

November 01, 2006 "Dangling" at Dam, Stuhltrager

For years bloggers Barry Hoggard of [bloggy](#) and James Wagner of [jameswagner.com](#) have offered an invaluable, lively glimpse into their experience of the New York gallery scene and art community. This month at the request of [Dam, Stuhltrager](#), they have taken an impressive inaugural turn at curating a group show of emerging (and as yet unrepresented) artists.

The show's title "[Dangling Between The Real Thing And The Sign In The Window](#)" is derived from a 1973 address by the composer [Morton Feldman](#) and is reflective of the newly minted curators' perception of a tension on display in today's art world between substance and superficiality. The curators' choices demonstrate that works of conceptual rigor and substance can be personal and lavishly beautiful with no diminishment of integrity.

Hoggard and Wagner acknowledge a collective interest "provoked by work that addresses humor, conceptualism, history, politics and the unexpected, so long as there is an identifiable aesthetic." Their "organic, serendipitous" curatorial approach yields an uncalculated, unified comment on American character, both during wartime and during this aggressively redefining cultural moment.

One of the cumulative and unexpected effects of "Dangling" is its curatorial reminder that to look unflinchingly upon the world is to see with a detachment that encompasses joy, humor and sheer beauty even amidst destruction. Arguably, this is most apparent in the focus of three works by [Jaishri Abichandani](#). Her glamorous images of South Asian drag queens - some of whom have sought gender autonomy by acquiring political asylum in the U.S. - remind viewers that the concept of liberty is still an active, if struggling, component of America's ideal.

It is in this context of human possibility that the viewer encounters [Susan C. Dessel](#)'s devastating *Our Backyard: A Cautionary Tale*. This sculptural installation is an instance where the literal becomes transcendent. No further spoilers provided here. Just go.

With surreptitious power, the works in this show take an unflinching and earnest look at the current moment. There is a strange joy evident in embracing the complexities that garnish simple truth. It is revealed by each work contributed to and - in the site specific case of Dessel's installation - created for this group show. At Dam, Stuhltrager Gallery - until Nov. 13th - these gems of candor and unabashed beauty radiate that so-often-hoped-for culminating synergy: As with Democracy, the sun eclipses even its most spectacular parts.