

MARK DION

The Octagon Room

February 16 - March 15, 2008

Opening reception: Saturday February 16, 6-8pm

Gallery one

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is very pleased to present *The Octagon Room*, a major installation and sculpture project that comprises Mark Dion's fourth solo presentation at the gallery.

Dion's dynamic and conceptually rigorous art making practice primarily serves as an investigation of the historical methods of representing and organizing the world, with particular sensitivity to man's sometimes tenuous relationship with nature, society and the environment. Employing scientific conventions of investigation and display in order to deconstruct them, the politics of museum representation have always taken a central role in Dion's practice, and in certain projects the act of realizing the work via pseudo scientific or curatorial endeavors has played a major role.

In *The Octagon Room*, which takes the form of an architecturally scaled installation, Dion furthers his investigation into the blurred boundaries between art, society, and history, as well as the homogenized methods of their presentation and consumption. Confronting the inherent contradictions between the artifact and the context in which it is displayed, *The Octagon Room* takes the appearance of a Brutalist styled bunker. However, within the installation the viewer is invited to browse through an abandoned office, the contents of which represent the artist's own labyrinthine history of the past eight years.

Dion's decision to utilize the octagon was inspired by the 19th century mania for octagonal buildings, popularized by the American phrenologist Orson Squire Fowler. Fowler championed the merits of octagonal homes over rectangular and square structures in his widely publicized book, *The Octagon House: A Home for All*. In the end, octagonal houses never took hold and, rather, these eight-sided homes seemed to be the choice of the individualists, standing defiant among their four-sided neighbors.

The imagined provenance of each of the objects in Dion's arrangement adds up to a staggering sum of experiences. As each speaks of an individual past, collectively they present a complex mosaic, informing our understanding of the overall subject matter and material. A Wunderkammer both autobiographical and sociological, *The Octagon Room* takes the nation's relationship with its own people and its neighbors, and the artist's status and position within this framework as its foundation.

Based in New York City and Pennsylvania Mark Dion's notable recent projects include *Systema Metropolis*, Natural History Museum, London, 2007 (solo); *Seattle Vivarium*, part of the Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle Art Museum, 2007 (solo); *The Natural History of the Museum*, Carre d'Art, Nimes, France and touring to Dunkers Kulturhus, Helsingborg and Seedamm Kulturzentrum, Pfäffikon, Switzerland, 2007 (solo); *Ecotopia: The 2nd ICP Triennial of Photography and Video*, International Center of Photography, New York, 2006/2007 (group); *The South Florida Wildlife Rescue Unit*, Miami Art Museum, 2006/7 (solo); *Classification: Alternative Knowledge and Contemporary Art*, Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, 2006/7 (group); *Drawing as Process in Contemporary Art*, Smart Museum of Art, Chicago, 2006 (group). Dion is currently developing an ongoing project with the John Bartram Association that will result in the

exhibition *Mark Dion: Travels of William Bartram Reconsidered*, Bartram's Garden, Philadelphia, June 21st - December 6th: www.markdionsbartramstravels.com.

For further information please feel free to contact the gallery.