

# PhiladelphiaWEEKLY

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## **Talking Outside the Box**

The best art draws you into a conversation. "Hopscotch," a 24-artist exhibit at the Painted Bride, has 33 conversation starters that provoke, cajole and, in a couple cases, tweak your nose to get the ball rolling. This is not cocktail-party chatter--these works are serious. And as with most dialogue, the best opening lines are questions, not thesis statements. For example, take Eric McDade's manic, three-booth installation *Who Is My Little Icemaker* (seen last year at Basekamp). *Icemaker* juggles issues of love and loss with a light touch, all the while questioning whether life (or at least art) is a carnival. Randy Bolton's two-panel storytelling *Tug* subverts children's-books imagery to get into issues of stereotyping and point of view. In an ambiguous scenario, a stubborn donkey gets pulled by a bright-eyed camel. Or is the donkey doing the pulling? It's not at all clear. Darice Polo's virtuoso photorealist graphite drawings based on family snapshots turn heads and start conversations with their technique alone. But these beautiful renderings introduce issues of reality's slipperiness, memory's selectivity and family ties. Jennifer Pepper's *Anatomy of the Read*, an Exacto-knife evisceration of the art review pages of the New York Times, is an art-world-weary piece, but it brings a new voice into the discussion about the packaging and marketing of art. You can pass on some of these conversations, but overall, the show's a good gabfest.

*(Roberta Fallon)*

>> Through Mar. 16. Painted Bride Art Center, 230 Vine St. 215.925.9914. [www.paintedbride.org](http://www.paintedbride.org)