

ARTFORUM

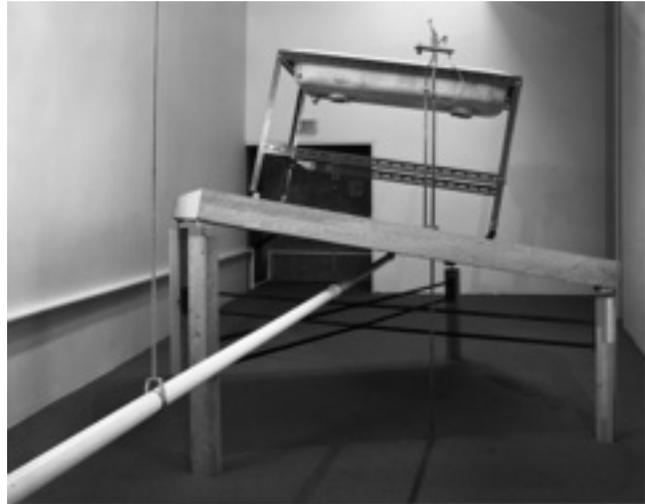
Howard Fried

THE BOX

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California is facing one of the most severe droughts in its history. While Los Angeles appeals for conscientious sprinkler use and reduced car washing, Howard Fried's *Sociopath* quietly waters the sidewalk outside of the gallery in which it is installed. First shown in 1983, the work consists of a two-tiered sink that dispenses tap water from its perched faucet to the trough of a precarious plywood platform and a series of irrigation pipes that traverse the gallery floor and walls. Embodying a kind of empty functionality, the pipelines run seamlessly with the industrial framework of the gallery. This integration of extant architecture



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might recall earlier modes of institutional critique, but here, vectorial vents, rafters, and plumbing create something like a diagrammatic drawing—in three dimensions. If one finds this use of water objectionable, perhaps its sociopathic temerity is a challenge to the authenticity of eco-consciousness and other fashionable modes of activism that often take place in the virtual communities of social media. What is the role of political provocation in our current social landscape—both online and off?

Fried imbricates virtual community with personal memory in *The Decomposition of My Mother's Wardrobe*, 2104—an extended performance-based work, temporarily manifested in four garment-filled clothing racks installed in a back room. After completing a questionnaire surveying color and pattern preferences, participants are given a unique combination of garments based on a computer algorithm that has processed their responses. These are not gifts. All recipients must agree to partake in a set of activities while wearing the clothing: taking photographs of predetermined spaces (e.g., the window next to where the clothing is kept) and attending a “celebratory event” in an undetermined time and place in the future. Here, the object of art engages a mode of speculation counter to commodity exchange and financial markets, entering instead into a discursive and even playful form of the social contract.

— Olivian Cha