Artist Statement
Jean Behnke

Fete du Cellules, three cast plaster discs, epoxy paint, welded steel armature, 2011, 20"x20"x6" (each)

The title of this work translates as Party of the Cells and makes reference to cellular change. Imagining a cartoonish cell party, helped me at one time to detach from the idea of being ill or having illness. I imagined the one rogue cell that called up all its available friends and the party went wildly out of control.

Cell development, function and balance fascinate me but it is really an unknowable celebration of change and correction occurring at every moment. Although not educated in science, I am inspired at intersections of science, art and human experience where the infinite and the intimate are aligned.

I was born in Yakima, where my great-grandparents moved from the Midwest settling there in the late 1800's. Although raised in Seattle, I spent a great deal of time in Sunnyside with my maternal grandparents and where my mother was born and grew up. Growing up, I had little awareness of Hanford and what occurred there, although in 1978 I met a technician who worked at the plant and he described the toxicity issues there. Occasionally I have thought about the effects of toxicity in the areas nearby, downwind and downriver and health issues of my own family from Sunnyside. Undeniable signs point to an inter-related web of things connecting all to all, which is now clearly imbalanced everywhere and at every level. When I think of Hanford, I think about photos of I have seen of men in white lab coats and how little was known. What was thought to be a foreseeable future was produced with what was thought to be a knowable outcome. Was it the white lab coats that gave so much credibility to these developments?

Recently in 2011, I learned about some of the realities at Hanford in terms of environmental/human impact through one person's remarkable experience. I was indeed fortunate to meet an exceptional and intrepid artist Gail Grinnell. Gail was raised at Hanford, her father brought to the project to work, her mother raising a family there throughout the early days of the project. In 2011, a powerful and significant installation of Gail's work was exhibited at Anchor art space, the most important exhibition mounted in the three-year history of the project under my direction as Founder/Curator. Within the content of

Gail's workings is the imprint of Hanford and how her early experiences there, shaped her sense of being in the world.