



Top left: Peter Randall-Page, *Mind Map I-V*, 2009. Clay, 2 meters wide each. Above: Peter Randall-Page, *Multiplication by Division*, 2000. Limestone, 100 x 103 x 106 cm. each. Left: Peter Randall-Page, *Rocks in my Bed*, 2005. Canvas, rock, and paint, installation view.

## SAN FRANCISCO

### Gail Wight

#### Patricia Sweetow Gallery

A haunting sadness emanates from the delicate black butterflies in Gail Wight's *J'ai des Papillons tous les jours*, even with no understanding of the title. One hundred slender pins hold the wings in place as the glowing bodies pulse with light, their life force apparently helpless, encased in Plexiglas as if on scientific display. As a young girl, I, too, captured butterflies and doused them with lighter fluid, their tender bodies suffocated from the fumes, left for me to examine without struggle and pin to boards for science class. On summer nights, I also collected lighting bugs in jars as flickering trophies. Wight's work triggers these memories with a visceral ambivalence, leaving us entranced and horrified at our actions as would-be scientists. The title literally translates as having "black butterflies every day," a French idiom for depression that references the work of Walter Freeman, a 20th-century scientist

forms, although solid and volumetric, are never still; instead, they appear on the cusp of mutation. *Multiplication by Division* demonstrates the importance of the relationship between singularity and multiplicity, particularly the complex and mysterious processes behind the evolution of a unit into a multifarious mass. Randall-Page's particular brand of monumentality is achieved through the creation of these simplified masses, and the work is often seen in isolation, clearly defined and not fused into the immediate environment. The sculptures stand digni-

fied and alone, reminiscent of the ancient menhirs rooted with symbolic intent as immobile markers of eternity within Britain's landscape.

Randall-Page's work reveals an innate technical skill and deep understanding of the individual characteristics of his chosen material. He received much of his early training as a carver on the restoration of Wells Cathedral in Somerset, and he has had work sited in the Bishop's Palace, Lincoln and Temple Church, Bristol. These ecclesiastical beginnings have clearly served him well with some of his chosen titles—*Stone Dreaming*

and *Mind Map*—which suggest a certain otherworldliness. But Randall-Page is just as attracted to the formal qualities of a place as he is to its intellectual possibilities. Indeed, the formal and intellectual qualities of his work are fully integrated, as in *Shapes in the Clouds*, a series made from distinctive Rosso Luana marble. Here, the forms share the geometry of Platonic solids, yet the stone's extraordinary structure offers a moment of quiet reverie, as though we were momentarily able to view the universe in miniature.

—Ina Cole



who advocated the use of lobotomy as the treatment of choice for depression.

Wight has built a career on work that critiques science as the language of authority. With humor and intelligence, she turns scientific techniques into parodies of themselves, exposing their inherent vulnerabilities and our suspicions that “they” might not know quite as much as they proclaim. In her recent show, however, the overt humor was replaced by an abstracted simplicity that revealed the seriousness of her content.

In *Center of Gravity*, a forest of eight-foot-high, rolled rice paper tubes gently sways with the viewer’s approach. Each light and fragile column bears manipulated photographic images, mirror-reflected to create abstract symmetrical patterns that become specific landscapes on closer approach. A blade of grass, a thorny cactus, snow-covered branches, a cloudless blue sky: each image depicts a site of natural wonder threatened by climate

change. Inspired by the notion of deep time, these dangling core samples depict a world destined to exist only as a memory, collective or specific to the artist. A tiny red light twinkles at the base of those columns with sound elements triggered by the viewer—for instance, a coyote howl and a hawk’s screech are paired with the sounds of man-made intruders, the chainsaw and the airplane. *Center of Gravity* gracefully bridged the bright illumination of the main gallery and the relative darkness of the installation space with an ease unusual in media installations. In the dark, the columns glow with an eerie beauty; light reveals their details and content.

*Creep* documents the straightforward beauty of a most understated natural phenomenon—the growth

**Above:** Gail Wight, *Center of Gravity*, 2008. Rice paper, Plexiglas, electronics, light, and sound, dimensions variable. **Right:** Lygia Clark, *Bicho*, 1960. Aluminum, 15 x 15 x 20 in. From “The Quick and the Dead.”

of slime mold. A creature so ubiquitous as to be the mascot of the everyday, slime mold is the stuff of compost and rotting logs. Wight grew her specimens in Petri dishes in her kitchen and then preserved the process as time-lapse video images on a grid of monitors. A self-proclaimed stalker of scientists and scientific practices, she continues to produce works that captivate us with the magic and pretensions of 21st-century knowledge.

—Donna Schumacher

### MINNEAPOLIS “The Quick and the Dead” Walker Art Center

“The quick and the dead,” a phrase from the King James translation of the Bible, refers to the collection of souls, those now physically alive and those whose bodies have died. An evocation of the split between matter and spirit, as well as their mysterious relation, the title offered a good entry point into this immensely engaging show. Curator Peter Eleey (former director of Creative Time) took 90-plus objects by 53 artists and turned them into something like a single work. This muscular feat of curation depended

on the inclusion of a few things that didn’t begin as artworks, such as mathematician Anthony Phillips’s “sphere eversion schematic,” a series of drawings detailing how a sphere can be turned inside out without rupturing, and Harold Edgerton’s eternally nifty 1950s high-speed photos of exploding milk glasses and atomic bombs.

These things marked one side of the show, while Catherine Murphy’s drawings and paintings of hiddenness (log interiors and dirt under snow) and Vija Celmin’s vibrantly intense painting of the night sky defined the other. Between them—let’s say between physics and imagination—were the many fascinating experiments and embodied essays that made up the rest of the exhibition—a kind of R&D lab for consciousness in the grip of matter and time.

Most of the show was sculptural, from Michael Sailstorfer’s car tire and wheel assembly grinding stinkily along on the wall and shedding crumbs of rubber (*Zeit ist keine Autobahn—Berlin*, 2006) to Jason Dodge’s little brick of fabric whose warp and weft document the height of the stratosphere (*Above the*

