

# Alexander Gray Associates

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## **J. MORGAN PUETT**

*Wholesale: To The Trade Only, 1985–1997*

18 October– 2 December 2006

Alexander Gray is pleased to announce the opening of his new eponymous gallery. Alexander Gray Associates opens to the public on Wednesday, October 18, with a solo exhibition by installation artist and fashion designer J. Morgan Puett.

Georgia native J. Morgan Puett emerged in the mid-1980s as a fashion designer. Her distinctive style, which drew from sources that explored the history of garments, were hand-made, crafted of hand-dyed natural fabrics, often in wrinkled, informal states. Her quirky SoHo retail space was heralded for its evocative environment—a bewildering combination of store, art installation, architectural remnant, and factory. Models rode a salvaged merry-go-round for fashion shows, the whirr of sewing machines provided a soundtrack, celebrities mingled with artists, and clothing shared shelf space with antique farm equipment. The Wooster Street space was abuzz with activities, including art exhibitions, poetry readings, concerts, tarot card readings, as well as memorable manicures provided by critic Rhonda Lieberman. It effectively served as an ad-hoc center for New York’s creative producers. This multifaceted studio-cum-store drew comparisons to Warhol’s Factory for its spontaneity. In retrospect, Puett anticipated the changed landscape of SoHo, with its entertainment-oriented retail and brand marquees such as Prada, Abercrombie and Fitch, and Apple.

Puett closed her Wooster Street store in 1997, and archived all of its contents—from dresses and patterns to financial records and shipping receipts—most of which was preserved with natural beeswax. This Pompeian action was the subject of a 1998 exhibition at the Centre d’Art contemporain Kunsthalle in Fribourg, Switzerland. In her installation at Alexander Gray Associates, Puett critically revisits this material at a timely moment, when the lines between the art world and luxury branding are collapsing.

Since 2001, Puett has focused her artistic practice on large-scale collaborative projects that mine her interest in the role of fashion and garments on culture, both historical and contemporary, in efforts that honor labor and “missing links to history.” Recent projects have been commissioned by the Santa Barbara Contemporary Art Forum; the Abington Art Center, Philadelphia; Mass MoCA, North Adams, MA; Artex, Arnhem, Amsterdam; The Fabric Workshop Museum, Philadelphia; Wave Hill, Bronx, New York; the Serpentine Gallery, London; and the 2002 Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina. Puett received her BFA and MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery and advising firm based in New York. Our exhibition program focuses on mid-career visual artists who emerged in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Through consulting and collection advising, we provide expertise and educational experiences for our individual and corporate clients. Our ultimate goal is to provide a direct experience with Modern and contemporary art that encourages discourse around art’s role in the advancement of culture.

Gallery hours: Tuesday— Saturday, 11 AM— 6 PM