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[visual arts]

DEPARTURE

The peanuts ain't free these days.  
By JOHN BARERA

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On a picturesque tree-lined street outside Davis Square, Benjamin Bray is making me an espresso shot. For Bray, like many creative thinkers, steam-pressed Italian coffee is an important catalyst. His latest epiphany occurred while sidelined by a knee injury. Stuck at home, Bray acquired a projector to kill time watching films. When he noticed a glass of water on the table accidentally catching the beam of light, he became intrigued with the beauty and endless nature of the reflection created, stumbling upon an entirely

new visual vocabulary.

Bray's breakthrough created a series of sculptures that do not stop, relent or hold still. "Boston is a transient place," he says. "It attracts transient people and creates cycles of nostalgia." Constantly traveling, Bray adopted the jet engine as a metaphor for human energy. Constructing a series of glass vessels in this shape, he began to study the acoustic properties of glass. Recording flights from the ground and inside the plane, Bray captured material to allow his glass engines to speak. This roar is brought to visual life in unprecedented ways, allowing the sound of the engine to be seen flowing through its glass walls.

"You could play a piano in a bad mood, but you '[can't] blow glass," Bray says. It was the direct, hand-eye-mind relationship one needs to blow glass that caused him to study glassblowing, where he met Christopher Watts. The two artists quickly realized a shared passion for cross-pollinating new art mediums—and a belief that glass could store an archive of energy.

On the other side of town, Watts holds court in a similarly cluttered studio at Diablo Glass and Metal in Roxbury. Here, Watts reveals his latest creative manifesto: smashing mirrors. Practically begging for a seven years bad luck, Watts has been combing the town seeking out disregarded mirrors with a story to tell. "One mirror I found, the girl saw me scooping out of her trash out of the corner of her eye," he says. This "suspicion, certain insecurity," gave him the character analysis he needed to extract personality from material, melting the mirror and making a teddy bear.

"Mirrors hold the physical components of the viewer," Watts says. He has crafted a body of work based on the personalities of these strangers, brought to life in glass. Watts also taped interviews of strangers in his studio, talking into mirrors. "I watched the videos and forced an opinion of who they were." Watts says. One woman seemed to have an "aching, yawning chasm, craving affection, support and approval." This fragility was reflected into large, empty vessels. Watts even took a large mirror to Copley Square for people watching en-masse, resulting in miniature vessels carrying a range of personalities.

In their current installation these two artists have spun a tale of life's fleeting moments, missed connections and epic journeys—with sound, light and glass. An artwork that surrounds you, constantly changing, deeply personal and progressive, it may leave you feeling as if you were taxiing down the runway.

DEPARTURE

W. BENJAMIN BRAY AND CHRISTOPHER J. WATTS

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REPUBLICANS SAY THE DARNEST THINGS

By CaraBayles on Thu, Jul 31, 2008 11:47 am  
Attention **Bill Cosby!** You're needed, STAT!  
"What do you want, you little jerks?"  
--John McCain, to some (diminutive?) reporters.  
7.29.08

UGH, I WOULDN'T MIND SOME EARTHQUAKE ACTION AROUND HERE... JUST SAYIN'