



1ST THURSDAY

OCTOBER 2ND

## STATE OF THE ART GALLERY CURATOR PROFILE

### An Interview with Dean Anes, Guest Curator State of the Art Gallery 2008 Director, Acme Gallery, Los Angeles



Dean Anes

By **Rita Ferri**, Visual Arts Coordinator & Curator  
of Collections SB County Arts Collections

**Q – Tell me a little bit about your art background...**

My education was in Art History and Studio Arts - I have always been a creative individual and continue to exercise my creativity but I chose the path of working with art and artists early on. I like the balance of my experiences between the commercial art world and the non-profit art institutions. They have formed my understanding of art making and the market.

**Q – I'm curious whether your childhood included any significant art experiences?**

My maternal grandparents were a big influence; they first brought me to the Boston Museums and my Grandmother would do art projects with my sister and me. My Grandmother was also a seasoned collector of art and antiques and that I certainly picked up and has become a big part of my life as well.

**Q – You left the East Coast for California? Was it a difficult transition?**

Choosing to come West seven years ago was the right thing for me. This New England boy feels right at home in SoCal. I feel like I lucked out with the timing because the Art market was just starting to really take off and the attention on Californian and LA artists was on the rise.

**Q – What are your duties with ACME Gallery?**

I work closely with the artists, clients, curators and consultants – keeping in contact and dealing with any needs they may have. With my co-workers we plan and execute new exhibitions at the gallery every 5 to 6 weeks – it is a very busy and fun atmosphere.

**Q – Choosing diverse works for State Street is different from the process of curating an exhibition at ACME. Can you talk about your approach to curating?**

I wanted to remain open to any ideas, but looked for work that had realistic goals. When I viewed all the sculpture proposals I looked for clear and attainable ambitions in the drawings. The materials the artist chose as well was important, especially because they are outdoor artworks.

**Q – When selecting work, how do you keep open and maintain a readiness to accept things that are strange or unfamiliar to you? Do you have any advice for viewers looking at these sculptures?**

I suppose I have to trust my instincts and the artists' commitment to take on the challenge. I definitely perceive outdoor public sculpture as challenging and as we have learned clearly that also includes displaying it. I would hope viewers take advantage of this unique opportunity and ask them, when looking, to take in the different surfaces and scale, the variety of materials used and then try and decide if the work has been made for its pure artistic form or does it hold some sort of meaning?

**Q – What important things have you learned from your association with artists?**

I have learned fearlessness and dedication; witnessing first-hand the joy and frustration of making art for a living. I find it exciting and rewarding when I feel I have contributed in some way.

**Q – What did you enjoy most about your studio visits with the SOAG artists?**

It was a highpoint. I loved meeting with everyone and briefly stepping into their worlds in which they create. Everyone was a pleasure to work with and took the task and deadline very seriously. It was also a great opportunity to explore the beautiful region as well.

**Q – In the United States, the history of public art is rife with controversies, as well as in our very own Santa Barbara. Did you contemplate that before you decided to accept the challenge of curating? Did it deter you in any way?**

I was basically in the dark about the extent of SB's very "public" public art. It was when I did the studio visits with this years artists that I received a much clearer

understanding of how far things had gone. I am glad I was not fully aware because otherwise it would have influenced my selection process.

**Q – Why should a community support public art?**

It is a wonderful and rich way to invigorate a community with culture. It stimulates familiar spaces with new life and as the community has witnessed brings very strong feelings and opinions out in the open.

This is a wonderful and unique thing that art can do and is a healthy thing too.

**Q – Why do you think that public art arouses such strong emotions in viewers?**

Possibly because it feels more like an unexpected encounter and so the viewer can choose to be open to the experience or not. It is a wonderful opportunity for the viewer to slow down and take them out of their thoughts – get them out of their heads to consider something new.

**Q – What happens for the viewer when art occurs outside the gallery and museum world?**

Our lives can feel so regulated and especially public areas, I feel public art can be an inspiring encounter, to think about the creative endeavor – regardless of whether they like it or not.

**Q – There is an openness to this exhibition, in that it is not characterized by any particular style. What other interesting sculptors are out there stretching the boundaries of sculpture as we know it?**

Well certainly the work of Danish artist Olafur Eliasson. He often sculpts using space, light and shadows and the way one interacts with work feels as if you are discovering a new phenomenon. The work is thrilling and fun and can be very humbling experience as well.

**Q – What does art do for you that nothing else does?**

It gives me much pleasure and asks nothing in return. With the current political stresses I find myself escaping into museums with more frequency. They calm me down and let me forget about the outside world, it is a very healing.

**Q – Any comments on the vandalism?**

It is very sad and so many people lose out. The public misses a chance to see the work as the artist intended, the attention is taken away from the enjoyment of the experience and the artist misses out on this wonderful opportunity. As I said in my curator's statement art making can be a very solitary endeavor but once a work or sculpture is complete the artist does not want only familiar eyes to see it, they wish for it to be shared with many.

It's hard for artist's living and working outside of big cities because they may have difficulty finding venues for exposure and attention for their work. This is why SOAG is so important and essential not only for the artist but the public as well.

**Dean, We are grateful to you for your contribution to the 5th annual SOAG 2008. You've highlighted the gifted artists that we have in our own community and the exhibition has invigorated our downtown. Will you be coming back soon?**

Oh, you can count on it – for the art & culture, for the food & wine, and for the shopping and beaches!

**Rita Ferri** is the Visual Arts Coordinator and Curator of Collections for the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission. She has worked in the field of Contemporary Art for 23 years; and is also an independent curator, lecturer, and consultant.



## State of the Art 2008

SANTA BARBARA  
SCULPTURE ON STATE STREET

– Curated by Dean Anes

Meet and greet the artists on State Street

Oct. 2, 5-7pm

Richard Aber

Jeff Elings

Ed Inks

Bill Malis

Rafael Perea de la Cabada  
& Matthew Woodford

Jeff Sanders

Helle Scharling-Todd

Nathan Snyder

Exhibition runs  
through November 15



City of Santa Barbara



Arts Commission

State of the Art Gallery is a collaboration between the City of Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission. INFO: 805.568.3990.