

For Immediate Release

Media Contact:

Joanna Raczkiewicz
212.937.6580 x233
press@eyebeam.org
www.eyebeam.org

UNTETHERED: A sculpture garden of readymades
Eyebeam's Fall 2008 exhibition

Featuring:

Jessica Banks, Ayah Bdeir, Michel de Broin, Max Dean, Paul DeMarinis
Kelly Dobson, Germaine Koh, JooYoun Paek, Sascha Pohflepp,
Hans-Christoph Steiner, Thomson & Craighead, Nor_/d (Addie Wagenknecht and
Stefan Hechenberger) and Joe Winter, curated by visiting fellow Sarah Cook

September 25 – October 25, 2008

Press preview: Thurs., Sept. 25, 11AM – 1PM
(RSVP press@eyebeam.org)

Exhibition opening: Thurs., Sept. 25, 6 – 8PM
Eyebeam, 540 W. 21st St. (btw 10th and 11th Aves.)



Michel de Broin, *Dead Star*, 2008

540 West 21st Street
New York, NY 10011
[T] 212.937.6580
[F] 212.937.6582
www.eyebeam.org

New York City, September 5, 2008—Eyebeam is pleased to announce ***Untethered***, a sculpture garden of everyday objects deprogrammed of their original function, embedded with new intelligence and transformed into surrealist and surprising readymades, including a **photocopier that reads the night sky; a PDA turned guitar; and a piano that plays the Internet**. The exhibition features pieces by 15 artists working at the intersection of art and technology, including current and former Eyebeam residents and fellows, as well as leading international artists. ***Untethered* opens September 25 and runs through October 25**, and is accompanied by a downloadable audio guide (available at www.eyebeam.org).

Sarah Cook, the exhibition's curator, cites the art-historical discourse on readymades, and current ideas concerning the designed obsolescence—or shelf life—of consumable

technologies as her inspiration for the show. “The idea of the readymade hinges on a mysterious quality of displacement, wherein objects are not just decontextualized, but actually transplanted from one realm of experience to another,” Cook said.

“In researching the work of Eyebeam’s resident artists I read [MoMA curator] Margit Rowell’s writing on the readymade and identified a link to contemporary “hacks” and instances where artists have deprogrammed technological objects in order to create a kind of magical experience for the viewer.” This “otherworldly” aesthetic is evident in the works on view, such as in **Michel de Broin’s** sculpture *Dead Star* (2008), an inert asteroid of nearly depleted batteries, and **Joe Winter’s** *Xerox Astronomy* (2008), in which a generic photocopier and desk lamp are transformed into elements within the cosmic system used by an imagined observer.

Additionally, as a show of objects that have been tinkered with, invented, and allowed to be “generative”, that is, open to experimentation and other use, *Untethered* presents a deliberate reference to the notion of “**tethered appliances**” (a term used by Internet scholar Jonathan Zittrain in his book *The Future of the Internet and How to Stop It*, Yale University Press and Penguin UK, 2008)—technologies, such as iPods or cell phones, that contain proprietary software and are tied to single uses or networks. In this, the exhibition ties into Eyebeam’s recently launched Open Culture Research Group, a forum for the investigation of free and open source software and hardware.

Both displaced and in some cases deprogrammed, the pieces in *Untethered* ask us why we understand some things as useful hardware and other things not. For instance, how does an inflated garbage bag become a way to disguise your bike, as in **JooYoun Paek’s** *Not Bicycle Cover* (2008)? Neither prototypes nor edgy products, the works in the exhibition will surely invite conversation on the semantic barriers between the worlds of art, design and technology.

Artists

Ayah Bdeir and Jessica Banks, both fellows in Eyebeam’s R&D OpenLab, have collaborated to realize a new work in the form of a chandelier that is constantly redrawing itself (*Chandelier in 4*, 2008). Jessica Banks will also show her latest experiment in creating responsive and interactive furniture: a table that appears to levitate in its own magnetic field (*Table, from the Cubed Series*, 2008). www.ayahbdeir.com, www.jessicabanks.com

Michel de Broin, an internationally recognized artist from Montreal who is based in Berlin, and winner of the 2007 Sobey Art Award, will show his recent sculptures, including *Dead Star* (2008) and *Great Encounter* (2008), an investigation into the isolation of appliances. www.micheldebroyin.org

Max Dean is an internationally acclaimed media artist from Toronto and winner of the 2005 Gershon Iskowitz Prize for visual arts. His piece in *Untethered*, *So, This Is It?* (2001), is a clock that wipes away an image of its viewer’s face, and has never been shown in New York. www.roboticchair.com

Paul DeMarinis, an artist based in California, will show a piece from his series *Hypnica* (2007), a collection of hacked metronomes that lull visitors with the voices of hypnotists. www.well.com/~demarinis

Kelly Dobson, an artist based at MIT's Media Lab, presents her responsive hacked technologies including *Blendie* (2003 – 04), a blender that responds only to growling noises, and *Toastie* (2004), a toaster that operates when hummed at. www.web.media.mit.edu/~monster

Germaine Koh, an internationally recognized artist from Vancouver, presents a work from her *Fair Weather Forces* series (2008), in which live tide and water-level data control a velvet rope barrier in the gallery. www.germainekoh.com

Eyebeam alum **JooYoun Paek** shows new projects created from the infrastructure of the city, including *Not Bicycle Cover* (2008), a bicycle cover fashioned from inflated garbage bags, and *Nothing In It* (2008), a handbag that sounds its contents when opened. www.jooyounpaek.com

Sascha Pohflepp, a German artist and student in the Design Interactions program at the Royal College of Art, London, presents, for the first time in North America, the stylish *Buttons* (2006)—a lens-free camera that takes other people's pictures. www.pohflepp.com

Hans-Christoph Steiner, currently a resident artist at Eyebeam, presents *Reware* (2008), hacked electronic devices for visitors to play with, including a Linux- and PureData (PD)-programmed PDA turned three-string guitar. www.at.or.at/hans

Thomson & Craighead, a UK team who has been making art from the Internet for more than 15 years, display *Unprepared Piano* (2003), a Yamaha Disklavier that plays MIDI files collected from the web, at random. www.thomson-craighead.net

Addie Wagenknecht, a fellow in Eyebeam's Production Lab, has collaborated with **Stefan Hechenberger** under the name *Nord_d*, on *Shadow Project* (2008), a responsive architectural environment of motor-controlled wires and fabric. www.nordd.com

Joe Winter, an Eyebeam alum and a recent recipient of a MacDowell Colony residency, presents his newly commissioned work, *Xerox Astronomy and the Nebulous Object-Image Archive* (2008), a modernist cubic structure in which a standard office copier is used as a central light source for reading the surrounding cosmos. www.severalprojects.com

Curator

Sarah Cook is the 2008 inaugural curatorial fellow at Eyebeam. She comes to Eyebeam from CRUMB (www.crumbweb.org), the UK-based online resource for curators of new media art, at the University of Sunderland, where she is a post-doctoral researcher. Sarah has been curating exhibitions of new media art in North America and Europe for the past 10 years, at venues including the Walker Art Center, the National Gallery of Canada, BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art, The Edith Russ Haus for Media Art, The Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff

Centre, AV Festival and Cornerhouse, Manchester. Her fellowship at Eyebeam is supported, in part, by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK.

Related events

Untethered's public programming takes its cue from Eyebeam's ongoing research into open source software and hardware. Events celebrating hacking and discussions of the issues surrounding patents and copyrights, art and designed obsolescence, will take place over the course of the exhibition.

Thursday, September 25, 6PM: The *Untethered* opening reception, featuring artist talks with Germaine Koh, Michel de Broin, Kelly Dobson and Sascha Pohflepp, as well as an introduction by the exhibition's curator, Sarah Cook.

Tuesday, October 14, 7PM: Workshop: Open source your mobile devices!
Eyebeam resident Hans-Christoph Steiner hosts a workshop on hacking devices such as iPods, wifi routers and PDAs.

Tuesday, October 21, 7PM: Presentation: Performing Machines: *Untethered* artists present their instrumental hacks. With JooYoun Paek and others.

Saturday, October 25, 5PM: Panel discussion: *Untethered* curator Sarah Cook leads a discussion on art, design and obsolescence. The panel features Jessica Banks, Ayah Bdeir and lawyer Elizabeth Stark, founder of Harvard's Free Culture group and researcher for Jonathan Zittrain's book *The Future of The Internet*. The talk will be followed by the exhibition's closing reception.

For further information and details about these events please visit: www.eyebeam.org

Images

Images for publication are available upon request and online at:
www.flickr.com/photos/eyebeam/sets/72157607128132407/

Credits

Thanks to:

The British Council, for supporting Sascha Pohflepp's participation in *Untethered*;
Frank and Camille Sicari, for the loan of the piano;
Solar One, for partnership on the waterfront location for the work of Germaine Koh.

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Founded in 1997, **Eyebeam** is an art and technology center that provides a fertile context and state-of-the-art tools for digital experimentation. It is a lively incubator of creativity and thought, where artists and technologists actively engage with the larger culture, addressing the issues and concerns of our time. Eyebeam challenges convention, celebrates the hack, educates the next generation, encourages collaboration, freely offers its output to the community, and invites the public to share in a spirit of *openness*: open source, open content and open distribution.

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Location: 540 W. 21st Street between 10th & 11th Avenues

Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 12:00 - 6:00pm

Bookstore: Tuesday - Saturday, 12:00 - 6:00pm

Admission: All events are free to the public with a suggested donation unless otherwise noted.