

Wild mix of elements marks DeCordova show

In his most outlandish schemes, the Owens-Corning Pink Panther couldn't have come up with this one: a 14-foot-high teddy bear knit entirely of Fiberglas insulation. But for sculptor David Cole, who also has knit a bear out of toxic strands of lead, art happens when familiar elements morph into "violent absurdities."

Visual Arts

JOANNE SILVER

John Bisbee's transformations begin with a most unmalleable substance — 12-inch metal spikes — and end in lyrical tapestries and welded spirals that resemble harvested grain. Lars-Erik Fisk has distilled a vintage Volkswagen minibus into a single 4-foot red-and-white sphere, complete with headlights, windshield wipers, twin doors and a perfectly upholstered seat.

Hannah Barrett has imagined living rooms peopled by odd groupings of androgynous beings — but the figures in these hand-painted photographic montages happen to be amalgams of her parents.

The 2003 DeCordova Annual Exhibition, at the Lincoln museum through Aug. 31, highlights the rich and strange output of some of New England's most creative individuals. Of the 15 versions of the show, which began in 1989 as Artists/Visions, this year's is particularly strong — and fun.

The 11 men and women selected by the museum's curators work in a typically wide variety of media

and styles. What they share is a high level of skill and a well-developed personal vision. And, like Cole, many are drawn to examining the unusual terrain where the ordinary and the extraordinary collide.

Their ingredients can be humble indeed. Sharpened pencil stubs by the hundreds and even thousands coalesce in Jennifer Maestre's biomorphic sculptures. Lumpy and marked by suggestive openings and protrusions, these pieces have a fetishistic power, despite their Prismaacolor skins.

Science, rather than ritual, permeates the exquisite kinetic sculptures Steve Hollinger crafts from an attic's worth of objects. Using light to trigger movement, these cabinets contain miniature surprises. A bat's gossamer skeleton rises through its watery chamber. Moths begin to flutter behind an antique wooden panel. A circle dangling slender filaments captures the aqueous grace of a jellyfish.

Bruce Bemis' installation "Mending Mid-Oceanic Rift" immerses the viewer in its underwater world. In a darkened room, twin projectors play old film footage of swimmers, which bounces off a reflective garden globe onto the walls of the gallery. A mesmerizing pageant unfolds, as not-quite-synchronized swimmers approach one another and vanish into cinematic oblivion.

Forgotten places are central to Morgan Cohen's lush color photographs. In the fading corners where walls and ceilings meet, he

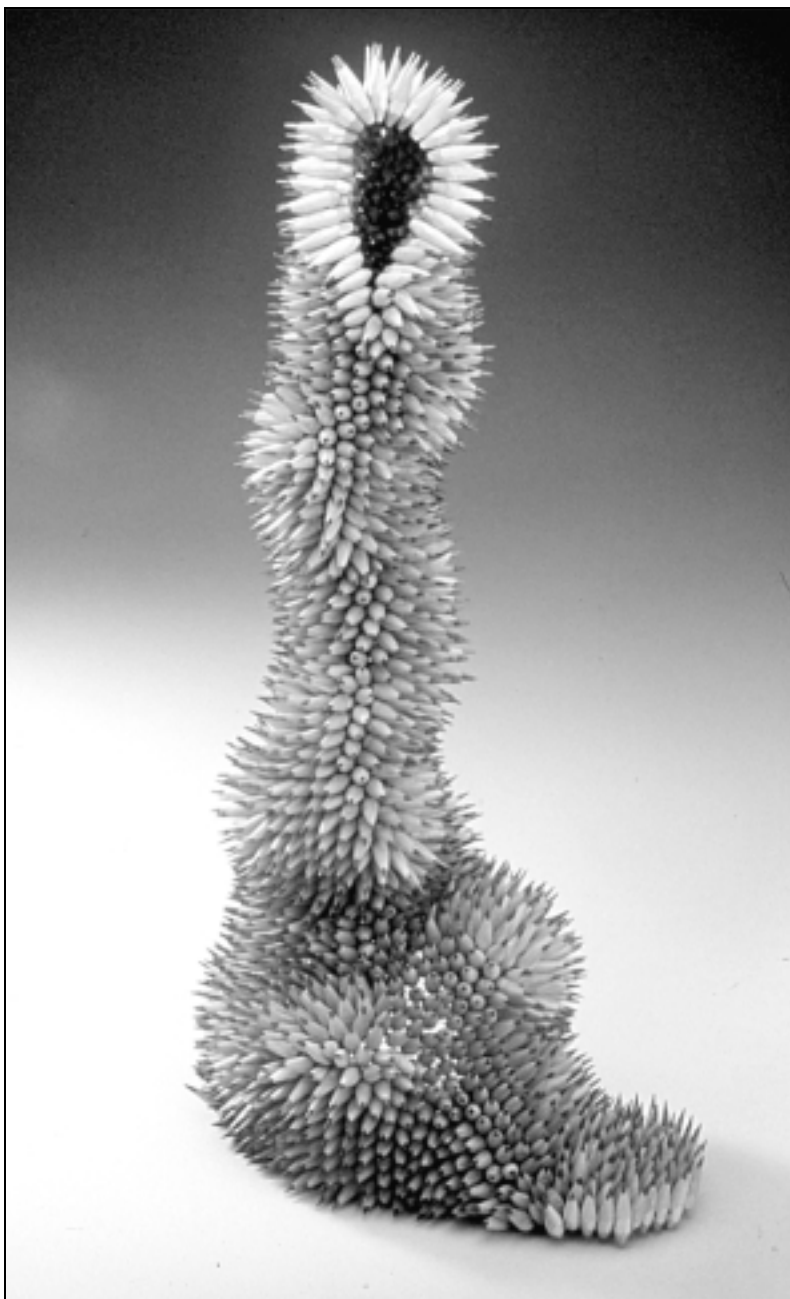
finds mysteries and illumination. Peeling paint and rough plaster give way to an otherworldly reverie even as they assert their presence in the here and now.

Laura McPhee has traveled far to uncover the charged crossroads of time and human culture. Her large-scale photographs of unpeopled interiors in Calcutta include the crumbling vestiges of bygone grandeur, as well as the cacophony of a current-day sari shop and a meat market.

Instead of searching for meaning within settings that already exist, Heather Hobler-Keene and Jane Masters construct environments of their own. Squiggly jigsaw shapes in fleshy pinks and spring greens dance over gallery walls in Hobler-Keene's juicy celebration of living things.

Masters has wallpapered an entire corridor with dizzying doodles of snaking coils and other faintly organic shapes, all set on a background of eye-blasting chartreuse. Against this surface her equally intricate black-and-white scratch-board drawings look downright soothing.

ALSO OF NOTE: This is not a test. It's a test wall. Through Aug. 10, "The Way Things Go," documenting an elaborate chain reaction by the Swiss collaborative team of Peter Fischli and David Weiss, will be playing on the Media Test Wall of the MIT List Visual Arts Center. Just inside the entrance to MIT's Whitaker Building No. 56, off Ames Street, Cambridge. Free. 617-253-4680.



MAKING A POINT: Jennifer Maestre's 'Messenger' is constructed from the sharpened stubs of colored pencils.

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Concerto winner seeks own sound

From Page E27

has an excellent music program anyway.

"For me, music is an integral part of everything in life, and it makes no sense to separate things. I like history, and I've taken a lot of film courses.

"Of course, I spend most of my time practicing," he said. "Mr. Totenberg makes me work on phrasing. His constant emphasis is on playing a phrase correctly, of making the music do things that are logical. I've had technique teachers before, and they were really boring. This isn't at all.

"We decide together what pieces to work on. He doesn't have any real emphasis; we just try to find pieces that I can grow on. I like Beethoven, and Russian music of course, especially Prokofiev. We've been exploring Bach together, too, and that is

amazingly interesting."

The young violinist admires fellow fiddlers Gidon Kremer, Anne-Sophie Mutter and Maxim Vengerov, all for different reasons but mainly because they stand out from the pack. As for himself, "I just want to have my own sound," he said. "That's what I'm really looking for."

Kutik, naturally, wants a career in music, but he's not sure what path to follow. He already has performed with New England Conservatory's Youth Philharmonic Orchestra and with the Juilliard orchestra, but may wish to try a solo career. This summer, he travels to Kneisel Hall in Blue Hill, Maine, for intensive chamber music workshops with Totenberg and others.

"I want to be a musician, but most of all I want to be innovative," he said. "That's my constant guiding light, I guess, to be innovative. I would be happy in an orchestra if I was still able to do other interesting things."

Sunday's program also includes opera highlights from Rossini's "Barber of Seville," Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana" and Respighi's "Pines of Rome." For tickets, call 866-266-1200 or go to www.bso.org.



KUTIK:
Violinist will attend Boston University.