

Work table during installation



First day of the installation



Artist Ann Diener and UCSB students at work

oblique manner by representations of artifacts such as shoes, buttons, and clothing as well as images of domestic architecture. Her fascination with these ongoing changes was augmented by the vast corporate greenhouses dotting the countryside. Her study of these "Cathedrals of Commerce," as Diener refers to them, resulted in a series of works by the same name which pictured these wondrous structures as another aspect of this area's transformation.

Ascent brings these two bodies of work together with Diener's more recent readings on the Tower of Babel and its underlying themes of arrogance and pride. In this Biblical narrative, builders attempt to construct a tower that will reach the heavens and God himself. Instead, God gives each of them a different language, making it impossible to communicate and therefore finish construction. The tower, deserted, eventually falls into ruin. Diener's grow hoops, in both form and scale, suggest a soaring edifice and touch on the issues of our day as well as facets of our contemporary life. With California in the midst of one of the most difficult economic periods and housing foreclosures at an all time high, the allusion to the Tower of Babel reads as a potent symbol of unchecked growth and arrogance and yet another element affecting the California landscape. By pulling these different periods and references together, Diener depicts time, not linearly, but in a collapsed fashion, like reveries, where past and present flow into one another. With *Ascent*, Diener shows us the complexities of our region's past and the forces that will continue to shape our future.

Elyse Gonzales
Curator of Exhibitions

Ann Diener is an artist based in Carpinteria, CA. She received her MFA from UC Santa Barbara and a BA from UCLA. Her work has been shown nationally, most notably at Bank Gallery, Los Angeles; Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, and the Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC. In 2009 she was the recipient of a Kaus Australis Residency, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Her work is included in the collections of the Capital Group, Prudential Insurance Company of America, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Weatherspoon Museum and the West Collection.

UC Santa Barbara Art Department students who assisted Ann Diener on the wall drawing are: August Edwards, Norah Eldredge, Shanti Harris, Sasha Karlova, Madalina Mihalache, Matthew Reeves, and Robbie Zant.



Views of the drawing during installation



Artist-in-Residence: Ann Diener has been generously funded by an Anonymous donor.

All photos by Tony Mastres/UCSB unless otherwise noted.

University Art Museum
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, California 93106-7130
805.895.2951; www.uam.ucsb.edu

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Cover: Detail view of *Ascent*, 2010



Artist-in-Residence: **ANN DIENER**
ASCENT

February 17–June 20, 2010

UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM
UC SANTA BARBARA



FOR her first museum project, artist Ann Diener has translated her dynamic works on paper and canvas into a massive drawing on the walls of the University Art Museum's Nachman Gallery. Diener, known for her large compositions which combine abstraction and figuration, drew upon her commanding use of scale to tackle the voluminous space of the gallery. In *Ascent* (2010) Diener has created a looming bower representing the coalescence of her previous works that explored changes wrought in the southern California landscape and her more recent interest in the story of the Tower of Babel.

Like the title implies, Diener's drawing conveys a dynamic motion that directs our attention upwards. Starting from the lowest portion of the wall, swirling abstractions appear ready to both tumble into the gallery and shoot skyward. Just above, robust reeds grow thickly. Their placement on the wall puts the viewer in the midst of this overgrowth with the tops of the reeds towering above one's head. These oversized stalks guide our eyes to the apex where a visual cacophony of forms and shapes seems to explode. Though difficult to see at a glance, stylized insects, buttons, and architectural remnants are combined with spinning vortices, as well as a cascade of leaves. Throughout the composition, sinuous vines, some sprouting leaves, creep about. The overall shape of the drawing takes its triangular form from the two arches that rise above, representative of grow hoops. Used extensively in farming, grow hoops are placed in a series and tented with plastic sheeting to create readymade greenhouses. Adding to the mélange of natural elements is a flock of birds that at first appears

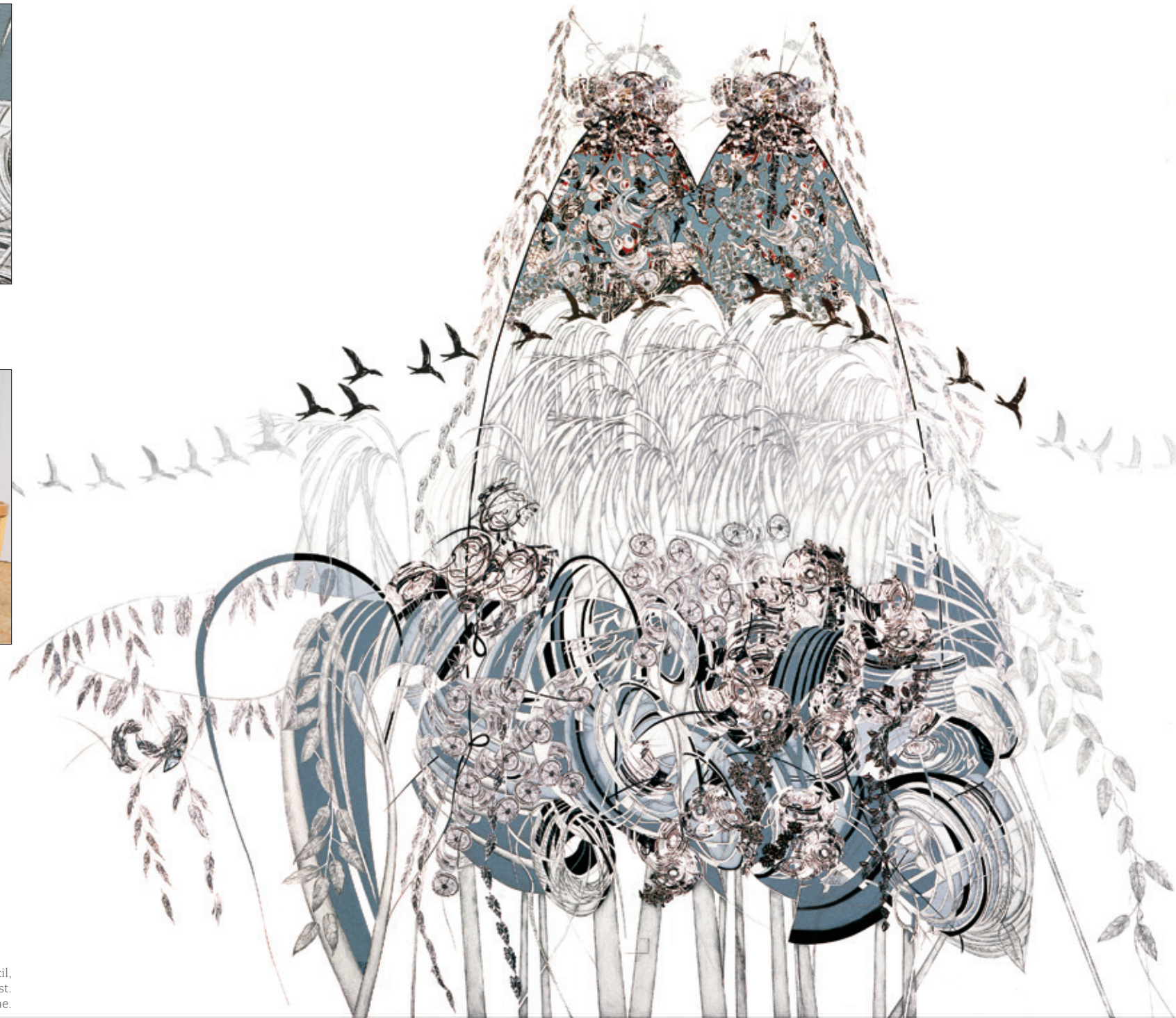


Detail view of *Ascent*, 2010



Artist Ann Diener at work

Ascent, 2010; collage, colored pencil, graphite, and paint; courtesy of the artist. Photo by Scott McClaine.



Detail views of *Ascent*, 2010

as faint pencil marks and then becomes paper cutouts, gliding through the hoops only to eventually fade away.

Prior to the installation at UAM, Diener had never executed one of her drawings directly on the wall or at such a large scale. To begin, she sketched out the underlying form of her composition on the wall. Diener worked onsite during museum hours building her drawing in layers of information in an organic fashion. As in her previous work, *Ascent* combines deft draftsmanship with swathes of paint and applied collage. The collaged elements are excised from digital prints of Diener's previous drawings after being carefully selected. They are seamlessly integrated into the design through extensive shading and line work. In Diener's hands these techniques and methods create passages which shift between flat fields of color and three dimensional forms. Contributing to this fluctuation is the conflicting desire to see the details up close, making them appear two-dimensional, and to step back and experience the entirety of the drawing and its imposing presence. To assist her during the three-and-a-half week installation period, Diener relied on seven students from UC Santa Barbara's Department of Art. They followed Diener's directives, but also, just as frequently, discussed and debated both large and small decisions with respect to form and content.

Beyond the swirling, energetic line work in all of Diener's drawings is an unceasing exploration of southern California's landscape and history. In her 2008 exhibition at Bank Gallery, Los Angeles, Diener reflected on the rapid development of Ventura County in the last century, from individually farmed plots to large-scale agribusiness estates or, even more frequently, to suburban housing communities. She also touched upon the parallel transformation of these populations from German and Irish immigrant farmers to nuclear family units and Latino migrant workers. Human presence was indicated in an











