

Eye Contact

Faculty exhibit at Schnitzer

As it re-opened last year, the newly expanded Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art repositioned itself as a museum for the entire community. By broadening its outreach, the museum has brought community and university closer together. A case in point is *Eye Contact*, the first UO faculty exhibition since the museum's re-opening. Among the 26 faculty members featured, only a few regularly show their work in local galleries. This exhibit, which closes April 9, is an opportunity to survey the wide-ranging output of these Eugene-based artists.

Ceramics professor **Sana Krusoe's** three striking and highly elegant pieces bear a conceptual relation to birds, with a number of forms based on what she terms "avian fuselage." *Agitation*, her site-specific installation, commands attention for its emotional impact as well as its unconventional design. Across a tight, gateway-like space between a wall and a divider, nine long, black, supple tails project horizontally towards a multitude of small, white bird-beaks. The beaks, open in mute shrieks, reveal thin, pointy tongues — whether from need, hunger, anger or bliss is for viewers to decide. Krusoe uses a remarkable range of materials, from porcelain and museum wax to taxidermy metal and asphalt, and every part reveals refined attention to detail. Delicate craftsmanship is also the hallmark of her two clay *Migration* pieces.

Laura Alpert's cleverly restrained abstract marble, *Wedge II*, is a purely formal investigation, and an aesthetically satisfying one, while **Kevin Yates** tricks and dazzles with the virtuosity and verisimilitude of his facsimile *Extension Cords* — carved out of beech wood — among whose coils rests a tiny snake. He makes no attempt to aestheticize the subject matter. Such an exact reproduction of a mundane functional object raises the eternal question of the nature of art.

Amanda Wojick's pieces are fun in a lumpy way, in the case of *Rock Island Mound*. Because of their unusual materials, which include band-aids, wallpaper and foam, ordinary hardware-store goods get an artistic makeover. These materials may not age gracefully, of course, but a short lifespan stylistically goes with the casual assemblage. **Marcy Adzich's** *Large Surface Area* is an unlikely and not altogether felicitous amalgam of shapeless form and baffling metal appendages, but I confess a perverse liking for *The Divide*, a wild, self-contained, asteroid-like chunk of buffalo land, with a wonderful caricatural quality.

Still within the realm of three-dimensional art, **Barbara Setsu Pickett's** *Cloth I* and *II*, outstanding in craftsmanship and sheer beauty, provide a luxurious feast of subtle colors and delightful textures. **Kate Wagle's** *Material Conceits #6* provides a background of sober inlaid wood to the blooming white extravagance of her rings. **Anya Kivarkis** dipped overwrought silver brooches in gloppy enamel paint, an idea more interesting than successful.

In two-dimensional works, **Kenneth O'Connell** provides beautiful examples of classical technique with his watercolor studies of clouds, ink landscapes and conté crayon re-

clining nude, as well as his lovely travel sketchbooks. However, O'Connell's art contributions are far more varied and extensive, notably including short experimental and animated films, pioneering work in computer graphics and software design, as well as works in ceramics and photography.

Reminiscent of cartography and topographical charts, **Laura Vandenburg's** imaginary landscapes draw in the viewer with their texture of delicate directional marks in ink and graphite, which create volumes, contours, planes, surfaces of mountains, islands,

ity of muddy brownish-grays, while other semi-transparent hues create layered veils of color. Three paintings were inspired by the reflective surfaces of the Amazonian water system she observed during her stay in Ecuador, but they readily evoke satellite images of Earth, brown soil and blue oceans visible through cloudy atmospheric layers. Meanwhile, **Jan Reaves'** two large conventional abstractions add little formal novelty to this extensive genre.

Hand-paper and printmaker **Margaret Prentice's** *Haiku* series on a floral theme vertically juxtaposes two images to poetically evoke her experience of nature. On top, a black-and-white etching realistically renders a chosen flower with delicate hatching or in

ditional visual interest. Her handmade marks, which refer to our body of cultural knowledge, also mirror her interest in the traces of man's meaningful connections to a given landscape.

Photographer, computer programmer and Digital Arts Program Director **Craig Hickman** documents recurrent visual, formal and social patterns, culled mostly from our region. The patterns revealed in the groupings provide a sometimes humorous perspective on our manmade and physical environment. These vividly colored images, rigorously composed and technically impeccable, exist in both print and web versions.

Dan Powell's *The Travelogues of Mr. Luna*, a series of five frames, four with several images, constitutes a dual photographic and textual narrative in which the photographed text is of paramount importance. Indeed, the deliberately blurry photographs are of little interest, formal or otherwise. Powell seems drawn to words more than images to explore perception and mental constructs of reality.

Camilla Dussinger's *Development* series of digital prints portrays studio-created symbolic scenes involving such props as toy soldiers and figurines. Over-enlargement results in heavy pixellation, and focus is problematic, lacking obvious motivation. In #1 the hand that is the central locus of symbolic meaning emerges blurrily out of peripheral but crisp styrofoam peanuts. In #5 the empty foreground is sharply in focus, while the figures in action are out of focus.

A conceptual approach predominates among the digital arts faculty. In **Megan O'Connell's** well-crafted, interactive installation, *am i in my text or am i out*, each word is cast into movable magnesium bricks set within a wood-and-glass case. Viewers are invited to rearrange the words and to use a graphite stick to rub an impression onto provided paper. One partakes in O'Connell's passion for the visual qualities of language and follows her in a playful interrogation of the notion of subject.

In **Colin Ives'** interactive video installation, *The Clearing*, a rotating projector unfolds images of a forest around the walls, to the sound of chirping birds. Step across its beam, and the scenery changes into a clear-cut, and birdsong gives way to the rumble of machinery: a reminder of the responsibility we all bear towards our natural environment.

Chris Coleman and **Michael Salter** clearly had fun creating *Viral Cognition*, a multi-site-specific installation. A "systematic infestation of images and ideas that uses the façade of logical flow systems to hide its parasitic nature," the work comments on the insidious functioning of visual bites in our culture. Interestingly, the monitors in the display appear to be there only to represent themselves, which also mimics the way in which digital presence sometimes operates in our daily lives.

Ying Tan's combination of video projection and plasma TV monitor called *RAIN* raises another issue of our times, albeit unwittingly. Many of us have been entranced by the behavior of raindrops on various surfaces. *RAIN* does nothing to enhance that experience nor does it build upon it aesthetically or emotionally. That real rain should be more interesting in every way reminds us that our perceptions of reality are unfortunately mediated through irrelevant technology. **EW**



(clockwise from top left) *Wedge II*, marble sculpture by Laura Alpert; *Mindo*, oil on wood by Carla Bengtson; *Cloth II* (detail), hand-painted, hand-dyed Arashi Shibori on Habotai Silk by Barbara Setsu Pickett; *Agitation*, multimedia site-specific installation by Sana Krusoe; *am i in my text or am i out*, magnesium and wood interactive installation by Megan O'Connell.

basins, coasts and starry skies or delineate gaps, holes and lacunae.

The creamy, luminous palette of **Ron Graff's** still life and landscapes is locally well-known. **Carla Bengtson's** circular and elliptical oils display a harsher surface. The metallic glitter of gold paint contrasts with the opac-

softly-textured tonal gradations. Below, a relief print expresses a joyful mood through color, rhythm, and symbolic shapes. Her technique is superb.

In photography, **Terri Warpinski** combines black-and-white prints with graphite writing, thus providing her landscapes with ad-