

Galleries

By Cate McQuaid

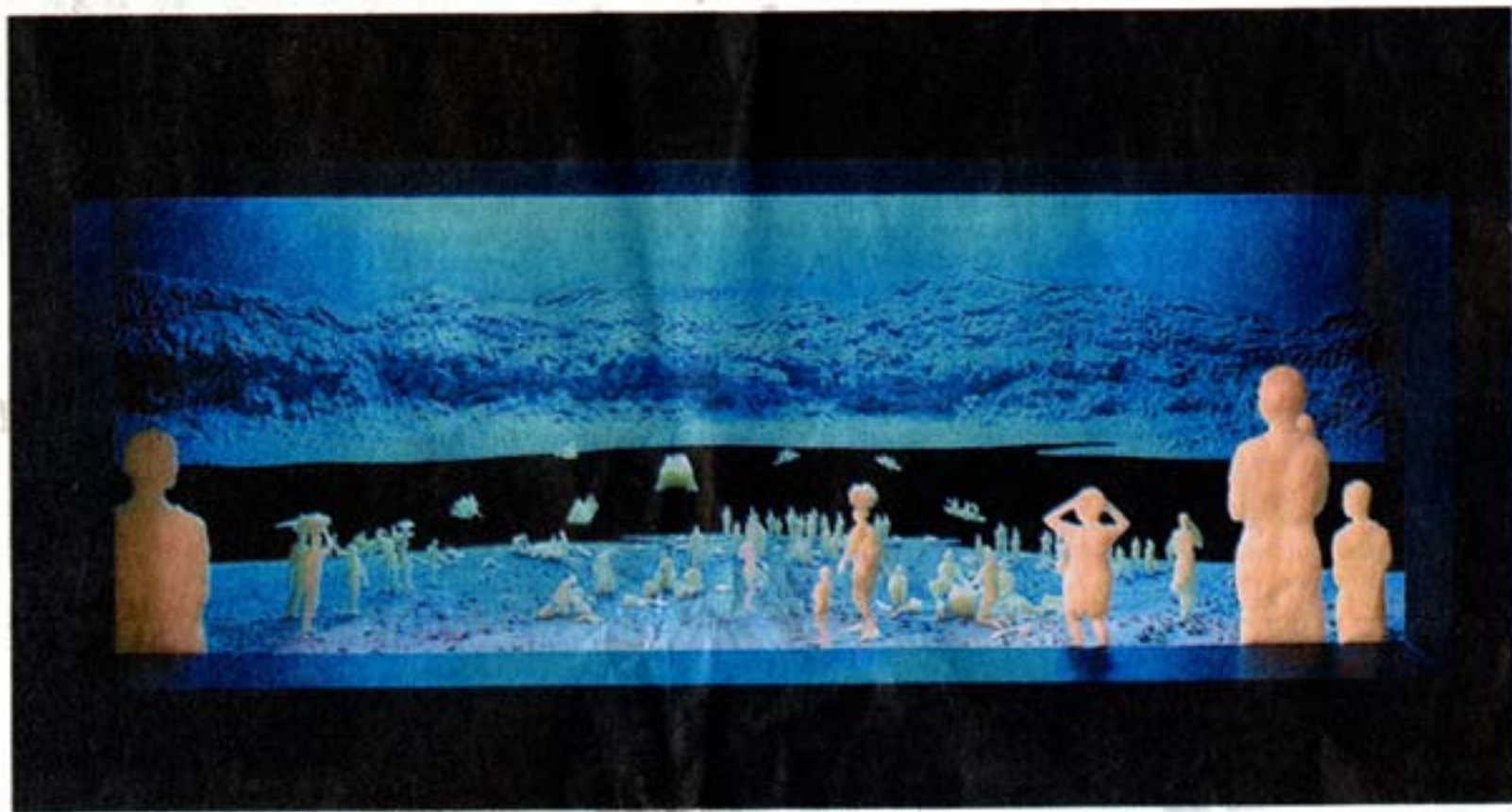
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Magic box

"Inside the Box," an exhibition of dioramas curated by George Field and Phaedra Shanbaum at Howard Yezerski Gallery, is sometimes fun and often frustrating. Dioramas are like wee theaters; the combination of the small scale, narrative, and space can be enchanting.

The best works in the show capitalize on those elements. Robert Taplin's "Over the Dark Waters (Dante and Virgil Come to the River of Hell)," from a series depicting scenes from Dante's "Inferno," is about seven feet wide and bathed in blue light, with dozens of eerie, pale-green people contemplating the black river in the distance.

Jerry Williams had a show of dioramas at Genovese/Sullivan Gallery a couple of years ago, and exhibits the same works here: bright, brilliantly crafted dime-novel scenes full of humor and in-



Robert Taplin's "Over the Dark Waters (Dante and Virgil Come to the River of Hell)" is about seven feet wide and bathed in blue light. Above right, Carlos Estévez maps systems in "The Relativity of Space."

trigue. Antony Flackett makes sly little black boxes with slots to peer into. Inside, the dioramas' sets are made simply, from cut paper and drawings. The tiny characters, such as Adam and Eve in "Morality Box," are reflections of a video projected onto acetate, but seem to inhabit the scene. Magic!

Suzie Silver and Hilary Harp couch videos inside layers of bucolic, leafy prints. The videos are re-enactments of performance art from the 1960s and '70s. Silver and Harp's work runs on a longing for an imagined utopia, a hunger no better satisfied 40 years ago than it is now, so the work feels empty.

Allison Holt's boxes revolve around the way the black-painted images on the plexiglass surface interact with the images within. These are sometimes effective and sometimes obscure. Empire S.N.A.F.U. is the alias of an artist whose art revolves around the

supposed restoration of the works of a deceased visionary named S.N.A.F.U. It's all too bloated with mythology, and the work here, a tiny diorama in a giant contraption with a title too long to print, is also bigger and louder than its aesthetic worth.