

Bearing Witness

Compact, Heady Show Riffs On The Citywide Cartography Festival

By Deborah McLeod



FEELING GRAVITY'S PULL: Anna Fine Foer's "Magnetism--Rebecca At The Well."

AS A PARRY TO THE WALTERS Art Museum's exhibition of historical maps, the Maryland State Arts Council has mounted an elusive little show along its warren of hallways in South Baltimore, revealing that mapping is as much an unseen and ongoing process as an influential document for all times. *Look Now Look All Around* was curated by Dawn Gavin, herself an artist who works with maps as source material. The show's title has a paranoid tinge to it, and in fact *Look Now's* underlying premise conveys a shadowy apprehension of being deceived by a map's presumed certainty. To prove that there is much going on beyond a map's route numbers and color codes of streets, 12 artists express new destinations, observations, and orientations.

The exhibition introduces itself with Julie Jankowski's epic repainting of a satellite shot of North America captured on Aug. 14, 2003, the date the Northeast corridor experienced a massive blackout that, in essence, sent New York, New Jersey, and parts of Michigan and Ontario into extinction. Like taking a bite of Alice's eat me cake, Jankowski's God's-eye-view painting strips viewers of their reliance on scale, landmark, boundary, and infrastructure to reorient them to

MORE INFO

Look Now Look All Around

At the Maryland State Arts Council through June 13

A reception for *Look Now All Around* is scheduled for 5-8 p.m., April 17.

the exhibition's reality.

That accomplished, Beverly Ress' "Jay/Torus" transforms negative to positive space by cutting away a double-comb shape from a map's two-dimensional paper plane and coiling it into a skeletal three-dimensional tubular circle. A found dead blue jay--a succinct rendering of one, at least--initiates this geometric hocus-pocus. Afloat in a void of presumed unconsciousness, it functions as the source of the cut-away paper that rolls forward, ultimately to form the torus. This uniquely supernatural work was in another area show in the last year or so, and it endowed each exhibition with its infinite profundity and mathematical caper: "Jay/Torus" simplifies the complicated and complicates the simple. In limitless ways, it is about rebirth or the cycles of existence and the interchanging relationships of all matter. But for this show Ress' piece is, to pull from Gavin's curatorial statement, "a theoretical topological model of the universe."

Ress' blue jay offers a transitional segue to Tim Horjus' dot matrices and electronic-beam traffic jams. Horjus envisions atomic space from different perspectives. He paints it as colorful intersecting rays scanning the realm like prison searchlights, or collages as organized dot-filled planes that order and record contact points or photons. As collages rather than paintings, these works suggest the dots more as a temporary visitation. Horjus extrapolates his titles from the letter/number formulas that spammers use to wiggle through computer spyware in an attempt to sell pharmaceuticals, etc.

Susan Main's video, "Glass/Sky (Fly)," shares some of the same transitory condition of documenting seemingly empty space. Her interloper to the unblank page is a fly. It periodically materializes and evaporates before her camera lens as she trains it on a lawn on a sunny, still day. Nothing appears to happen at first, and time assumes the infinite quality it disingenuously promises a child. As the blades of grass barely ruffle, a sense of warm, comforting boredom settles in--and it is just about then when the fuzzy, black, out-of-focus splotch whooshes by, bringing with it age, annoyance, dark humor, and the prescience of rot sticking to the fine hairs on its legs.

Foon Sham and Anna Fine Foer employ a form of reverse big bang in approaching their complex symbolic compositions. Both artists summon ideas of receptivity, the returning home of lost aspects to be welcomed back to an inner fold, restoring and revising it. Sham nests triangular wood shapes, to which map sections have been judiciously applied, to some outermost surfaces; Foer works with cutup map papers but also on occasion with collaged images of magnets. Each artist meticulously and brilliantly reintegrates his and her imagined worlds from these prodigal shards to construct a new hierarchy, one of aspiration, magnetic pull, and reunification.