



# The Secret House

As David Bodanis details in *The Secret House: The Extraordinary Science of an Ordinary Day*, tiny microbial life exists within our midst. From the moment we wake up in the morning, there are tiny, mind bogglingly complex worlds surrounding us, just beyond our sensory perception: There is a whole host of secrets we may never know, just under our noses. And yet, to locate this realization in the domestic realm, a place where we hold our own secrets, where we define the boundary between our private sphere and the rest of the world, leaves us in a potentially destabilizing position. How is it that so many strangers can inhabit our most private sphere? How can we find security when, upon closer inspection, our most “secure” space is totally occupied? When our conception of home is challenged, what is our process of reconciliation? By wrestling with images and notions of house and home, pulling and stretching, cutting and pasting, shrinking, overturning, grappling with this symbol, the artists in this show draw us into these destabilized spaces. As viewers we are asked to pause in these inconsistencies, these secrets. Once brought to this point, the work does not offer us resolution, but rather portals through which to access our own mysteries.

Edythe Wright presents a piece from her *Stairwell Series*: cast models, from memory, of the staircases from the different houses she has lived in throughout her life. The process of casting: starting with a positive of the object, creating the negative mold, then casting the final positive mirrors the act of processing our memories. Each time we revisit a memory we “cast” it in the light of the present moment. As we are never reflecting back from the same point, our perception of our own past is in a state of flux. To focus on the staircase as a touch-point of memory is to further acknowledge the fluidity of our perceptions of the past. The staircase is a liminal space, representing the time of transition, when we are in neither space, but are engaged in the physical act of going from one level to the next. By casting these spaces in the ethereal opacity of plaster, Wright triggers an otherworldliness that further transports us into the realm of memory and the moments when imperceptible shifts occur.

In Fritz Beuhner’s sculptures, the houses, emerging out of sections of whole logs, provide no point of entry. Impenetrable,



solid forms located on vast, empty plains, these houses speak to us not from their interior spaces, but through their isolated presence. The specificity of the architectural references allows us to draw from our own internal catalog of like buildings. Emerging as immaculate forms from the rawness of the deadfall logs, the houses simultaneously assert their status as indicators of civilization while maintaining a rootedness and connection to the natural world from which they came. This fluidity of the relationship between the house and the wood from which it emerges, however, is countered by the austerity of this relationship of the house to its environs, leaving the viewer with the contradiction of both connection and disconnection.

Both Rachel Gross and Robert Lazzarini use optical means to posit viewers in a destabilized space, prompting viewers to reconcile what they “know” with what is in front of them. Rachel Gross’ pieces bring to mind the domestic realm as they seem to be referencing furniture, but not quite. Is one a bed? One a chair? Just as Gross does not give us quite enough information to identify her constructions, so does she leave us in a limbo between two-dimensional and three dimensional-space. Our eye follows the cues that she is creating the illusion of space, but as soon as we’re there we encounter flatness in the form of color. The space seems inaccessible, just beyond reach, secret.

Robert Lazzarini also draws us in with the domestic familiar. We immediately recognize that we are looking at hammers and a phone, yet we simultaneously sense something is “wrong.” What is going on here? Through the process of scanning these objects, Lazzarini has generated a set of coordinates that he

then manipulates or stretches with the help of the computer. From here he can use a three dimensional printer to extrude the manipulated objects. Finally, he uses these extruded pieces as models to recreate the objects in their original materials. The results are objects that look like they have been stretched, and yet, from certain angles snap into focus of a completely undistorted, almost holographic quality. Just as with Gross' work, our eye registers this discontinuity and attempts to correct for it. Even when we know Lazzarini's methods, we still bounce back and forth between what we see in front of us and our "knowledge" of what these objects should look like.

Allison Matherly's "secrets" are of the more literal variety. Her collage *Bar(f)* juxtaposes dated, 1970s magazine images of, among other things, domestic interiors, soft core pornography, and beer. With the exception of the icy cold cocktails, the images are sliced and fragmented so we never get the whole story. Illicit things are certainly happening in luxurious settings, but the viewer only has access to a breast here, a hand there, the occasional expression of pleasure. Seen next to her piece *Fer(n) Fun*, a construction made of densely packed plastic ficus trees, the viewer is drawn further towards the edge of a hidden domestic world. Something may be rustling in the bushes, but we can't make out what it is, or if it's even real.



Rachel Gross, above, *Juke Joint*, 2012, acrylic on wood, 25" x 34"  
facing page, *Tangerine Slice*, 2012, acrylic on wood, 19" x 34"

Amy Morel's work highlights the fragility of this domestic construct. In *Thought House (Study)*, the house appears to be having a thought, but that "thought" is unknowable, intangible as smoke. The "thought bubble," a convention of comics, and the "house" are here inscribed with the nature of their material and construction: the solidity of steel paradoxically formed into a filigree of curving lines, the walls and roof edges jagged and not quite in fact solid. We can understand through this work the nature of domesticity: work, ideas, hopes and actions that vacillate between solidity and impermanence. With *Drop of Irene*, however, constructed from the flotsam washed up on the shore of the Ottaquechee River after Hurricane Irene, the house has been completely destroyed. All that remains are the bits, futilely wired together. And yet, like *Thought House (Study)*, the piece conveys the kernel of hope, the secret of what is necessary to move forward, to rebuild, and to make a new house from the detritus of the old one.

Climate change induced hurricanes, the sub-prime mortgage debacle, even the long reach of September 11th are events in the collective memory of those of us living in the Northeast corner of the United States. It's no wonder that when contemporary artists depict domestic imagery it has an aspect of the surreal. The implied element of secrecy belies the artists' stubborn attempts to wrest back some control from this unpredictable state, to hold a little back, to safeguard the sacred. The subject and image of the house, and the environment of domesticity, with all its trappings, will likely never cease to be revisited and reexamined by artists. The artists of *The Secret House* show are participating in a conversation started long ago, whose agents include the great Louise Bourgeois, as well as Haim Steinbach, Rachel Whiteread, Joel Shapiro and many others. A barometer of our collective psyches, our domiciles and how we depict them offer a lens on our relationship to the world around us and an entry point to further reflection, if not a wide-open front door.

5th Business  
2012  
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Fritz Buehner  
top, *Water Flowing Underground, T.H.*, 2002, carved cherry, approx. 10" x 8" x 6"  
bottom, *A View From Here*, 2006, carved wood, approx. 12" x 12" x 10"



## Fritz Buehner

Fritz Buehner is on the faculty at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where he received his diploma in 1965. He's shown at the National Museum of Botswana; St. Botolph Club, Boston; Naomi Aren Contemporary Art (Las Vegas); Saint-Gaudens Picture Gallery (NH), among others. He has received residencies and awards from several foundations, including MacDowell, Yaddo, Art Omi, and the New York Foundation for the Arts.



Rachel Gross  
left, *Bulwark*, 2012, acrylic on wood, 24" x 36"  
right, *Hall Light*, 2012, acrylic on wood, 21" x 16"



## Rachel Gross

Rachel Gross, of White River Junction, VT, received her MFA in Printmaking from Temple University in Pennsylvania. She has exhibited her work in numerous group and solo shows, including exhibitions at Two Rivers Printmaking Studio in White River Junction and at AVA Gallery and Art Center. She also exhibited in the 2009 Northern Print Biennale in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Gross has work in several public collections, including at the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, NH and at the Hood Museum of Art in Hanover, NH.

She has received many awards, fellowships and residencies, including a residency at Yaddo in 2009 and the 2009 Northern Print International Residency Prize at Newcastle upon Tyne. She has served as both a faculty member and Chair of the Board of Directors at Two Rivers Printmaking Studio since 2005. Previously, she taught at the Center for Cartoon Studios in White River Junction and at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia.  
[www.rachelgross.net](http://www.rachelgross.net)



## Robert Lazzarini

Robert Lazzarini was born in 1965 in New Jersey, and received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts, NYC. His work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally in venues such as the Whitney Museum of American Art; The Aldrich Museum; the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; the Wadsworth Atheneum; the Taipei Museum of Contemporary Art and the Kunsthalle Berne. His work is in the permanent collections of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, DC; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC, among others. He lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

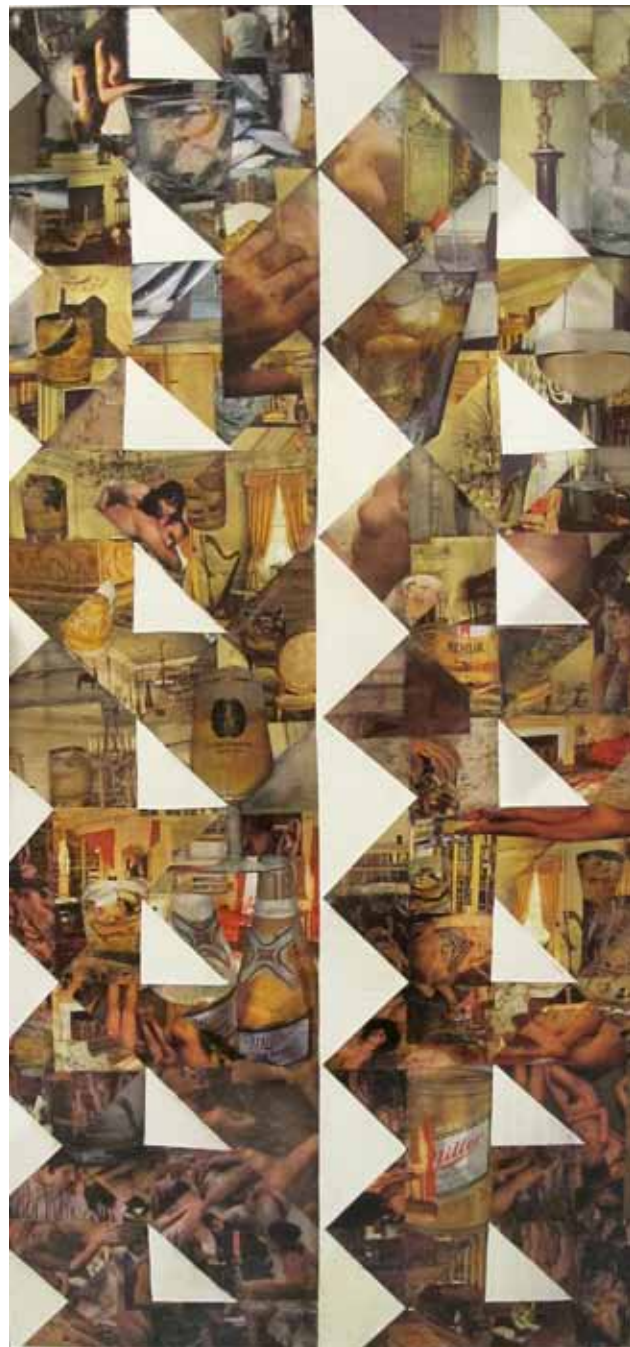


Robert Lazzarini, top, *Telephone*, 2000, Plastic, Metal, Rubber, 8" x 16" x 8"  
bottom, *Hammers*, 2000, Wood, steel, 2 elements  
13.5" x 16" x 12"





Allison Matherly, right, *Bar(f)* detail, 2010, mixed media collage, 25.5" x 49.5"  
above, *Fer(n) Fun*, 2012, mixed media, approx. 24"x24"x24"



## Allison Matherly

Allison Matherly is originally from Miami, and currently lives and works in Boston.

She received her BFA in 2012 from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston/Tufts University, and her high school diploma from Design and Architecture Senior High in Miami. She has exhibited her work in many venues in Boston including the Museum of Fine Arts, the Van Alan Clark Library, the BAG Gallery and the Grossman Gallery at SMFA. Matherly has received numerous awards, including the SMFA Deborah H. Dhuly Endowed Fund Grant and the Faculty Endowed Fund Grant, as well as Merit Scholarships all four years at SMFA.

## Amy Morel

Amy Morel lives and works in Vermont. Born in Seattle, she received her MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston/Tufts University; attended the New York Studio School; and received her AB in Studio Art from Dartmouth College.

Morel has exhibited her work at the AVA Gallery (NH); the Cue Art Foundation (NYC); Oni Gallery (MA);

Adams House Gallery at Harvard University; the Hera Gallery (RI) and The Boston Center for the Arts, among others. She was awarded a Joan Mitchell Foundation MFA grant, and a Wolfenden Prize for Fine Arts, Dartmouth College.

She is a founding member of 5th Business curatorial collaborative.  
[www.amymorel.com](http://www.amymorel.com)

Amy Morel, left, *Drop of Irene*, 2012, flotsam and jetsam from Hurricane Irene, 24" x 12" x 12"  
right, *Thought House (Study)*, 2009, steel, 28" x 28" x 12"





## Edythe Wright

Edythe Wright lives and works in Boston, MA. She received her MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston/Tufts University, and her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work has been exhibited at the DeCordova Museum (MA); the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University; Meme Gallery (MA); Sarah Doyle Gallery at Brown University; the Firehouse Gallery (VT); and White Columns Gallery (NYC), among many others. She is currently on the faculty at RISD and Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Wright's grants and awards include a Tenot Bursary and a TransCultural Exchange Travel Grant in 2008 for a residency at CAMAC in France; a LEF Foundation Visual Artist Grant in 2005; and a Massachusetts Cultural Council Artist Award for Sculpture in 2003. She is a founding member of 5th Business curatorial collaborative.

[http://registry.whitecolumns.org/view\\_artist.php?artist=446](http://registry.whitecolumns.org/view_artist.php?artist=446)



Edythe F. Wright, 2012, *Untitled*, (from the *Stairwell Series*), Plaster, wood, 64"h x 42"w x 31"d



The Secret House, installation view, Woodstock, Vermont 2012



5th Business gratefully acknowledges the amazing assistance of Anne Mapplebeck in the production of this exhibition. We'd also like to thank our families for their loving support, and in particular, Joseph Morel and Brooks Wright. This endeavor, as with so many others, would be impossible without them.

Amy Morel  
Edythe Wright  
[www.5thBusinessProjects.com](http://www.5thBusinessProjects.com)

All photos courtesy of the artists, except: Robert Lazzarini: top: <http://katewerblegallery.com/index.php?/past/things-just-arent-the-way-they-use/>  
bottom: [http://www.deitch.com/projects/slide\\_pop.php?imageId=219&name=Robert%20Lazzarini](http://www.deitch.com/projects/slide_pop.php?imageId=219&name=Robert%20Lazzarini)  
Amy Morel, both photos: Lynn Bohannon

