

***Beth Cook: Annual Report***

Richmond Art Center  
West Gallery  
April 11-June 3, 2006

*Annual Report* presents the cumulative 2005 findings of Beth Cook's comprehensive self-analysis. The Employment Division assesses the ratio of emotional to financial satisfaction offered a young artist by her day job. The Romantic Division charts her fluctuations between trust and cynicism, as each new relationship blossoms and then fizzles. The Emotional/Psychological Division compartmentalizes her professional and social anxieties into the schematic architecture of a small single-family home. The Spiritual Division demonstrates how the life of one mind can encompass a whole universe.

Cook is an autobiographical conceptualist. She reflects on her most personal and private experiences from the outside, organizing her obsessions into divisions within the corporate hierarchy of her own mind. Romantic, professional, financial, filial and social pressures, causing her to feel a loss of self-control, are corralled into tidy graphs and charts whose empty in-between spaces speak volumes about the messiness of human existence. These graphs range visually from Minimalism to Expressionism, with margins full of diary notes written in a tiny hand.

Cook's visual lexicon is a hybrid of marketing, publicity and pop psychology standards. The pie charts and graphs of the boardroom, like the easy sentiments of the advice columnist, serve to universalize her personal insights. An inner world of pain and confusion ever threatens to burst through the emotional dam of shallow platitudes that she has cobbled together. Cook works in a kind of narrative abstraction. She uses art as a means by which her rational self can coldly evaluate her emotional self, while creating just enough distance to be brutally honest with herself and her audience. Easily mistaken for narcissism, her practice is in fact a means to extrapolate herself as a case study—an average young woman torn between her own ambitions and her desire to please others.

Beth Cook was born in 1978 in Chicago, IL. She holds dual Bachelor's degrees in Fine Art and Advertising Management from the University of Syracuse, New York (2001). *Annual Report* is her first solo exhibition since completing her MFA at California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA, in 2005. Cook's recent exhibitions and performances include *New California Masters*, Works San José, San José, CA (2005), *All I Know*, 12 Galaxies, San Francisco, CA (2005), *Free Love*, Bohemia Lounge, San Francisco, CA (2005), and *Dating Seminar*, Alternative Lecture Series, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA (2005).

*Beth Cook: Annual Report*



*Installation view*



*Installation view*

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*Installation view*



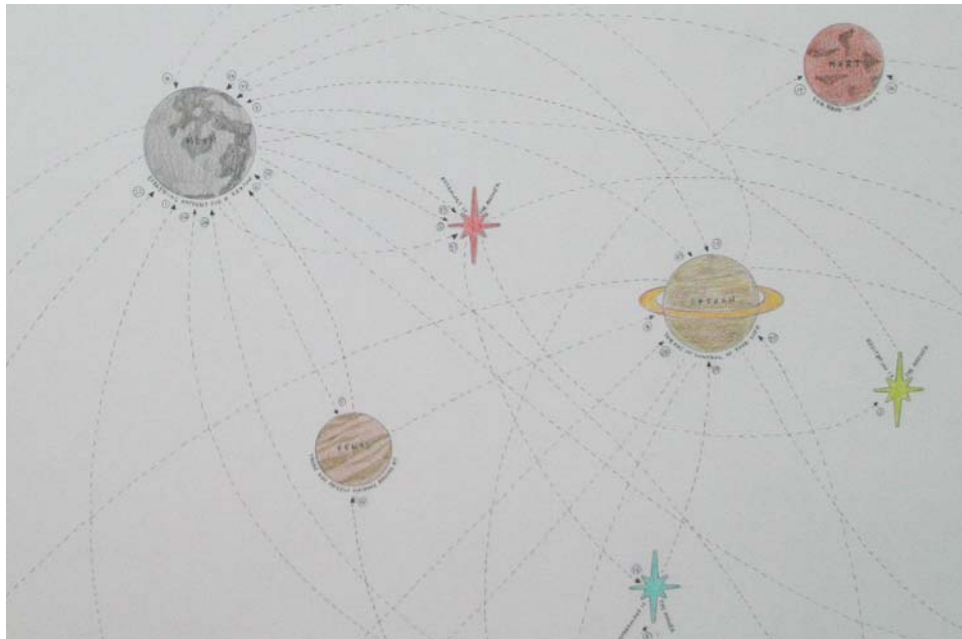
*Romantic Division, 2006, pencil on vellum*



*Beth Cook: Annual Report*



*Spiritual Division*, 2006, pencil on vellum



*Spiritual Division* (detail)