



## MIKE RATHBUN

---

*I HAVE LOVE IN MY HEART AS A THIEF HAS RICHES*

**FRONT OF HOUSE**



## ARTIST STATEMENT

---

"The very posture of search, the slow movement with the head down, seems to draw people. 'What did you lose?' they ask. 'Nothing.' 'Then what do you search for?' And this is an embarrassing question. We search for something that will seem like truth to us; we search for understanding; we search for that principle which keys us deeply into the pattern of all life; we search for the relations of things, one to another."

-John Steinbeck, *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*

I think with my hands. I build contexts that provide the parts of a narrative that the participant will construct from their own experience. My artistic intent is to present, re-present and represent ideas, spaces, objects, or possibilities that have been rendered invisible by the everydayness of life. The process is not linear or logical. I hope to make a hyperbolic context that by its created nature, compels us to experience with our eyes open, so that we might, at a moment of emotional swell, look to the side and see a path that leads to our own particular longing.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

---

Mike Rathbun is based in Portland, OR, and has exhibited nationally. Some venues include Suyama Space, The Boise Art Museum in Boise, Socrates Sculpture Park, Franconia Sculpture Park, and Minneapolis Institute of Art. Mike has been recognized and funded by such organizations as The National Endowment for the Arts, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the Bush Foundation, the Virginia Groot Foundation, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, and the Regional Arts and Culture Council. More information about Mike can be found at [mikerathbun.com](http://mikerathbun.com)

## **TEXT TO ACCOMPANY *I HAVE LOVE IN MY HEART AS A THIEF HAS RICHES***

---

**RUSSELL RATHBUN**

Meaning in objects is transferable. It can be imbued collectively or by the individual. It may be built-in or detected. Meaning may also be completely consumed, leaving the object empty. Loss of meaning may also occur through leakage, as with time. A portion may be recovered through a process of effective nostalgia.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

---

**MIKE RATHBUN**

I would like to thank Jessica Helgersen, Mariah Hum, Mira Eng-Goetz, Stephen Pierce and all those at JHID who made this piece possible. I want to thank those without whose hearts and hands this work would not have happened: Kim and Ameilia Rathbun, Melissa and Scott VanBergen, Russell Rathbun, Bob and Betty Lee Rathbun, Pamela Wurtz, Steve VanBergen, Kyle Thompson, Lewis Feuer, Marian Kidd, Robin Wilburn, Spencer Byrnes, Monroe Isengard, Meagan Nuss and Lee Jimerson, and the Collins Company.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE RATHBUN

## THE OPENING OF FRONT OF HOUSE

---

JESSICA HELGERSON

The opening of Front of House is the culmination of an idea that has been churning in my head since 2007, when my husband and I stumbled upon Seattle's Suyama Space, where Mike Rathbun's *N47°36.878' W122°20.788* was installed. In his massive, movingly beautiful piece, a giant wooden skeleton of an airplane was entangled in a forest of exquisitely crafted thorny branches. I was taken by the strength and grace of the piece as well as the huge amount of labor that had clearly gone into fabricating it. I also was fascinated by the fact that this exhibition space existed inside an architecture firm. It wasn't until we moved into our new office at the beginning of this year that it became clear how we could create an exhibition space at JHID.

As architects and interior designers, our job is to create spaces or respond to existing spaces. Our creativity is necessarily enmeshed in many layers of practicality and function. I was excited about the idea of working in close proximity to a beautiful empty space and having the chance to see how one artist after another would respond to it. Our only requirement of the artists is to allow for passage through the space.

It has been fascinating to see Mike Rathbun's process on the first installation at Front of House. His approach to the work, titled *I Have Love in My Heart as the Thief Has Riches*, has been a combination of tremendously careful and laborious craftsmanship, coupled with a certain detachment. For him, the processes of invention and fabrication are paramount. Beth Sellars, in her preface to his earlier piece at Suyama Space, said it so well; "The completed installation remains for us, the viewer, to enjoy, and to marvel at the magnitude, complexity, and beauty. Mike, however, has moved on to his next set of questions." I was surprised and touched, when he installed the piece, to see how much creative freedom he gave to his students and friends who came to assist. When I mentioned that the piece would stay up for several months, he shrugged, smiled, and said, "You could take it down tomorrow as far as I'm concerned." Another important part of his process is to burn past work periodically, which he feels liberates him to think of new things without the constraints of what has come before. The purity of his artistic spirit, his emphasis on the present and the process of creation, as well as the kindness and inclusiveness of his process, have been profoundly touching to witness.

I would like to thank the following people for their help along the way in this first year: Mike Rathbun, for agreeing to be the first artist in this start-up space; Suyama Space curator Beth Sellars, for providing inspiration and support; Portland artists Heather Watkins, Pete Beeman, Andy Paiko, and Jessica Hutchins, for their friendship and support; Portland curators Stephanie Snyder, Libby Werbel, Jeanine Jablonski, and Sandra Percival, for kindly meeting with me and offering their advice and ideas; Green Gables contractor Narada Fairbank, for building out the space; my husband Yianni Doulis, for his unending support of my schemes and dreams, and JHID designer Chelsie Lee for coming up with the great name Front of House.