



ARTS & EVENTS

The Malleable Present: J.J. McCracken

ShareThis | Print | Facebook | Post This | Like (0) | Comments (0)



IT BEGINS WITH A "TOCK."

You'd barely noticed her from across the street, the clay-colored woman standing barefoot on her big clay ball, but now she's noticed you, and counts your presence with the click of a wooden bead.

D.C. ceramic artist **J.J. McCracken** is the muse of all this clay. Further into the Project 4, where her current show, "**Living Sculpture**," is on display, are four more ball-perched artisans: one forming tiny spheres out of clay and casting them to their dooms in a liquidy mass; one knitting; one unknitting the product of the first; the last a cellist (Janel Leppin) playing a short meditation and then reversing it by way of a recording device.

[McCracken](#) has applied the 1,200 pounds of clay that she dug from near Baltimore to all of this, even the cello. "There's about a thousand pounds on the walls" alone, she says.

As the artist notes, "I'm interested in the pregnant pause." All this making and un-making here is meditative to watch. When will that little ball drop? The cellist's sphere shudders as she plays. Each actor seems capable of being a gymnastic calamity at any moment. The overall effect is part koi pond, part roller-coaster-cresting-the-hill; you are relaxed, yet wary.

McCracken was a potter for years, but "felt something was dying about the work" when it was baked. "I discovered — I don't have to fire the clay!"

» [Project 4 Gallery](#), 903 U St. NW; performance on Fri., 7:30 p.m., clay backdrops and poetry handouts on display through Sept. 11; 202-232-4340. (U St.-Cardozo)

Written by Express' Chris Combs

Photos by Rebecca Jones, J.J. McCracken; courtesy of Project 4 Gallery

Posted By Express at 7:38 AM on August 28, 2008 Tagged in [Arts & Events](#) , [Museums & Galleries](#) , [The District](#) , [Weekend Pass](#)

