

## New Show at Spheris in Hanover Is a Study in Contrasts



Julia Barello's *Red Swirl*, 2009  
IMAGES COURTESY OF SPHERIS GALLERY

### ART NOTES

By ALEX HANSON

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**T**HE CURRENT SHOW at Spheris Gallery in Hanover contrasts two styles that share an important quality: accessibility.

Duncan Johnson's assemblages of strips of reclaimed wood are easy on the eyes — beautiful and unburdened by any need for rigorous interpretation. The strips of wood bring their own character to the work, knot holes and nail holes, patterns of wear and a palette of mostly muted colors. Johnson, who lives in Hartford, rules lines horizontally and diagonally across the strips, then nails the

composition together with shiny finish nails. The lines and nail heads and the way Johnson groups the colors give his work a sort of map-like quality, particularly the two largest pieces, both titled *Longitude*.

I was struck by a smaller work, a nearly square composition titled *Phantom*, in which a dark shape is suspended inside strips of lighter-colored wood. The shape looks vaguely like a figure from an early 1980s video game, and the strips of wood approximate a pixelated screen. The play between the age and origin of the material and the oddity of the shape is entertaining, even funny, in the best sense.

Julia Barello, a professor at New Mexico State University, also works in a reclaimed medium, but one that couldn't

be much more different from wood. She makes wall sculptures from discarded X-ray and MRI film. For *Red Swirl*, Barello cut dozens of birds from the film, dyed some of them red, then fixed them to the wall in a helix.

Some of the birds bear images from the medical film, although we can't really tell what they are. Well, a newspaper writer can't tell. A radiologist might be able to determine whether we're looking at tumors or broken limbs. The birds dyed red only enhance the feeling that we're looking at a sort of medical narrative. Red symbolizes blood and life, but the birds spiral inward and diminish, like

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Duncan Johnson's *Phantom*, 2010

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life heading down a drain.

The birds are beautiful, but I couldn't help thinking it would be interesting to see how they would make me feel if they were spiraling upward and outward, taking wing rather than turning in on themselves.

Spheris Gallery in Hanover exhibits work by Duncan Johnson and Julia Barello through March 2. Call 603-640-6155.

■ AVA Gallery and Art Center in

fly by AVA, Lebanon City Councilor Karen Liot Hill and a small group of local citizens. Suggested donation for entrance to the event is \$15 per adult and \$5 per child. Money also is being raised through sponsorships by businesses and individuals. All of the tax deductible donations will support Haiti earthquake victims. Call 603-448-3117 for more information.

### OPENINGS, RECEPTIONS

"Will They Remain?" — land-

auctioning vintage prints on Feb. 4, a sale that includes nine Dartmouth Winter Carnival posters dating from 1936 to 1961. Call 212-254-4710 for information.

■ The Hood Museum in Hanover holds a free lunchtime gallery talk on Tuesday at 12:30 by Mary Coffey, assistant professor of art history, titled "Botero's Butcher Window: Cute or Creepy?"

### ONGOING

9 a.m. to noon on Saturday.

■ Winter exhibitions at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center include mixed media and sculpture by Timothy Fisher, photographs by Glenna Evans, drawings by Judith Laliberte and paintings by Gregory Albright.

■ "When Snow Calls," paintings by Western Massachusetts artist Michael Wolski, is on view at the Quechee Inn at Marshland Farms. Call 802-295-3133.

■ The Norwich Public Library