

OPENINGS

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—Alice Thorson

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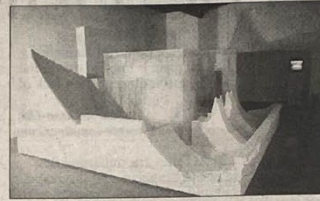
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**Englishman's exhibit at Joseph Nease Gallery tries to do it all and pretty much succeeds.**

By ELISABETH KIRSCH  
Contributing Reviewer

Shaun Cassidy, whose installations, paintings and video make up

the inaugural show at the newly opened Joseph Nease Gallery, 1819 Central, is from the take-no-prisoners school of young English sculptors whose works resonate throughout the contemporary art world. English artists such as Rachel Whiteread, Damien Hirst and Cassidy, who teaches in the sculpture department at



Shaun Cassidy's "Sweet Surround" is made of steel, wood and powdered sugar.

Photo courtesy of the gallery

REVIEW

Kansas City Art Institute, share some important attributes: They are assertive, fearless in their use of color, wildly experimental with materials and equally ambitious formally and thematically. In other words these artists see no reason why they can't do it all.

Cassidy and his conferees seem in direct defiance to the elegant and more genteel generation of sculptors headed by Henry Moore, whose aesthetic—traditional subject matter such as nudes, in traditional material such as bronze—dominated Great Britain for decades.

Cassidy's immediate predecessors—sculptors such as Anish Kapoor and Tony Cragg—made bold use of color and took sculpture off of pedestals, spreading it onto the floors and walls. But Cassidy and his peers go further still, insistent on their work having emotional content and using materials that are quite unexpected, even "rude" (e.g., Hirst's dissected cows). Their work does not politely inhabit a room. It takes over. In Cassidy's "Congestion," an

eye-zapping bubble-gum pink installation of two empty chairs completely encased in a bog of chewy-looking foam, there are imprints of forms left by legs while a cup rises suggestively from the center, frozen in its ascent. While many possible references abound, the notion of a couple chained in an empty relationship, stifled and unable to breathe, comes immediately to mind.

"Sweet Surround" is an even more imposing installation, encompassing most of the interior gallery space, where Cassidy began assembling it two weeks before the opening of his show.

What appears to be the interior of a living room—there are chairs, a sofa, a fireplace mantel and a jagged balustrade that surrounds the piece—is entirely painted a crystalline white.

Powdered sugar lies in large, dustlike piles throughout the work. In the center of the piece, surrounded on four sides by glass that is thoroughly scarred, is a chunky white object that somewhat resembles a human form.

This piece is ineffably moving

and, as with all of Cassidy's work, multiple connotations are possible. We could be looking at a dreamlike, demented snow scene from the "Nutcracker" after the Snow Queen has abruptly departed. But it is hard not to see "Sweet Surround" as a metaphor for a family life that is unspeakably chilly, rife with issues that no one will discuss.

Although the sculptures dominate this show, four works using wax resist on paper are handsome and intriguing. And "Top View," a large-scale canvas in the back room that is a technical tour-de-force, gives us an abstracted, bird's-eye perspective of a dining table in which there are multiple table settings but only one diner, repeating Cassidy's themes of alienation and isolation. A video of a recently completed outdoor sculpture, a variant of "Sweet Surround," is also on exhibit.

This is an exhibition that should not be missed by anyone who cares about contemporary art.

The exhibit continues through Oct. 24. Gallery hours are noon to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and by appointment, 421-2166.

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