



Review: Sarah Morris and Jockum Nordstrom at the CAC

Lively and uncharted explorations in paintings, film and collage through June 17

By D. Eric Bookhardt



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New York-based painter Sarah Morris says her *Sawdust and Tinsel* expo explores the "semiotics of capital and power structures" and "unapologetic appropriation of corporate iconography, Warholian pop and minimalist seriality." Despite the dire retro jargon, her work is lively and engaging. A keen observer, Morris has distilled the formal chaos and colors of everyday urban life into a contrapuntal visual music based on the tones and rhythms of particular places. Her tersely angular *Danuza Leao* and buoyantly bubbly *Rio Atlantica* paintings reflect the contrasting dynamics of Rio de Janeiro, one of the world's most boisterously vivacious cities. But the tensely staggered expanses of her "Abu Dhabi" series reflect the destabilizing impact global commerce has on the traditional austerities of the Middle Eastern cultural landscape. The best of Morris' geometric compositions insightfully reflects the interaction of natural and man-made forces all around us, as

seen in *February 2017* (pictured), with its suggestions of Copernican diagrams of lunar and planetary cycles – or maybe the inner workings of pinball machines.

The drawings and collages in Swedish mixed-media artist/musician Jockum Nordstrom's *Why Is Everything a Rag* exhibit recall vintage weirdo art, from elegant old-time Euro-kink to Henry Darger's otherworldly visions of feral children. Arranged in storyboard fashion, they hark to the way folklore and surrealism explored the darkly whimsical corners of the psyche common to us all. The title is from an old Swedish poem, but Nordstrom also relates his helter-skelter graphical sequences to the "ragged" syncopations of ragtime music. The exhibition's imposing title work is a darkened chamber, where his drawn and collaged figures come to life eerily in a kind of animated shadow-box projection that recalls the 19th-century magic lantern animations that preceded modern movies. Here, as in his drawings and musical performances, Nordstrom takes us to an uncharted territory of the imagination that, while you may not want to live there, can be an oddly intriguing place to visit. *Through June 17. Contemporary Arts Center, 900 Camp St., (504) 528-3805; www.cacno.org.*

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