

By Annette Monnier
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STARS OF STRIPES: Polly Apfelbaum's ode to Gene Davis' Franklin's Footpath covers the walls and floor of Temple Contemporary as part of the exhibit "Polly Apfelbaum +



Dan Cole: For the Love of Gene Davis."

Gene Davis was an American painter of the Color Field variety known for his paintings of brightly hued vertical stripes. In 1972, Davis created *Franklin's Footpath* — at the time the world's largest artwork — by painting 414-foot-long colorful stripes down the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The painting utilized 12 miles of masking tape, 400 gallons of special paint and a lot of stooping over with a paint roller.

That painting is gone now, a parking lot in its place. But pieces of asphalt from the demolished work, along with an homage to its glory, are on view at Temple Contemporary. The tribute comes in the form of two installations by artists Polly Apfelbaum and Dan Cole, who were brought together through the "Distinguished Alumni Mentoring Program" at Tyler School of Art, Apfelbaum being the distinguished and Cole

the up-and-coming artist.

Apfelbaum's installation encompasses the main gallery space in vertical and horizontal stripes that mimic Davis' original painting. The painted stripes cover the walls; the floor is covered by four large wool carpets. (Visitors are required to take their shoes off.) The combination inspires some of the same awe that must have overcome the public when viewing Davis' freshly rainbow-ed streetscape.

The piece could stand on its own, without the invocation of the earlier work, with the exception of the footsteps of the original artist, along with demarcation for a five-gallon paint bucket, paint tray and roller woven into one of the carpets, all calling back to Davis.

It's fun to compare photographs of *Franklin's Footpath*, noticing just how gnarly the asphalt streets were below the painted lines. The work conjures thoughts of history, the ghost of artworks past and the ephemeral nature of things that seem permanent.

In the smaller space to the left of Apfelbaum's chromatic behemoth is the work of recent Tyler graduate Dan Cole. Cole's contribution is a combination of wall painting and video projection, intermingling a slow-moving Davis pushing his paint roller on the Parkway with a clip from the cemetery scene in the classic film *Harold and Maude*. It is a collage that leads one to draw many colorful conclusions.

It's difficult to judge the successes and failures of an exhibition that grew from a mentoring program. On one hand, it seems that Cole enjoyed working with Apfelbaum, but the younger artist created work that appears to be forced on a theme while the older was able to create one in line with the rest of her oeuvre. Regardless, the result is well worth seeing.

Polly Apfelbaum + Dan Cole: For the Love of Gene Davis, *through July 11, Tyler School of Art, 2001*
N. 13th St., 215-777-9021, tyler.temple.edu/temple-contemporary.

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