

# Dreams takes flight

## Dezsö's installation creates rich reality at Rice Gallery

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**Issue date:** 4/9/10 **Section:** [Entertainment](#)

Andrea Dezsö's new installation at the Rice Gallery transforms the front of the gallery into a network of various portals and windows, which transport the viewer into another world. *Sometimes in My Dreams I Fly*, which runs April 8 to Aug. 8, challenges the viewers to suspend their earthly cares in exchange for passage to a lunar landscape of fantastical creatures and unidentifiable objects.

Dezsö grew up in Transylvania, Romania under the regime of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. Rampant censorship, the inability to freely move about the country and the launch of Sputnik during the space race shaped her childhood. The impossibility of travel caused Dezsö to turn inward and use her own imagination as an avenue to different locations, both on Earth and beyond. Throughout her artistic career, Dezsö has elected to give great agency to her viewers' ability to escape past their physical location with their minds.

*Sometimes in My Dreams I Fly* is an enlargement of Dezsö's signature "tunnel books," series of pieces of paper cut and painted to portray an overall image. Placed in a receding horizontal manner, the layers of paper lend a great sense of depth to her work. The presence of a third dimension within the tunnel books serves to expertly draw the viewer into Dezsö's imagined universe.

The installation is actually composed of numerous separate tunnel "books," some expanded to proportions so large viewers can almost walk through them. Speckled across various levels over the gallery's front glass panels, the portals allow access to different imaginary characters and geographical features. Dezsö invites the viewer to explore various aspects of the same world through the physical act of bending down or standing on tiptoe to more completely examine scenes at various elevations. Either way, the act of physical exploration lends a childlike quality of discovery to the installation, akin to bouncing up and down to gain a better view of animals at the zoo or aquarium.

Houston provided a worthy backdrop and inspiration for Dezsö's first site-specific work. Home to the Johnson Space Center and the eponymous Mission Control Center, the city's connection with space travel appears particularly direct. In fact, the famous line "Houston, we've had a problem," uttered during the failed Apollo 13 mission to the moon, provided the main inspiration for *Sometimes in My Dreams I Fly*. The catastrophe that prevented the crew from actually reaching the moon spoke to Dezsö's memories of her childhood in restrictive Romania. She imagined that, despite being thwarted from landing on the moon, the crew turned their attention to exploring the moon with their imaginations.



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"What you imagine may be richer than reality," Dezsö believes; therefore, her installation could mirror some of the creatures that the crew hypothesized resided on the lunar surface. Largely devoid of scientific inhibitions, these creatures have spectacular names like "strolling couple with benevolent houseplant" and "small leaf-brain runner." *Sometimes in My Dreams I Fly* allows the viewer to leave behind the trappings of the everyday world through the acceptance of fantasy.

Dezsö's dark, muted blue-and-black color scheme contributes to the overall mystery and almost sinister quality of the landscape. It is clear that while the theme appeals to the childlike elements of curiosity and acceptance, this is decidedly a complex exploration where not every pathway yields a happy ending.

The alienness of Dezsö's otherworldly creation inspires a distinct feeling of wonder and awe. She defines her goal as "suspending the feeling of familiarity" and transporting viewers into an environment quite different from their own. With great artistry and skill, Dezsö successfully achieves her mission through a reliance on the imaginative curiosity present in all of us.

Page 1 of 1

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