

**Mara Lonner**  
**Curated by Catherine Opie**

March 16 – April 22, 2006  
(Opening Reception: Thursday, March 16, 6-8pm)

“Lonner makes things that resonate in the complexities of the everyday, obsessively exploring things that seem so simple, and shifting our perceptions in the process.”  
—Catherine Opie

Mara Lonner’s previous installations have investigated the overlap between ornament and architecture, the intersection between labor and material, and the relationship between surface and structure, in order to reveal the paradox inherent within these contrasting elements. Since 1998, Lonner has been presenting individual works offered in an ideal arrangement, proposing a resonance between the objects much like the rooms in IKEA. Rather than employing ornamentation to uphold the uniformity and harmony of the surface appearance of structural form, Lonner breaks through the surface to make highly crafted decoration and patterning integral to the architecture of her forms.

Lonner’s recent series of colored-pencil drawings on paper and a wall piece on view at CUE investigate the relationship between architecture, drawing and sculpture. They address her interest in the spaces between, spaces that are sometimes difficult and uncomfortable, sometimes intolerable or exciting, but are always important states of transition.

The concept of the modern gallery, as clean white cube in which interaction within the space is pre-determined and can be altered only through moveable partitions, is undercut by Lonner’s use of decorative form as content. Space for Lonner is mutable and momentary just like modern life. She responds to the specific quirks and character of the architecture it addresses by treating the gallery’s permanent and partition walls and columns as legitimate ground formats (just like paper and canvas). By reducing CUE’s walls, partitions, wall joints, and support columns into ghostlike structures, Lonner deconstructs familiar modes of perception, building her work layer upon layer using slightly different temperatures and textures of white paint to depict patterns and forms derived from nature. Imagery includes flowers found in her lifelong collection of *Sunset* magazines in flattened 70’s Pop Art format and leaves inspired by Victorian marginalia. Root structures derived from botanical studies of invasive plants like Bamboo originate as line drawings and are then sculpted from joint compound to comprise the top layer of her work in the form of a contour drawing in slight relief. In order to break from any uniform reading brought on by the use of repeated patterns throughout the space, root structures are placed at key focal points such as the joining corner of the gallery walls, and wrapped around the support column. A series of monochromatic drawings that include muted shades of red, blue, yellow, green, violet, and amber are also interspersed throughout the installation at key junctures.



Mara Lonner, Drawing detail of the wall piece, *Between Now and Then*, 2006, to be installed at CUE, Ink on Mylar, 18" x 24"

(Cont.)

Like the other elements within the exhibition, there are slight variations in value, while form and dimensionality is achieved here by free flowing delicate root renderings anchored underneath by logical geometric patterns and shapes.

It is the unpredictable exigencies caused by the layering process itself which resonate for the artist. Just as roots must penetrate the ground to move particles of earth in order to release oxygen that creates nutrients, Lonner's layering of imagery—flowers in the background, leaves in the middle ground, and roots placed on top—pays homage to this inevitable cycle, while inverting the natural order. Although the artist's adherence to monochromatic purity may appear to challenge the limits of visibility, her treatment of texture such as painting her flowers a slightly shiny version of latex or sculpting her roots in joint compound (a material normally used to create structure) allows the imagery to pull forward or recede in relation to each other. By exhibiting decidedly feminine traits of adapting and adjusting, self reflectivity, along with the physical capacity to be innately aware of nature, Lonner's patterning and ornamentation is equally seductive. In the process of inventing her own set of imagery, she draws certain parallels between the Victorian period and our own as referenced by the romanticizing of home pursuits, and through sexually-related fears, re-interpreted through phallic-like or explosive symbolism.

In her investigation of states of transitions, Lonner strikes a delicate balance by buttressing feelings of loss and melancholia with an overall sense of beauty, which makes living so worthwhile.

#### ARTIST'S BIO:

Mara Lonner was born in the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles, in 1956. After initial studies in horticulture, she pursued a career that encompassed, costume, jewelry, interior design and architectural remodeling. She received her BFA in 1987 and an MFA in 1989 from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. Since 1995, she has taught all levels of drawing, 2/3D design, sculpture and senior exhibition at the University of California, Irvine. In addition, she teaches at Long Beach Community college and for the California Summer School for the Arts. In 1998, she received a California Arts Council fellowship, and in 2001 and 2005, was awarded Artist Completion Grants from the Durfee Foundation. The 2005 grant was awarded to assist in completing work for the CUE Art Foundation exhibition. Her work has been exhibited across the country, and the exhibition at CUE is her first in New York. She continues to work and live in Los Angeles.

#### ABOUT CUE:

CUE Art Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, provides educational and professional development programs in the visual arts. These include student internships, stipends, exhibitions, public lectures, and an in-gallery studio program, all of which draw from the talents and experience of the diverse community of artists, art critics, and teachers that the Foundation brings together.

CUE's exhibition season gives unknown or under-recognized artists public and professional exposure comparable to that offered by neighboring commercial galleries, without the usual financial restraints. The Advisory Council, an honorary group of artists and leading figures from the arts education, applied arts, art history, and literary communities, has the responsibility of selecting exhibition curators. The curators, in turn, nominate artists to exhibit at CUE, and continue to play a role throughout the exhibition process. Both the Advisory Council and the exhibition curators actively participate in the public lectures and educational programs.

CUE Art Foundation's operations and programs are made possible with the generous support of foundations, corporations, individuals, and its membership. Meeting Artists' Needs is supported in part by the Joan Mitchell Foundation. Additional programming assistance is provided in part by public funds from the New York Department of Cultural Affairs, and the New York State Council on the Arts through the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Experimental Television Center.

For additional exhibition information, please contact Beatrice Wolert-Weese, Gallery Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, 212 206-3583, or email [beatrice.wolert@cueartfoundation.org](mailto:beatrice.wolert@cueartfoundation.org).