

## How much do you think about water?

Posted by Nicole Aguirre | May 21, 2010

In college, I had the pleasure of taking a color photography course taught by the photographer and performance artist, Mary Coble. She was a kind, encouraging, and easy-going professor who truly supported her students' passion for photography. One day, toward the end of the course, she presented her own work and suddenly we found that this sweet and soft-spoken woman had a dark side, a very dark side, which is unleashed in her performance work. Coble's concern for all areas of social justice, most notably for LGBT issues, has led her to endure painful procedures as part of her art, including extensive tattooing and electroshock therapy. Her performances almost always include a heavy physical component. Last Saturday's performance was no different.



Source, held at Conner Contemporary Art, addresses the preciousness and scarcity of water in our city and in the world. Coble gathered water samples from locations throughout Washington, DC. The large containers she filled hung grid-like off a wall in the gallery's patio. For six hours on Saturday, May 15th, Coble climbed a ladder, removed a single container, carried it over to a tall three-tiered filtration fountain, poured a small amount into the fountain, and then

returned it to its place on the wall. Eventually, water from each part of the city was filtered together into one clean source. Viewers watching the performance wondered aloud about the endurance and strength required to repeat such a task for so long. Others, perhaps less audibly, wondered about the piece's meaning. Fresh water is something we often take for granted, but what about those who have to walk for

many miles a day to collect it? Shouldn't we all have access to clean, safe drinking water? What would it take to achieve such a goal? How could each one of us make a difference? Source doesn't provide easy answers to any of these questions. Its purpose, perhaps, is to make sure that we ask them.

