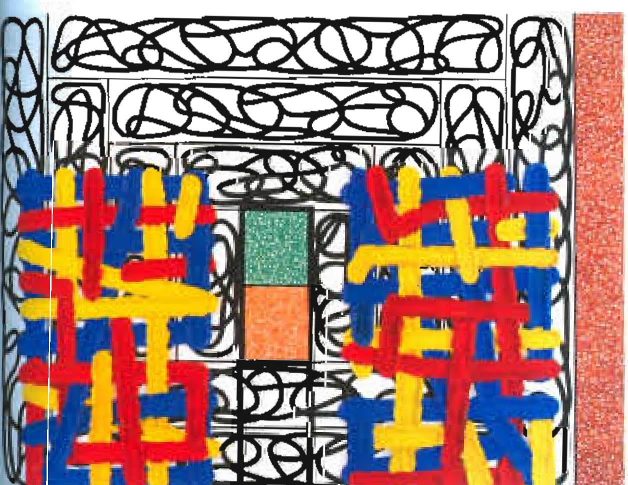
ptual abstraction" was intended to be inclusive. Determined distance themselves from the last vestiges of Greenbergian rmalism, these artists sought ways to move forward. Their verse works admitted narrative; references and appropriation; ctuality and illusionism; and signs and symbols.

The recent "Conceptual Abstraction" exhibition juxtaposed ork from then and now in a compare-and-contrast format at was not at all formulaic; works by individual artists, for stance, were not always hung side by side. One of the many leasures of the show was discovering themes and motifs hared by different artists in works that drew you from gallery gallery, in a gratifyingly complex orchestration. The paintings re often generously (but not heroically) scaled, far from the timate-sized canvases favored by many young painters today.

Striking, indeed, was the materiality of certain works, uch as Jonathan Lasker's *The Inability to Sublimate* (2009), which the paint is thick and three-dimensional in places. Color was rich and intense throughout the show. Halley, Stephen Westfall and John Zinsser led the charge in this espect. Even the vintage work looked as if it had arrived fresh from the studio.

Although some of the artists have made other, more disparate bodies of work, the newer examples were selected for the most part so that they appeared to have evolved directly from the older, with similar imagery. Lydia Dona, prescient both in 1991 and now, envisions the modernist grid not as a utopian construct but as smoldering urban systems corrupted by the reckless disregard for environmental realities. David Diao contributed two instances of his handsome info-charts, *Plus and Minus* (1991) and *Barnett Newman: Chronology of Work (Updated)*, 2010, both presenting his double-edged institutional critique.

Thomas Nozkowski's colorful pop figurations are irresistible, as are the Mary Heilmanns, especially the double canvas *Violette* (1991), in which a centrally placed purple spiral reclines flirtatiously on a luscious white ground. Shirley Kaneda's taut, bright, cleanly executed paintings look digitally induced and enhanced. Jaudon's distinctively patterned paintings are visual teasers, as are Richard Kalina's erudite collages, both artists



hijacking the modernist grid for their own purposes in their signature blends of the systemic and the intuitive. David Reed and Stephen Ellis, each in his own way, conflate the cinematic and the painterly, factoring time into their work.

David Row's gorgeous gold and black *Split Infinitive* (1990) is a kind of postmodernist altarpiece, a vision of the empyrean. Its fractured form returns in the shaped canvas *Ellipsis* (2012), executed in Row's current palette of night-sky blue. Space, as well as time, appears to fold in on itself. It may be taken as emblematic of this triumphant back-to-the-future show.

—Lilly Wei

View of Jeanne Jaffe's *East Coker*, 2012, mixed mediums, dimensions variable; at Marginal Utility.

PHILADELPHIA
JEANNE JAFFE
Marginal Utility

Although the mingling of art and text is by now commonplace, Philadelphia-based sculptor and installation artist Jeanne Jaffe coupled the mediums with particular theatricality in her recent solo show. Titled "Four Quartets," it was dedicated to T.S. Eliot—a modernist icon—and his luminous, incantatory poem cycle of the same name. Installed in three small rooms of a bare-bones nonprofit organization, the exhibition connected with the poems as a kind of "objective correlative," a term Eliot used to designate the objects and circumstances that correspond to a specific emotion or thought. In this case, the focus was a perpetual revisiting of the places of one's origin and formation ("In my beginning is my end . . . In my end is my beginning," says the poet).

The gallery space and the quirky, handcrafted look of Jaffe's art were in some ways at odds with Eliot's elegiac, allusive and manicured verses—and all the more effective for it, as was its cast of stylized feminine figures. *Threshold Figure* (2007), encountered in the first room, is pale, under-life-size and gracefully kneeling, with a knobby gray mass like a brain or a thought bubble arced on a wire above its headless body. The ensemble—reminding us that the disembodied mind and the substantiated body are inextricably linked—seems a surrogate for the artist, the creator of all that followed.

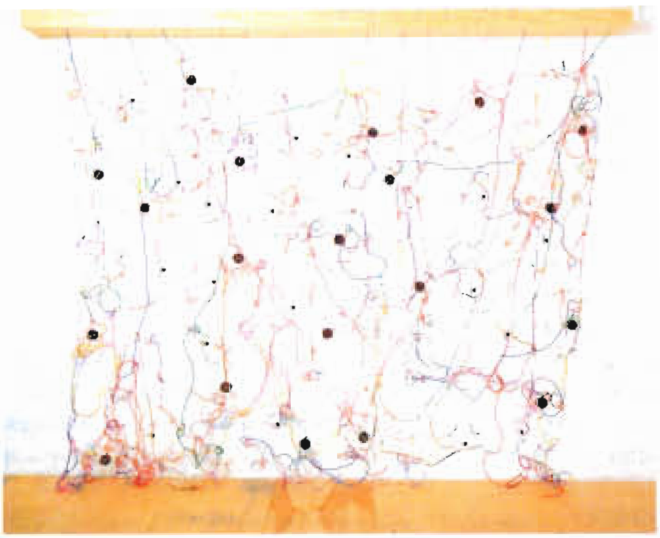
In the next gallery, one found an animation, shown in a circular projection, featuring layered images of various Jaffe

Jonathan Lasker: *The Inability to Sublimate*, 2009, oil on linen, 75 by 100 inches; in "Conceptual Abstraction" at Hunter College/Times Square sculptures, drawings, prints and cutouts. Nearby was a quietly premonitory, fairy-tale tableau that consists of a wooden door, again slightly reduced in scale, balanced on a pile of simulated rocks. Leafless, silvery branches jut from it, and another gray brainlike form hovers overhead while witchy black strands of what might be hair protrude from the threshold below. Hung near or laid against the tableau, lines from Eliot's "Burnt Norton" are spelled out in little handmade letters, often reversed as if to be read from within the installation, not outside it, the poet's haunting scenes seemingly remembered from a dream.

The last room was a forest of suspended, spidery silver branches and elongated headless women with tiny, doll-like hands, legs and feet, the stylized figures twitching intermittently, disturbingly. Verses from "East Coker" dangle between them, the written words a visual echo of the phrases intoned by Eliot on an accompanying audio track.

Jaffe's reimagined, lingering vision of modernist anomie, of existential angst, is seen through a scaled-down dreamscape of repeating motifs, its theme of eternal recurrence as well as its imagery directly inspired by Eliot. "Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden" might be one description of Jaffe's haunting installation, her interpretation surreal enough, eccentric enough, that it was not merely illustrative. Her "Four Quartets" might also make you want to reread Eliot's—always a worthwhile pursuit.

—Lilly Wei



Julianne Swartz: *Loop*, 2010, wire, speakers and mixed mediums, 130 by 140 by 10 inches; at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum.

LINCOLN, MASS.
JULIANNE SWARTZ
deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum

"Julianne Swartz: How Deep Is Your," the artist's first museum survey, presented just over 30 photographs, sculptures and sound pieces that she completed between 1998 and 2012. The earliest, among them *Shadow House* (1996-98), a delicate mobile of almost invisible glass houses that cast dark shadows, were begun while Swartz was still in the MFA program at Bard College. Many of the works that followed were site-specific installations, and it was a highlight of this show to see several re-created, with adaptations. For example, Swartz reconfigured the sound piece *Affirmation* (2006/2012), with its multiple voices issuing encouraging statements, for the museum bathrooms, and tailored *How Deep Is Your* (2003/2012), in which blue PVC pipes broadcast John Lennon's "Love" and The Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love," to transmit throughout the museum. Also present were *Storagescape* (2012, a variation of *Closetspace*, 2002) and *Line Drawing* (2003/2012), both consisting of apertures cut into the gallery walls to reveal, in the first case, a manipulated view of the storage facilities and, in the second, the course of a meandering line of blue plastic tape.

The central galleries featured a number of self-contained, anthropomorphic sculptures, including the series "Hope Studies" (2007), five sets of stacked concrete blocks punctured by slight steel wires, many connected to motors within. Above the largest of these works, *Garden of Infinite Hearts*—a massing of over 30 blocks—wave small paper and foil hearts, while a motor inside *Touch Knowledge* projects a delicate metal arm into an electrically charged wire bramble, generating small sparks. These works set the stage for the recent *Surrogate (JS)*, *Surrogate (KRL)* and *Surrogate (ARL)*, all 2012, three carefully balanced concrete-block towers approximating the size of Swartz, her husband and her child. Inside, clock motors emit barely audible syncopated ticking.

The figural sculptures and sound pieces were complemented by a variety of works having to do with landscape or forces of nature. In *Spectrum (Double Yellow)*, 2004, Swartz created a rainbow cascade by attaching colored threads to seven points on the wall, 10 feet from the floor. Cutting the threads halfway down, she attached magnets at the gaps so that the threads formed continuous lines that arced through space and landed on the floor one yard from the wall.

Loop (2010), an approximately 11-by-12-foot web of brightly colored audio wires and coin-sized speakers, plays a soundscape of bird calls, running water, songs and voices. Such works, along with photographs of land and sky taken through droplets of water dangling from the artist's fingers, reinforced the connection between art and nature emphasized at the deCordova itself, with its sculpture park set into the New England woodlands. Swartz took this terrain as the subject in *Camera-Less-Video* (2009), a small viewing box that she stationed at one of the museum's windows.

Swartz appeals to the senses and emotions with a quiet lyricism, using unassuming materials and marshaling grand forces like wind and magnetism. Bending to hear the music in *How Deep Is Your*, we listened; peering at the inverted image of the museum's back room in *Storagescape*, we looked; and standing close to *Body* (2007), a human-sized suspension of colorful wires and black speakers imploring "don't be afraid" or "let me hold you," we felt. With careful attention to the ephemeral and concrete alike, the deCordova exhibition presented Swartz's career thus far as a thoughtful excursion into sound, sight and psyche.

—Peter R. Kalb