



REINA KUBOTA AND HANG XU | "PIGEONHOLE" | COURTESY DUMBO ARTS CENTER

LABYRINTHS OF THE EYE

REINA KUBOTA AND HANG XU'S *PIGEONHOLE*
 CHARLOTTE SCHULZ'S *THE UNEVEN INTENSITIES OF DURATION*

Art, ideally, can distort our perceptions and make us reconsider the world we inhabit. Two new exhibitions in Dumbo turn rough, imprecise materials into the contorted walls and sharp lines of maze-like compositions. Exploring these spaces can be a genuinely transporting experience, or just a lot of fun.

For the second year in a row, the Dumbo Arts Center has invited two artists to collaborate on a labyrinth of paper products for its fall exhibition. Reina Kubota and Hang Xu's *Pigeonhole* (through November 14 at 30 Washington Street) takes a different route, from Wade Kavanaugh and Stephen B. Nguyen's red paper forest last year, though the environmentalist undercurrent remains. Their towering, tilting maze of reclaimed cardboard boxes fastened together with plastic ties beckons visitors down narrow walkways where box flaps skim their heads and shoulders, and some passages can only be taken by crouching. Throughout, cracks between paper building blocks afford views of... more boxes! The effect, at least initially, is surprisingly disorienting. If Michel Gondry remade *The Shining*, his hedge maze would look like this. Once you're through to the other side, where boxes collapse into massive piles, the installation loses much of its interest. On opening night, during the Dumbo Arts Festival, some anonymous visitor left a bucket of chalk at the maze's symbolic center (which, fyi, is near the front-right of the gallery-sized installation) and the cardboard walls still bare marks from that unauthorized Ariadnean intervention. Mysterious crowd-sourced hieroglyphs notwithstanding, *Pigeonhole's* intrigue is quickly discovered.

Down the block at Smack Mellon, past eteam's cruise ship simulacrum, Charlotte Schulz's exhibition of charcoal drawings *The Uneven Intensities of Duration* (through November 7 at 92 Plymouth Street) maps temporal and geographic dislocations across beautiful scroll-like compositions. Though it's often used as an expressive medium, Schulz deploys charcoal with nearly photographic precision. Her clean horizontal compositions reveal wondrous messes of furniture, architecture, landscapes and weather. Each long-titled work follows one elegant sequence of environments. In "tea and biscuits are set upon our object of destruction for those acting within the center without our knowledge" (2008), for instance, an explosive cloudscape turns into a modernist interior where a vintage warplane drops parcels on its way towards a jazz-age nightclub and, beyond, an empty bedroom, a row of skyscrapers, and a forested mountainside. More seemingly random details surround these spaces, and line the edge of the paper, which is marked by vertical folds that introduce further shifts in perspective and dimension. The slick monochrome, mid-century modern dreamscapes elicit immense visual pleasure—like Giorgio de Chirico designing Streamline architecture; but each drawing's radical instability is simultaneously attractive and ominous.

As with Kubota and Xu's cardboard maze, we're irrevocably drawn into Schultz's optical obstacle courses. But with no center or solution in sight they're much harder to escape. Here, getting lost is a good thing. *Benjamin Sutton*