

PREVAILING CLIMATE

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Sara Meltzer Gallery
525-531 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through Aug. 18

This intelligent group show, organized by Rachel Gugelberger and Jeffrey Walkowiak, is as much about psychic and political weather as it is about environmental conditions. Joy Garnett's paintings of fiery, storm-swollen skies are about turbulence in a larger sense, as is Christoph Draeger's jigsaw-puzzle photograph of the aftermath of a tsunami.

Boukje Janssen's small silhouette paintings of running figures, combined with Yumi Janairo Roth's sculptures of mirrored police barricades (she calls them disco barriers), introduce that greater disturbance on a light-touch note. Joan Linder gives it weight in a life-size drawing, half realistic, half cartoon, of a gas-masked soldier. And in a hand-stitched wall piece by Anna von Mertens, danger becomes specific. Titled "8:45 a.m. to 10:28 a.m., Sept. 11, 2001 (Above New York City Looking Towards Boston)," the piece, which suggests the image of readings on a radar screen, records the position of stars at a fateful moment in recent history.

Catarina Leitão's forest-green puppet in the center of the gallery is designed for meditative retreat, though it seems far too fragile to withstand the explosion in John Jurayj's "Untitled (Bomb 2005, #2)." Of Lebanese descent, Mr. Jurayj derived the images in his paintings from news photographs, including some of the devastation of Beirut in the 1990's. Enough to say that his new work catches the current climate in that brilliant and unfortunate city all too well.

HOLLAND COTTER