



# tema celeste

contemporary art

## douglas r. weathersby

The Institute of Contemporary Art  
Boston

Artist Douglas R. Weathersby has been working as a sort of “janitor-in-residence” at the museum since May 2003 when he was awarded the 2003 ICA Artist Prize, earning him a solo show that opened a few months later. Arranged in a spotlight corner, his site-specific sculpture *Products Project, September 16, 2003* featured various industrial cleaning tools and products—a trash barrel, washing pail, and mop among other items—and five months of dirt collected during the museum’s installations. Wavy patterns of light and shadow were projected onto the ceiling using a lens fashioned from a shrink-wrapped trash barrel filled with a few inches of water. A quadrant of sandy-toned debris (mostly sawdust, drywall, and dirt) provided the ground for abstract drawings, which Weathersby shaped by tracing and selectively removing the debris from areas defined by the shadows cast by the cleaning tools—a significant ode to evanescence as well as to Man Ray’s and Duchamp’s 1920 *Dust Breeding*. These negative-space shadow drawings, painstakingly arranged, expose Weathersby’s background as an abstract painter in

their hard edges and formal elegance. Illustrated scrapbooks, documentaries, and live-feed video logs of backroom site-specific projects and performances showed how proficiently Weathersby converted workroom filth into art with Dadaist undertones. *Sink Scum Shadow Wet June 2003* depicted how effectively Weathersby was able to remove years of paint and grease from a white porcelain sink and recycle the scum into a permanent shadow drawing of faucets and pipes. The entrepreneurial Weathersby also conceived of his project as an opportunity to advertise his business, “Environmental Services”; Weathersby explained on a poster his mission to bring “the conceptual focus of art-making to the many cleaning and repair services offered for your home or place of work.” A sign-up station—outfitted with a pricelist that included his house cleanings, his reorganization of residue accumulations, and the documentation of his labor—also contained a drop slot with “project for hire” forms. This clever multi-media work explores both formally and conceptually the boundaries of light and dark, order and disorder, clean and dirty, and reality and illusion.

- Francine Koslow Miller



Douglas R. Weathersby *Products Project, September 16, 2003, 2003*, installation / installazione.