Selected Bibliography:


Robert Gober was born September 12, 1954 in Wallingford, Connecticut. He currently lives and works in New York City. Since his first show in 1984 he has exhibited widely, in numerous exhibitions in North America, Japan and Europe.

Major funding for this project has been received from the Lannan Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, Washington D.C., with additional funding from the Dia Art Council, the major annual support group of the Dia Center for the Arts, and the Dia Art Circle. Support for the 1992-93 exhibitions program has also been provided through a generous grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

A book documenting the installation is forthcoming.

Maureen Sherlock, Associate Professor of Critical Theory in the Film Department of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, will give a lecture on the installation on Thursday, January 14, 1993 at 6:30pm.

Scene Painting: Quinn-Rockwell Studios

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**Site Map**

- scenic painting
- rat bait
- prison windows
- sink
- newspapers

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**ROBERT GOBER**

September 24, 1992 - June 20, 1993

548 West 22nd Street New York City
Most of my sculptures have been memories remadelerrecombined and filtered through my current experiences”, Robert Gober once stated. Asked on another occasion whether his works originated with a formal sculptural concept, he elaborated: “It’s more a nursing of an image that haunts me…(often of artists), and the willful neglect of the health crisis and AIDS pandemic by government and official bodies set amidst the banal and more innocuous events of everyday life and commerce. Precisely because it is accepted as normal and familiar, such a juxtaposition serves to render the general level of indifference which prevails in contemporary American society all the more grievous.

“Most of my sculptures have been memories remade, recombined and filtered through walls of the building. The woods, painted by professional scene painters working from photographs taken by professional photographers acting under the guidance of the artist, do not constitute a single coherent vista. Close scrutiny reveals that at least one section has been repeated in reverse, making the totality more akin to a location recalled in memory, and thus subject to its inevitable omissions, blurrings and falsified coherences, than to a scene scanned in actuality. The sinks, another familiar motif from Gober’s repertoire, are as usual modelled by hand, but, for the first time, they have become functional. As substitutions for natural brooks they introduce an unsettling note into the theme of cleansing, purification and renewal that such iconography is conventionally employed to denote. The pastoral idyll is here besmirched with echoes of constraint, puritanical hygiene, incarceration. The saline, release, even regeneration, normally promised by this arcadian myth as it has been transmuted into North American cultural idioms is here revealed as not only a cultural construct, a fabrication, but the site of misplaced romanticism, false sentiment and nostalgia. Boxes of rat bait are placed at the ready in each space.

In Gober’s recent installations, of which this is the most monumental to date, occupying the whole floor of what was formerly a warehouse, the principles by which meaning is constructed are similar except that temporal sequencing is replaced by spatial contiguity. The artist establishes a mise-en-scene: passage through it, and the connections made en route, are the prerogative of the spectator-become-participant.

Hesitation is almost inevitably the initial response to this work given that on opening the door one is confronted with a darkened space. Having ascertained that this is indeed the site of the work the viewer is then faced with another dilemma: whether to try the closed door opposite, under which light seeps, or to try a sharp turn right to seek the source of the more brilliant light spilling from out of the looming freestanding structure. Either way one’s initial doubt soon recedes. For the locked door is in fact a false door, though since it matches others in the building this is difficult to determine with certainty. In addition, the room that one can enter, is, notwithstanding its trompe l'oeil woodlands scene, also a prison: the barred windows high in the walls reveal glimpses of a sky beyond, an illusionistic sky, not that concealed by the barricaded windows in the outer