

Mark Lombardi: Global Networks  
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA  
February 28, 2004

Mark Lombardi: Global Networks is a solo exhibition of the artist's large-scale drawings. Lombardi's work illustrates connections between political and corporate leaders, religious institutions and members of organized crime.

It's fascinating to see a diagram of the connections of Meyer Lansky, or of the Bank of South Florida's connections between the Contras, the Bin Laddens and the Bush family. I felt, however, that I needed much more information. Unlike the other exhibits at Yerba Buena, there was little information provided, other than the framed, meticulously drawn works. I do not have enough historical back ground to appreciate it, and I found that I was working very hard to overcompensate (i.e. making up reasons for the connections) for missing information.

I have read that Lombardi was a librarian, and that makes sense- he is a researcher. The most illuminative part of the exhibit was a couple year old documentary, on display on a small TV monitor at the corner at the end of the exhibition. That there were more people huddled around the monitor looking at the documentary than were looking at the art, confirmed my belief that people really did want to understand the artwork, but that the artwork alone, without labels or explanations left them with too many questions.

I did noticed a couple looking at the works, and talking about each one with excitement. They were older than me, its true, but I felt like a philistine because not only did I not have the knowledge, I could not see the way they could. I wanted too!

Politically, I enjoyed it, although I needed much more information to keep me going. I wanted to understand where he got the information for his diagrams, how exactly they work. If to think artistically is to think in constellations and to connect disparate ideas, Lombardi is the consummate artist. Although I went to the exhibit with an extreme conservative libertarian who kept asking me: "is this art?" I ended up sending him to the video game room.

Yerba Buena center is, in its exhibition programs, trying to explore themes like the roll of art, technology in art, the roll of exhibitions. For this, I realize that it takes a particular museum goer to feel comfortable in its halls. But the Center makes an effort to make its exhibits interactive where it can: for example, the other exhibit in the gallery was that of the art of the video game. The whole exhibition

room was made to look like you were inside one of the "levels" of a fantasy video game: dark with pyramids and space like creatures. I sent my libertarian friend down to play video games as I "worked" on the exhibition myself. I do think that Lombardi's work is art, but the nature of his work demands even more back ground information, than say Chuck Close's, just to appreciate it. Given that this exhibition took up part of two floors of the Center, I think they could have done a better job at providing that information for me. The exhibit was organized and circulated by a group I have never heard of: Independent Curators International, New York. So perhaps, there were specific reasons that Yerba Buena did not add or receive an extensive education component with the exhibit.