

Basement installation holds a viewer captive

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VISUAL ARTS REVIEW

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CONTRIBUTING ART CRITIC

The nudes upstairs are the starring exhibition for the Loudoun House, but in the downstairs Project Space, deep inside the basement, there is an exhibit that also relies on ideas of the body.

Titled *Inquietude*, the installation inescapably captures the uneasy feelings brought to mind by its title. Created by Athens, Ohio, artist Petra Kralickova, the mixed-media installation embodies what

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"Cages" surrounded by black sand lend an uneasy feel to *Inquietudes*.

she calls in her artist's statement the "colonizing effects of an emotional dam."

Originally from the Czech Republic, Kralickova pours into *Inquietude* (through March 4) the suppressive feelings created by living under a Communist regime. From the opposing colors of the installation to the concept of invisible captives, to something as basic as difficult lighting, the installation overtakes the viewer with an unmistakable sense of embattlement and oppression.

You know there's trouble afoot when you start having problems seeing. The red fluorescent tubes used to light the white cement basement room play tricks with your eyes, making every blink a conscious act. The act of seeing becomes more vibrantly active, making it the only thing you can freely do in this space.

Filling the room are three types of black fiber forms: undulating, worm-like bolsters lying on the floor; hanging fringe "cages" surrounded by 2-foot circles of black sand; and hanging, furry fiber pendulums.

The cages are most obvious in espousing the invisible presence of humanity — the fringe encircles the approximate size of a human being. However, you cannot enter or exit them without leaving traces in the dust. Viewers are trapped on their side, barred from freely entering or (as can be inferred) exiting the captive space. The furry pendulums and sluggish fiber forms bring forth the concept of natural elements also frozen, confined, and unable to move easily and be free.

The oppression and isolation of the show are omnipresent. Only upon ascending the staircase to the main show upstairs do you slowly find you can breathe again.

