

Jessica Stockholder





16 September – 31 October 2004

Jessica Stockholder

Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam

Rice Gallery
HOUSTON, TEXAS





Foreword

Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam explores the evocative nature of abstract gesture as something literal and immediate. I hope to create a situation where the body moves along the path of an image being projected so that one is caught in the headlights.

– Jessica Stockholder

Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam was a landmark exhibition for Rice Gallery, affirming the truism, “good things come to those who wait.” I first visited Jessica at her Brooklyn studio in 1995, not long after Rice Gallery had adopted its mission to show only site-specific installation. Jessica is an artist of international reputation, named by a recent *ARTnews* cover story as “one of the most sought-after installation artists working today,” but we were dreaming big. On that first visit I learned that she was pregnant, inundated with exhibition commitments and about to move, but still, she was open to the idea of creating an installation for Rice Gallery. Our conversation that afternoon was the first of many we would have over the next nine years, during which time Jessica became head of graduate sculpture at Yale and with Patrick, her husband, and Charlie, their son, moved to Connecticut. The year 2004 would prove to be the right time for Rice Gallery to be the venue for Jessica’s first solo installation in the United States in eight years. We took part in an exciting collaboration with Blaffer Gallery, The Art Museum of the University of Houston, which simultaneously presented *Kissing The Wall: Works, 1988-2003*, an exhibition of Jessica’s studio works organized by Blaffer Gallery and The Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The exhibitions at two of Houston’s university galleries comprised the first comprehensive look at Jessica Stockholder’s work.

Stockholder’s large-scale installations are created in response to the particularities of a space. “Museums and gallery spaces are modeled on the notion of the White Cube. My work is about that – responding to a blank piece of paper,” she says. During her site visit Jessica was intrigued by the gallery’s glass front wall, and spoke of working “through” it to address the relationship between inside and outside the



space, and between the gallery and the campus. In *Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam*, vivid red and yellow shag carpet extended into the gallery foyer. Outside the building, she replaced a standard-issue clay planter with a boldly patterned ceramic one. Holding a seven-foot tall red rose bush, it was a lavish hint at what was to come inside: a sumptuous array of materials, objects, and color that continued the installation's exuberant, yet tightly unified composition.

The Rice campus responded enthusiastically to a call to assist in the early, materials-gathering stage of the installation process; we netted a fantastic assortment of floor lamps and furniture, and I am grateful to all who contributed. Jessica supplemented this bounty on a marathon shopping trip that was filmed for the PBS series *Art:21*. This being Texas, a Home Depot salesman spoke admiringly of Jessica's choice of their largest chest freezer, assuring her that she could "fit a whole deer in there."

Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam was, said Jessica, "about how the experience of color and space is pictorial, about your moving through it, and how your eyes make pictures." In person, the installation offered viewers an infinite number of potential pictures through multiple points of view and navigational choices. Likewise, its enigmatic title was in keeping with Jessica's desire for the work to take the viewer's mind down many overlapping paths.

Like Mark Rothko, who saw the shapes in his paintings as performers, Jessica thinks of her work in theatrical terms, observing that, "Installation is like a performance: it has a beginning, middle and end." Her insightful prose poem "A Rethinking of Character," which was printed in a brochure available to gallery visitors, was written to accompany *Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam*. The text, reproduced in this catalogue, is an expression of Jessica's belief that materials and form have character, and when combined in her installations, they can give rise to character. Though *Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam* is gone, her text remains as a unique work in its own right, and as she concludes, "The plot thickens."

Kimberly Davenport
Director



An abstract artwork featuring a large, textured blue area on the left and right, with a vertical yellow line running down the center. A large, irregular pink shape is on the left side, partially overlapping the blue. The overall composition is layered and textured.

Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam:

Rethinking Character

by Jessica Stockholder

Materials and form have character and or give rise to character. This text aims to give voice to how and what might be a character in this work and what parts might be played by the various actors. The action takes place as the senses of the body meet the constructs of the mind.

The Cast of Characters:

Three shadows wait to be. They wait for Sam to stand on three different occasions just there, in the future, out of sand. Three figures eclipsed; lost to the lights and slipped between the pages – the covers of a bed. They act – standing still on the stage. The event moves down the path, Life's middle road, the yellow brick road; mark-making as they go, teetering between artifice and good will.

Those three bend down, whispering to the lake flowing underground – their noses pressed to the floor – pressed some more – the nostrils squeezed tight so nothing can ooze. Backs bend, awkwardly. No robes flowing – no fabrics blowing in the wind. It is quiet.

The pots and pans clatter in the background. **The ongoing nature of daily life** in this case is sidelined. The stopped hush of snow falling is centered in the gallery. Projections – pictures – in the mind's eye and in the eye are patched together onto the wall and felt through a tunnel and in an empty space. They are in the middle of a page. The wind blows the leaves around their feet. Purple slime slips over their backs. Their noses are runny.

That eccentric branch at the door! Unsettled in isolation beckoning to the intruder with warm and enthusiastic invitation. So in love! Some wind slipping through the door and the energy and envy of the air moving is also a protagonist in the midst of the still staged artifice. The plateau of colors is still and yet more gushing, twisted and upsettingly alive than the plants at the door were last year. Here is a big heap of static event piled up like shards of broken plastic buckets.

The icebox is full of love metered out over time. Metering is a kind of control. Control is necessary to living, in concert with passion, breaking the bounds of predictability and ordered knowing. The cold of winter slows life processes. The cold of the icebox mimics winter. The cold of the gallery/white cube, like the icebox, is full of love and control.

Building – the verb and the noun – in all of its life process is a character in the event here orchestrated. The stuff – carpet, stone, hardware, wood, couch, freezer, lamps, cloths, shoes, and sheetrock – is in process as is the food cycling through our tubes – making passage.

Slow dancing mingles with the tinsel, the flashing lights of Christmas, the dance floor, and the cars on the highway at night passing through downtown. The dirt under the building is alive with worms, beetles, and mold. Being kept safe, but the surfaces are too clean and the walls have too much flex in them.

Plastic is so beautiful and so frightening.

The shiny thinness of experience.

Making holes in the veneer of the hard clear surface.





The line between two colors charged! It's impossible to separate one from the other, impossible to take that impossible place away and put it somewhere else. Try to put feet there. Dive into that place that is not there and point. Finger stretched out long and pointing like . . . and to the beach shore – the inter-tidal zone.

Carpet always stamps his feet – hard like there is mud on them. He doesn't like sand between his toes. She brushes her hair often. And she worries about the color fading.

Green waterproof drywall rigidly embarks on a sea journey of mammoth proportions. The green sea seems to go on forever in all directions until you step back and see the edges. The size of experience changes so drastically! He is a little dry but then she likes to swim.

Wires with electricity mess up together with the air and dust specks and balls carried on breezes through colored air.

Colored air is thick and interrupted by body parts, bone, flesh, and blood flowing along channels. Channels, like the eye's point of view, flow through space and come into focus at the end, on the wall. Projected pictures overlay the rough and tumble of the current in all directions.

The Characters are orchestrated for the eye – riding on wheels – legs flapping in the wind. The eye screeches – along in the grooves laid out for it, like a train on its track. Meanwhile, experience and oceans of color inform the action, figures, belly, dancing, and knitting.

Back to the wall, body and wall are screen; eyes painstakingly turned around character plots of stuff. The light tunnels weave together two kinds of mapping that lie side by side: the darting map the eye manufactures and the map of being as the body learns it.

The plot thickens.

– Jessica Stockholder



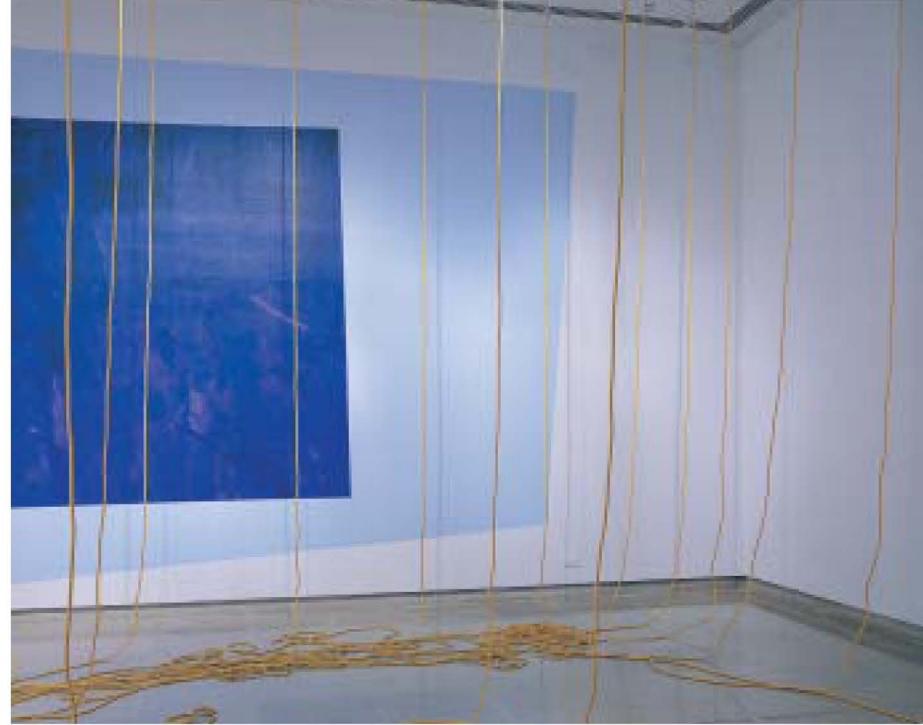
















About the Artist

Jessica Stockholder was born in 1959 in Seattle, Washington and grew up in Vancouver, Canada. She received a BFA from the University of Victoria, British Columbia in 1982, and in 1985, a MFA in sculpture from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Stockholder has exhibited work in a variety of media, both nationally and internationally.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Rawhide Harangue of Aching Idiocies as Told by Light*, Museum School Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts (2005); *Jessica Stockholder*, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea Torino, Italy (2005); *Kissing the Wall: Works 1988-2003*, Weatherspoon Art Museum, The University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina (2005) and Blaffer Gallery, The Art Museum of The University of Houston, Texas (2004); *Table Top Sculpture*, Gorney Bravin + Lee, New York (2003); *TV Tipped Toe Nail & the Green Salami*, Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux, France (2003), and *Vortex in the Play of Theatre with the Real Passion (for Kay Stockholder)* and *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland (2000). Recent works featured in group shows include *Bird Watching* in *Beau Monde: Toward a Redeemed Cosmopolitanism*, SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico (2001); *Gelatinous Too Dry* in *In the Beginning was MERZ*, Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany (2000), and *Pictures at an Exhibition* in *Apparent Things: Painting with Things*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2000).



Stockholder's work is in numerous public collections including the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; The British Museum, London; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Her career is the subject of the monographs *Jessica Stockholder, Kissing The Wall: Works, 1988-2003* (2004, Marquand Books, Inc., Seattle) and *Jessica Stockholder* (1995, Phaidon Press, Ltd., London). Stockholder is Director of Graduate Studies in Sculpture at Yale University.





Credits

Jessica Stockholder, *Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam*, 2004
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Rice University Art Gallery is located in Sewall Hall on the campus of Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005, and on the web at ricegallery.org.

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Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam was presented in collaboration with Jessica Stockholder, *Kissing The Wall: Works, 1988-2003*, co-organized by Blaffer Gallery, The Art Museum of the University of Houston and The Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The exhibitions at Blaffer and Rice Galleries comprised the first comprehensive look at Jessica Stockholder's work. Special thanks to Terrie Sultan, Director, and Katherine Veneman, Curator of Education at Blaffer Gallery.

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Inside front cover, and page 35

Pages 38-39: Preparatory drawings, poem, and photograph by Jessica Stockholder

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