

# ART NEW ENGLAND

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

Northampton Center for the Arts/Northampton, MA [www.nohoarts.org](http://www.nohoarts.org)

**LYDIA NETTLER: IMPERATIVES; HARRIET DIAMOND: NO WAR!**



Lydia Nettler, *Break Away*, site specific installation, charcoal, papier-mâché, cardboard tubes, 9 x 20 x 20'.

Both Lydia Nettler and Harriet Diamond approach universality via locality. Each artist's work is inspired by her native town—Northampton—but addresses common themes both timeless and timely.

Nettler uses Northampton's landscape as a springboard for investigating human psychology and the struggle to control fear and anger. Surrounded by wraparound charcoal murals, Nettler's life-size, black-and-white sculpted tree trunks seem to pull viewers into the gallery. Walking toward them is like

entering a forest. Enveloping and entrapping, branchless tree trunks loom above, and one lies diagonally across the gallery floor. The enclosing arrangement simultaneously soothes and threatens, protects and intimidates. The same dichotomy defines the surrounding murals. In one, a young man runs along a path in the woods. His strained and stressed expression reveals his movement to be less liberating than fearful. Further along the path, a boy stands, arms overhead, calling to the runner. The uncertainty of whether he is calling the runner back or chasing him away adds to the installation's pushing and pulling, beckoning and foreboding.

Diamond's sculpted scenes celebrate Northampton's reaction to and action against the war in Iraq. The show's centerpiece is *No War*, an action-packed, multi-tiered cityscape depicting a 2003 antiwar rally in New York. Front and center, three veiled Muslim women wail, each holding a dead baby. Recalling Picasso's *Guernica*, they draw a subtle parallel between America's presence in Iraq and the horrific civilian bombing that took place during the Spanish Civil War. Immediately next to the mourning Muslims, three cheerleaders in stars-and-stripes bikinis kick in celebration. The surrounding crowd includes soldiers carrying picket signs, police dragging away protestors, and reporters conducting interviews. Despite the figures' small size, the tiered arrangement allows the viewer to look down on some figures and up at others, effectively creating the sense of a surrounding environment. *Lisa Amato Lynch*

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