

DARK MATTER

NEW WORK IN TAR BY ELLYN WEISS

Show runs September 17 through October 17, 2009; Opening Reception, Thursday, September 17 from 6 – 9 pm.

Bethesda artist Ellyn Weiss will exhibit a new series of paintings in tar at Nevin Kelly Gallery, 1400 Irving Street, NW, #132, Washington, DC. "*Dark Matter*" will run from September 17 through October 17, 2009. The public is invited to an opening reception with the artist on Thursday, September 17 from 6 until 9 o'clock p.m.

Weiss's art has long been influenced by a fascination with the mysteries of communication. In earlier years, she would start her paintings by writing on the canvas, taking inspiration from the movement of her arms and from the shapes formed by intersecting script. Although the final works contained virtually no legible words, they communicated by inviting us to find meaning in the familiar shapes produced by the writing process.

Later works focused on the kinds of communication at the cellular level that make life possible. The artist studied microscopic images of neurons and other cells that exchange chemical or electric signals, allowing organisms to function and to interact. She consciously incorporated shapes, colors and textures from these images into her paintings and press plates, producing work that registers at a gut level—as if tapping into an innate biological self-awareness that recognizes our own internal workings.

Her new paintings in tar seek an even more fundamental understanding of life, taking us back to the moment eons ago when a signal, passed between two heretofore inorganic somethings, first sparked life. Her choice of medium for the series seems ironic. In tar, the kinds of intricately differentiated organic structures that influenced Weiss's earlier work have been broken down by death and decay into a lifeless, homogenous goo.

Weiss has discovered, however, that tar is not the dull and uniformly black substance it first appears to be. It contains a range of subtle hues—rich browns, subtle grays and warm amber tones. She uses these colors to coax images from the tar. The images are not planned in advance, but reveal themselves as she works. They have an eerily organic quality to them, appearing to the artist like living things "swimming up from the primeval darkness." They are like echoes of life from the distant past, preserved in the broken-down DNA from which the tar

NEVINKELLY

GALLERY

is made and, through the artist's hand, emerging anew to communicate with us, their descendents.

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