New wave flick blown to smithereens

Despite what the groundhog may have thought, it's still winter here in Cambridge, and not many people want to be culturally stimulated when it's snowing outside. But there are a worthwhile few exhibits right here at MIT that can be seen during a lunch hour with time enough left over to grab a sandwich besides. Also, all four are free, and within walking distance. So you have no excuse not to see them. Consider it a painless cultural enlightenment.

First, there is Batten: An Installation by Allan Turrell, at the Hayden Gallery. Now before you jump to conclusions, I should tell you that although this is one of those modern, minimalist sculpture installations that the Institute is famous for, it is different. Although simple, it has a hidden surprise which makes it a lot of fun to see. Besides that, it only takes about ten minutes, unless you want to stay and watch other people figure it out. Although one could argue all day about its artistic meaning, I would recommend it just because it is neat.

After you've seen Batten, you might want to catch Mud in 3-D at Compton Gallery, room 10-130. The exhibit consists of about 15 different sculptures, made out of paper in mathematically derived shapes. Intricate, delicate, and colorful, fascinating, these sculptures are also fun to look at. My favorite is the great big artificial dodecahedron which is painted so that each plane forms a different plane of color. Since the star rotates, too, you can stand there for hours watching the colors go by.

If you're heading up to Central Square for lunch, make sure you check out the MIT Visual Language Workshop (VVL), building N52, on Mass Ave. They're currently displaying computer-generated and -processed images reprinted on 20x24" polaroid color prints. These might seem a bit bizarre at first, but I think you'll like the incredible visual effects which the computer provides. If you have a bit more time, you might want to browse through the MIT Museum, building N52 (next door to the VVL). Although theoretically arranged in many different exhibits, a far more accurate description is to say that the Museum is "filled with neat stuff," staff like the first brass rat, copies of VooDoo, and photos of Oliver Smoot being used to measure The Bridge are all over the place.

If you want to get a taste of some of the Institute folklore, there is the place to go. Supposedly, space is reserved for the MIT Balloon. If Harvard ever returns it. Those of you who bellyache about Nia珍贵 should go see these exhibits. There really is "good art" at MIT, it's right in your back yard. It's quick, it's fun, and it's free. So what are you waiting for?

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