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Wednesday, October 25, 2006

Walk the Line

A subtle meditation on rhythm and religion

By [Julia Morton](#)

Su-Mei Tse has thrown her socially charged art onto the floor in the form of a rug. Applying the minimalist tradition of using industrial materials, Tse acquired a large wool carpet, had it professionally printed and then cut it into the shape of a maze. The colorful area rug, "Proposition de detour," measures nine meters (nearly 30 feet) in diameter and is the only object on display in the expansive, white Peter Blum Gallery.

The maze is a copy of an inlaid design found at the 12th century Chartres Cathedral in France. Historians suspect it was used to warn parishioners about the entanglements of sin or as a mini-pilgrimage. The rug's print is from a 16th century Persian carpet, which features stylized animals, birds and plants found in Persian versions of paradise.

Born to a British mother and Chinese father, Tse is accustomed to bridging cultures. By combining these contrasting visual ideas of salvation, Tse has created a subtle meditation on the complexity of relationships.

Trained as a classical cellist, Tse often incorporates aspects of music in her videos, photographs, sculptures



and installations; here, rhythm and movement are made spatial as the viewer becomes her performer.

Mazes are known as “tour puzzles.” The “solver” must walk the route to find its goal, or solution. You can try to follow the narrow path with your eyes, but the tangled course is best explored barefoot. Tse’s maze is unicursal—or a “perfect maze”—without branches or dead ends. Though complex, the concentric circles offer only one solution.

Entering the narrow path, the way may seem obvious and the goal within easy reach. But turn a corner and you suddenly find yourself at the outer edge again. If you follow the path, resisting the cynical temptation to cheat, you’ll have traveled the entire puzzle’s length and width to reach the center.

Tse’s carpeted journey, which starts as a game, becomes a meditation on our willingness to go the distance in order to understand our own goals as well as those of others. In transcending the obvious, Tse leaves us with the idea of lasting personal and cultural value—and not simply another social/political art-rant.

Through Nov. 4. Peter Blum Gallery, 526 W. 29th St. (betw. 10th & 11th Aves.), 212-244-6055.

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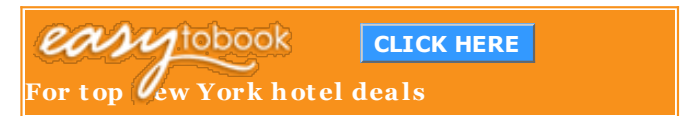
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