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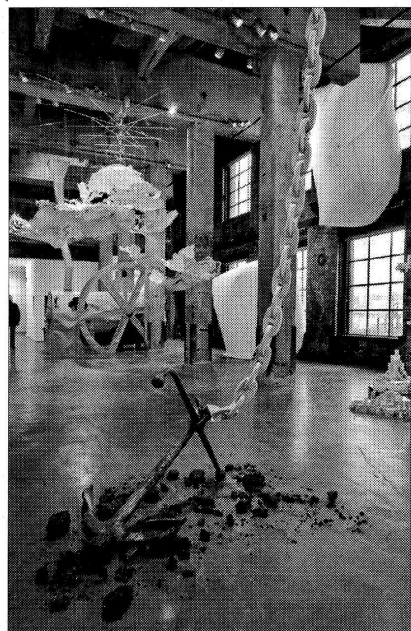
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WEEKEND

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## ART



Courtesy of Smack Mellon

**ANCHORS AWAY** ■ Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass in Brooklyn, an artists' community is flourishing.

## DUMBO Smacks of Art Better Than Even Disney Could Do

BY MARIELA QUINTANA  
*Columbia Daily Spectator*

It's time for another outer-borough adventure—this time, we head to Brooklyn. According to the borough president, delightfully named Marty Markowitz, Brooklyn is a great place to walk. Walking is high on this borough president's political agenda: his Web site delineates important campaigns such as Walk to Work Mondays, power walks at lunchtime on Wednesdays, and walks in Brooklyn parks at 10 on Saturday mornings. And Markowitz is quite right—Brooklyn is a feast for both the legs and the eyes. It is a lovely place both to walk and to look at art, especially on a sunny Saturday in very early spring.

Walking across the Brooklyn Bridge is one of this borough's finest walks, and if you haven't already done it, now is the time. It's an easy shoot down the 2 or 3 train to Park Place, and at one point along the route you can actually see the borough of Brooklyn rising proudly across the East River. After you've made your way across the Bridge and stopped to snap a couple

pics for your Facebook album, you'll find yourself in Brooklyn.

The Brooklyn Bridge path feeds right onto the main artery into DUMBO, the heart of Brooklyn's art scene. The neighborhood is true to its name, which stands for Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass. Full of large industrial factories and warehouses, DUMBO was targeted by up-and-coming artists in the early 1980s as an area where inexpensive and sunlit lofts could be found and transformed into studios and galleries. Recently the neighborhood has become gentrified, acquired a Starbucks, and perhaps lost some of its edge (or what some cynics might call artistic integrity). And while the truly starving artists have moved on in search of lower rents, many established and well-recognized artists and galleries remain.

Smack Mellon Gallery is an excellent example of this phenomenon. Located on the corner of Plymouth and Washington Streets, just below the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, Smack Mellon is an integral part of the artistic community in DUMBO. Housed in a recently renovated boiler building with tremendous

architectural elements—expansive floor space, soaring factory ceilings, and wrought iron beams—the gallery focuses on work made by contemporary female artists and creative technology-based projects.

The building perfectly suits the art displayed within. On the day I visited, the gallery's large windows provided plenty of clear February sunlight and a spectacular view of Manhattan and the East River.

The artists on display capitalize on the space Smack Mellon provides and the industrial vestiges that characterize the neighborhood's architecture. In "Coal Chain" (2007), Anne Peabody paid homage to DUMBO's nearby shipyards. From the high beams of the ceiling, an iron chain hangs taut to a rusty anchor, which weighs down upon a pile of shredded coal shrapnel.

Other works use an array of textured industrial inputs, such as nails, wire cordage, yarn, duct tape, and white tapulin, to make maps of the neighborhood and to reference the factories and manual labor that at one point defined and gave rise to the neighborhood.

Anne Thulin expressed this sentiment in a dramatic installation piece that bridges both the divide between the viewer and the art and the divide between the art and the space. Billowing white pieces of fabric project from the gallery's windowpanes high above. They expand and contract rhythmically as if breathing, coming to life and directly interacting with the viewer. And like Thulin's work, Brooklyn's art scene is constantly growing and expanding, thoroughly engaged with its environment.

### WHERE IT'S AT

Smack Mellon



92 Plymouth St. @ Washington,  
Brooklyn

Free

