



BROOKLYN / MONTRÉAL: JANET BIGGS / AUDE MOREAU



Aude Moreau's installation at Smack Mellon contains two tons of refined sugar (photo by twi-ny/mdr)

AUDE MOREAU: SUGAR CARPET JANET BIGGS: SOMEWHERE BEYOND NOWHERE

Smack Mellon
92 Plymouth St. at Washington St.
Wednesday – Sunday through February 24, free, 12 noon – 6:00
www.smackmellon.org
www.brooklynmontreal.com

This past fall, Brooklyn-based visual artist Janet Biggs showed four of her video works — her Arctic Trilogy, made during an extraordinary trip to the far North, and *A Step on the Sun*, about a sulfur miner in the Ijen volcano in Indonesia — at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal as part of the "Brooklyn/Montréal" cultural exchange, which involves forty artists and sixteen institutions. In conjunction with that, French-born Montréal installation artist Aude Moreau presented her film of the New York City skyline, *Reconstruction*. The two have joined forces again for the second part of the exchange, a pair of solo exhibitions at Smack Mellon in DUMBO. Although Biggs's and Moreau's pieces reinforce each other so well it seems they might have planned the shows together, actually each artist had no idea what the other was going to do at the Brooklyn gallery. Biggs is very familiar with the area, however; Smack Mellon is just steps from the East River where Biggs staged the impressive *Wet Exit* for the DUMBO Arts Festival in September 2011. Moreau's "Sugar Carpet" is a large-scale rectangular Persian rug made from two tons of refined sugar, bordered by an intricate black and red floral design. The piece is installed in the center of the gallery, incorporating eight of Smack Mellon's structural posts, which pierce into the sides of the sugar, adding to the industrial feel referencing mass production. "Sugar Carpet" also evokes the abandoned Domino Sugar Factory in Williamsburg, a memorial to a past era, and serves as a splendid introduction, fittingly a white carpet rather than a red one, to the brilliantly bright expanse of Biggs's latest video.



Janet Biggs fires a flare across a vast white landscape in *SOMEWHERE BEYOND NOWHERE* (photo courtesy of Janet Biggs)

Somewhere Beyond Nowhere, Biggs's six-minute, two-channel follow-up to the Arctic Trilogy, which consists of *Fade to White*, *Brightness All Around*, and *In the Cold Edge*, was made during a 2010 art and science expedition aboard a hundred-year-old schooner. Over an electronic score by Will Martina, the camera-shy Biggs, in voice-over, narrates the tale of an early journey gone wrong as she shoots flares across an empty, vast white horizon that immediately makes one think of climate change and the melting of the glaciers. "The act of shooting off a flare became both an aggressive assertion of my presence and a cry for help that implied a condition of emergency," she explains in an artist statement. "My efforts to either establish power or seek assistance failed as a thousand miles from civilization, I was too far north for anyone to see or respond to my act." The nearly blinding whiteness of *Somewhere Beyond Nowhere* echoes that of "Sugar Carpet," the frozen landscape Biggs walks across providing a stark contrast to the fragility of Moreau's sugar sculpture, which would be ruined by the trampling of people's feet. In addition, the pieces work particularly well in tandem during what has been an extremely cold winter, which has featured several powerful snowstorms. Biggs's and Moreau's installations continue through February 24; you can also catch Biggs's *In the Cold Edge* through March 10 at Present Company as part of the group show "Through This to That," which also features Biggs's lightboxes from her Kawah Ijen series. For our 2011 twi-ny talk with Biggs, go here.