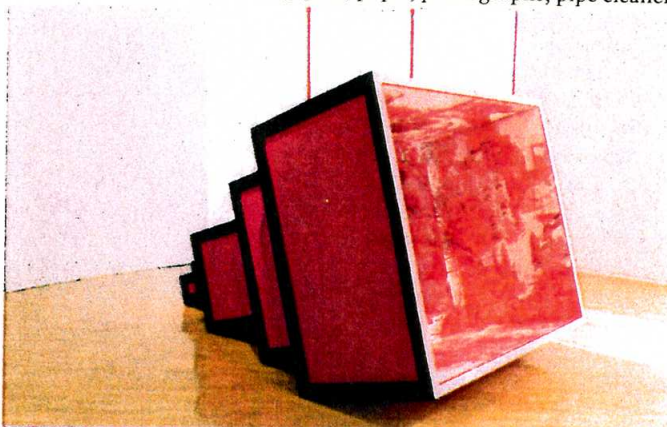


CLEVELAND

## Diana Cooper

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CLEVELAND

Using acetate, acrylic, aluminum tape, corrugated plastic, felt, felt-tip markers, foamcore, ink, map pins, paper, photographs, pipe cleaners,



Diana Cooper, *All Our Wandering*, 2007, wood, paper, vinyl, custom pigment print, ink, acrylic, colored pencil, ballpoint pen, foam rubber, felt, and Velcro, 6' 4 1/4" x 6' 7 1/2" x 11' 10 1/2".

pom-poms, velour paper, and vinyl, Diana Cooper makes "three-dimensional drawings," many of them extremely large. Her recent exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art featured a range of these hybrid constructions and wall reliefs, as well as two freestanding sculptures. The lush green construction *Daphne*, 2006, is based around a set of radiating forms that emerge from its center, while the sprawling *Emerger*, 2005–2007, joins a vast array of small elements into a fragmentary grid, and *Hidden Tracks Sabotage the Random*, 2001–2002, incorporates matrices that project onto the surrounding wall and floor.

Why does Cooper call these works "drawings"? We're accustomed to thinking of drawings as modestly scaled, but much of this art is very large. While drawings are most often made with graphite or ink, Cooper marshals a variety of materials, including paint. And confounding our habitual expectation that drawings should be flat, many of Cooper's are three-dimensional. Perhaps what these works are asking us to imagine is a sketch come to life; in this sense they are curiously akin to the cartoons used in the making of frescoes or tapestries. But all drawings are seductive because they take us into the process of artmaking; Cooper's fascinate because they involve arrays of elements that seem open to further rearrangement. In *Swarm*, 2003–2007, for example, numerous small, black, beelike shapes spread themselves across two walls and onto a column like escapees from a video game. Cooper draws, then, not by making marks, but by assembling heterogeneous materials, and her most successful works are those that push this strategy to a monumental extreme (smaller works, including the recent miniature constructions, and relief constructions like *The Black One*, 1997, are less convincing).

But while Cooper is a gifted artist, she was here served poorly by the attendant commentary—the museum's and her own. Her constructions are not really, as the text of the catalogue contends, about the brain, computers, DNA, highways, subway maps, 9/11, or the tension between order and chaos. She may believe that the room-filling *Orange Alert: UK*, 2003–2007, its vinyl straps radiating out from a central starburst, is about some urgent issue or other, but her installations fall more comfortably within formalist tradition. Influenced by David Smith's welded metal sculptures, Ray Johnson's paper collages, Claes Oldenburg's use of soft materials, and Jessica Stockholder's informal juxtapositions of found objects, Cooper builds large, loose-limbed forms that seem to acknowledge the possibility of imminent collapse. And while she uses commercial materials, she doesn't employ recycled consumer products. To the extent that Cooper's labor-intensive art has a political dimension, then, it is straightforwardly reflective of the inherent precariousness of our culture of superabundance.