

Art League Houston presents

Vulnerable Ecologies

A site specific installation by Susan Stockwell

May 8 - June 19, 2009

Main Gallery, Art League Houston

Opening Reception and Artist Talk

Friday, May 8, 2009

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Art League Houston
1953 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006

Houston, TX (March 23, 2009) Art League Houston is pleased to announce *Vulnerable Ecologies*, a site specific installation by acclaimed British sculptor Susan Stockwell. Made entirely from massive quantities of recycled computer components manipulated and transformed, *Vulnerable Ecologies* is Stockwell's first installation in Houston.

The opening reception for *Vulnerable Ecologies* is on Friday, May 8, 2009 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. with an artist talk at 6:30 p.m.

All the recycled computer components used in the installation are generously provided by the Houston electronic recycling company TechnoCycle.



In 2008, Susan Stockwell first began working with computer components in Taipei, creating the installation, *B-side Ecology* at the Hong's Foundation for Education and Culture. In Houston, Stockwell will further her investigation into this realm using recycled computers generously supplied by the Houston electronic recycling company TechnoCycle. At the conclusion of the exhibition the computers will be returned to the company to be recycled once again. Using recycled materials and then returning the materials to the original donor is an important element in Stockwell's work.

Highlighting the beauty of the recycled components, the forms created in Stockwell's installation resemble architectural forms and organic matter as they seep into the gallery space, surrounding us with a toxic exquisiteness. The dissected computers, with their innards exposed, reveal the underbelly

of the machines we so heavily rely upon, an autopsy of our consumer society.

Accumulation, transformation, detritus, debris and the use of everyday materials are recurrent themes in the artist's work. Stockwell chooses industrial and domestic "commodity" materials because, in her words, they contain "stains of existence" and "act as ready made signifiers" which she can sculpt and interweave in ways that delicately reveal their obscured politics and hidden beauty.

Meticulously handcrafted, the benign, sublime beauty of her site specific works belies the devastating effect of our culture and our own role in shaping it. Upon closer observation of the work, one is confronted by a cultural urgency of global proportions. Political and cultural colonization, global waste, and mass consumption are reconfigured into a new festering eco system of meaning that slowly rises, much like our imperiled ocean levels.



Installation view of *B-Side Ecology*, Taipei, China, 2008

About the Artist

Susan Stockwell has a B.A. with Honors from Sheffield Hallam University and an M.A. from The Royal College of Art, London. She has exhibited her work across the globe including the Victoria and Albert Museum and The Royal Society of British Sculptors in London, National Museum of China in Beijing, China, Shenghua Art Center in Nanjing, China, Finesilver Gallery in San Antonio, and the Neuberger Museum of Art in New York. Her work is in notable permanent collections including the Victoria and Albert Museum, Binghampton Art Museum, Shenghua Art Centre, and the Christopher and Georgia Erk Collection. Stockwell's many honors include a 2007 Taiwan-England Artists Fellowship Programme grant from the British Council, Council of England and the Council for Cultural Affairs, Taiwan; multiple Surrey Institute of Art and Design Research and Development awards, and a Bursary Award from The Royal Society of British Sculptures. The artist has been written about extensively in ARTFORUM, Art on Paper, FIBERARTS, The London Guardian, and The Taipei Times, among others and she has been interviewed on B.B.C. Radio London and B.B.C. Scotland T.V. Stockwell has taught extensively in the U.K., America, and Taiwan and is presently a part-time Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at The School of Art and Architecture at the University of East London.

About TechnoCycle

As a technology recycling solutions provider in Houston for 15 years,

TechnoCycle enables corporations and individuals to responsibly dispose of unwanted computers and electronics. Committed to protecting the environment of the Earth as an EPA registered facility, TechnoCycle's policies, aims, and activities are carried out in a manner that does not exploit the global community and follows ethical business practices. Visit them online at <http://www.technocycle.com>.



Art League Houston presents

Conceal/Disclose

An exhibition of works by
Hagit Barkai and Tala Vahabzadeh
May 8 - June 19th, 2009
ALH project space/Front Gallery

Opening Reception and Artist Talk
May 8, 2009 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Art League Houston
1953 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006

Art League Houston is pleased to announce *Conceal/Disclose*, an exhibition of paintings by Hagit Barkai and photographs by Tala Vahabzadeh, which will be on view in the ALH project space May 8 through June 19, 2009.

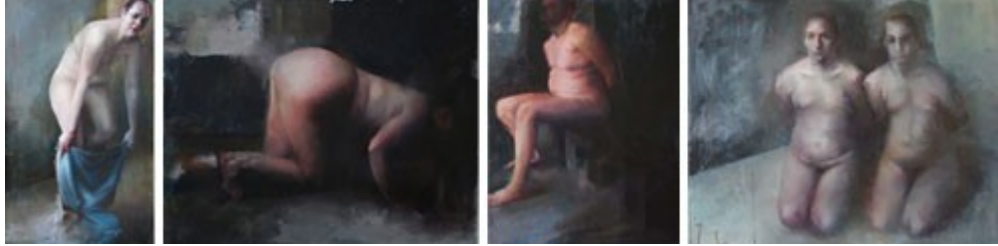
The opening reception for the exhibition is Friday, May 8, 2009 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., with an artist talk by Hagit Barkai at 6:15 p.m.

Both women come from the Middle East, and their works are filtered through the vantage point of personal experience. Although they work with different media, subjects, and approaches, both Vahabzadeh and Barkai deal with issues of concealment and disclosure, hence the title of the exhibition.

Hagit Barkai is from Israel. "Growing up in the ideological atmosphere in a Jewish Settlement Bet El in the West Bank, I was at the center of an increasingly hostile moral and political quarrel, which resulted in extremely defensive attitudes. Part of my education included a rewrite of events and ways of thinking that did not sustain the religious and national convictions while at the same time assuming to hold ideals such as liberalism, democracy and basic human rights. I see this work as creating a visual echo of public discourses that weave a camouflage around such events"

Her paintings focus on public and private demands addressed to the body. Viewing the body as the primary receptacle in which rights are given and removed, and through which histories take place and are understood, Barkai's subjects stand as metaphors for those social imperatives which direct and enforce aspects of identity and self. Through observations of

body language, Barkai depicts the body for what it fails to be - how the body refuses to settle into any image or concept that confines and regulates, and how the body can never bridge the gap between its outward appearance and its inner realm of experience.



The series *Every Body Knows* is deeply informed by Barkai's personal history, and questions the borders, both literally and metaphorically drawn between victimization and victim-hood. Within *Every Body Knows* are four families of characters - *the Blindfold*, *the Vomiters*, *the Middays* and *the Waiters*, whose imagery stems from real events which form the basis of the political atmosphere in Israel, including unjustified detainments, public strip-searches, harassments, violence, and torture, all dependent upon a person's identity.



The portraits in Barkai's series *Cross* attempt to blur the line or "border" between young and old, alive and dead, normal and monstrous. In these, Barkai also demonstrates how the potential of a person, and the threats to that person's body are not so very different things. By creating images of newborns, along with the dying, deformed or traumatized, the artist constructs a realm inhabited by those no longer fully existing, those not yet fully realized, and those that are

for one reason or another considered not to be there at all.

Tala Vahabzadeh's current series of photographs are based on her personal experience of being an Iranian/Muslim woman undercover since she was nine years old. These works seek to show the conflicting worlds of tradition (public life) and modernity (personal life) and the effect this conflict has in the lives of contemporary women in Iran. Through simple, fairy tale like stories, Vahabzadeh uses the image of the veil in both its traditional iconic sense, and as a metaphor of the lack of freedom.



Herself as subject, Vahabzadeh uses various props and arrangements, and different printing processes to create the appropriate ambience and atmosphere needed to expose the meaning behind her untitled pieces. In one work, the fully veiled Vahabzadeh perches high in the branches of a tree. The image of a woman as a bird is based on a common joke in Iran that compares a woman wearing full veil to a black crow. In another photograph, the artist is hunched down, surrounded by greenery, as though in a garden. Again fully veiled, she munches on an apple, and on top of her head she wears a mask, which depicts the typical face of innocence in Persian Miniatures. As one might guess, this photo is a metaphor for Eve and the original sin. By not covering her face with the mask, Vahabzadeh asserts herself as a normal woman, who like any other woman is not that innocent, and is subject to on occasion doing "wrong" things.

Vahabzadeh says "These photographs are a representation of how I feel about being forced to cover myself and how in constantly being physically censored, I both consciously and unconsciously apply that censorship to my personal life."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Hagit Barkai is from Israel and currently lives in Houston. She attended The Jerusalem Studio School and the Maryland Institute College of Art, and has a B.A. in Philosophy from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and an M.F.A. from Penn State University, School of the Visual Arts. Her work has shown at venues that include the Susquehanna Art Museum and the State Museum in Harrisburg, PA, Penn State University in State College, PA, and Crane Arts in Philadelphia, among others. In the summer of 2009 she will be in an exhibition organized by MFANow entitled *Identity, Self*, which travels to New York, Los Angeles, and Beijing. Among her awards are a 2008 CAA Professional Development Fellowship Award, 2007 First Place for the Visual Arts in University-Wide Research Exhibition, and a Penn State University Graduate Student Travel Grant to Israel.

Tala Vahabzadeh is from Tehran, Iran and currently lives in Houston, Texas. She received a Bachelors in Photography from the University of Tehran and is a Masters Candidate in Photography/Digital Media at the University of Houston. While living in Tehran she worked as a commercial photographer for an advertising and industrial photography company, and also assisted on a major documentary photography project that focused on the historical monuments of Iran. She has exhibited her work in both Houston and Tehran, at venues that include the University of Tehran, The University of Houston, Lawndale Art Center, Commerce Street Artists' Warehouse and Lone Star College, among others.

.....



These projects are funded in part by a grant from the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance.



**Texas
Commission
on the Arts**

These projects are funded in part by Texas Commission on the Arts.

These projects are also funded in part by the Houston Endowment, Inc., The Brown Foundation, and the Wortham Foundation.

ABOUT ART LEAGUE HOUSTON

Art League Houston is one of Houston's longest operating non-profit visual arts organizations and was the first alternative art space in Texas. Founded in 1948 and incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1953, Art League Houston (ALH) was created to promote the public appreciation of and interest in the visual arts. During the past 61 years, ALH has provided over 760 exhibitions to the Houston community, showcased the work of nearly 22,200 artists, and instructed over 35,000 students through the Art League School and Outreach Program.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Art League Houston is to cultivate awareness, appreciation, and accessibility of contemporary visual art within the community for its cultural enrichment. Art League Houston provides an opportunity for all members of the community to experience the contemporary visual arts. We achieve our mission through exhibitions, education and outreach programs.

Art League Houston acknowledges the following private foundations and corporations for their support this season: Laurie and Kevin Foxx and Aqua Foxx Productions, Houston Endowment, Inc., Brown Foundation, Inc., Eleanor and Frank Freed Foundation, John P. McGovern Foundation, Mrs. Katherine McGovern, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, Oshman Foundation, Target, and the Wortham Foundation, Inc.

Art League Houston also wishes to thank its many generous individual donors for their support.

CONTACT US

1953 Montrose Blvd

Houston, TX 77006

www.artleaguehouston.org

info@artleaguehouston.org

P 713-523-9530

F 713-523-4053