

# Guggenheim

A Magazine for Members Winter 2006

**SARAH ANNE JOHNSON** In her ambitious *Tree Planting* series, an installation of 65 color photographs, Sarah Anne Johnson (b. 1976, Winnipeg) chronicles what has become a rite-of-passage for many Canadians, planting trees in deforested areas of Manitoba. The young adults who participate in these conservation trips are paid per sapling, but what attracts them, says the artist, is the rewarding sense of community and connection to the land that the work engenders. Johnson records the ritual with two types of photographs: images of actual people and locales from her reforestation journeys, and shots of constructed tableaux—miniature dolls and dioramas—that the artist sculpted from memory in her studio. Mixed together on the wall, the two sets of images question the boundary between fact and fiction. But they also work together to present a richer account of the experience, expressing the mundane, physical realities of the labor—bug bites, bandaged arms, rain-soaked and mud-caked clothes—and, simultaneously, the sublimity of nature and a nostalgic longing for what Johnson calls “the closest thing I’ve found to Utopia.” The images vary in scale and format and range from portraits to figureless landscapes, giving the overall installation the impression of a private scrapbook. However, Johnson’s intention for the work extends well beyond the merely personal: her “quietly political agenda” is to persuade others of “the empowering emotion born in good old-fashioned hard work for an important cause.” —*T.M.*



Sarah Anne Johnson, *Tree Planting*, 2002–05. Installation of 65 color photographs. Edition 1/2, overall dimensions variable. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Purchased with funds contributed by Pamela and Arthur Sanders; the Harriett Ames Charitable Trust; Henry Buhl; the Heather and Tony Podesta Collection, Falls Church, Virginia; Ann and Mel Schaffer; Shelley Harrison; and the Photography Committee, 2005.43.1–65. Clockwise from top: *Camping*, 2003, 20 x 24 inches; *Nadine*, 2004, 40 x 30 inches; partial installation view at Julie Saul Gallery, New York, 2005. Courtesy Julie Saul Gallery, New York