

Art Column

'Boredom' exhibit may pique interest

By GLENN McNATT
SUN ART CRITIC

It may seem paradoxical that an exhibition devoted to the subject of boredom should actually turn out to be, well, pretty interesting after all.

Yet happily that is the case with *Formalized Boredom*, a modestly scaled but lively Art-scape-affiliated show at the Creative Alliance in Highlandtown.

Curator Ding Ren has brought together five emerging artists who interrogate the notion of boredom, either by deliberately doing boring things — such as repetitive household chores — or by drawing inspiration from ennui as the spark for doodling and other forms of compulsive mark-making.

In one way or another, all the artists seem concerned with the ritualistic aspect of everyday activities that, on their face, at least, seem to lack much meaning or purpose. In engaging these behaviors, the artists suggest that boredom, listlessness and lack of interest are actually more complex states of mind than one might imagine.

Adeye Dersse creates large-scale drawings entirely out of

tiny dots inscribed within tiny squares. The sheer tedium of the process is also its reward, however, by allowing the mind to wander freely and ultimately producing a soothing sensation of inner peace and relaxation.

Andy Moon Wilson's *Wall of Doodles* is an installation of more than 100 small drawings dashed off in moments of ennui. The idea seems to be that the very distractedness of the work represents a kind of escape for the artist and therefore is meaningful despite being pointless.

(Wilson has a similar piece at Maryland Institute College of Art that consists of more than 1,000 such doodles. The mere act of trying to see how many one can look at before one's attention flags is itself a fairly interesting exercise.)

The show also includes work by Shin-Yi Wang, Arthur Soontornsaratool and Jan-Michael Casison.

Hours at the gallery at 3134 Eastern Ave. are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Call 410-276-1651 or visit www.creativealliance.org.

On a smaller scale

New York-based artist Gary Simmons, who curated the Art-scape-affiliated exhibition *Observation Deck* at the Baltimore Museum of Art, also selected the 10 artists in the BMA-juried show at Maryland Institute College of Art.

The MICA exhibition is every bit as handsome as the BMA's, though necessarily on a smaller scale. It includes at least four works that could be described as installation art, which may suggest either that Simmons is partial to the medium or that he



Carolyn Case is among the artists whose works are featured in an exhibit at MICA's Fox Building.

uncovered a particular abundance of local talent in the field.

Jackie Milad's *Do the Same Thing*, for example, is an installation consisting of scores of closely spaced, white paper cut-out figures, all of which seem to be simultaneously engaged in taking their clothes off.

The piece, which suggests both a commonplace activity and the vulnerability implied by the act of disrobing, starts out as a thin trickle of figures along one wall that gradually widens as it reaches the room corner, then turns and trails off along the adjacent wall.

Rocyeun Kim's *She Is Lori* presents four pairs of life-size female figures on Xerox paper pasted to the wall. Portions of each pair have been cut away, leaving an ambiguous, partial image that curiously resembles a cubist painting.

Kim's piece implicitly asks how much we can really know



"Alphabet" show is at MICA.

about another person. It's doubly ambiguous because the images we see are actually reproductions of reproductions, raising the disturbing possibility that there is in fact no authoritative "original," at least not one we can grasp.

I was also impressed by Dawn Gavin's *Atlas*, which consists of hundreds of very small, circular map fragments attached to pins arranged in a circle representing the globe.

We recognize the globe, but the map fragments are so tiny we can't tell from them where on earth we are, which may be a permanent existential condition.

The show also includes works by Carolyn Case, Noah Hyleck,

Ian Jehle, Charnan Lewis and George Grace, Steven R. Riddle and Wilson.

The gallery is in MICA's Fox Building, 1300 Mount Royal Ave. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Saturday; noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Call 410-225-2300.

The ABCs of art

At MICA's Bunting Center, *Alphabet: An Exhibition of Hand-Drawn Lettering and Experimental Typography* presents several dozen complete sets of alphabet letters created by adventurous artists and designers.

Many of the alphabets in the show are restrained, formally elegant modern updates of traditional lettering.

But others can only be described as flights of inspired whimsy. They include alphabets crafted from foods, body parts, wire sculpture, chair frames, stuffed animals, mazes and cut-paper snowflakes.

In other words, you've got to see them to believe them.

It's fun to go through this show and try to make out individual letters in each style. You'll probably come away with the feeling that some of these inventions are indisputably works of genius while others are so quirky that they richly deserve the obscurity that undoubtedly awaits them.

The gallery is in MICA's Bunting Center, 1401 Mount Royal Ave. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Saturday; noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Call 410-225-2300.

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