

● Forum 87

Amie Siegel:
Panorama

Carnegie
Museum
of Art

What remains unseen often sits at the heart of Amie Siegel's artistic inquiry. In her films, photography, sculpture, and installation, Siegel focuses on making visible the behind-the-scenes or inner operations of complex systems and investigates how value is constructed as her protagonists—archeological artifacts, furniture, paintings, marble, labor—move from one place to another, one cultural context to another. Commissioned by Carnegie Museum of Art, Siegel's new film *Panorama* (2023) traces the complex process of how cultural materials enter a museum collection and begin their afterlife as objects of study and display. Focusing on the adjacent Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Siegel's research brought to light a group of dormant 16mm films from the museum's storage. The artist found, selected, and edited together material from approximately 200 reels from the 1930s to 1970s that document scientific expeditions and preparations of specimens for display, creating an entirely new, autonomous work of art.

In her film *Panorama*, Siegel reveals the processes, mechanisms, technologies, and hidden stories of the expeditions by connecting footage across multiple decades and geographies. *Panorama* emphasizes the scientists' self-conscious aim of the camera as it focuses on a truck, sled, or ship that indicates their passage through various climates, and as it frames local guides and workers interacting with researchers who bring their Western perspectives to bear upon places around the world, as much as they take select specimens with them. Across the numerous ecologies charted in Siegel's film,

scientists consistently perform acts of extraction. In some cases, they aim and shoot guns and wield nets, in tandem with cameras, to ground birds, trap butterflies, and fell large mammals. The artist's film contrasts the movement and stillness of animals, and thus life with death. Specimens hence collected are seen examined, recorded, and readied for transport—skinned, stuffed, sewn, and, ultimately, prepared for a life of display.

In addition to sweeping across continents and through varied environments, Siegel's film uncovers a space of artifice and illusion at the museum of natural history itself. Her film divulges captivating moments of technicians setting up, for example, taxidermy rams on an ersatz mountain top, against a painted backdrop that suggests their natural roaming grounds. Siegel reveals the skills and attention of the museum staff working to resurrect animals and plants from the global expeditions with paint, props, and wax, creating simulacra of natural habitats.

As filmed by Siegel in the present day, the encased displays become cinematic windows into not only the habitats on view, but the minds of the scientists and technicians who created them. The animals, in their afterlife, look back at the visitors, the scientists and staff, and the viewers of Siegel's film. Their glass-eyed gaze now conveys a multitude of ideas, ideologies, and aesthetics evident in a museum of natural history; Siegel has made visible their journey to the museum by connecting their former lives as roving and flying creatures with their emphatic, unceasing stillness. Whether they are in



Amie Siegel, *Panorama*, 2023, 4K Video (stills compilation), Courtesy of the artist and Carnegie Museum of Art

suspension as part of a dramatic diorama or placed side by side in storage drawers, the specimens portrayed by Siegel hold multivalent narratives of other places, times, and the subjectivities of their collectors. By tracing this process in all their complexity, the artist offers a view of the museum as a place of overlapping temporalities and contexts where meaning and value shift and accrue.

Alongside her film, Siegel presents an arrangement she refers to as a “city of plinths,” creating a meticulous array of select functional decorative arts objects and works on paper from the museum of art’s collection. The objects on view feature visions of the flora and fauna that must have captivated their owners who, for instance, handled a ceramic dish of mollusk clusters or filled with flowers a vase adorned with painted bird feathers. The objects’ former functions, however, cease as they enter the museum collection; instead, they

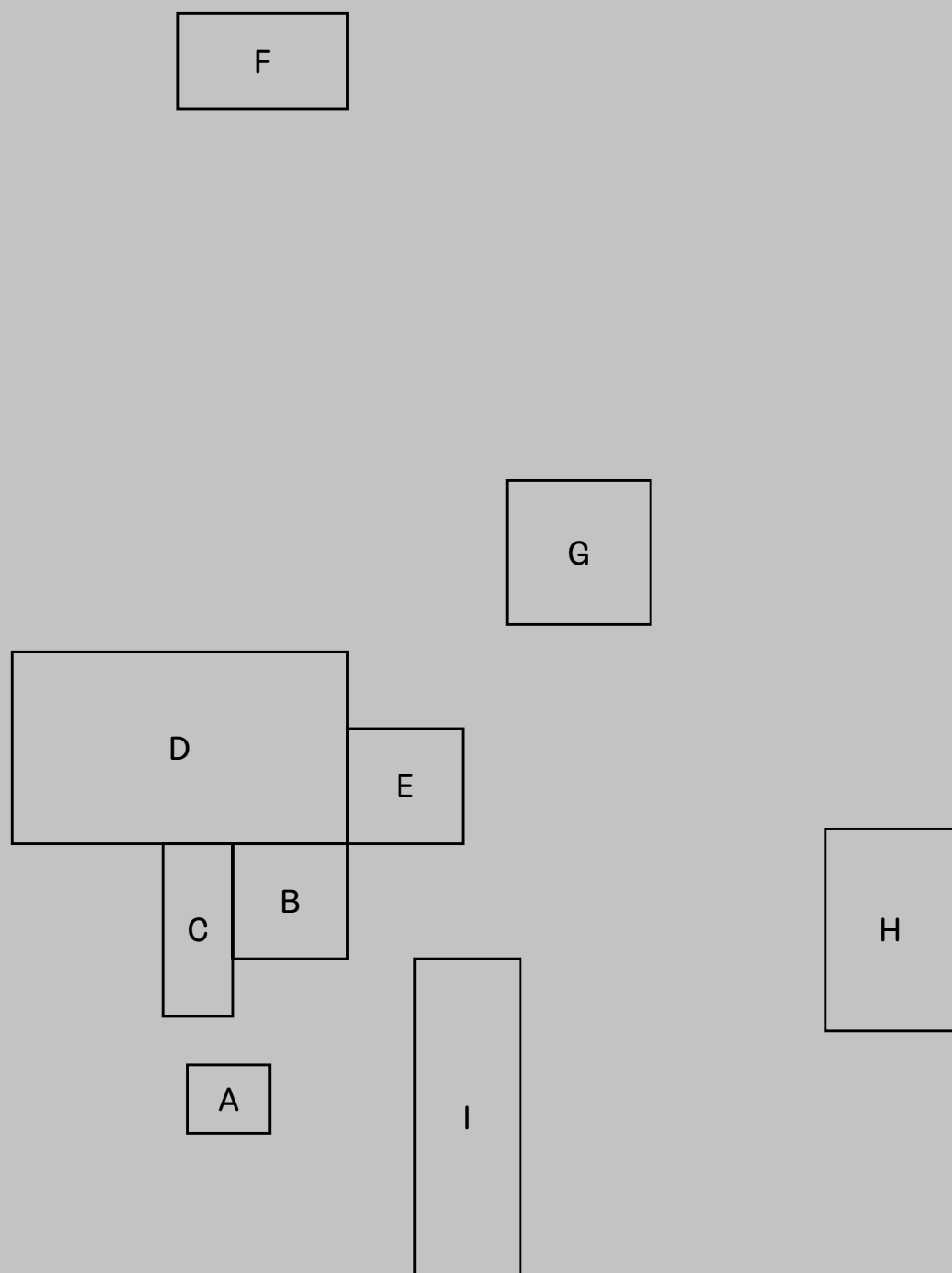
become representative of a style or aesthetic movement. They stoke and affirm the desire to hold and own—not just the thing itself but the images and ideas of nature that they communicate. Siegel’s re-contextualization of these once dynamic objects, now encased in the art museum’s collection, thus draws a parallel to how animals become objects in the natural history museum.

Siegel’s exhibition draws attention to the complex relationship humans have to our respective habitats. *Panorama* powerfully captures the objects’ journey to reveal larger structures of socioeconomics, culture, and power that imbue them with their significance.



Amie Siegel, *Panorama*, 2023, 4K Video (stills compilation), Courtesy of the artist and Carnegie Museum of Art

Works in the Exhibition



Amie Siegel, *Panorama*, 2023
4K Video (color, sound)
Courtesy of the artist and
Thomas Dane Gallery

Case A

1. Aitchison & Co.,
manufacturer
English, 1889–1927
Folding binoculars, ca. 1900
aluminum, glass, leather, and
metal
Gift of Paul Reeves, 1997.53. A-.B

Case B

2. Meissen Porcelain
Manufactory
German, est. 1710
Parrot, 1726–1730
porcelain with enamel decoration
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection,
70.7.47, 70.7.48

Case C

3. European
Crosier, 18th century
ivory
Gift of Mrs. J. Frederic Byers,
55.3.1

Case D

4. Norman Marshall Jeannero
American, 1886–1954
(*Portrait: Dr. Arthur C. Twomey
with Bird Specimens*), 1939
gelatin silver print
Gift of the Carnegie Library of
Pittsburgh, 84.17.75

5. Worcester Porcelain Factory
British, est. 1751
Dish, ca. 1765–1775
glazed porcelain
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George H.
Love, 76.38

6. Ludwigsburg Pottery
and Porcelain Factory
German, 1758–1824
Spoon, ca. 1760
porcelain
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection,
70.32.814, 70.32.812.C

7. Daisy Makeig-Jones
British, 1881–1945
Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd.
British, est. 1759
Bowl, ca. 1914–1931
bone china with lustre glaze
Gift of Stanley and Charlotte
Bernstein, 77.83.24

8. Chinese, Qing Dynasty
Dish, 1736–1795
porcelain
Gift of Walter Read Hovey,
73.48.88

9. Meissen Porcelain
Manufactory
German, est. 1710
Salt cellar, 1745–1780
porcelain
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection,
70.32.1082, 70.32.1084

10. Bow Porcelain Factory
British, ca. 1745–1776
Sweetmeat dish, ca. 1750
porcelain
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection,
70.32.1869

11. Derby Porcelain Factory, manufacturer British, 1756–1848 Sweetmeat stand, 1760–1765 porcelain with underglaze decoration Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Oliver Rea in memory of Edith Oliver Rea, 71.51.7.2.A-.B

12. Japanese *Netsuke*, no date ivory Gift of the Estate of H. J. Heinz, 11853.786

Case E

13. Attributed to Turner & Company British, 1770–1806 Punch pot, ca. 1800 black basaltes Gift of the family of Tillie S. Speyer, 82.93.29

14. Wedgwood English, est. 1759 Teapot, ca. 1775 cream-colored earthenware Gift of Steve Zoumberakis, 91.31

15. American Miniature teapot, 20th century porcelain Bequest of Sarah Mellon Scaife, 66.10.7.38

Case F

16. Wedgwood English, est. 1759 Dish, ca. 1800–1810

glazed earthenware Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.32.2696

17. William Henry Fox Talbot British, 1800–1877 *Buckler Fern*, ca. 1839/2017 modern facsimile - photogenic drawing negative Gift of William Talbott Hillman

Case G

18. Ludwigsburg Pottery and Porcelain Factory German, 1758–1824 Dish, ca. 1760 porcelain Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.32.766

19. Royal Danish Porcelain Factory Platter, ca. 1861–1863 porcelain Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.32.413

20. Royal Danish Porcelain Factory Soup bowl, ca. 1861–1863 porcelain Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.32.327

21. Royal Danish Porcelain Factory Dish, ca. 1861–1863 porcelain Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.32.394

22. Chelsea Porcelain Factory British, ca. 1745–1769 Dish, ca. 1755 porcelain with enamel decoration Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.32.1843

23. Chelsea Porcelain Factory British, ca. 1745–1769 Dish, ca. 1752–1756 porcelain Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.7.59

24. Derby Porcelain Factory British, 1756–1848 Cup, ca. 1810 porcelain Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.32.1966

Case H

25. Andrey Avinoff American, b. Russia, 1884–1949 *Butterfly: Papilio Hungerfordi Av. sp. nov.*, ca. 1925–1945 brush and ink on paper Patrons Art Fund, 2009.36.2

26. Worcester Porcelain Factory British, founded 1751 Standish, ca. 1792–1803 porcelain Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.32.1850

27. Daisy Makeig-Jones British, 1881–1945 Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Ltd. British, est. 1759 Bowl, ca. 1914–1931 bone china with lustre glaze

Gift of Stanley and Charlotte Bernstein, 77.83.30

Case I

28. British Vase, 1815–1820 porcelain with enamel decoration Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 70.7.79

29. Louis-Denis Armand l'aîné, painter French, 1720–1800 Vincennes Porcelain Manufactory, manufacturer French, ca. 1740–1756 Flower pot, 1754 porcelain with enamel and gilded decoration Purchased through the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, John Berdan Memorial Fund, and funds provided by Thomas E. Rassieur, 88.6.1, 88.6.2

30. British Miniature Painting Depicting an Eye, ca. 1800 watercolor on ivory; gold frame Gift of Herbert DuPuy, 27.10.43

31. English Bonbon dish, 18th century gold and sardonyx Gift of Herbert DuPuy, 27.10.649

32. Russian Easter egg, late 19th century enameled and jeweled with semiprecious stones Bequest of Margaret Seifert Magee, 1999.24.1

33. Haviland & Co.
French, est. 1842
Soup bowl, ca. 1880
porcelain
Gift, UN.2.5
34. Chinese
Snuff bottle, mid-10th century
glass
Gift of Howard Heinz, 11854.166
35. Chinese
Snuff bottle, no date
carved glass
Gift of Mrs. Jennie Boyle Scaife,
24.4.56
36. Chinese
Snuff bottle, 18th–19th century
glass
Gift of Howard Heinz, 11854.167
37. Chinese
Snuff bottle, 18th–19th century
glass
Gift of Howard Heinz, 74.H
38. Chinese
Snuff bottle, 18th century
agate
Gift of Howard Heinz, 11854.154
39. Christopher Dresser,
designer
British, 1834–1904
W. Brownfield & Sons,
manufacturer
1871–1891
Jug, ca. 1880
salt-glazed stoneware
Women's Committee Acquisition
Fund, 2002.21.1.2

Works on Paper

40. Natale Bonifacio, engraver
Italian, 1538–1592
Bartolomeo Grassi, publisher
Italian, active 16th century
Tamed wild Zebra (Zebra fera saluatica), 1591
From the book *Relatione del reame di Congo et delle circonvicine contrade tratta dalli scritti & ragionamenti di Odoardo Lopez*
engraving and etching
Mr. & Mrs. William A. Meyer
Fund, 2016.13
41. Frederic Edwin Church
American, 1826–1900
Iceberg in the Open Sea, St. John's Newfoundland, 7/1/1859
gouache, pencil, and traces of
watercolor on green gray paper
Leisser Art Fund and Foster
Charitable Trust Fund, 1999.33
42. Andrey Avinoff
American, b. Russia, 1884–1949
Tibet: Camp Scene in the Karakoram at the Foot of the Mountain (interior of tent)
(recto); *Studies of butterfly and moth wings* (verso), 1912
graphite and watercolor
Patrons Art Fund, 2008.12.1
43. Andrey Avinoff
American, b. Russia, 1884–1949
Tibet: Mountain with Camp Scene in the Karakoram (rocky river with tents), 1912
graphite and watercolor
Patrons Art Fund, 2008.12.2

44. Andrey Avinoff
American, b. Russia, 1884–1949
Ship Deck, 1912
graphite and watercolor on paper
Gift of Antonia Shoumatoff
Foster, 2009.39.2

45. Andrey Avinoff
American, b. Russia, 1884–1949
Butterfly Specimen, ca.
1925–1945
colored pencil on business card
Patrons Art Fund, 2009.36.13

Programming

Thursday, September 21, 6 p.m.

● Forum Gallery

Celebrate the opening of *Amie Siegel: Panorama*. Engage with the exhibition and join us outside the Forum Gallery at 6:30 p.m. for a toast and conversation between Amie Siegel and Liz Park, Richard Armstrong Curator of Contemporary Art.

A Panorama on *Panorama*: A conversation between Amie Siegel and Filipa Ramos

Thursday, February 1, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

● Carnegie Museum of Art Theater

While celebrating the richness and diversity of life, museums are also intrinsically related to death. Few other places have objectified, transformed, and exhibited so carefully creatures that once lived and moved. Dwelling on such complexities, Amie Siegel and writer Filipa Ramos will discuss the artist's film *Panorama* and the relationship between the cultural histories and traditions that brought together the medium of film, the Western practices of research, and the methods of collectionism.

This gallery brochure is published on the occasion of *Amie Siegel: Panorama*, organized by Liz Park, Richard Armstrong Curator of Contemporary Art, with Cynthia Stucki, curatorial assistant, and Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, September 22, 2023, through February 11, 2024.

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Forum Gallery presents the work of living artists in an ongoing series that invites them to expand their practice through a commission or new presentation of existing works. Initiated in 1990, and with 87 projects to date, the Forum series is an opportunity for artists to deepen their relationship to and understanding of the museum.

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