, shoulder to shoulder, with paper-thin honeycomb bonds. In this context, the fragile unifying mesh becomes an instructive metaphor for the enviable cohesiveness of insect society. Furthermore, by using beeswax (rather than hydrocal, for example, or fiberglass) from which to fashion the armature figures, Puett this time suggests a self-conscious alignment with the industrious species he so admires. This subtle acknowledgment of the contemporary artist's role as one of the countless, interchangeable workers in a vast production system is ironically undercut by the astonishing originality of Puett's unique conceptions. —Sue Taylor



Martin, Richard, "Garnett Puett: In the Natural Order." *Arts Magazine*, Volume 61, no. 9, May 1987.

## GARNETT PUETT: IN THE NATURAL ORDER

RICHARD MARTIN

Indeed, such a perception accords with a mythic moment of creation: God causes a flood to cleanse the world on realizing that Creation has been vitiated by the works of men. That system works in reverse for Smithson; so, too, for Puett. The reversed creative paradigm is, of course, not just about art-making; it is about world-making and Puett is making new worlds in his delicate, information-loaded, aesthetically sweet sculptures.

In fact, our knowledge of the bee may represent one of the paradoxes of contemporary science. Acknowledging that science is an interactive force in the relation of humans to the "natural" world, contemporary science has sought to understand a world system which allows for the human presence. Yet some genuses seem to defy our interaction. For most people, without Puett's exceptional knowledge and zeal, the bee is removed from our experience. Puett requires us to realize a relation with a part of the natural world we more often ignore. Karl von Frisch, in brilliant scientific inquiry, required us to understand a "language" of bees. Puett, in brilliant aesthetic inquiry (he tends to refer to his sculptures as "experiments"), requires us to understand an aesthetic of bees which is both "natural" and referential to the human being.

Few see what Puett perceives. Retinally we can, but emotionally and intellectually we seldom do. The world of bees is, like the world of dinosaurs that Smithson and other artists have gained access to, frequently introduced with glowing adulation in childhood and not returned to again. Everyone knows of the queen, workers, drones, "dance language," and solar navigation, but they are forgotten until an unwanted presence at a picnic reminds one ferociously of what once had seemed a perfect and systematic world. Revered in isolation, the bee may be repelled in human social context, most especially for adults. Puett plays with the inferences we take from bees, admiring their innocent and productive systems, delighting in thier combed and groomed microcosm, seeing their beautiful forms, yet also realizing their small savagery and our potential phobias about bees and insects. In so doing, he grants meaning to mystery as an element of the work, stressing its mutuality of the pleasant and unpleasant and its alienation in work done in such a manner that human beings could not effectively duplicate that work, thus making it inevitably "other." Puett's profound sense of the "other" in the bees is evident in the forms he creates as armatures for the fully produced sculptures in tandem with the bees. Reliefs are formed with synthetic comb and with judgment of the pattern of the bees as if to recognize that we can approximate the fabrication of the bees. Nonetheless, Puett includes on these reliefs illustrations of bees and flowers as elegant pictograms of an external

Gertrude Stein's hermetic "Bee time vine be vine truth devine truth" calls for the truth generated by nature and finally evident in our observation thereof. Puett addresses his forms to specific interaction with the forms created by the bees, yet can never fully incorporate those forms. The interaction is, however, not mere accretion on Puett's sculpture. A kouros in wax was transformed by bees into the trunk of a figure as they bored into and dismembered the legs of the figure. Puett takes an especially perverse—and fascinating—interest in this sculpture as an instance of complete change in interaction with the bees. More often, that interchange is more subtle. A striding figure is veiled with the fine net of comb mantilla akin to sci-fi-movie special effects, yet our transformed monster is a friendly Frankenstein. The initial grotesquery of the figure is quelled and we can see it as the most elegant of transformations.

But Puett's science and art is not just cosmetic surgery: his abstract sculptures create forms in the establishment of planned pattern between given structures. The lacy, natural filament which obtains be-



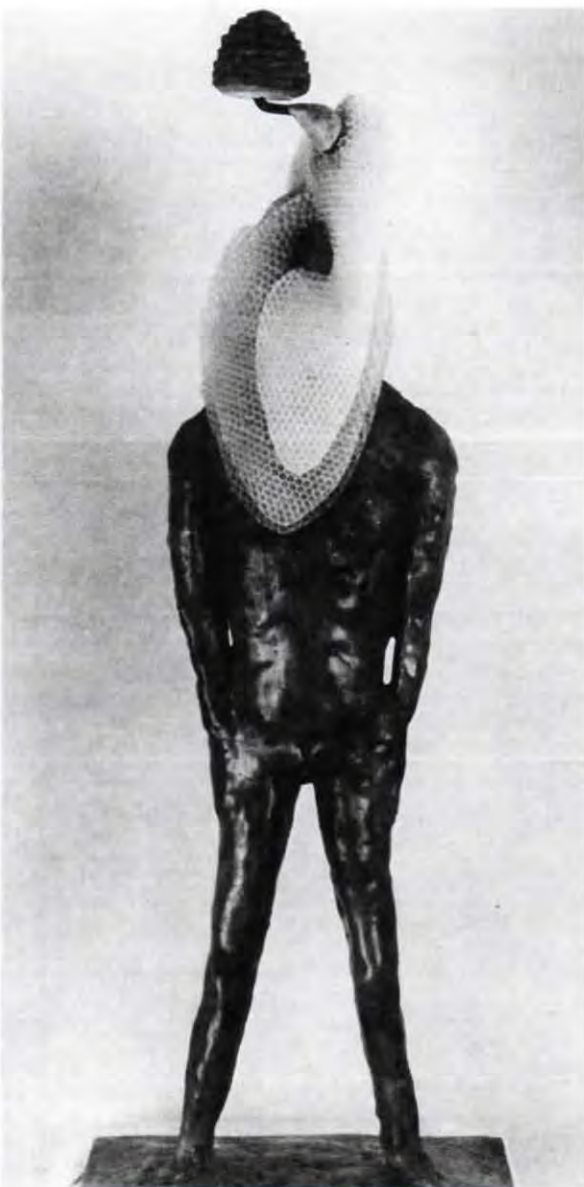
Garnett  
Puett,  
*Espaller  
Skep*,  
1986.  
*Beeswax,  
wood, and  
steel*



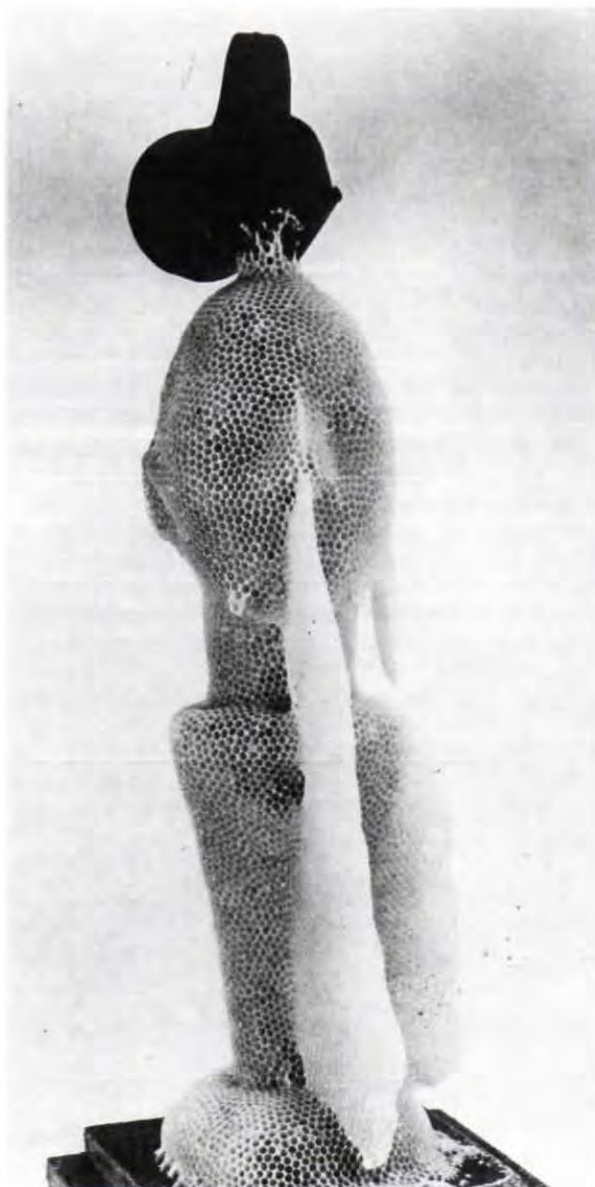
ween man-made structures offers a more evocative abstraction than any humanly-made geometry. Like webs in eaves, these interstices between construction remind us that there is another world of forms made not by chance, but by an architecture which antecedes any human construction. Puett's bees make reference to the ancestral and finite life of the insect world (we know of fossil bees fifty million years ago) wherein these structures so meticulously made are everlasting in a way in which human construction perhaps never can be. The bee advises us to look beneath the surface and to look beyond the parameters of our time. Victor Hugo described, "Nothing is so like a soul as a bee. It goes from flower to flower as a soul from star to star, and it gathers honey as soul gathers light."

But Puett's bee is not merely of a child's imagination or a poet's fancy. Puett is a scientist. A fourth-generation beekeeper, he is acutely aware of the history of apiculture and deeply committed to contemporary bee culture and industry. He speaks knowledgeably of bees; he is passionately committed to apiarian policies to preserve an essential

industry. In these regards, his ardor is akin to that of a constructive artist who loves his or her objects. When the artist selects objects for a box or construction, those objects may be endowed with personal significance and imbued with aesthetic desire. When, however, Puett works with bees with a similar commitment, his relationship is with genus, not with specific object. To see the genus and not the specific object in the artist's covenant with object-as-medium allows us to see the scale of Puett's gesture. His objects, at once monstrous and magnificent, suggest a large accord between cultures. The post-War anticipation that the two cultures could not be brought to mutual comprehension seems to be refuted in Puett's elegant sculpture. He brings his knowledge of science and human care for science to the culture of art and reminds us not only of what we have all known all along (since second grade or so), but of what we need to know about our world in the large and in the small. Puett's bee is rightly, as the poet would have had it, "finale of seem" and the beginning of a seamless, fascinating, and beautiful comb interlacing nature and art.



Garnett  
Puett,  
Bee Master,  
1986.  
Beeswax  
and steel,  
11 1/2 x 13 x 13 1/2"



Garnett  
Puett,  
Meta Man,  
1986.  
Beeswax  
and steel,  
11 1/2 x 13 x 13 1/2"



# ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

## BUGS

**A**N elegantly dressed blond woman was spiritedly holding forth on the Meaning of It All. It was hard to pay attention to what she was saying, because her two long antennae jounced and curtsied as she nodded her head for emphasis. The antennae, which were made of cloth-wrapped wire and ended in yellow cotton balls, were held on her head by a plastic bandeau; they looked like the Deely Bobbers that sprang from the heads of ten-year-olds on the streets of New York a few years ago. The antennae woman and four hundred and ninety-nine other St. Louisans who were interested in the finer things had paid fifteen dollars each for the privilege of celebrating the opening of a special kind of art exhibition. They had come together on a mild afternoon late in September at the city's Laumeier Sculpture Park, which boasts work by Richard Serra, Mary Miss, Mark di Suvero, and others, to attend the installation of a show by Garnett Puett, an apisculptor (*apis* is the Latin word for bee), who had, with his bees, been working during the spring and summer on a piece commissioned by Laumeier. The sculpture was done, the honeybees were gone, but Puett was there. Puett, a New Yorker, is point man, as it were, of this particular kind of art today.

A big blue-and-white striped tent had been put up on the lawn in back of the Laumeier gallery. Black and yellow (bee colors) gas-filled balloons were tethered at its corners. Inside, a string band—its members decked out in white shirts, black pants, and yellow sashes—was playing gypsy music. Puett's wife, Whendi, who was the model for the commissioned work, was there, in a black dress, and Puett had given her a yellow rose to wear with it. Tables were piled with food, and there was an open bar. As the noise level rose, only scraps of conversation could be picked up.

"Queen bee left all of a sudden and they called the artist . . ."

"A little weird . . ."

"It *is* art, because it's creating something upon a form."

"Trying to leave the sculpture another month, but the queen bee left . . ."

"It is *not* art. No, not human art. Bee art, maybe. This young man is *exploiting* bees."

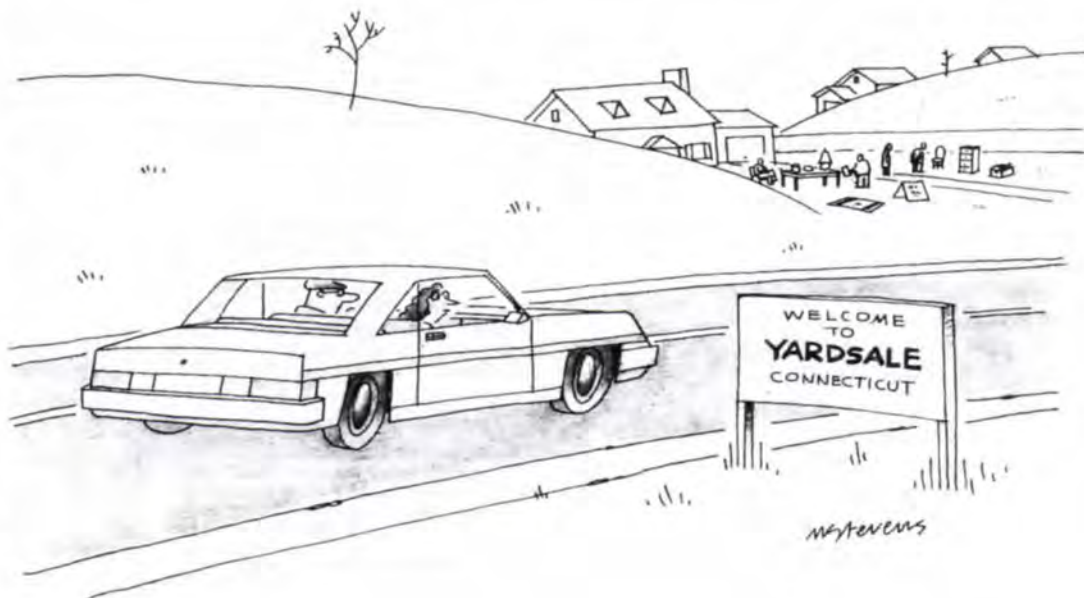
In front of the commissioned piece stands a young woman, stunned. The piece, "Apiscaryatid," is a record of a completed process. It is a life-size naked female figure of beeswax. One foot is held slightly to one side. The arms are held in back, hands clasped. The head is in a relaxed position. The whole stance is easy, natural. The young woman gazing at the figure says, "I came prepared to laugh at this, but I'm moved by its power beyond telling."

**B**ECAUSE, as a beekeeper, I spend a portion of my workdays at the edge of entomology, thinking about bugs and trying to figure out what they are up to, friends from more acceptable trades are constantly sending me clippings about insects and telling me funny bug stories. It is their attempt to keep in touch with my entomological half, which they con-

sider quaintly charming but a bit mad.

Not long ago, I realized that in among the piles of clippings reporting bizarre incidents—like one about a man in Florida who pulled out his pistol and shot himself in the leg to kill an (unidentified) bug that was crawling up it—were lots of stories about people committing art with insects. The clippings from art magazines and newspaper art columns indicated that the critics were taking the individual artists seriously—too seriously—but that none had grasped the fact that each show was more than an isolated event. I've discovered a trend, a movement, and I'm going to claim a discoverer's privilege and name it: Bug Art.

There are straight representations. Terry Winters, a New York artist, paints insects on canvas, for instance. Some venture further and use bug parts. In Beijing, Cao Yijian takes cicadas apart and reassembles them as three-dimensional figures. In New York, Richard Boscarino uses whole (though dead) cockroaches to create what he calls still-lives. In Los Angeles, Kim Abeles has made what she calls a metaphor for rush-hour traffic, in her "Great Periodic Migration," consisting partly of cicada shells. A Japanese artist, Kazuo Kadonaga, has live silkworms spin cocoons in wooden grids. The





his interests is filmmaking, and he took a course in it at N.Y.U. but found it too limiting. In the process, he made a film that became a finalist in the student division of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences competition. He used insects in that film, an experiment in macro-photography in which he filled the screen with bugs and kitchen appliances.

To Boscarino's amusement, he has become something of a star. He appeared on "West 57th Street" and "PM Magazine," and he smiles as he tells about being the featured performer on a popular Japanese television quiz show, "The World in a Nutshell," three years ago, while celebrities vied with one another to guess the prices of his work. His only regret is that he was filmed in New Haven, not Tokyo.

Although Boscarino likes insects in general, he would not use butterflies, for instance, in his pieces. Butterflies find favor, if any bug does, with the non-entomological public, and he prefers what he calls the "tension" created when he uses an insect that is considered abhorrent. Boscarino's face grows serious as he talks about how adaptable cockroaches are, how good at surviving in a wide range of habitats and conditions, how old a life form they are. "You can't help admiring them," he says.

**G**ARNETT PUETT, the apisculptor, is only one year older than Boscarino. He, too, is a New Yorker and has an entomological background, but with that his similarity to Boscarino ends. Puett is a strong-looking man, muscular from a lifetime of doing heavy beework. He has dark-brown hair, cut short, and brooding brown eyes, which do not follow along when the rest of his face smiles. He has the air of a young man who would not compromise much, and at times he seems to be on the verge of truculence, as is often true of beekeepers. Perhaps this comes from spending so much of one's life away from human concerns.

Puett was born in Hahira, Georgia. His father was a commercial beekeeper and so were his father's father and grandfather. When Puett was a teenager, his father died, and his mother, who was an artist, married Jim Powers. Powers runs what was until very recently the biggest honey-producing operation in the United States. It is based in North Dakota but has

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branches throughout the continental United States and in Hawaii.

Bees have been a part of Puett's life ever since he can remember, and his stepfather expected him to take over Powers Apiaries when he graduated from college. With that in mind, Puett entered the University of Idaho, to study business administration and entomology. But after a year he switched to art at the University of Washington, in Seattle, specializing in sculpture. At first, he worked with bronze, but he found himself scrapping the finished pieces and thinking about the wax he had used to create them. The process interested him more than the product.

When he graduated, he did not want to go into his stepfather's business, although to this day he does work in the Hawaiian part of the operation when his schedule permits and the bees there need him. He was also, however, disgusted with the art world as he saw it. "Thirty years ago, I understand, it was ninety per cent poetry and ten per cent sales," he says. "Today, it is just the opposite." He did not want to make the changes in his work which he thought were necessary to create commercially successful sculpture. "I wanted a way to confront viewers with the essence of sculpture—shapes and form," Puett says. "I was willing to frighten them, if necessary, to force them to see." He realized that he could use the forms created by bees for just that purpose. All beekeepers know that the inside of a beehive is beautiful to human eyes, but the patterned structures built by bees from uniform honeycomb cells are seldom seen by any human eyes except beekeepers', and few beekeepers are expressive enough to convey an idea of that beauty. Therefore, the average gallerygoer should find the forms created by bees fresh and startling enough to make him consider form itself. Or so Puett reasoned. He began by experimenting with beeswax foundation—delicate sheets of beeswax, sold by beekeeping-supply companies, that are imprinted in a factory with a matrix of the hexagonal honeycomb pattern that bees build on their own. But he soon switched to using the drawn-out and worked comb itself, with its deeper, cup-shaped cells, completed by the bees.

In 1983, in the face of his stepfather's skepticism and continuing hope that he would decide to manage the Hawaiian division of the business, Puett moved to New York City with a few hundred dollars and a five-year

DECEMBER 28, 1987

plan. He did not want to live out his life on the fringes of the New York art world, so he gave himself five years within which he must have ten shows and get his work accepted. "If it didn't work out, I would go back to Hawaii and pull honey," he says.

He enrolled in Pratt and got a job delivering art to galleries. In the course of his work, he met gallery owners and artists, and soon he was introduced to two dealers who went on to form the Curt Marcus Gallery, which has handled him ever since. Within two years, he had had his ten shows and was being taken very seriously by the art establishment.

His sculptures, which originally sold for under a thousand dollars, now sell for more than five times that, and there is interest in his work in other parts of the country. Laumeier Sculpture Park, which commissioned his "Apiscaryatid" for five thousand dollars, has been trying to raise another ten thousand dollars to buy it for permanent display.

Critical and commercial acceptance has come so quickly to Puett that those around him are concerned about its effect on his development. Beej Nierentgarten-Smith, the director of Laumeier, wonders if he understands how unusual his early success is. After one of Puett's openings, a group of older artists, taking small nibbles from their sour grapes, were speculating about whether it might not have been better for the young man to have a little less luck and a little more struggle. Ann Philbin, who has served as his gallery representative at Curt Marcus, has protected him from exploitation by television. Puett has cooperated with her because he understands that his apisculptures can be played for what he calls their "freak show" aspect, and he *does* want to be considered a serious artist. However, he admits, with an engaging boyish longing, that he would have rather liked to accept an offer to appear on the "Today" show.

Puett and his wife, Whendi, who is a fabric designer, share a large, sunny space in a factory building in Brooklyn, near the Williamsburg Bridge. I visited him there on a clear, sparkling summer day. Along the waterfront, a prostitute waited glumly beside a van with privacy glass, old newspapers fluttered across the streets, and, in among flattened beer cans and old mattresses, some weeds flowered, noticed only by bees and beekeepers. Puett's bees had flown out through a



hole in his studio window and were hard at work gathering nectar and pollen.

In his studio, Puett develops the basic forms for his sculptures, usually welding a steel armature, which he will coat with beeswax and give to the bees to finish. Many of the forms are abstract. He sometimes starts with examples from the "Scanning Electron Microscope Atlas of the Honey Bee," a book of anatomical details so small that they cannot be seen by the unaided human eye. Enlarged, they become pure form. "Nothing relays natural form better than natural form itself," Puett says. He works up these forms on a computer and then welds the armature to express the design in a way that he hopes the bees will accept and use as a base for building comb. If they accept it—and they do in many cases, but not all—they will treat the same form similarly the next time, and Puett will have learned something. (Once, a buyer displayed a finished sculpture too near a radiator, the wax melted, and the piece was destroyed. Puett gave the armature back to the bees, and they built an identical sculpture upon it.) One of his goals is to create forms so pleasing to bees that they will build on every one.

After coating the armature with beeswax, Puett installs packages of bees, bought from a bee breeder, on the base, which he has enclosed in a box, and there, if the design is acceptable to the bees, they will finish in layered beeswax the sculpture he has begun. When the piece is finished, Puett removes the bees to an ordinary beehive, takes out any honey with a dental water pick, and freezes the sculpture for a short time to kill any wax-moth eggs and larvae that it might contain. Then the piece is enclosed in a glass case—Puett builds one for each of his sculptures—to keep it safe.

Sometimes the forms are human—a head, a row of small figures, or a single figure. In creating

the Laumeier "Apiscaryatid," Puett coated the figure, molded from Whendi's body, with beeswax and set it up last April at the Sculpture Park in a large wooden box with a door on one side for public viewing. He put a caged queen on the figure's head and then released a hundred thousand bees above the tiny cage. The bees and the viewers were separated by a screen, so that neither would be harmed. Throughout the spring and summer, the bees collected nectar from miles around, drew out the wax on the form into their hexagonal cells, and added to these bases creamy white beeswax of their own making. The cells became the building units for what appear to be layers of shawls draping the head and torso of the waxen form.

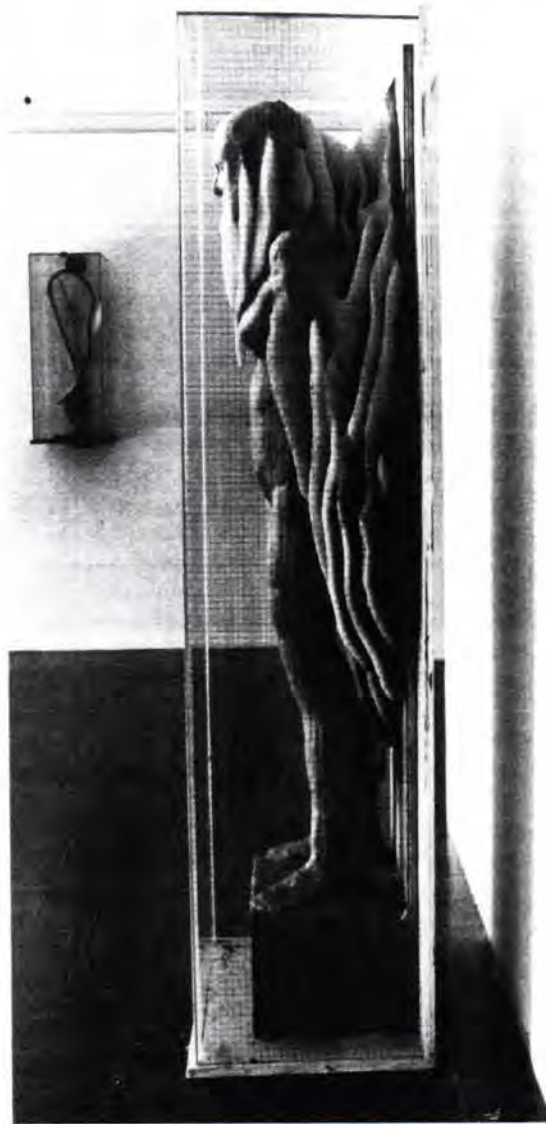
The bees' exit and entrance was a small hole in the box behind the figure. The top of the box was also cut away, and was replaced with red Plexiglas. The glowing, warm light

that filled the box did not disturb the bees, because their receptivity to the spectrum of visible light is different from ours, and the unusual color skewed and altered the visitors' perception of the figure. According to Nierengarten-Smith, the "Apiscaryatid" quickly became one of the most popular pieces the Sculpture Park has ever exhibited.

I was in St. Louis a number of times during the spring and summer, and I always made a special trip out to the Sculpture Park to see how the bees were coming along. They began by building comb on the top of the figure and worked their way down. By mid-summer, although the bees had left the face bare, the rest of the head and the upper torso were covered with layered leaves of wax honeycomb. At summer's end, the queen bee escaped from her cage. Puett was in Hawaii helping to harvest honey at his stepfather's hives, and so was unable to come to

Laumeier. As the staff watched, the queen began to lay eggs in the honeycomb cells along the back and one side of the figure. At one point, the bees clustered around the queen in an upper corner of the box, away from the figure, and built more honeycomb there. From the eggs that the queen bee had laid the bees apparently raised themselves some new queens, for during September, just before Puett was to remove the bees from the sculpture, most of the bees in the colony swarmed away with the old queen. When Puett arrived in St. Louis, only a few bees were left on the sculpture, and none of the honey that the colony had gathered remained. He killed the remaining bees and froze the piece in dry ice.

Nierengarten-Smith says she preferred that Puett base his piece on a human form. That is not always to his liking these days, for he wants to move beyond human models, but it is by using a human base for his sculptures that he has attracted the most atten-





tion. Reviewing a gallery show of Puett's in *Arts Magazine* for September, 1985, Timothy Cohrs writes:

There were so many bees, so many *thousands* of bees, that they stacked up two and three and four deep, dripping from the mass like magma turned into a lifeform. The figure, once it could be identified as such, seemed frozen with shock, stung into a paralysis that at any moment could break and send it and the box and the glass sheet smashing to the ground. The sight of something so primeval, so vital, and so terrifying thrust into the cocoon of the gallery scene was more than surprising—it actually stunned the crowd of art-weary art-watchers at the ArtMart opening into a uniform silence.

Puett's live, untitled piece was planted outside in the gallery's courtyard. It contained over 80,000 honeybees all furiously involved in the process of constructing a hive on the surface of the wax figure. The ceaseless and truly inhuman energy of the piece-in-process contrasted sharply with a finished, bee-less sculpture inside the gallery. . . . the finished piece was absolutely static—no hum, no wild pulse of life, no horrifying vision of a ghastly insect-covered death.

Some viewers have described Puett's work as sadistic—covering a woman's form with bees strikes people to whom bugs are abhorrent as vaguely obscene. Puett shrugs off such reactions. If people think of death and cruelty, he points out, that says more about them than it does about the sculpture. He acknowledges that once he has completed a piece its connotations belong to those who look at it. "But I am not trying to make deathly images," he says, scowling. Puett, after all, comes from a way of life in which having live bees crawl on one's body is not a bad experience (following the Powers Apiaries practice, he works bees without wearing gloves or a protective bee suit) but, rather, a neutral, or even a pleasant, one, standing, as it does, for a benign partnership between bees and human beings. Beekeepers know that bees sting only in exceptional circumstances—circumstances that are easy to control.

Critics have other things to say about Puett's work. Richard Martin writes in *Arts Magazine* for September, 1986:

A kouros in wax was transformed by bees into the trunk of a figure as they bored into and dismembered the legs of the figure. Puett takes an especially perverse—and fascinating—interest in this sculpture as an instance of complete change in interaction with the bees. More often, that interaction is more subtle. A striding figure is veiled with the fine net of comb mantilla akin to a sci-fi-movie special effects, yet our transformed monster is a friendly Frankenstein. The initial grotesquery of

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the figure is quelled and we can see it as the most elegant of transformations.

Writing in *Art in America* for March, 1987, Sue Taylor reviews a Chicago show of Puett's and suggests:

The project seemed to comment on the ability of nature to overtake art, to undermine human achievement, inevitably, through time. Indeed, in the face of the bees' urgent, collective activity, human individualism and self-expression suddenly seemed maladaptive quirks in a social system lacking the cooperative base and supreme integration of bee populations.

We are on very slippery anthropomorphic ground here, and to me what is going on seems something much simpler. These Bug Artists are messing around with materials, and that is an interesting thing to be doing. In addition, they're having a rather good time, and that is even better. What their work has to say is something so plain and obvious that it seems surprising that it needs saying at all, but since so many people are engaged in creating artifacts that do say it and no one else is smiling, perhaps it does: We live in a world in which there are many live things other than human beings, and many of these things can seem beautiful and amusing and interesting to us if they can catch our attention and if we can step back from our crabbed and limiting and lonely anthropocentricity to consider them.

—SUE HUBBELL



# Flash Art

GARNETT PUETT

CURT MARCUS

It's difficult not to think of Sylvia Plath when confronted with a row of bell jars, particularly when they house beeswax covered sculptures as in the work of Garnett Puett. There's an added resonance between Plath's madness-inspired art and Puett's torture-inspired pieces with such titles as *Head-Crusher* and *Hand Masher*. Such liberally drawn connections probably never occurred to Puett. The real significance of his bell jars relates to his own scientific capacities. A professional beekeeper, as well as an artist, Puett originally studied biology before he opted for art. His work has consistently embraced a sort of laboratory aesthetic.

With this exhibition, Puett seems to be addressing a need to rid himself of the "Bug Art" (as his work was labeled in a recent *New Yorker* article) and the Science Fair lure of his novel working method, demonstrated here by *Motor Table*, a live, work-in-progress. By minimizing the role of the bees, he allows his own sculpture to emerge. Wax continues to be the predominant material, the heads of the *Duchess of Windsor* and the body of *Sister* are cast wax, the Savarin can and rods that make up *Fish Traps* are slathered over with wax. However, the great mantles of honey comb contributed by the bees that so heavily enshrouded the forms of such earlier works as, *Funnel Head*, 1966, have been reduced to webs of wax and moulds of comb that delicately cover the sculpture surfaces.

Although Puett continues to incorporate other tokens of the bee trade, such as little wire queen cages, and the boxes and paper wrappers which the insects are shipped in, the predominant imagery is more idiosyncratic. The bell jar pieces in the main gallery have mostly to do with instruments of torture, inspired by a medieval collection of such devices vividly catalogued in a book from Puett's library. His pieces aren't copies of those particular objects, rather they play off phobias generated by his work. Gripping manacles seem to have held hands and heads in place while bees crept over them. The *Shock*



GARNETT PUETT, SHOCK BOX, 1988.  
BEESWAX, STEEL, WOOD, GLASS, 76" WITH BASE.

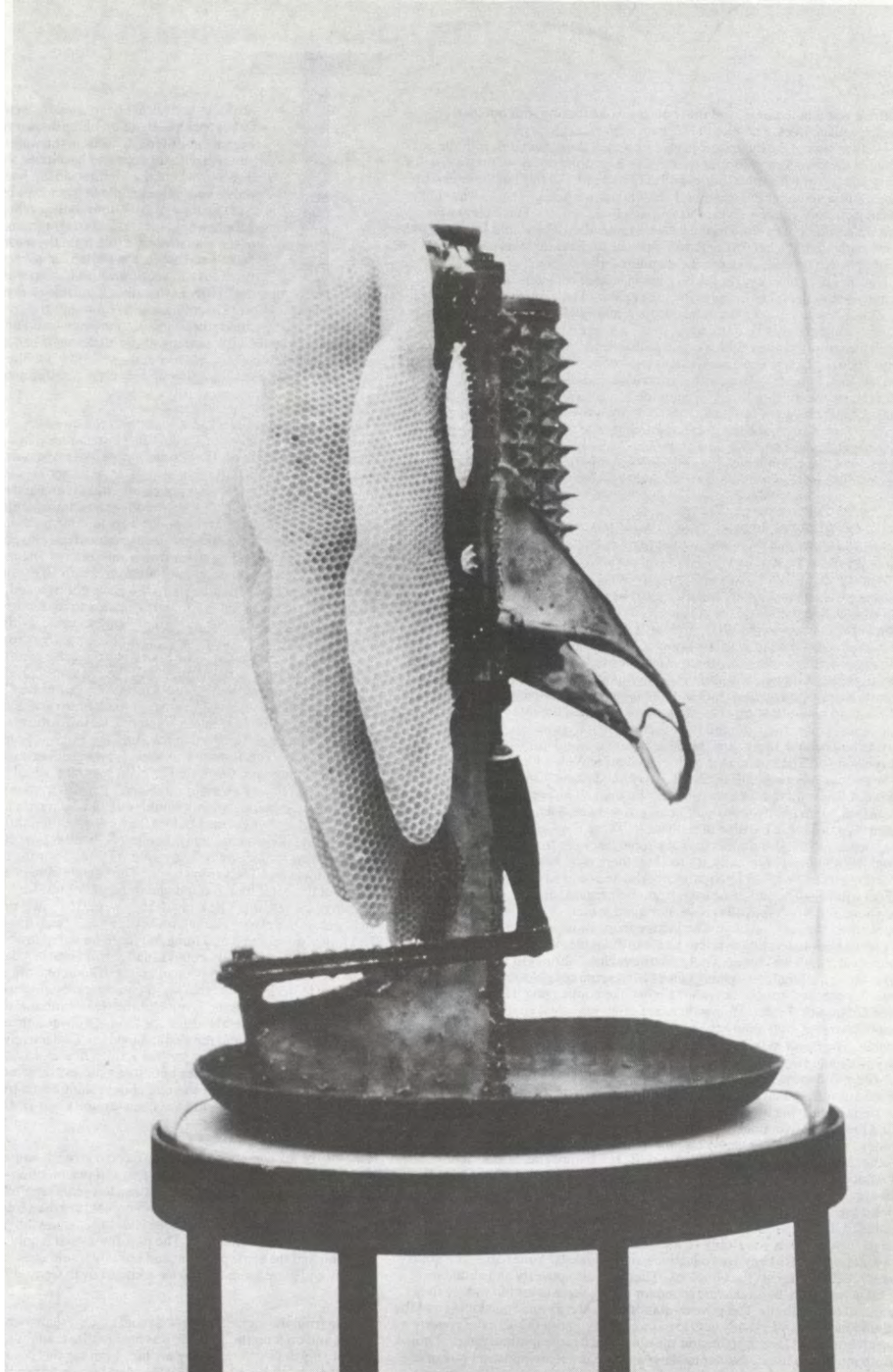
*Box* might jolt with the heat of a thousand bee stings. The figurative works invoke the apiary significance of their models. Puett's *Sister*, (an artist, whose early use of wax informed her brother's quite different use of the media), appears here cast from the knees up, a wax caryatid, rising up from a wooden bee box. *The Duchess of Windsor*, is a totem pole of casts made from an original wax museum head, which Puett received as a gift, an homage to his own wax-works. *Gun Box*, perhaps the least successful piece in the show, involves a real gun box, full of real guns. This last assemblage, barely manipulated by the artist or the bees, falls short of the stimulating interplay between references and sources that Puett usually achieves.

Ingrid Schaffner

*BOMB*

Art : Portfolio

Hand Masher  
by Garnett Puett



Garnett Puett, *Hand Masher*, 1988, beeswax, steel, wood, corn in Belljar,

## The Seattle Times

Thursday, January 4, 1990

### Art About Bee-Ing -- Man Bug Intersect To Create 'Apisculptures'

By Deloris Tarzan Ament

Garnett Puett, beeswax sculpture, opening 6 to 8 tonight, (to Jan. 28) in a dual show with sculpture and drawings by John Monti, at the Greg Kucera Gallery, 608 Second Ave. 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. 624-0770.

Several years ago, Brooklyn sculptor Garnett Puett impressed the New York art world by making sculptures that were collaborations with honey bees. You can see what all the buzzing was about at this evening's Pioneer Square Gallery Walk, when the Greg Kucera Gallery opens a show of Puett's work, called apisculptures. Apis is Latin for bee.

There is a long tradition in American and European art of honoring sheep and cattle in pastoral paintings. And artists have long admired fluffy ducks and the occasional pretty pig.

Bugs are something new. Aside from the precisely drawn bee or moth that customarily appears in formal flower paintings, bugs have been banished from the Eden of art. Too repellent, one supposes. Until recently.

Puett is one of a growing number of artists who commit art with insects. In Beijing, where getting art supplies can sometimes be a problem, Cao Yijian dismembers cicadas, and reassembles them as figures. In New York, Richard Boscarino creates miniature tableaux from costumed cockroaches. Japanese artist Kazuo Kadonaga nurtures silkworms who spin cocoons inside wooden grids, which he presents as artworks.

There's some special tension inherent in art that employs bugs. So many people find them abhorrent that the art carries an emotional load separate from its content or artistic merit. That's especially true when an artist combines insects with the human form, as Puett did in his early work. Perhaps that's why critical and commercial acceptance, usually so difficult to come by in the highly competitive New York art world, were almost immediate for Puett. He probably is one of very few artists who have turned down the chance to appear on the "Today" show.

Puett, 30, is a fourth-generation beekeeper. Instead of taking over Powers Apiaries, the family enterprise, he studied sculpture at the University of Washington, then moved to New York, as many young artists do, to pursue his career.

Living in New York in the mid-1980s, fed up with the commercial nature of contemporary art, and familiar with the beauty of the shapes inside beehives, Puett decided to combine his beekeeping and artistic training by using man-made structures as the basis for bee-built forms. Bees create startling forms, quite unlike those made by humans. The waxy structures, composed of hexagonal cells, have both a sense of rigidity and a fluid drape.

Puett develops the basic forms for his sculpture by welding steel armatures, which he coats with beeswax. The coated form is enclosed in a box, into which he introduces bees. Bees will not accept just every form - no one knows why - but those they accept, they build on.

When the structure looks finished to Puett, he removes the bees, washes out any deposited honey with a dental water pick, and freezes the sculpture long enough to kill any eggs and larvae it might contain. Finally, the piece is enclosed in a glass case.

Puett has attracted the most attention when he was using the human figure as the basis for his apisculptures. Possibly that is because the thought of thousands of bees swarming over the human form elicits a shock that is near atavistic. And the sight of thick, hanging lobes of honeycomb seemingly growing from a human figure is otherworldly; monstrously grotesque, and at the same time strangely beautiful. It has shamanic overtones, as if some human/insect transformation were under way, or a human and insect shared a level of instinctual action.

Unfortunately, Puett decided to branch out into mechanical forms. I say unfortunately, because the gut-level visual resonance evoked by altered human forms is absent from the mechanical constructions. What's left is an intersection of natural and constructed forms whose appeal rests on a more intellectual level.

All six apisculptures at the Greg Kucera Gallery are of the latter type. Puett has turned over to the bees, among other things, an oversize wooden screw, a vaned shape, and a pair of welded, four-sided, open teardrop shapes. The bees have filled in vertical voids with webbed structures, puckered here and there with those pleasing irregularities nature builds into the world. Had Puett chosen to build a six-sided shape, it would have had more coherence with the hexagonal cells bees construct.

One of the forms in the show looks like a bee reject. So little honeycomb is built on the basic shape it seems an afterthought. The most intriguing piece, titled "Wing," is so covered with honeycomb no part of the underlying armature is visible. That's how it is when you try to predict what insects will do. They bug you.



## **Henry H. Laumeier Park** **Contemporary Art In An Outdoor Setting**



**The park's largest and most prominent sculpture, "The Way", was built by Alexander Liberman in 1980.**

**Due to its prominence, it has become symbolic of the park.**

Henry H. Laumeier Park, located at 12580 Rott Rd. in Sunset Hills, is a relatively small but unique outdoor preserve featuring a variety of modern contemporary sculptures and other art. This 98-acre park features around 450 works of contemporary art. This includes about 79 outdoor sculptures, 66 indoor sculptures, 39 maquettes (small sculptures and models of larger sculptures), 52 book arts, and 190 pieces of flat art. All of this is scattered among 98 acres of grounds, an indoor art gallery, library, and gift shop.

Laumeier features multiple hiking trails through the woods and the open lawns/meadows of the park. None of these trails are very long and the outdoor portions of the park can easily be visited in 3-4 hours. The park is bounded on all sides by roads and residential development but seems relatively remote when one hikes the trails through the wooded valley. The park is in metropolitan St. Louis and only 12 miles from downtown, so the area is an island of non-urban land.

Some of the trails are handicapped accessible, while others are more rugged, but by no means difficult. The museum and restrooms in the park are also wheelchair accessible. Many of the larger

sculptures feature a nearby maquette, or small-scale model, along with a Braille interpretation/description of the sculpture and its artist for those who are blind. In order to preserve the sculptures and make the park safe for visitors, climbing on the sculptures is not allowed.

Sculptures are scattered throughout the park and with some being in the woods. They made of everything from compacted earthwork, natural and processed lumber, aluminum, steel, fiberglass, glass/ceramics, stone, and concrete. Some sculptures are built of recycled materials (essentially old scrap metal) while others are made of material specifically meant for sculpture. Some sculptures such as “Orchard Valley” and “The Palm At The End Of The Parking Lot” build on of pre-existing structures, as in the Orchard Valley Pool Complex, and existing natural features such as an old dead tree.

The park’s largest and most prominent sculpture is “The Way”. This structure was built by Alexander Liberman in 1980 and was Laumeier’s first sculpture of monumental proportions. It consists of 18 salvaged steel oil tanks welded together and painted red. “The Way” is 65 feet tall, 102 feet long, and weighs 50 tons. Due to its prominence, it has become symbolic of the park.

One of the park’s more creative sculptures, Apiscaryatid, was created by both artist Garnett Puett and the honeybee. In the summer of 1987, Puett created a life size wax model of his wife, Whendi. He then attracted honeybees by enclosing a queen bee on top of the head. Visitors could observe the bees at work behind a Plexiglas enclosure. Today, the figure and associated honeycomb artwork are in the indoor art gallery at Laumeier.

Throughout the years, Laumeier has been home to some temporary sculptures only meant to last only a short period before being destroyed. These included a series of large and ornate sand castles in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Their lifespan was mostly dependent on the weather. The park hosted a large sculpture “Fire And Ice”, for five winter seasons from 1987 to 1992. It consisted of a large stacking of enormous blocks of ice with a wooden interior. At nightfall, the wooden interior and other combustibles were lit on fire, melting the ice and creating a unique glow. As the ice structure melted and weakened from the heat, spectacular cracking and eventual collapse occurred.

The rest of the park’s varying and numerous sculptures are not discussed in detail here, as there are over 450 works of art within the park. For write-ups of all the sculptures and their authors, see references at the end of the article.

Special exhibitions visit Laumeier from time to time. These are located both indoors and outdoors depending on their nature and purpose. Past exhibitions have involved various art displays, performances by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and others, dances, and more. Some exhibitions request a nominal fee while others are free. Guided tours of Laumeier are available to groups at a cost of \$1 per person. These walking tours last from 45 minutes to an hour. Reservations must be made for tours. For more information on tours and exhibits, visit [www.laumeier.com](http://www.laumeier.com) or call the park at 314-821-1209, as more information and phone numbers are provided.

The landscape of Laumeier Park began to take place sometime before 1916. Prior to this time Mr. Joseph Griesedieck, owner of Falstaff Brewing and president of Vahlaus Realty owned the land. He had the old stone springhouse built over Red Bud Springs, which he also named. This interesting historical feature is unique even though the spring has bypassed the structure by flowing through a lower outlet. Water does flow in the actual springhouse after heavy rains. The terrain under Laumeier is karst. Many small caves and springs are present in the area, although some were destroyed during



the construction of nearby interstate highways I-44 and I-270. Although the exact date of construction is not known, this springhouse predates all other buildings discussed in this article and is the oldest known (to the author) permanent structure within the park.



**The springhouse over Red Bud Springs, built by Joseph Griesedieck of Falstaff Brewing, is just one scenic ruin present in the park.**

Roland Kahle purchased 47.67 acres of land at the site in 1916 from Joseph Griesedieck. Kahle was associated with both the Ringen Stove Company and the Quick Meal Stove Company. These two companies later merged in 1901 to form the American Stove Company. Kahle constructed the stone house serving as the park headquarters today. In 1931 he had the stone garage built and the gatehouse was built in 1936. Mr. Kahle died in 1938 of heart disease and his wife sold the home and property to Henry H. Laumeier in 1940.

Henry Laumeier was the son of Christine and Herman Laumeier. Herman operated a wholesale shoe business in St. Louis and was instrumental in the operation of two banks. He founded the United Bank And Trust Company. Henry Laumeier married Matilda Cramer in 1941 and settled at the house on Rott Rd. after moving from a house on South Grand in St. Louis City. At this time, it was common for the wealthy citizens of St. Louis to buy country estates to escape pollution and the hustle of the city. Members of the Lemp and Busch families, both large brewers of beer, also lived nearby at the time.

The Laumeiers made minor modifications to the house and bought more land adjacent to their current estate. This brought their total land holding up to 72 acres. Henry died at the home in December 1959 at eighty-three years of age.



Wayne C. Kennedy, director of the St. Louis County Department of Parks And Recreation, searched the St. Louis area for rural lands to add to the park system in the early 1960's. Such areas were being developed and disappearing at the time. Relatives of Henry suggested that Kennedy talk to Matilda about obtaining her land. Matilda Laumeier and Wayne Kennedy first met in 1963. Kennedy wrote, "Sights like these must spur the efforts of all of us who love a tree." The two developed a positive relationship and Kennedy later suggested that Matilda will the property to department for use as a park. The Laumeiers always maintained their property so that it had a very park like appearance.

She was enthusiastic to the idea of leaving her land for park use but wanted the park to maintain the general character of the old estate. Matilda didn't want playing fields constructed. Instead she wanted features such as a formal garden, a conservatory building, and plantings to fit the trees and meadows at the site. When she died in 1968 at the age of 86, she left her home and property, which was valued at \$500,000, and \$25,000 to convert the area to a park to St. Louis County in memory of her husband.

The park was opened in 1975 with a nature theme and received very few visitors. It was the least visited of the county parks from 1975 to 1976. This was due to the fact that there were rolling lawns, few facilities, and not much to do at the time. Kennedy left the park in much the same condition as when it was first acquired. The Twin Lakes Golf Club offered to sell 27 adjoining acres to the county the same year but the county was unable to purchase the land. The county did end up buying 4.5 more acres along Rott Rd. which included a house used for the park supervisor to reside and a small strip of land donated by the Peace Haven Association. The park grew to 76 acres with these additions.

In 1975, Ernest Trova made an offer to give large sculptures to create a sculpture park and gallery at the site. The original idea was to temporarily place his completed works at a specified location on a loan basis. Queeny Park near Manchester and Vouziers, the former home of Joseph Desloge in North County were considered but Laumier was picked due to it being relatively undeveloped. This gave the artists a clean slate to create a sculpture park and few other attractions/activities to disturb the art. He liked the area so much that he decided to give the park many sculptures instead of simply lending them. Other galleries in New York and Boston heard of the idea and suggested that other artists be included. Trova formally offered his resources on Dec 11, 1975 to the people of St. Louis County and stated that the proposed sculpture park "would be in the tradition of the Kroller-Muller Museum in Holland and the Storm King Center in New York." His gift consisted of forty sculptures and other materials, all with an estimated value of around a million dollars. It was accepted the following March by the St. Louis County Council. Laumeier opened as a sculpture park on July 7, 1976, with the old stone house being an indoor art gallery and library.

At first, there were around 40 works of art only by Trova. The county and a non-profit group of community sponsors worked to have art from other nationally and internationally known artists lent and donated to Laumeier Sculpture Park. Their efforts have been successful and Laumeier is now considered to be a world-class sculpture park.

The park, which was hardly known before, soon became a popular St. Louis attraction. It was receiving local and international recognition within months. The collection of sculptures continued to grow as other artists donated and lent works to the park. Laumeier to 96 acres in size in August 1986 when a voter approved bond issue provided funding to purchase an additional 20 acres adjacent to Laumeier. The park had previously leased some of this land.

The ruin of a swimming pool complex, once part of an estate named "Orchard Valley", which belonged to the Hedenkamp family, is also part of Laumeier. This area, in the northeast part of the park was once a cow pasture and stock pond. The Hedenkamps built a house nearby and converted the pond into a stone and concrete swimming pool. An article, "Old Pond Converted Into A Delightful Swimming Pool" published in the August 4, 1934 edition of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat highlighted the project. One can tell that this large stone and concrete swimming pool was spectacular in its time. During the early 1980's, artist Mary Miss built decking and trellises of treated lumber around pool to create her work titled "Orchard Valley."



**The remains of the Orchard Valley swimming pool complex are now part of Mary Miss' sculpture titled "Orchard Valley."**

In 1977, the City of Sunset Hills Board of Alderman stated that the sculpture at Laumeier belonged in a nearby auto salvage yard. While some viewed the modern sculpture as an eyesore or simply junk, the park continued to grow in popularity. Much attention was brought to the park by this controversy. Such controversy is typical when dealing with public art in general and almost guaranteed when dealing modern-contemporary art.

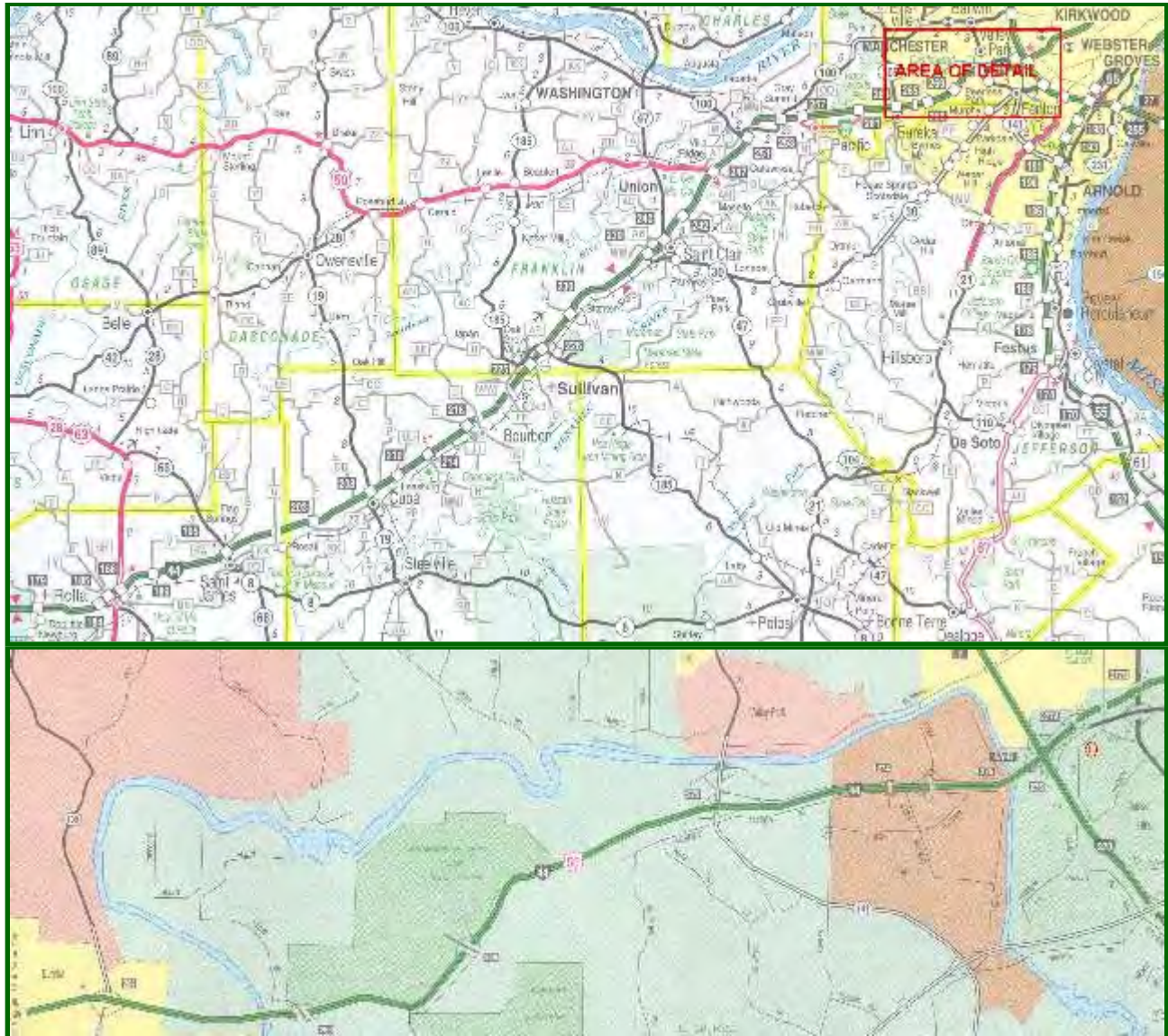
In 1987, the park received accreditation by American Association of Museums (AAM), the highest recognition available for museums. This makes it the only contemporary sculpture park in the country to receive such an award. Of the 8,500 museums nationwide, only 800 have received this accreditation from the AAM. Programs, finances, and service to the community are all factors considered when giving this award.

When Mrs. Matilda Laumeier willed her estate to St. Louis County, she wanted her land used to create a unique park without the typical playing fields that would preserve the general nature of the property. The final result would probably exceed her best expectations and wildest imaginations if



she were alive today. Although it took years, her estate developed into a unique cultural attraction that continues to draw people and international attention year after year. Laumeier Sculpture Park continues to evolve and attract new works of art.

To get to Henry H. Laumeier Sculpture Park from Rolla, take I-44 east to the Watson Rd. Exit (exit 277A). Turn right (south) on Geyer Rd. soon after exiting. Follow Geyer Rd. until it ends at Rott Rd. Turn right again and follow to Laumeier Sculpture Park (on the left) at 12580 Rott Rd.



**Maps to Laumeier (Click on maps to enlarge)**

**The red rectangle on the uppermost map represents the more detailed area covered by the lower map. Laumeier is represented by the red "(L)" in the eastern section of the bottom map.**





**Mapquest generated map of the local area near Laumeier Sculpture Park.**

Thanks to the good people of Laumeier Sculpture Park (<http://www.laumeier.com>) for providing verbal and written information on the park and the City Of Sunset Hills – History (<http://www.sunset-hills.com/history.html>) for information used in this article.

Also used were the publications “Laumeier Sculpture Park – First Decade 1976-1986” and “Laumeier Sculpture Park – Second Decade 1986-1996” published by Laumeier Sculpture Park. Both of these contain write-ups on the art and artists of Laumeier Sculpture Park. These books are available in many libraries are for sale at the Laumeier gift shop.

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# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

ICONS

## Outgoing Smithsonian Chief Hunts Hometown Relics

G. Wayne Clough is hunting relics linked to his hometown



Outgoing Smithsonian leader G. Wayne Clough, left, and colleagues Chris Milensky and Carla Dove look at woodpecker specimens at the National Museum of Natural History. *JOHN GIBBONS/SMITHSONIAN*

By **KELLY CROW**

Dec. 26, 2014 3:12 p.m. ET

**Talk about a rabbit hole.** For the past year, an unusual project has consumed the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, G. Wayne Clough, as he nears his departure on New Year's Day. He has been scouring the Smithsonian's 19 museums and 138 million-piece collection for signs of home—specifically, for artifacts and artworks that hail from the region of southern Georgia where he was born 73 years ago.

The hunt started as a way to cull fodder for a planned memoir, but he said he "got so into it" that he has spent hours looking into dusty cases containing glass specimen jars and asking curators to pull out drawers of anything remotely connected to his hometown of Douglas and its environs. So far, he's found ties to every museum across the vast institution except the Freer and Sackler Galleries, which both focus on Asian art.

For the rural town of Douglas, with a population of around 12,000, that's saying something, he said. "It's become my own version of six degrees of separation, played out over 4.5 billion years," he added, "and it's been fascinating to see how the connections ricochet."

He found meteorites collected close to Douglas a century ago. He found a dinosaur jawbone discovered in southern Georgia in the 1880s within the paleobiology department of the Museum of Natural History. In the botany department, he found samples of rabbit tobacco—a plant that locals used to smoke in corncob pipes—and a sweet plant called sour weed. A curator in the mammal department helped him dig up samples of local snakes, from diamondbacks to the endangered Eastern indigo snake, and then he discovered a couple of living indigos within the National Zoo. "They're hoping to breed them," he said.

Findings at the Air and Space Museum "proved a little thin," he said, but he gleaned records proving that South Georgia State College was among the first colleges in the country to establish an air-instruction academy.

In the realm of fine art, Mr. Clough found a long lineup of faces with Georgian links within the National Portrait Gallery, from Button Gwinnett, an early signer of the Declaration of Independence, to Ray Charles. President Andrew Jackson fought members of the Creek Indian tribe near Mr. Clough's home, so he said the president's portrait counts as well. Cooper Hewitt's design collection produced a "ton" of archival photos of the region as well.

At the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Mr. Clough was surprised to find a rarely seen 1989 sculpture, "Mr. Zivic," by Garnett Puett. The artist, who was born in nearby Hahira, Ga., built a wiry mesh figure of a man, sprayed it with wax and then unleashed around 2,000 bees within the structure. Eventually, the bees transformed the figure into a honeyed hive, a waxy and globby form. The problem with the piece lies in its proper conservation, Mr. Clough said: "It's difficult to keep fresh."



The secretary said that his quest would have been easier had the Smithsonian finished digitizing its vast collection, but added, “I wish I started it earlier because it’s made me appreciate these collections in a way I didn’t when I took on the job” six years ago.

Curators at the Freer and Sackler also know they’re on notice to keep an eye out for any Asian-Georgian connections. “I haven’t given up,” he said.

# Garnett Puett



Garnett Puett was born in 1959 in Hahira, Georgia. He moved to Hawaii in 1972 with his family who came to start a honey operation on the island. Garnett comes from several generations of both artists and commercial beekeepers. He graduated from University of Washington as a sculpture/foundry major. While working on his MFA from Pratt Institute in NYC, he decided to use bees instead of casting his wax



pieces to create collaborative pieces between himself and the bees. Garnett has work owned by the Hirshhorn Museum, The Honolulu State Art Museum, The Laumeier Sculpture Park and many private collections throughout the country.