



For Immediate Release

Cynthia Winika
The Accidental Mycologist

October 11 – November 5, 2006

Opening Reception
October 12, 6pm – 8pm

New York, N.Y., October 3, 2006 – A.I.R. Gallery is please to announce THE ACCIDENTAL MYCOLOGIST, a solo exhibition of recent work by Cynthia Winika, running from October 11 through November 5, 2006. An opening reception will be held on October 12th from 6-8 pm.

Cynthia Winika's new body of work raises fascinating questions about the relationship between nature and culture. Evolving out of her deep interest in the natural world that surrounds her studio in rural Ulster County, these works are made possible only by engaging the unique properties of various types of fungi.

Her *Spore Paintings* rely on the mycological technique of the spore print. By removing the cap of an umbrella-shaped mushroom and placing it rib-side down on a flat surface, the mushroom will release its microscopic spores over a one- to two-day period, in a pattern corresponding to its ribbing. After placing the mushroom caps on a wood panel prepared with black encaustic paint, the dropped spores are fused to the waxy base by placing the panel in direct sunlight. In this process, the range of the spores' delicate colors is lost: to compensate for that, I wipe interference oil paints across the surface (like inking an etching plate), which catches the irregularities of the surface created by the spores to create deeply shimmering patterns that shift dramatically depending on the point of view and the lighting.

Her shelf fungus 'sculptures' take advantage of the oxidation that takes place when the underside of the fungus is scratched or compressed. Starting with a light tan color, the surface darkens to a deep rich brown wherever pressure has been applied, which Winika uses to record a variety of images, from the outright representational (a depiction of Niagara Falls) to the abstract geometry found in Irish passage tombs. She also applies found imagery using a Xerox transfer technique with encaustic to the fungi, adding even more depth to the philosophical conundrums raised by the headlong collision between nature and the manmade world in this unique body of work.

Cynthia Winika is a National Member of A.I.R. Gallery, and has shown her work in museums and galleries across the U.S. and abroad. Her work is held in a number of public and private collections, including: Harvard Fine Arts Library, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Rochester Institute of Technology, Reed College, and the University of the Commonwealth of Virginia. She has been a visiting artist/lecturer at many art schools including: San Francisco Art Institute, Columbia College, Yale University, Russell Sage, Bard College, and many others.

A.I.R. Gallery is located at 511 West 25th Street, NYC. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday 11am-6pm. For information please contact the director, Kat Griefen at 212.255.6651 or kgriefen@airgallery.org.