

miniARTure: 10 x 10 x 10 x 10



january 15 — march 13, 2004



TRIANGLE GALLERY OF VISUAL ARTS

miniARTure:

10x10x10x10

The extraordinary diversity among the group of artists represented in *miniARTure* defies grouping or categorization into one style, however, the title of the exhibition might function as a pretext to underline the circumstances from which artistic production originates.

When we look back at Egyptian architecture and sculpture, their importance as objects of art rests in part on their sensationally large mass/scale. Throughout history the scale and proportion of sculpture have been described by architectural theory. In terms of meaning, scale is biased. We do not expect small-scale objects to carry profound meaning, which is required of large-scale objects. In the *Art of Sculpture*, Herbert Read described sculpture as evolving from two distinct sources: the monument and the amulet. As architecture strives toward the monument, sculpture leaves behind its ties to the amulet and the human body.

We are the most important element determining extrinsic scale. We use our bodies instinctively to gauge the scale of objects. Some sculptors, like the ten invited to participate in *miniARTure*, intentionally subvert or manipulate this bodily dependence, producing sculptures on an impossible scale.

KIRSTEN ABRAHAMSON'S

glazed ceramic pieces act out allegories in a way that immediately allow the spectator to recognize that there is more than visual humour presented. She seems to want to return the viewer to a more innocent world. Simultaneously Abrahamson calls into question our



moral and cultural values, which the innocence of her art represents and defends. We find ourselves chuckling every time we are confronted with her works, though this is also mixed with an indefinable sense of compassion. Sophisticated and whimsical, the new pieces extend her exploration of some of humanity's deepest obsessions and fears. The brightly coloured work is simultaneously sobering and sad. Objects that are somewhat "funny" rely heavily on an intimate relationship with everyday life. There has to be a strong resemblance to a reality that can then be tweaked and transformed into the strange.

Using a symphony of joyous, buoyant and enchanting colours, the resultant work is composed and, at times, playful. Her work is best described as complex and never what it seems at first. Abrahamson's objects attract and demand longer attention.



"God is in the details."
(Mies van der Rohe)

JEFF DE BOER can be best described as a watchmaker consumed by the artistic issues of surrealistic weaponry – a Sumi Master exploring the world beneath the surface from the driver's seat of a rocket. His art is successful and thought-provoking in

spite of its hilarity and superb craftsmanship. Conceptually it spoofs clichéd patterns of thought that begin with childhood toys.

An appearance that evokes amusement requires displacements from known reality. De Boer's armored cats and mice and ray gun pistols serve as a perfect example. There are many levels of humour in these

objects, but they preserve the innocent, evergreen awe of the miniature. Like the Surrealists, de Boer merges dream and reality and shows the ability to liberate, yet control, the subversive, disquieting elements of paradox and ambiguity at the core of the self.

KIM BRUCE expresses herself through the use of subjective symbols and metaphors. She expresses the fragility of our world, our precarious position within that world and within ourselves, utilizing mixed media works. Bruce's miniature sculptures have generally voiced the need for a new relationship with nature. A marked dichotomy exists in her choice of materials, contrasting those found in nature and those created by "man". Wood, wax, clay and subtly altered specimens from nature co-exist alongside wire mesh, rivets, clamps and screws. Her ephemeral, delicate and fragile forms critique the fallacy of permanence and the arrogance of monumentality. Bruce's works stand as temporary flowerings of humble gestures and anonymous hands, odes to the poetic beauty of transience.

"Everything has its extra increment. As every leaf is born new, so is art."
(Isamu Noguchi)

At times **JADWIGA BYSZEWSKI'S** work seems to be inspired on what was being done



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by sculptors, like Isamu Noguchi or Brancusi, whose simplification of form in the vein of Henry Moore's later, semi-abstract work are quite effective. Like the work of Noguchi, Brancusi and others, Byszewski's pieces are instilled with elimination, simplification and reduction. They have been pared down to their bare essentials, aiming to maximize the potential of the materials, using the colour and texture of the preferred medium to evoke the subject of the work. At times we see the influence of the Renaissance artist Michelangelo in her work, particularly by the way in which Michelangelo gave some parts of his work a delicate finish while leaving other parts deliberately rough and unresolved. The traditional material Byszewski is using, whether it is marble, limestone or alabaster, already seems to

contain the form she wishes to express.

Artists like **HONSUN CHU** offer an essential, refined, delicately "orientalized" version of existing Western ideas. This is not surprising if one considers the fact that Chu has lived and



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worked in Italy for four years and in Canada for over thirteen years. The sculptures of Chu are closely linked to European and North American practice, but have a refinement of craftsmanship, which offers some clues to their origins. Despite their universal aesthetic appeal, the works also reflect traditional Chinese sensibilities. His work is a comment on the conflict between Western Oedipal theory and the Confucian respect for ancestors once practiced in China. Chu creates the most basic of solid forms, including cubes, cones, cylinders, spheres

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and triangular solids. Regardless of whether they are made of steel, clay or carved out of stone, they are constrained by a definite formal order. Rid of all possible extraneous implications, they stand out as a substantive embodiment of a will to simplicity.

Like other artists represented in this exhibition, **ADRIAN COOKE** works with pure, often abstract forms to create a style in which balance and harmony stand against the chaos of modern life. The radical simplicity of his work is neither illusionistic nor anthropomorphic, but has a unity of its own. Cooke's sensibility, for all its expressiveness, is also intellectually oriented.

Instead of conceiving of sculpture based on theories of systematic progression that could be industrially fabricated, he retains a hands-on approach, integrating earlier Modernist interests

in coincidence and change with the object and material emphasis of Minimalism. The striking difference in progress has undoubtedly contributed to the ongoing freshness that characterizes his work. Its visual impact is impressive and lyrical, showing how little is needed for art to have a resounding impact.

DALLAS DIAMOND is a conceptual artist. Her art primarily evolves out of personal experiences and how they shape her relationship to the world. The central figure in each piece is a tiny woman that

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represents the artist herself. *"Each individual piece reads almost like a three-dimensional pop-up scene from my journal,"* states Diamond. Built out of low fire white earthenware clay, Diamond's work represents a fragment of an idea or experience frozen in clay. The viewer knows neither the before nor the after of the event as each piece is left open for the viewer to generate their own personal narration.

Titles are also an integral part of this work, as sentence fragments or single words are used

to provide a context for each piece.

RON KOSTYNIUK is a creator of three-dimensional abstraction. With the emphasis on rationality and modern technology Kostyniuk creates sculptures under the rule of Constructivism by focusing on space rather than mass. With its close links to the technologically oriented Bauhaus school of art and design, Constructivism seems to mirror Kostyniuk's earlier education as a scientist. Through his art, he offers a slightly



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surreal paraphrase of architecture. He reduces his objects in scale. Rather than being relics of civilizations which never, in fact, existed they connote a dialogue between fine art, architecture and space as well as form and strategy. An underlying philosophical attitude permeates his work, focusing on humanity's connection to nature, the ephemeral character of experience, the transient quality of human life and the archeology of human memory. Kostyniuk's visual language stems from a complex process, a conglomeration

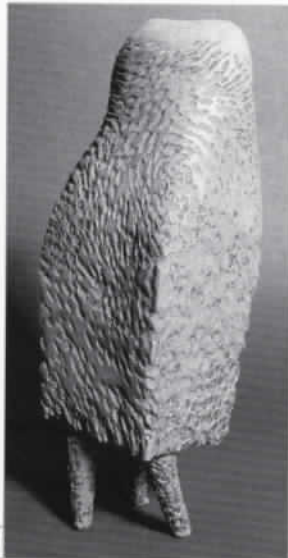
of data resulting in a remarkable reality that at times appears absurd. His artistic vision exists outside the boundaries of mainstream conformity.



Following the idea of the elevation of common objects to works of art, **WALTER MAY** explores the diversity of both man-made and natural things. The items he uses to create his assemblages are recognizable to any audience.

They yield themselves readily to assimilation into narratives of the viewer's own invention. However, May's transformation of humble materials questions our understanding of objects and explores the profound visual possibilities in the trivial things we easily pass by. While sometimes humorous, May's constructions are always poetic and intellectually stimulating.

Walter May's objects are crafted with meticulous attention to detail. He impregnates his three-dimensional work with meaning above and beyond the sum of its borrowed parts.



In her recent work, **CATHERINE PALECZNY** is dealing with surface texture that refers to the exterior coatings of organisms. "Currently I have been manipulating physically the actual surface of the clay. I seek to form a correlation in which forms such as human, plant and mineral uncover a connection with one another through the resemblance of their structure." A deft use of repetition and miniaturization, which occurs in Paleczny's recent ornamental textural structures are vital to her. Repetition of a shape, or the same

quality of shape, throughout a composition serves to unify the general impression and gives a harmonious rhythm and a particularly expressive flavour. The smoothly rounded shapes obviously establish a calm, lush and integrating feeling. Displayed in rows, the objects suggest the endless planting (and harvesting) of crops. Working within what is now an established academic tradition of installation art, Paleczny seems poised to go beyond the objects, such as human, plant and mineral, adapting them to the repeated element, and arriving at a point of further exploration of lives that interact with each other and the earth, symbolized in clay.

The Great Pyramids of Gizeh derive impressiveness from their great mass. My *Top Ten List of Artists* represented in *miniARTure* carries these thoughts to their logical extremes in the opposite direction by undertaking obsessively (additive) reductive rituals to document their results in painstakingly crafted miniature objects, none larger than 10 x10 x10 inches.

REINHARD SKORACKI, Curator

IMAGES

- 1. KIRSTEN ABRAHAMSON** — Kitchener, Ontario
Blue Coyote, 2003; *ceramic*; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 2. JEFF DE BOER** — Calgary, Alberta
Short Range Rocket Mouse, 1997;
steel, brass, mixed media; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 3. KIM BRUCE** — Calgary, Alberta
Pin Point, 2002; straight pins, muslin, beeswax,
glass beads, mixed media; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 4. JADWIGA BYSZEWSKI** — Markham, Ontario
In And Out, 2004; *marble*; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 5. HONSUN CHU** — Calgary, Alberta
Cubes Study, 2003; *ceramic sculpture*; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 6. ADRIAN COOKE** — Lethbridge, Alberta
Parrish, 2003; *cedar and enamel*; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 7. DALLAS DIAMOND** — Calgary, Alberta
Stella: In Lieu of Flowers, 2003; *low fire white earthenware,*
glaze, underglaze, luster, metallic star, glitter; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 8. RON KOSTYNIUK** — Calgary, Alberta
Prairie Sentinel III, 2001; (a model; from the *Saskatchewan Road*
Map Series) *enamel on MDF and aluminum*; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 9. WALTER MAY** — Calgary, Alberta
Snail Act Series: Snails, 2003; *ornamental*
brass plated snail, snail shells; *photo courtesy of the artist.*
- 10. CATHERINE PALECZNY** — Waterloo, Ontario
Agar, 2003; *red stoneware*; *photo courtesy of the artist.*

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