

**For immediate release**

## **MARK DION**

### *Vivarium*

November 21, 2002 to January 4, 2003

Opening reception, 6-8pm, November 21, 2002

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present its second major solo exhibition by Mark Dion entitled, 'Vivarium.'

Mark Dion's interests in the spectacular presentation of nature and ecological systems are specifically explored in this major installation. In the main gallery space, set beneath the peaked glass skylight, the visitor is confronted with a tremendous greenhouse that has been constructed in the space. The structure provides an environment for a large decomposing tree that was found (already fallen) in nearby region of Connecticut. Removed from its natural context, the surroundings had already gained a foothold on the tree carcass in the form of moss and other ground vegetation. As the glass structure cultivates the continued growth of this vegetation and myriad microorganisms, it simultaneously provides visual access to the slow process of decomposition and transmutation. But in addition to its function as vitrine and growth medium, the structure can also give the impression of a glass casket, with the exhibition as metaphorical viewing of the deceased. In another detail, images of the decomposer microorganisms, insects and fungi have been printed on tiles that decorate the base of the greenhouse structure and construct a mosaic around the periphery of the structure.

"Vivarium" continues Mark Dion's investigation into the construction, interpretation and presentation of nature and science. Often employing irony, humor and an improvisational style, his installation work confronts and emphasizes the inherent contradictions between the nature of an artifact and the context in which it is displayed for popular consumption. Most recently, Dion has been exploring the methods of collection and presentation of material artifacts in a series of pseudo-archeological digs. These projects include an exhibition for the Tate Gallery that involve the drudging of the Thames River in London, as well as a dig in three urban areas of New England. In both projects, materials were gathered, sorted, cleaned and presented in cabinets and treasure chests, juxtaposed with photo-documentation of the gathering process.

Mark Dion's current and upcoming exhibition schedule includes 'Urban Wildlife Observation Unit,' Public Art Fund, New York; 'Museotopia,' Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum Der Stadt Hagen, Germany; 'Encyclomania,' Villa Markel, Esslingen and Kunstverein Hannover, Germany; 'Microsmographia,' University of Tokyo Museum, Tokyo; 'Full House,' The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT; and 'Collaborations 1987-2003,' Joseloff Gallery, Hartford, CT.

