

# 'WE ALL FALL DOWN' POWERFULLY DISTURBING

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SUE COE'S DRAWINGS in "We All Fall Down," at the upstairs gallery in the Salt Lake Art Center, vividly re-create the artist's impressions of a visit to the Infectious Disease Ward at the Institute of Medical Humanities in Galveston, Texas. (The ward works primarily with people infected with the AIDS virus.) The drawings - reminiscent of the politically charged works of Kathe Kollwitz and Honore Daumier - are a stark reminder of the damage AIDS does to the human body and soul.

During her visit to the Institute, Coe found a basic humanity in the patients and doctors. In "Mary" (graphite, ink, gouache), Coe renders a female AIDS patient vomiting over the side of her hospital bed. Admittedly, it is a disturbing image made even more sickening by Coe's graphic execution of the pathetic event. However, the power of the drawing doesn't come from the shock of seeing an "Auschwitzesque" phantom throwing up. It comes from the figure of a nurse standing at the side of the bed, mop in hand, ready to clean up the mess. Coe manages to craft the nurse's back, shoulders and rubber-gloved hands into a "It's OK. I'll wait until you're finished. Do you need any help?" posture. It's the kindness of the nurse in the face of this humiliating horror that brings significance to the piece. In two of the drawings, "It's Over" and "Paul," Coe incorporates genuine hospital signs, which lifts the pieces into another dimension. It's as if the artist is saying, "Hey, this is really happening."

Coe has become a leading artist in the United States by devoting her work to political and controversial themes. Often such work is avoided due to its bold imagery or potent message. Indeed, while this exhibit isn't for everyone, the power of the message cannot be denied. For those attending, plan on several hours of discussion with fellow viewers when you leave.

The nine drawings and suite of prints in "We All Fall Down" runs through Sept. 15.

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