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Paintings, Photographs, and Projects Galore

2011 Portland Museum of Art Biennial

by **Edgar Allen Beem**

The seventh edition of the Portland Museum of Art Biennial, which began in 1998, features 65 works by 47 artists selected from some 3,600 works submitted to a three-person jury by 902 artists. The resultant exhibition, selected by New York art dealer Jim Kempner, painter David Row, and Smithsonian American Art Museum curator Joanna Marsh, is divided roughly equally into paintings, photographs, and installation projects and comes across as an entertaining if not very coherent art sampler.

To my eye and taste, the most memorable works in this year's biennial are the installations. Their playfulness, inventiveness, and sheer size overpower the paintings and photographs. My favorite is an elegant and sublime ink on transparent polyester film installation by Avy Claire entitled *For the Trees*. Bare, ghostly trees are "drawn" on the hanging sheets of plastic. Only upon close inspection do you notice that the lines are actually words, Claire having used a fine-point Rapidograph to transcribe radio news she was hearing in her studio into the form of trees.



For The Trees by Avy Claire

