

Time Out Chicago / Issue 101: February 1–7, 2007

Review

# The Nature of Disturbance

rowlandcontemporary, through Feb 10.



Justin Berry, *Mastodon*, 2007.

★★★★★★

*Disturbance* in this exhibition doesn't refer to the common psychological sense of the word, although Sarah Mae Stone's cluster of works on paper do evoke unrest through the gaze of a ghostly woman who peers out at us in three of the pieces.

The group of artists—M.F.A. candidates at the School of the Art Institute assembled by Dan Devening—presents cool and crisp visages in painting, drawing, sculpture and photography. What is so disturbing about that? Well, good art should be a little disturbing; something needs to be out of place that doesn't quite work. That's what gets your mind stuck on it and causes you to really think—it's what holds your attention. *Disturbing* can be conceptual and formal, not just sick and twisted. Here the word is used in a linguistic sense: to throw into disorder, to agitate, to discompose. The spare abstract paintings of You Ni Chae and Zak Prekop do this subtly; little tremors in the paint handling keep your eye on the canvas. Carefully aligned compositions are saved from banality by a stray drip here, a loose touch there, and the edges of these paintings, which are unfit and wild, throw you back into the picture. This formal disturbance happens physically with Justin Berry's sculpture *Mastodon*: A delicate cube of paper has been stabbed to death until the very wooden spears destroying it become the scaffolding keeping the structure from collapsing.

The frame of disturbance provides a theoretical arena for the show, but a lot of the work extends far beyond that idea. For instance, the woman embracing a mound of dirt at the water's edge in *From Here*, Carrie Schneider's large photograph, was inspired by the movie *From Here to Eternity*. In that famous flick of passion starring Deborah Kerr and Burt Lancaster, lust is a force of nature. The emotional intensity portrayed here provokes us to consider the disturbing nature of longing.—*Erik Wenzel*