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## Renée Gertler

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AUTHOR: GLEN HELFAND

03.21.09-04.27.09 *Blankspace*

Check your smartphone and you'll probably have at least one message concerning a downward spiral, collapse, or evacuated piece of real estate. It wasn't so long ago, though, that those discussions of the magnitude of nothingness and infinite space had more philosophical tones and emerged from late-night conversations around pot, munchies, and sci-fi novels. In her wry, engaging sculptural installation, Renée Gertler invokes the pleasures of circuitous conversations about life and the universe.

The objects comprising *Modality Room*, 2009, suggest an apartment scrappily furnished with makeshift modernist furniture and accessorized with macramé wall hangings, homemade bongos, open beer cans, half-eaten snacks, geodes, and other curious sculptures that each resemble brains suspended in three-dimensional geometric matrices. Most of what's here is made with modest means—paper-mâché, string, and little strips of wood—and covered in an equalizing layer of black paint, as if the party were frozen in a faux lava flow. It's reminiscent of a kinder, gentler Banks Violette project, although charged with a zap of quantum physics. Gertler also adds glimmers of the elemental—one of the best brainlike sculptures, *Instability Collapses*, 2008, is a multi-orbed blob of gold-leafed insulation foam, while an untitled piece suggests a silver-leafed sine-wave model.

Diagrams repurposed and poeticized are a recurring strategy here—the bulk of the exhibition seems to be a set or model of a stoner apartment. But Gertler breaks the monochromatic mold with a piece titled *blackhole*, 2009, a work composed of several thin wooden model-making strips, stained in corporeal purples and pinks, that form a large-scale cone, both weblike and oddly floral (the equivalent of a Louise Bourgeois spider exploded by a laser beam), that emanates from a corner opposite all the dark-hued objects. The artist wrangles humble material into something dazzling, providing ample, timely proof that it's the little things that can lead us out of the wormhole.

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