

BARTOW+METZGAR



CORRUPTION



It was a startling and revelatory moment when I saw the big colored dice.

It was the middle of the installation week and I noticed the dice lying among the tools and materials sculptors Bartow+Metzgar were using to realize their current installation, *Corrupture*. It wasn't entirely surprising to find the tools of chance in the B+M palette. A large measure of their practice throws its trust to the unpredictable and unanticipated. Their work does not aspire to wind its way toward some singular predetermined form, but instead takes as a given that—within any set of conditions and materials—there are innumerable versions of a possible form. There is no best version, there is only the one that has landed right here right now.



The projects undertaken by Bartow+Metzgar are arenas within which space is both created and disrupted. There is a pointed exploration of "things in the world" and the implications of rethinking things and structures as active agents rather than static entities. Using a simple set of algorithms or directives derived from certain known facts (size and shape of the gallery, its lighting track configuration, etc), B+M create an exploding assemblage whose unfolding growth highlights disparate and unexpected connections and relationships between objects and images. Elements of the urban environment (sound, signage, architecture) are reconfigured as the links and hybrids that invent new forms. Objects and images

are manifest within a context that relies on (and relishes) rethinking space as an unfolding potentiality.

Despite their use of predominantly "hard" materials, B+M are pursuing some rendition of organic, spontaneous flow. While *Corrupture* has landed in this form—this version of itself—there exists a strong suggestion that it is still in the midst of becoming, an exploded view that is still exploding. It has not been resolved with finality and, in fact, it will never again exist in its present form. Its temporal nature speaks acutely to the moment and its desire to inhabit the moment with an emphatic presentness.

The B+M methodology combines intent with play, purpose with accident. Working within predetermined parameters—parsing the gallery into shaped zones and predicating how their sculptural forms reside within these zones—involves no small portion of derring-do. But problematizing their practice never becomes a problem for B+M. They operate with the knowledge and expectation that the resolutions exist and will become apparent, that the work will—in a sense—resolve its own problems.

There is plenty of elegance within the chaos. The colored tape drawings defining the zones within *Corrupture* will operate provide an energetic and graceful point of departure for the work. Prior to any physical element of the work being situated, the taped zones already suggest possibility in all directions. It is not dissimilar from the compelling drawn quality of any large mathematical equation—it's a gorgeous thing long before you ever approach an answer.

Corrupture also confronts the notion of visual

B+M CORRUPTURE
9-2-06

ZONE 5



allure with a form that is almost intentionally abrasive in its aspect. It's not ugly, but it's also not intended to be beautiful. It is what it is. It is all elbows and knees, jutting out and jostling and groping to define its personal space. It isn't any more confrontational than it is ugly, but it does demand one's attention. It is a thing that, once encountered, must be addressed. Even a cursory glance creates awareness in the viewer that this cluster of forms is not mere coincidence. There is an internal logic at work, whether we can immediately discern that logic or not.

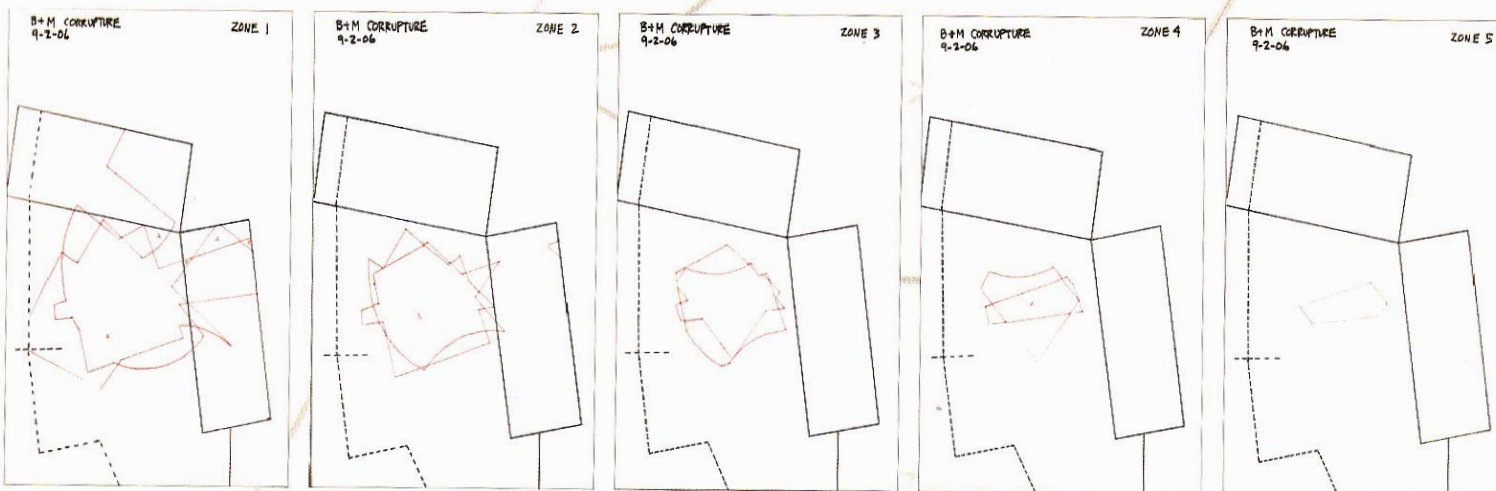
The designation of "Bartow+Metzgar" is key to understanding this internal logic (one could call it the internal faith) of their practice. It does not merely reflect the collaborative aspect of their practice or the gesture of turning oneself into an artistic "brand," a common enough trope in recent years. It is an overt clue to the notion that intersections, connections, and mutual reliance are integral parts of their work. The final form of *Corrupture* only works as a confluence of structurally-dependent things, similar and dissimilar elements holding each other together.

There is a mode of perpetual transformation within the practice of B+M, in both concept and actuality. *Corrupture* is literally comprised of the spare parts of numerous previous works, reconfigured and combined with newer elements. The painted, printed, and video images used as samples of the everyday were culled from urban environments including Taipei, Montreal, Rochester, Vancouver, and New York City. Video projection and audio elements are treated as malleable and transformative as the more concrete sculptural forms—a portion of their video samples served as the "template" from which they realized the painted static on the walls surrounding *Corrupture*.

Bartow+Metzgar are continually re-examining one's embodiment with the everyday, in that bodily perceptions are continually assaulted with a multiplicity of sensorial stimuli. All of these factors become opportunities for the investigation of potential mediators within the open Bartow+Metzgar equation. To them, there is no such thing as too much.

More mediators equal more experiences of the world.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator



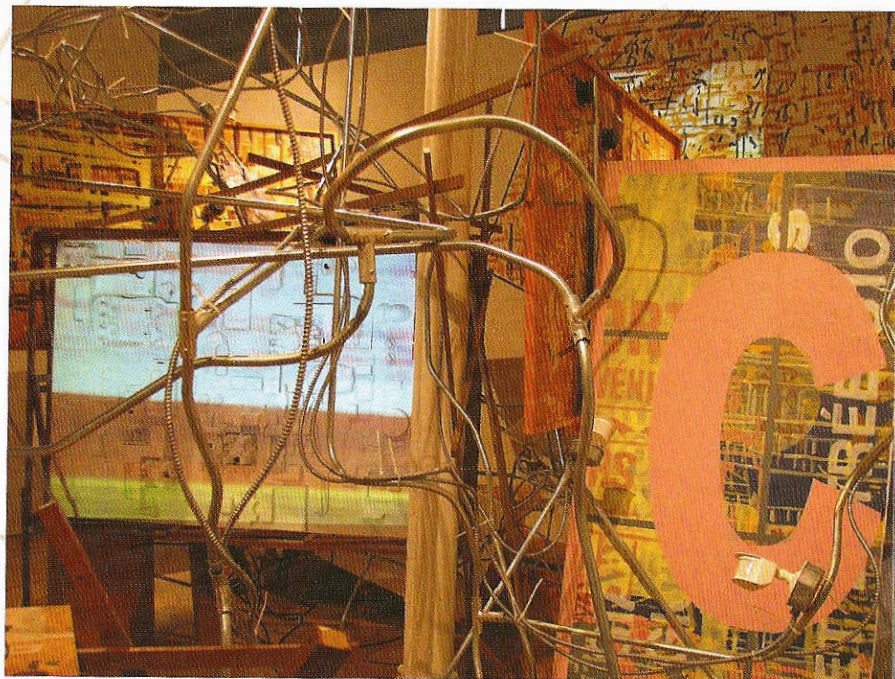
BARTOW+METZGAR: Corrupture

These drawings represent a set of placement zones developed from an algorithmic system (a simple set of directives) that utilized the gallery's spatial dimensions and partition capacity. Installation components were placed respectively into the zones with the use of a categorical system developed for this exhibition.

The use of a system derived from what is inherent to the gallery space (dimensions, spatial properties, location, etc) stems from an interest that B+M have with regard to mediators and their capacity to problematize the world. For this installation, the gallery was considered an active agent that could determine the layout of B+M's assemblage. Our methodology treats the gallery as a fully active space that is inherently complex and heterogeneous (multiple and varied).

B+M are also interested in the connections that are produced when things, ideas, objects are joined as structural, but not necessarily practical, entities. What is a thing becoming something else, where does it move, how does it sustain itself, what are its utterances, how does it exist?

Bartow+Metzgar



BARTOW+METZGAR • Corrupture • September 16 to October 28, 2006

Bartow+Metzgar was established as a two-person collaborative in 1999. Paul Bartow and Richard Metzgar were trained in visual arts and architecture. During the course of their collaborative practice, they have used the notion of assemblage as a way to investigate one's embodied experience in the world, specifically with regard to perception. A current project on view is *Colloquiseum* (2006) at Evergreen House, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. Both Bartow and Metzgar are also active members of the international art collective spurse, an installation *sub-merging (a wetland project)* is currently on view at the Indianapolis Museum of Art through December 3. A recently completed project, *Dis/Relocation: sensing place* in Montreal was sponsored by the arts organization Dare Dare, Centre de diffusion d'art multidisciplinaire.



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