



Cover Story Biennial X 2

by Becky Moda & Eric Jackson-Forsberg



Last week, the biennial *Beyond/In Western New York* exhibition opened in major 12 galleries throughout the Buffalo/Niagara region. The exhibition features the work of 50 artists and is the fruit of two years of collaborative work involving the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Big Orbit, Buffalo Arts Studio, the Burchfield-Penney, the Carnegie Art Center, the Castellani, CEPA, El Museo, Hallwalls, Squeaky Wheel, the UB Anderson Gallery and the UB Center for the Arts. *Beyond/In* serves as a cultural exchange between the local curators and artists in Western New York and the adjacent communities of Southern Ontario, Northern Ohio and Central New York.



Artemis Herber's "Walls of Love."

It's too much for one person to tackle in one week, so in this issue our two reviewers initiate their rolling, four-week coverage of the biennial's exhibits. They begin with three venues: the Albright-Knox, El Museo and Hallwalls.

Albright-Knox Art Gallery

The power of the sculptural installations at the Albright-Knox is immediately apparent as one looks across the sculpture court toward the *Beyond/In Western New York* galleries. Shayne Dark's outdoor sculpture, *Into the Blue*, framed in the far window, Lyn Carter's central form of *Courting Entasis* in the middle gallery and Artemis Herber's *Walls of Love* undulating out into the court form a stunning vista along the central axis of the exhibition. Contrasting colors and forms spill out of the designated space and draw you into the exhibition—as if the galleries couldn't hold it all, or the art couldn't wait to be seen.

Artemis Herber's standing ribbons and curls of Valentine-red cardboard inhabit the large, central gallery as well as the entry colonnade. Some of these forms embrace the building's ionic columns like lithe, sanguine forces made material, their color and form in rich contrast to the white, symmetrical marble. Other sections of these "walls" curl onto themselves to form mysterious teepees. Herber's architectonic sculptures question the distinctions between positive and negative space with simple materials and a seductive power.



Simone Mantellasi stands before his installation of mixed-media works.

Lyn Carter's installation—created especially for one of the *Beyond/In* galleries—presents other surprising sculptural possibilities. *Courting Entasis* is an extreme illustration of the slight bulge in the middle of classical columns (entasis) that reflects their load-bearing function. Here, columns of blue-and-white striped fabric swell and diminish repeatedly on their implied journey from floor to ceiling (or vice versa) like sculptural pythons digesting a recent, formal meal. The precisely aligned blue and white stripes of the fabric Carter uses encourage the eye to track over the pieces' fascinating curves, but may also be a whimsical nod to the Greek flag, drawing another connection to classical architecture. Carter's work has a simmering eroticism as well in the allure of the tightly

wrapped, swelling forms.

The vista of sculptural installation ends outside the Gallery's walls with **Shayne Dark's** *Into the Blue*. This piece looks like it has always been at home amongst the primary-colored forms of the Gallery's outdoor sculpture collection. Like Anish Kapoor's blue-pigmented forms, *Into the Blue* resonates with a supernatural energy, swaying gently in the wind and harmonizing with patches of clear sky. Dark's installation suggests a metaphor for growth, as if to compensate for the many arboreal casualties of last year's devastating October storm, the scars of which are still evident in the Buffalo treescape, just beyond the sculpture.

The installation continues with **Ani Hoover's** vibrant paintings. Created on Yupo synthetic paper, these compositions have an inherent slickness that Hoover exploits not for the sake of a seamless surface, but for the amazing sense of movement implied. *White Collide*, for example, invokes the explosive energy of a fireworks display, underscored by the red, white and blue palette. *Memory* alludes to the slickness of the materials on another level, as the banner of Yupo paper seems to slide off the gallery wall and down onto the floor. On the opposite wall, Hoover's grid of small works offers hours of delectable aesthetic contemplation, and demonstrates that her vocabulary of drips and disks works on a small scale as well.

Turning to another selection of small-scale paintings, **Amanda Besl's** intimate oils offer glimpses of female coming-of-age. Beautiful and awkward in turn, these are not so much portraits of individuals, but of moments that define (or defy) female adolescence. Besl considers herself a "miniaturist," working in a hyper-realistic mode facilitated by precise tools such as razor blades and cat whisker brushes. The tightly contained nature of her working method seems to reflect the introspective nature of the subject, the narrow arenas still imposed on young women.

One of the most intriguing "paintings" in the exhibition is not technically a painting at all: **Lois Andison's** *time and again*. A video made up of sutured digital stills, this work combines static and kinetic media, retaining the benefits of both. Andison took thousands of still images of her Toronto backyard—every half hour for a year—and the results are uniquely captivating. This document allows the viewer to contemplate both small and large changes in this otherwise ordinary vista—an animated landscape that inspires meditation on the nature of time and the exquisite beauty that may be found in patient observation.

From the sublime to the ridiculous—**Simone Mantellasi's** frenetic installation of small, mixed-media works channels a flood of images and influences through a fire wire connection to art history, comics, and a psychoanalytic circus. His rapid-fire commentary on the audio guide explains that experiencing his work is like "going inside the head of someone not quite normal." There, "[he has] a big monster trying to come out." To the extent that he—or anyone—can analyze this visual onslaught, Mantellasi sees his work as a sort of doodle therapy, sanctioned by Hunter S. Thompson as much as by Walt Disney.



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