

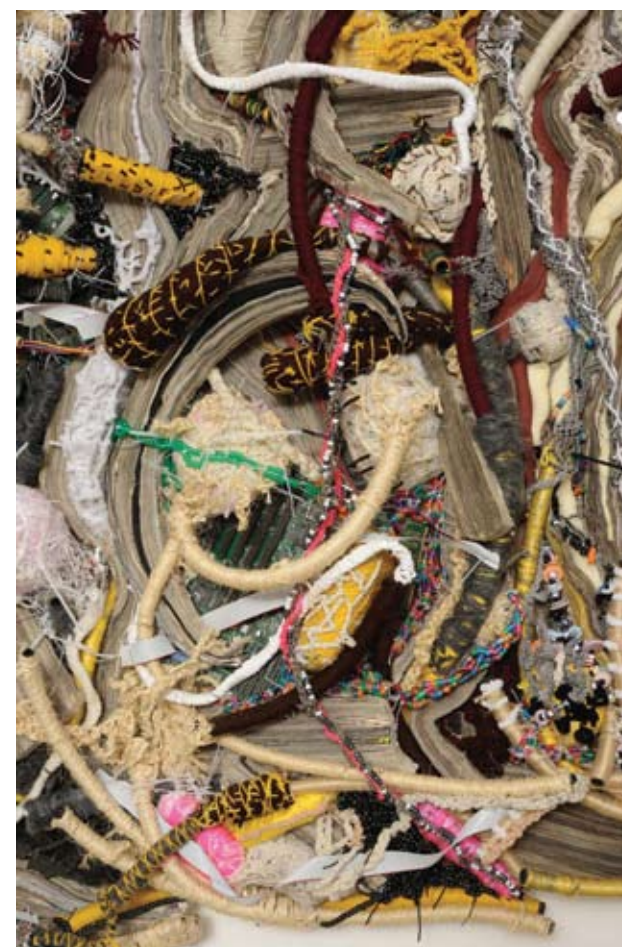


STEVEN SIEGEL

Biography

Marlborough Chelsea

OF OUR TIME

Suzaan BoettgerDETAIL OF *Biography*

In his magisterial relief, Steven Siegel conveys a dynamic equilibrium between the days of our lives and the propulsive flux of time. The title, *Biography*, could imply that the life it refers to is his. Arcs of wrapped wire, a splay of popsicle sticks, clumps of bright wire nuts, and amber waves of twine sweep across its 75-foot span, evoking an epic trove of a hoarder's treasures. Plucked and preserved for their distinctive shapes or textures as if by a manic collector with a particular zeal for techno-gizmos, the doohickies and thingamajigs seem to have actually come in handy one day, to be further transformed during the two-and-a-half years Siegel worked on this piece into a fantasy of the life of THINGS. We recognize the artist's signature procedure of tight packing, akin to the industrious assemblages in his sprawling sculptures, the compressed cubes of crushed plastic bottles and the massive cones of stacked newspapers built outdoors to eventually collapse – all that hard work inevitably becoming monuments to transience.

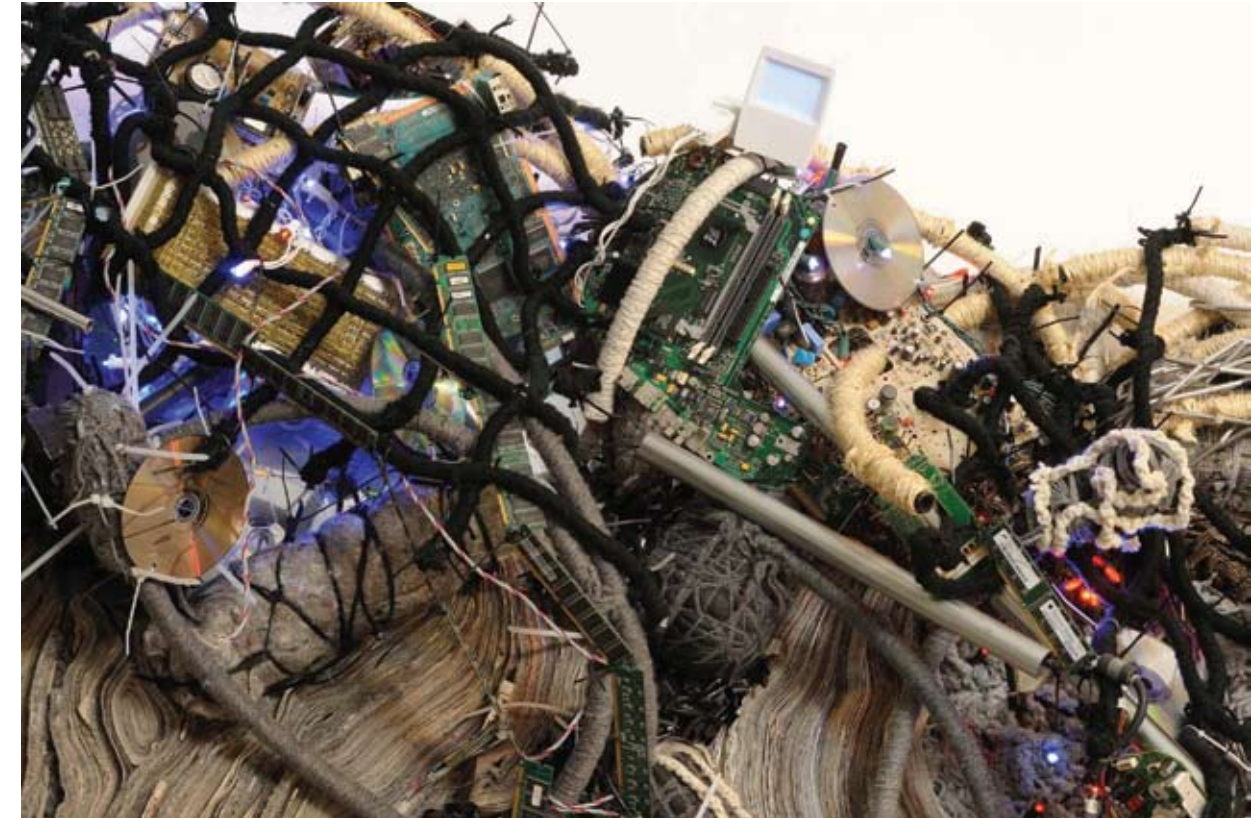
But note *Biography's* absence of the prefix 'auto.' As much as we might presume it to be made of more than a few of Siegel's favorite things, it is not just about him. Stylistically, the process of assembling found and purchased items into aesthetically mediated collages continues the heritage of worn planks and weathered steel in early twentieth-century reliefs such as constructed by Kurt Schwitters. The extensive scale of Siegel's piece and its textural density recalls the Abstract Expressionism of Jackson Pollock's continuous flurries of painterly arabesques. Siegel's incorporation of delightfully kaleidoscopic bright plastic cording, bottle tops and zip ties bears a distant relation to Nancy Rubins' explosive heaps of salvaged industrial goods, likewise enacting the Pop Art integration of "low" consumer commodities with fine art's reflexive seriousness. And his awesome extent of intricate labor is akin to that of the interior environments painstakingly put together by Liza Lou and Ann Hamilton. Scrutinizing *Biography's* surface intimately, we can appreciate the artist's facility for traditional artistic alchemy – the perceptual and material transfiguration of one thing, e.g., yarn, into another, a field that flips between resemblances to grass, pelts, and a shag rug.

Surveying the panorama of this spectacular river of stuff, we see that the composition is not a jumbled miscellany but subtle segues as, for example, from an expanse of flatly coiled newsprint into bumpy dispersals which eventually align as orderly grids. Everything appears to continuously morph, almost as if animated. From a distance, the overall structure's connotations come into focus as a meditation on mutation, or really, about metaphysical flow. *Biography's* relentlessly evolving trajectory calls up the vicissitudes of life at the present moment, of living life intensely, under the sign of accumulation, not even so much of possessions as of stimulations. Its torrent of objects conjures fragmented attention when multitasking within a constant avalanche of information which itself only reinforces the sense of economic, political, and climatological contingency, if not instability. Quiet, and peace of mind, are elusive.

So in addition to the visual pleasure offered by Siegel's *Biography* is its illuminating fulfillment of Henri Daumier's nineteenth-century modernist credo, ONE MUST BE OF ONE'S TIME. Through his *Biography*, Siegel channels the cultural consciousness of our early twenty-first century. It is made visible in the implication running through its intricate design that all is connected, yet in flux. *Biography's* multitudinous constituents are clearly of a manufactured sort, but the lateral movement of the relief and the metamorphosing composition connote landscape's shifting plate tectonics or more broadly the processes of evolution and the accretions associated with natural processes. In other words, it encapsulates our era's recognition (made all too evident by the climate crisis of global warming) that the distinction between "culture" and "nature" is untenable. Anthropogenic global warming has produced an environment in disequilibrium affecting *everything* – our biggest demonstration that there is nothing in the world untouched by the impact of "civilization" and outside the great continuum of living and made things.

By visualizing the complexities and fluidities of interconnection around the issue of "biography," Siegel models retrospective reflection and continuous re-invention of self and society. That this work does so in a spirit of amplitude displays our era's appreciation for abundance and rapid innovation. Yet it is Siegel's marvelous materialization of these ideas – the artist's idiosyncratic handling of composition, texture and color and his particular strategies of accumulation – that rewards our sustained contemplation of *Biography* and the implications it so richly embodies.

SUZAAN BOETTGER, PH.D., IS THE AUTHOR OF *EARTHWORKS: ART AND THE LANDSCAPE OF THE SIXTIES* (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS) AND *NEDKO SOLAKOV: 99 FEARS* (PHAIDON).



DETAILS OF *Biography*

Biography (shown pp. 4-9), 2008-2010, mixed media, length: approximately 75 ft.





STEVEN SIEGEL

The artist lives and works in Red Hook, New York.

1971 University of Colorado, Boulder

1976 Hampshire College, Amherst, MA, BA

1978 Pratt Institute Brooklyn, NY, MFA

AWARDS

2006 Artists and Communities Grant, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland

2001 Visual Artist Fellowship Award, New York Foundation for the Arts, New York, New York

2000 Grant, Gunk Foundation, Red Hook, New York

1999 Collaborative Projects Award, ArtsLink, New York, New York

1998 The Martin and Doris Rosen Award, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina

1996 ASF Public Projects Grant, American-Scandinavian Foundation, New York, New York

1994 Artist Grant, Connemara Conservancy Foundation, Dallas, Texas

1992 Individual Artist Fellowship, Dutchess County Arts Council, Poughkeepsie, New York

1981 Grant, New York Foundation for the Arts, New York, New York

1980 NEA Building Arts Grant, The NEA Foundation, Washington, DC

1977 Grant, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York

1977 Grant, Ford Foundation, New York, New York

BIENNIALS

2008 Geumgang Nature Art Biennale, Gong-Ju, South Korea

2004 Geumgang Nature Art Biennale, Gong-Ju, South Korea

2001 Neuberger National Biennial of Public Art, Purchase, New York

1992 The 4th International Biennale of Paper Art, Düren, Germany

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2011 *Steven Siegel*, Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides, Québec, Canada.

2010 *Wonderful Life*, Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, Pennsylvania; Goggleworks Center for the Arts, Reading, Pennsylvania; Penn State Berks Freyberger Gallery, Reading, Pennsylvania; Reading Public Museum, Reading, Pennsylvania;Turchin Center for the Visual Arts, Boone, North Carolina (2009).

2006 *Grounds for Sculpture*, Hamilton, New Jersey

2005 *New Geology: The Art of Steven Siegel*, Motalvo Gallery, Saratoga, California

2003 *Secondary Functions*, Focus Gallery, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

2002 *Scale*, Abington Art Center, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania

2001 Davis & Hall Gallery, Hudson, New York

2000 125 Maiden Lane, New York, New York

1995 *Works on and of Paper*, Marist College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York

1993 Richmond Art Center, Windsor, Connecticut

1993 *Extending the Landscape*, Barrett House Galleries, Poughkeepsie, New York

1992 Unison Arts & Learning Center, New Paltz, New York

1988 *Earth Time and Events: The Art of Steven Siegel*, Wave Hill, Bronx, New York

1986 Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts

1981 Drew University, Madison, New Jersey

1979 Soho Center for the Visual Arts, New York, New York

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

2009 *Beach Blocks*, Shoes, Aliveshoes, Sirolo, Italy

2009 *Two of 'em*, recycled materials and bamboo, Penn State Berks, Reading, Pennsylvania

2006 *E-virus*, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California

2005 *Steven Siegel: Sculptures*, Kunstverein Ingolstadt, Ingolstadt, Germany

2005 *Tilt*, Newspaper, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

2004 Rinker Hall School of Construction, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

2003 *Mitochondria*, Buffalo Bayou Artpark, Houston, Texas

2002 *Can Can*, crushed aluminum cans, rubber hose, netting, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio

2002 *Some Cans*, aluminum cans, rubber hose, netting, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina

2001 *Bale*, crushed plastic bottles, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

2001 *Study*, Mixed media, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

1999 Thornton Creek Environmental Learning Center, Seattle, Washington

1999 *Jory*, Sculpture, Forest Ecosystem Research Laboratory, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon

1999 *Pretty Fast*, Mixed media, University of Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama

1998 *Squeeze 2*, Newspaper, earth, grass, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina

1993 *Hood*, North Park Blocks, Portland, Oregon

1992 *Holocene*, Paper and discarded construction materials, State University of New York, New Paltz, New York (Work now destroyed)

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2010 Grande, John K.. "We Are the Landscape: A Conversation with Steven Siegel." *Sculpture Magazine*

2010 Richmond, Susan. "Paper, Earth: An Installation with Steven Siegel." *Wild Apples*

2010 Schira, Ron. "It's A Wonderful Life." *Reading Eagle*

2009 Baucon, Andrea. "The Abyss of Time." *Geology in Art: an unorthodox path from visual art to music*

2008 Beaudet, Pascale. "Sentier Art3." *Espace*

2008 Gyongy, Adrienne. "Sustainable Art: Trash Transformend." *Prattfolio: Pratt Alumni Magazine*

2007 Song, Young Imm K.. "Public Art: New ways of Approaching Environmental Issues: The Art of Steven Siegel." *International Journal of the Arts in Society*

2006 Limme, Neyse. "Steven Siegel Basura Ancestral." *lamona Magazine*

2006 Merckling, Catherine. "Éco-Art." *UFR Arts*

2006 Weintraub, Linda. *Cycle-Logical Art: Recycling Matters for Eco-Art*. Rhinebeck: Artnow Publications, 2006

2005 Rowe-Shields, Michele. "New Geology: The Art of Steven Siegel." Sculpture on the Grounds Brochure

2004 Schneider, Carrie. "The Art of Recycling." *Pittsburgh City Paper*, June 02, 2004

2004 Thomas, Mary. "Plastic Fantastic." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 04, 2004

2003 Johnson, Patricia. "One Man's Trash." *Houston Chronicle*

2003 Leonard, Mary. "Tying Knots of Wow and Wonder: Sculptor Steven Siegel ." *About Town of Dutchess and Columbia Counties*

2003 Phillips, Patricia. "Wandering Through Time: The Sculpture of Steven Siegel." *Sculpture Magazine*

2002 Johnson, Ken. "A Landfill in the Eyes of Artists Who Beheld It." *New York Times*

2001 Cassai, Mary. "Hudson Gallery features earth-centered sculptures." *Kingston Daily Freeman*

2001 Clarke, Jessica. "A Wordy Piece of Art." *The Daily News-Record*

2001 Gouveia, Georgette. "Avant Garden." *Journal News*

2001 Jaeger, William. "When location is everything." *Albany Times Union*

2001 Keeffe, Eileen. "Environmental Art Highlights Poet's Walk." *Gazette Advertiser*

2001 Zimmer, William. "A Smaller, More Accessible Biennial." *New York Times*

2001 Zimmer, William. "On Paper, A Show That Measures Up." *New York Times*

2000 Bolender, Karin. "Into the Holocene: The Art of Steven Siegel." *Dutchess Magazine*

2000 Ryumina, Elena. "Garbage-Man Puts Up the Trash." *Moscow Times*

2000 Scrupe, Mara. "Environment, Audience, and Public Art in the New World (Order)." *Sculpture Magazine*

1999 Kimmelman, Michael. "The Hudson Valley, Inside Out." *New York Times*

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© 2011 Marlborough Gallery, Inc.
ISBN 978-0-89797-410-3

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DESIGN / Maeve O'Regan
PHOTOGRAPHY / Douglas Baz

PRINTED IN NEW YORK BY PROJECT



STEVEN SIEGEL / *BIOGRAPHY*

JANUARY 27 - FEBRUARY 26, 2011

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