

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART 250 S. Grand Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90012
tel 213/621-1749 fax 213/620-8674 moca.org

Media contacts:

John Hindman jhindman@moca.org, 213/621-1750

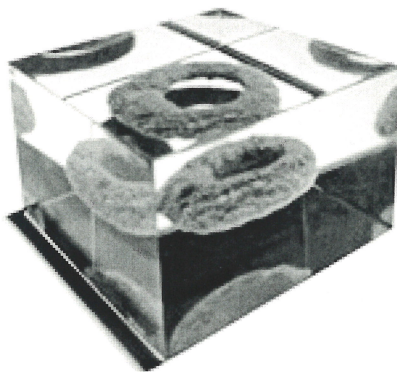
Rebecca Taylor rtaylor@moca.org, 213/621-1749

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2006

**FIRST SOLO MUSEUM EXHIBITION OF LOS ANGELES-BASED ARTIST ERIC WESLEY
AT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

MOCA Focus: Eric Wesley
March 23–June 25, 2006
MOCA Pacific Design Center



Eric Wesley
Untitled, 2005
Photo by Eric Wesley

LOS ANGELES—This spring, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), is mounting the first solo museum exhibition of American artist Eric Wesley. ***MOCA Focus: Eric Wesley*** presents a new body of work by the Los Angeles-based Wesley, who has become internationally known for his large-scale installations that combine highly crafted objects with elements of performance and a wry, pranksterish social criticism. Wesley is creating the multipart, site-specific work specifically for the gallery space at **MOCA Pacific Design Center** (8687 Melrose Avenue in West Hollywood). *MOCA Focus: Eric Wesley* is presented as part of the MOCA Focus series, a major initiative showcasing the work of emerging artists in Southern California, and is on view **March 23–June 25, 2006**.

Eric Wesley's installations present unorthodox objects alongside other, more traditional works. The juxtapositions of these "formal strategies" can provoke a broad range of responses—from the purely visceral to mostly cerebral assessments to imagined stories inspired by the unlikely groupings.

(m o r e)

MOCA GRAND AVENUE THE GEFKEN CONTEMPORARY PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER

Wesley's MOCA Focus project, entitled *Thirty Three Point Three Three Three (Dimensions Vary)*, 2006, is loosely conceived around the idea of the traditional art student's Master of Fine Arts degree requisite (and often dreaded) thesis show. Wesley is presenting an entirely new body of work that draws associations between higher-learning institutions and arts institutions, making analogies between the multiple "campuses" of MOCA and multiple sites for the work, including the accompanying exhibition catalogue as a further "site" that serves as a key or back-story to what is on view.

The architecture of the gallery is transformed by Wesley's introduction of two massive structures: a false floor that is elevated 30 inches and spans the width of the gallery, and a full-scale replica of a heating duct from his live/work studio that reaches up into the space of the museum's vaulted ceiling and then turns to meet the northeast wall, forming a huge upside-down "L" shape. In a small section of the floor, three discs have been cut from and replaced into the surface. One larger disc contains two smaller ones within it. All three discs are capable of rotating on casters that rest on an armature beneath the false floor. However, the artist has chosen to disable the rotation of the discs by chaining the moving parts together with an enormous metal chain that is visible beneath the platform.

A wooden frame encasing a thin glass box is installed on the raised floor. The glass "painting" doubles as an external gas tank that is attached to—and capable of powering—a Vespa motor scooter that is hidden in the landscaping behind the building, at the foot of the emergency exit stairs. When the gas tank is full and the Vespa is running, the wires that connect the Vespa battery to a single track light instrument in the gallery power the bulb within it. Rather than being hooked into the power source that runs through the track, the lamp gains its power directly from the scooter's battery. The halogen bulb that is normally installed in the lamp has been replaced with a Vespa headlamp, and when the circuit functions, the lamp then illuminates the "painting".

While all of the sculptures are capable of functioning, none of them actually do—one may not stand on the platform, nothing passes through the heating duct, the discs do not rotate, the circuit is cut. The fact that all of these elements are rendered non-functional perhaps forces the viewer to consider the differences and similarities between architecture, design, and sculpture. When a sculpture also functions or serves another practical, non-aesthetic purpose, then is it really sculpture? If a design is a terrible failure, can *it* be considered a sculpture? Where does the artist's intention come into play? In Eric Wesley's exhibition, visitors are asked to entertain these questions as they explore Wesley's installation—in part and in total—and the gallery space at the MOCA Pacific Design Center. Viewers find themselves invited to consider the disguised spaces, the hidden places, the open space, the insides and outsides of the building—the context within which the sculptures reside, and the possibility that the building is another one of those sculptures, authored anew by Wesley's gestures.

About the Artist

Eric Wesley was born in Los Angeles in 1973. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1997. Wesley's work has been included in important group exhibitions, including *Snapshot: New Art from Los Angeles* at the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, in 2001; *Freestyle* at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and the Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, California, in 2001; Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 2004; and *100 Artists See God*, which traveled extensively throughout the United States and to the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in 2004–05. Solo exhibitions of his work have been mounted at China Art Objects Gallery in Los Angeles; California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California; Meyer Riegger Galerie in Karlsruhe, Germany; Metro Pictures in New York; Galleria Franco Noero in Turin, Italy; and Bowie van Valen in Amsterdam. Eric Wesley is represented by China Art Objects Gallery in Los Angeles.

Publication

Accompanying the exhibition is a richly illustrated 64-page softcover catalogue, published by The Museum of Contemporary Art, which features nearly 50 full color reproductions. Designed by Michael Worthington, the book features an essay by Cornelia Butler and a biography of the artist. *MOCA Focus: Eric Wesley* is available for \$24 at all four MOCA Store locations.

Public Programs

MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C

MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C are informative discussions on current exhibitions led by arts professionals. The talks take place in museum exhibition galleries unless otherwise noted. Attendance is free with museum admission, unless otherwise noted, and no reservations are required.

The MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C series is made possible by The Times Mirror Foundation Endowment and Gallery C.

Sunday, March 26, 2006, 3pm

Connie Butler

MOCA Pacific Design Center

Exhibition curator Connie Butler will lead a discussion of *MOCA Focus: Eric Wesley* in the galleries.

The talk will be immediately followed by a booksigning at ART CATALOGUES.

FREE. INFO 213/621-1745

Thursday, April 20, 2006, 6:30pm—MOCA Grand Avenue, Ahmanson Auditorium

Eric Wesley

The artist will discuss his work.

FREE. INFO 213/621-1745

Organization

MOCA Focus: Eric Wesley is organized by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and curated by former MOCA curator Connie Butler.

Funding

MOCA Focus: Eric Wesley is made possible by generous endowment support from The Nimoy Fund for New and Emerging Artists and the Fran and Ray Stark Foundation Fund to Support the Work of Emerging Artists.

Major support is also provided by a multi-year grant from The James Irvine Foundation.

###

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) is your source of creativity and inspiration in Los Angeles through innovative exhibitions and programs by significant and compelling contemporary artists. MOCA is a private not-for-profit institution supported by its members, corporate and foundation support, government grants, and admission revenues.

MOCA Pacific Design Center is open 11am to 6pm on Saturday and Sunday; 11am to 5pm on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday; 11am to 8pm on Thursday; and closed on Monday. Admission to MOCA Pacific Design Center only is free.

For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.

MOCA Focus: Eric Wesley
Exhibition Checklist

1. **Eric Wesley, b. 1973**
***Thirty Three Point Three Three Three (Dimensions Vary)*, 2005**
Constructed floor, replica of a column, museum dead space, and various objects
Courtesy of the artist