

INSTALLATION

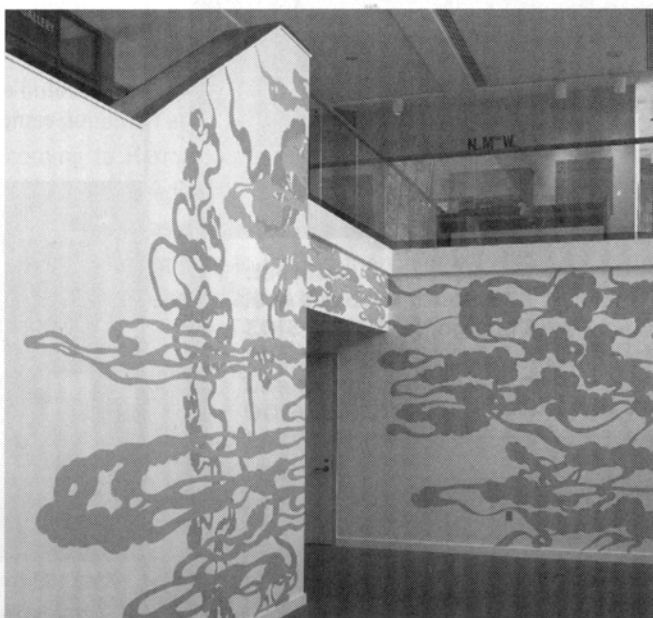
Mary Bucci McCoy

Clouds of the Contemporary and Baroque

Boston painter Cristi Rinklin's site-specific architectural installation, *Nuvolomondo*, in the Remis Sculpture Court at Tufts University's Aidekman Arts Center signals a bold leap for the artist in terms of scale, complexity, materials, and the use of technology. Moving from the more intimate scale of her studio work, Rinklin leveraged materials and processes more commonly associated with the advertising industry than with fine art to expand her work into an environment encompassing the windows, ceiling, and walls of the atrium space. At the same time, *Nuvolomondo* extends her ongoing examination of the relationships between technology, space, and the imagination.

In the summer of 2005, when Amy Ingrid Schlegel, director of the galleries and collections at Tufts, saw Rinklin's earlier piece, *Io*, (Italian for "me") in the *Some Colors* iteration of *Boston Art Windows*, she was already very familiar with Rinklin's work. Rinklin typically exhibits her mid-sized canvases singly or in groups over unique, site-specific wall paintings. But for *Io*, she had made inkjet prints on Mylar, painted on them, and installed them in a multipaned window where they were lit from behind. At the time, Schlegel was contemplating a large-scale, site-specific installation in the Sculpture Court in celebration of the Aidekman Art Center's fifteenth anniversary and thought that Rinklin might be the ideal artist to do an installation with the impact she was envisioning. She invited Rinklin to visit the space to consider the project, which would represent the gallery director's most ambitious step in transforming the Sculpture Court from a display area to an active exhibition space.

The title of the resulting installation, *Nuvolomondo*, combines the Italian words for "cloud" and "world" into a hybrid expression. Cloud forms have appeared frequently in Rinklin's work, reflecting their art-historical roles as vehicles for deities, portals to the supernatural, devices for revealing and concealing, and matrices unifying the space of a painting. With this installation, she uses cloud imagery to transcend the concreteness of the building, transforming it into an alternate space of shifting realities. She realizes this through a combination of photographic prints on Duraclear (a heavy, clear plastic film), vinyl drawings, and wall paintings. On the windows, glowing acid orange and blue cloud forms—echoing both an Eastern and Western sensibility—twist and knot against a swirly, blurry psychedelic background. When the sun shines through the window, the colors spill onto the floor. The installation shifts the role of Rinklin's wall painting from background to foreground by separating it spatially from the paintings,



yet it remains connected by form and colors—light orange and blue—to the glass print areas. Undulating blue vinyl forms on the narrow horizontal bands of windows mediate between the Duraclear prints and the walls. And if the prints themselves don't have quite the depth of field of Rinklin's canvas paintings, the landscape outside the window, seen through the translucent prints, lends a different kind of visual depth to the work.

For her oil paintings, Rinklin uses technology to appropriate and recombine imagery in preparation for painting. Here,

she takes it a step further, scanning paintings and working on them in Photoshop, ending up with what she describes as a "fifty-fifty union" between her hand and the technology. She was able to recycle images within the installation, exploiting the technology and materials to mine and recombine her own imagery in a much more expedient way than working by hand would have allowed. The imagery, with its references to traditional Asian painting and to Italian Baroque painting—with their reliance on the skilled hand of the artist—contrasts with the contemporary commercial materials of the installation, creating a space filled with dynamic tension.

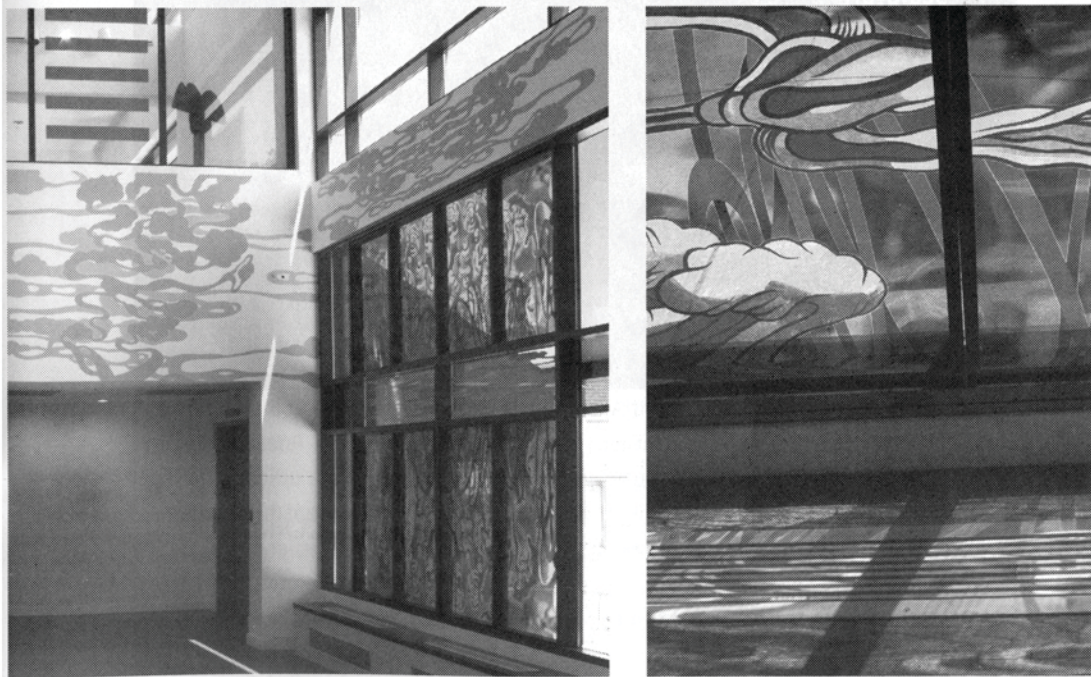
For Rinklin, the scale and complexity of this project meant stepping outside of her usual role as a painter and taking on many new roles: "I was the designer, I was the artist, I was the project manager, I was the installer, and I was the grant writer." She began thinking about the installation in terms of her 2005 *Windows Project* piece, but soon began experimenting with transparent materials with a goal of creating something that would echo stained glass. The E. B. Luce Corporation in Worcester was able to output her images on Duraclear in a way that met her aesthetic and material demands with the density of ink and the color saturation she was looking for, and with the durability required for installation in the high-traffic, accessible location. Rinklin worked intensively with them to develop the color through many test prints. She then devised wooden frames that fit within the framework of the existing windows to solve the issue of how to mount the Duraclear prints in the windows.

The project was quite time-consuming for her; just getting to finished prints took three months, and the installation took another month beyond that. The process of installing the work was beyond the scope of anything Rinklin had done before; ladders and hydraulic lifts were used to access the walls to trace and paint projected images. She did most of the wall painting herself, with some assistance from the gallery staff, and she installed the vinyl drawings produced by a sign company on the horizontal windows.

Rinklin explained that one challenge in particular for her was that she couldn't truly see the piece before installing it: "When you're working in the studio you always have the chance to 'proof' your work before it goes public." While she made a lot of samples and built maquettes, it wasn't until it was actually installed that she could see her piece with all the variables—light, scale, architecture—at play, and fully experience it as psychological as well as physical space. "Once it was done, it was like sitting back and unwrapping a huge Christmas present," she said. ■

Through January 14, 2007

All images: Cristi Rinklin, *Nuvolomondo*, site-specific installation, 2006. Courtesy of Tufts University Art Gallery. Photo: Peter Harris ©2006.



Tufts University Art Gallery, Aidekman Arts Center – www.ase.tufts.edu/gallery

Mary Bucci McCoy is an artist, graphic designer, and writer based in Beverly, MA.