

**Boston Herald**

## **DRAWING ATTENTION**

**BCA exhibit celebrates age-old and modern traditions of sketching.**

**January 4, 2002**

**Visual Arts by Joanne Silver**

Strands of wire reach out across a wall to connect three little squares made of plaster in an untitled work by Tracy Wile. Ribbons of raw black paint, dotted with yellow lines and sprinkled with real capacitors, curl and meander over a tabletop to form Kristin Lamb's "information Superhighway."

Larimer Richards has pulverized a matchbox and its contents, then shifted the colored powders to fashion an image of unlit matches. Against a background grid of untoasted Pop Tarts, Mary Ellen Strom has projected a video containing words about food, symbols, guilt, and the United States.

All three works have qualified for admission to this year's adamantly eclectic Drawing Show, at the Mills Gallery of the Boston Center for the Arts through Feb. 10. Bill Arning, curator of the MIT List Visual Arts Center, juried and organized the 17th version of the BCA exhibition with an eye to the essence-but not necessarily the time honored traditions - of drawing.

This unusual viewpoint becomes apparent as soon as a viewer walks in the door and hears the clackity-clack of mechanical fingers in Christy Georg's typewriter-inspired "Wait/Hate (for Nauman)," or encounters the flickering video ramblings in Bebe Beard's self portrait.

"Portrait of a Crowd" by Douglas Kornfeld also explores the effect of a single mark repeated over and over. In this scrolled vellum document, the artist has drawn hundreds of rows of the international symbol for man -- the little picture that appears on bathroom doors. At first glance, the piece looks printed. Gradually, what seemed like mind-numbing repetition reveals variations and time-consuming labor, the symbols develop the seeds of personalities.

There are certain old fashioned drawings, executed in pencil or charcoal, in which the line reigns supreme. Nan Freeman's large scale "Sequin Hat for Bill" fizzes to life in charcoal but ultimately proves less satisfying than some of the shows more offbeat efforts. Sarah Hutt's "Drawing from Memory" unites several sketches of elephants in a mixed-media piece held together by beeswax, shellac and a desire to capture something fleeting. Instead of striving for a seamless whole, the artist has crafted a hymn to the process of trial and error. This spirit fills many of the strongest drawings here. Adie Russell's ink -on-paper pieces --"78 Lines Trying Not To Meet" and "79 Lines Trying Not To Meet" --convey yearning through the most modest of means: quivering, hand-drawn verticals not quite touching at the middle of the page. Dots of paint in shades of red and orange coalesce in Masako Kamiya's flurried "Autumn" -- an abstraction that is at once about a season and about the methodical accumulation of marks on a sheet of paper.

Drawing at its heart resembles this moment, when an idea becomes distinct and visible and worth preserving. If Arning has relaxed some of the ingredients of a drawing, he has faithfully preserved this one. In an exhibition brimming with work -- so that some walls.

Are packed with pieces hung "salon-style" -- he has triumphantly captured the energy of this most intimate of art forms. Thanks to the thoughtfully arrangement of each section of the exhibition, resonances between works emerge and shed light on broader themes. Cameron Shaw's veiled circles, Noah Fischer's manipulated photograph of Giacometti and Cynthia Nartonis' mixed-media eggs drawn on graph paper all probe the notions of revelation and obscurity.

Julian Cydlo's jazzy Costanzo's ghostly charcoal mother and child, and Edythe Wright's meticulous ink-on-acetate close-ups of a Wonderbra investigate different aspects of femininity. And the architectural

environment has inspired a strong grouping of artworks, including Eileen Gillespie's shadowy charcoal of the 59th Street Bridge's bold geometry and the hushed stripes of Meryl Blinder's graphite "WTC."

Some drawings trumpet their presence, as does Isabel Riley's pink felt doily on a slab of plaster. Others are nearly invisible. "Dark Energy" by Jesse Kaminsky consists of many hours of scribbling with a ballpoint pen on black paper. Julie Levesque's oddly transcendent "Dishes IN/Dishes Out," a scene recalled from the artist's childhood as one of seven siblings in a restaurant family, renders plates and cups stacked for washing in an other-worldly format of white salt on a sheet of white vellum.