

Wendy Wischer is Going to Winnipeg

Tami Katz-Freiman

I first met Wendy Wischer in 1999, when I co-curated (with Goran Tomcic) *Currently*, a small show of young Miami-based emerging artists for ArtCenter/South Florida, then known as South Florida Art Center and chose her for an emerging artist award. It was her first show ever. Seven years later, I included her in the group exhibition *Fatamorgana* at the Haifa Museum of Art in Israel, where I was working as the chief curator. Since then, I have continued to follow Wischer's career and watched her establish a reputation as one of Miami's most active artists. In 2012, I included her in *Unnatural*, an international group exhibition at the Bass Museum of Art that dealt with artificial nature. Writing about her work now, in the context of her being selected to the exchange program between MAWA and ArtCenter/South Florida, is a form of a closure in our ongoing dialogue.

In her artist statement, Wischer quotes William Blake: "To see the world in a grain of sand / and to see heaven in a wild flower / hold infinity in the palm of your hands / and eternity in an hour." These poetic lines perfectly encapsulate the DNA of her work, embedded in her strive to redirect attention to the smaller things in life, exposing the sacred within the mundane and the monumental within the minute. With a minimalist approach to form and a conceptual approach to process, Wischer is lured to redefine the shape of her environment: to explore our shifting relationships with nature, the topography of technology and the mapping of time, space and memory.

Wischer's dreamlike multi-media installations take the viewer on a sort of a cosmological, sensual and metaphysical journey. Her multisensory environments are concerned with the crossroad of nature, technology, science, mythology and personal identity. In most of her works she integrates an intense laborious craft (i.e. thousands of hand-cut mirror pieces or mylar fragments) with technology-oriented devices (i.e. a sensor-triggered surround-

sound or projected animation), in order to create references to spatial planetary landscapes beyond our daily experience.

Focusing on the gap between the visible and the invisible, the sculptural component of her works is rooted in optical experience and is characterized by varying degrees of tangibility. Her interest in light lies in the fluidity of the medium, being both tangible and intangible. The performative nature of light encourages the viewer to engage him/herself in the work. Her use of lighting, sound, mirrors and technology, and the magic she performs with simple quotidian objects, create analogies to microcosmic models of basic systems in the universe—such as galaxies, the trajectories of stars and various types of vegetation.

By integrating technology and fabricated materials, Wischer attempts to link the man-made with the natural elements, creating a new aesthetic where technology is the new environment. Fascinated by the conflicting and magical realms between the physical and the imaginary, the sensual and virtual, Wischer brings together two approaches to matter—the physical and the conceptual—while fusing the material and the immaterial. Her spectacular works thus provoke philosophical and spiritual thoughts.

In July 2014, I was invited to MAWA for a guest lecture and for a series of intense studio visits. Being exposed to the strong community of women-artists, I know that participating in MAWA residency will enable Wischer to expand a dialogue with artists/colleagues who are dealing with similar themes around the notion of nature and environmental issues. The diverse landscape in Winnipeg and the surrounding area of prairies, aspens, lakes and rivers, along with the largest urban Elm Forest in North America will be the perfect platform for her ongoing research.