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Sun shines for No•Mad II show

No•Mad II

1429 Park St., Hartford

No•Mad II Show

Oct. 6—28, 2007

On Saturday afternoon, an accommodating natural light bathed two sides of the second floor of the building at 1429 Park Street in the Parkville section of Hartford. It was the opening of *No•Mad II*, a show of Connecticut artists organized by **Gabriela Galarza-Block** and **Hirokazu Fukawa**. The natural light was necessary because—with the building still undergoing redevelopment as a center for design-related businesses—electric lighting hasn't been installed yet. That it was dark in the center of the floor just made that section amenable to the placement of video works and "Water Paddles/Summer, 1945," a piece by Fukawa that incorporated tube s of neon.

With so much room, the various pieces don't crowd each other as happens in some large multi-artist shows in temporary venues. But there doesn't seem much rhyme nor reason to their placement. There is no intrinsic flow. Each work is there to be appreciated on its own—from the haute contemporary and conceptual to the more traditional—without reference to a larger gestalt.

Which is fine because the purpose is two-fold: to showcase local (Hartford/Connecticut) talent and to showcase the space to prospective tenants.

There are paintings, drawings, installation pieces, sculpture and photograms. On one of the TV monitors, there were two works by **Rebecca Parker** playing. One video—which is probably titled "Balancing Terrain, although I didn't catch the beginning of it—features a succession of shots of a woman's legs and feet clad in impractical pointy-toed, stiletto-heeled shoes trying to walk on inhospitable surfaces. Pillows, mattresses, a loose sandy hill, the muck of a pond's edge, an old-fashioned radiator. In a way both disturbing and humorous, it addresses the difficulty of navigating the world while confined within traditional women's roles.

Fukawa's "Three Monitors" has three TV sets on the floor arranged to face inward in a triangle/circle

formation. The two smaller sets play the same loop of war footage--World War II naval battles and artillery barrages, Vietnam War imagery and footage from contemporary violence in the Middle East including martyr tapes left behind by suicide bombers. The third and larger monitor shows still images, painted abstractions, many of which look like explosions. It is a statement, perhaps, of how the vicious violence of war, when mediated through images, becomes an abstraction itself, divorced from the true pain and suffering.

Contemporary issues are also on the minds of sculptor **Greg Bailey** and artist **Linda Abadjian**. Bailey, who teaches at Connecticut College, has sculptural works in the show that touch on the issue of global warming. "Northwest Passage 4," is a bronze sculpture that is composed of a globe of the Earth tentatively balanced on a profusion of elongated cone-like spikes. "Kilimanjaro" is a stunning piece of blue fiberglass and painted wood on the other side of the building—fortunately, the side that received more direct light. The wood is painted red and polished; the pieces look like large drops of blood on the floor. The blue, icicle-like cones are balanced on each wood base at their tip.

The "Northwest Passage" sculptures—there are two on the second floor and a larger one on the first—deal with the "prophecies of the probability of the Northwest Passage being open up" by global warming, Bailey tells me. And in characteristic keeping with the short-term thinking that marks our contemporary predicament, Bailey says, "the West is capitalizing on that and fighting over it. And meanwhile, the world continues to heat up."

The cone shapes represent "event cones," a concept drawn from theoretical physics and which Bailey specifically came upon in **Stephen Hawking's** book *A Brief History of Time*. An event cone is a conceptual/visual representation of the notion that actions have consequences, and those consequences may emanate and multiply from the precipitating event, or point, over time. So the decisions we (or the people with power to make decisions) make today—serious efforts to rein in the causes of global warming *or* salivate greedily over the thought of oil exploration beneath the melting ice of the Arctic Sea—will have consequences for the future. The cone shapes also refer to icicles, stalactites or stalagmites and the trees of the forest.

"A lot of my work is personally dealing with the changes and what I see the world becoming," says Bailey, who notes that not all his work is about the global warming issue. "It's a type of processing

of the information which I can do and then share."

Abadjian is a native of Lebanon who emigrated to the United States when she was 13. Her family left the country to escape the civil war that was then rending the nation. In this show, Abadjian is exhibiting a series of paintings addressing that conflict and its more recent dark echoes in the Summer War of 2006. These are acrylic paintings on paper, augmented with Sharpie markers, color drawings with text drawn from Abadjian's own poetry and Arabic she learned from books as a young student in Lebanon.

She returned to Lebanon for a month-long visit in 2005 and took many photographs, some of which are the basis for some of the drawings. Drawings of bodies of multiple victims of the recent war, of multiple coffins being prepared for burial and of bodies in body bags are based on news images. The paintings are powerful—there is an image of the school she attended, scarred by bombs—and they are effectively layered with the textual material.

"My work is about resilience, the endurance of people," Abadjian says. Referring to the war torn buildings she paints, she notes that "I don't have any buildings that are completely on the ground. What I want to stress is the endurance of peace. I paint for that reason."

Emily Cappa's installation "Containment of My Air Contained" will change over the course of the month the show is running. The work refers to the human inclination to collect keepsakes or souvenirs that connect us with places visited or moments in time. In this case, the souvenir is her breath, used to inflate a couple dozen or more balloons. Many of the balloons, both blue and white, are gathered inside clear plastic and displayed along the place where the wall meets the ceiling, as though they had floated up there. The rest are individually held within clear glass apothecary jars on a table. Over the course of the month, they will gradually deflate. There is an interesting interplay between the surfaces: the taut yet smooth shapes of the balloons, the slackness of the clear plastic and the solidity of the jars.

"I'm very heavy on concept for my work. I do things based on familiar objects," Cappa says. There are multiple layers of containment here—air within balloons, balloons within plastic glass, installation within building, concept within its execution.

Samuel Ekwurtzel has a couple of macabre, well-crafted installations. One, "gogo," is of a life-size yellow lamb made of polyester foam. But inside the lamb is an oscillator that causes the little creature to tremble as though it is overcome by nerves. The other, "Untitled," is made out of acrylic resin and... blood. The acrylic resin has been molded to look like a long icicle. It's attached to one of the concrete stanchions and a bucket is placed beneath it on the floor. Through the icicle flows a vein of red fluid—blood—that drips, drips, drips out of the tip into the white plastic bucket.

There are also quite a few lively oil paintings by Gabriela Galarza-Block, several impressive carved wood sculptures by **Matthew Weber** and much more. The show will be open Saturdays and Sundays through Oct. 28, 1—5 p.m. Or, you can arrange visits by appointment by emailing info@sodoproject.com. There will be a closing reception on Oct. 28 at 3 p.m.
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