



Reviews, profiles and news about art in Chicago (BETA)

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## Review: Karen Lebergott/Rowland Contemporary

Painting, West Loop

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### RECOMMENDED

By enabling us to resize terrain, shift vantage points, and chart personal landmarks with the ease of a mouse click, virtual mapping applications like Google Maps and Google Earth (along with built-in automobile GPS systems) are making street maps interactive and customizable: psychogeography, meet Web 2.0. In an exhibition titled "Coming Apart—In-Visible Cities," Karen Lebergott uses city maps as the metaphorical starting point of an investigation into personal narratives and historical landscapes. Palpably handmade and willfully poetic, Lebergott's densely collaged works collapse numerous distinctions, starting with past and present. Different iterations of city space are layered in colorful, gleefully anarchic pastiches. Nameless streets and highways twist and fold in on each other, sometimes bulging from the walls like tunnels or hidden passageways. City blocks scrawled hastily in black ink may be partially painted over in bright hues, like color codes without a key. While Lebergott's paintings certainly invite top-down forms of archaeological scrutiny, their success also depends on how well they hold together as paintings and/or as sculptural objects (yet another categorical distinction this artist's works implicitly question). The show's largest piece, a floor-to-ceiling collage executed on twin scrolls of paper spilling out onto the floor, provides an affirmative answer. Titled "Disruption," the painting can be read as an aerial map, an expressionist collage and a simulated urban edifice (from a distance, its surface recalls the graffiti-tagged exterior of a crumbling building). Viewed in its entirety, the show's kaleidoscopic perspectives on urban space add up to something Google Maps can't come close to capturing. (Claudine Isé)



*Through December 13 at Rowland Contemporary, 1118 W. Fulton, (312)421-6275.*