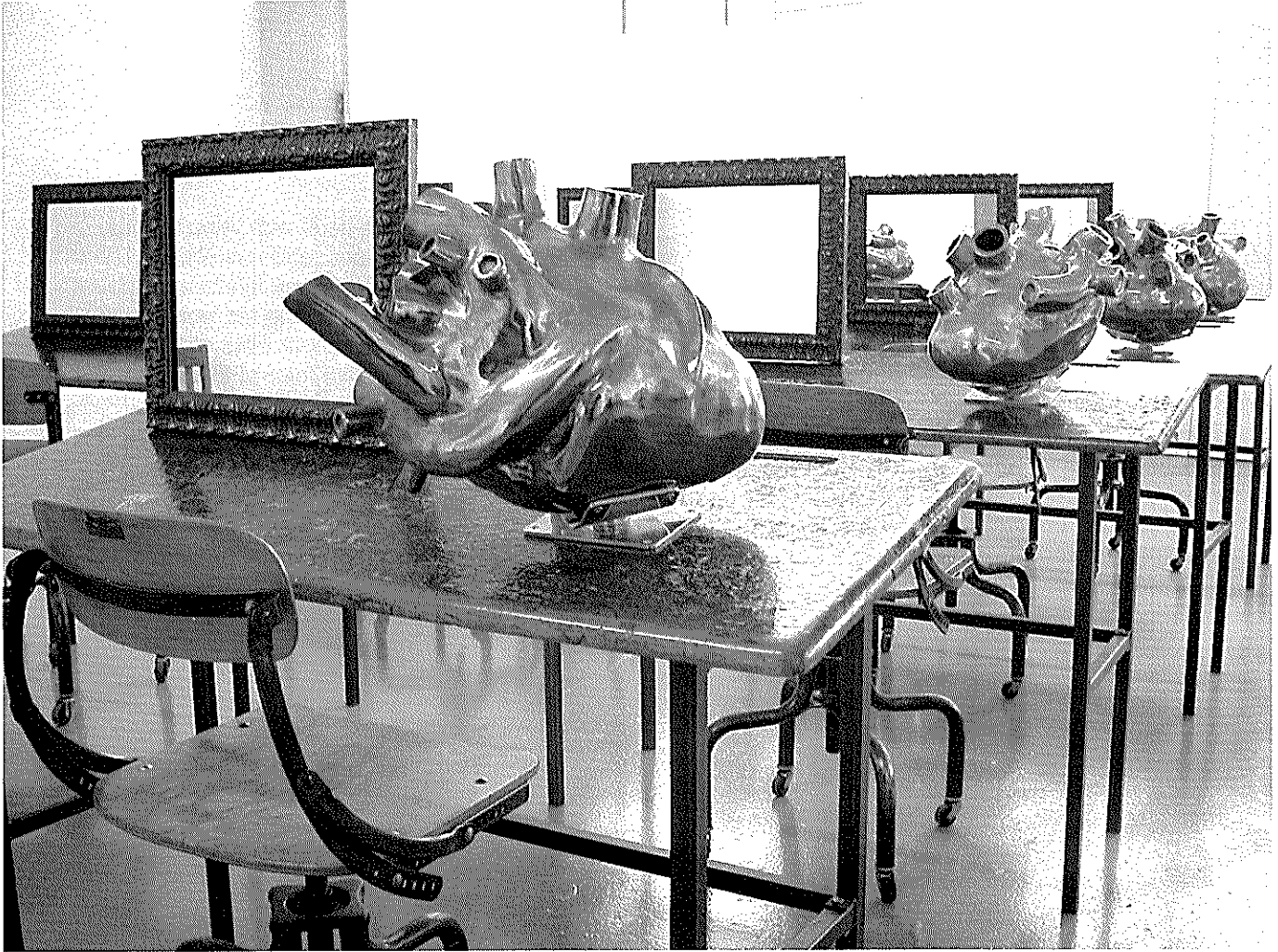


**Elba Damast**  
**Memories of Things to Come**



September 14, 2004 - January 14, 2005

## Elba Damast

### *Memories of Things to Come*

From the adult perspective childhood is a time of total potential—of hopes and dreams that lie in the future. It is a time in which all things are possible. Elba Damast's interactive, video-based installation *Memories of Things to Come* explores childhood memories and their subliminal presence in every adult. *Memories of Things to Come*, a major work developed over the past five years, is being presented at Lehman College Art Gallery for the first time.

Filmed in her native Venezuela in the area around Falcon, the installation consists of school desks with sculptural bronze and brass hearts. Gilded mirrors are mounted on top of each desk. The vintage 1940s desks—formerly used in Bronx schools—are richly marked by age and their use by generations of students. The desktops rest on fabricated metal legs that allow an adult to sit comfortably. They are arranged to suggest the regimented rows of a classroom and recall those early days in school.

Inside the chambers of each heart there is a video—of children with their clanging trays in a lunch line, their shouts on the playground, and the silent, studied details of an empty classroom. There is a video of an old woman sitting in her home surrounded by photographs and her memories. In another video the countryside, viewed from the window of a car,

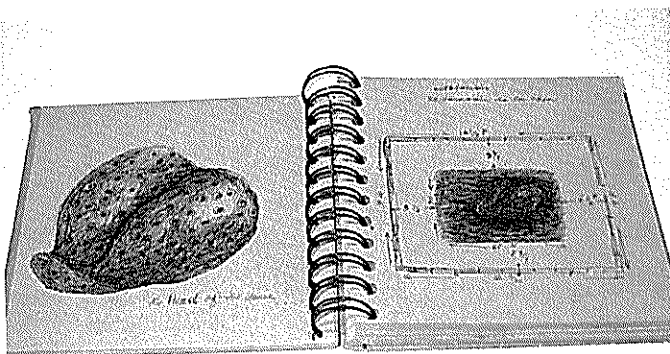


*Memories of Things to Come*, 2004, installation detail.

streams by like life itself with views of blue skies, colorful houses, and mountains. The waved patterns of a desert landscape repeat the deeply lined face of the old woman. In another video a voiceover talks of love. One of the hearts plays a live feed of the installation from a camera in the gallery, giving an omniscient perspective and allowing the viewer to be a participant in the classroom and, at the same time, above it all.

The viewer is perhaps the most important element of the work, bringing it to life. Damast believes that visiting this classroom will bring the viewer back in time to school days past, recalling those earliest experiences of collective learning. The viewer "looks into the heart" to evoke memories. The title, a reference to Proust, suggests both the past and the future. The mirror and the live video are a reminder of the present. Sitting at the desk one is poised between the memories of the past, the realities

*Sketchbook*, 1999-2000



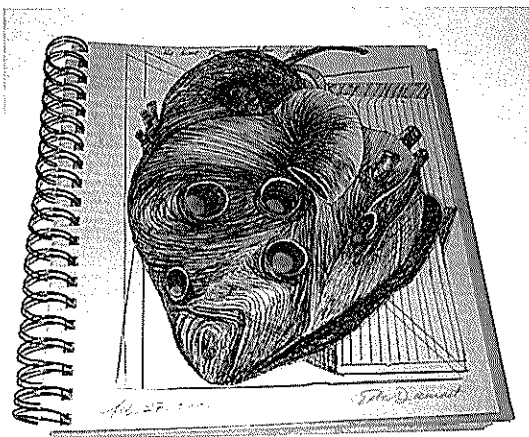
of the present, and the future that lies ahead. The installation probes the expectations of childhood and the realities of adulthood—where we started, how we got here, and where we are going. *Memories of Things to Come* is a richly layered work in both content and meaning. As in much of Damast's work, its multiple elements combine to create a complex visual allegory.

The heart remains a potent symbol throughout Damast's work. It is through the heart that memories are interpreted and hopes and dreams are built. It is the center of one's being. In her earlier work, Damast repeatedly probed the house as a symbol and an image. Like those earlier works, the heart is now the subject to which she obsessively returns, making drawings, paintings, and sculptures of this symbol. The heart she renders is not the Valentine symbol but an anatomical one, "the heart that beats in everyone...the heart that seemingly never changes and never tires." For Damast, as long as it continues to beat "there exists hope." The exhibition includes three sketchbooks, numerous drawings, and two small "palm" sculptures designed to fit into the palm of one's hand.

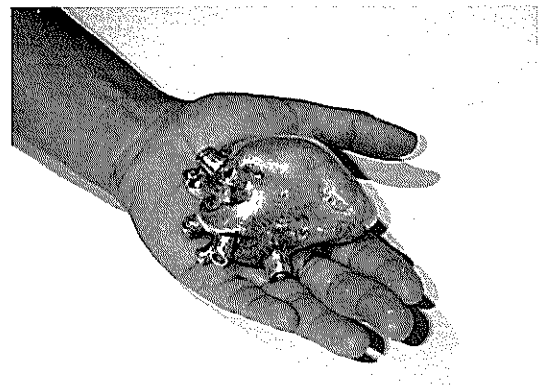
Damast was born on the island of Pedernales in the Delta Amacuro in Venezuela. She lived in Paris before settling in New York in the early seventies.

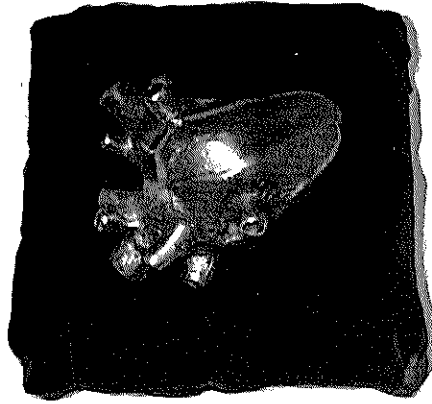
Susan Hoeltzel

*Sketchbook*, 1999-2000



*Palm Heart*, 1999-2000





Lehman College Art Gallery's exhibitions and programs  
are made possible through the generous support of:

Bronx Council on the Arts Cultural Venture Fund  
Bronx Council on the Arts Stabilization Program Management Initiative  
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs  
National Endowment for the Arts  
New York State Council on the Arts  
Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation  
Greentree Foundation  
Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro  
Edith and Herbert Lehman Foundation  
JPMorgan Chase  
Citigroup  
Friends of Lehman College Art Gallery

LEHMAN  
COLLEGE  
■ ART  
GALLERY