

# 'New Geometry' Isn't So by the Book

By MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN  
Washington Post Staff Writer

There's a "Da Vinci Code" quality — and I mean this in a good way — to Charbel Ackermann's "The New Geometry," one of two off-site installations that Irvine Contemporary has mounted at the Warehouse Gallery to showcase the work of the contemporary artist.

Having discovered that the so-called "Axis of Evil" is, quite literally, a straight line intersecting Pyongyang, Baghdad, Tehran and Havana (along with a host of other, less nefarious geographic points in between), the London-based conceptualist has good fun literalizing that connection in a series of unique drawings, limited-edition prints and computer projections. Among the more creative (though, to my geometry-eneebled brain, abstruse) visualizations is one in which the artist imagines the implications of the Earth being placed in a box.

"If a globe fits snugly into a hat box," writes Ackermann, tongue firmly in cheek, "the surface of the globe cap defined by the axis of evil is equal to the surface of the rim of the box delimited by the axis of evil."

Now, I know what you're saying (and if you're not saying, "Huh?," then you clearly paid more attention in high school math than I did). What exactly is the point of all these visualizations of a silly political metaphor, a particularly brilliant example of which turns the phrase into a kind of tunable stringed instrument?

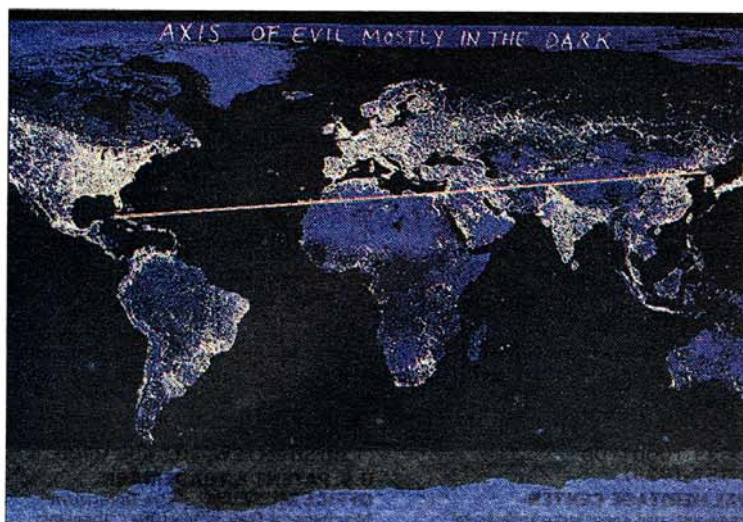
The project is, of course, a critique of sorts, puncturing presidential grandstanding, fear-mongering and pandering. What's more, the images themselves are, in many cases, also quite striking, as with "The Axis of Evil Mostly in the Dark," which envisions the line as if seen by satellite at night.

Less successful is "Monument<sup>2</sup>," an interactive "drawing" comprising 49 paper panels printed with bar codes in the configuration of a monumental arch. As visitors use one of two handheld scanners to click on various parts of the image, text fragments on the theme of monuments pop up in a kind of random slide show.

But if the idea is to get those of us who live in this monument-rich city to stop and think about the meaning of what is all too often visual wallpaper, then excerpts like the following ponderous death-penalty-themed passage, which tend to make the eyes glaze over — and the brain freeze up — are counterproductive:

"Absolute judicial error occurs when, after the execution, as it still happens, the innocence of the executed is proven, and the society at large, that is us, in the name of whom the verdict was rendered, becomes collectively guilty, since its justice makes this supreme injustice impossible."

**CHARBEL ACKERMANN: "THE NEW GEOMETRY" AND "MONUMENT<sup>2</sup>"** Through July 1 at the Warehouse Gallery, 1021 Seventh St. NW (Metro: Mount Vernon Square/Seventh Street-Convention Center), 202-332-8767. [www.irvinecontemporary.com](http://www.irvinecontemporary.com). Open Thursday-Saturday 1 to 6. Free.



BY CHARBEL ACKERMANN

"The Axis of Evil Mostly in the Dark," by Charbel Ackermann.