

Connecticut

Housatonic Museum of Art/Bridgeport

WEIR FARM VISITING ARTISTS 2001

The Housatonic Museum is this year's host of an annual exhibition of works by the Weir Farm Visiting Artists. It is a substantive display, broad in the array of art forms represented and unusually strong and accomplished in clear artistic intention.

The works by the 2001 visiting artists—Richard Lang Chandler, Maureen Cummins, Steven Dolbin, Camille Eskell, Thomas Mezzanotte, and Michael Torlen—seem like notebook jottings. They are ruminative, introspective, and spontaneous. Viewing them is somehow restorative, as if they had absorbed and then spread the benefits of the bucolic settings in which they were produced. As is inevitable in such exhibitions, there is some inconsistency of quality, but the kind of work typically produced at visiting artist programs is often distinctive and refreshing, and this show follows suit.

Eskell and Mezzanotte sound notes of dignity and distinguished achievement. Both have injected their works with authentic yet unsentimental sadness in which the senses swim. Eskell presents a series of boxes containing dried flowers, lace, drawings, and fragmentary casts of body parts that embody yearning blended with regret and delicacy compounded with the crushing weight of hard fact. Eskell's constructions reveal that tragedy and beauty are somehow the same.

Mezzanotte's photographs are soft-focus suffusions that suggest photography's universal subject, time. He creates images of what our minds conjure up when we look back to what has been forever lost.

—Mark Daniel Cohen