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CRITICAL MASS 2: COLLABORATIONS at Marygrove College

Like its predecessor, Critical Mass 2 attempts to explore urbanity, environment, and the process of renewal of the city through means of art and architecture. In that regard, it certainly also shares much with the recent international Shrinking Cities Project. This show, housed in the smaller, though beautiful Marygrove space (themselves no strangers to putting on socially conscious shows), while offering plenty of diverse offerings, may perhaps be a little short in the investigation department. The art seems at times a little too esoteric, and thus lack the impact that this show sets out to have. Too many pieces have already been made about Detroit as ruins, but what becomes more exciting is what can we make of it? The pieces that address that issue creatively really shine.

One common theme recurrent through all the works is the use of sound – the sounds of the city or at least a city are heard throughout the gallery.

Perhaps the highlight of the show is Robert Anderson's fabled Metro Project. Anderson has created a number of sound tracks (available for sale on CD) chronicling a ride along the metro as it passes through various stops on fictional lines in Detroit. The sound work is complemented by Steve Schock's entrance to these non-existent underground lines. This steel frame is simple and elegant, and one can't help but wish to see it leading somewhere on the Detroit streets.

To bring that lack of wish fulfillment home, this show saw a performance by **Melanie Manos**, as she did



her best Lucille Ball impression (or perhaps we need to go back further to silent antics of Harold Lloyd) Manos appears in suit with satchel, hanging by the Metro stop as if waiting to go to work. She discovers the lack of stairs leading anywhere, and begins a frantic and comic search to find them. This sees her doing everything from trying to dig a hole to climbing over the top of this structure in this futile search. Her miming and body contortions are quite funny, but sad at the same time. This is a poignant reminder of how lacking Detroit is in transit alternatives and allows us to wonder if we will ever find them here in Detroit.

All in all, those behind this event, [FLAK]detroit have a truly worthwhile concept going. As their mission states, "We are dedicated to invigorating the creative community in Detroit and believe inventive, sensitive and humane visions are not only relevant but urgently needed for Detroit and the world." We need more of that in this town, and I for one, welcome their next venture. – Nick Sousanis