

# CAUGHT UP IN THE LIGHT MATRIX 158

## The work of Kitty Kraus

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art • 600 Main Street • Hartford, Connecticut

Through May 2



The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art has reignited their MATRIX Series with its first new installation by Berlin artist Kitty Kraus.

The MATRIX program began in 1975 with the Wadsworth being one of the first museums offering a program to actively bring attention to contemporary art at a time when contemporary art was rarely embraced. Serving as the model for similar programs in museums and galleries around the nation, MATRIX saw such talent as Sol LeWitt, Willem de Kooning, Christo, Cindy Sherman and Andy Warhol, and showcased 157 artists in total, many of whom were showing in their first US exhibition.

The relaunch of MATRIX comes after a two-year hiatus. Under the supervision of Patricia Hickson, the museum's new curator of contemporary art, MATRIX will exhibit the works of three young and exciting emerging artists from around the world. "Kitty Kraus, Justin Lowe and Kim Schoenstadt are three remarkable young artists whose work is distinctive and new, yet still strongly influenced by the history of art," Hickson explained. "I look forward to reenergizing the contemporary program and to exploring new approaches to creatively engage the community and the contemporary art world with the Wadsworth."

And we look forward to this as well. Connecticut is often seen as a black hole of traditional landscape paintings and still life, though an energizing movement toward abstract and contemporary art is here in the land between Boston and New York.

MATRIX's 158th artist, Kitty Kraus, provides the Hartford community with a dazzling display of green and white light. "The green light is caused by using American glass," said Director of Public Relations and Marketing Kimberly Reynolds. "That was something the artist was not expecting." Regardless, the overall effect is stunning and not short on impact.

Constructing her mirrored light boxes, Kraus uses everyday materials: light bulbs, mirrors, glass and scotch tape. The MATRIX installation includes seven of Kraus's boxes, which all reflect their own unique display against the gallery walls, ceiling and floor. The MATRIX gallery

is long and somewhat narrow, entered by a single door. Once within the gallery, the visitor seems caught up in the light — yet outside of it. It is much like a conversation with a person — there is so much more inside the mind (the box) that we don't have access to. In experiencing the installation, a personal effect grabs hold, perhaps leaving one with a feeling of inclusion — or perhaps even isolation. There is a feeling of melancholy in knowing these beams of light could reach out to the world but are captured within gallery walls.

Kitty Kraus' work has been exhibited at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York City and the Sculpture Center in Long Island City.

The opening night of MATRIX 158 was an upbeat and stylish evening. The juxtaposition of MATRIX with the fine examples of Wadsworth's old master works felt delicious, sophisticated and right.

| Lisa Mikulski

LEFT PAGE: *Untitled*, mirrored lightbox.



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