

This exhibition is a result of Real Art Ways' "Open" competition in 2006, which requested proposals from emerging artists living in New York or New England. "Open" was juried by Catherine D'Ignazio, (Co-Director, iKatun and Member of The Institute for Infinitely Small Things, Massachusetts); Omar Lopez-Chahoud, (Independent Curator, New York); and Rachel Berwick, (Artist, Connecticut).

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Real Art Ways is one of the leading contemporary arts organizations in the United States with an emphasis on supporting contemporary artists, fostering the creation of new work, and working in creative ways with community. Programs include visual arts and public art projects, music, performance, spoken word, film and video, and creative social events designed to connect people with each other. Founded in 1975, Real Art Ways is an alternative to mainstream museums and commercial culture; its programs are made possible by a diverse and growing audience, and support from a wide range of enlightened funders.

On the cover: Kite Walk, recycled paper, thread, 2007 (detail).

All images courtesy of Real Art Ways. Staff photographer John Groo.

Nadya Volicer



Kite Walk, recycled paper, cardboard, thread, staples, 15' x 23' x 26', 2007.

"All of us collect fortunes when we are children—a fortune of colors, of light and darkness, of movements, of tensions. Some of us have the fantastic chance to go back to their fortune when we grow up. Most of us don't have the chance—that is the tragedy." —Ingmar Bergman

Putting Things Together

By Jerry Beck

In Nadya Volicer's adept hands, worn-down, thrown-out objects are revived and worlds of sculptural wonders are built. Her art, like a force of nature, seems to grow instinctively, carrying with it a playful, sincere, and radiating power.

Nadya is a pioneer who makes one discover the adventure in the artistic process, who breathes energy into the best kind of ambition—the kind that translates the poetry in art that is so indescribably beautiful, mysterious, eloquent, and wise. She leads viewers closer to a utopian truth but also keeps them grounded in meaningful moments.

I have followed Nadya Volicer's artwork—reaching out, hungry, and searching the ground for crumbs like the Hansel and Gretel fairytale.

In the past, I have stepped into a cabin-like structure to sit down next to a bunch of children drawing pictures on scraps of cut wood.

I have been trapped behind a wooden waterfall cascading from white ceilings and walls.

Nadya Volicer earned her BFA in Sculpture from Massachusetts College of Art in 2001. She has shown her work in solo and group shows at venues nationally and internationally, including Real Art Ways, Hartford, Connecticut; Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts and Normalife Unlimited in London, UK. She was the recipient of the Lowell Cultural Council Grant in 2006 and will be the artist in residence at the McColl Center for Visual Arts, Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2008. Nadya lives and works in Westford, Massachusetts.

I have gone beneath the curl of a huge wave as if surfing on a puzzle made of a million pieces.

I walked through a cemetery to find her artwork as a magic carpet ride, where birds were flying over my head, connected to strings of light that pierced branches of trees.

I even had the chance to watch her turn a museum space into a dramatic interactive multi-layered story about a revolutionary city.

Her work roots and illuminates memories long forgotten, like the times collecting junk as if treasure.

I remember reading in Native American folklore that in each of us we have a young boy and girl and an old woman and man, and together they create that perfect balance of how to live and work.

This is how I experience her art.

As Nadya says about her childhood:

"It was standard suburbia, but we had a great big back yard with towering pine trees at the edge of woods, which in summer felt endless. Often I would build tree houses, props for plays, musical instruments, cardboard box forts, couch forts, kites and boats."

Nadya's walk-through, site-specific installations have the ability to get me walking a tight rope between the natural and invented, representational and abstract, the intuitive and thoughtful.

2007 installation view of Kite Walk, recycled paper, cardboard, thread, staples, 15' x 23' x 26'.



She is a lumberjack, poet, construction worker, scientist, architect, world traveller, garbage collector, environmentalist, historian, toy maker, beach comber, circus performer, inventor, and yes, a generous, genuine, and inspiring creative person.

More stuff: Mosaics, tactile surfaces, clusters of lacey cutouts, themes of nature, home, memory, movement, architecture, jigsaw puzzles, curious landscapes, currents of water, traffic flow, peculiar defects, the way the air circulates, sounds, trash piles, dumpsters, basements, neighborhoods, fragments, relics, rusty hinges, yesterday's color preferences, flaking layers of paint, patinas, dirt, spider webs, cardboard, shapes, quilts, surrealism, earth, cultural artifact, weather, piecing, weaving, connecting these things to make small parts a large whole.

"Kite Walk" has transformed Real Art Ways' gallery into a visually stunning environment made almost entirely of paper. It consists of 350 recycled kites strung individually to the ceiling and tethered to a quilted paper ground, lifting it up into topography of gentle hills and valleys. Viewers walk amid this landscape along a rippled path of paper strips glued down to resemble grass and are surrounded by the paper strings of the kites pulling up towards the rafters. Aside from this considerable tension, the urge to soar versus the fact of being rooted, "Kite Walk" is primarily a playful work referencing childhood memories of kite building and flying. The quilts covering the floor are both domestic reminders of comfort and visual allusions to aerial views of rural landscape. In these ways, this installation offers viewers a perspective shift in time and in space. But the room-sized scale of the work also allows viewers to be surrounded by the sheer volume of waste paper employed in this piece. This use of recycled paper is meant to bring attention to society's wastefulness as well as the barrage of news and advertisements we are bombarded with daily, as much of the material used consists of newspapers and advertising circulars.

Within Nadya's virtuosity of recycling cultural artifacts, we find a new innocence and inventiveness. We begin to unfold a pathway through the forest, to discover a landscape



2007 installation view of Kite Walk, recycled paper, cardboard, thread, staples, 15' x 23' x 26'.

created by and preserved by things we want to forget and by which we want to be revived.

It is a living room, a landscape, a language.
A place of hellos and good byes,
Of yesterdays and tomorrows made fresh today.
It is a boundless range of theatrical narratives with something more.
It is a mythic game of dissolving art into life.
It is conjuring imaginary worlds.
It is and isn't folk art.
It is way too much and not enough.
It is tough and gentle. Soft and hard.
It has secrets and thrills.
Hills and valleys, mountains, and air.
I swear you can hear music somewhere.

It is open minded and amusing.
It is on the edge of being
Discovered.

Nadya unravels a treasure map, creates a place to lose oneself within her extraordinary technical finesse. Even when she is not there, you can journey with her. Hear her thinking, jig-sawing, puzzling things together, banging nails, and weaving a promising and idealized vision of the past, present, and future.

Jerry Beck, is an artist, community activist, and the Founder/Artistic Director of The Revolving Museum, a nationally recognized arts organization located in Lowell, Massachusetts.