

NEW ART

examiner

JUNE/SUMMER 1991
Volume 18, No.10

MINNEAPOLIS

The Minneapolis College of Art and Design Gallery (MCAD, 2501 Stevens Ave. S, 612/874-3790) continues to be one of the very few small, reliable nonprofit spaces in town, hosting work that could hardly be shown anywhere else. The current show was no exception. Large, site-specific, deeply poetic and utterly unsalable, the conceptual work of New Yorkers **Kristin Jones** and **Andrew Ginzel** provided a sort of oasis from the influences of commodity and economics that attend any visit these days to the warehouse district dealers.

Jones and Ginzel needed lots of room for their large, involved installations—lyrical, nature-based work generally featuring combinations of carefully considered natural forces and sensuous objects, the former dependent on the latter for substantiation, the latter on the former for the liberation of change. Their *Naos* was a collection of several hundred small glass bowls arranged in a kind of cellular rectangle. Filled predominantly with paper and wood ash—or in some cases with water, small mounds of cerulean or sharp red pigment, or nothing at all—the “cells” encroached on an island of serenity at the installation’s center, a patch of raked orange pigment covered by a glass table top on which sat a variety of small sculptural objects and a ticking metronome. Ten sturdy tree trunks stood guard around this central space, reinforcing its positioning as a kind of oasis of “life” amid the debris of consumption.

Built specifically for the MCAD space, the work was sited so viewers on the second floor of the open foyer/gallery can look down onto it. From this vantage, the piece seemed to beg for some kind of summary—a reading of the overall cell pattern as though it were a field of benday dots awaiting visual combination into a larger picture. And there were surprises from up there, like the green leaves floating in hollows carved out of the tops of the “guardian” tree trunks and the way the water in the bowls flashed quicksilver.

But the beauty of *Naos*, like the energies that drove it, was quiet. Finally, the ticking of the metronome set a pace for the piece, the slow but unerring progress occurring within the installation’s small world. Crouched down next to the work, the viewer learned its smallest and most vital secrets. In one corner, condensation slowly gathered on the terrarium’s transparent dome as brilliant green mosses gently swelled within its hemisphere. In another quarter, a small chunk of ice expired, giving itself up to the water that surrounded it. And across the breadth of the work, the draft from visitors passing through the gallery doorways caught small scraps of the black ash and redistributed them. It’s in these details that Jones and Ginzel made their stand: a quietly profound plea on behalf of nature’s poetic side that exhibited a sanguine faith in the powers of transformation, on both the ecological and personal scale.

by Jeffrey Kastner