



Allison Wiese is an interdisciplinary artist who makes sculptures, installations, sound works and architectural interventions. Her solo exhibitions include an upcoming site-specific project at the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego; *Utica Speed Seduction* at Sculpture Space and other locations in Utica, New York; *Come To Find Out* at the W&TW Gallery in Austin, Texas; and *Hay Burner* at the Lawndale Art Center in Houston. She has been awarded working residencies at the Djerassi Resident Artists' Program in Woodside, California; The McColl Center in Charlotte, North Carolina; and the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire. A 2001–03 Core Fellow at the Glassell School of Art in Houston, she has also received funding from the Cultural Arts Council of Houston and Harris County, the Russell Foundation and through The Eliza Randall Prize at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. She has taught at The Glassell School, The University of San Diego and Brown University.

Allison Wiese

OH! DIDN'T HE RAMBLE

Emerging Fields > Installation | Sculpture | The Built Environment | Environment | History | Southwest/Pacific | 2006

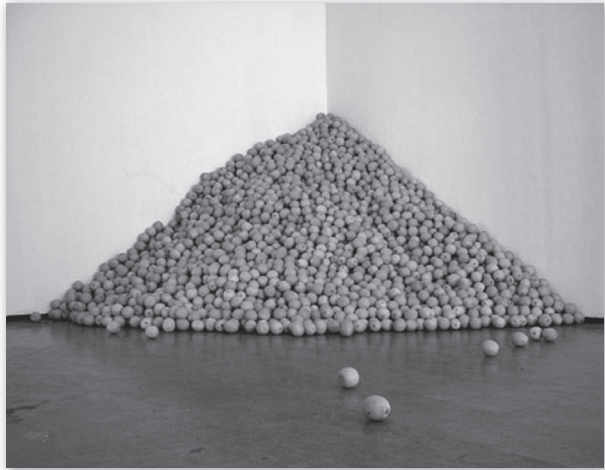
If the collapse of the World Trade Center towers on September 11 was a shocking illustration of how radically the urban landscape can change, every day there are more banal reminders. A favorite restaurant becomes a chain-store; empty lots become new residences; vibrant neighborhoods gradually decay. As symbols of progress and modernity, cities are made to change. But, wonders artist Allison Wiese, does it have to happen so fast?

A Houston resident, Wiese has seen buildings in her neighborhood disappear in a single afternoon. This disconcerting experience inspired her to create *Oh! Didn't He Ramble*, an installation artwork that focuses on that brief moment between a structure's existence and its disappearance. On a yet-to-be-determined date, Wiese will move a condemned commercial structure in Houston's redeveloping center—which will be torn down and reduced to debris—and temporarily relocate its rubble to an exhibition space. In claiming and displaying the debris, she stalls the process of destruction: the building is no longer there, but not yet entirely gone. The remains, too, become something new. Taken out of context, they're no longer a heap of waste waiting to be removed, but a memorial to the changing landscape.

As an artist, Wiese doesn't make things; she moves them. This practice of diversion—of taking materials and putting them in new contexts—is central to her work. In previous projects, she's borrowed oranges, hay, and sheep and relocated them to galleries and historic sites. It's *detournement* on a large scale, and what she creates are evocative juxtapositions. Letting a herd of sheep pasture for six months at a historic mansion in Baltimore, as she did in *Flock* (2004), she gets us to think about the myth of the self-sufficient European estate and our collective fantasies about our landed past. Like a poet who uses a dozen carefully chosen words to tell an epic tale, Wiese

(continued)

“Like a poet who uses a dozen carefully chosen words to tell an epic tale, Wiese uses singular objects to elicit broader meanings.”



Above: *Untitled (orange pile)*, 2005

Previous: *Utica Speed Seduction: Pick-Up Line (For Mark)*, 2004

uses singular objects to elicit broader meanings.

In this, Wiese acknowledges the influences of artists like Gordon Matta-Clark and William Pope.L, both of whom have similarly used the stuff of everyday life to plumb larger social issues. Wiese’s demolition certainly shares a family resemblance to Matta-Clark’s 1970s *building cuts* series, in which the artist cut and exhibited building parts, from hunks of flooring (in *Bronx Floors*, 1972-73) to an entire house sliced in half (in *Splitting: Four Corners*, 1974). In this time of red hot real estate, when development and demolition have become a fact of life, Wiese’s project draw attention to this process by momentarily freezing it. “I want to take this routine event and stall it significantly at mid-point.” For her, the project “dignifies something mundane, amplifying and marking a change in the physical and social fabric of our lives.”

Wiese is currently working with a demolition company to identify an appropriate structure for demolition. With support from Creative Capital, she plans to document the process in a video and ultimately in a publication—a book, perhaps, or a brochure. Preserved in this way, *Oh! Didn’t He Ramble* will serve as an act of commemoration—a funeral service, perhaps, for the living landscape.

In fact, Wiese notes, the project was inspired in part by her turn as a pallbearer at her grandmother’s funeral. “Funerals are a way to mark something that happens all the time,” she explains. “There are structural equivalents between what funerals do and what the project does.” But if Wiese wants us to remember and observe the passing of this building, she doesn’t necessarily want us to mourn it. Cities change. Wiese can’t stop that, but she can slow it down a little. ✨