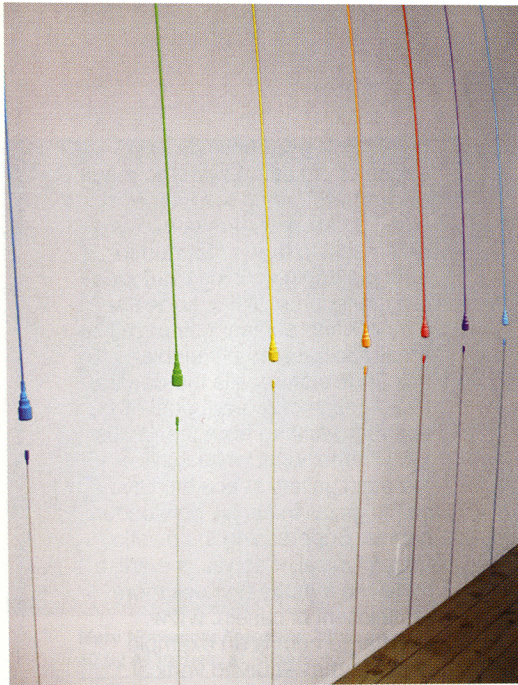


Art in America

November 2006



Julianne Swartz: *Spectrum (Double Blue)*, 2005, magnets, thread, plastic, wire, hardware, 103 by 48 by 28 inches; at Lisa Sette.

Julianne Swartz at Lisa Sette

From large, lovingly formal photographs of bubbles to an elegant little hall of mirrors she calls a "Hybrid Periscope," Arizona-born artist Julianne Swartz has pursued the translation of ordinary materials into extraordinary experiences. It's the very everydayness of her materials—PVC pipe, magnets,

Plexiglas, thread—that accounts for the almost invisible quality of her work. More than one person who entered the gallery during this show, titled "Attractions, Suspensions and Dislocations," wondered aloud where the art was.

Swartz's installation pieces exhibit the rigorous, organic logic of a snowflake and prompt the same kind of wonder on close inspection. The more the viewer studies them, the more questions emerge: How exactly did she get those tiny magnets to attract and repulse each other so as to achieve equilibrium? How do her "participatory scopes," as Swartz has called

them, refract and reflect the space the viewer is standing in? Where is that light coming from, and how is it reaching me?

Like so many of Swartz's pieces, *Purple Corner Reach* (2005) looks modest at first glance: an arc traced through the air at about chest height by what appear to be two purple lines. Closer inspection shows that one "line" is a seemingly telescoped plastic wand affixed to the wall reaching out to another, far more slender filament, which is attached to an adjacent wall. The core of the piece resides in the gap between the two linear elements and the way tiny, unseen magnets at the end of each filament strain toward one another, keeping the sculpture aloft.

Spectrum (Double Blue), 2005, is a rainbow of the same broken filaments, this time reaching almost from floor to ceiling. Thicker cords, looking like components of an electrical wiring project, arc down from high on the wall, while threads of the same spectrum extend up from the floor. Again, magnets hold the elements taut. The colors are bright: one line is red, another orange, another turquoise blue and yet another parrot green. The overall impression is of power and fragility. (In fact, when one visitor ran his hand through the waist-level spaces between the lines, interrupting the magnetic force that holds the pieces in place, the entire sculpture collapsed.)

Equal parts scientist and poet, Swartz produces work that is analytical and methodical, but also engagingly whimsical and generous.

—Deborah Sussman Susser