

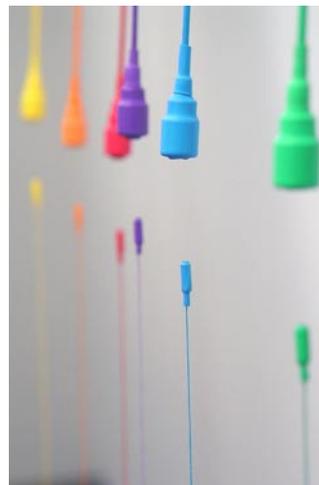


Julianne Swartz,
“Speculative Mechanics
***persistent optimism”**
Josee Bienvenu Gallery, through
Oct 23 (see Chelsea).

Julianne Swartz’s techie bricolage has had so much museum exposure recently that it’s hard to believe this is her first solo show. Six months ago, she strung a tangle of cables up the stairwell at the Whitney Biennial and piped in “Over the Rainbow”; viewers were left to debate whether the museum was Kansas, Oz or both. In July, under the aegis of the New Museum, she built a periscope onto the Bowery’s Sunshine Hotel, enabling residents to use the tube to visit with passersby.

The eight freestanding pieces in “Speculative Mechanics *persistent optimism” include several smaller periscopes, one of which offers the viewer a reflection of his or her own face. Another (balding gentlemen, beware) peers down at the top of the viewer’s head. The title’s “optimism” is most immediately visible in a rainbow-colored line of plugs and sockets, constructed from magnets and thread, hovering tantalizingly close to one another along the wall. The “mechanics” make themselves noisily known in a tower of raw wood and clock parts, ticking and tocking away frantically, hands whirling and wobbling, without telling the time.

If the artist’s larger, site-specific installations detect the anxieties of a place and broadcast them, these more contained pieces communicate the concerns of the drawing room, taking their subjects-self, time and the yearning for connection-very literally. Some of these works may endure on their own, but others are more effective as portraits of the artist noodling around in the studio, assembling the machinery for her next public project. With any luck, Swartz will get to put that clock in Grand Central, where its ticking will really resonate. -*Sophie Fels*



Julianne Swartz, detail of *Spectrum*, 2004.