

WHITNEY

Press Release

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THE WHITNEY TO PRESENT CHARLES LEDRAY: workworkworkworkwork

November 18, 2010—February 13, 2011



Charles, 1995, Fabric, thread, metal, plastic, paint, 19 x 14 x 4 ½ inches (48.3 x 35.6 x 11.4 cm), Collection of Barbara and Leonard Kaban, Courtesy of Sperone Westwater [Photo credit unknown]

NEW YORK, September 24, 2010—The New York-based artist Charles LeDray, known for his diminutive yet powerfully resonant objects made of fabric, clay, and human bone, is the subject of a major mid-career survey this fall at the Whitney Museum

of American Art. Organized by Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, where it was initially shown, and curated by ICA Associate Curator Randi Hopkins, **CHARLES LEDRAY: workworkworkworkwork** goes on view in the Whitney's third-floor Peter Norton Family Galleries, November 18, 2010—February 13, 2011. After the Whitney, it travels to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, May 8—September 11, 2011.

With approximately fifty sculptures and installations spanning the past twenty-five years, **CHARLES LEDRAY: workworkworkworkwork** traces the themes that have evolved and developed through the artist's oeuvre to date. "Since the start of his career, much has been written about Charles LeDray's early work in terms of childhood, sexual identity, personal history, and craftsmanship," writes Adam D. Weinberg, the Whitney's Alice Pratt Brown Director, in a catalogue essay that focuses on the captured moment and the fugitive sense of time in LeDray's work. "...So many of LeDray's early works convey this fleeting sense of love and loss—what was there is now gone, represented only by a surrogate object."

In her foreword to the catalogue, ICA Director Jill Medvedow notes, "LeDray's meticulous hand stitching, exquisite bone carving, and masterful ceramics seduce us with their virtuosity, but it is his consistent inquiry into the complex overlaps between community and the individual, uniqueness and diversity, absence and presence, mourning and celebration that gives LeDray's art its aesthetic power and great humanity."

In an era of high-tech mass production, LeDray remains committed to a painstaking manual process, unlike many artists of his generation who have embraced less hands-on methods of art-making. While some of LeDray's processes are rooted in the traditions of folk art, his art is in no way "naïve." Having spent years as a museum guard and art handler, LeDray absorbed and was inspired by centuries of art. Whitney curator Carter Foster, who is overseeing the installation of the show in New York, notes, "LeDray's meticulous making and his virtuosity with materials is often what initially attracts the viewer, but his work has a fascinating relationship with art history as well. This comes through formally, for example, in his incredible ceramics, which reference the entire history of the medium and of the 'vessel' as art. But it also comes through in the way he engages display and cataloguing. These two concepts are crucial for our understanding of

the art of the past, and LeDray uses these histories to develop an aesthetic that is both poetic and mysterious.”

“LeDray doesn't set out to make small-scale sculpture—a notion that might strike you as odd when you're bending down to get a better look at one of his creations,” says exhibition curator Randi Hopkins. “The sculptures can be considered simply the size they need to be—small enough to demand that we look closer and to let us know they've been made by hand. These works aren't undersized but concentrated, with an emotional impact that far exceeds their dimensions.”

Among the works to be shown are *Hall Tree* (2006), a standing wooden coat rack hung with coats, with a few hooks still free; the colorful *Party Bed* (2006-2007) with coats of all sizes and patterns seemingly tossed onto a bed while the festivities take place in another room; *Village People* (2003-2006), an installation of twenty-one tiny hats that conjures a parade of identities; and *Orrery* (1997), LeDray's earliest work made from carved bone, and one which refers to ancient models of the solar system. Some works are connected to personal history and memory, others to communities and social milieus, or the viewer's sense of time and place within a vast universe—all ideas that recur throughout the exhibition.

LeDray's most recent work is characterized by increasingly expansive, multi-part installations that require years to create. The exhibition premieres *Throwing Shadows* (2008-2010), an extraordinary new ceramic work, which includes more than 3,000 small black porcelain pots. (LeDray's earlier *Milk and Honey*, now in the Whitney's collection, an astonishing multi-tiered work containing 2,000 tiny white glazed porcelain vessels on glass shelves, will also be shown.) Making its US debut in the exhibition is *MENS SUITS*, an installation that brings viewers to the floor to examine three very distinct rooms of a second-hand clothing shop in which every item is rendered in extremely precise, intimately wrought detail and scale. In a scene that feels suspended in time and space, *MENS SUITS* invites viewers to imagine the lives through which these objects seem to have passed—and, perhaps, any chance of their future use and continued existence.

About the Artist

Charles LeDray was born in 1960 in Seattle, Washington, and currently lives and works in New York. The artist's previous exhibitions include a solo show organized by the ICA Philadelphia (2002) and a number of significant group exhibitions including *Sculpture*, the Cartin Collection, Hartford, Connecticut (2005); *Past Presence: Childhood and Memory*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2005); and the Lyon Biennale, France (2000). In 1993, LeDray received the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award and in 1997 he was the recipient of the Prix de Rome from the American Academy in Rome. The artist's work can be found in major public collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Publication

The ICA and Skira/Rizzoli have co-published a comprehensive illustrated catalogue designed by Stefan Sagmeister. The publication features a foreword by ICA Director Jill Medvedow; and essays by former ICA Curator Jen Mergel; Artangel Co-Director and Curator James Lingwood; and Whitney Museum Director Adam D. Weinberg.

Programs

DECEMBER

Whitney Wees (for families with children ages 4–5)

Hats Off! Clothing as Costume

Kids and parents will marvel at the tiny handmade sculptures of Charles LeDray. Families will create narratives and characters inspired by LeDray's work.

Saturday December 4 10:30-11:30

Saturday December 11 10:30-11:30

Family Fun (for families with children ages 6–10)

Thinking about Transformation

Taking cues from the artist Charles LeDray, kids and parents will consider how LeDray has transformed familiar objects like hats, shirts, and suits into sculpture. Inspired by LeDray's process, families will experiment with transforming everyday objects into works of art!

Saturday, December 4 10:30-12:30 and 1-3pm

Saturday, December 11 10:30-12:30

JANUARY

Whitney Wees (for families with children ages 4–5)

Off the Cuff: Everyday Objects

Families will investigate Charles LeDray's process of recreating everyday objects as tiny, handmade sculptures. Kids and parents will identify materials and consider scale and texture through discussion and activities.

Saturday January 8 10:30-11:30

Saturday January 22 10:30-11:30

Family Fun (for families with children ages 6–10)

It's a Set Up: Sculpture and Installation

Families will explore how Charles LeDray creates environments with his sculptural installations. Kids and parents will then design their own creative spaces inspired by LeDray's work.

Saturday January 8 10:30-11:30 * morning session only

Saturday January 22 10:30-11:30 * morning session only

Art School

Kids are invited to join us for Art School, a new studio class just for artists 8-12. This is an opportunity for young artists to further develop their own artistic practice, to learn about the newest trends in contemporary art, and to expand their ideas about what art can be.

Unusual Materials

Inspired by the sculptures of Charles LeDray and Paul Thek, students will explore the use of unusual materials and methods as part of the artistic process, and create their own sensational sculptures.

Saturday January 8, 22 and 29 1:30-3:30pm

Registration for all of the above programs is required. For more information and to sign up for Whitney Family Programs, please visit whitney.org/families.

Educator Exhibition Previews

Kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers are invited to preview the fall exhibitions at this special free event. During the guided tour with Whitney Education staff, you will find out more about the works on view, learn new teaching approaches for engaging with works of art, and meet like-minded colleagues.

Charles LeDray: workworkworkworkwork

December 3, 4–6 pm

RSVP by November 19 by emailing schoolprograms@whitney.org

Sponsors

Charles LeDray: workworkworkworkwork is organized by The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston.

Significant support for the Whitney's presentation is provided by Norman and Melissa Selby, Pamela and Arthur Sanders, and Alice and Tom Tisch.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the preeminent institution devoted to twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States, with a special focus on works by living artists. The Whitney's collection, which comprises over 18,000 works by more than 2800 artists, includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today. Founded in 1930, the Whitney was first housed on West 8th Street. The Museum relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and in 1966 inaugurated its present home at 945 Madison Avenue, designed by Marcel Breuer. The Whitney is currently moving ahead with plans to build a second facility, designed by Renzo Piano, located in downtown Manhattan at the entrance to the High Line in the Meatpacking District.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

Heat Waves in a Swamp: The Paintings of Charles Burchfield	Through October 17, 2010
Collecting Biennials	Through November 28, 2010
Lee Friedlander: America by Car	Through November 28, 2010
Sara VanDerBeek: To Think of Time	Through December 5, 2010
Off the Wall: Part 2--Seven Works by Trisha Brown	September 30–October 3, 2010
Paul Thek: Diver, A Retrospective	October 21, 2010–January 9, 2011
Modern Life: Edward Hopper and His Time	October 28, 2010–April 10, 2011
Charles LeDray: workworkworkworkwork	November 18, 2010–February 13, 2011

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. General admission: \$18. Full-time students and visitors ages 19–25 and 62 & over: \$12. Visitors 18 & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission to the Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery only: \$6. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

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