

MCCONNELL ARTS CENTER

Exhibit | Works in wood deceptively simple

“**Works in Wood: Melinda Rosenberg**” continues through May 5 in the McConnell Arts Center of Worthington, 777 Evening St. Hours: noon to 5p.m. Sundays, 10 a.m. to 9p.m. Tuesdays through Thursday. Friday, Saturday 10 a.m. to 5p.m.

By Christopher A. Yates



Circus by Melinda Rosenberg

Melinda Rosenberg re-purposes the past.

Collecting wood from the vanishing agrarian landscape, she constructs nostalgic if not poetic meditations on history and change.

Her works, on view in the McConnell Arts Center, are foremost about simplicity. Most of the pieces are square, and all jut from the wall at about a 30-degree angle, forming pyramidal “roof peaks.” Viewers will discover patterns, visual conundrums and optical illusions.

Physical surfaces are key to Rosenberg’s aesthetic. Geometric in design, some surface planes are highly textured while others are smooth and sanded. Always, the grain of the wood serves as a marker of growth and decay — a point of opposition that becomes the focus of every piece.

In *Skin*, three pieces form a triptych. The geometric compositions of the three are the same, but the surface texture on each piece is different. Refined and highly sanded surfaces reveal the growth pattern of trees; they suggest a living history of expansion. Other surfaces are rough. Having been exposed to the elements, such surfaces are a record of gradual decay.

Rosenberg’s thinking is aligned with and influenced by Japanese aesthetics. Concepts such as *wabi* (subdued, transient beauty); *sabi* (rustic or aged beauty); and *yugen* (mysterious or graceful subtlety) are readily visible in her work.

Books 1-9 resembles a set of open books. With varied surfaces, the books speak to different stories and records of the past.

Other works refer to minimalism and op art. *Eye Exam Symbols*, *Grey Circle*, *Hexagon and Diamond to Circle* are all visual conundrums that, depending on the viewer’s vantage point, seem to protrude outward or sink inward. Included in the show is an example from Rosenberg’s “Mandala” series as well as a group of works that tap issues of childhood and memory.

Rosenberg’s work sneaks up on you. Her pieces require viewers to slow down and look carefully. It’s worth the effort.

cayates.dispatch@earthlink.net