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## A new exhibition at Fort Lauderdale's Museum of Art encourages visitors to stop, look and listen

By Beth Dunlop

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Courtesy of Fredric Snitzer Gallery

"Cluster F\*\*\*\*" by Gavin Perry is part of the "Sight Specific" exhibition at Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale through Sept. 4.

The first suggestion that there's a really intriguing new exhibition at the Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale is an insistent low hum that seems to reverberate around the lobby. It's coming from the direction of the museum's ever-elegant staircase that leads to the second-floor galleries.

In fact, the reverberation is an integral part of one of nine installations that form *Sight Specific: Explorations in Space, Vision and Sound*, which will run through Sept. 4. It's from the artist Gustavo Matamoros, who recorded the ambient sounds around the stairs — on one occasion, fortuitously enough, during an event that featured a string quartet — and transformed them into resonant frequencies transmitted through black foam-core panels that work as speakers and are hung at ascending intervals. Walk up the stairs, or just stand and listen, and the sounds change subtly. In all, the sound score includes 202 different tones in what Matamoros calls an "acoustical signature."

The piece, titled *Stairway*, is rich in ideas and has a threefold purpose: to respond to the building, to the gently curved wall the staircase helps form; to interact with the viewer and the listener and to force the visitor to respond to the architecture of the building.

This is a primary objective of *Sight Specific*, created by Freddy Jouwayed, the museum's chief exhibition designer and an artist himself. The pun in the title is purposeful, in that Jouwayed wanted to offer forth new ways of looking at and experiencing the museum's interstitial spaces — the stairways and hallways that too often are overlooked in favor of the

four walls of a conventional gallery.

Jouwayed asked a group of well-regarded South Florida artists known for their interest in place, process and exploration to join him. Some offered existing pieces or projects that fit well with the concept, among them Gavin Perry, whose beautiful epoxy chandelier-like piece was seen at Fred Snitzer Gallery, and Clifton Childree, whose absorbingly complex and imaginative *Mysterium* is culled from a one-man show at Brook Dorsch Gallery. Others started afresh. The work on view is linked not so much by medium or subject matter as by a commitment to the expression of ideas in art, even if the outward meaning might be a bit elusive.

"These pieces ask a lot of the viewer," Jouwayed says.

Kyle Trowbridge, for example, chose to emboss a saying on the wall — SITE OF TEMPORARILY INVESTED INTEREST — which could be a comment on all museum shows, or this show, or the artist's participation or the interest of the gallery-goer. You choose.

By contrast, Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt designed a full-fledged, participatory installation that includes a wall of plastic ribbons in enough colors to fill a Crayola box, a diamond-shaped mirror to reflect them on a second wall and a third wall that is chock-a-block with multiple meanings. A large map, titled *World Poetical Map* (yes that's "poetical," not "political") hangs above a credenza that has tin robots, a toy rocket, a single vase turned into a bomb, two other vases filled with Christmas lights, a gold-painted rock and a house of cards. Stored in the credenza are vinyl records — remember them? — and a record player that can actually be played.

The artists who comprise *BREAKFAST* (Bhakti Baxter and Jay Hines) chose to show the detritus of art-making (or could it be construction, for that matter) in an installation that includes wood scaffolding, drop cloths, paint cans, bags of concrete, masonite and a tattered ancient stuffed Mickey Mouse. In the same vein, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova's minimalist offering is a partially framed room with a bit of drywall attached, a handful of tiles on the floor and a door hung against the hallway wall. It's all quite enigmatic, but then, that's the point.

Juan Maristany's video projections against a sculpted wall explore shape, form, composition, geometry and color and balance out the ideological and the aesthetic. Wendy Wischer's wall of wire and mylar flowers falls more into that latter category. The flowers are more than just decorative; they define the wall, make it sparkle, cast shadows and even, oddly, reshape it.

Two sets of footprints, back-to-back, mark Misrael Soto's participation in *Sight Specific*. A late entry to the exhibition (which is flexible enough that it can morph over time), this one is really about being and nothingness, a kind of non-performing performance art. At the show's opening, Soto enlisted seven friends to stand quietly facing a wall or a lamppost outside the museum while he stood inside in the same position. Now only their footprints remain, but anyone can stand there in silence and experience the moment — or the space.

That, in the end, is what *Sight Specific* is about — stopping, looking and listening. The

museum, designed in 1986 by the late Edward Larrabee Barnes, turns 25 this year, and it's worth taking a fresh look through the eyes of the artists who interpret it here — a fresh perspective that makes us perceive it anew, too.

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