

One of the many interesting things about the work of the thirteen ceramists, painters, printmakers, and sculptors in *MFA Thesis Exhibitions 2001* is the difficulty you will have deciding the home discipline of many of the artists. These exhibitions contain painters of three-dimensional environments, sculptors of miniature tableaux as well as flat images, and ceramist installations that do not always involve clay. There is a tendency toward the psychological, the quotidian, and the anti-heroic; technology is used casually when needed – it is just another medium. The relationship of these artists to postmodernism is quite complex – some celebrate it, some seem to reject the very notion, and some search for whatever will come after postmodernism, but they all negotiate the postmodern terrain as they pursue extremely personal quests. It has been my pleasure to experience the exciting ideas and provocative work generated by these thirteen artists. We may be thankful for the glimpse of the future they reveal.

Suzanna Fields is an abstract painter who combines the idealism of modernism and the vernacular forms and materials of the “crafts” shop at the local mall to produce vibrant little 3-D

paintings – surreal terrains reminiscent of geological formations, outer-space, and cartoons.

Brian Geary is a figurative painter of exceptional skill. He makes smart, light suffused paintings of the most ordinary objects – refrigerator interiors and bathroom fixtures. He is a master of the quotidian and the humble.

Elizabeth Gilfilen conflates abstract expressionist painting, the nervous system, and digital/medical imaging in completely fresh and unexpected ways. The beauty of her painting is most uncanny – it is the beauty of virtuoso painting in the age of the internet and the MRI. And Elizabeth reminds us that painting has always been a kind of cosmic lie detector.

Elise Howell is a painter who takes figuration forward into complex psychological realms. The women in Elise’s striking cinematic paintings peer into mirrors, endlessly examining their bodies, mirroring the incessant self-scrutiny of artists as well as our era of self-consciousness.

Haeggen Kim takes the most ordinary materials – toilet paper rolls, tape measures, and stacks of paper – and relentlessly, inventively torments them until they become unique and magical objects.

Bindu Mehra manipulates everyday materials. Hot-glue becomes the bee's honey and the spider's web extruded by Bindu into piles of filaments – lines that have either freed themselves from paintings or remain in search of a painting home.

Rebecca Murtaugh is a ceramist who makes sculptural installations that celebrate light and translucence in important new ways. She uses porcelain, paper or cloth to create meditative environments that tell personal stories and poetically transform the domestic.

Angel Nuñez is a sculptor who makes brilliant little tableaux of interior architectural spaces within suspended biomorphic pods. These surreal landscapes speak of collective futuristic notions as well as the intimate space of our private dreams.

Melissa Paca's prints tell personal stories as they blend with popular culture, comics, and bohemian shenanigans. Melissa tells her stories with wit and humor and is nonetheless a serious innovator of the printmaker's craft.

Genevieve Paterson is a sculptor who uses the unlikeliest of materials – a recent work utilized dog hair to fabricate a monumental rug-like work that bears the image of the

Richmond legend, Sculpture Department Chair Joe Seipel. Genevieve's playful and ironic work charges the viewer with carefully wrought contradictions.

Fiona Ross is a ceramist who makes objects out of clay, minerals, and refractory concrete. Profoundly crude and deformed, they balance precariously between the world of nature – deep seismic events – and the artificial – expressive formal strategies. Forged by fire, Fiona's ugly/beautiful chunks of clay take us back to all that is primal and dangerous.

Curtis Smith is a sculptor who uses electrical pressure switches, speakers, light bulbs, and video as naturally as others use stone and wood. His interactive work is both witty and philosophical. While performing the serious work of exploring perception, Curtis is not afraid to delight.

Roland Thompson is a painter of large abstract paintings. He effortlessly melds geometry and gesture in his monumental and complex arrays of lines and drips – optical extravaganzas. Roland's original fascination with maps and diagrams provides a clue to help us unlock his painterly secrets.

- Richard Roth

rebecca murtaugh

7" x 90" x 5"
porcelain, MDF, plexi
2000



*I am intrigued by language and it's potential to drive and push ideas.
My constructions of ephemeral objects serve to enhance the concept
of ritual and the pathways necessary to complete a task.*

*A Resting Place for Ziplock
Pillows and Ritual (detail)*