

Frank Egloff's "After Deakin, 1952 (Rayner Heppenstall)," 1998, at the 2000 DeCordova Annual Exhibition.

Art Review

Disparate solo shows strong at DeCordova

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

The DeCordova Annual Exhibition doesn't aim for cohesion. Curators Rachel Rosenfield Lafo, Nick Capasso, George Fifield, and Gillian Nagler aim only to find exceptional work by New England artists in a variety of media. The result is a strong series of small solo exhibitions.

Still, you may find some pleasing connections. There are birds here, and bees, in the form of feathers, honey, and bee pollen. You'll also find carpenter ants, used coffee filters, and circuit boards. Artists have been utilizing nontraditional material forever; here it functions as a hand-

hold to draw viewers deeper into the work by foiling expectations of "fine" art.

That's true in the work of Patricia Trevisan Woods, who crafts ceremonial costumes from dingy coffee filters and antistatic dryer sheets. Woods makes stuff we dispose of without a second thought not only into art, but into something mystical. The dryer sheets in "Cloud Dress" give the dress its froufrou up-in-the-clouds feel; the coffee filters, as undergarment, give it an earthy quality. Feathers hang from the bodice; they create the sense that this dress could be worn by a shaman with an open line to the sky gods.

Doug Bosch, like Woods a re-
DECORDOVA, Page D13

Murder, ants, and clay mutants at DeCordova Museum

■ DECORDOVA

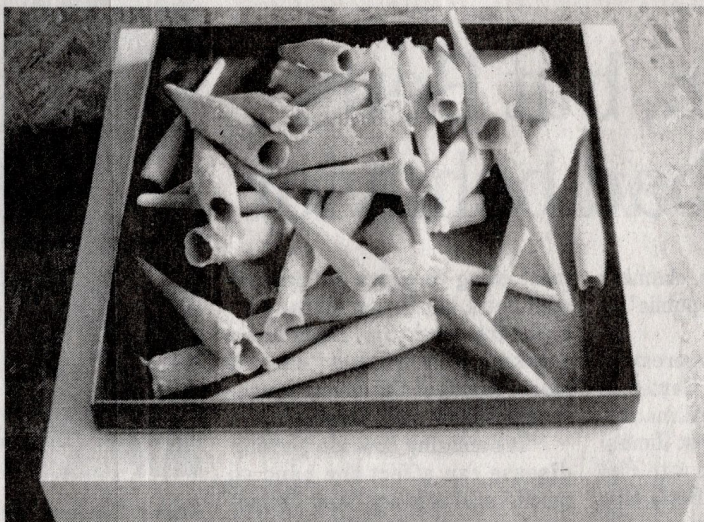
Continued from Page D1

cycler, has the air of a mad scientist. He gathers materials like bee pollen and linseed oil and mixes them together just to see what they'll do, then he captures the result ("Cross Section") under glass: a viscous, alluring brown bubble. Bosch's works verge on the grotesque: "Lint Sacs" looks like an innocent batch of tea bags ruthlessly stuffed with wads of lint, hung in a modernist grid. Some have a pregnant bulge; others merely show a dirty little spot. This artist marries dirty with clean and threatens a disturbing offspring.

Speaking of offspring, Theo Appel photographs newborn babies, often in medical crisis, in their fathers' arms. The grids of black-and-white photos show the infants asleep or in pain or looking oddly aged, and hint at the life cycle contained in this mere seed of a human. Appel, a pediatrician, also paints from his photos, cropping the image and re-creating it on a large scale in flickering brush strokes and haunting colors, so that it's hard to tell it's a baby you're looking at, with blue mounds of flesh and a dark, sparkling rabbit's eye.

The other painter in the show, Frank Egloff, tackles the issue of photography as mediator of information. He projects photos onto his canvas and paints them there, then distorts the image. In "After Deakin, 1952/1957 (Oliver Bernard)," the young unshaven Bernard, painted in muted green, regards us warily from the left. Egloff paints a second face over the first, looking straight on. There are many layers here: how we compose ourselves to be photographed, how the photographer composes us. Here, Egloff offers yet another iteration and asks which is closest to the truth.

Find your own truth in Laura Baring-Gould's installation, "Apiary." Baring-Gould creates a hive for humans, a tall, twisting thatched hut in the shape of a spiral of soft-serve ice cream. Walk in and the artist seduces your senses with the aroma of hay and the buzzing of bees. The interior is dark, save for lights hovering warmly in handblown glass ampules filled with honey.

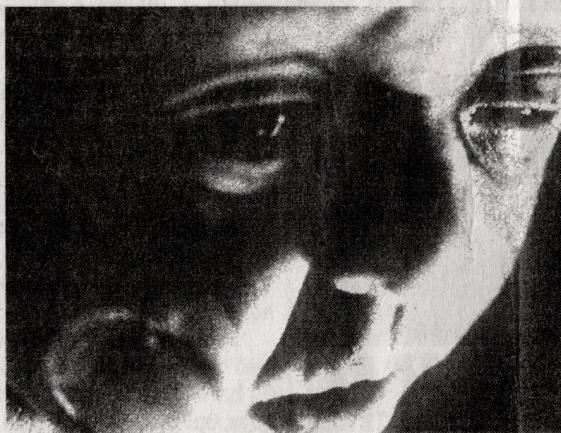


At left: Doug Bosch's "Ampules" (wax, flour, and wood); at right: Ri Anderson's "Talbot's B & B, Belg Lakes, ME 9:45 p.m. August 15, 1998"; below: a print by Theo Appel from the "Ignition Series."

"Apiary" is a retreat, a place to reconnect to your own rhythms and silences.

Jill Slosburg-Ackerman sculpts wood, then takes the leftover sawdust, mixes it with glue, and builds on top of the natural wood. In "Numen," the blond wood base becomes a blocky anchor, broken open along one side by a luscious chasm. Rising from this wounded block she has smooth giant bubbles of her sawdust mixture. It's as if the base has split open and let out a great sigh, curvaceously feminine and rising to the heavens.

Ambreen Butt's paintings and works on paper honor both her Pakistani Muslim heritage and her feminine identity. She layers images drawn on mylar. Things are happening just under the surface as we watch her narrative drawings and paintings trace the mythic adventures of a young woman. The mylar works set their characters against a feminine, sexual opening that fades concentrically in the many layers. In one untitled drawing, a small horse leads the blindfolded woman up the slope of a vulva stitched onto the paper, one more step



on a journey toward knowing.

Ri Anderson takes a page from Cindy Sherman's photography book, shooting herself in character. For Anderson, the character is always, tragically, the same: a slain woman in a cocktail dress. The photos are crisp, enigmatic, and disturbing, often hinting at the trace of another presence that might be the murderer's.

Remo Campopiano's "Under the Volcano" is a small city built from circuit boards, surrounding a great hill of sand. Red carpenter ants live in the city, and over the course of the exhibition, they will level the hill and cover over the computer guts with



THE 2000 DECORDOVA ANNUAL EXHIBITION
At: The DeCordova Museum, 51 Sandy Pond Road, Lincoln, through Sept. 4

sand. Campopiano captures every moment on video, streamed to the Internet (<http://remo.net/volcano>). Like us, the ants farm, make war, and capture slaves. It's fascinating and humbling to watch.

Finally, Nancy Hayes fashions ceramic creatures that belong in grade B horror movies. "Inner Surge" joins a welted, pitted green bulb to a striped sphere strewn with sucking arms, from which springs an accordion section in white traced with black lines. That leads to a stiff stem with an ugly brown flower. These are patterned, organic, and rhythmic, neither plant nor animal but a frightening and celebratory combination.

Murderous photos, ants, and clay mutants may have nothing in common, but it doesn't matter. As usual, the DeCordova Annual shows off what fine artists we have in New England.