

Sculptures built with fear and hope



Sally B. Moore: Edge

At: Barbara Krakow Gallery,
10 Newbury St.,
through April 9th.
617-262-4490,
barbarakrakowgallery.com

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Sally B. Moore
Where It Lives, 2008

Wood, cement, wire, dacron, mesh, fringe, paint, sand and tire
94 x 38 x 32 inches

I visited galleries last week, rattled by news of the economic crisis. The stock market was plummeting again. Listening to the radio, headlines seemed to screech. "Are we approaching another Great Depression?" cried the BBC.

At Barbara Krakow Gallery, I read sculptor Sally B. Moore's artist's statement before I looked closely at her work. It begins: "Wonder and fear coexist. Sometimes, they are intertwined. We must be willing to walk toward both." I exhaled and recalled that it was a beautiful day outside. All was not wrong with the world.

Moore's a good writer and a better sculptor. Her work has always embodied terror, neurosis, and the possibility of salvation. For years, she has built small, splintering, crazy-quilt architectural pieces that carry the sense of everything falling apart, then gamely, even ridiculously, pulling back together.

In this new body of work, "Edge," she boldly introduces the figure into many of her sculptures. Suddenly, her physical metaphors for balance and chaos become stories, fables on the verge of resolution. In her artist's statement, Moore shares her fascination with dreams, and some of the odd dramas she creates come from her dreams.

In "Approaching Eye Level (From Dream Series)," a small clay woman shimmies up a piece of twine hanging from one end of a horizontal rod; a bear in a cage is suspended at the other end. The two counterbalance each other. It's a perfect characterization, although I imagine an inadvertent one, of the frightened response to the bear market and the way we weigh our fear, or sometimes it outweighs us. I had to look twice before I saw a more hopeful element to the piece: The bear cage is seemingly held aloft by a hummingbird.

"Fall" also resonates with the times. It hangs high on the gallery wall, a

platform broken through the middle, with a fallen figure deep in the pocket of a safety net below. The most intricate work, "Where It Lives," has no figures; Moore says in her statement that "It" signifies imagination. The piece is classic Moore, but more ambitious than I've seen before: a shelter-like contraption on three uneven legs, with twisting stairways, broken floors, fractured landings, fences, and mesh rooms. The piece seems to spontaneously generate itself: A floor falls through, and a ladder appears. Ramshackle and precarious, "Where It Lives" nonetheless continues to grow, to vault skyward, and to say, "So you're afraid - that's OK, let's see what happens."

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