

Believe in magic of Shaun Cassidy's 'New Work'

Sculptor's Nease Gallery show has challenging qualities

By KATE HACKMAN
Special to The Star

On first impression, sculptor Shaun Cassidy's current exhibition, "New Work," feels more like a group show than the product of a single artist's efforts. Yet, while the range of work on view makes the exhibit feel a bit disjointed, it ultimately attests to Cassidy's willingness to play with several different ideas at once. Resisting the pressure to adopt a recognizable "style," Cassidy chooses to challenge himself and his audiences with a breadth of approaches.

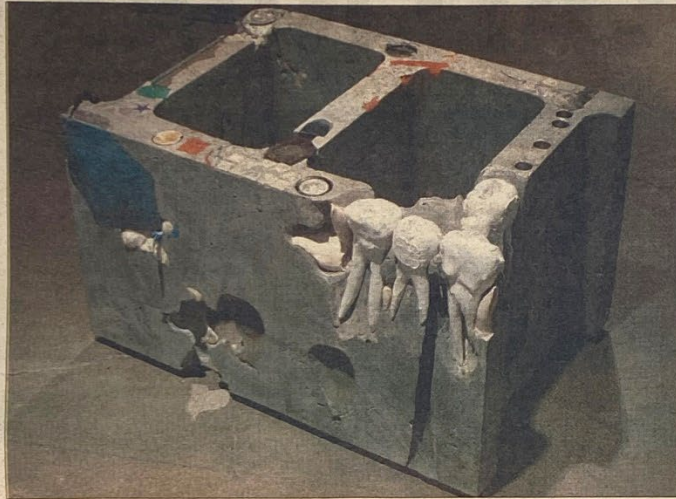
REVIEW

Originally from the United Kingdom and currently associate professor and director of the sculpture program at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, S.C., Cassidy is no stranger to art audiences in Kansas City. From 1996 to 1999, he taught at the Kansas City Art Institute, and his work made up the inaugural exhibition at Joseph Nease in 1998.

Two site-specific works by Cassidy remain on view in the area — a 1999 installation for the five-story stair tower of the Marietta Chair Building at 2020 Baltimore and an outdoor work for the Cedar Creek Development in Olathe. But even for those familiar with Cassidy's work, the current show should come as something of a surprise.

While including four pieces, the first room of Joseph Nease Gallery is dominated by two pure-white, painted-steel sculptures that suggest gestural line drawings in space. Playing off the pristine walls and concrete floor, these sleek, curvaceous constructions, created from welded metal pipes, set a sexy tone, bridging minimalist and pop sensibilities to evocative effect.

The first of these, "Loop," is mounted on the wall. The undulating, elliptical "loop" hangs flush, while from its top a second length of pipe projects emphatically toward the viewer, ending in a found bulb. The projection casts a long shadow



"Fragments," concrete and found objects, by Shaun Cassidy, is part of the "New Work" exhibit at the Joseph Nease Gallery.

that vertically bisects the loop, mimicking a sundial and introducing a softer element to the resolute sculpture.

Phallic and feminine at once, this piece and the larger related "Bubble" nearby remind one of Eva Hesse's "Hang Up" (1966), in which the artist, who became known for challenging the codes of minimalism with soft sculptures relating to the body, constructed a large frame from which a curved metal rod thrust out into the space of the gallery. While Cassidy's work assumes a more polished form, it achieves a similar emotional potency, capturing a sense of energetic tension, awkwardness and sensuality at once.

"Bubble," which takes its title from

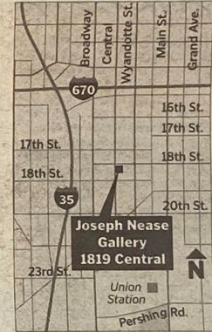
the idea of a soap bubble expanding to the brink of collapse, also poignantly addresses the relationship between discrete objects and the spaces in which they are displayed, as it leans up against the corner of the gallery for support. The two points where it touches the wall serve as sparks of tension, with the sculpture seeming to conform to the parameters allowed. Elegant in its simple lines, this excellent piece operates on a multiplicity of levels while blurring the line between drawing, sculpture and installation.

In marked stylistic contrast, Cassidy's installation "Fragments," which fills the second gallery, comprises nine clunky concrete forms molded in the shape of oversized

cinderblocks. Each block is embedded with found objects, collected on trips to the beach, supplemented by odds and ends from Cassidy's home.

The fluorescent colors of plastic toys suspended in the dull gray of the concrete provide formal contrast while creating a tension between light and heavy, ephemeral and enduring, descriptive and elemental. With gaping holes in their sides from where Cassidy had stuffed clothes into the molds then removed them, the sculptures are anything but pristine and aestheticized — rather they feel like time capsules containing the detritus of consumer culture.

"Fragments" is an approachable, engaging installation. On an immediate level, it is great fun to crouch



THE SHOW

■ "Shaun Cassidy: New Work" continues at the Joseph Nease Gallery, 1819 Central, through Feb. 10. Hours are noon to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and by appointment. Call (816) 421-2166 for information.

down and search for recognizable objects — crayons, spare change, shoes, toys, Coke bottles, seashells and much more. Additionally, Cassidy created huge ceramic teeth that he set into the tops of a couple of the blocks, such that the cement takes on the character of giant gums.

Clearly Cassidy is enjoying himself and the somewhat serendipitous process of throwing assorted materials into a mix and seeing what emerges. The effect is to capture specific moments while also, more subtly, contemplating memory and history. And though quite different formally, "Fragments" ultimately belongs here — sharing with Cassidy's other works a lively investigation of materials, a delight in contrasts, a juxtaposition of the organic and the industrial and a heartfelt sense of playfulness.

OPENINGS



Jean Cook's 'Madonna of Copper Canyon,' on display at Images Art Gallery

- The Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, 4420 Warwick Blvd., opens "Kojo Griffin" with a reception from 5:30 to 7:30 tonight and an artist's talk by Griffin at 6:30 p.m.
- Jan Weiner Gallery, 4800 Liberty, opens "Sabina Ott: Paintings and Prints" with a reception from 5 to 9 p.m. today and 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday.
- Grand Arts, 1819 Grand Blvd., opens "Jesse Rosser" with a reception from 6 to 9 tonight. Rosser will give a gallery talk at 2 p.m. Saturday.
- Leedy-Voukos Art Center, 2012 Baltimore, opens "Kate Hunt" and

- "Stretch: From Low Key Elegance to Full Scale Visual Assault" with a reception from 7 to 10 tonight.
- Ople Gallery at Leedy-Voukos Art Center, 2012 Baltimore, opens "Clint Paugh: Hammering a Nail" with a reception from 7 to 10 tonight.
- The Society for Contemporary Photography, 2012 Baltimore, opens "Andrew Bush: Prop Portraits" and "Mike Sinclair and Bruce West" with a reception from 7 to 9 tonight.
- Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, 2004 Baltimore, opens "High Fire: Significant Ceramic Sculpture," an exhibit of new work by John Mason, Peter Voukos,

- Toshiko Takaezu, Rudy Autio, Jun Kaneko and Ann Currier and "The Made and The Unmade," an exhibit of new work by John Atkin, with a reception from 7 to 9 tonight.
- The Cube at Beco, 1922 Baltimore, opens "Painter Jean M. Ponte" with a reception from 7 to 9 tonight.
- Dolphin, 1901 Baltimore, opens "Gloria Baker Feinstein: New Work" with a reception from 6 to 10 tonight.
- Images Art Gallery, 520 W. Penneway, opens "Oil Paintings by Jean Cook" and "Sculptural Pottery by Angela Grisales" with a reception from 7 to 9 tonight.

- The Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art, 2818 Frederick Ave., St. Joseph, opens "Reflections: Selections From the Commerce Bancshares Fine Art Collection" with a reception from 5 to 7 tonight.
- The Gallery at Village Shalom, 5500 W. 123rd St., Overland Park, opens "Counterpoint: A Painting Installation by Warren Rosser," with a reception from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday. Dwight Frizzell and members of newEar will perform a musical collaboration in response to the painting installation at 2 p.m. during the opening.

—Alice Thorson/The Star



Porcelain pottery work by Angela Grisales, on display at Images Art Gallery