



WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

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Visual Art

Art of the State: SECCA exhibition spotlights works by 12 North Carolina artists

Who: 12 artists

What: "12 x 12: 12 Artists

from the 12 State"

Where: Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, 750 Marguerite Drive

When: Through April 22; open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday, until 8 p.m. Thursday, 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

Information: 336-725-1904; secca.org

Regional art museums charged with showcasing works of national and international stature occupy a delicate position in relation to artists in their local communities, who sometimes complain they're being neglected by these institutions.

In recent years the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art has anticipated and implicitly rebutted any such complaints by regularly featuring local and regional artists' works in small solo exhibitions and larger group shows. Since 2016 SECCA has presented works by regional artists in monthly solo shows, mostly in its small Preview Gallery near the main entrance.

Works by 12 artists who have had such solo outings are brought together in SECCA's latest group exhibition, on view through April 22 in the Main Gallery. Playing on North Carolina's status as the 12th state to have ratified the U.S. Constitution, it's titled "12 x 12: 12 Artists from the 12th State."

Winston-Salem artist Elizabeth Alexander teaches in UNC School of the Arts' School of Design and Production. In that sense, it's no surprise that her sprawling sculptural- collage installation "Crumbs Under My Pillow" suggests an idiosyncratic theatrical set design. To create it she meticulously cut the antique patterns of stylized flora and fauna from rolls of wallpaper and used the swaths of cutout material to wrap, drape and spill over an array of decorative accessories, furnishings and the upper portion of a wall.

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The collaged objects look like vessels and fixtures designed by Dr. Seuss, and one stack of them appears perilously close to toppling over. But the overall effect calls to mind the ruined interior of Miss Havisham's mansion in Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations."



More sedate and minimalistic in their use of recycled or repurposed materials are Durham artist Katy Mixon's quilt-like wall hangings made from scrap cloth she used to wipe paint off her brushes. She later cut these rags into pieces that she sewed together in grid patterns. In a related vein is Mixon's post-minimalist sculpture

"Horizons," made from dried layers of acrylic paint cut into uniformly sized rectangles and neatly arranged in a stack measuring about the height of an adult viewer.

Martha Clippinger, also from Durham, designed her boldly colored, geometric-abstract woolen wall hangings and hired an experienced hand-weaver, Augustin Contreras Lopez, to fabricate them in accord with American Indian weaving traditions. Clippinger takes her experiments with color and abstract form into three dimensions with a group of compact, wall-mounted sculptures made of painted wood.

Kirsten Stolle, who lives in Marshall, is represented by a series of critically informed photo collages and painted photographs related to Cold War propaganda and advanced missile technologies. Twelve of her pieces introduce colorful, decorative elements into otherwise drab photographs of abandoned launch sites and other facilities built to accommodate this country's vast nuclear-weapons arsenal. A larger collage combines images of military drones with aerial views of arid, mountainous landscapes like those where such drones are routinely tested and employed.

If nothing else, Durham printmaker Bill Fick's "Clown Wall" injects a strong dose of lively graphics into the show. This instant pop-art mural repeats multiple versions of three big clown faces in three different colors (pink, yellow and blue) — a total of 144 images — to cover one side of the gallery's central wall. The emerging archetype of the evil clown and the increasingly common, derogatory use of the word clown in current political discourse lend this piece a metaphorical edge that viewers can choose to ponder or ignore.

In a clever curatorial juxtaposition, the truncated figure in Bob Trotman's sculpture "No Way" appears to be staring up at Fick's mural. A Winston-Salem native who lives and works in the state's western foothills, Trotman is known for his realistically sculpted figures, including his recent depictions of modern-day businessmen dressed in neatly pressed suits, ties and wing-tip shoes.

His piece in this show is one such figure, distinguished by the closed wooden box that has replaced his torso and limbs except for his feet, reducing him to dwarf stature. Painted on the front of the box in a graffiti-like scrawl is the title, which invites multiple readings in relation to contemporary corporate culture.



Pinar Yoldas takes an ironically critical approach to increasingly sophisticated technology in her 12-minute video “The Kitty AI: Artificial Intelligence for Governance.” Its star is a cute, digitally animated, cartoon cat that speaks directly to the viewer, purportedly from the year 2039. This seemingly lovable manifestation of

artificial intelligence appears to straightforwardly explain the dystopian conditions that led it to become ruler of an efficiently functioning megalopolis in the near future.

Mijoo Kim of Chapel Hill and Endia Beal of Winston- Salem both employ carefully staged color photographs to explore issues of identity and minority status. In one of the show’s two photos from her “Re-figure” series, Kim hid herself under decoratively patterned cloth in an ordinary domestic interior, presumably as a means of commenting on her own perceived invisibility as a Korean-American.

Beal is more generously represented by nine photos from her series “Am I What You’re Looking For?” In these portraits Beal collaborated with young, black women who dressed in clothing they might wear to job interviews and posed in their own living rooms in front of a large-format photo backdrop of a generic office hallway.

Portraiture is also the customary mode of Greensboro native Beverly McIver, who now lives in Durham. Working in the traditional medium of oil paint, she also concerns herself with issues of identity. Her four typically informal, expressionistic paintings in this show portray ailing members of her own family.

In her multi-media piece titled “Perilous Times in Four Texts,” Hong-An Truong highlights a politically charged cultural artifact from 1973, namely a record album of revolutionary folk songs and stories by three young Asian American activists. Truong, who teaches art at UNC-Chapel Hill, asserts the continued relevance of this record by making it central to an installation whose main visual component is a three-color banner incorporating a silk-screened photo of the three activists.

Recorded music is also central to “Listening to the C,” Lee Walton’s multi-media installation in SECCA’s living room. Reminiscent of John Cage’s musical experiments, Walton’s piece incorporates more than 100 snapshot photos of pianos in people’s homes, along with sound recordings and videos of people repeatedly playing a single note — specifically a C — on a variety of different pianos that aren’t all in tune.

The artists represented in “12 x 12” were selected by SECCA’s former curator Cora Fisher along with four guest curators from other North Carolina arts institutions: Linda Dougherty, Lia Newman, Marshall Price and Mary Anne Redding.