

## Marguerite Kahrl

Schumacher, Donna. "Magnetic Oracles",  
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### New York

#### Marguerite Kahrl

##### Thread Waxing Space

Marguerite Kahrl's installation, *Magnetic Oracles*, is a hypothetical museum of nuclear technology. Four mock laboratory stations have been placed one after another on a long table. Each station

includes a wooden box with detailing reminiscent of a piece of finely crafted furniture. Atop each of the four stations, a small figure is balanced on a metal rod surrounded by a ring of electromagnets which activate a jerky mechanistic motion. As the accompanying knobs, buttons, or dials are pushed and twirled, we are invited to observe the impact of our experiments on the figure. An arrangement of dials show levels of radioactivity, possible consequences, and barometric pressure.

In one station, a tilted board with a pad of paper provides a place for notations and observations. The implication inherent within our almost sadistic manipulations of the figure is easily representative of the problematic relationship between daily life and nuclear technology. The language of science, in particular nuclear science, has been taken out of

**Marguerite Kahrl, *Magnetic Oracles* (detail of Station #3), 1997. Mixed media.**

the exclusive domain of high technology and placed back into the human realm.

Another piece, *Armageddon*, an elaborate game board, creates a user-friendly forum for the discussion of the consequences of nuclear technology. An identical set of whimsical tokens are placed on either side of a three-by-five-foot table. Separated in the center by a white board for notations, two identical game boards describe paths of movement in green felt. The table itself is again finely crafted, as if meant to be passed along from one generation to another (like the waste materials of nuclear technology). Each player takes turns reading an instruction from a stack of cards, an instruction which both players follow. The two sides simultaneously determine a strategy to the problems posed and only when the game is over can the other side see and learn from their opponent's solutions.

Large drawings on white paper extend nearly from floor to ceiling, documenting the process of Kahrl's investigation, drawn with graphite in a straightforward simple style. The scribbling, drawings, and diagrams create a link between the artifact-laboratories, with their use of the language of science, and the framework of art exemplified in the gallery environment. —Donna Schumacher

