Gary Sangster

934A Fort Barry, Sausalito, California 94965
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

ARTICULATE SPATIAL PROJECTIONS

THE SCOPE OF JUDITH BARRY'S VIDEO INSTALLATION.

Turning a corner on a stairwell landing to discover a disembodied, oversized face, speaking intimately about 'her story,' is both a compelling and startling visual and spatial experience. In a video installation that appears to float before our eyes like an apparition, powerful stories of escape, dislocation, exile, or exclusion are told over and over again as the tape rolls, rewinds, and repeats. This ethereal, and yet profoundly human, representational and narrative object, is a video projection of a giant 'talking head' titled ***First and Third***. It was initially exhibited at the 1987 Whitney Biennial, and marks many of the critical concerns and strategies found in Judith Barry's extensive body of video installations and performances.

Stylistically ***First and Third*** involves cinematic conventions of documentary film; technically it evades the central focus of the traditional projection system and appears to 'paint' a subtle, moving image onto the abruptly narrow confines of a stairwell; and materially it incorporates the transitory space of the stairwell to reiterate the transitional nature of the speakers telling their stories. The subjects of this video, and the video image itself, merge with their surroundings like phantoms, ever present, but never recognized as real.

The disconcerting qualities of ***First and Third*** are an effect of Judith Barry's ongoing project to destabilize the viewers' comfortable relationship with images, space, and subject matter in a way that is both intriguing and enticing. The mysterious element of production, the unexpected element of spatial context and arrangements, and the uncompromising element of the material elevate the viewers' engagement above the banal and familiar, and propel their participation in finding their way through the work. Rather than disorienting or displacing the viewer with a fierce image, a voyeuristic fantasy, or a gigantic spectacle, the logic of Barry's work is to place the viewer within the scheme of the work, either

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

physically or psychologically, and allow the interaction to unfold. This process is played out discretely in Barry's 1980-81 video, ***Casual Shopper***, which examines the "sleights of display used to excite desire in a West Coast shopping mall. Conflating the domains of public consumption and private seduction Barry's video traces the movements of a couple, both models, through the continually displaced focus of each other's gaze in the synthetic spaces of the mall. The space of shopping becomes the space of their unappeasable desire."[1]

Similarly in ***Adam's Wish***, 1988, an ambitious design to be projected into the 60 foot dome of the World Financial Center, forced the viewer to assume the optimum position under the projection to most clearly see the work. The one-minute video loop presents a "brief fantastic narrative in which the biblical Adam is shown as a worker in overalls, the creation of God, and a friend of the homeless. At one point, Adam yawns and as he does so the camera zooms down his throat and he appears to be swallowing the architectural space around him."[2] Thus the viewer is placed intimately within a fantasy voyage of imaginary longing, where Adam tries to touch the hand of God, but fails, only to succeed in being dropped from the sky into a homeless encampment. The discordant relationship of psuedo-religious subject matter to the elite context of display is an effective clue to understanding the work. Barry intends the viewer to revisit the dubious aftermath of co-opting public space for corporate needs or turning fervent (spiritual) desire into opportunistic (consuming) markets. In a daring play of imagination and compact story-telling, Barry tells of the "fall" of the worker and his absorption within a corporate space that signals an end to public space and any attendant notions of social interaction and community. Images that refer to religion, god, and spirituality, and images of the social condition of poverty and homelessness, could not be more abruptly different to the ideology, methodology, and iconography projected from an architectural site self-designated as the World Financial Center. The irony intended by Barry cuts ever deeper, as the corporate facility casually

[1] Johanna Drucker, Spectacle and Subjectivity: the Work of Judith Barry, in Iwona Blazwick, ed., Public Fantasy (London: ICA, 1991) p.9.
[2] Margaret Morse, Judith Barry: The Body in Space, Art in America, April 1993, p. 118.

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

assimilates the piece as cultural decor or multimedia entertainment within a context of advanced exchanges of economic value.

Intent on transforming the viewers traditional relationship with the image, Barry's work extends an invitation to enter a different kind of art world and to have a new kind of art experience. It is a world closely aligned with the complexities, technologies, and desires of contemporary experience, and it engages the ambiguity, anxiety, and apprehension inhabiting there. It is an experience that explores sensations and evokes memories through vision, sound, texts, and spatial relations. Employing stylistic devices drawn from theater, cinema, documentary photography and film-making, as well as from architecture, design, and urban planning, Barry's work is both accessible and familiar, in a personal, almost intimate way. In a large double sided projection piece using slides, film loops and audio, ***In the Shadow of the City…Vamp r y***, 1985, Barry creates a panoramic projection of a suburban parking lot that ceaselessly dissolves into a Manhattan cityscape. Within this fictive city, film loops are projected into windows, presenting fragmented narratives whose unfixed meanings shift with each dissolve. A woman's face or window blinds can be glimpsed, but interaction is barely discernible. The anonymity of distance and the proximity of the windows invites looking and suggests voyeurism. Inviting the audience to crave for more to see, Barry plays on the vampire myth, suggesting an insatiable desire for images, that pulls the viewer to circulate to the other side of the screen, not to miss the longed-for action.

In addition to her conscious maneuvers in dissecting and reconstituting the spaces of her installations, she has investigated a range of historical and critical sources and materials that support and amplify the potential of her work to be read by a wide audience. Her work displays an intelligent and rigorous program of refining and defining meaning that pointedly invoke cultural relevance and political import. The extent of Barry's connection to design, architecture, history, language, critical theory and Feminism, coupled with the breadth of reference in her work, mirrors

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

the network of intersections and crossovers in everyday life, but with a difference. Although Barry's work reflects on the ideological dimension of spaces and sites, and the relationship to structures of power and signs of authority, she is not content to point out the existence of claustrophobic or coercive symbolic regimes. She is more concerned with probing fissures in history, language and imagery that can be regenerated and reinvigorated in an imaginative and poetic form. Forsaking the conventional artistic strategy of replicating forms, styles, or the accumulated appearance of seductive, perceptual beauty, Barry's work plays on other aspects of the viewers' desire, in the realm of fantasy, imagination, or psychic projection. Constantly switching circuits in the production of her work, Barry engages ideological space as transformable entity, and physical space as transportable idea. In her work for the 1991 Carnegie International, ***Ars Memoriae Carnegiensis: A Memory Theater***, she designed and produced information cards about the library, natural history, and fine art museum functions and facilities of the Carnegie Institute. To navigate the vast collections of the Carnegie the viewer could use the packet of cards as a guide, "rethinking the meaning of its objects and the reasons for their assembly, and turning the museum into a rich storage house of memories that could be retrieved by following the simple directions on the cards. In this way the viewer became, as Barry's cards noted, 'the producer of the museum, bringing to bear her or his particular belief in the notion that the objects displayed constitute a coherent view of the UNIVERSE.'"[3] Barry avoids allowing the work to serve as an educational tool or a theoretical essay, because it is a work that activates the viewer's relationship to the museum as an archival and educational institution, as a conglomeration of artifacts and collections, and as an arrangement of (public) displays and (private) storage. The work acts as the schematic director's notes for a performance that is carried out by the viewer. But it is a performance that can only make sense in direct relationship to the objects, images, and spaces that constitute the stage or the set. The Carnegie Institute is a slowly accumulated and tightly edited bundle of historical records, aesthetic materials, critical dialogue, and immediate

[3] Brian Wallis, Judith Barry and the Space of Fantasy, in Judith Barry Projections Mise en abyme,

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

contemporary experience. ***Ars Memoriae Carnegiensis: A Memory Theater*** offers clues to making sense of this complex that is based on the experience of taking an (intellectual) adventure tour of the museum.

Barry's emergence as an artist is coupled with a fertile period in the development and production of theoretical positions within the field of art, and in the fields of cinema studies, gender studies and Feminism in particular. As an artist, writer, and exhibition designer she has taken an active role in the critical debates of post-modernism that explore the myth of individual subjectivity, of the notion that "one's unique self - was, in fact, a historically specific and socially constructed fiction or myth, an accumulation of ideas and images assembled from various pre-existing discourses."[4] The sophistication and subtlety of her messages interact with, rather than resist, the usual power relations and ideologies of social and architectonic institutions, suggesting other readings and other potential outcomes that may result from their interpolation. In one of her earliest solo performance-installations, ***pastpresentfuturetense***, Barry examined the way the body, especially the female body, functions as a site of experience. Creating a texture of sight and sound, using a complex sound track and a wall of three large backlit projections, Barry presented a multi-layered narrative that culminated in a four ton curtain of cascading silica sand, which gradually buried the artist, suggesting a passive, improbable entombment. In other performance-installations from the same period, for instance, ***Cup/Couch***, ***They Agape*** and ***Kaleidoscope***, she incorporated video and film projection directly within the audience/gallery environments, utilizing the power of these mediums to construct physical spaces which the audience could inhabit. In a gallery setting, a video or film projection served a hybrid function, as both the traditional space of painting—a view of the world— to be watched and witnessed, and as a spatialized environment that enveloped and incorporated the audience, as participants moving through the visual duality of two-dimensional/three-dimensional experience. With these projects, Barry animates space for the body as a conscious component in a cocoon-like aesthetic

---

Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 1993), p. 13.

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

experience. The viewer's body is bound in place, but not trapped; surrounded, but not engulfed; observing, but also observed.

Throughout Barry's work is the redolent presence of the body, the recurring figurative element in a landscape of spectacle, commodity, desire, and difference, or the implicit subject of the work. Her work documents, articulates, or produces effects that disorient or reconfigure the relationship of the body to the spatial environment. The purpose of subjecting the body to these dislocations is to better understand the human subject, how it is produced, constructed, and identified. In a recent work, ***imagination, dead imagine***, 1991, Barry addresses the compulsion to participate in viewing even the distasteful and unpleasant. A video projected onto the four faces of a large minimalist cube, created a huge androgynous head that is fixed within the confines of a gallery environment. The enlarged head becomes the human site of a series of defacements and exfoliations. Dousing the composite image of a man and a woman's head with successive indignities, including simulated bodily fluids, live crickets, and worms, then to be 'wiped' clean by the video tape cutting to a new sequence, has an orchestrated, near rhythmic quality. The impact of this work is strangely compelling. With all the odious elements plainly obvious, inviting rejection, the repellent images nonetheless induce a state of abjection to the subject matter, and create a disgusting yet fascinating spectacle. The vulnerable head, container of the brain and the psyche, in this case grown way out of proportion to the viewer, is visually 'worked over' as the viewers watch, wait, and witness a disturbing, stomach-turning scene. The viscerality of the imagery, the grotesque quality of the over-sized head, and the amelioration of gender identification, contrasted with the stately formality of the cube-form armature of the projections, adds to the disturbing tension in the work. The work is cued and amplified by undisguised literary references that are both poetic and metaphysical. ***imagination, dead imagine*** is also the title of Samuel Beckett's last and shortest (5 pages) novel, in which he describes "an austere room in which a male and female character are

[4] ibid. pp. 14-15.

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

seated, experiencing only invariable cycles of light and heat. Barry was also influenced by J.G.Ballard's story "The Impossible Room," which includes the following description: 'A perfect cube, its walls and ceiling were formed by what seemed to be a series of cinema screens. Projected onto them in close-up was the face of Nurse Nagamatzu, her mouth three feet across."[5]

Political activism within an aesthetic framework is the central impulse driving Barry's work. But Barry's art is not cloaked in didactic aphorisms, or pointed, sometimes painful or controversial, symbols of power and social control. The content of her work emerges from an exploration of the relationship between the physical, visceral, and kinesthetic effects of the viewer's immersion in an aesthetically activated space, and the specific subject matter or theme of the piece. Barry's work, ***Model for Stage and Screen***, 1987, or more recently ***Speedflesh***, 1998, demonstrate how these effects can be accomplished. ***Model for Stage and Screen*** is a circular room with an antechamber. In the circular room two discs are suspended in such a way that the viewer in the room begins to experience a variety of retinal effects (visions) which are heightened when leaving the room and entering the antechamber. The experience takes visual perception out of the control of the viewer. In this way the viewer becomes the projector, a kind of minimalist projection. ***Speedflesh*** is a 4 channel immersive, interactive video/sound narrative that takes place in a 360 degree point-of-view theater. The point-of-view of each of these 4 characters can be accessed by dialing a 'radio-like tuner' which allows you to simulate tuning into the last five minutes of their lives by moving from one character's point-of-view to another's across the dial. You are in the center of a world which is moving away from you at a rapid speed. A woman floats toward you and then away, elongated through the anamorphosis which is produced by the projection. Her movements seem to conceal and sometimes reveal the four characters whose lives seem to be caught/displayed in the band of light that closes in around you. As a viewer you can engage with the narrative by tuning in, using the wheel that is at the center of the space. You experience the

[5] Margaret Morse, Judith Barry: The Body in Space, op.cit., p. 118.

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

narrative through the eyes of each character as each character's point-of-view is projected 360 degrees around the cylinder using three projectors and video wall technology to split the image. The structure of the work, the 360 degree projection, has antecedents in the history of the anamorphosis image; a history that figures not only throughout the narratives of representation, but also marks the Neo-platonic period and recalls the power of hidden iconographies in describing new social orders. On one level, use of the anamorphosis as the form/content of the imagery of ***Speedflesh*** , proposes that even an apocalyptic moment poses other histories, sometimes immediately accessible, sometimes elusive or hidden.

Disentangling these elements is impossible, because of the strategic way Barry interconnects the layers of visual, visceral, intellectual and emotional experience, to the institutional discourse of the site of the work. Yet this does not mean that the work is always constrained in a fixed environment or locale, because the notion of site for Barry is a generic idea, that can be both flexible and efficiently mobile. In fact the site, as both a physical place and an institutional discourse, is transient and pliable, receptive to transformations and make-overs as new regimes seek to efface or reinvigorate the old. Barry uses these possibilities to great effect. Eschewing intervention, she pursues infiltration or inflection as a key mode of critical discourse. In a number of art/exhibition design projects, such as ***Damaged Goods***, 1986*,* ***From Receiver To Remote Control: The TV Set*****, 1990** or ***alt.youth.media*****,** 1996**,** she changed the stakes of engagement by serving the institution as an artist whose contribution was to design the exhibition, effectively framing the institutional project, the curators, and the other artist participants with her work.

Critical to understanding her work is the apparent eclecticism of form it displays, in which different kinds of installation forms are devised for different situations. Although video installation is the frequently recurring element, Barry has experimented with a variety of means, including performance, texts, and exhibition design. Three elements are the focus of her analysis, the image, space, and

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

subject matter. A different kind of museum research project incorporating these three elements resulted in ***About Face*****,** 1992, which explored how the effects of altered spatial constructions affected a viewer's notion of history and knowledge. ***About Face*** was a project in the form of a miniature book. But the point was not merely the reduction of scale to induce portability or concealment. The project was designed to invoke the credentials of a gentlemanly Victorian experience, as part of a self-conscious project by the Parrish Art Museum, NY, ***A Museum Looks at Itself*****.** The miniature book was often part of the wardrobe of the well-to-do Victorian. Many of these books were actually physiognomy or phrenology manuals that allowed the user to make on-the-spot assessments of an acquaintance's character by charting facial features. Physiognomy or phrenology were two of the primary ways the 18th and 19th centuries came to terms with a rapidly transforming culture. By examining the shape of the skull and its indentations (phrenology) or by analyzing facial features (physiognomy) it was thought that a person's inner nature and motivations would be revealed. Physiognomy or phrenology were pseudo-sciences and while many of their formulations proved to be an aid in the development of legitimate sciences, their biases also served to inscribe race and class prejudices across all representational systems, including the arts of genre painting, portraiture, and the novel, as well as the social sciences of anthropology and ethnography. Barry's miniature book transported the viewer into the late Victorian period that formed part of the exhibition and collections of the museum, but it also included commentary on contemporary portraits, with a twist, because the text of the book consists of a compilation of quotations drawn from 18th and 19th century sources.

Although Barry's work is tied to the trajectory of Modernism through her engagement with the metropolis and its technologies of representation, it is liberated from the danger of didactic constraints and homogenizing statements of authority through a dynamic relationship to the means, mechanisms, and forms of the present moment. By virtue of this strong connection to the culture and aesthetic experiences of the present, Barry is involved in negotiating the

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

separation between the desire for images and the seduction of images, and how that variable distance can effect the sense of individual and collective identity. As pseudo-archaic as ***About Face*** may have been, ***Whole Potatoes from Mashed***, 1993, looked at the intersection of knowledge and space from an architectonic and technological perspective. It is an interactive sound and fiber optic sculpture that employs the metaphor of an exploded ceiling, making clear reference to the work and ideas of Gordon Matta Clark, and in particular, his notion of taking a familiar and normal situation and translating it into multiple and overlapping discourse. The work explores the ways in which materials have a history, and how viewers can be induced to participate in constructing those histories. The dominant visual element in the piece is a mass of cables dangling from the ceiling. Less obvious is the scattering of pages from a glossary across the floor. Gradually it becomes apparent that some of the cables light up in response to the soundtrack and to other sounds that are produced by the viewers. The sounds at first appear to be random and ad hoc, but they gradually cohere into different stories with similar themes. Reading the glossary aloud orchestrates a mini light-show. The fiber-optics respond to the sound in such a way that they give shape to the room and a tangible presence to the words. Activated by the discretion and programmed codes of the artist, the viewer's voice is part of the media that produces the work. The soundtracks trace the relationships between science, alchemy, and materials, from ancient times through to the present.

Barry creates installations and projects that are designed to examine the circulation of images. Her projects explore the reduction and amplification of meaning in images, across a wide cultural landscape. It is a terrain that stretches from the architecture of the city, the museum, or the mall, to the architecture of the body and mind, right up to the psychic, hallucinatory effects of illusion, fantasy, imagination, or memory. "Two principal areas she has explored - the history of place and the nature of visual perception - help define the specificity of the individual experience. But these concerns are constantly being called into question by what she sees as the eradication of historical memory and the dulling

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

of our own acute abilities to perceive."[6] The notion of a loss of historical memory is not simply a call to nostalgia for times past, it is the erasure of a vast accumulation of human interaction and the accretion of culture across communities. If structures and objects of value and meaning are lost, then they must be replaced by something more recent, more compact, and inevitably less nuanced. The gap is filled with a more manageable and homogenized notion of cultural exchange as well as a condensed, short-hand language that is easy to translate and transport. Barry's installation of 1991, ***Depense***, in an old cheese market in Glasgow, is directed towards the idea of historical effacement. Housed in a now abandoned building of large-scale commercial activity in the 19th century, the installation revolved around the relationship between different kinds of work documents, and the facility of these artifacts to reinscribe the social and cultural dimension of the city. Images of Glasgow's past: manual labor, factory labor, decrepit buildings, dilapidated neighborhoods, tenement slums, and antiquated transport from the docks, stations, and streets were projected onto a large vitrine. The images set the scene of the installation, recalling the past, mourning the passing of a different kind of living, and evoking a different mercantile apparatus. Littered before the vitrine were thousands of official documents, time sheets, business reports, working drawings, and work orders. The papers once functioned to circumscribe work and business, to implement change, and to cause considerable effect in people's daily lives. The documents quantified time and were directly negotiable. Like money, they had measurable value. The correlation of the images and the papers is poignant, because a dramatic inversion of meaning has occurred. The images of Glasgow act as a kind of historical currency, enriched by the peddling of nostalgia that is now so common in the global culture of tourism. While the documents, the very measure and definition of work done or to be done are now virtually valueless, numerical scribble. The notations refer to kinds of work no longer required, buildings that have long been razed, businesses that have been transformed into conglomerates headquartered elsewhere, or to institutions that have ceased to exist.

---

[6] ibid., p. 143.

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

The engagement of space in an aesthetic program of design, installation, and re-organization is not unusual in Barry's work. Her training as an architect and her practice as an exhibition designer afford considerable awareness of the fractured discourse that permeates the site and the inherently variable conditions of display. While the notion of a site specific project being an intervention or response to a constant condition of space, architecture, or ideology is now common practice within the institutions of art, public art, and museum exhibitions, Barry's approach to the issue of the site is reflexive and multivalent. Resisting the idea of the environment of display being fixed or immutable, Barry elects to animate spaces through variable means. She may elect to interact with a site, reconfiguring space or transforming it, to interfere with traditional senses of perception, or to invert historical references and structures as they unpredictably mutate into the present to construct accepted views of contemporary reality. A recent work from InSite '97, in San Diego, ***Consigned to Border: The terror and possibility in the things not seen*****,** is a reflection on some of the relationships that might be posed in a contemporary notion of 'landscape'. For Barry, the concept 'landscape' functions as a series of signs that frame the dialogues between what was once called 'nature' and 'culture'. These dialogues, while referring to the long traditions of perspectival space, art history, natural history and geography, also now reflect the largely invisible relations of the flows of capital and technologies of representations. In beginning her research for InSite '97, what was most striking to Barry was how different the cities of Tijuana and San Diego appear, even though they share essentially the same geography. Issues of difference in identity, culture and social and economic relations have all had a powerful impact on the evolution of each community and on their production of representation systems and environmental marks. ***Consigned to Border*** evolved to become an interlocking series of five billboard-size images, functioning as a sign of the relationships between the two cities, effectively using the photographic tradition, particularly collage, to render what might be invisible, more visible. The work consists of five large scale, interconnected planes that serve as screens for the

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

projection of video images. Critical to the language of the work is the configuration of the screens in the form of a T-shaped sign. This form sets out a number of (visual) situations that the viewer can respond to or question. Images are juxtaposed and counter-posed by screens being adjacent and back to back. This work cleverly uses the structure of the sign itself to set up a number of antinomies that might be provoked by comparing the various panels in different ways. The work operates through memory and association, not just through the appearance of images in the videos through time, but also through their dislocation in the physical space of the site. ***Consigned to Border*** inverts the usual placement of the projection screens on the walled perimeter of a site, and creates a sculptural form that is tautly reduced or collapsed in on itself as a way of compressing the relationship between the cities of Tijuana and San Diego into a face to face act of both confrontation and denial, or a recognition of intimate knowledge and insistent ignorance. The work provides a series of colorful, poetic, and evocative images that form an impression of the landscape as an evolving mixture of commerce, recreation, and constant movement and activity. Images of transport are keys to the shifting role of humans within the scene. One screen projects the San Diego coast as it exists today in a series of classic 'tourist' images - the harbor and the downtown area crossed by the ever-present airplanes. Another depicts the San Diego train going from San Diego to one of the Mexican borders in a series of time lapse photos. A third shows the Makladora section of Tijuana, a fast growing multi-national, industrial area which engages in various kinds of manufacturing. The dissolving images appearing in the panorama that burns out of control are examples of existing forms of land use as they occur along the border. A fourth screen presents a busy pedestrian crosswalk in Tijuana shown as a time-lapse series of photos. The last screen is the Tijuana coast line showing three potential land uses, not yet materialized, but certainly on the horizon.

One of the compelling aspects in much of Barry's work is the evocation of longing, desire, or wishfulness, that is neither romantic or subjective, nor is it strictly material or objective. Her work envisions sites, circumstances, and stories as

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

living entities, straining and flexing under the reifying gaze of a commodity culture constructed of both actual and virtual commodities, constricted and restricted languages, banal architectonic environments and streetscapes, and a hyper-imaginative media. The idea of places, situations, and narratives evolving, changing, or mutating suggests a reflexive, almost organic, relationship to content that is more exploratory than didactic, more evocative than specific, and more fluid than fixed. This kind of mixture of approaches and effects within her work is consistent with Barry's subtle sense of critique of rigid political and intellectual positions within the overall discourse and experience of an artwork. Rather than stating the obvious (or depicting the statement) she prefers to allude to experiences that are troubling and disconcerting, and to engage the viewer explicitly and viscerally by drawing them into the physical space of the work and involving them in the tangible physicality of the piece. But this kind of invitation to the viewer to participate is not accomplished through the directness of role playing, interactive response mechanisms, or the presentation of enveloping, invasive exhibit contexts, cluttered with objects and tangential references. Instead Barry recalls the traditional context of art as a site for viewing a static work. Then she surreptitiously induces viewer participation through a reductive approach to installation design, the use of sophisticated technology in concealed locations, and the control of viewer traffic in the space of display. Barry's frequent use of the scale of cinematic spectacle in relation to the claustrophobic size of traditional exhibition spaces permits viewers to infuse the work with their own bodies or to examine the imagery as a (nearly complete) visual environment.

In her video installation ***VOICE Off***, for the 8th Cairo Biennale, 2001, Barry stages how sound might be visualized within an unusual cinematic environment. ***VOICE Off*** is a two channel video and sound installation that explores how the voice might be represented visually. To present this work the gallery is divided into two identical rooms, in which the projection screen wall is the dividing line, and the video projection completely fills the screen from floor to ceiling, creating a visual extension of gallery space. On one side is the 'women's side' and they are

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

surrounded by sound, while the other side is 'man's side,' in which he is ‘hearing things’ and listening. This two channel installation explores ideas intrinsic to the question of 'what the voice is' in terms of possession and loss, presenting the viewer with two metaphoric narratives that unfold simultaneously on the double-sided screen.

Each of the spaces stages a different kind of experience of the voice. On one side, a dreamlike sequence unfolds that represents some of the personal, intimate and interior encounters that one might have with the voice - with your own voice, for instance, or with other voices. These are overheard bits of speech, interior monologues, snatches of songs, the kinds of things caught while moving through daily life, which both possess you, and which you try to hold on to, or give yourself over to. On the other side of the screen, “time passes slowly as a middle-aged man taps away at his keyboard, getting up often to smoke cigarettes, drink coffee, read the paper and take a nap. Distracted by muffled noises and siren-like songs, he repeatedly opens the door of his studio to look up and down the hall. Finally, he dismantles a bookshelf and uses a golf club to whack a hole in the wall, which he steps through. Having broken through his studio's wall, our frustrated hero finds nothing but mist and silence before the video fades to black.”[7] On this side of the screen, the man who initially is disturbed by the sounds that he hears and who demonstrates, from a different perspective, how through the act of involuntarily hearing, one can also be possessed, even haunted, by the voice.

Through the clarity of the design of the installation of ***VOICE Off*****,** the viewer is able to inhabit the spaces of these familiar yet strange narrative experiences, and to share the experience of sound and vision, not simply in a cinematic (or painterly) context of sitting, standing and viewing, but in a kinesthetic manner. The use of the voice as the propagating element of the drama, and the intensity of the psychic tension for the male side in particular, where the anxiety leads to near-desperate violence, suggest the latent power of the of the intangible object or ephemeral

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

experience in causing palpable damage or instigating unbearable pressure. The work also evokes the fugitive nature of speech in being held accountable for inference and implications in the fragmented and fractured human discourse and conversations of everyday life.

Judith Barry is one of the pioneers of the rapidly expanding field of video installation. She has explored the new potential of digital media and video technologies in an extended mix of video installation, performance strategies, and narrative experimentation. Her installations are critical to many of the on-going developments in video art. Her work addresses key production issues of style and form ranging through narrative and non-narrative video, performance-based video experiments and documentation, and single-screen or multi-screen based installations in relation to the spatial potential of video projection, video installation, and video sculpture.

Contemporary debates concerning the social role of art in the realm of politics and culture have been key elements in the formation of subject matter in Barry's work. However, the ideas and issues in the work coalesce with the installation strategies, the technological equipment, the contextual arrangement of space, and the recognition of the physical, visceral, and perceptual engagement of the viewer. Together these elements create a carefully articulated and coherent aesthetic experience.

Barry's treatment of subject matter has remained constant as an aesthetic strategy throughout her body of work. This consistency reaches from questioning the conventions of representation in early performances and videos like ***pastpresentfuturetense*** and ***Casual Shopper***, respectively, to later works like ***Consigned to Border*** and ***VOICE Off***. Similarly, Barry's work has focused on the subject of the image as a descriptive element within a complex set of narrative relationships, and has questioned the way meanings are construed within a field or

[7] David Pagel, Entering a Dream State With Judith Barry's Video Installations, (Los Angeles: LA Times,

Gary Sangster
t | 415-331-2787 x 23 e | gsangster@headlands.org

a context of visual experience. Not captive to a style of formula for constructing video or installation narratives, each of her projects, in its spatial organization of the image (whether it is a single projection or a multiple projection), presents the image in a different way. Barry uses her freedom from style to propel her work in considering issues of space. This is evident in her treatment of architectural conventions such as the physicality of the installations, how they are laid out and how the viewer is meant to move through them, to more analytical investigations of space such *as* ***Ars Memoriae Carnegiensis: A Memory Theater***, where the viewer was asked to construct his or her own imaginary memory theater, or to phenomenological investigations such as ***Model for Stage and Screen*** or interactive investigations such as ***Speedflesh***. While her work is often created for a site, the site itself, unlike most artists' approaches to 'site specific' work, is often conceived of as mutable, transportable, reproducible.

Judith Barry's video installations stand out in the diverse genres that encompass video in the way she links the visual elements of the subject matter and content of her film and video work with the specific experience by viewers as they may encounter the projection or installation of the work. Barry has been among the first artists to incorporate the conceptual and physical space of video and film as part of the content of her work, and has consistently created new ways to enable the viewer to conceptually and physically inhabit that space of film and video. Although each of her installations has a different subject and provides an original visual solution, each work makes of the immateriality of the media, a tangible construct, that maintains the integrity of traditional sculpture.

Gary Sangster
2001

Friday December 22, 2000) Calendar Live.