

## **Curatorial Statement**

Shapes are at the cornerstone of our experience of the material world and of our connection to it. Patricia Chauncey builds on one of our most basic and common structures and perhaps the most evocative and spiritual, the circle or the sphere, to work through the fundamentals of nature. The result is *WONDERLAND*, an invitation for us to venture into nature's curiosities, not always comfortably but always with wonder and awe at their mysterious and transient beauty.

### **The Fundamentals: A Witnessing**

A fertilized human egg of approximately 100 micrometers in diameter contains all that is necessary for the formation of an adult. The egg develops through cell replication and differentiation. Cell differentiation can occur with or after replication. Wherever there is differentiation, replication occurs. When this mechanism malfunctions, cancer develops.

Life and death, function and malfunction, health and sickness. What underlies one state from another is finely calibrated in a perpetually delicate if not precarious balance. In an instant, one can transform into the other. Perhaps with one lies the seed for the other? Are they ultimately one and the same? Patterns cut from the same cloth?

Patricia's globular structures or *globes* reference cellular imageries. They appear like multiple copies of one another. However, they are differentiated in texture and palette. The *globes* could be referencing different states of being or they could be hinting at different stages of evolution, suggestive of a historical timeline. Perhaps any end can be a beginning. In between the end and the beginning, in between the beginning and the end, are our tangibles: our material witness or events.

What the *globes* have in common is that they appear to be in the process of becoming something else. The manner in which light interacts on or through them suggests a transition that is taking place, of matter transforming into energy.

Fire and heat that were responsible for their creation are in effect also tools for witnessing. It is only through the modulated destruction of surfaces that we are

© Celine Rumalean, 2007

Patricia Chauncey, *WONDERLAND*, October 27–November 25, 2007  
NUMEN GALLERY [www.numengallery.com](http://www.numengallery.com)

able to witness the internal going-ons. It is through events on their surfaces that we arrive at a deeper understanding of the nature of the materials. These events leave traces and hints at processes that would otherwise go unacknowledged or unexamined.

Patricia constructs paper globes by pasting layers of paper on top of each other, using different mediums, before torching them. Some of the paper globes appear to hover at the brink of extinction. Coming through the heat and fire, they appear the most decayed but are also capable of the most radiance.

The crusty globes appear fossilized, as if they are remnants or shells of some distant past, of a life form that once was. Are the crusty globes in a terminal state? Terminal differentiation in cell biology refers to the state in which a cell arrives at its last stage and does not divide again. However, Patricia's crusty globes hint at yet another transition, a keen sense of waiting for something to happen, not unlike the pupa of a butterfly.

A quieter transformation appears to be taking place with the crusty globes. In the midst of this hush of mysterious possibilities, the crusty globes could represent a more mature state of containment, a self-contentment, and a kind of surrender. They appear more coalesced yet still complex. Maybe they stand witness to Patricia's coming through her cancer experience where she is now not as afraid, where "what happens, happens."

WONDERLAND was arrived at from Patricia's desire to explore three-dimensional work while continuing her experimentations with surfaces and materials. Patricia's palette is more restful here than in her earlier works. Perhaps with WONDERLAND, Patricia has conjured a place of fertile stillness. One that is familiar with discernible patterns, and yet forever pulsating with new possibilities and wonders.

### **Through the Rabbit Hole: Nothing is What It Seems**

Sickness, not unlike *Alice in Wonderland*'s fall through the rabbit hole, alters one's perspectives on the fundamentals of life. There is the realization that what gives life can also take life and that both order and chaos are illusions. Nothing is what it seems. Everything leads to something but not all could be grasped.

© Celine Rumalean, 2007

Patricia Chauncey, WONDERLAND, October 27–November 25, 2007  
NUMEN GALLERY [www.numengallery.com](http://www.numengallery.com)

Patricia's surfaces are not what they seem. Bone-like surfaces instead of hard on touch, are smooth and waxy. Globes that resemble rusted metal sieves are light as air.

Surfaces are not only surfaces but also histories. Patricia has embedded objects and made markings inside the surfaces and inside the globes that we can no longer witness. The globes are worlds containing worlds.

How her globes are presented or grouped perhaps comments on the creation of order out of former chaos; our interpretations of events and of the meanings they hold for us are one of those forms of order.

Patricia parallels her journey from the material, what is happening to her body, to the non-material, on how the cancer alters how she considers herself. In her work, the joy of (re-)discovering the beauty of nature is palpable and ever present. She is able to see the beauty of cancer cells in spite of the physical anguish they have put her through. Never losing sight of beauty is a form of hopefulness. Remaining able to maintain wonder under trying circumstances is a form of beauty. Patricia's ability to maintain her curiosity, imagination and wonder in her dealings with her cancer and its aftermaths is such a beauty. It is a beauty that is reflected back into her art.

### **Knowing Before Knowing: A Continuing**

"The globe is never finite." All along there is a continuance that is always taking form and always moving along.

There is a continuity of practice. Patricia Chauncey's family history is steeped in textile traditions. However, in her manipulation and transformation of materials, Patricia continually pushes the limits of her materials. Now another metaphorical layer can be considered when reflecting on her methodology. There is the unavoidable connection between these methods and how the human body can be transformed by biochemical manipulations and disease. Patricia recognizes now the cellular nature inherent in the images on her earlier textile pieces that had been completed before her diagnose of metastatic cancer. There was a knowing before knowing - a continuity of knowing.

At the age of seventeen, she was told that the DES drug her mother took to enable her to come to term with Patricia, put Patricia at risk for developing

© Celine Rumalean, 2007

Patricia Chauncey, WONDERLAND, October 27–November 25, 2007  
NUMEN GALLERY [www.numengallery.com](http://www.numengallery.com)

cancer. The drug that enabled Patricia to have this life, also has put it in jeopardy and made it more precarious. This foreboding of a premature death and the ever-present reminder of mortality have matured an instinct to clarify and deepen the contours of life. Underlying *WONDERLAND* is the sense of mortality that has always been present in Patricia's life from the start.

In *WONDERLAND*, Patricia references what has always captivated her imagination: digging up fossils and relics, and cabinet of curios. Histories are brought back to life and given new forms and universes. *WONDERLAND* is both a strange and familiar beauty, a witnessing of nature's delicate balance wherein lie our transience and our mortality.

© Celine Rumalean, 2007

Patricia Chauncey, *WONDERLAND*, October 27–November 25, 2007  
NUMEN GALLERY [www.numengallery.com](http://www.numengallery.com)