

DYNASTY

AN EXHIBITION MODELED ON
THE DYNAMIC OF MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILIES

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March 9 *to* April 5, 2006

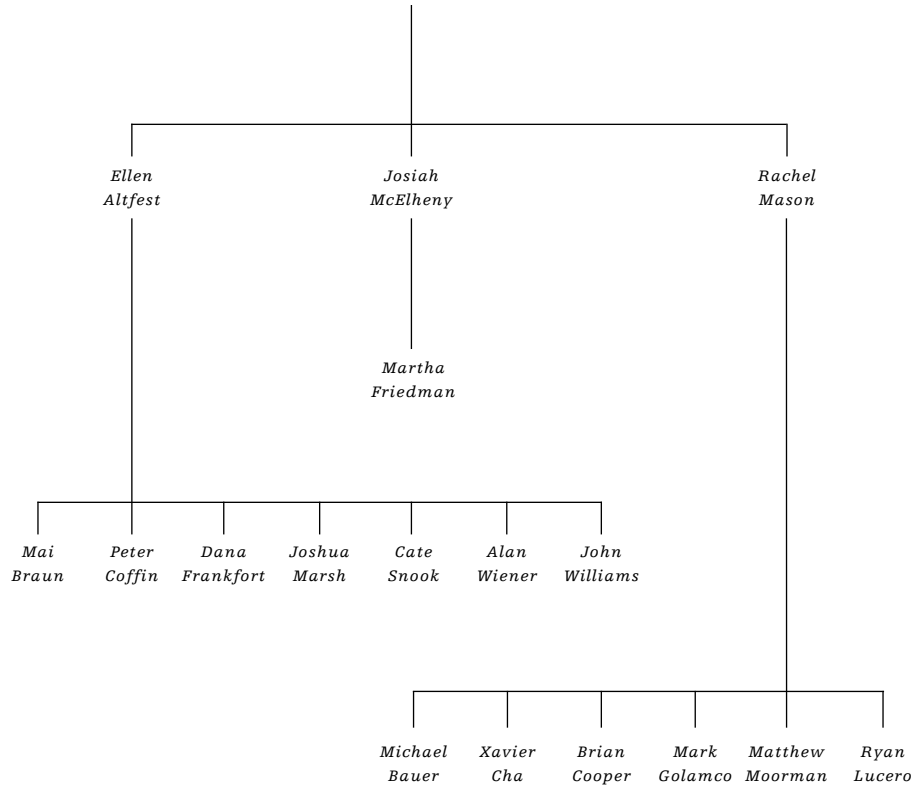
AN EXHIBITION MODELED ON
THE DYNAMIC OF MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILIES

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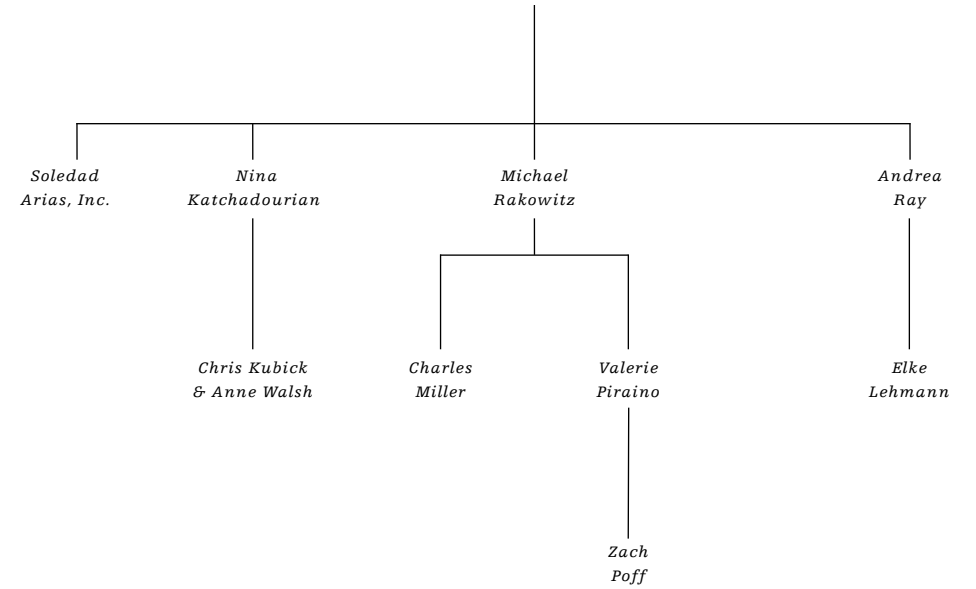
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AMY GOLDRICH *m.* OMAR LOPEZ-CHAHOUD



CHRISTOPHER K. HO *m.* SARA REISMAN



AMY GOLDRICH *m.* OMAR LOPEZ- CHAHOUD

Almost two years ago, we conceived a show that would unfold over time by inviting artists who would, in turn, invite other artists. As the show developed, the number of participating artists would grow and create a family tree. We soon realized the unwieldy, even infinite possibilities that were inherent in such a project; we would have to invent rules to limit the exercise. We were surprised to find that the necessary rules significantly tracked our own society's traditions and laws about how property can be inherited and consumed within families.¹

By creating two separate families of two curators each, we are ultimately able to perform our experiment twice at the same time in the shared space of a single gallery. After a few glasses of wine, we saw this as not unlike the Carrington and Colby clans of the 1980s TV family melodrama, *Dynasty*. That show was, at the very least, about conspicuous consumption and battles for control among those unable or ill-inclined to share. In many respects the art world replicates the dynamics of that show, and we appropriated the title of the infamous Aaron Spelling production.

Our *Dynasty* would deploy gallery space as each family's sole asset and fortune. Each curating couple could use their family's estate however they wished. We gave our property, in equal shares, to three artists whom we adopted as our children for the purposes of the show. We placed no restrictions on their use of the space, giving them total control over their inheritance. Of course this subverts the idea of curating because each of our children could show, or not show, whatever he or she wanted, without regard to our taste, feelings, or concerns.

Ellen Altfest, Rachel Mason and Josiah McElheny each chose to do very different things with the property they were given. With something more than 200 square feet of gallery space, there were many possibilities. They could show their own work, either alone

or together with other artists, give it all away, either to a single artist or to a group of artists, and they could even use it to curate their own show.

We chose Ellen Altfest because her work as a painter, though highly representational, also deals, upon closer examination, with abstraction. She further explores this theme in her own curatorial project, inviting seven fellow artists to exhibit work that explores the blurring line between a concrete something and an abstract nothing. Ellen shared her inheritance with artists who work in a broad range of media: Mai Braun, Peter Coffin, Dana Frankfort, Joshua Marsh, Cate Snook, Alan Wiener and John Williams. Together, they form a dense branch of our family tree.

Rachel Mason's conceptually based sculptural installations, and earlier work dealing with the Hapsburg dynasty, made her a natural selection. In addition to her visual artworks, Rachel writes music and collaborates with other artist-musicians to perform her songs. For *Dynasty*, she has chosen to create an ongoing piece by recording an album with fellow artist-musicians Michael Bauer, Xavier Cha, Brian Cooper, Mark Golamco, Ryan Lucero, Matthew Moorman and others. She will exhibit their artwork on the walls alongside her own, framing the performances that will continue for the duration of the show, culminating in a recorded album.

Josiah McElheny continued our family tradition by giving sculptor Martha Friedman all 200-some square feet for her work alone. We invited Josiah into our family because of the multiplicity, mathematical precision and human touch that combine in his delicately wrought work. In choosing Martha, he joins with someone whose work is similarly object-based, with carefully balanced sculptures that carry multiple meanings. Her work is similarly mathematical and precise while it maintains a wholly tactile quality, virtually inviting the viewer to touch.

In the end, as parents/curators, we exerted control at the same time as we relinquished it. Our gift was pure and genuine, without restrictions, and laden only with the hope that each of our artists would do something that we might ourselves have chosen to do. They did not disappoint us.

¹ Although we would have liked to be able to explore that concept in more detailed and critical ways, we saw that even our limited experiment would reveal much about the nature of wealth of any kind.

ELLEN ALTFEST

Driftwood (Studio Floor) 1

2003, Oil on canvas, 20 x 28 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Bellwether

*With the 200 square foot space I have been given in Dynasty I have decided to organize a small show called *Something and Nothing*. The works in the show depict a concrete thing, but at the same time it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what that thing is. Sculpture, painting, drawing and video hover between representation and abstraction. Familiar things break apart and things that look unfamiliar cohere in unexpected ways. The works have a simplicity that is both understated and direct.*



MAI BRAUN

Crystal Column

2006, Cardboard and Tape, 101 x 25 x 25 inches

Courtesy of Brooklyn Fireproof

PETER COFFIN

C-Print, 20 x 26 inches

2004, Found book, 5 x 10 x 6 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery



DANA FRANKFORT

And Yet And Yet 4

2005, 3 x 2 feet, Oil on panel

Courtesy of the artist and Freight + Volume

JOSHUA MARSH

Stream and Deer

2005, 19 x 30 inches, Graphite on paper

Courtesy of the artist



CATE SNOOK

Three Values

2003, DVD, TV, museum board, 6 Minutes

16 inches (screen)

Courtesy of the artist

ALAN WIENER

Nature Study

2001, Hydrocal with clay pigment, 7 3/4 x 18 1/2 x 7 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Feature



JOHN WILLIAMS

Puffy World

2005, DVD Projection, 13 minutes
Courtesy of Sister



RACHEL MASON

2006, Performance for Circular States of Boredom in the Face of World Domination Party, Brooklyn, NY

Michael Bauer, Xavier Cha, Mark Golanco, Ryan Lucero, Matthew Moorman

During the course of the show I will be collaborating with artists to create an album. Each artist has a different connection to music. I have played with some, been in bands with some and others I have never played with, and have never improvised but have classical training. When the exhibition opens, I will play a short set and for the rest of the show, I will come in and out to write and record music. The schedule will be fluctuating so there will be no set time for someone to see it. The artists were asked to contribute their own work to the exhibition and this is what will be up on the walls in addition to my own work. The album will be completed at the end of the month.



JOSIAH MCELHENY

Extended Landscape Model for Total Reflective Abstraction (detail)

2004, Mirrored blown glass, industrial mirror, wood
Collection of the Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona

I have invited Martha Friedman to participate in Dynasty. In her sculptures Friedman depicts tricks and balancing acts, while arguing for the possible sexual connotation of everything. Structurally her work is like a history of sculpture from Bernini to Duchamp to Richard Prince; she uses modeling and mold making to make improbable conglomerations of everyday looking objects and sometimes 'tells' some pointed dirty puns. Friedman describes how illusion is a magic act of supreme tenuousness, maybe formed of some not so nice parts.

MARTHA FRIEDMAN

Melons (detail)

2004, 60 x 60 x 54 inches,

Painted urethane castings of
melons stacked in a hollow pyramid

Courtesy of the artist



CHRISTOPHER K. HO *m.* SARA REISMAN

Central to Harold Bloom's 1973 signal essay on poetry, *The Anxiety of Influence*, is the family romance: the struggle of individual poets to distinguish their practice from that of precursors, to emerge from the shadow of strong precedents. For Bloom, historical posteriority, or the fact of coming after another person, produces an anxiety that can either subsume the poet or be overcome. The success or failure of poetry depends on the poet's response. Great poetry willfully misreads previous work, while weak poetry merely imitates.

Yet the eclecticism of the past three decades suggests that the anxiety of influence has waned as a creative stimulus. If there is anxiety, it seems to stem less from strong historical awareness than from having no dominant history, and hence nothing to react to. After a period of pluralism and in the age of wealth transfer – baby boomers will bequeath over \$10 trillion in the next 20 years – might it be the *family business* rather than the *family romance* that is the apposite model?

This model focuses less on the immediate conflict between fathers and sons than on the evolutionary arc of an extended family through a century or more. The family is conceived of as an organic entity that each generation redefines for itself while preserving and accumulating wealth for the future. This family-wide, cross-generational scope is evident in Michael Rakowitz's mutually supportive rapport with his chosen offspring, Charles Miller and Valerie Piraino, both former students of his. Rakowitz writes:

Valerie Piraino's work employs an elegant vocabulary of form and visual signifiers that address the issue of global amnesia that still surrounds the catastrophic events that have directly affected the lives of millions of Rwandans worldwide, including Valerie and her family. Charles Miller's projects explore perceptual issues of cities and buildings through a means of mapping that incorporates his body as a measure for comparison with existing units and systems. In this investigation, Charles poses pertinent questions relating to societal and institutional standards, resulting in fascinating challenges to hierarchical relationships.

Rakowitz's own contribution to *Dynasty*, titled *Return*, is an ongoing work initiated in 2004 that recreates his Iraqi grandfather's import/export business.

One similarity between the family business and the family romance is that success is elusive. An article in the December 2003 issue of *Worth* magazine estimated that only 30 percent of family businesses survive to the second generation, and fewer than 12 percent make the leap to the third. The article advocated a four-pronged strategy to improve the odds:

- Managing *financial assets* through trusts and other instruments
- Fostering *human assets* by acknowledging the unique individual strengths of family members
- Using *intellectual assets* by learning from life experiences
- Developing *civic assets* through philanthropic activity

While space precludes elaboration, it is worth noting that such strategies might be analogous to Bloom's *revisionary ratios*, or means that poets deploy to overcome predecessors.

Dynasty's curatorial team operated as a fictional family. Omar Lopez-Chahoud married Amy Goldrich, the sister of Sara Reisman, who in turn married Christopher K. Ho. As the Ho-Reisman branch of the family, we considered how we might generate a dynamic and enduring family tree that at once cohered and allowed for, even fostered, pockets of autonomy. One such pocket is Soledad Arias, Inc., who incorporated herself to facilitate collaborating with multiple participants in the text component of her artwork. Andrea Ray, whose *Day after day* is based on her own experiences with her child, invited Elke Lehmann into the family. Lehmann's site-specific installations and public interventions address the physical and historical aspects of their sites, and at times amplify aspects of history and collective memory. Nina Katchadourian is represented in the catalogue by GRNAD OPENING, which documents a misspelled awning sign, the kind one might see in multi-lingual neighborhoods. Katchadourian also shared her space with Chris Kubick and Anne Walsh. Working collaboratively under the name Archive, their project, *Art After Death*, offers alternative or "parallel" portraits of artists. Kubick and Walsh explain: "We 'interview' their spirits by bringing professional spirit mediums in contact with their work, and by employing the mediums as translators, or channels."

As a family, we hope to extend to as many generations as possible. This desire is in part fulfilled by the addition of Zach Poff, a great-grandson. One of Poff's recent sound installations, *Displacement*, sets up a network of recordings of the 2001 and 2005 presidential inaugural speeches. Spanning history, politics, architecture, language, economics, geography, and phenomenology, our family's interests extend far beyond our initial expectations. We are idealistic in our ambitions and hope that the chain of relations in this family unit – a microcosm of the artworld system of artists, curators, and others – lives on posthumously, after *Dynasty* closes, as a proposal for the possibilities of collaboration.

asphyxia serum sachet tubes feet hands
silence kiss carcass void avoid surprise
caress upset childhood curls disgust
annoyed bell understanding anguish
impatience frustration serenity innocence
monitor child peepee bell doctor
hand swollen heat tenderness strength
tiredness exhaustion numbness morphine
drugs decision emotion convulsion nurses
humanity possibility tears essence pride
dignity misery uncertainty abyss mask
misunderstanding command suffering
union disbelief transmutation change
affected affection disruption clear lie
trust memory passion disgust fear relief
awareness disproportion awe ©

NINA KATCHADOURIAN

GRNAD OPENING

2006, C-print, 23 x 16 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

I decided to invite Chris Kubick and Anne Walsh because I greatly admire them, I greatly admire their work, I greatly admire that they work with sound, and I greatly admire sound. All of these factors seemed a good conglomerate reason to scoop them up as my relations and hang together on the branches of this particular family tree.

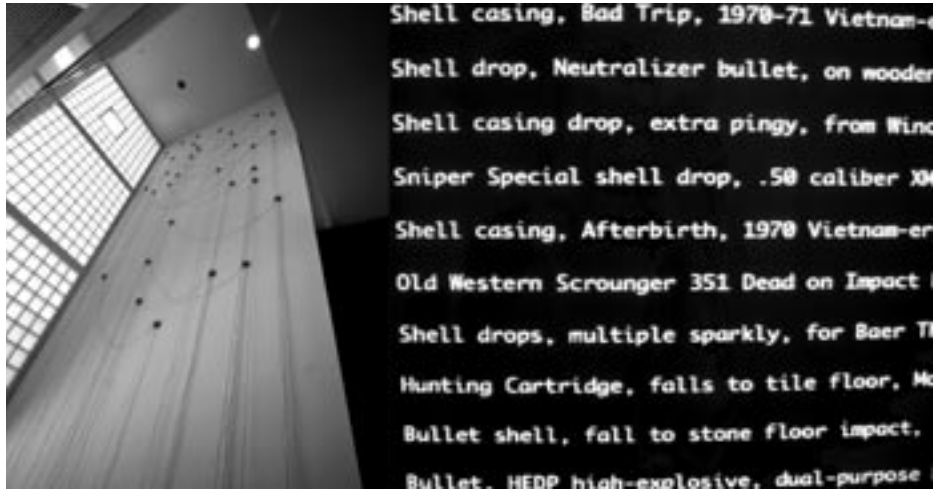


SOLEDAD ARIAS, INC.

Untitled

2006, 21 x 3/4 inches, Recorded words, white neon light, Voice: Denise Greber

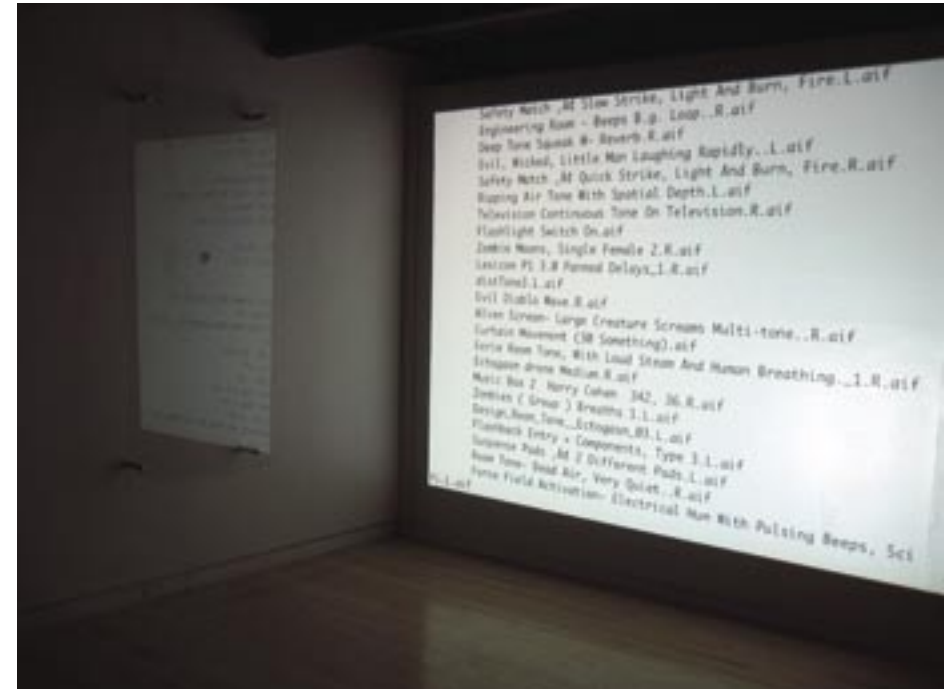
Courtesy of the artist



CHRIS KUBICK & ANNE WALSH

Full Metal Jackets

2005, Still from generative text and sound piece, 32 speakers, wire, projector, amplifier, computer, custom software, Dimensions variable
 Courtesy of the artists



Spirit Array

2005, Still from generative text and sound piece, Transducers, 8 3 x 6 feet sheets of glass, wire, projector, amplifier, computer, custom software, Dimensions variable
 Courtesy of the artists

MICHAEL RAKOWITZ

Return

2004 – ongoing, Installation views of
drop box and package shipping station,

Mixed media, Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Lombard Fried Projects



Dynasty. Lineage. In addition to being an artist, I am also a teacher. I became a teacher largely due to the fact that I love the way that I was taught. Certain professors made indelible marks on my career as a student that have carried over in significant ways into my life as an artist and also as an instructor. Allan Wexler taught a visiting artist class in which I was enrolled at SUNY Purchase. The man changed my life, introducing me at an early stage in my development to performance art, architecture, public art, and poetry. Every word that came out of his mouth turned on a light in my brain and made me want to produce work that need not be defined by specific fields (Wexler himself is an architect and artist). His critiques were masterful and optimistic, tapping into students' strengths while at the same time causing them to address weaknesses. Dennis Adams welcomed me into the M.I.T. Visual Studies Program and introduced me to work that I hadn't seen before. I had gone through my undergraduate program with a keen interest in Middle Eastern issues and with my family's lineage based in Iraq, I had a pretty broad sense of the region's history. Up until graduate school, I was unable or hesitant to imagine a way to see myself within the work I was producing. Dennis's acute critical sensibility enabled me to realize this in a rather honest and matter-of-fact way. Krzysztof Wodiczko, also at M.I.T. proved to me that struggling was key, and that criticality of the self and of the world was central not only to

cultural production, but to a practice that might set higher goals in the production (or betterment) of culture. Through his unique lens, I was able to view the world in a more complicated way and enlist the things in which I believed. He treats his teaching in much the same way, unable to give a brush-off critique. He is wholly invested and magnificently generous.

These lineages are meaningful. And for me, they work in two directions. I said that I became a teacher because I love the way I was taught. What I didn't know was that I would continue to be taught by my students. It is the best job I can imagine as there is genuinely a sense of reciprocity in the environment that encourages discourse. They have, and continue to instigate and inspire me.

I came to know Charles Miller and Valerie Piraino while teaching full time at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. Charles was enrolled in my Senior Thesis class and Valerie was enrolled in an experimental class called "Agitational Design." Both produced work that was of the highest quality I had witnessed.

My mentors enabled me to dream that as artists we have the ability to demand the culture in which we want to participate.

CHARLES MILLER

New Uaxactun

2003 - 05, Detail of Metro service map, Re-designed Washington DC metro service map

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist



ZACH POFF

Parallel Rhetoric: 2001 + 2005

2005, Recordings, briefcase, electronics, custom software, Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist



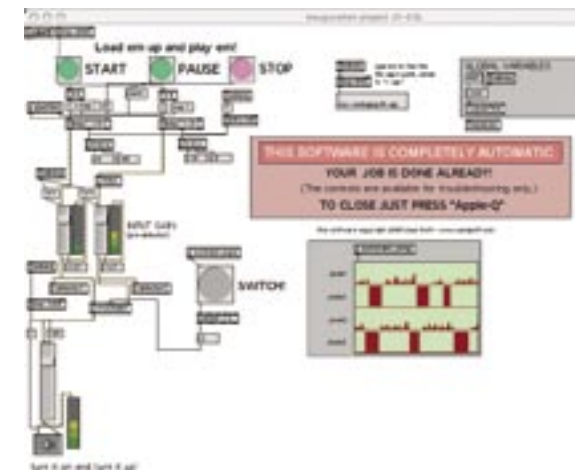
Michael Rakowitz initially introduced the concept of Dynasty to me in terms of inheritance. Upon speaking to Sara Reisman it was described in terms of a family tree, both related, one degree removed. I then invited Zach Poff and the end result is an organic response to a unique curatorial system. Zach has been a friend for years and is now a colleague or sorts, someone who I have known through various stages of my life and development and was part of my art community in Baltimore. This exhibition is a transference of that community and mirrors some of the spontaneity and generosity that I always imagined the art scene of the past was like, when it was a community, before it became the art world and before it became the art industry.

VALERIE PIRAINO

Kwera

2006, Digital video (still), 12 minutes

Courtesy of the artist



ANDREA RAY

Day after day

2006, DVD and audio, Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and the Newman Popiashvili Gallery



"... I'm concerned to see how femininity, within the discourse of the mother-child relationship, is produced as natural and maternal. Of course, the practices that are implied in that process, such as feeding or dressing a child, are as dependent on a system of signs as are writing or speaking. In a sense I see all social practices as expressions of a general social law (of a symbolic dimension, as Kristeva puts it), which is given in language."

– Mary Kelly, "No Essential Femininity: A Conversation between Mary Kelly and Paul Smith," *Parachute* 26 (1982)



ELKE LEHMANN

FLAGS

2005, Digital color prints on Fuji Crystal Paper, 24 1/8 x 16 3/4 inches, Edition of 6

Courtesy of the artist and Silo, New York

THE LAUGHING HEIR

by AMY J.
GOLDRICH, ESQ.

What is the real purpose of a family tree – the diagrammatic construct that allows us to trace up and down generations, and across many branches? Knowledge of history and an understanding of one's place in it? Perhaps. But in the most practical sense, the importance of a family tree is to show us who will inherit our property when we die. If I die intestate – without a will – New York law will divvy up my estate and distribute it according to an established formula based on degrees of relationship as illustrated by my family tree.

Every state has a law of intestate succession, which effectively treats a family as an economic unit entitled to the government's assistance with, and enforcement of, a system of private property rights. In fact, one could argue that family has always been about the control and passage of private property. Even the word *family* is rooted in the idea of property ownership; it is derived from the Latin word *familia*, meaning household or slaves/servants of a household, and from *famulus*, meaning a slave or servant.

While I prefer to think that I actually get to define *family* for myself, that is only the case while I am alive. After I die, my definition of *family* will trump and prevail over the state's *if and only if* I took affirmative steps during my lifetime to create a valid estate plan. The most common example of this would be a simple will. If I did nothing during my lifetime to make my wishes clear in a way that the state recognizes as valid, the state will act for me according to its laws governing intestate succession. These laws are designed to distribute property in a manner consistent with the state's moral assumptions about who should benefit from my hard work and wealth.

The state's primary moral assumption seems to be that my property should pass to those whom the state deems to be closely linked to me, and therefore likely to suffer actual grief upon my death. The great threat to moral order, then, would be the *laughing heir*,

the extremely distant relative who, like Monty Brewster, will one day wake up to find that he or she has inherited millions from a distant relative he has never met and has no feelings for. (Hollywood, too, would be poorer without the *laughing heir*, who is famously featured in no fewer than five different versions of the comedy *Brewster's Millions*.)

In its desire to advance the moral good of not leaving such a windfall to someone who would never mourn me, the state makes a curious and self-serving choice. Rather than give my property to someone the state deems to be too remote, the state will take my property for its own under the principle of *escheat*. Barring a specific act of a state legislature, the state will not only prevent a *laughing heir* from inheriting, it will also deny my property to certain people who may have known and loved me best of all. Obviously, same sex partners are left out in this way, as are unadopted step-children and step-siblings. There is not even a possibility for these legally unfavored souls, who in some cases may mourn most of all, to come into court and plead a case for a right to inherit so that my property does not go to someone estranged or even despised, affiliated by blood but no more.

Perhaps as much as 75% of the United States population dies without a will. We are all free to speculate as to why that may be the case, but wondering doesn't really help anyone. The only control we have over our deaths is the will or other estate planning devices that we may use to decide who will inherit whatever it is we have to give. If we ignore reality, New York will break down our estates under the terms of the Estate Powers & Trusts Law §4-1.1 in the following way:

§4-1.1 Descent and distribution of a decedent's estate

(a) If a decedent is survived by:

- (1) A spouse and issue, fifty thousand dollars and one-half of the residue to the spouse, and the balance thereof to the issue by representation.*
- (2) A spouse and no issue, the whole to the spouse.*
- (3) Issue and no spouse, the whole to the issue, by representation.*
- (4) One or both parents, and no spouse and no issue, the whole to the surviving parent or parents.*
- (5) Issue of parents, and no spouse, issue or parent, the whole to the issue of the parents, by representation.*
- (6) One or more grandparents or the issue of grandparents (as hereinafter defined), and no spouse, issue, parent or issue of parents, one-half to the surviving paternal grandparent or grandparents, or if neither of them survives the decedent, to their issue, by representation, and the other one-half to the surviving maternal grandparent or grandparents, or if neither of them survives the decedent, to their issue, by representation; provided that if the decedent was not survived by a grandparent or grandparents on one side or by the issue of such grandparents, the whole to the surviving grandparent or grandparents on the other side, or if neither of them survives the decedent, to their issue, by representation, in the same manner as the one-half. For the purposes of this*

subparagraph, issue of grandparents shall not include issue more remote than grandchildren of such grandparents.

(7) Great-grandchildren of grandparents, and no spouse, issue, parent, issue of parents, grandparent, children of grandparents or grandchildren of grandparents, one-half to the great-grandchildren of the paternal grandparents, per capita, and the other one-half to the great-grandchildren of the maternal grandparents, per capita; provided that if the decedent was not survived by great-grandchildren of grandparents on one side, the whole to the great-grandchildren of grandparents on the other side, in the same manner as the one-half.

(b) For all purposes of this section, decedent's relatives of the half blood shall be treated as if they were relatives of the whole blood.

(c) Distributees of the decedent, conceived before his or her death but born alive thereafter, take as if they were born in his or her lifetime.

(d) The right of an adopted child to take a distributive share and the right of succession to the estate of an adopted child continue as provided in the domestic relations law.

(e) A distributive share passing to a surviving spouse under this section is in lieu of any right of dower to which such spouse may be entitled.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

*Ellen Altfest • Soledad Arias, Inc. • Michael Bauer • Mai Braun • Xavier Cha • Peter Coffin
Brian Cooper • Dana Frankfort • Martha Friedman • Mark Golamco • Nina Katchadouria
Chris Kubick & Anne Walsh • Elke Lehmann • Ryan Lucero • Joshua Marsh • Rachel Mason
Josiah McElheny • Charles Miller • Matthew Moorman • Valerie Piraino • Zach Poff
Michael Rakowitz • Andrea Ray • Cate Snook • Alan Wiener • John Williams*



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