

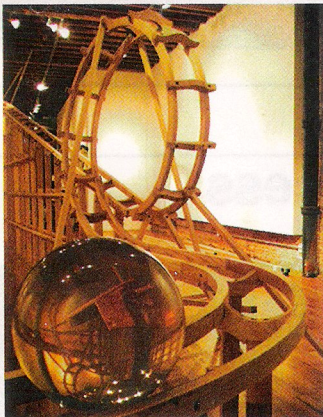
# Make up to break up

## Conrad Freiburg: *The Slipping Glimpser*

Linda Warren Gallery, Fri 8, 6–8pm  
(see West Loop).

Conrad Freiburg built his 50-foot-long roller-coasterish contraption in 15 segments in his garage. At the 11th hour, he was at the gallery assembling the interlocking sections and finessing the curves and levers designed to send a bowling ball rolling around the gallery. But Freiburg wasn't able to figure out how all the mechanisms would work until the piece was together. "It is very much an improvisational construction process," he says.

Freiburg's *The Slipping Glimpser* was named after a phrase the painter Willem de Kooning came up with that alludes to his process and imagery. The piece was also inspired by innovations presented at the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Last March, Freiburg hosted an event at which guests pushed a bowling ball down a chutelike sculpture titled *Ball Dropper*. It delivered the ball smack on top of "some dainty little sculptures." Freiburg collected the resultant fragments and sent them to a bowling-ball manufacturer in California to be encased in a clear custom-made ("P.B.A. certified") bowling ball. That's the ball that will be activated in *The Slipping Glimpser*—which, by design, will unleash its own destruction.



**BOWLED OVER** A portion of *The Slipping Glimpser*.

So, why does he go through all the trouble?

"It's about creating beauty. I'm not creating permanence," he says. "I think you can get more out of things if you are actually in the moment." Is this the roller coaster of life? And is the metaphor intentional? "I think so," Freiburg says, "but it goes beyond playing with the words." For instance, his 1999 project "Catapult for the New Millennium" started with an idea to kill rats by flinging them out the window. "It got refined into an idea of tossing things into the future and the idea of time travel."

Which is what happens when a

bunch of artists hang out. All of Freiburg's sculptures—or "dooflachies," as he calls them—are the result of talking about crazy stuff with friends. But Freiburg takes it a step further. "It's taking a silly idea and making it real," he says. Freiburg worked out of a huge warehouse until it was converted to lofts and he and his pals got kicked out. But not before they built their own bowling lane—which partly explains the presence of the sport's iconic object in his work. Not that he is any good at bowling. Recently, his grandmother kicked his ass at a game. "I said, 'Grandma, take it easy!'" he says.

Freiburg, an SAIC grad, makes his living as a carpenter and put those skills to use in making this piece that at some points is 12 feet tall and includes a loop-the-loop. For once, he didn't have to scavenge for materials; he got funding from New York Foundation for the Arts, so he was able to work with really nice wood. He chose ash, a light-colored local hardwood used to make baseball bats. "It has a lot of properties that I like," he says. "It is flexible and strong; it allows for the track to flex with whatever tension is on it without breaking it." And that's important, seeing as there will be a 14-pound bowling ball flying around. "There is a little bit of danger involved," he says. "But art should be a little bit dangerous." —*Ruth Lopez*