

*Voice of Site: Tokyo - Chicago - New York*

Gaijutsu Daigaku Chirinretsukan Exhibition Hall, Tokyo, Japan

September 24 – 17 October, 2004

For a number of years Gaylen Gerber has been making works that involve a large-scale canvas that is constructed to duplicate an existing wall in an exhibition space. He then exhibits another representation (usually another work of art) on top or on front of his painting.

In this case, Gerber's painting is not sized to a wall, but instead is the same size and shape as the plinth in Piero Manzoni's *Socle du Monde* or *Base of the World* from 1961. Manzoni's *Socle du Monde* consists of a square block of iron that sits on the ground and is labeled with the title oriented upside down, suggesting that the part sitting on the ground is the top rather than the bottom and that it supports or exhibits the entirety of the world.

For his piece for the Tokyo Geidai, Gerber locates his canvas, painted in his signature gray, face down in the garden plaza, suggesting that it becomes the backdrop against which the world is represented. In choosing to reference a work by Manzoni, Gerber acknowledges their shared emphasis on the relationships between daily activity and aesthetic production in constructing meaning for their work.

Gerber's painting-*Backdrop/Everything* exactly matches the footprint of the Manzoni piece, re-presenting it as a conventional pictorial support that acts as the background to literally everything. Gerber's choice to re-present *Socle du Monde* reflects his interest in paradoxical expressions. As Gerber sees it, *Base of the World* was meant to present the world, but at the same time no single person can take in the entirety of the world. People who encounter this canvas will see it either as a discrete object or as an imaginary proposition, and what Gerber would like to stress is the relationship between the two.

*Backdrop/Everything* reflects not only the presence of the whole world in front of the painting but also the perception of the *Backdrop* as apart from the world. As a humorous aside, since Gerber is representing "everything" in front of his painting, it is necessary for him to return to Chicago (half way around the world) in order to view his work from the front, which is of course a position from which the perception of his *Backdrop* may only be imagined and remembered but not actually seen.