

# ARTnews

Reviews: New York

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By David Bonetti

## Sarah Braman

Museum of Fine Arts

**Boston**

This engaging exhibition, “Sarah Braman: Alive,” debuted new works by the winner of the MFA’s 2013 Maud Morgan Prize, given biennially to a female artist

working in Massachusetts. Set in the museum’s contemporary-art wing, the show consisted of an abstract painting, a video, and—the focal point of the room—two colorful, large-scale, glass and steel sculptures. *Door*—inspired by the “false door” of an Egyptian Old Kingdom tomb in the museum’s collection—and *Forward* are two minimalist monoliths. As the viewer walked around the deep purple and the narrower orange sides of *Door* and the slyly listing form of *Forward*, the effect changed dramatically. *Door* and *Forward*

became very different sculptures when seen from the front, the side, or through each other. The result was an active experience for the viewer, alternately somber and playful.

Braman’s abstract painting *Baltimore Summer* is composed of three panels smeared with brilliant blue, green, magenta, mauve, and marigold acrylics.



Sarah Braman, *Forward*, 2013, 70 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 52" x 36"; and *Door*, 2013, 84" x 60" x 36", both welded steel armature, architectural grade light-fast colored gel, glass. Museum of Fine Arts.

However casual the gestures might appear, the carefully considered composition emphasized the contrast between a rigidly geometric tri-part structure and a joyful rhapsody of color. Likewise, the 17-minute video, *Planet Earth*, despite being composed of what appeared to be randomly selected images, came together to form a dramatic diary based in contrasts. The video opens on a dreary day in New York City and cuts abruptly to Braman’s Western Massachusetts home, where vivid colors and images of nature dominate—a naked baby toddling through an overgrown backyard, flowers, a snowy field, a trip to Emily Dickinson’s grave, and more flowers. As a whole, this exhibition demonstrated the potential for deep feeling and whimsy to exist in harmony with formalist structure.

—David Bonetti