



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021

## Ground/Underground



Dudley Zopp, *Erratics*, installation view, articulated builder's paper, laminated tissue, collaged text, shellac, wood bench; wall-mounted *Erratic*: 127 x 131 x 18"; floor-mounted *Erratic*: 33 x 64 x 36".

Maine-based artist Dudley Zopp has stated, "My site-specific installations are simulacra for cultural and natural worlds." Her latest, *Ground/Underground*, confirms this self-appraisal. Among the cultural simulacra is a side table near the entrance to the show that features small LED candles and a printed card offering a message of welcome and a poem, "Traveler, there is no road," by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado. We might be entering a church and taking a prayer card.

In the natural world vein, hundreds of 8-by-10-inch canvases painted in shades of dark gray, brown and black are arranged across the main gallery floor. Squint your eyes and these shapes form a river running to the far wall—choppy water, like rapids. The illusion is simple and somehow inviting despite its artifice.

Zopp is a brilliant maker of evocative forms. She manages to create stunning wall and floor pieces out of crumpled and torn builder's paper that has been further enhanced with tissue and scrawled writings. They might be distant cousins of certain Frank Stella sculptures, but they seem at once less preconceived and more resonant. One of them looks strikingly like a figure fallen backwards, into a corner of the gallery, eliciting a kind of empathy.

Zopp's installations are incremental, organic and referential. Visiting her website after seeing the show (there were no labels with titles and media, hence the search for background), one discovers that she is a recycler: many of the images and presentations in the current installation are iterations of earlier work, variations on themes explored at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Portland Museum of Art and other venues. Here, for example, one finds more examples of those marvelous "erratics," her term for the articulated paper forms.

*Ground/Underground* was curated by Susan Smith, an intermedia MFA candidate at the University of Maine, who also included Zopp in the recent *Turning in Your Hand: The Blue Marbles Project* at Waterfall Arts in Belfast, ME. Whether she is riffing on geological phenomena or considering the great ball on which we live, this artist compels us to consider new ways to approach and perceive the world.

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