

OUR FAVORITE SHOWS OF 2007

(**artscope** magazine asked some of its writers to share memories of their favorite exhibition of the past year. Hopefully, instead of kicking yourself for missing these shows, you'll keep an eye out for a future chance to see these artists' work.)

MFA Thesis Exhibition, Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown by Rena Lindstrom

I had been anticipating this exhibition since the first class of MFA students arrived in Provincetown in September 2005. Founded in 1968, the Fine Arts Work Center (FAWC) is a truly extraordinary institution. It has become an internationally renowned, premier residency fellowship supporting talented individuals at the outset of their careers.

Now, through a new collaboration between the FAWC and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, an MFA in Visual Arts is being offered. The eight students in the class of 2007 were an adventurous group, enthusiastically engaging in the challenge of a small, new, low-residency program, and deeply committed to their development as artists.

This was no vacation on the Cape. With only two months each year to work on site with resident instructors and visiting artists, it was all about the studio, critique and work. I got to know several of the artists as they took their coffee breaks at a nearby cafe where I am a barista, serving up caffeine and sweets late night and early morning, seeing on a daily basis who is dragging, who has a cold, circles under her eyes, who has made a breakthrough in the studio. The other 10 months are long-distance in students' hometowns, guided by a local mentor in communication with resident faculty.

Except for Nathalie Ferrier, whose fascinating thread constructions capture and release light and space in labyrinthine constellations, this class of MFA students is all painters. The Class of 2007 returned for a third September last month to present their thesis exhibition.

The exhibition took place in two parts; smaller work hung in the Hudson Walker Gallery at the FAWC, and larger pieces were installed in two beautiful



Unexpected by Sandra Deacon Robinson



Untitled by Cathleen Daley

spaces at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. The smaller works sparked my appetite and that excitement grew in my first quick pass through PAAM's spacious galleries. The high ceilings, the larger size of the work, the light, the color - there was an exponential expansion of sensation. And more than that, there was something visceral about the collection, something akin to the instinctual, some elemental emotional charge. This was strong work.

From the dramatic presence of Carole Ann Danner's figures; to the movement in Kay Knight Clarke's heavy-hanging clouds and changeling skies; the reductive, intimate and elegiac abstractions of Cathleen Daley; Alice Denison's extravagant and romantic English flower compositions; the controlled, murmuring verdance of suburbia in Liza Bingham's paintings; and finally, to Sandra Deacon Robinson's floor to ceiling mysterious, humid, beckoning, swamp forests - this group of artists found something together here that enriched their individual work. And exhibited together, that work speaks to the collaborative success of an inventive new MFA program.

Edwin Dickinson in Provincetown, 1912-1937 by James Foritano

This exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum was my favorite not because it eclipsed all other artists and their art, but because it involved them. Just as Governor Winthrop's Boston became, according to his wishes, "as a city upon a hill" for (some) refugees from religious oppression, so Provincetown parlayed its glorious nature and remove into a vital, century-long community for artists of all creeds. As I attempted to give my readers some context for Dickinson's prominence in this history, it became glowingly present to me and changed my outlook on American art.

Michael Kenna: Hokkaido at the Robert Klein Gallery by George Gerard

Hokkaido was a wonderful photography exhibition showcasing serene landscapes ranging from abstraction to detail. Kenna is a master of his technique, creating an intimate experience with his use of line, context, and emotion. Each piece seems to resonate with an individual beauty; a beauty that is all the more enhanced when presented together. As an artist, Kenna continues to remain consistent with his method of presentation. The layout is simple and clean and it is his art that creates the mood of the space. The viewer is able to join with Kenna's frame of mind and still take from it a wholly unique experience.

In the Spirit of Play at the Lascano Gallery in Great Barrington, Massachusetts by Greg Morell

"In the Spirit of Play" was a rich experience full of humor, zest, color, seasonal sensation and toys. Lots of toys, painted, sculpted and collaged with exuberance showcasing 17 Berkshire artists. Curator Jessica Hess and gallery director Ramon Lascano put together a holiday feast that I savored. It was an intelligent, provocative and thoroughly enjoyable cornucopia of visual concepts all flirting with the theme of toys. This was not your typical holiday showcase of smaller works. This was a holiday event, an exploration of inventiveness enjoyed by the young, the seasoned and the sophisticated.

ARTSWorcester's Biennial 2007 by Chet Williamson

DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park curator Nick Capasso judged more than 250 pieces for ARTSWorcester's 13th Biennial, one of Central Massachusetts' largest and finest juried shows. The resulting exhibition of 95 works by 74 artists represented the categories of painting, photography, works-on-paper, sculpture, mixed media, computer art and crafts. The Worcester Art Museum's Hoche-Scofield Scholarship Fund provided \$2,500 for cash awards to 16 artists in the five categories.