



## commissions

### LIGORANO/REESE

*The State of Things* and *Main Street Meltdown*

Denver, CO, St. Paul, MN, and New York, NY Responding to the 2008 presidential election season, the artist team of Ligorano/Reese (Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese) composed a series of ephemeral, politically charged works. Provisions Library, a non-profit organization concerned with social issues, supported their endeavors as part of BrushFire, a public art series funded by CrossCurrents addressing the election. *The State of Things*, first created at Jim Kemper Fine Art for the third anniversary of the war in Iraq, involves the word "Democracy" carved into a 20-foot-long block of ice, placed outside, and allowed to melt. According to Reese, they proposed "democracy meltdowns in both convention cities" and worked with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver and the UnConvention in Minnesota to select sites.

Reese says that the project grew to include *Main Street Meltdown*, when, "as the election drew closer, and tighter, we felt it would be a compelling action to take *Meltdown* further, to the streets of New York, as close as we could get to Wall Street, and with a new message: the economy." BrushFire also supported this piece,

Left: Ligorano/Reese, *Main Street Meltdown* 10.29.08, 2008. Ice, 5 x 20 x 2 ft. Above: Ligorano/Reese, *The State of Things* (RNC St. Paul) 09.01.08, 2008. Ice, 5 x 20 x 2 ft.

allowing the artists to respond to the moment. As Reese described the plan, "We felt since we were creating performative works, we needed to choose an auspicious date for the economy sculpture, and we chose October 29, 2008, the 79th anniversary of Black Tuesday, the stock market crash that caused the Great Depression."

The sculptures were hand-carved in ice, the words formed from simple, block capitals resting on plinths above white lighting. Ligorano says that "horizontal ridges [were] cut into the surface...to help the sculpture catch light from the illumination source below." The timely and provocative subject matter prompted different audience responses at each location. Close to the MCA in Denver, the work was seen as "a piece of art"; the St. Paul sculpture, on the state capitol grounds in the midst of an anti-war march, became "a temporary monument, a site for protesters to gather before and after the march"; and the New York piece "created an atmosphere of disbelief." For Ligorano/Reese, ice "has an openness" different from other mediums: "to witness the economy crumble gives testimony to underlying concerns in the air." As part of public election events, their work "helped project the spirit that brought a new administration to Washington."

—Elizabeth Lynch

Juries are convened each month to select works for Commissions. Information on recently completed commissions, along with quality 351mm slides/transparencies or high-resolution digital images (300 dpi at 4 x 5 in. minimum) and an SASE for return of slides, should be sent to: Commissions, Sculpture, 1633 Connecticut Avenue NW, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20009.