

## ARTHOUSE @ 85 ROCKVIEW ST.

by MATTHEW NASH

So, when a real estate developer decides to promote a new pair of overpriced condos with two weekends of art events, I tend not to think too much about it. But given that the event is packed with a virtual *who's who* of Boston art-scene regulars, that some of the work is interactive, that it was curated by Brendan Killian, that there is free food and wine, and that many of the artists will be on hand for conversations about their work, I am very interested. Of course, it helps that it is two doors down from where I live.

This is the third "ArtHouse" event, whose scheduling has been more-or-less annual. Like the previous two, it seems to be a combination of reveling in, and struggling with, Boston's alternative scene and the need for space to show work. On one hand, with the boom in housing and condo development in the past few years, an opportunity like this makes perfect sense. Artists are craving space, and developers are looking for new ways to promote property. On the other hand, a thriving alt-scene would be filling some of the desires among artists for clean white walls.

That said, the "ArtHouse" experience is quite amazing. Many of the artists have created pieces that truly utilize the space they are in. Not the least of these is Douglass Weathersby and his 'Environmental Services' project. He produces an immersive environment that is, for those initiated to the ES experience, familiar and immersive. If it is possible to be densely minimal, Weathersby has a corner on that aesthetic.

Other artists tackle the space with grace as well. Esprit de Corps presents a delicate combination of draped fabric, strategically placed text, and projected video to turn an ordinary bedroom into a fascinating encounter. James Hull's clock creations alter a staircase in an amazing and pleasing way, while Samantha Fields has altered a pantry into a protected womb of white fabric. Danielle Krcmar's sculpted pieces, of a material that appears to be concrete, hang on thick white ropes in a



Samantha Fields among her work.



stairwell, simultaneously dense and delicate.

Every room in the house is jam-packed with work. Robin Mandel presents one of his sculptures, and some delightful photograms on the porch. Nicole DeBoer's drawings meet viewers in the entrance hall, and Caitlin Rockman's paintings fill a living room. The abundance of pieces actually pull one through the house, creating a guided tour that is an interesting way to experience real estate.

A particular delight is the work of Erica Von Schilgen, whose pieces use gears, tiny hand-crank, and music boxes to animate montage works of elaborate elegance. It's possible that someone may be seduced into buying a condo simply through a fascination with this amazing work.

Another piece, one of many included by Megan Goltermann, hangs in the upstairs bathroom. It is a series of white dripping globules, sculpted from plaster, that hint at both playful childhood fascinations and more adult inclinations.

Much of the art is more traditional, meaning it hangs on a wall and is neither interactive nor installation. Amy Carpenter's cute and colorful paintings have a room to themselves, as do Alec Strasser's creepy post-apocalyptic works. Kelly Carmoody's classically styled portraits feel out of place in such a modern setting, yet their elegantly painted subjects throw in the ironic twist that makes her room unsettlingly appropriate.

"ArtHouse" may be a promotion for a pair of condos, but it is also a chance to see some great art. Sadly, by the time this piece is published, it will have passed. It is important, however, to acknowledge that great art is being shown in many places throughout our city. As our lively alternative scene becomes a fading memory, events such as this may be the new face of non-commercial art in Boston.

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Links:  
ArtHouse Boston

*"ArtHouse" was on view May 6-7 & 13-14 at 85 Rockview Street in Boston's Jamaica Plain neighborhood.*

It featured work by

- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Adam Lampton        | <i>Kelly Carmoody</i>  |
| Alec Strasser       | <i>Leah Giberson</i>   |
| Amy Carpenter       | <i>Liz Alexander</i>   |
| Catlin Rockman      | <i>Megan Golterman</i> |
| Danielle Krmar      | <i>Nicole Deponte</i>  |
| Douglass Weathersby | <i>Robin Mandel</i>    |
| Erica Von Schilgen  | <i>Samantha Fields</i> |
| Hillary Tolan       | <i>Sue Murad</i>       |
| James Hull          | <i>Esprit De Corps</i> |



Artwork by Kelly Carmoody.



Artwork by Megan Goltermann.

*Fields image by Matthew Nash.*

*All other images are courtesy of the artist and ArtHouse Boston.*

**Matthew Nash** is the publisher of *Big RED & Shiny*.

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## ARTHOUSE @ 73 SPRING PARK AVE.

by MATTHEW NASH

“Are you here for the art, or for the property?”

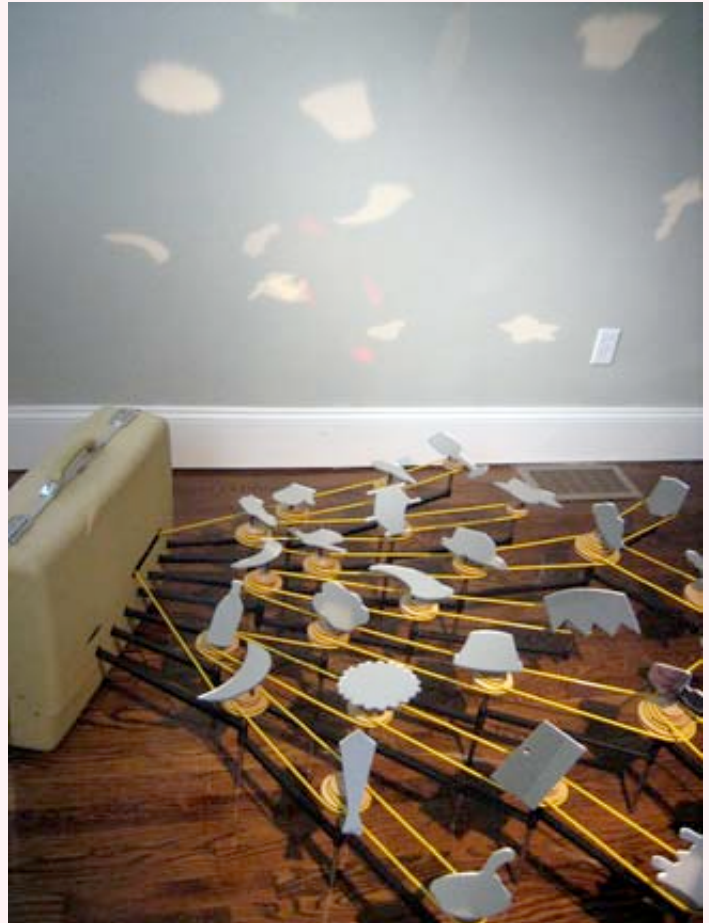
This question was overheard several times during my visit to the latest incarnation of Arthouse, this time at 73 Spring Park Ave. in Jamaica Plain. Like its predecessors, this exhibition is built around the dual purposes of showcasing art and real estate, and once again Brendan Killian has put together a great collection of artwork. The fact that there were real estate agents hovering with business cards at the ready did not, surprisingly, detract from the experience of the work. Much of this was due to the presence of many of the artists, happily talking about their work, and reminding viewers that Arthouse is very much about the art.

I imagine it must be very hard to curate a show that is meant to highlight a (future) home, since many artists become physically ill at the thought of their work becoming “decoration,” yet the carefully chosen pieces spread through the three condominiums do a great job of showcasing the talents of their creators and the space that houses them.

Many of the works are *about* space, architecture and our experiences with site, home, and domesticity. The photographs of Jennifer Uhrhane explore dilapidated spaces, worn architecture and nostalgic elements of the home. Hanging in newly renovated rooms, they serve as stark reminders of the impact of time on domestic and urban environments.

The sculptures of Christopher Frost explore architecture through a reduction of scale. His numerous pieces in the show are buildings in miniature, sometimes braced by elaborate structural supports, other times hanging sideways on a wall. Within a space that we are expected to consider for its architectural values, Frost’s pieces re-invest the very walls they hang on with complicated, ironic and funny new meanings.

One of the most beautiful pieces (among many) in Arthouse is by Robin Mandel. An array of small mirrors, cut into the shapes of moons and clouds, razor blades and liquor bottles, spin on motors under bright lights. Their reflections move across the wall, overlapping and distorting, creating a space both child-like and disturbing.



Work by Robin Mandel.



Work by Samantha Fields.



Samantha Fields has a room all to her self, where she proves again that she is the queen of domestic art. Her space is dominated by a knitted lounge chair, surrounded by a colorful knitted blanket. A corner space is crowded with brightly colored rugs and blankets, and the walls are hung with images of domesticity. Her best piece by far, though, is a sneaky video that can only be viewed through the open crack in the closet door and reflected in a mirror: footage of the artist trying on every pair of her shoes. It was filmed, and is shown, at foot-level.



Work by Elizabeth Alexander.

Nearby, Sue Murad plays with the short-term nature of the Arthouse with "The Taperoom: a time based installation". Here she has attached rolls of tape to the walls that, over time, will eventually make their way to the floor. The tension of the potential movement within the space turns a simple material and a small room into strong work.

Another artist playing with the space and exploring the closet space is Elizabeth Alexander. Her cut wood installations and wall pieces, along with some cut paper works, activate the room and have fun with the complexities of form, shadow and discovery. In one alcove, space a wall of cut wood cascades outward, while in the closet a tangle of cut black paper grows down the white walls and reaches, tentatively, through the open closet door toward sunlight.

There are many beautiful works in the Arthouse, far more than I could describe here. Erica Von Schilgen's crank-animated pieces are lovely, as are photographs by Doria Grace, John Reilly, and Liz Alexander. Paintings by Linda Cordner and Sara Theophall, drawings by Corazon Higgins and powerfully creepy sculptures by Ann Hirsch each bring some new delight or discovery as one passes through the rooms.

This two-weekend event is a great opportunity to see (and buy) some wonderful works, so make your way out to JP before you miss out.

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Arthouse Boston

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*"Arthouse" is on view April 7, 8, 14 & 15th, 2007 at 73 Spring Park Ave in Boston's Jamaica Plain neighborhood..*

*All images are courtesy of the artists and Arthouse.*

**Matthew Nash** is the publisher of *Big RED & Shiny*.

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