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UC Santa Barbara Staff

Alice Aycock Drawings: Some Stories Are Worth Repeating

UC Santa Barbara's Art, Design & Architecture Museum and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art present "Alice Aycock Drawings: Some Stories Are Worth Repeating," the first comprehensive exploration of this vital aspect of the renowned sculptor's creative process. The exhibition traces Aycock's career from 1971 to the present, highlighting the major themes that have governed her artistic practice.

While Aycock is best known for her large-scale installations and outdoor sculptures, her drawings capture the full range of her ideas and sources. Consisting of approximately 100 works, the exhibition will be presented in two parts. The works on view at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum (January 25 - April 19) focus on the beginning of her career, including detailed architectural drawings, sculptural maquettes, and photo documentation for both realized and imagined architectural projects. Works on view at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (January 26 - April 20) cover the later years, when Aycock developed an increasingly elaborate visual vocabulary, drawing upon a multitude of sources and facilitated in part by the use of computer programs.

Aycock first produced working drawings for imaginary projects in the early 1970s, at

the same time as she began creating site-specific structures on an architectural scale. The Art, Design & Architecture Museum's installation includes a broad selection of drawings, ranging from conceptual idea-making to detailed working documents for the construction of intricate and challenging monumental installations, as well as photographic documentation of projects realized during the 1970s and 1980s. Just as the early constructions choreographed the viewer through a mixture of psychological sensations, the early drawings from this period, among them "Project for a Vertical Maze" and "Project for Five Wells Descending a Hillside," depict imagined architectural constructions designed to elicit feelings ranging from comfort and security to anxiety and distress.

In the late 1970s, language began to figure more prominently in Aycock's work, in the form of increasingly elaborate and allusive titles and narratives that reflected the many sources she mined for ideas — contemporary and obsolete science, philosophies and belief systems, mythology, fantastic architecture, archeology, family history, literature and clinical psychology texts, especially those dealing with the language of schizophrenia. Several major drawings from this period are on view, including "The City of the Walls: A Narrow City, A Thin City," which is complemented by a disjunctive, free-ranging text set in the Middle Ages and referencing multiple sites such as Cairo's City of the Dead; Bloomfield, Indiana; Sarajevo; and Reykjavik.

During the early 1980s, Aycock's interest in machinery and mechanics — cross-bred with imaginary science of the Ghostbusters variety — intensified, resulting in a series of works that are represented by drawings and maquettes. Among these are "The Miraculating Machine in the Garden"; "From the Series Entitled How to Catch and Manufacture Ghosts: 'Collected Ghost Stories from the Workhouse'"; "Rotary Lightning Express (An Apparatus for Determining the Effects of Mesmerism on Terrestrial Currents)"; and "The Savage Sparkler."

The exhibitions both at the Art, Design and Architecture and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art have been organized by Parrish Art Museum Adjunct Curator

Jonathan Fineberg. Fineberg is the emeritus Gutgsell Professor of Art History at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

A gallery tour and opening reception will take place from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 24, at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum. Other events related to the exhibition are talks by Fineberg and Anna Lovatt of the University of Manchester at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 26, at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art; and a conversation with Jeremy White, a lecturer in the UCSB Department of History of Art and Architecture, in which he will discuss drafting, follies and the language of form in Aycock's work. His talk, titled "Where Art Meets Architecture," begins at 5:30 p.m. on March 5 at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum.

More information about the exhibition can be found at <http://www.museum.ucsb.edu>.

About UC Santa Barbara

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