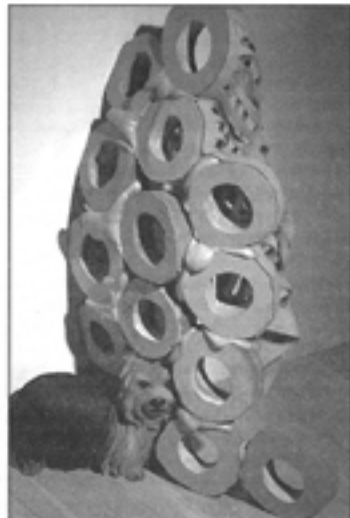




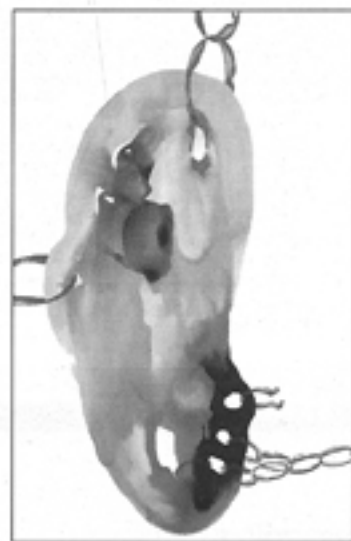
"Blue Shiek and the Seer" by Deb Mell



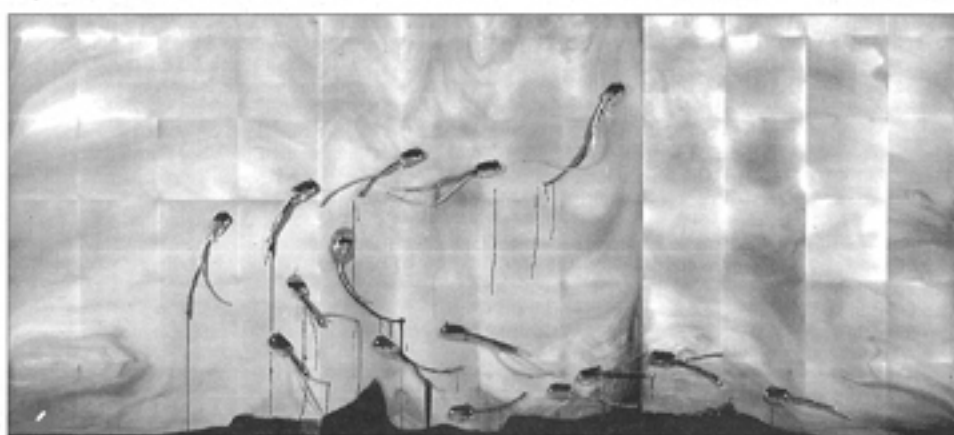
"At Large" by Melissa Pokorny



"Burial of the Past" by Lucien Dulfan



"Pull: Text & Trust #1" by Anne Pearce



"April Like the Month" by Steve Driscoll



"Gluttonous" by Ulises Mora

Critics showcase what's new in contemporary art

SICA's 'Critics Select' shows opinions are as diverse as the art scene

Although he set the focus, Doug Ferrari admitted to being somewhat surprised at the diversity of the work represented in the "Critics Select '06" exhibit currently at the Shore Institute of the Contemporary Arts in Long Branch.

"I was surprised last year and this year, too, at how varied the work is from piece to piece, artist to artist and critic to critic," said Ferrari, executive director of SICA.

Curator D. Dominick Lombardi echoed that sentiment.

"In their selections, it is easy to see that critical opinion ... can be as diverse as the contemporary art scene itself," he wrote in his curator's statement.

For SICA's second annual "Critics Select" show, Lombardi challenged seven art critics to choose under-represented artists in specific geographical regions who exemplify the spirit of contemporary

art today or represent new trends in art.

"Critics Select '06" will run through Feb. 19 at SICA, 20 Third Ave., Long Branch.

Critics chosen by Lombardi to participate in the exhibition include Dan Bischoff, Newark; Anjali Gupta, San Antonio; Kate Hackman, Kansas City; Claire Lieberman, Chicago area; Valery Oisteana, New York City; Steve Rockwell, Toronto; and Raul Zamudio, a New York-based critic who selected artists in Mexico City.

Lombardi said he selected the critics for their extensive knowledge and exposure to specific geographic areas, "which feature a small, albeit important window into a culture that is wrestling with any number of political, religious, personal or historic issues."

"We wanted people the critics thought were really up and coming and on the cutting edge of where these particular critics each thought contemporary art was," Ferrari explained. "When you get such varied work from the critics, it shows your opinions can vary greatly about what is new in contemporary art."

"It's exciting, and 'Critics Select'

seems to expand each time," Ferrari said, adding that the broader scope was by design.

"We wanted to broaden it, get it more out of the region. This particular [exhibit] is to show what critics feel are under-represented artists from different areas that deserve more recognition. So, it's Canada, Mexico, out West, Texas — all over the place — but there are still artists from New Jersey and New York."

Critics' selections include the following:

- Bischoff, art critic for The Star-Ledger in Newark, chose Tom Nussbaum, Deb Mell and Emily Hubley.

- Gupta, editor of Artlies, a contemporary art magazine published in Texas, chose Christopher Sauter, Guy Hundere and Andrea Caillouet.

- Hackman, editor of The Review, Kansas City, selected Anne Pearce, James Woodfill and Jess Moffitt.

- Claire Lieberman, feature writer/critic, Sculpture magazine, selected Melissa Pokorny, Alberto González-González and Lon Gordon.

- Valery Oisteana, NYARTS, selected Lucien Dulfan, Dinah Dulfan, Bruno Brieva and Angelo Jannuzzi.

- Steve Rockwell, publisher, d'Art, an Internet art database, chose artists Ric Evans, Scott Silverthorn and Steve Driscoll.

- Raul Zamudio, art critic for ArtNexus, a magazine on Latin American art, chose to showcase works by Edgar Orlaineta, Ulises Mora and Teresa Serrano.

Gallery hours at SICA are Wednesday and Thursday, 1-5 p.m.; Friday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday 1-5 p.m.

For more information, visit www.sica.org or call (732) 263-1121.

According to Ferrari, SICA itself is attracting a broader audience.

"We seem to be drawing a larger audience and more local group of artists," he said. "More people are starting to recognize us for what we are, for what we're doing and what we're trying to accomplish — to create an exciting place to experience contemporary art, to just be exposed to contemporary art and ideas."

— Gloria Stravelli