

What's up in Boston-area art galleries



Michael Beatty's "Samedifference"
at Barbara Krakow Gallery

The Barbara Krakow Gallery frames "Arise," its summer group show, as an exhibition about polarities. It's sleek, minimal, and conceptual, which is true to the Krakow aesthetic. But the greatest polarity in the gallery is between "Arise" and the small show in the venue's side gallery, the mixed-media collages by Flora Natapoff

There's nothing minimal or sleek about them. They are dense, messy pieces. Natapoff, who taught at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard and now lives outside London, has multiple sclerosis, and her mobility is waning. In the past, she has made large paintings and collages with shifting perspectives, gestural kaleidoscopes of landscape and cityscape.

These works are small, crafted in her studio from previous efforts. There's a sense of excavation about them, of delving back through time and space, and also of spackling it back together. Several have so many layers they are sculptural.

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One untitled collage has a rolling charcoal landscape across the top. Below are structures: hard angles, a purple beam that might be an overpass, and on the right, what looks like a strong arm, contoured with light. Layer upon layer of sliced--up drawings and paintings suggest the buildup and condensing of time and experience.

The works by the seven artists in "Arise" are rigorous, crisp, and inquisitive. Amy Stacey Curtis explores perception in her series of drawings "12 inches." She invited 99 people to estimate 12 measurements, from an inch to a foot, and for each drawing made 99 squares according to those wide-ranging guesses, from oversized borders to undersized interiors. The polarity here is between hard fact and estimation: Curtis crowd-sources measurements, and the squares get dense and overlapping in the middle, where they're closest to accurate.

Nearby sits Sol LeWitt's "Cube Without a

Cube" sculpture that neatly plays off Curtis's drawings, and also Michael Beatty's "Samedifference," another measurement sculptural. Beatty took a length of steel welded together at right angles and joined each end to an equal length of looping wood. The dark metal looks shorter, businesslike and industrial. The white-painted wood looks languorous.

Natapoff is unsentimental, an explorer of space and form. But her hand, in the gestures, the cuts, the accumulating layers, imbues these works with feeling: dark, sometimes exuberant; and fluid, sometimes stuttering. The works in "Arise" are sharp, but certainly more thought than felt.

By Cate McQuaid
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At: Barbara Krakow Gallery,
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