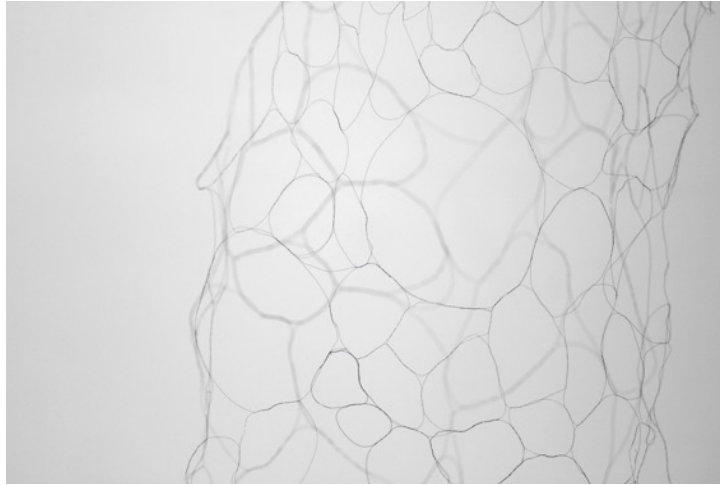


Vasari Diary: Julianne Swartz, Munch Meets Schoenberg at the Met, and Artists Playing With Dolls

BY *Barbara A. MacAdam* | Excerpt POSTED 01/02/18 4:46 PM



Julianne Swartz, *Zero Weave* (detail), 2017, enameled copper wire.
COURTESY THE ARTIST, CHRIS KENDALL, AND JOSÉE BIENVENU GALLERY

Making Heavy of the Light

To understand what makes a medium a medium and what makes nothing something, Julianne Swartz leads us to act on all of our senses, and, in the process, renders us her most unreliable medium—breathing, singing, walking, touching, blinking, we can't help activating her fragile environment.

Swartz constructs her sculptures from the humblest of things—paper, wire, string, mirrors, magnets. The finished pieces vibrate slightly, appearing to breathe; it is we viewers who, with the slightest of (often inadvertent) motions, bring them to life.

Shadows assume both lead and supporting roles, as in her *Drip Drawing* (long), a skinny fabric fragment with a slender shadow. It's a tenuous sculptural form, subject to the vagaries of illumination.

Working with sound waves and kinetics, Swartz calls into play optics, magnetism, space, and time. All of this can be witnessed in action at New York's Josée Bienvenu gallery through January 13, at the Museum of Art and Design (MAD) through February 25, and in ongoing installations, including "Harmonicity, the Tonal Walkway" at MASS MoCA; "Blue Sky with Rainbow" at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; and "Terrain," at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. The Perth installation is an optical piece, one that, Swartz told me, "gathers sunlight through fiber-optic cable and brings the light onto the site." In one place, it makes a rainbow-like pattern; in another, a beam. "It's not functional," she said, "but the sunlight collector I use has been used in architecture."

For the group show "Sonic Arcade: Shaping Space with Sound" at MAD she has contributed 18 glass objects. Although object-based, she explained, "together they make a sonic installation. Each object makes a particular tone." Through physics and electronics, she continued, "these are essentially instruments."

Technology and craft combine to create an emotional component. For Swartz, "sound is a way to get to emotions. Today I use it as a more tactile way to convey emotion."

"Sometimes you see or feel the sound vibrations as a way to transmit the content without going into narrative," she said. As an example, she captured her father breathing at the end of his life; she was, as she put it, "taking out the narrative and communicating through vibration."



Julianne Swartz, *Bone Score* (Paper Zero), 2016, stainless steel wire, magnet wire, magnet, abaca paper, amplifier, audio player, wood, and sounds of: breathing, a whispered conversation, a timpani drum, rustling paper, a child's laugh, a storm, and thunder.

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