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UNIVERSITY GALLERY

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEWS RELEASE

Phantom Cities, a major, new three-channel video installation by Rita Myers, will be on view at the University Gallery from September 15 through December 16. Combining classical concerns with poetic sensibilities, Myers' installations mix video images with architectural and natural forms. Phantom Cities explores the convergence of historical (or linear) time and mythological (or cyclical) time by placing images from the Mexican and Guatemalan sites of the ancient Maya and those from contemporary New York City in a setting that evokes the life cycle of civilizations. Innovative in its metaphorical presentation of cross-cultural phenomena, Phantom Cities is Myers' most ambitious work to date. The installation will begin a two-year national tour at the Madison Art Center, Wisconsin, subsequent to its premier at the University Gallery, accompanied by a brochure produced by the Gallery.

The physical components of Phantom Cities are arranged in a manner similar to an abandoned archaeological site. An octagonally-shaped area, containing a miniature replica of a generic city partially buried in black sand, is the installation's focal point. The city's individual elements reflect Mayan and New York architecture: pyramids, skyscrapers, suspension bridges, temples, and track housing. Despite these specific derivations, the city is meant to be an archetype that refers to metropoli throughout time. Surrounding the miniature city are suspended trees and charred wall fragments within which are eight randomly placed video monitors. The monitors play a three-channel videotape that presents visual comparisons between ancient and contemporary cultures and shows fragmentary images of fictionalized cities, amalgams of granite and steel, stone and jungle. The installation creates a synthesis of time and civilization and strives for an understanding of the erosive forces of history and the regenerative power of myth.

Rita Myers is gaining recognition as one of video art's most important installation artists. Her work has been included in two major traveling exhibitions in the United States and Europe: American Landscape: The Electronic Grove organized by the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, in 1988, and Video-Skulptur Retrospektiv und Aktuell 1963-1989 which was organized by the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Köln, in 1989. She has created numerous installations, the most recent of which was In the Drowning Pool, presented and produced in 1989 by the Long Beach Museum of Art, California, and presented in 1989 at the Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The artist lives and works in New York City.

Phantom Cities has received a "New Works" grant provided by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state arts agency. Additional funding for this project was provided by the Polaroid Foundation, Cambridge, the University Arts Council and Alumni Association, and the Friends of the Fine Art Center.

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Phantom Cities, a major 3-channel video installation by Rita Myers will reopen on November 3 and remain on view through December 16.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held at the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall.

MEMBERSHIP

The University Gallery is pleased to announce the reopening of Rita Myers' Phantom Cities. This major 3-channel video installation is a continuation of her work in the field of video art and is a significant contribution to the history of video art. The installation consists of three channels of video that explore the relationship between the physical and the virtual, the real and the imaginary. The work is a reflection of the artist's interest in the history of the city and the way in which it has been constructed and reconstructed over time. The installation is a journey through the history of the city, from its earliest beginnings to the present day. It is a work that is both a historical document and a contemporary statement. The installation is a must-see for anyone interested in the history of the city or in the art of video.