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Barbara Siegel

Arboretum

November 2 – November 26, 2011

Reception: Thursday, November 3 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

BROOKLYN, NY November 2011– A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of Barbara Siegel's exhibition entitled *Arboretum*, featuring wall installations and sculpture made between 2009 and 2011. The exhibition will be on view from November 2 to November 26, 2011, with a reception on Thursday, November 3 from 6pm to 9pm.



Barbara Siegel's biographically inspired installations memorialize and subjectively re-imagine the complexities and creative trajectories of other people's lives. The subject and inspiration for *Arboretum* is the life and practice of horticulturalist Dr. Sidney Waxman (1923-2005). Shortly after World War II in his research nursery at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, Waxman used the seeds from "witches' brooms" (an anomalous clump of branches on a normal tree) to propagate more than forty varieties of dwarf conifers. These beautiful, often small, slow-growing trees fit the newly evolving suburban tract housing of the American post-war landscape.

Siegel's large wall-installation, *Dr. Waxman's Arboretum*, combines paintings, drawings, photographs, and measuring devices related to and evoking Waxman's practice. Unframed and pinned to the wall, they suggest the raw energy and intuitive impulse of scientific exploration and research, as well as the nature of Siegel's art practice involving research in unfamiliar fields of inquiry.

As curator Charlotta Kotik writes in a recent essay about Siegel's work:

"The rare and the ordinary are intertwined in a rich mosaic of shapes, colors and materials making us see small miracles in a bundle of twigs, in the images of pine cones printed on a pillow, or in a drawing of a stone we might have encountered on a mountain path. Her ability to illuminate hidden richness in the commonplace makes Siegel's installations treasures to behold."

Images of Waxman's dwarf cultivar, "Sea Urchin," are combined with the scent of pine oil in the hanging piece, *Pinus Strobus*, a project that led to collaboration with filmmaker Augusta Palmer. In Palmer's film also entitled *Pinus Strobus*, she poignantly combines imagery from Dr. Waxman's Arboretum with a resonantly Asian soundtrack by the Tehran-Dakar Brothers.

Siegel spent fall 2010 as visiting professor at Sungshin Women's University in Seoul, also traveling to Beijing and Kyoto. The floor pieces *Twin Beds*, *East-West Gateway*, and *Witches' Broom* link Waxman's horticultural research with the uniquely Asian appreciation and reverence for trees that Siegel observed and documented.

The wall installation *S(e)oul of Korea* was made during Siegel's Seoul residency. Each of the 54 collaged panels are framed on Korean rice paper; the visual content is an amalgam of friends, colleagues, students, experiences, texts, and artifacts of a life-changing experience—the work is a multi-layered visual diary.

Barbara Siegel is an installation and book artist living and working in New York City. She has had solo exhibitions at Columbia University, Marilyn Pearl Gallery, Hartnett Murray Gallery, Parsons School of Design, Lehman College, The Gallery of South Orange, Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Manhattanville College, and the University of Bridgeport. Her work is in numerous public and private collections. She graduated from the University of Chicago, and is an adjunct associate professor in the School of Design Strategies at Parsons the New School for Design.

A.I.R. Gallery is located at 111 Front Street, #228 in the DUMBO neighborhood of Brooklyn. Gallery hours: Wed. – Sun., 11am to 6pm. For directions please visit www.airgallery.org. For more information please contact Gallery Director, Julie Lohnes at 212-255-6651 or jlohnese@airgallery.org.