

# Hip Threads

Artspace's untitled(space) gallery unravels strands of consciousness

By Zach Hughes

**Thread: A Network Exhibition**

Through June 24 at untitled(space), Artspace, 50 Orange St., New Haven. 772-2709, art-space-nh.org.

**T**he art-makers at Artspace's untitled(space) gallery are examining the threads that bind us: systems that connect humanity, whether innate or manufactured.

The *Thread* exhibition, curated by Trifocal Projects (Todd Jokl, Jessica Schwind Smolinski and Joseph Smolinski) includes a sewing machine with a barcode scanner (rather than the seemingly more effective needles and metal spirals to which the citizens of Indochina are chained). *Data Sewing Machine* is the name of this cyborg. When I did what a projecting screen told me and ran a barcode beneath the thread-red lines of the scanner, a printer gave me back a sheet of paper with only the slightest numerical differentiations.

"So we're all the same when we marry the shirt-making mechanical pulses?" my heart cried as I scanned my second data-set. But the results were the same, and my question became humiliatingly rhetorical.

Another *Thread* item let me play with plug-in toys. A monitor told me how to assemble my own robot, then the push of a button brought my fighting brute to life, giving him only the use of his twisted legs. He contorted, supine, until I gave up and left him for the vultures.

I was standing by a painting of pastel molecules, thinking about whether atom bombs smiled maliciously or benevolently, when I became aware of a horrible series of spastic,

digital wails. "That's no human baby," I reasoned. It certainly wasn't. A monitor, buried in swaddling clothes, revealed a glove (or a piece of soft dough?) with a mouth, pleading for its artificial mother. I walked on, but the cribbed Pinocchio persisted in its sobbing.

The paintings of Eva Lee are attractive enough to hold even the proverbial Vacuous Eye-Head People in their places. But *Thread's* key draw is the experiment Christina Ayala and John Morris undertook with their minds and pens. *The Telepathy Drawings* are based upon seven-minute sessions during which Morris would "telepathically" project an image or phrase to Ayala, who would illustrate the thought. I don't know that the piece substantiated my already strong beliefs in telepathy. (Proof: Right now I am thinking of a girl I met on an island in 1956, and you are thinking of the words that begot an island-image of years past). But no other piece in the gallery made me want to sit and think as much.

The sketches are titled with the thoughts that begat them: *Web Surfing* depicts two bald dinosaurs slamming heads in a close-eyed contest affront a tired and sparse landscape; *Pretty in Pink* yields a creature half jack-o-lantern and half vagina. The cartoons are minimalist, which creates an interest not so much in the visual elements, but in the concept and spiraling thoughts of the experiment. Is this art? The creations seem to be more impulsive than conscious, and the affectivity comes not from aesthetic mastery, but out of cerebral intrigue.

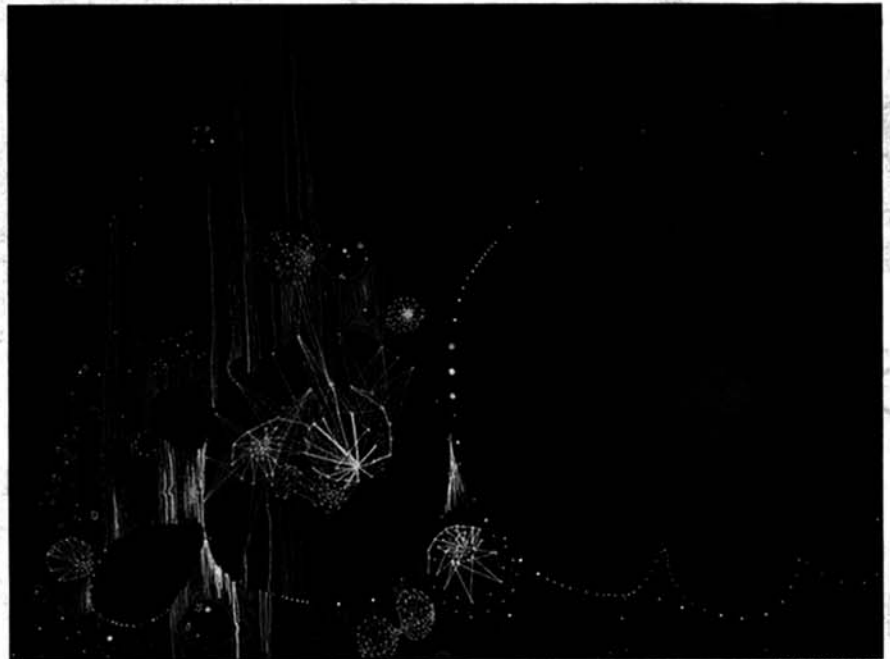
*Thread* is an appealing package: ideas coupled with substance, surrounded by decent pictures.

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*Sputnik*: Artist Christina Ayala credits mental telepathy.



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*Floating Vesicles*