

MILLS

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mills College Art Museum Announces Exhibition of New Work By Bay Area Artist Kathryn Spence

Oakland, CA— The Mills College Art Museum is pleased to present *Kathryn Spence: Short sharp notes, rolling or churring whistles, clear phrases* from August 21 through December 12, 2010. Featuring new work by the Bay Area artist, the exhibition will showcase large-scale sculptural installations and drawings inspired by the confluence of natural and urban environments. *Kathryn Spence: Short sharp notes, rolling or churring whistles, clear phrases* is curated by Stephanie Hanor. An opening reception with the artist will take place on August 25 from 5:30–7:30 pm.



Spence's sculptural objects are inspired by animals and nature but are composed from the discarded materials of the human world. Her work demonstrates an uncanny ability to capture the essence of animals without masking her found materials, applying a naturalist's methods to urban detritus. Accumulated bits of fabric, thread, paper, and cardboard take on species-specific characteristics of songbirds, owls, and coyotes.

Spence's exhibition at the Mills College Art Museum will include new sculptural work that brings together many of the significant elements of her artistic practice. Spence collects humble, common materials--such as thread, old stuffed animals, fabric, images from birding field guides, and wire—that are carefully selected for their color, texture, and associations. She then uses the material to create meticulously stacked and organized accumulations that are both a monument to the impulse to organize and a method of rehabilitating materials that have been cast aside by a consumer society.

Drawing plays an important role in Spence's work and the exhibition includes a large floor-based work on paper that expands the artist's use of drawing in both scale and concept. A collage of abstract color imagery, the piece demonstrates Spence's accumulative procedures deployed toward more formally abstract ends.

Spence has described the objects she makes as dimensional drawings and her technique of accumulating, attaching, layering, and lining are the very procedures that animals use to build up their own nests and shelters. Spence's installations emulate the living animals and other items and elements she observes in nature, and explore the disparity between the culture of the artificial and the untamed natural world that surrounds us.

Kathryn Spence lives and works in San Francisco, CA and received her MFA from Mills College in 1993. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions such as *Leavings*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University (2001) and *Wild*, The Kempner Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO (1999). Spence has presented in select group exhibitions, including *Natural Blunders*, de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA (2009); *48th Corcoran Biennial*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2005); *Hard Candy*, San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA (2004); *The Not-So-Still-Life: A Century of California Painting and Sculpture*, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA (2003); *Not So Cute & Cuddly: Dolls and Stuffed Toys in Contemporary Art*, Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University, Kansas (2002); *Skin Deep: Surface and Appearance in Contemporary Art*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel (1999); *1999 Biennial Exhibition*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA (1999), *Present Tense: Nine Artists in the Nineties*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (1997); and *Bay Area Now*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA (1997). She has received numerous awards and artist residencies, including the Fleishhacker Foundation Fellowship and residencies at the Headlands Center for the Arts and the Djerassi Resident Artists Program.

Kathryn Spence: Short sharp notes, rolling or churring whistles, clear phrases has been supported by the Joan Danforth Art Museum Endowment.

Image: Kathryn Spence, *Untitled (Western Screech Owls)*, 2009. Coats, pants, stuffed animals, sand, string, thread, wire, pins. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco.

Public Programs (please visit our website for updated details):

September 25, 2010

Bird Walk with John Harris

10:00 am, Art Museum

October 13, 2010

Lecture by Kathryn Spence

7:00 pm, Danforth Lecture Hall, Art Building

—more—

November 10, 2010

Kathryn Spence in conversation with Stephanie Hanor

7:00 pm, Art Museum

About the Mills College Art Museum

The Mills College Art Museum, founded in 1925, is a dynamic center for art that focuses on the creative work of women as artists and curators. The museum strives to engage and inspire the diverse and distinctive cultures of the Bay Area by presenting innovative exhibitions by emerging and established national and international artists. Exhibitions are designed to challenge and invite reflection upon the profound complexities of contemporary culture. The Mills College Art Museum is located at 5000 MacArthur Boulevard, Oakland, CA 94613. Museum hours are Tuesday-Sunday 11:00–4:00 pm and Wednesday 11:00–7:30 pm. Admission is free for all exhibitions and programs unless noted. For more information, visit <http://mcam.mills.edu>

About Mills College

Nestled in the foothills of Oakland, California, Mills College is a nationally renowned, independent liberal arts college offering a dynamic progressive education that fosters leadership, social responsibility, and creativity to approximately 950 undergraduate women and 550 graduate women and men. Since 2000, applications to Mills College have more than doubled. The College is named one of the top colleges in the West by *U.S. News & World Report*, and ranks as one of the *Best 371 Colleges* by The Princeton Review. *Forbes.com* ranked Mills 55th among America's best colleges and named it a "Top Ten: Best of the All-Women's Colleges." For more information, visit www.mills.edu.

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