

associated with the Manhattan Project, like "tickling the dragon," the phrase used to describe the lethal criticality exercises.

Sanborn has long been fascinated with the interplay between art and science in projects that explore the invisible forces of nature and manmade systems. His early process-oriented works experimented with the magnetic properties of lodestones and petrified trees. These interests merged and became politicized in *Kryptos*. The landmark commission for the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, features a curved copper screen perforated with letters from the English language, along with a petrified tree, a pool of water, and various plantings. Here, he chose the science of cryptography to outwit the agency, which to this date has been unable to decode the embedded inscription in its entirety. With *Critical Assembly*, he takes on the horrifying beauty of Big Science as well as the disturbing slippage between pure scientific experiments and their technological applications. A detail not to be missed—a tape measure that counts down from 10—encapsulates this sense of urgency. By conjuring the dawn of the nuclear age, Sanborn paints the poignant devolution of an ideal, a fall from innocence so vast and lasting that guilt can never take a vacation.

—Sarah Tanguy

#### New Orleans

##### Sally Heller

Contemporary Arts Center  
Sally Heller's exhibition "Hanging By a Thread" dominated the first floor of the CAC with 18 large-scale sculptures and installations, all positioned closely together in thematic unity. Together, they confronted perceptions of femininity and the temporality of art and culture. Entering the exhibition, one was drawn to the largest, most dominant work, *Hanging By a Thread* (2004), a web-like structure of everyday items, what the artist terms "detritus": pipe cleaners,

##### Sally Heller, *Hanging By a Thread*, 2004. Pipe cleaners, wallpaper, fabric swatches, underwear, and mixed media, detail of installation.

ers, wallpaper, fabric swatches, and underwear, to name a few. These items were wrapped and twisted together, tangled up in an enormous web, which seemed barely attached to the surrounding walls. While some elements appeared securely bound, there was a definite instability. From loosely tied pipe cleaners to the delicacy of the structure, there was a sensation that if just one of the many cords were severed, the entire work would collapse in disarray. Fragility and temporality reflected the artist's critique of mass consumerism and the state of modern society.

A striking commentary to preconceived notions of femininity was found in the "Pin-up Girls." Heller's women, who derive from 1950s pin-up images, are all composed entirely of an everyday object—jiggly eyes from the craft store. Through the use of these "play" eyes, Heller cleverly redirects the gaze back at us. We become aware of our positions as voyeurs. In *Pin-up Girl 2001*, the eyes vibrate, which jolts us into the reality of being watched, even as we are amused at the sex symbol's gyrations. Each of the figures looks directly at us, not diverting her gaze: Heller's women challenge their roles as objects as well as our sensations of looking.

Perhaps the most visually stunning piece was *Not Just Wallpaper #1* (2004), a large-scale floor piece reconstructed from a wallpaper image. Heller used various sizes and colors of gravel and glass to create an impressively large and intricate picture of a samurai that forced spectators to become aware of their position in relation to the work. While walking up the CAC's spiral ramp, one registered distinct differences in perception as one's proximity to the work changed. Standing



at ground level, viewers were particularly aware of the medium, its subtle and drastic transitions of color, as well as its varying textures. From above, the elements of the picture became unified, texture and medium taking second place to the impact of the image itself. In this work, as in *Hanging By a Thread*, the theme of temporality emerged as a primary aspect.

"Hanging By a Thread" was an ambitious show, presenting the artist's works of the last five years. Through fluid sculpture, Heller challenges perceptions of femininity, continuity, and mass-production culture.

—Laurie Delk

#### North Adams, Massachusetts

##### Ann Hamilton

MASS MoCA

Ann Hamilton's *corpus*, a new installation commissioned by MASS MoCA, occupies its most dramatic space, the massive Building 5 Main Gallery. The gallery is the size of a football field with extremely high ceilings and hundreds of windows. Hamilton's installation continues through a second smaller gallery and upstairs to the balcony space that overlooks the main gallery, an overwhelming experience with its tremendous volume of space. Hamilton certainly capitalized on the particular qualities that make this place special, while in her own way subtly transforming it.