

Artist Biography

Michelle Segre was born in Israel in 1965 and has a B.F.A. degree from The Cooper Union School of Art, New York. Her most recent solo exhibition, *Lost Songs of the Filament*, was at the Derek Eller Gallery in New York City (2012). Other solo exhibitions include Derek Eller Gallery (2010) and Daniel Weinberg Gallery in Los Angeles (2010). Selected group exhibitions include *Hot Time Tub Machine* at Canada in New York City (2012); the *Awards Exhibition* at the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City (2011); *Broodwork: It's About Time* at Otis Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art in Los Angeles (2011); The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skimore College in Saratoga Springs, New York (2006); P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in New York City (2005); Kemper Museum in Kansas City (2005); Scottsdale Museum of Art in Scottsdale, Arizona (2004); and Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art in Boulder, Colorado (2000). She is a past recipient of an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award (2011) as well as a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Award (2001). Segre currently teaches at the School of Visual Arts in New York and Laguardia Community College, CUNY. She is represented by the Derek Eller Gallery in New York City, where she lives.

Artist Acknowledgements

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Museum Summer Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday: 11 AM – 4 PM (Closed Thursday, July 4)
Starting August 27: Tuesday: 10 AM – 8 PM;
Wednesday – Friday: 10 AM – 5 PM; Saturday: 12 – 4 PM
Telephone: 518-442-4035 www.albany.edu/museum



Exhibition Checklist

Cryptanalysis of the Enigma, 2013
Metal, wire, wood, plaster, clay, yarn, mylar, thread, plastic lace, photos, modeling clay, seashell
138 x 64 x 75 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Self-Reflexive Narcissistic Supernova, 2013
Metal, yarn, thread, wire, plastic bags, plastic lace, papier-mâché, photos, mylar, clay, screws, acrylic, modeling clay, wood, beeswax, dried mushrooms, cobblestone
72 x 84 x 120 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Untitled (Facsimile Drawing Wall), 2013
Color Xeroxes
45 x 120 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

The Collector, 2012
Milk crates, plaster, paint, clay, metal, plastic lace, yarn, thread, wire, rocks, modeling clay, acrylic, papier-mâché, toothpicks, seashells, pitchforks
102½ x 81 x 69 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Oracle in Reverse, 2012
Papier-mâché, metal, plaster,

enamel, beeswax, thread, wire, clay, foam, feathers, seashell, gouache, plastic
86½ x 43 x 41 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Untitled (Crumb), 2012
Beeswax, foam, plaster, papier-mâché, metal, enamel, acrylic, yarn, plastic lace, pebbles
36 x 20 x 6 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Untitled (Driftwood), 2012
Foam, plaster, driftwood, papier-mâché, metal, wire, modeling clay, plastic rod, acrylic, enamel
69 x 18 x 20 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Untitled (Hamster), 2012
Wood, yarn, wire, modeling clay, photo, steel rod, metal, putty
27 x 22 x 20 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Untitled (Mushroom), 2012
Wood, metal, papier-mâché, plaster, modeling clay, wire, string, ink, glass, sand, dried mushroom
28 x 28 x 23 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Untitled (Orange Brick), 2012
Wood, string, wire, foam, beeswax, screws, plastic rods, modeling clay, pushpins
31 x 31 x 18 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Godzeye, 2011
Metal, plastic lace, yarn, string, rocks, acrylic, modeling clay, plaster, papier-mâché, mailbox
102 x 42 x 35 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Synapse, 2011
Metal, plaster, foam, papier-mâché, plastic rods, wire, pebbles, modeling clay
59 x 70 x 64 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Three Hanging Forms, 2010
Metal, papier-mâché, modeling clay, plastic, wire, rocks, latex, newspaper
42 x 21 x 45 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Daniel Weinberg Gallery

Untitled, 2010
Gouache and India ink on polypropylene
20 x 26 inches
Collection of Geoffrey Young

Untitled (Eroded Bricks), 2009
Gouache on polypropylene
20 x 26 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

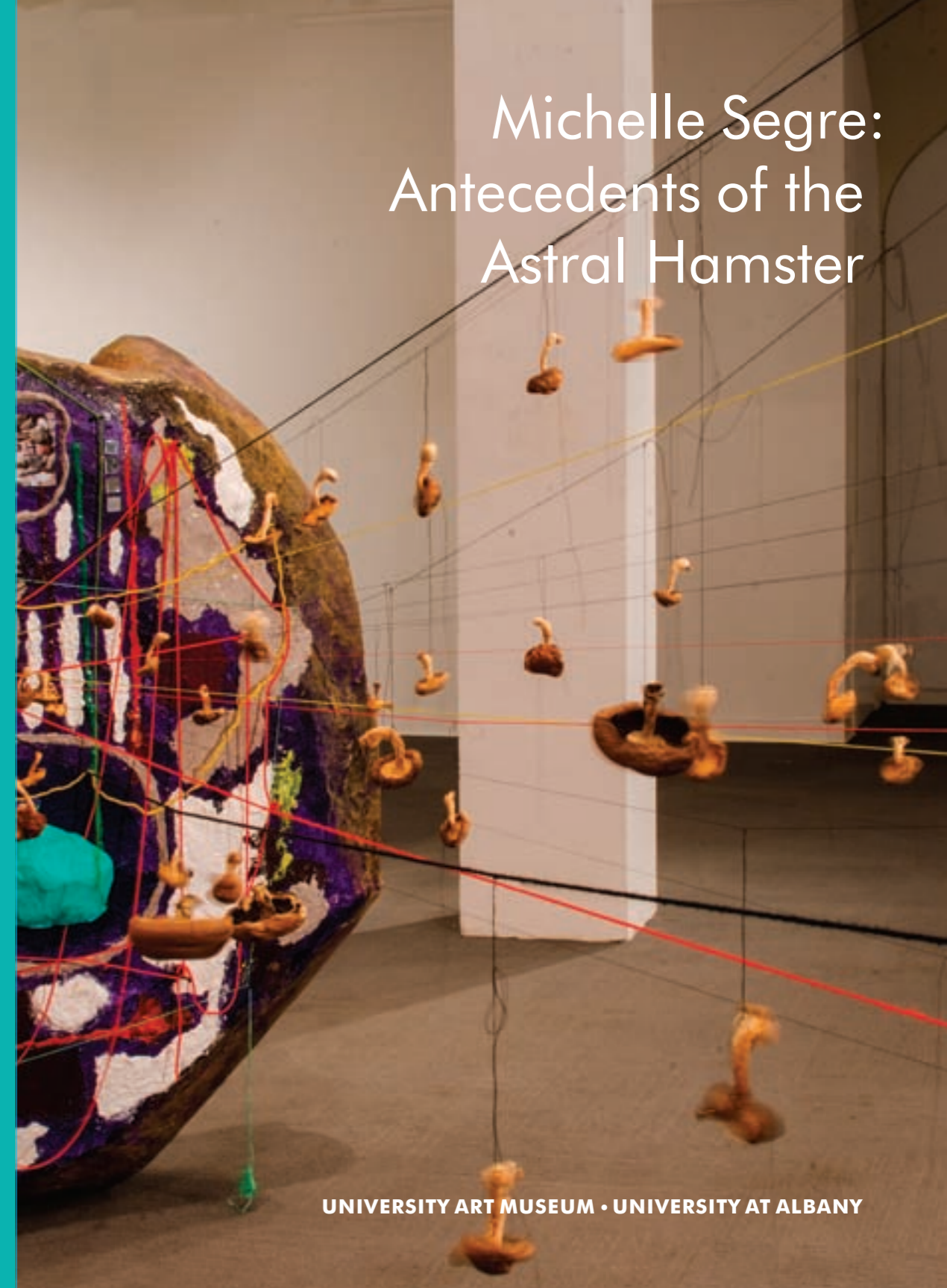
Untitled (Eyes), 2009
Gouache and India ink on polypropylene
20 x 26 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Portal, 2007
Beeswax, papier-mâché, foam, wood, metal and pigment
77 x 22¼ x 80½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Let Me Love Your Brain, 1997–2012
Hydrocal, foam, steel, beeswax, modeling clay, papier-mâché, plaster, paint
83 x 69 x 41 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery

Golden White Slice, 1996
Beeswax, papier-mâché, foam
53 x 57 x 6 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Big Cheese, 1995
Papier-mâché, beeswax, string
45 x 66 x 26 inches
Courtesy of the artist



**Michelle Segre:
Antecedents of the
Astral Hamster**



UPPER LEFT:
Untitled (Facsimile Drawing Wall) (detail), 2013

LOWER LEFT:
Untitled (Orange Brick), 2012
Untitled (Crumb), 2012

FRONT AND BACK COVER:
Self-Reflexive Narcissistic Supernova (detail), 2013

Antecedents of the Astral Hamster

A mushroom is bio-engineered for tactical deployment in the event of rain. From its rapidly hoisted gills, spores spread from the mother organism, actually a vast network of filaments embedded in the soil. Early on, Michelle Segre founded a gravely deadpan, super-scaled surrealism—Paul Thek meets Henry Moore—on the hybrid anatomies, neither animal nor plant, of mushrooms and other fungi. Happily, we re-encounter some of Segre’s monuments to cheese and bread molds in the present survey. Their oozing, bulging, fractal porosity sets the stage for Segre’s more recent work, in which she has seemingly reversed her field in every way—from slow to fast, from dense to aerated, from intro- to extroverted, from wry to euphoric. And yet Segre continues to advance her fungal metaphor (*Self-Reflexive Narcissistic Supernova* from 2013 being anchored by a huge gilled fragment of old mushroom sculpture and trimmed with actual dried specimens), which should give us a clue as to what’s really going on: just as the dense, pneumatic mushroom and its diaphanous network of underground mycelia are actually two sides of a biological coin, Segre’s seemingly opposite approaches to sculpture are but alternate phases of an artistic life-cycle.

To clarify, certain of the metaphor’s polarities are reversed. Segre’s fungal works from the 1990s didn’t pop up overnight like mushrooms—they were immense labors. Nor are the mycelium-like tissues and wirings of the new work secretive or underground; The pieces

in Segre’s recent exhibition “Lost Songs of the Filament,” with their vivid linear energy and improvisatory daring, seemed as liberated as spores in the wind.

Segre’s filaments are also musical, like vibrating guitar strings; and they are neural, like dendrites tingling with new thoughts, looking for contact. Yet again, they are efflorescent, like light bulb filaments, which aptly symbolize ideas, and electrostatic, as in old radios. *Godzeve* even resembles a crystal microphone—say the one Orson Welles employed to broadcast *The War of the Worlds*. Not only do the new sculptures suggest transmitters, they function as highly sensitized receivers, pulling in distant emanations. (The pun in the title of *The Collector* is intended.) In *Godzeve* the signals seem to have bounced off fiber art and kids’ craft projects, ancient guardian spirits and their wishful New Age counterparts.

Segre’s receivers, like old radio towers, are marvels of engineering—intricate, seemingly clumsy at times, yet finely tuned to their purpose: which is to capture any impulse, any color vibration, any spark of syntax, any inkling of how to attach one thing to another. The sculptures, in other words, are nothing less than projections of the artist’s own readiness and receptivity—so much so that Segre was unsure at the time of writing whether to affix a ludicrously violent horror-film still to one work for fear of inviting evil spirits, despite her hard-headed views on superstition.

That genuine investment in the image, even against her will, distinguishes Segre’s practice altogether from superficially related trends of “unmonumental” conglomerative sculpture, exemplified by the cryptic mastery of Rachel Harrison, who has made much of orphaned snapshots. More fundamentally, Harrison seems to find beauty hilarious, while Segre courts it with unrestrained, shamanic eccentricity. Segre keeps pushing her gestures past the comfort zone, but her contrarianism is not programmatic, it reaches for pure sculptural nerve: Robert Rauschenberg’s synchronicity, Jean Dubuffet’s protoplasmic mass, Eva Hesse’s inquisitiveness of materials, Lee Bontecou’s spidery structuralism, Joan Miró’s scalpel-carved color.

Aside from the fungi, Segre’s apprenticeship of staunch verisimilitude included cactus archetypes and Tyrannosaurus-scale chicken bones. (A relic from the latter series is refashioned in the recent *Let Me Love Your Brain*.) Even when Segre’s organic structures began to wander into fantasy, they retained their perfectionism of surface, as with *Portal*’s concentrically glowing beeswax skin, as luscious as an encaustic Arthur Dove foghorn. A superbly rigorous body of graphic work from that time smolders with like obsession.

But around 2007, channeling the far-out, sexy innocence of Niki de St. Phalle and the cheesy special effects of *The Outer Limits*, among other tonic influences, Segre outsmarted her compulsion to cover everything with

wax. The formerly hidden armatures—metal lathe, wire, plaster, papier-mâché, wood, and anything close to hand—came out to play, took over the asylum. Those astonishing developments assemble here as if emerged from wet soil after a night of rain. Which is to say that this giant fairy circle of fruiting bodies, however wildly various, is linked below-ground by the filaments of a single, deeply embedded artistic metabolism. ■

David Brody is an artist and writer living in Brooklyn. He publishes criticism regularly on *Artcritical.com* and has written for *Bomb*, *Cabinet*, and the *Brooklyn Rail*.



LEFT:
Synapse, 2011

RIGHT:
Cryptanalysis of the Enigma (detail), 2013
Cryptanalysis of the Enigma, 2013

FAR RIGHT:
Self-Reflexive Narcissistic Supernova, 2013

