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Public Art Fund presents...

*Trapdoor*

**A group show of new and recent works by Ethan Breckenridge, Francis Cape, Martha Friedman and Sara Greenberger Rafferty**

**November 7, 2008 – September 25, 2009**

OCTOBER 24, 2008: NEW YORK – Public Art Fund is pleased to present a new exhibition of contemporary art at the MetroTech Center in downtown Brooklyn, opening November 7, 2008. *Trapdoor* features new commissions by Ethan Breckenridge, Martha Friedman and Sara Greenberger Rafferty, and recent works by Francis Cape. By using or making reference to recognizable objects whose properties are exaggerated or altered in one way or another, the artists express transformation as a physical condition within their works. These artists convey an overarching sense of transition or metamorphosis in works that appear to be changing appearance, moving, disappearing or melting. In each case, there is an element of the unexpected, of things appearing delightfully out of the ordinary; as if the viewer has passed through a portal and entered into some kind of conceptual wonderland. In their own ways, these artists are experimenting with new ways of seeing everyday objects and occurrences, accentuating the spirit of change and innovation that is characteristic of the MetroTech Center's downtown Brooklyn location—an area that has experienced pronounced growth and transformation in the last decade.

**Ethan Breckenridge—*I'm OK-You're OK***

*I'm OK-You're OK*, a new commission by Ethan Breckenridge, is a sculpture composed of 100 standard, functional furniture dollies, piled on top of another to a staggering height of 16 feet. Typically used for transporting heavy items, dollies are often stacked in pairs or groups before or after moving something from one location to another, and give the sense of work in progress. Breckenridge exaggerates this common occurrence to a state of absurdity with the soaring and seemingly impossible height of the stack, turning something practical into an improbable feat. Although engineered to be stable, the dollies seem to be resting precariously, as if the entire structure could topple over at any minute. In this work, Breckenridge pays homage to Marcel Duchamp and artists who have followed in his footsteps by working with everyday objects and transforming them into non-functional works of art, as well as making reference to Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column* and Minimalists whose work includes the repetition of individual parts into sculptural arrangements, such as Donald Judd's vertical stacks. Positioned within a seating area in MetroTech Commons, *I'm OK-You're OK* appears as a statuesque column resembling a civic monument or public marker.



Ethan Breckenridge, *I'm OK-You're OK*, 2008

Born in Madison, Wisconsin, Ethan Breckenridge received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts (2002), and his MFA from Columbia University (2005), both in New York. He lives and works in New York City. His work was recently shown at Kate Werble Gallery, New York (2008); Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, New York (2006), and was included in the *Peace Tower* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2006).

### **Francis Cape – *On Main Street* and *Blue Piece***

Before attending art school, Francis Cape was trained as a wood carver, a factor that has guided his work towards a fusion of strong craftsmanship, sculpture and architecture. His pieces, which are constructed of standard milled lumber, are meticulously built and often include references to both functional and architectural elements that have gone through types of transformation. Two of Cape's free-standing pieces, *On Main Street* and *Blue Piece*, are sited in the lobby of MetroTech One. Like all of his work, these pieces combine the look of Minimalist sculpture with the simplicity of Shaker design, resulting in intriguing structures that blend history with Modernism. *On Main Street* includes what appears to be a fragment of a table and part of a shelf, fused with sections of wainscoting and portions of walls. From one side, *Blue Piece* appears to be a monochromatically painted, minimal sculpture, while the other side reveals unfinished wood and a small cabinet with a door. In each case, architectural elements are truncated or fused together, giving the viewer the perception that sections of a room have gone through a transformation, when in actuality, this effect is produced simply by the way in which the components are arranged.



Francis Cape, *On Main Street*, 2004

Francis Cape was born in Lisbon, Portugal in 1952 and currently lives and works in New York. He received his BFA from City and Guilds of London Art School and his MFA at Goldsmiths College, London, in addition to apprenticing for a wood carver. His solo show, *It Happened Here* at Suraci Gallery, is currently on view at the Insalaco College of Creative Arts and Management, Scranton, Pennsylvania. His recent solo exhibitions have been at Richard and Dolly Maass Gallery, SUNY Purchase, Purchase, New York (2006) and Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, Missouri (2004). His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions, including Lehman College Art Gallery, New York (2008), and Wave Hill, Bronx, New York (2007), and will be featured in *Prospect 1. New Orleans* beginning November 2008.

### **Martha Friedman—*Waffle***

Martha Friedman's work conveys the artist's fascination with the sculptural characteristics of common objects, particularly food. In recent years she has made sculptures inspired by melons, eggs, macaroni pasta and sausage, in each case transforming the scale of the grocery item or arranging them in such a manner that invites viewers to explore their more formal qualities. For MetroTech Commons, Friedman has created a seven-foot-tall "waffle" submerged in a thick pool that suggests "syrup". Standing vertically upright, it appears to be melting or forming, and its enlarged scale brings focus



Martha Friedman, *Waffle*, 2008.

to the rises, crevices, and surface of the foam, resin and metal construction. Friedman is especially interested in the grid pattern—a staple of modernism—that characterizes waffles and the way they are made in molds, a common method of sculpture making and one that she employs often in her work. Whereas Minimalists, including Agnes Martin and Sol LeWitt, used meticulous grids as repetitive formats in their artworks, Friedman's waffle is imperfect, functions as a "found" grid and in doing so, makes reference to an aspect of everyday life and human consumption.

Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1975, Martha Friedman received her undergraduate degree from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1998) and her MFA from Yale University (2003). She has had solo exhibitions at WallSpace, New York (2007), and has been part of group exhibitions at Triple Candie, New York (2008); Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio (2007); Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, New York (2006), and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (2005), among other. Friedman has upcoming exhibitions at The Station, Miami, Florida (December 2008); Armand Bartos Fine Art, New York (November 2008), and WallSpace, New York (April 2009).

### **Sara Greenberger Rafferty – *After Harry***

Sara Greenberger Rafferty uses elements of performance as an overarching theme in her work. For MetroTech Center, Rafferty has created *After Harry*, a seven-foot-tall Plexiglas tank that is empty, aside from ropes and chains left in a pile inside, giving the impression that an escape artist has miraculously broken free. The vacant container is presented as a record of an imagined performance, a "souvenir" of the transformation from bound to unbound, and from being contained inside to freedom beyond the container, that viewers were unable to witness. This is not the first time Greenberger Rafferty has alluded to great stunt performers such as Harry Houdini in her work. She often references historical performances and vaudeville in her art, creating a sense of vintage nostalgia. The tank itself has the sculptural quality of a Modernist cube, and its transparent quality is also reminiscent of a museum display vitrine that has been expanded significantly to meet human scale.



Sara Greenberger Rafferty, *After Harry*, 2008

Born in Chicago, Illinois, Sara Greenberger Rafferty received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design (2000) and her MFA from Columbia University (2005). She currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She has had solo exhibitions at Sandroni Ray Gallery, Los Angeles (2006) and P.S.1 Contemporary Arts Center, New York (2006), and has participated in a number of group shows, including Gagosian Gallery, New York (2008); Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, Oregon (2007); and ARTSPACE, Auckland, New Zealand (2006). She has upcoming shows at The Kitchen, New York and the Eli Marsh Gallery at Amherst College in 2009.

**Ongoing at MetroTech:** Tony Matelli's *Stray Dog* (1998), James Angus's *Basketball Dropped from 35,000 feet at Moment of Impact* (1999), and Tom Otterness's *Alligator* (1996) and *Visionary* (1997), all commissioned by Public Art Fund, continue to be exhibited within the MetroTech Commons.

**MetroTech Center** is located in Downtown Brooklyn between Jay Street and Flatbush Avenue at Myrtle Avenue. Viewing hours are dawn to dusk daily for outdoor works and Monday through Friday 8am to 6pm for Francis Cape's installation in the lobby of One MetroTech Center. Subway: A, C, F to Jay Street/Borough Hall, exit at Myrtle Promenade; R to Lawrence Street; Q to Dekalb Avenue. This exhibition is free.

**Public Art Fund** is New York's leading presenter of artists' projects, new commissions, installations and exhibitions in public spaces. For over 30 years, the Public Art Fund has been committed to working with emerging and established artists to produce innovative exhibitions of contemporary art throughout New York City. By bringing artworks outside the traditional context of museums and galleries, the Public Art Fund provides a unique platform for an unparalleled public encounter with the art of our time.

Recent critically acclaimed exhibitions and presentations include Olafur Eliasson's *The New York City Waterfalls* at four locations on the shorelines of lower Manhattan, Brooklyn and Governors Island; Chris Burden's *What My Dad Gave Me* at Rockefeller Center; James Yamada's *Our Starry Night*, and Sarah Lucas' *Perceval* at Doris C. Freedman Plaza; Dara Friedman's *Musical* on the streets of Midtown Manhattan, and *Alexander Calder in New York* at City Hall Park.

Since 1993, Public Art Fund's program at MetroTech has exhibited new commissions and recent works by more than fifty emerging and established artists including Vito Acconci, Liz Craft, Jacob Dyrenforth, Tony Feher, Rachel Foulon, Luis Gispert, Corin Hewitt, Matthew Day Jackson, Matt Johnson, Nina Katchadourian, Peter Kreider, Tony Matelli, Ryan McGuinness, Dave McKenzie, Franco Mondini-Ruiz, Mamiko Otsubo, Tom Otterness, Ester Partegás, Valeska Soares, Do-Ho Suh, Marc Swanson and Ursula von Rydingsvard.

### **Sponsorship**

*Trapdoor* at MetroTech Center is part of an ongoing program organized by Public Art Fund and sponsored by MetroTech Commons Associates, and MetroTech companies including: Forest City Ratner Companies, JPMorganChase, National Grid, WellChoice and Polytechnic University. Special thanks to Forest City Ratner Companies and First New York Partners.

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