

BESPOKE GALLERY
547 West 27th Street
Sixth Floor
New York, New York 10001

The Scholar's Stones of Lethe Gardens: Photographs by Reuben Cox

March 2 – April 1, 2006

Reception for the artist: Thursday, March 2, 2006 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Bespoke Gallery is pleased to present The Scholar's Stones of Lethe Gardens, a series of C-Print photographs by Reuben Cox. A reception will be held on Thursday, March 2 from 6 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. This is Reuben Cox's second solo exhibit at Bespoke Gallery.

In this body of work, Cox has photographed an impermanent collection of scholars' rocks fabricated by the artist using aluminum foil. Cox's scholars' rocks are featured in both natural environments and in domestic settings where they sit side by side with antique and art collectibles. In a natural and wild context the role of light and the solitude of these aluminum foil 'rocks' afford the viewer a contemplative retreat from the human dimension inherent in their synthesis, and yet displayed in a contrived interior environment the rocks resemble more traditional *objets d'art*. Cox's photographs of the scholar's rocks featured in contrasting contexts explore both the dialogue between natural and artificial mediums and the human constructs of authenticity and collectible value.

The origin of scholars' rocks can be traced to second century B.C. China, where natural rock formations were collected and placed in private gardens or taken indoors to be honored by scholars in their studios. Over time, scholars' rocks came to represent a dialogue between the natural world and cultural value. Artists creating scholars' rocks worked with organic materials but would frequently alter the original materials in order to further evoke a specific image, thereby accentuating the innate discourse between the contemplative and natural worlds.

"In the art of the natural world, the idea that one is supposed to begin and end and in nature holds true even when an artist has moved beyond the found object and created a piece by hand: he is still concerned with capturing the randomness and unpredictability of natural creation. Thus in Chinese nature art, "the real faces of Nature" never take you very far from the original material, the "clod" or wild nature. Nature is not only the beginning, but also integral in the end. Nothing is lost." From Richard Rosenblum's Art of the Natural World.

Born in Highlands, North Carolina in 1972, Reuben was educated at The North Carolina School for Science and Math and The Cooper Union in New York, NY. His work is included in collections of The Ogden Museum, The New Orleans Museum of Art, The Center for Documentary Studies, The Alice Austen House Museum, and Howard Stein's Cameraworks.

Cox's work has been included in numerous group shows and publications and he was a finalist for the Discovery Prize at the 2005 *Rencontres Arles* festival in Arles, France. In addition to Cox's solo exhibit What a Woman Wants at Bespoke Gallery in 2005, he had two solo shows in 2005: His X-Ray Dreams at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in Cold Spring, NY and The 2003 Contract Bridge World Championships! at The Captain's Bookshelf in Asheville, NC.