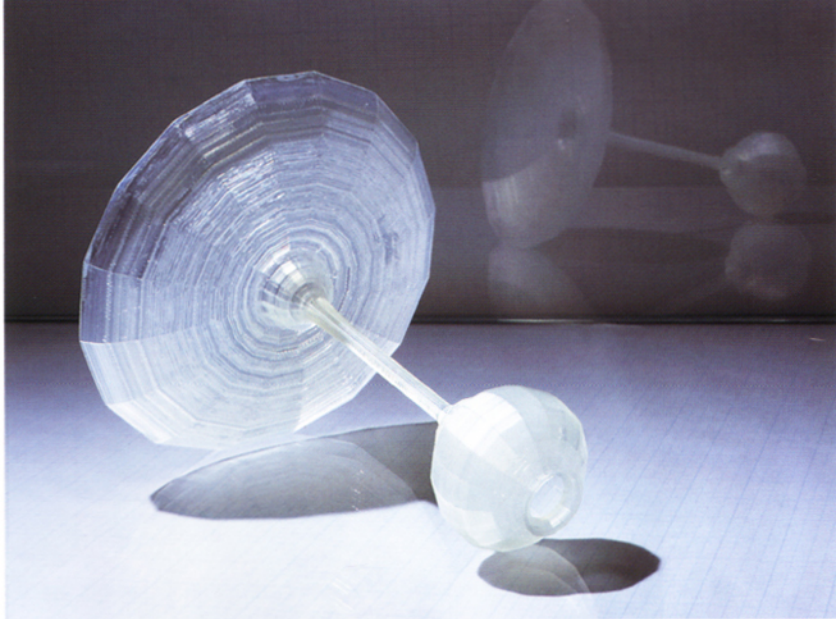




UNNATURALLY

Independent Curators International
New York



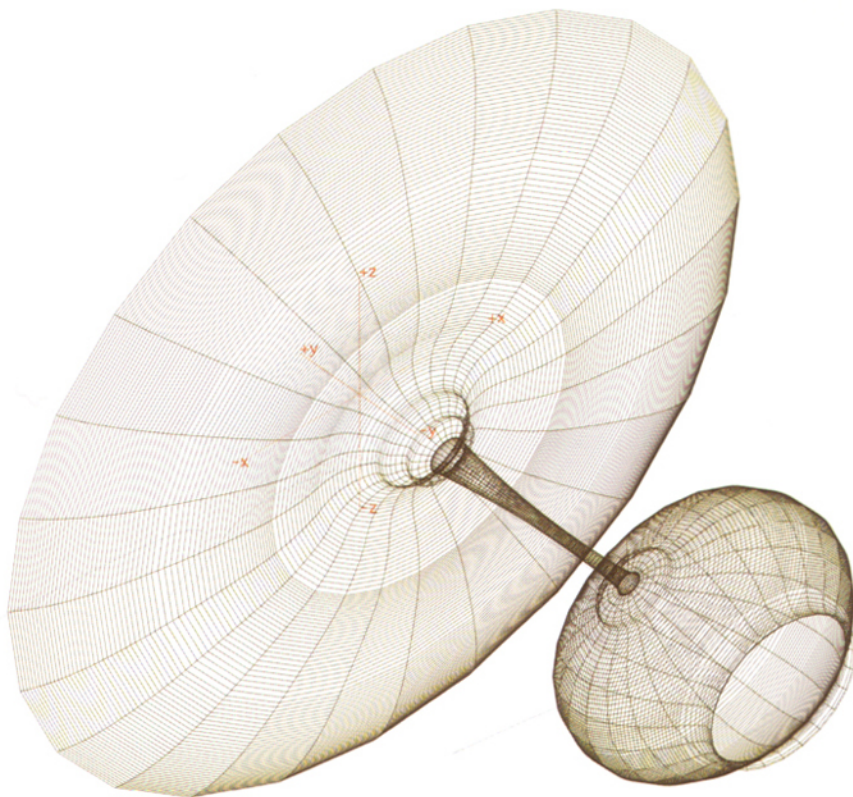
FRANCES WHITEHEAD

above:

37. *metamohn.dbf*
pop2.ajm3.dtl, 2001

36. *metamohn.dbf*
pop2.ajm3.ai, 2001

001	metamohn
002	metamohn.dtl
003	metamohn.ai
004	metamohn.dtl
005	metamohn.ai
006	metamohn.dtl
007	metamohn.ai
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098	metamohn.dtl
099	metamohn.ai
100	metamohn.dtl



Frances Whitehead's work demonstrates an abiding concern with the ways in which new technology and industry affect our relationship with the natural world. Growing and maintaining a garden in the back yard of her house in Chicago has led her to an in-depth investigation of the scientific system of classifying and naming plants according to their presumed natural relationships. In a new series of drawings and related sculptures, Whitehead has rendered poppies as geometric forms modeled in the virtual space of 3-D software. The resultant images, which combine graph lines and measurements with intricate patterns and buoyant, domelike shapes, look more like technical drawings for manufactured objects and only vaguely resemble the original flowers that inspired them. The files that create the drawings are then entered into a rapid-prototyping machine that reads the data and translates the computer-generated forms into three-dimensional objects made of epoxy resin. Whitehead's direct involvement in the modeling of her creative output has thus been removed, replaced by the computer and its peripheral equipment, which fabricated the data output as sculptural replicas. Although they are products of a collaboration between artist and machine, they look wholly mass-produced. These "post-natural" flower forms are strangely seductive and beckon us toward a sci-fi future in which the dichotomy between nature and artifice is completely transcended.

In her titles for these works, Whitehead alludes to the pervasiveness of computers in everyday life by imitating cryptically abbreviated computer-file names with a somewhat scientific aura, such as *metamohn.dbl pop2.a1m3.ai* and *metamohn.zptl pop 1raq.a1m3.stl* (cat. nos. 36, 41). Moreover, she presents the drawings and sculptures in an installation that mimics both the scientific approach and the slickness of contemporary natural-history exhibits: the drawings are digitally printed on backlit film and displayed next to a Plexiglas vitrine containing the sculptures, which are laid out on their sides like botanical specimens. These offer a subtle critique of the assumptions underlying taxonomic classification as well as of art-historical texts and museological methods of display.

Essay by curator
Mary-Kay Lombino



EXHIBITION ITINERARY*

Contemporary Art Museum
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida
January 13–March 8, 2003

H & R Block Artspace at the
Kansas City Art Institute
Kansas City, Missouri
September 19–October 29, 2003

Fisher Gallery
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California
November 21, 2003–January 17, 2004

F. Donald Kenney Museum
The Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, New York
February 3–March 30, 2004

Copia: The American Center for Wine,
Food & the Arts
Napa, California
April 20–August 16, 2004

Lowe Art Museum
University of Miami
Coral Gables, Florida
September 14–November 14, 2004

**at time of publication*

With a short story by
Philip K. Dick

*Independent Curators International
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