DOVE BRADSHAW

TIME MATTERS
The Art of Dove Bradshaw, Nature, Change and Indeterminacy, the 2003 monograph by Thomas McEvilley, is easily the best and most complete overview of her work in respect to the mindsets of her friend and mentor, John Cage and to that of William Anastasi, the pioneering conceptual artist who has been her partner since the mid-1970s. This book includes an interview with Cage on the subject of Bradshaw’s work. This was Cage’s last extensive interview. At least as important are the striking relationships between Bradshaw’s art and the most broadly considered history of modern art, particularly modern sculpture. With this brief catalogue introduction I would like to present a few of the parallels between her works and key historical issues.

I first met the New-York-based artist in 1987 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She had come to attend a symposium organized to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Marcel Duchamp at which I presented a brief lecture about one of his ostensibly modest sculptures: *Air de Paris*, 1919, an empty roughly raindrop-shaped glass vial elongated at its top with something like a short hooked stem to allow for hanging. For me, the work’s fragile emptiness conveyed Duchamp’s lyrical sensitivity to nothing as art essence (material, image and content). A specialist in nothing art, Bradshaw introduced herself to me.

The illustrated catalogue of her complete works circulated in only a few handmade photocopies is entitled “NOTHING, 1969-PRESENT” (printed on her own wire-rimmed eyeglasses and so photographed as a title page). According to this valuable record, Bradshaw first made use of a glass vial in 1971, for *Clepsydra* (Water Clock). This all transparent time machine consists of conjoined twin glass bulbs containing clear liquid free to move from one to the other (if the bulbs are handled), voiding and filling, contingent upon time and gravity. Related glass vials play an essential role in later works. For example, the glass separatory funnels in Bradshaw’s *Waterstones* and *Negative Ions* (both series initiated in 1996) metronomically drip an erosive shaping force, patiently penetrating and liquidating the endurance of solid matter as if there were nothing to it.
It seems worth stressing how her works often consist of interdependent halves, parts of wholes in an ongoing process of transformation.

As Curator of Twentieth-Century Paintings and Sculpture at The Art Institute of Chicago, in 1989 I was able to acquire one of Bradshaw’s nothing/everything works: the two halves of a broken eggshell meticulously cast in 18kt gold. (She had already begun to make casts of broken egg shells in 1969.) Similar in mood to Jasper Johns’s life-sized metallic sculptures of commonplace items like flashlights or light bulbs, Bradshaw’s Art Institute sculpture is a glorified found object or readymade. The anti-climatic residue of a vanished creature, the little sculpture at first seemed too modest and fragile when displayed alongside other 1980s works by contemporary artists committed to monumental “museum” scale. In Bradshaw’s art, however, scale is often immaterial, that is to say, conceptual. Hypersensitive to its surroundings, Bradshaw’s golden half shells tremble slightly at the footfall of any approaching viewer. With their jagged edges, the convex and concave surfaces of the emptied half shells are paradoxically full, with reflected images of each other and the surroundings, changing images contingent upon where the sculpture is placed and where the physical viewer is situated as an agent of interaction.

Inevitably Bradshaw’s works brings to mind the sculpture of Duchamp’s friend, Constantin Brancusi. Not merely occupying space as a shaped mass, but reflectively absorbing the image of surrounding space, Bradshaw’s half shells are commentaries on his highly polished sculptures shaped as eggs and birds. Sundered parts of an elemental whole, Bradshaw’s shell fragments moreover amount to a conceptual reversal of The Kiss, c. 1907, Brancusi’s famous image of coupled beings at the core of a stone monolith. As they took shape in the mid-1990s, moreover, with contrasting and interacting upper and lower parts, Bradshaw’s Waterstones and Negative Ions can be understood to extend Brancusi’s unprecedented treatment of pedestals as essential sculptural components rather than as subservient display furnishings.

Contrary to the emphasis on perfect shape in Brancusi’s art, however, Bradshaw’s Indeterminacy sculptures, and later her Irrational Numbers, feature non-sculpted stones as something like found objects. While the rich colors and textures of these rocks call to mind the fantastic rocks venerated since the tenth century in Chinese gardens, in terms of modern Western sculpture Bradshaw’s non-sculpted components reference a modern advocacy since Rodin for unfinished or free abstract form as a sign for pure nature at liberty from human intervention. Incorporating base components in Brancusi fashion, Arp’s influential Head with Annoying Objects, 1930, emphasized free forms to be positioned at the discretion of the viewer. Such 1930s sculptures led in the 1950s to Magritte’s paintings of boulders transposed against all common sense into ordinary rooms, and in the 1960s to Smithson’s non-sculptured rocks accumulated as evidence of some
geologically ancient faraway place. Predicated on the contrast between natural and man-made common to natural history museum display, Smithson’s presentations of accumulated irregular rocks in geometric-shaped containers provided a license for quite some few artists. For example, Carl Andre placed 35 found rock samples on identical concrete blocks for *Portland Regulus*, 1973-74, and not much later Richard Long began his signature *Stone Circle* arrangements. But while Bradshaw’s sculptures have similarly romantic nature overtones, the raw rocks in her sculptures are not chosen primarily for their shapes but instead for their inner chemical capacities as reagents with partner components. While the parts of her sculptures have colors and forms, their sculptural roles are determined rather by their destabilizing capacity to stimulate discoloration and transformation.

Stated in concept by such early works as the Art Institute of Chicago’s egg shell halves or Bradshaw’s 1977 word and glass sculpture, *Break to Activate*, ongoing metamorphosis has become quite literally embedded in her various *Contingency* series. All of them are made from materials coupled with the view to initiate and sustain change as a kind of ongoing breakage (so to speak) of the “final” work: for example, pyrite with marble or sandstone; or limestone spring calcsp with aged calcsp. Presumably the way she programs flux into her work is in some way a subliminal reaction to various experiments by such artists as Giovanni Anselmo, Hans Haacke and Gilberto Zorio beginning in the 1950s and 1960s to make works with “living” materials interactive in time with one another and their surroundings.

It was around 1984 that Bradshaw discovered that liver of sulfur applied to a silvered surface would initiate an ongoing transformation prompted by changes in heat or humidity. The chemically textured surfaces of her *Contingency* works are materially rougher as skins than conventional painting in oils or acrylics. As a result the *Contingency* “paintings’ have kinship with the assemblage works by Alberto Burri, Robert Rauschenberg or Antoni Tàpies with weathered and battered debris used as proxies for conventional painting materials and supports. Just as these works tended as reliefs towards sculptural issues, so Bradshaw’s *Contingency* works have less to do with painting than with patina, the coloration of sculpture skins with the application of special reagents. Once “activated” by Bradshaw applying liquids to a flat surface, the images in her works manifestly shape and color themselves according to a process no less mysterious than irrepresible. Artist and viewer alike can only welcome transformation outside their control as the essence of truth and beauty. With future images slowly but persistently hatching from current ones, Bradshaw’s *Contingency* works can be compared to abstract silent films in slow motion without any end in sight. Of course, the instability in Bradshaw’s works expands traditional museum concepts about art as ideal objects to be preserved unchanged no matter what.
It would be hard to imagine anything purer and more stable than one of Bradshaw’s 2004 images of a white triangle on a white triangular panel alluding to Kasimir Malevich’s most concise Suprematist paintings, such as the White Square on White, 1918, at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. (Indeed, there are inescapable parallels between the helter-skelter compositions of Bradshaw’s Quick Constructions and the revolutionary asymmetric compositions of Russian Constructivist art in general with myriad geometric forms out of alignment with one another). Yet for all their apparent stability, Bradshaw’s Angles are made for change, each one contrived for presentation in any one of twelve possible positions, with always one inner or outer edge parallel to the horizon. Bradshaw provides “scores” (determined by rolling dice) for her Angles to sequence how presentation should change day by day. Needless to say, this form of contingency is anathema to traditional museum standards of preserving stability. But, Bradshaw has decided to demonstrate that change can make art come to life.

An early example of indeterminate work is her 1976 guerrilla “claim” (her coinage) of a fire hose in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is entitled Performance (since 1993) in anticipation of a seemingly ceaseless engagement with the museum as well as the inevitable contingent nature of a fire hose. The Duchampian gesture of the object trouvé is expanded on two fronts here by the object’s a priori placement in an art space and by its intact function. Bradshaw accomplished this by affixing a wall label next to the fire hose in 1976, replacing it whenever removed. After two years of this she made a postcard of the work and when no one was looking placed a stack of them for sale in the museum shop postcard rack, restocking whenever they sold out. In 1980 her ongoing gambit prompted the museum to acquire her photograph of the fire hose in order to produce their own bona fide postcard. This, too, sold out. In 2006, not satisfied that the museum had properly recognized the work as a sculpture, Bradshaw sold an updated label to New York collector Rosalind Jacobs who in time offered this label to the museum. The fire hose became a sculpture in their permanent collection as of December 31, 2007. It seems unlikely that this will bring Performance to an end.

Singling out “contingency” (rather than chance or inevitability) as “the central principle of all history” in Wonderful Life, 1989, Stephen Jay Gould explained, “...with contingency we are drawn in; we become involved, we share the pain of triumph or tragedy.” So it is that Bradshaw’s works are contingent upon the artist activating otherwise unthought-of events, starting to clock a commingling of restless elements destined to evolve rather than simply to endure. Evolving from her early water clock, Bradshaw’s works are now essentially time sculptures. With disregard for endurance as an art issue, Bradshaw welcomes the gradual measured transformation of every mark she has made, in keeping with the chemistry of change, until eventually nothing looks the same.
9. Waterstone, 1996
Limestone, separatory funnel, water
Limestone: 12 x 12 x 12 inches, 1000 ml funnel
Senzatitolo, Rome, 2007
10. *Contingency Pour II [October]*, 2006
Activated October 2006; photographed April 2007
Silver, liver of sulfur, varnish, gesso on linen
78 x 66 inches
11. *Contingency Pour I [October]*, 2006
Activated October 2006; photographed April 2007
Silver, liver of sulfur, varnish, gesso on linen
76 x 66 inches
12. Without Title [Carbon Removal], 1981
Carbon paper
4 7/8 x 4 3/4 inches
Activated September, 2006; photographed April 2007
Silver, liver of sulfur, varnish, gesso on paper
3 3/8 x 3 3/8 inches
Collection of David and Deborah Roberts
Activated March 1995; photographed May 1998
Silver, liver of sulfur, varnish, beeswax on linen paper
Seven sheets bound with steel clips in a steel box
stamped with the title and artist’s name
Book opened: 26 ¼ x 42 ¼ inches

17. *Six Continents*, 2003

Salt taken from each of the six continents
6th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea, 2006

18. *Negative Ions II*, 1996
Salt
Senzatitolo, Rome, 2007
Six Continents, 2003
Larry Becker Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, 2005
SolwayJones Gallery, Los Angeles, 2005

22. *You Skull See*, 2004
Self-portrait
Archival inkjet print
Whitney Museum of American Art
23. 2√0, 2004
Daguerreotype
4 x 5 inches
Rendition of 2√0 [clock/level], 1971
Glass, acetone
2 ½ x 5 x 2 ½ inches
Edition Number V of X
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Scanned Daguerreotype on Duraclear
12 ¼ x 15 ½ inches
25. *II series, Nothing, 2*, 2004
18 karat gold
2 ½ x 5 x 2 ½ inches
Collection of Rosalind Jacobs
Local, world band shortwave, and microwave frequencies
41 x 35 x 35 inches
Baronessa Lucrezia Durini Commission
Permanent installation, Bolognano, Italy, 2006
27. Crack In The Air, 2003
Thorn, pigment
39 x 8 x 6 inches
Senzatitolo, Rome, 2007
28. *Angles VI*, 2006
Score for rotations
10 ½ x 10 ¼ inches
Collection of Robert Gordon
29. *Angles VIII*, 2004
Oil, cold wax medium on linen over wood
21 ¼ inches each side
30. *Notation VII*, 2000
Limestone, copper
14 x 12 x 12 inches
Sirius Art Center, Cobh, Ireland
Plaster on wall
21 ¼ inches each side
Permanent installation
Ingreja do Convento de Santo Antonio, Trancoso, Portugal
32. *Without Title*, 2006
Oil, plaster on linen over wood
3 ½ x 3 ½ inches
Collection of Merrill Wagner and Robert Ryman
33. Angles V, 2003
Gesso, graphite on linen over wood
21 ¼ inches each side
34. S, 1997
Sulfur, varnish on canvas
91 ¼ x 76 inches
35. Oracle, 2006
18 quarter-inch saw cuts in a wall
Permanent installation
Ingreja do Convento de Santo Antonio, Trancoso, Portugal
36. *Quick Construction III*, 2006
Titanium dioxide, silver, liver of sulfur,
varnish, beeswax on paper
25 x 19 ½ inches
37. Quick Construction with Yellow, 2008
Meproof yellow, silver, liver of sulfur, tape, varnish, beeswax on paper
25 x 19 ½ inches
Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, Denmark

Opposite: 38. Material/Immaterial
40. Praying for Irreverence, 1984
Self-portrait, Marcel Duchamp’s studio, Neuilly-sur-Seine, France
41. *Performance*, 1976
Claimed fire hose, NW corner
The Metropolitan Museum Grand Mezzanine
Steel, wire glass, brass, paint, canvas
34 x 21 x 7 ¾ inches
Gift of Rosalind Jacobs in honor of Melvin Jacobs
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2008
Radio Rocks, Larry Becker Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Time Matters, Pierre Menard Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts

2007
Time & Material, catalogue, Senzatitolo, Rome
Constructions, Zero Space, Zero Time, Infinite Heat, under the auspices of the SPIRIT OF DISCOVERY 2, Facto Foundation for the Arts, Sciences and Technology - Observatory, Ingreja do Convento de Santo Antonio, Trancoso, Portugal
Contingency, Björn Ressle Gallery, New York

2006
Six Continents, “Trace of Mind,” catalogue, 6th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea
The Way, Gallery 360°, Tokyo
Radio Rocks, permanent installation commissioned by the Baronessa Lucrezia Durini for the town of Bolognano, Italy
Time & Material, catalogue, SPIRIT OF DISCOVERY 1, Ingreja do Convento de Santo Antonio, Trancoso, Portugal

2005
Six Continents, Contingency and Body Works, Solway Jones Gallery, Los Angeles
Six Continents and [Angles 12 Rotations], Larry Becker Contemporary Art, Philadelphia

2004

2003
Angles, Differenca Gallery, Lisbon

2001
Waterstones, Stark Gallery, New York
Elements, Stalke Gallery, Copenhagen
2000
Waterstones, curator: Heidi and Larry Becker, Larry Becker Contemporary Art, Philadelphia

1999
Negative Ions I, Indeterminacy [film] and $2\sqrt{0}$, curator: Michael Olijnyk, Mattress Factory Museum, Pittsburgh
Guilty Marks, Stalke Gallery, Copenhagen

1998
Dove Bradshaw, catalogue, curator: Julie Lazar, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
Irrational Numbers, Sandra Gering, New York
Irrational Numbers, Linda Kirkland Gallery, New York

1997
‘S’ Paintings and Indeterminacy, Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston

1996
Contingency, Stalke Gallery, Copenhagen

1995
Indeterminacy, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York
Indeterminacy, curator: Neil Firth, Pier Center, Orkney, Scotland

1993
Contingency, catalogue, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York

1991
Full, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York
Plain Air, curator: Ryzsard Wasco and Zdenka Gabalova, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, LIC, New York

1990
Plain Air, curator: Michael Olijnyk, Mattress Factory Museum, Pittsburgh

1989
Plain Air, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York
Paintings on Vellum, Stalke Gallery, Copenhagen

1988
Paintings on Vellum, inaugural exhibition Sandra Gering Gallery, New York
Dove Bradshaw, curator: Joan Blanchfield, Edith Barrett Art Gallery, Utica College, Syracuse University, Utica, New York

1986
Collages on Wood, curators: Susan Lorence and Bob Monk, Lorence Monk Gallery, New York

1984
Works 1969-1984, curator: Joan Blanchfield, Utica College, Syracuse University

1983
Last Year’s Leaves, curator: Linda Mackler, Wave Hill, Bronx, New York

1982
Works on Paper, Ericson Gallery, New York

1981
Removals, Ericson Gallery, New York

1979
Mirror Drawings, curator: Terry Davis, Graham Modern, New York

1977
Slippers and Chairs, curator: Terry Davis, Graham Modern, New York
Chairs, curator: Bill Hart, Razor Gallery, New York

1975
Reliquaries, curator: Bill Hart, Razor Gallery, New York

ARTISTIC ADVISOR TO THE MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY

Appointed along with William Anastasi in 1984
Cargo X, 1989, World première, University of Texas, Austin, Texas. Music: Takehisa Kosugi; Design, Costumes and Lighting
Inventions, 1989, World première, City Center, New York, Music: John Cage; Design, Costumes and Lighting: invited Carl Kielblock
August Pace, 1989, world première, City Center, New York, Music: Michael Pugliese; Design, Costumes and Lighting: invited Sergei Bugaev (Afrika)

Events, 1989, Grand Central Station, New York. Music: David Tudor; Costumes


Fabrications, 1987, world première, Northrup Auditorium, Minneapolis and revival for MCDC’s 50th Anniversary, Lincoln Center, New York (one of four revivals with one première). Music: Emanuel Dimas De Melo Pimenta; Design, Costumes and Lighting


Events, 1985, Joyce Theater, New York. Costumes


Deli Commedia, 1985, video, Merce Cunningham Studio, New York. Music: Pat Richter; Costumes

Native Green, 1985, world première, City Center. Music: John King; Design, Costumes: William Anastasi; Bradshaw: Lighting

Phrases, 1984, world première, Théâtre Municipal d'Angers, Angers, France. Music: David Tudor; Design: William Anastasi; Bradshaw: Costumes and Lighting

BOOKS/CATALOGUES solo

Time Matters, essay by Charles Stuckey, Pierre Menard, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008

Time & Material, introduction by Massimo Arioli, essay by Charles Stuckey, Senzatitolo, Rome, 2007


Anastasi Bradshaw Cage, accompanying a three person exhibition; “we are beginning to get nowhere” interview of William Anastasi and “Still Conversing with Cage” interview of Dove Bradshaw with Jacob Lillemose: Karl Aage Rasmussen, essay, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, Denmark, 2001

Dove Bradshaw: Inconsistency, quotes by Tao Te Ching, Henry David Thoreau, John Cage, Franz Kafka selected by the artist, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York and Stalke Gallery, Copenhagen, 1998
Dove Bradshaw: Indeterminacy, essay by Anne Morgan, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York and Stalke Kunsthandel, Copenhagen, 1997
Dove Bradshaw: Contingency and Indeterminacy [Film], selected quotes about the artist, Stalke Kunsthandel, Denmark, 1996
Dove Bradshaw: Living Metal, essay by Barry Schwabsky, Pier Gallery, Stromness, Orkney, Scotland, 1996

AWARDS

National Science Foundation for Writers and Artists, Washington, DC, 2006, Collection of Antarctic salt
Furthermore Grant for Dove Bradshaw: Nature Change and Indeterminacy, Mark Batty Publisher, LLP, West New York, New Jersey, 2003, Publication
The New York State Council on the Arts Grant for Merce Cunningham Dance, 1987, Design and Lighting
The Pollock Krasner Award, 1985, Painting
The Nation Endowment of the Arts Award, 1975, Sculpture

WEB SITES

www.dovebradshaw.com
www.ressleart.com: Bjørn Ressle Gallery, New York
www.artnet.com/lbecker.html: Larry Becker Contemporary Art
www.solwayjones.gallery.com: SolwayJones Gallery, Los Angeles
www.stalke.dk/stalke_galleri/artist/artistinfo/98/_dove_bradshaw: Stalke Gallery, Copenhagen and Kirke Sonnerup, Denmark
www.mattress.org: Mattress Factory Museum, Pittsburgh, 2√0 Edition, Ground, Negative Ions, Plain Air
http://newarttv.com/trailer/trailer.html: Dove Bradshaw (biographical film)
www.sover.net/~rpress: Renaissance Press, New Hampshire, Medium, Double Negative
www.artcyclopedia.com: links to art museum sites
www.toutfait.com: Marcel Duchamp website, Praying for Irreverence
RESIDENCIES

2007 Pont-Aven School of Contemporary Art, France, teaching and resident artist
2005 Niels Borch Jensen Printmaker, Copenhagen
2000-2001 Niels Borch Jensen Printmaker, Copenhagen
Statens Vaerksteder for Kunst and Handvaerark, Gammeldok, Copenhagen
2000 The Sirius Art Center, Cobh Ireland, inaugurated outdoor sculpture court with placement of Notation II
1995 The Pier Arts Center, Orkney, Scotland, accompanying an exhibition

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, New York
The Getty Center, Malibu, California
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge
Arkansas Arts Center, Arkansas
The Mattress Factory Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
The New School for Social Research, New York
Syracuse University, Utica, New York
Rubin Museum of Art, New York
Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine
Fields Sculpture Park at Art OMI International Arts Center, Ghent, New York
Sony Capitol Corporation, New York
The Prudential Insurance Company, New Jersey
Kunstmuseum Dusseldorf
Centre Pompidou, Paris
Moderna Museet, Stockholm
Muestra International De Arte Grafico, Bilbao, Spain
Ingreja do Convento de Santo Antonio, Trancoso, Portugal
Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, Denmark
Pier Centre, Orkney, Scotland
Sirius Art Center, Cobh, Ireland
The State Russian Museum, St. Petersberg, Russia
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10 Arrow Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
Telephone: 617 868 2033
www.pierremenardgallery.com

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