

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

LIVING

SECTION



Sunday,
October 26,
2003

Mattress Factory exhibit opens up different worlds of art

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TRIBUNE-REVIEW ART CRITIC

Today, after months of preparation, the Mattress Factory — the museum of contemporary installation art on Pittsburgh's North Side — opens its doors with eight new, compelling site-specific works by 10 very different artists.

The exhibition's title, "New Installations: Artists in Residence," says it all, because the 10 artists involved, who hail from all over the country, have pretty much had the run of the museum's two buildings since June creating new and challenging works.

But even with all of them working in tandem in their individually appointed spaces, their works are distinctly dif-

ferent from one another's, maintains Michael Olijnyk, the Mattress Factory's curator of exhibitions.

"They're all individual pieces. There isn't a theme that connects them together," Olijnyk says. "It's like eight one-person exhibitions. You go from one piece to another, not taking something from the previous piece. You'll see how different they are. They're very different from each other."

That's something to keep in mind, especially when visiting the museum's annex space at 1414 Monterey St., where half of the works are housed; at what is typically the main entrance to that converted row house, visitors will find a roadblock of sorts in the form of a slanted wall that is just 15 or so

feet from the front door.

The solid wall, except for a few colored-glass objects that protrude from it, makes it more sensible to enter the building from the side door, where visitors will find that the wall is part of Margo Sawyer's installation piece.

Once inside, the slanted wall will make more sense, because inside Sawyer has created a blackened room in which several more of her unique glass sculptures are scattered about the floor. Each is lit from beneath with a slowly pulsating light in a kind of orchestral motion that renders the space unearthly, almost mystical.

Upstairs on the second floor, Lynne Yamamoto has filled

A block away, at 500 Sampsonia Way, the remaining works fill several floors of the museum's main building, beginning with the basement. There, Rebecca Holland has covered nearly 800 square feet of the floor with a half-inch slab of green translucent candy in a successful effort to transform the space while simultaneously calling attention to the architectural history of its rocky, cavelike walls.

Upstairs on the third floor, three artists collectively — Arne Peterson, Jim Drain and Eamon Brown — have filled one large room with three massive, colorful geodesic spheres around which only a few narrow passageways lead to the back of the room, where visitors will find an oversized kaleidoscope. The mirrors in the kaleidoscope create the same shape as the spheres, resulting in a dizzying, almost

delirious, relationship between real and perceived space.

And lastly, on the fourth floor, two more artists, Ann Reichlin and Curtis Mitchell, have made their mark on their spaces, but the two installations could not be more opposite.

Reichlin's works deal with issues of territory and control through the use of labyrinths, fences and walls. To that effect,

she has filled one long room with "floating and tilted structures," as she calls them, that she has constructed out of wire mesh and rebar. Looking solid yet precarious, they create a dichotomous space that seems at once dangerous and controlled.

Mitchell's work, however, is far less rigid. With a fascination with mixing household chemicals into bizarre concoctions, Mitchell delights in ap-

plying them wherever possible to create beautiful messes. For example, in one room he has poured a mixture of espresso, Pepto Bismol, Kool-Aid and Worcestershire sauce onto a large tablecloth on a dining room table.

The other two rooms contain even more semi-controlled messes, but space limits their explanation here. Better to go and see this show, which promises to be not only different from piece to piece, but very different from anything else currently on exhibit around town.