

ART AND ILLUSION AT PEM



EYE SPY, PLAYING WITH PERCEPTION **ON VIEW JUNE 19, 2010 – MAY 1, 2011**

SALEM, MA — This summer, the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) unveils a captivating exhibition exploring what we see and how we see it. *Eye Spy, Playing with Perception*, on view in PEM's interactive Art & Nature Center from June 19, 2010 to May 1, 2011, presents work by 11 contemporary artists challenging visual expectations and revealing an array of illusionary surprises. From shadow sculptures and 3-D images to holograms and distortion, *Eye Spy* invites careful examination into what we think we see versus what we actually physically perceive.

“By manipulating the most basic components of perception — light, shadow, line, color, shape, motion and depth — the artworks in *Eye Spy* trick our eyes and fool our brains,” said Jane Winchell, the Sarah Fraser Robbins Director of PEM's Art & Nature Center. “Visitors to the exhibition will delight in the beauty of these mind-stretching objects.”



The artists in *Eye Spy* utilize a broad spectrum of materials and methods to achieve unexpected optical effects. One inventive approach comes from New York-based artist Devorah Sperber, who renders well-known masterpieces of Western art (such as Renoir's *A Girl with a Watering Can* (1876), seen left) by refracting the images into thousands of colorful spools of thread. Without the aid of a viewing lens, Sperber's creations appear as an abstract grid that the viewer's eye cannot decipher. With the acrylic lens mounted just so, the image coalesces, inverts and becomes instantly recognizable.

While some artists in *Eye Spy* manipulate reality with optical tricks, others, like Robert Lazzarini, prefer to physically alter spacial reality. Lazzarini, an artist working in Brooklyn, NY, combines computer manipulation with traditional sculpting methods to faithfully re-create everyday objects like phones, teacups and furniture (*chair*, 2000, seen right) at extreme perspectives, seemingly to the point of distortion. The resulting artworks appear to vacillate between two and three-dimensions and give the impression that they are going to collapse into themselves, or as the artist states, "slip toward their own demise."



Interactive computer stations, video interviews and hands-on activities appear throughout the exhibition to engagingly demonstrate the relationship between the art on view and the science of perception. After leaving PEM, the *Eye Spy* fun continues on eye-spy-pem.tumblr.com with an opportunity to determine how perception and illusion influence the way we interpret the world around us.

EXHIBITION EVENTS

Saturday, June 19th | 10 am – 4 pm

Opening Day | All activities FREE with museum admission

Enjoy a fun-filled day of magic, illusion and art in celebration of the opening of *Eye Spy, Playing with Perception* in PEM's interactive Art & Nature Center. Participate in a magic show, investigate optical illusions, meet featured artists and create your own illusion-inspired art.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

Support provided by the East India Marine Associates (EIMA) of the Peabody Essex Museum.

Media Partner — *Mix 104-1*

IMAGE CAPTIONS (TOP TO BOTTOM)

Self-Centered Mirror; 2003; Daniel Rozin; 34 mirror panes, wood; 120" x 30" x 25"; Private Collection of Jonathan Carroll.

After Renoir; 2006; Devorah Sperber; Spools of thread, stainless steel ball chain and hanging apparatus, clear acrylic viewing sphere; 96" x 100" x 60"; Courtesy of the Artist.

chair; 2000; Robert Lazzarini; maple; 54" x 26" x 12"; Courtesy of the Artist and Deitch Projects, NY.

ABOUT THE PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM

The Peabody Essex Museum presents art and culture from New England and around the world. The museum's collection is one of the finest of its kind, showcasing an unrivaled spectrum of American art and architecture (including four National Historic Landmark buildings) and outstanding Asian, Asian Export, Native American, African, Oceanic, Maritime and Photography collections. In addition to its vast collection, the museum offers a vibrant schedule of special exhibitions and a hands-on education center. The museum campus features numerous parks, period gardens and 22 historic properties, including Yin Yu Tang, a 200-year-old house that is the only example of Chinese domestic architecture on display in the United States.

HOURS: Open Tuesday–Sunday and holiday Mondays, 10 am–5 pm. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

ADMISSION: Adults \$15; seniors \$13; students \$11. Additional admission to Yin Yu Tang: \$5. Members, youth 16 and under and residents of Salem enjoy free general admission and free admission to Yin Yu Tang.

INFO: Call 866-745-1876 or visit our Web site at www.pem.org.

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