

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Swarm Gallery is pleased to present the exhibition

NATURAL SELECTION | Vaughn Bell + Josh Keyes
Project | **WASHED UP** | Multimedia installation by Reenie Charrière

August 7 - September 13, 2009
Exhibit Opening | Friday, August 7, 6-8PM

OAKLAND, Calif. – 3 July 2009 – Swarm Gallery is pleased to present the pairing of Portland-based artist **Josh Keyes** and Seattle-based artist **Vaughn Bell** in “Natural Selection.” The exhibition explores ways we interact with nature, and comprises new paintings and site-specific installation.

Josh Keyes' work brings to mind the detail and complexity of natural history dioramas, and the color and diagrammatic complexity one might find in cross section illustrations from a vintage science textbook. His work has developed over the past years into an iconic and complex personal vocabulary of imagery that creates a mysterious and sometimes unsettling juxtaposition between the natural world and the man made landscape. The work conveys an anxious vision of what the world might be like in the future as a result of current global warming predictions. Keyes' interest in creating paintings that fuse realism with the possible often evokes the imagery found in dystopian and post-apocalyptic literature, while other works express the optimism and utopian ideas found in the writings of Buckminster Fuller and Paolo Soleri. Keyes often incorporates objects and animals into his dissected environments that have personal iconographic significance. He weaves his personal mythology through fractured and isolated landscapes that are either overgrown with vegetation or underwater, and often depict historic or military monuments covered with graffiti. The imagery functions as a way for Keyes to express his personal experience and also allows him to comment and interpret events in the world.

Vaughn Bell's work is informed by an ever-expanding array of ideas and histories. She is as interested in discussions of sustainability, property rights, public space and ecological function as she is in a range of contemporary art practices. Investigations into local sites, art histories and cultures become the groundwork for site-based work, whether it is performances in public space or installation works. In some cases, a conceptual exploration takes form in drawings, objects and actions, and then adapts to diverse locations and contexts. She is inspired by moments of absurdity and contradiction as well as my own visceral experiences of place. In a recent body of work, she explores the iconic aspects of a mountain landscape, traditionally represented in landscape painting as the distant mountain peaks on the horizon. *Surrogate Mountain* is a portable version of Mt. Rainier, recreated at a scale of 1:30000 (1 inch=2500 feet). The miniature mountain can travel throughout the city with its caretaker, providing a mountain view when clouds obscure the horizon. In this piece, the majesty of Mt. Rainier becomes something we can literally carry with us everywhere, and the iconic view of the mountain is accessible on any street corner. The human desire to make the landscape knowable and controllable is satirized, as the diminutive mountain is pulled along concrete pathways.

Josh Keyes was born in 1969 in Tacoma Washington. Keyes graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and later received his MFA in painting from Yale University. His work has been featured in numerous publications and exhibited in galleries in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Denver. Keyes currently lives and works in Portland, Oregon. Vaughn Bell was born in Syracuse, New York. She has exhibited work in venues across the United States including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Seattle, Chicago and Portland, OR, as well as the UK and Japan. Vaughn received her MFA from the Studio for Inter-related Media at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston and her undergraduate degree from Brown University.



Project | **WASHED UP** | Multimedia installation by Reenie Charrière

Reenie will present a multimedia video installation in Swarm's project space. Her recent works are triggered by a fascination with urban spaces, especially abandoned or seemingly vacant ones including public waterways and shorelines.

Her investigations zoom into the juxtapositions of natural and synthetic aggregations amassing in these ignored locations. As a mixed media artist she enjoys observing, gathering, documenting and transmogrifying these perceptions into sculptural installations. Her practice involves a physical exploration, balanced by playful manipulations of remnants from these sites intermingled with unorthodox additions.

Reenie Charrière recently received a travel scholarship from the Roderick Dew Fund from the Maine College of Art to document the takeover of vegetation in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina. She has spent the past seven years teaching Visual Arts and Dance as an artist-in-residence at Irvington High School in Fremont, Westlake Middle School in Oakland, and George Peabody Elementary School in San Francisco. She received her BA from Simmons College, and MFA from Maine College of Art.

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