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Mapping in a Major and Minor Key: Lisa C Soto's Recent Installations and Sculptural Wall Pieces

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"Don't be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth."
— Rumi

Dissolve, disperse, rebuild, and then marvel at the process. It's cyclical. It can refer to natural things (Big Banged astrophysics, plate tectonic continents, polluted ecosystems). It can refer to human things (the flux of social structures, religions, friendships, love, and war). With wisdom, poetry, and, yes, beauty, Lisa C Soto's installations and sculptural wall pieces describe things that crumble and then, in theory, can be reconfigured. *The beauty is in the will to rebuild and the effort to map the process of the rebuilding.* With a billowness that belies its intellectual vigor, her work is both a clarion call and a beacon as it articulates despair and hope, destruction and regeneration.

Fragile and eccentric, her work offer three-dimensional renditions of linear smoke and particulate matter (washers, fishing line weights, bullet shells, fishing hooks, twist pins, and sliders) calligraphied and wedded into place with wire and thread. Some of the objects she colors with pastel and spray paint. These tendrils of line and shapes form nebulae that, depending on your point of view, engulf, wash over, or retreat. It's an accessible and, initially, a bewildering experience, until you get your bearings straight.

Their fabrication is obsessive. Some of the pieces are dense: one features hundreds of twist pins compressed to form a sphere or asteroid. Some of the pieces are expansive, with intimations of boundless space beyond the confines of a studio with implications far beyond those of a white cube.

It's as a series of mini and many discrete universes, collectively, that these works form an exquisite and fascinating narrative of the process of dissolve, disperse, and rebuild. Consider the dense globe, seemingly impenetrable, of SLIDE 1 as a starting point for a pre-Big Bang universe. Imagine then, an explosion of such magnitude that, jillions of years later, its outward thrust continues. What would a telescopic freeze-frame of the remnants of the explosion look like? It would look like either SLIDE 2 or SLIDE 3. The same aggregated material from SLIDE 1 now thrust outward, randomly, its filigreed path describing constellations of debris, dreamy and awe-inspiring, in the eternal nighttime sky of the artist's studio.

Other pieces, SLIDE 4, SLIDE 5, and SLIDE 6, iterate different phases of the same explosion's aftermath, each beguiled by the vapor trail of eternity and shards of once-whole matter. Seen on both the micro- or macro-level, these post-explosion pieces are beautiful in their endless, wispy voyage through physical and mental time. Both the lines and the objects quiver with ambient air. The vastness to which they allude within the confines of the space is as chilling as an understanding of how far a light year really is.

Finally, SLIDE 7 looks like a loosely woven quilt. The shapes, though, aren't random. They're credit card-sized Mylar cutouts of each American state and territory (talk about obsessive). Mapping-wise it's a Soto, not a Mercator, projection, flat but undulating in the ambient air, each piece with a tentative hold on both the wall and with its contiguous partner. Narrow spaces exist between each state-shape glyphed with Native American symbols, to arrest the effort of reconciliation in mid-process, a frozen moment that describes the fruitlessness of objectively mapping anything - solar systems, boundaries, and, by extension, anything man-made -- because, from a Big Bang to a simple, ongoing imperfection of anything human, there are always unstable and creaky edges born of conflict which makes the enterprise of mapping *anything*, with tidy borders, a bold, quixotic enterprise. For Soto to admit as much and to do it so well is admirable. Her works' walkaway impression is of an unexpected adagio of nostalgia for the unshatteredness of things, of people, institutions, belief systems, and even the stars.