



View of Gelah Penn's installation *Swing Time*, 2006, monofilament, Dacron line, lead weights, plastic beads, dimensions variable; at Dam, Stuhltrager.

Gelah Penn at Kentler and Dam, Stuhltrager

For her third solo show, Gelah Penn constructed a site-specific installation with six large and two small drawings at Red Hook's Kentler International Drawing Space. Six drawings (2003-04) were hung in pairs in the small storefront gallery, one above the other. At first they appeared somewhat dreary, but close inspection revealed blots of white and shimmering gray amid the splotches of black ink.

The different-size circles could have been made by dip-

ping the eraser end of a jumbo pencil in ink and then roughly stamping the heavy white paper. Most of the blots are loosely connected by nervous graphite squiggles. The drawings look like snapshots of bacterial colonies taken through a microscope; they're messy and alive, yet contained. *Splink #3* evokes a swarm of insects gathered around a flowering vine, while *Splink #4* (both 44 by 60 inches) includes an iciclelike formation with gray and white drips.

The main event was *Detour*, which spilled across three walls as if the drawings had come to life—in Technicolor. It was Sarah Sze-esque, but more delicate and static, and where Sze pieces together things like plastic cups and cardboard boxes, sometimes animated by whirring fans, Penn uses neon-hued plastic filaments twisted together into knots and loops and flecked with tiny rubber balls, cut-out felt circles and flashes of copper wire. *Detour* was partially tethered to the wall with straight

pins, and some filaments mysteriously emerged from and disappeared into the wall.

Two small framed works on paper (each 7½ inches square), hung in a back room, combine radically shrunk and simplified elements of the drawings and the installation. One includes eight tight loops of monofilament, the ends of which are tucked into tiny holes poked in the paper. In the dimly lit room, the action was doubled by the shadows, which looked like wobbly pencil marks trying to catch up.

In a group show at Dam, Stuhltrager in Williamsburg, Penn installed *Swing Time* in the gallery's cube-shaped back room, which opens onto a sunny patio. Here, twisted loops of the same delicate vinyl thread were used to similar effect. A dense thicket of tangled red and black filament hung above the back door, flickering with curls of neon yellow. Small clusters of filament fell like phosphorescent hanging plants from the rim of an off-center, pyramidal skylight.

Swing Time was more fluid than *Detour* and had a greater sense of movement. On one wall, a row of attached loops were pulled taut and slightly downward, implying rushing water. Another wall was much quieter and more sparsely occupied, with about a dozen scattered, thick black coils and a single red, woundlike twist.

—Leigh Anne Miller

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