

Works of 16 New England artists expertly converge in deCordova's biennial exhibit

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By Keith Powers/Daily News Correspondent

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Sixteen New England artists each offer samples of new work. It's a broad range, spreading from site-specific outdoor sculptures through two floors of gallery installations. Photography, video installations, painting, sculptural creations and totemic puppetry all figure in to the collection.

Curated by Jennifer Gross and Sarah Montross, the artists are only bound by their own New England residency. Apart from that, a wide sweep of ages, styles and ideas are on view.

The calm, gracious drawings of Jason Noushin, of Hamden, Connecticut, decorate one corner of the Linde Gallery. Five large compositions blending calligraphy and drawing, the meditative works are set on a mauve background.

All five feature the same model (the labels point out that she is a Cambodian woman who disappeared in that country's horrible genocide in the 1970s), in stylized poses, surrounded artfully by calligraphic elements. Calming and peaceful, you only learn by reading the labeling about the work's political and humanitarian concerns. These are deeply moving creations, beautifully composed on dry linen.

Providence, Rhode Island, artist Heather Leigh McPherson creates collages that are appealingly inexplicable. Hanging reliefs, with backgrounds of pastel-stained chiffon, a single page of an exposed drawing notebook epoxied with a clear glaze affixed to the cloth canvas, the works offer little firm ground for interpretation. The titles—"Bupropion," "High Bottom"—allude to the mental health industry. The visual allure is palpable nonetheless.

Islesford, Maine, children's book author and illustrator Ashley Bryan not only shows colorful representations of that work—including multiple pages from James Herriot's "All Things Bright and Beautiful"—but also six exotic totems, or stick puppets, which blend skeletal remains with a mash of various clothing and accessories. The totems—if that is what he calls them—are at once scary, sardonic and comic.

Cambridge native Craig Stockwell, who now works in Keene, New Hampshire, not only shows four large, brightly colored abstract paintings, but posits them with smaller "works in progress," details (or studies) that throw an ambiguous meaning in the direction of the larger compositions.

Many of the artists create an appeal that can hardly be described definitively. Tanja Hollander of Auburn, Maine, takes color photographs of Facebook "friends" that she travels the world to meet; the unsmiling views capture some kind of intersection between modern intimacy and shallow relationships. They also cast a curious eye toward the sitters—do they enjoy their misplaced "celebrity"?

Boston artist Youjin Moon's video installations, all named after the moons of Jupiter, hit and miss. The slow-paced "Callisto" works the best. Cambridge artist Kelly Nipper juxtaposes a video installation with Zen-like wavy paintings and other works, a curiously effective pairing. Guilford, Connecticut, artist Susan Howe's ultra-minimalist poetry works on paper deliciously fill one glass case.

Academy Records, led by Holliston's Stephen Lacy, a teacher at Walnut Hill School in Natick, has designed a site-specific installation, "Blood of the Sun," that is inspired by ship-building, whaling and historic architecture.

Two large "glacial façades"—collaged photographs cut and arranged into a monochromatic, sweeping and textured whole—by Theresa Ganz, of Providence, are not sculptural, but yet have much more than two-dimensional appeal. Other unique installations—Dover, New Hampshire

artist Carly Glovinski's meticulous book covers and indexes; delicate paintings by Lois Dodd of Cushing, Maine; two glitzy wall sculptures by Timothy Horn of Burlington, Vermont —add to the complex, inviting show.

“DeCordova New England Biennial 2016”

WHEN: Through March 26, 2017

WHERE: deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, 51 Sandy Pond Road, Lincoln

HOURS: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday-Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

ADMISSION: \$14 adults; \$12 seniors 65+; \$10 students: free under 12. “Free Second Saturdays” 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov. 12 and Dec. 10

INFO: 781-259-8355, decordova.org

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