

Parimpsestic

VISUAL ARTS Five artists at the Jundt create ephemeral works that undermine our assumptions about two-dimensional drawings

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Gonzaga's "Drawn to the Wall III" (through Oct. 6) has invited five Northwest area artists – Richard Schindler, Kevin Haas, Gina Freuen, Ken Yuhasz and Michelle Forsyth – to create site-specific "drawings." Like the 2004 "Drawn to the Wall II," which featured both 2D and 3D artists, this exhibition displays a wide variety of mediums: from charcoal to paint to ceramics, and even from neon to colored paper, felt and pinheads. The result? An interrogation of what "drawing" means. From the traditional to the unusual, an entire continuum of approaches to drawing is on display at the Jundt.

Parameters for the exhibition are unusual. First, the work had to be done on an 11-foot tall wall *in situ* (as opposed to being created in the artist's studio and "hung" on the wall). Second, the walls would be painted over at the end of the exhibition. Those were the rules according to Gonzaga director and curator Scott Patnode, who developed the idea for "Drawn to the Wall" six years ago.

Richard Schindler, for example, would be the nearest end of the continuum for his use of traditional drawing media – charcoal, graphite and ink. Using four oversized pieces of paper as a foundation (like panes of window glass), Schindler creates a portrait of celebration. Of his piece "In Memory of a Free Spirit," he writes about being in the garden with his soon-to-be-wife and recapturing the vitality of nature and of drawing: "The buzzing around of life and the chaos of a rampant garden are constant reminders of the importance of freedom of the creative spirit."

Kevin Haas describes his "I-90 Double Spokane" as a painting, not a drawing. With shades of flat, gray color, it resembles a silkscreen, too, which would be appropriate for this WSU associate professor of printmaking and digital media. Close up, however, faint brushstrokes and pencil lines become evident. This suggests the peril of misinformation or disengagement when viewing life through distortions such as digital imagery – e.g., television or even a car's window. Haas stresses the exploration of landscape.

Gina Freuen, better known for her ceramics, straddles the midpoint of the continuum with a background in graphic design and mixed-media drawings. Her "Self-Portrait Obscured" is a careful exploration of politics and personal issues, which her statement – like the artwork

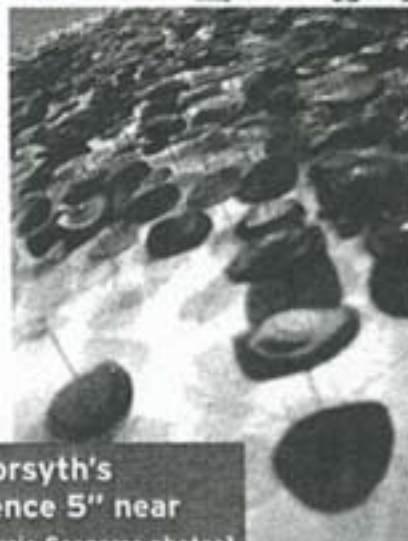
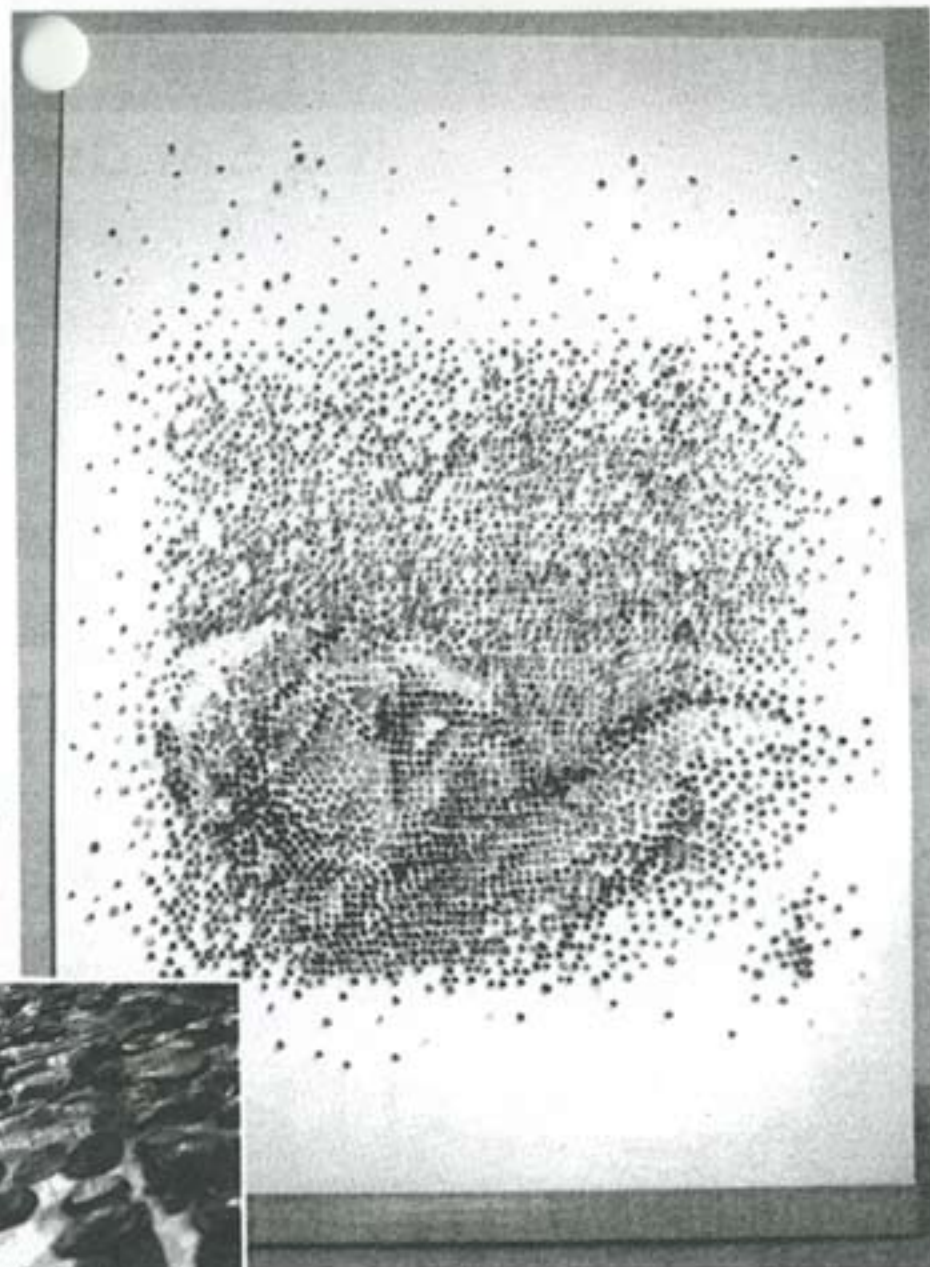
– hints at but does not commit to. Protruding from the wall's upper area is a row of soda-fired ceramic hands from which hang strips of smoke-stained paper long enough to rest on the floor. The effect is of a stage, the hands like marionette-workers, which may tie in to what Freuen describes as frustration with government. There's a smoldering psychic intensity here.

One imagines Ken Yuhasz had fun creating "Odd Planets," which combines his trademark neon with paint, drawing and found objects. A progression of disc-like assemblages emerges from the center of a drawing (or painting) of a wheel against a dark blue and white grid. As with Haas's work, however, Yuhasz invites closer inspection to reveal evidence of sketching, planning and revision; there is more than just the whimsy and formal study of color and light here.

The most extreme interpretation of drawing is Michelle Forsyth's "Fluorescence 5 (Flowers for Iraq)," which is mindboggling from

any vantage point. Forsyth uses a grid of colored paper, felt and foam shapes on pinheads extending from the surface of the wall to capture, deconstruct and recontextualize images of horror she culls from pop media. Although they must be viewed from afar to be understood (like Chuck Close's gridwork), they are intensely beautiful and surprisingly tactile from close up. Standing back mimics the way we view horror – as consumers of the "horror" genre and of sensationalized news media. Forsyth's work reminds us that we're an apathetic audience desensitized to violence.

The visual and conceptual potency of Forsyth's imagery moves viewers past the question of "Is this drawing?" and nudges them to a place that, like the other walls,



Michelle Forsyth's "Fluorescence 5" near and far. [Carrie Scozarro photos]

negates the object-orientation of conventional art. The audience gets to see a "work of art," yet they cannot obtain or consume it – beyond, that is, the experience of viewing and thinking about it.

Once "Drawn to the Wall" ends, the works will be removed and the walls painted over. Yet elements of the works will persist. Although it's impossible to *exactly* recreate the "drawings" in this year's exhibition, each artist had a choice as to the degree with which to bend the rules. Far from being a distraction, however, the transience of these works creates delight. It's yet another example of how artists can (and should) push boundaries and engender new ways of seeing that enrich more than just our visual lexicon. ■

"Drawn to the Wall III" runs through Oct. 6 at Gonzaga's Jundt Art Museum, 202 E. Cataldo Ave. Open Mondays-Fridays from 10 am-4 pm, Saturdays from noon-4 pm. Artist reception: Thursday, Sept. 13, from 7-9 pm. Free. Visit www.gonzaga.edu or call 323-6613.