

Martha Friedman
"Inside Art"

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Inside Art

Carol Vogel

Familiar Voice, Different Home

After Philippe de Montebello retires at year's end as director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, his sonorous voice will no longer be a signature presence on the Met's audio guides. But in his new life he will be more than a disembodied voice to the public.

WNET, Channel 13 in New York, has hired him as a co-host of its weekly "SundayArts" program. Starting Sunday he and the former CNN host Paula Zahn will present material about arts news and events. Broadcast weekly at noon, the program was initiated in March by WNET's president and chief executive, Neal Shapiro, who acted as host.

"I couldn't wait to fire me, and when I heard Philippe was retiring, I thought, this guy should be great," Mr. Shapiro said. He decided to team him with Ms. Zahn because he knew of her passion for the performing arts.

Mr. de Montebello said that when WNET broached the possibility, he thought: "Why not? It keeps me plugged in and is something completely different from everything else I am doing."

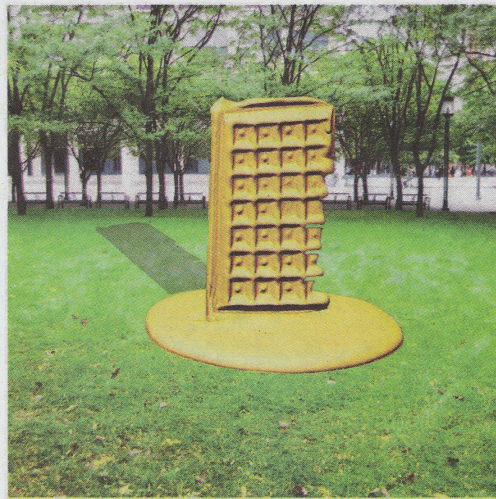
(Among other projects, Mr. de Montebello plans to teach courses on the history and culture of museums for the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University and to advise the university on its planned overseas campus in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.)

At the outset Mr. de Montebello will introduce "SundayArts" content "à la 'Masterpiece Theater,'" as he put it, by offering a bit of an overview. But eventually he hopes to develop programming and offer his own opinions.

"For the moment I'm a pretty voice," he said wryly. "After that, we'll see."

Watching Visions Unfold

The Art Production Fund, a nonprofit organization that presents public art around New



MARTHA FRIEDMAN, WALLSPACE, NEW YORK

Martha Friedman's "Waffle" is in a show at MetroTech Center.

York, has set up shop in a SoHo storefront that can be likened to an experimental laboratory.

The organization will invite artists to create installations and performances in the space, the APF Lab, at 15 Wooster Street. "Some projects can last for a day, others for a month or longer," said Yvonne Force Villareal, who runs the Art Production Fund with Doreen Remen. "It's all about the artists' visions."

Reflecting tight economic times, Ms. Villareal said, "everything has been done on the cheap."

Rather than send out costly exhibition invitations, the lab will rely on e-mail messages and its Web site, artproductionfund.org. There will be no lavish catalogs; instead the Art Production Fund's facade will post a phone number — (646) 775-2789 — at which people can hear artists discuss their projects.

The space has been donated to the fund for five years by the Laboz family, owners of United American Land, the developers behind the SoHo Mews, two residential condominium buildings designed by Gwathmey Siegel &

Associates Architects. The APF Lab is on the Wooster Street side of one of the buildings.

Ms. Villareal and Ms. Remen said that they settled on the idea for the space after helping organize art installations in the Park Avenue Armory as part of this year's Whitney Biennial. "Each of those projects were in rooms," Ms. Villareal said. "We took that feeling. Artists come to us all the time with projects, so we wanted to create a space that we could turn over to them."

The glass-fronted gallery's inaugural project, "Blue Balls," conceived of by the painter Jackie Saccoccio, is already underway. She invited 15 artists to paint on the walls: each week two or three artists will arrive to paint around and over what is already there, giving the project an archaeological feel. While viewers can watch the artists' progress from the street, the space will open for viewing on Dec. 6 and 7. The next project will be "Cathedral," a multilayered video by Marco Brambilla, running through January. Mr. Brambilla photographed people window shopping around Christmas in a Toronto mall and then

created a video in which he superimposes these images, one on top of another, to create a kaleidoscopic effect.

"It looks like a stained-glass window," Ms. Villareal said, "but it's really about conspicuous consumption."

Appetite for Sculpture

A waffle that rises seven feet and appears to be enveloped in a thick pool of syrup has appeared on the grassy area of the commons at the MetroTech Center corporate complex in downtown Brooklyn. Fashioned from foam, resin and metal by the sculptor Martha Friedman, it is part of "Trapdoor," a group sculpture exhibition that opens on Friday on the commons and in the lobby of 1 MetroTech.

The sculpture show, which runs through Sept. 25, is the 16th annual exhibition at MetroTech organized by the nonprofit Public Art Fund.

Three of this show's works by the young artists Ethan Breckenridge, Ms. Friedman and Sara Greenberger Rafferty — were commissioned specifically for the exhibition. "All of these artists are not making things that are ephemeral," said Rochelle Steiner, director of the Public Art Fund. "They all feel solid. And you can see glimpses of Brancusi, Judd, Beuys and Duchamp."

Ms. Friedman's "Waffle" — a play on the grid pattern — is not the only work that summons a familiar reference. Mr. Breckenridge's "I'm OK-You're OK," a sculpture near the seating area in the center of the commons, is made up of 100 furniture-moving dollies. Piled on top of one another to a height of 16 feet, they give the impression that they could be toppled with the slightest push.

Two recent sculptures by Francis Cape in the lobby of 1 MetroTech are more architectural, suggesting elements of a building's interior that have magically landed in the space. "They're like fragments or sections," Ms. Steiner said. "As if a cabinet has morphed into a piece of architectural paneling."