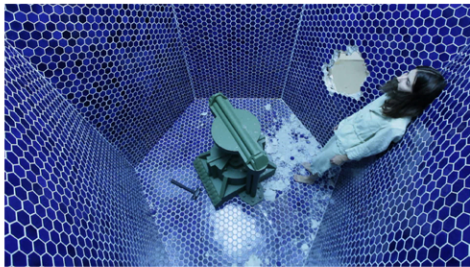


# arts wednesday

By Cate McQuaid  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



## Scopes reenactment

Boru O'Brien O'Connell's stark, layered exhibit of photos and video at LaMontagne Gallery considers history's distance, and the encrustation of meaning that flows into the gulf between then and now. The show revolves around the 1925 Scopes trial in Dayton, Tenn., and reenactors in an annual restaging of the event.

Reenacting honors history, but it also codifies it. In "Reenactment," a three-channel video, O'Connell shares a split screen with the actors playing defendant John T. Scopes, defense lawyer Clarence



Darrow, and prosecutor William Jennings Bryan. The actor recites a line from memory, repeatedly and sometimes getting it wrong, and the artist reflexively parrots each word, draining the script of meaning. O'Connell makes a counterpoint to the swollen import of reenactment. Yes, the Scopes Trial mattered; teaching evolution remains a flashpoint in American society. But you can't capture historical events in amber. They shift and sway according to the needs of the present.

O'Connell's black-and-white photos were shot around the Tennessee courtroom where the trial took place, and where the reenactment is staged. He photographed the actors, seats in the courtroom, and views outside. His triptychs feature three viewpoints of the same thing

(or, in one case, images of the three actors). He stacked them, then riddled them with buckshot. The prints bear patterns of bullet holes. To me, the violence of shooting the photographs calls the viewer back to the present from a dream of the past, like the rap of a Zen master's stick on the shoulder of a daydreaming meditator.

Also at LaMontagne, Meredith James has a crafty video on view, in which she performs a scene from Adolfo Bioy Casares's science fiction novel "The Invention of Morel." James plays a man who breaks into a blue-tiled room with a hammer. He finds a machine inside the room, and when the machine turns on, the hole, which is the only exit, vanishes. Terror ensues, and in the end, a solution.

The visuals are gorgeous. But there are

## CHIDO JOHNSON:

### Domesticated Angst: Third Recording

At: Suffolk University Art Gallery, 75 Arlington St., through Jan. 15. 617-573-8785, [www.jameshull.com](http://www.jameshull.com)

## BORU O'BRIEN O'CONNELL:

### More Information Has Been Transmitted Via the Telegraph

## MEREDITH JAMES:

### The Invention of Morel Pages 86-91

At: LaMontagne Gallery, 555 East 2d St., South Boston, through Jan. 15. 617-464-4640, [www.lamontagnegallery.com](http://www.lamontagnegallery.com)

## CAROLYN SWISZCZ: Recent Work

At: Steven Zevitas Gallery, 450 Harrison Ave., through Jan. 15. 617-778-5265, [www.stevenzevitasgallery.com](http://www.stevenzevitasgallery.com)

some technical problems. The video streams from two opposing projectors onto a frosted glass screen. It's a beautiful, tricky way to layer imagery, but the reality they create together is not seamless; the hole, for instance, doesn't truly disappear. Suspension of disbelief failed me.