

GALLERIES

# What's up at Boston-area art galleries

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 27, 2012

At a crowded party in a small house over the weekend, I overheard the host answering someone who had called asking what he might bring.

“Space,” she said.

It's something most of us negotiate absent-mindedly. Vlatka Horvat, in her installation “Also Called: Backbone, Anchor, Lifeline” at Boston University Art Gallery at the Stone Gallery, brings space to awareness. How does a body respond to the built environment? To the detritus of city life?

For this exhibit, the Croatian-born, London-based artist, who is also known for performance, photography, video, and collage work, scoured the neighborhood around the university for materials. She acquired discards from a local lumberyard and went dumpster diving.

The work is trashy. Rolled up bits of foam rubber, splintery wood. Yet there's something sweetly playful about the installation — much of it is just the right scale for a child. And that sets up a tension with the taboos of a gallery setting. Throughout the space, Horvat has placed planks on their edges, making low,



A detail view of Vlatka Horvat's installation “Also Called: Backbone, Anchor, Lifeline.”

cockeyed corrals that you have to step over to pass through. Is it not verboten to step over art?

Here it's all right, but don't climb on the series of planks near the front of the gallery that look like ramps and a teeter-totter, one delicately joined to the next by strips of foam rubber. And take care not to stub your toe on the upright concrete blocks, scattered throughout the gallery like shy strangers at a party, close enough to nod but not to make conversation. Then there are protruding tubes and ribbons of foam rubber flopping off walls and columns, which seem vaguely unseemly, like someone sticking out a tongue.

Despite its antic energy, the installation exudes anxiety. It's as if neuroses, usually suppressed by the gallery's perfect white-painted walls and stately columns, have erupted through unseen fissures, or seeped in from the more chaotic environment on the street and under the nearby BU Bridge. Horvat uses her scavenged materials to manifest a physical reality that reveals the seductions and indignities we experience every day as we move through spaces, many of which were not made for our comfort.

**VLATKA HORVAT: Also Called: Backbone, Anchor, Lifeline**

At: Boston University Art Gallery at the Stone Gallery, 855 Commonwealth Ave., through Dec. 20.

617-353-3329, [www.bu.edu/art/](http://www.bu.edu/art/)

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