Academy 2010 @ Conner Contemporary Art

Matthew Smith

Installation image of "The Wait", by Joyce Lee, courtesy of Conner Contemporary Art

Conner Contemporary Art co-founders Jamie Smith and Leigh Conner believe in the viability of emerging artists from the D.C. area, as displayed in *Academy*, their yearly survey of MFA/BFA standouts from the D.C.-Baltimore area and *gogo emerging art projects, which evolved from Academy and serves as their arts incubator program. You'll be hard-pressed to find another gallery in the area that is as successful and as committed to local artistic potential.

Currently in its tenth edition, *Academy* is the brainchild of Smith, who's curated nearly every iteration of the show since its inception. Her selections are chosen from annual visits to thesis shows, and although they are as subjective as anything else in art tends to be, her preferences draw from her academic background (she holds a doctorate in the History of Art from Johns Hopkins) and extensive professional experience.

Smith explains that while the purpose of *Academy* is to provide exposure to exciting young artists, it's also an opportunity to recognize the strengths of the local art schools that keep the D.C. artscape vibrant and in constant renewal. In the process, Smith and Conner's intention is to contribute to the developing idea that D.C., like New York or Chicago, can also be a viable place for emerging artists to show their work and be commercially successful.