

CORONA DEL MAR

Mary Cecile Gee: "Field Equations: An (Accidental) Self-Portrait" at Southern California Art Projects and Exhibitions (SCAPE)

Mary Cecile Gee's "Field Equations: An (Accidental) Self-Portrait" takes its title from Einstein's equations used to describe the shape of space-time, in which all physical events occur. Gee's project was begun in response to the death of her mother, whose presence had long shaped the artist's world. Long concerned with the iconography of death, Gee's previous work featured dark, precisely rendered drawings of caskets and haunted houses. However, the tenor of her representational strategy has changed dramatically with "Field Equations." Faced with dispersing her mother's many collections, Gee found that the objects not only made a compelling portrait of her mother, but also of herself.

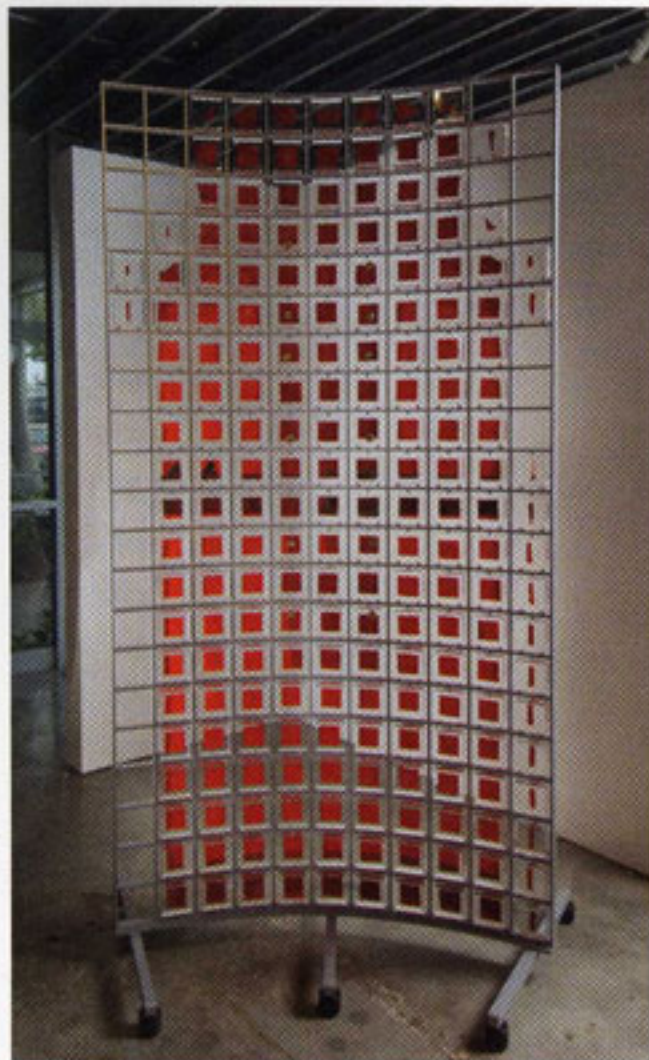
Dozens of lipsticks form a carmine chronology on a shelf in the gallery window frozen into blocks of Lucite. Eerie swirls of pigment waft upwards from the open tubes like pink smoke. Upon entering, visitors are invited to don wireless headsets that play tapes from Gee's mother's answering machine. The artist's voice is heard, after the beep, her voice rising with worry, "Mother? Are you there? It's Mary Cecile... Is anybody there...?"

A chorus of questions rings throughout: Does life remain in the things people leave behind? By rearranging it, cutting it up and peering into its seams, can we see something that escaped our notice when its owner was alive? The work entitled *Red Dress* represents a poignant contemplation of these questions. Cut up into one inch squares and encased in separate Lucite

blocks, then hung on a brushed metal frame, the dress is monumental and prismatic. The emptiness engulfs the whole, as if to say, "No, your mother is not here; there is nothing here but red fabric, gold buttons and air."

Inanimate objects are here imbued with symbolic presence. Glasses once abandoned on an open book are now memorialized in Lucite, becoming evermore image-like. Removed from the tactile realm of the living they enter a dream space reserved for memories. "Field Equations" suggests that what was once alive in these objects, the last remaining trace of the living, has been frozen in time.

—KIM BEIL



"RED DRESS," 2007, Mary Cecile Gee
ALUMINUM, LUCITE EMBEDMENTS
87" x 48" x 28"