

DAVID NOLAN **NEW YORK**

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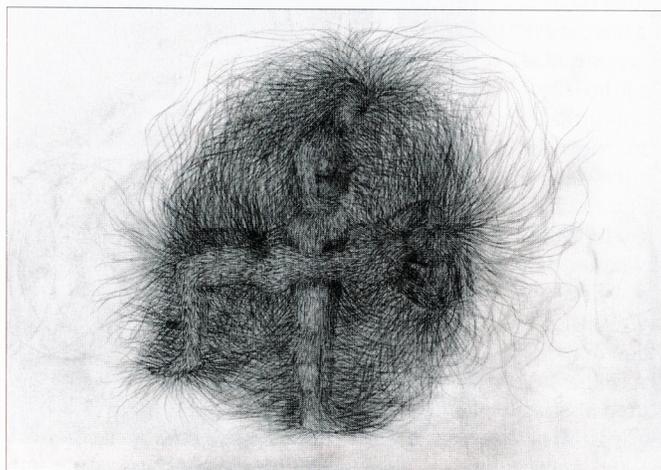
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Alice Maher, *The Music of Things (III)*, 2009, etching, 15½" x 18". David Nolan.

Irish artist Alice Maher, who's long been pulling it all together (myth, magic, folklore, memoir, in video, music, drawing, sculpture, and more), turned this unlikely venue into a small theater with viewers sandwiched between screens that tantalized and confounded with a kind of primitive animation.

Little in this fascinating show of video works, sculpture, and prints was exactly what it seemed. There were the videos with soundtracks by British composer Trevor Knight, drawings and prints in the back gallery, and mock-classical sculptures of a boy and a girl—the kind you might find on Victorian mantelpieces or in cemeteries.

The videos initially suggest a narrative with mythological creatures and lots of metamorphosing. There's a centaurlike fellow, a Rapunzel figure, and mounds of what might be gold. But it soon becomes clear that what we are viewing is really a series of erased drawings, one atop the other, assembled in the manner of animation but leading nowhere in particular.

In a still from her video *Godchildren of Enantios* (2010), a woman sits sidesaddle (sans saddle) on a bull. Wearing knee-high stockings, big underpants, and a necklace, she is draped with flowing, unstoppable-looking hair, which also covers the bull's eyes, effectively blinding him to her charms.

Here, rather than being cumulative and in a linear progression, the drawings appear as a palimpsest, continually reminding the viewer that the past is always a presence.

Maher's work is much about hair, head, and body; and it's about sex—men's decapitated heads sucking at a sphinx-postured woman's breasts/teats—and a lot about art as the process of production.

Through the erased pentimenti, we can gauge the evolution of the work and the story/nonstory. The music is ambiguously allusive and elusive, producing disconnected enticing sounds that keep us spellbound all the while.

The quickly sketched and erased drawings suggest dreams almost recollected and not nearly understood, showing that resolution is not what art and dreams are really about.

-Barbara A. MacAdam