


Review: The Heliocentric Project

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LOCATION:

[Pacific Northwest College of Art Galleries](#)
1241 NW Johnson
Portland

HOURS:

Mar 4-Mar 27 Sat 9:00am- 8:00pm



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Summary:

"The Heliocentric Project," an installation by four local artists -- Emily Ginsburg, Melissa McClure, Nan Curtis, and Julia Stoops -- addresses how time and space are measured by the vernal equinox, the moment when the sun's center crosses the equator, equalizing day and night. The artists, who all teach at PNCA where the gallery is located, collaborated on this project over the last year and a half.

Review:

When artists create environments within a gallery, they must consider that galleries, like libraries, can be meditative spaces. "The Heliocentric Project" doesn't exactly soothe the senses when you first enter the Philip Feldman Gallery. The space is well-lit, and a bright sun image confronts you when you walk in. The wall is part of an obelisk-shaped "room" within the gallery that forces viewers to circle it, but not go inside. On another wall with a small video image of the sun, warm air blasts out from several holes, as if simulating the heat of the orb's rays.

But "Heliocentric" also offers viewers contemplation. The opening sentence of a T.S. Eliot poem circles the walls with the phrase "At the still point of the turning world." A dark space at the back of the gallery offers that point of tranquility. The "black hole" -- as Nan Curtis, one of the artists in the show, refers to it -- is a place where there is little sensory input. Inside, you hear poetry. According to Curtis, the artists likened the obelisk shape to the Kaaba, the shrine in Mecca that Moslem pilgrims walk around.

The artists were not interested in conveying an overt spirituality in their work, but rather, the qualities of light and equilibrium. Walking around the walls, it is easy to think about the path that the sun takes, or the fact that for centuries, people believed that the earth revolved around the sun. "Heliocentric" is a place to linger and contemplate the universe and our place in it. Or it can simply be a place to indulge the senses.

The artists' collaborative process will be the subject of a gallery talk this Saturday, March 20 -- the day of the equinox. The talk begins at 4:30pm and is followed, at 5:46pm, with an observance of the precise moment the equinox occurs. The public is invited to attend. -- Anne Martens, CitySearch.com Visual Arts Editor

Also on display at PNCA:

In the Feldman Gallery's Project Room -- "Wallballs," an installation of gem-studded spheres by John Torreano.

In the Commons -- "Forty New Prints," by Yang Yue, a visiting professor of printmaking from China.