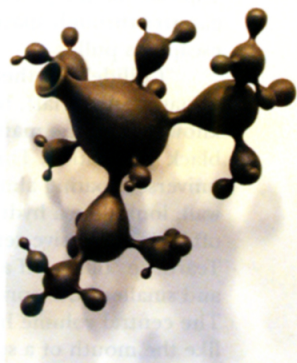


Michael Beatty: Low Fat
Barbara Krakow Gallery
10 Newbury Street, Boston
Through October 22

When Worlds Collide" is the title of one sculpture in Beatty's new show, but the exhibition is really all about balance, not chaotic destruction. There's a key to this show, an innocuous



Michael Beatty's "When Worlds Collide."

central work which doesn't attract immediate attention, but does explain the whole.

On a little podium, under glass, is a tiny black globe. The title unfolds the meaning as literally as possible: "Model of Earth as a Black Hole (actual size)." This golf-ball sized symbol of infinity anchors the other works, as the dark center for a lexicon of ideas. Some are centered and discrete objects, like the globe. Others cut linear arcs through space, as if trying to escape its pull.

"Collide" is lathed wood (Beatty's signature material), but you wouldn't know it from the matte sheen of the black iron patina. This model of the universe, floating almost free of the wall, looks like a hydra busily budding off little successive replicas of itself. Teardrops bulge off a central sphere, and smaller buds spring off of them. The central volume has an opening like the mouth of a sponge. Is it a vessel, an entrance into an unknown void, or the exit path from the primal womb?

The tension between opposing forces defines all of Beatty's work. In "Tangle," expressive arcs of wood move through space with a dancer's fluidity. Made of layered plywood, one feels the narrow beams would spring open if not for the elegant iron crosses that join them at crucial junctures. A vaguely ovoid shape is described, but the eye goes back to those sturdy little fasteners that anchor the piece literally and visually.

Shawn Hill



Detail of a Michael Beatty shelf at the Barbara Krakow Gallery.