

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Geoffrey Koetsch

Phone : 978-456-3459

e-mail : gkage@charter.net

More info at www.laconiagallery.org

Laconia Gallery Presents:

MINDmatters

8 visual artists explore the complexities of the mind

What: Art exhibition suggests a shift in the way artists are approaching the mind.

Why: Is the new atmosphere created by neuroscience being reflected in the visual arts? This exhibition may show how science affects human experience and artistic expression. In this exhibition by 8 artists working in several disciplines there is new emphasis on brain mapping, identity stabilization, integration of self, and healing. Several of the participating artists have had intimate contact with dementia, brain surgery, and bi-polar disorder.

Notably absent are reflections on Freud, dreams, sex or violence. Lingering references to visions, parapsychology, and spiritual disciplines (so pervasive in the 80's) share space with the new imagery inspired by neuroscience.

Who: This exhibition features work by 2-D and 3-D visual artists from the greater Boston area and New York working in installation, painting, printmaking, sculpture and film. Participating artists include: Denise Dumas, Audrey Goldstein, Constance Jacobson, Mary Kaye, Geoffrey Koetsch, Karl Nussbaum, Ellen Schön, and Heidi Whitman.

Where: Laconia Gallery, Boston, 433 Harrison Ave. Boston MA

When: May 2-June 28, 2008
Hours: Sat. 12:00-4:00pm, or by appointment.
Opening receptions: First Fridays, May 2 and June 6, 5:30-8pm.
Gallery talk: Saturday June 7, 1:00pm.
SoWa Artwalk: May 17 & 18, 11-6pm.

THE ARTISTS

DENISE DUMAS

Denise Dumas explores the “boundary problem,” defined as the challenge we face to maintain a stable and coherent sense of identity. Dumas work probes the fact that perceptual reality is a construct of the mind that changes depending on place and social context. Her sculpture *Three’s Company* combines mirrors, holographic projections, and sculptural elements to evoke a constant flux of self-image by means of complex, layered points of view.

[Dumas is a multi-disciplinary artist and Adjunct Faculty at the University of Massachusetts/Lowell.]

AUDREY GOLDSTEIN

Audrey Goldstein draws a parallel between micro- and macro-biological functions. In her new work *Point to Point*, a structure of thin metal rods stands for the pathways and connections between neurons *and* between people. Goldstein puts the structure in a “backpack” and carries it through her daily rounds. A video camera captures this macro-function of social networking so it can be reproduced in the gallery.

[Goldstein is the Fine Arts Program Director at the New England School of Art and Design at Suffolk University]

CONSTANCE JACOBSON

Jacobson’s *Tome Series* grew out of a family connection to dementia and deals directly with fear of loss of self. Jacobson’s prints use the shape of an axial slice of the brain as a repeated motif. Her images are metaphors of the fluidity of ideas that eventually settle into patterns and tight networks of neurons that in turn form larger networks of interconnections. Jacobson’s *Grey matter Series* explores memories that fade and reappear, trying to connect to other memories. By layering lotus leaves on brain imagery, she imposes visual simplicity, and in a sense, attempts to calm the unruly and complicated mind. *[Jacobson is Assistant Professor of Fine Arts and the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University.]*

ELLEN SCHÖN

Schön’s recent work is a personal response to her husband’s treatment of a brain tumor. The skull is the brain’s helmet protecting it from outside impact. But it is useless against inside attack and becomes a barrier to healers. Schön’s series of clay works titled *Skull Cap/Helmet* represents on one hand the violence of opening the receptacle of the soul, and on the other, its restoration to wholeness.

[Ellen Schön is Adjunct Faculty in Fine Arts at The Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University]

MARY KAYE

Mary Kaye’s work is a manifestation of the artist’s own mental *process*. Her wire construction *The Spirit Builds the Body For Itself (to Goethe)* is a three dimensional linear diagram of thinking, and holds in tension both circular and dualistic thought patterns. Specifically, the sphere of wires may stand for such circular conundrums as the debate over the precedence of essence or existence, and the transparent web-penetrating cone is a sign for Kaye’s dualistic take on the creation of the universe. According to the artist, any assertions we make about such matters tell us only about our own habits of mind and nothing about the nature of reality itself, which remains a mystery.

[Mary Kaye is a Professor of Fine Arts at the Art Institute at Lesley University]

GEOFFREY KOETSCH

Koetsch's Sculptural installation *Node* visualizes how new thinking in neuroscience "leads outward from the self, finding increasing porosity in borders separating individuals from one another, one species from the rest and even the biological from the artificial" (Nancy Princenthal, AIA, 4/08) The invasion of our physical boundaries by fiber-optic cameras, prosthetic devices and brain imaging technology signal "...humankind's creeping disembodiment."

[Koetsch is a professor of Fine Arts at the Art Institute at Lesley University.]

KARL NUSSBAUM

Filmmaker Karl Nussbaum's work serves as a link between old and new views of the mind. In the early 20th century artists focused on Freud, dreams and hypnosis. In the 80's attention shifted to visionary tendencies. Labeling himself a "collage artist" Nussbaum blends traditional dream and visionary content with references to neural pathways, evolutionary biology, and cognitive psychology. He allows these elements to flow through his film on parallel channels unedited by the rational mind and "casting a spell on an audience...overwhelming their rational minds and mesmerizing them, speaking directly to their unconscious through a rush of imagery, music and sound."

[Nussbaum teaches Film and Video at Montclair University in New Jersey]

HEIDI WHITMAN

Whitman provides a link to the 20th century in a different way: she brings the formal painting skills of the surrealists to bear on the contemporary interest in brain mapping. Like Nussbaum she creates a deep, layered mental space through which flow various kinds of mental activity. These activities alternately flow over linear brain wave patterns, hover motionless over a deep abyss, or are swept along in lozenge shaped "channels." Whitman writes "For several years, I've drawn heads, brains, and minds as imagined territory. Inevitably the notion of brain mapping came up. These 'alternative' brain maps chart mental activity in metaphoric, specific, and sometimes narrative ways. References to anatomy merge with elements of cartography, computer networks, ancient ruins, floor plans, fortifications, and city grids coexist in a time and space compressed world."

[Whitman, a Boston painter, maintains a studio in the South End]

THE CURATORS

Co-curators Geoffrey Koetsch and Ellen Schön are colleagues at the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University. They have recently started a curatorial partnership organizing exhibitions in various non-profit venues around New England. Their inaugural exhibit, *Vessel as Metaphor: Sculpture and Installation*, opened at the Nave Gallery in Somerville in February 2007. The exhibition was well received, earning Meredith Goldstein's "Quick Pick" in the Boston Globe (2/16/07).

The curators have had extensive experience working with artist's groups. Geoffrey Koetsch was co-director of The Metropolitan Artists and Poets (MAAPS), director of The Arts Collaborative Inc., and the co-director of Theater of Kinetic Sculpture (World Sculpture Racing). Ellen Schön was a six-year member of Clay Dragon Studios, a pottery co-operative and gallery where she shared responsibility for policy development and group exhibitions. She is also a participant in *The Transcultural Exchange Tile Project* whose mission is to promote "cross-fertilization between artists of different backgrounds, cultures and disciplines."

~~~~