

## Community

# To sleep, perchance to create art at Becker Gallery

By R.B. STRAUSS.

"Paintings, Drawing, and Videos" is a multifaceted exhibition by the collaborative artists Kocot and Hatton. It runs through May 20 at Larry Becker Contemporary Art (www.artnet.com/lbecker.html), 43 N. Second St. in Philadelphia's Old City gallery district.

This is an intrinsically mystifying show, in that the paintings and drawings are created in the interval between wakefulness and sleep, with the artists waking at individual intervals through the night to work on a single piece until completed. The result is art that embraces added humanity on a very primal level to resonate in a way that no other artist's work can.

As for the videos, they deal with natural processes, and are yet a further mystic presence in the gallery.

Like all the paintings, "Breath No. 2" is square and (for the most part) monochrome black. It is

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also the baseline work from which the others flow.

Texture is paramount, the surface unbroken, and the oil stick medium applied in layers mere molecules thick.

There is a grand calm here, and in context with representational art this piece is analogous to that time which is darkest before the dawn. Rather

than yielding a hypnotic effect, the work assumes that those who encounter it are already in such a state and thus deepens one's trance until the realization that the painting is a passage into another universe.

Further into this alternate realm of the artists' making is "Split Ground — (veils) No. 2." This features a surface that is richly textured, with vertical "veils," which in reality are built up sections of medium. Meanwhile, a very thin and pale diagonal line runs across the lowermost section of the painting. This alludes to the split ground and is also a visual counterpoint to the "veils."

Like all these paintings, perspective is a physical act on the part of the viewer, inasmuch that the work accrues details from varied angles and also as one approaches the work up close from afar. Yet there is a direct correlative with our world as well, that being the pale streak itself, which brings to mind the unwavering straight trajectory of a shooting star falling to earth.

One of the most fascinating paintings is "Additive Subjective Properties-Yellow's Shadow." This piece is all rough-hewn surface covered with nodules of medium, each one erupting from the black surface in a rich shade of plum. There is a tactile sense of purpose here, something physical on a basis that is very solid indeed.

This is no analog of night, but rather something mysteriously geological, with the nodules like a mineral formation still to be discovered. And yet, here and there is something else, something almost subliminal. The merest wisps of yellow, like the bioluminescence of but a few fireflies erupting into being.

This is the heart of the piece, deep down there beneath all those layers of oil stick.

The drawings are as varied as the paintings, while similarly created by a singular process — that being the thinnest of lines of ink superimposed one atop another in a vast array. Like the paintings, too, various angles away from or nearer to the drawings affords them different perspectives. A perfect example is "12 May - 21 May 2005 (blue code)."

This features layer upon layer of thin horizontal lines, though there are two points of departure, one subtle, one subtler still. Moving diagonally up at a slow incline from the bottom left across the piece is a "break" of sorts in the visual rhythm that suggests a geological fault line. Also, from a certain angle, a circle seems to appear directly in the center of the piece in a most uncanny manner.

The work of Kocot and Hatton is refreshing and deeply spiritual as befits art that has been made through ritual to reveal intense intent.