

OPPENHEIMER'S CHAIR

Situating myself here, where I live, in New Mexico—
How, as a woman, can I make a work that illuminates the fissures?

In the Glass House,

Over a million photographic glass plates were made of the Civil War. At the end of the war, no one wanted them. They were forgotten, lost, sold to gardeners, not for the imagery but for the glass. In his Civil War series, filmmaker Ken Burns says: "in the years that followed Appomattox, the sun slowly burned the image of war from thousands of greenhouse glass panes."

Sits a Glass Chair,

J. Robert Oppenheimer was the head of the Manhattan Project. I had been looking last summer at a photograph I made of his Los Alamos director's chair. We all sit in Oppenheimer's chair. It's made of glass.

In White Sand,

The first atomic bomb was detonated at the Trinity test Site near White Sands on July 16, 1945. I decided to mark this event and 50 years of cold war by making a reconstructive work.

With A Tree,

The atomic scientists thought they were creating a second sun at 5:29 in the morning in the New Mexico desert. The heat of the blast turned the sand into glass. A blast so bright, a blind woman saw its reflection 70 miles away. The tree reclaims the molten landscape.

And Armor,

A story my father told me when I was young keeps coming back. He once knew someone so sensitive, it was as if he didn't have any skin. Everything touched him. Instead we have coverings that protect us— or do they? The armor is about our history of war. All that protects us is a glass house.

The Heart Beats At The Center Of The Changing Image.

The armor shatters, the tree breathes, the sun burns, the snake sheds, I dance on glass.

Meridel Rubenstein
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CREDITS

1995:

Conceptual Design Assistance

Edith Katz, landscape architect Chris Taylor, architect

Video Production Assistance

Steina

Archival Video Footage

Dancer on glass: Saburo Texhigawara, shot in Japan by Steina Vasulka
Sun and solar storms: Dr. Mat Penn, the National Solar Observatory, Sacramento Peak, Sunspot, New Mexico
Snake footage: Lorna Domke, Missouri Department of Conservation;
Todd Brown, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Glass
studio sound: Michael Warren and Spooner Marcus
Slingshot made and performed by Frank Rolla

Steel Structure Fabrication

Larry Swann

Sandblasted Glass

Dave Bond, Reliable Reproductions, Albuquerque—halftones Peter Igo,
Printmaker Studio—photo resist
Larry Swann—sandblasting

Glass Chair Fabrication

Michael Warren Lee Lyons

Armor Image

Duroclear print made at Camera Graphics, Albuquerque Armor photographed at the Higgins Armory Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts
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