

November 15, 2000

Review

## Phlat Stuff

Flipside through December 17

By Suzan Dionne

**P**hlat Stuff is an exhibition curated by Caroline Cox of two artists who are primarily sculptors - Robin Hill and Mary Judge - but who are showing, you guessed it, flat stuff. Robin Hill's floor-to-ceiling cyanotype installation covers two of the gallery walls and part of the floor. It consists of some kind of matte paper plastered on the walls and part of the floor like wallpaper, which apparently has been photographically exposed to different levels of light in the intention of documenting the gesture of placing physical matter on paper. At first glance, the deep blue and ghostly bluish-white image (or group of images) looks like a nighttime shot of flower petals or something equally ethereal and fragile. It is with a small shock of delight that the viewer eventually realizes that the images are in fact of an empty white plastic shopping bag, seemingly shot while floating in the breeze.

Hill is interested in recycling and using refuse in her work, and in the delicate project of embracing the "incidental as noteworthy," and this installation succeeds in extracting beauty from an unusual source. There seems to be something rather sad as well. It brings to mind a sight we're all familiar with - empty and discarded plastic shopping bags blowing around the Brooklyn streets, evoking thoughts of trash, waste, disrespect, hopelessness, futility. Here, however, the image is transformed. While it retains a certain sadness, it is also beautiful and sweetly joyous.

Also included in the main gallery is another small installation by Hill consisting of six, small square works similarly papered with cyanotype images of banal objects such as a glass, what appears to be the bottom of pop bottles, and what might be crumpled up cellophane. (It is interesting to note that Hill often photographs the refuse from her sculpture-making process, such as tape and bits of metal.) While it is good to see the artist experimenting with different source material, the most interesting of these six images is the most abstract, and the one which is most obviously derived, like the shopping bags, from refuse, this being the image of what appears to be used and discarded cellophane.

Not to be missed are two larger works tucked away in the Flipside kitchen, and the little take-away *The Flying Bag* (sold by the gallery for \$5 and highly worth it) Although I hate to give this away, it's too good not to include - this little work contains a story that reads "Once there was a flying bag. It swirled around and around in the air. People stopped and watched it float by. Watching the bag slowed them down. Some wanted to save it. Others wanted it to save them. The bag was happy either way. The End."

**M**ary Judge is showing a site-specific wall painting in the hallway, and in the main gallery a collection of very small (often only five or six inches high) drawings-on-paper mounted on canvas. These are artfully hung (apparently a curatorial decision) in a scattershot way in two corners of the gallery, and this choice relieves these works of what might otherwise be a certain preciousness. As it is, though, they feel more like objects than drawings, and although they are highly decorative they feel more like the relics of a process. These works are made by means of a technique called *spolvero*, which dates from the Renaissance, involving pouncing the paper and then filling the holes with pigment. Judge uses this technique - using the (pounce) point as an essential unit and folding the paper, as a means of generating images - to create linear abstract designs. They bring to mind old maps and illuminated books, sewing patterns and survey lines. While the designs look a bit like images of sound waves or magnetic patterns, these works are not slick or glossy but, rather, have a handmade, homespun quality.

Although it is not immediately apparent why these artists should be showing together, with a bit of contemplation the curating makes sense. Both of these artists are sculptors whose two-dimensional works have their origins in a system or process closely related to and derived from their respective sculptural processes, and this sense of the relic pervades the exhibition.

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