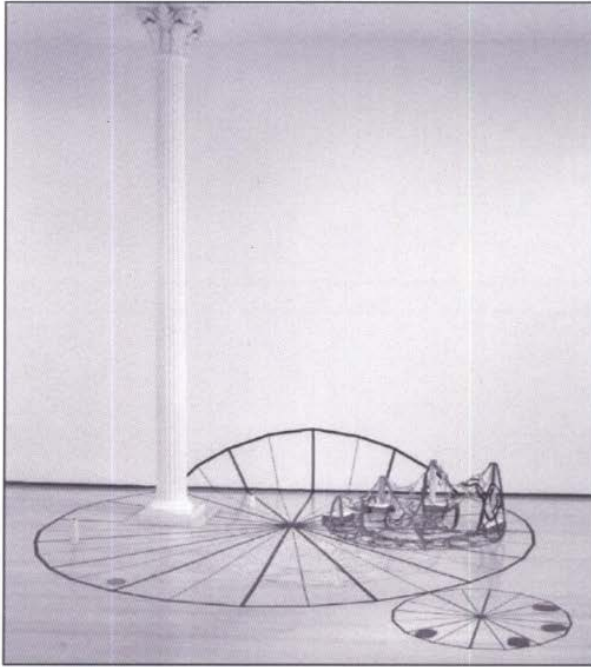


ART



Dianna Frid, "Starwheel Launchpad"

Drawing the invisible *Transcribing the space of movies, motion and other worlds*

SELECTIONS SPRING 2008
Through March 27
The Drawing Center
35 Wooster Street
(212-219-2166; drawingcenter.org)

By Debra Jenks

If you're familiar with the work of the immensely talented Nina Katchadourian, you will recognize some similarities between her interest in language and location—both physical and cultural—and the work of the nine artists she has selected from the Drawing Center's Viewing Program. Katchadourian, the program's new curator, is best known for her public work like "Natural Car Alarms," where she replaced cars' alarm systems with recordings of bird calls, and "Office Semaphore," which induced viewers to decipher coded communications from people at work by looking through a street-level telescope aimed at an office window above. Common office objects—a bottle of Wite Out, a coffee cup, a stapler, a potted plant—were assigned specific meanings and arranged by the workers to form rebus-like messages.

Brian Lund's glossary of excruciatingly tiny circles, squares, dots and dashes is an enigmatic system for translating the edits in films. His drawings are maps of the frame-by-frame action of characters from "Showgirls," "Diehard" and "Rambo," and form a sort of nonlinear Braille for the sighted. Lund's signs seem to purposely defy being read, at least in the narrative sense. There's no key for the viewer to follow. Seen as a whole, they resemble experimental music scores or aerial views of

suburban sprawl and amusement parks.

Most similar to Lund in its translation of physical motion into marks is Hannah Burr's installation "Visual Traces of Groups at Work." Burr assigned numbers to correlate with movements, human interaction, sounds, smells, and body language that were recorded (for seven hours) during the show's installation. Bits of colored paper and tape with numbers define the spots where the list of various activities took place. The corresponding list of movements hung on the wall reads like the notes of a choreographer or directions for actors in a play—entering, exiting, measuring, unfurling, pulling up pants, scratching, chewing, agreeing, disagreeing, sighs. Even silence has a number.

One of the more playful works in the show is Dianna Frid's cosmic installation "Starwheel Launchpad," which began with the image of a Ferris wheel. Constructed from low-tech materials like tape, tinfoil and toilet paper rolls, Frid creates a place where points of reference shift like the weather. Sailboats shaped like pie slices float on an astronomical chart or compass, navigating through the constellations of a Dr. Seuss-in-outer-space diorama.

Casey Jex Smith presents a fantastic realm of multi-dimensional realities. Hovering landscapes melt into prisms of color—a universe in constant flux, folding in on itself and out again, channeling ghosts of Kandinsky and William Blake. His pairing of abstract forms and figurative elements, of religious and occult iconography with personal symbolism, and a psychedelic color palette with black and white is humorous and quirky and can be stunningly beautiful.

The left side of Smith's diptych "The Big Bang in a Garden of Eden" reads like an abstract drawing of colored lines that resonate like molecules around a nucleus. In the other half we zoom out to an unearthly garden where fire and water erupt and flow from hexagonal columns resembling candlesticks or pedestals. The left hand image reappears in the sky above, only this time as a means for propelling one of the pedestal forms into orbit or as energy being emptied from a container. It has the effect of shifting our own sense of location in space, as our perception shifts from "pure" form to subject matter.

Isabelle Cornaro's "Savannah Surrounding Bangui and the River Utubangui" mixes personal and political symbols with an innovative use of photography as a drawing medium (something I have not seen heretofore). When first encountered, the work appears almost empty—a few peculiar lines carefully arranged on a plywood ground. The lines, however, are contour drawings of landscapes made with Cornaro's family jewelry and are based on photographs of the Central African Republic (her family's homeland), which was a source of gold and diamonds for its French colonizers.

The mechanical reproduction comes full circle in David Clarkson's Martian landscapes, drawn from photographs taken by NASA robots. They resemble the American West, except there's no sign of life anywhere, just rocks and craters and a feeling of uncertainty about where we are or the accuracy of what we are viewing.

A similar uncertainty takes place in Kate Smith's drawings from magnified handprints. Like Clarkson, Smith uses the lens in order to get closer to her subject. While her work has a sort of inkblot immediacy, the prints are actually meticulously reproduced in pencil from the magnified images.

Andrea Sulzer's luscious and large-scale "Spillway" is also somewhat deceptive and confounding. Here again, the subject matter is ambiguous. What appear to be mountains of refuse in a landfill (I was sure I saw something that looked like overturned books) or some sort of natural disaster, such as an oil spill, are actually the folds of a parachute.

There's no photographic source for Tina Schneider's gorgeous scratchy line drawings. Geographical forms protrude and recede in tactile crazy quilts of recycled paper scraps. Perspective twists and turns in whirlpools and windstorms of automatic energy. The spatial and textural resemblance to landscape ties her work to the rest of the group, and the panoply of takes on the shifting of location makes this an arresting show.