

VOX VIII—the material unreal

By Libby and Roberta July 22, 2012

Amid materials like peeled paint, silky concrete and shards of glass, the path through Vox VIII, [Vox Populi](#)'s eighth annual juried show of emerging artists suggests a road forward for art, perhaps. At least, it seems to be the curators' view of what that road is. Sculpture Center curator Ruba Katrib and artist Marlo Pascual assembled the group of 23 artists, including a mix of familiar faces and a number of surprises.

This is a show in which sculpture, painting and video merge into multi-faceted approaches to one investigation of where dreams and reality can create a new world order.



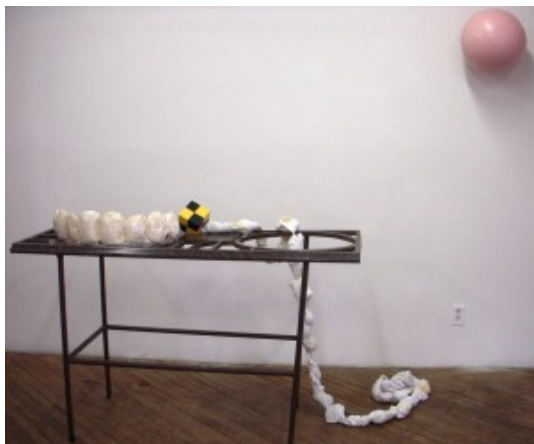
Sacha Ingber, Sheila's Vacation, 2012, mixed media. Detail

Of course the path forward into this show begins with Sacha Ingber's installation Sheila's Vacation in the gallery's lobby space. Its a piece that involves furniture and objects and it's set up like a sort of art classroom, with most of the tables/desks suggesting pre-teens through high school students and one tall table obviously for the grown up. There are objects on the desks, and objects that suggest object-making, although nothing sits on the tilted grown ups' desk (which actually suggests a lectern more than a desk, come to think of it).



Sacha Ingber, Sheila's Vacation, 2012, mixed media. Detail--what we call the meatgrinder making a clay piece

Ingber is a great object maker, as are many of the artists in Vox VIII—it's a 3D-wonderland, this show. Ingber's funny-looking meat-grinder object seems to be stopped mid turn in making a pot on a wheel; there are really big teeth nearby and an oversize bubble gum bubble high on the wall. Is making art fun or what?!



Sacha Ingber, Sheila's Vacation, 2012, mixed media. Detail - teeth and bubble gum bubble

Ingber's suggestion that Sheila's Vacation is a classroom or factory or artist's residency for making art is a great one. The suggestion to play feels just about right for this time in art on the planet. Play on, artists, and by all means do it together in a group setting. Turn the factory or classroom into a play room.



Linda Lopez, I'm not so weird to me, 2011, ceramic, wood, balloons, latex paint, foam

Meanwhile, further on in the show, Linda Lopez' sculpture I'm Not so Weird to Me probes for the Platonic cave, with faux shadows painted on the wall—the dreamy projections of her bare-boned clay objects arrayed on ordinary shelves. The emptiness of the 3-D clay outlines, the fullness of the air-filled balloons, the flatness of the shadows are meditations on the nature of reality and volume and maybe even the Higgs Boson—our favorite science topic of the week. What is there? Do we see it? What is beautiful? What is art?



Susan Scott, canvas

The little canvas objects from Susan Scott, their forms stuffed, stapled, sewn and coated with colors pop off the wall like pet rocks, and some of them, like pets, are endearing. Others are somewhere between repelling and got-to-touch-it strange.



Esther Ruiz, *A Place in my Mind*, 2012, poured concrete, argon tube, plexi

A mini trend that won't lie down: Neon (not that we want it to). Here, Esther Ruiz uses the lighting element effectively in her tiny landscape with suggested rainbow or maybe it's half of a MacDonald's arch. Either way, the beauty — from surprise uses of materials — is consistent with the rest of the show, and the suggestion of the unattainable is in keeping with this show's sense of the forlorn, with anger bubbling up around the edges. We have heard that irony is dead although we're not sure. But this piece does not seem ironic to us, nor do the other works in this show.



William Holton, *Evidence*, pigment, oil residue, detritus, 2012, detail of a series

Even William Holton's *Evidence* doesn't seem ironic, though it distills painting down to its essence, chips of paint peelings from the palette, stacked into little morsels like pretty candy to be purchased by those who can afford it. Painting materials separated from the conventional rectangle continues to be a trend with new variations weekly.



Erica Prince, Megastructure Models, 2012, mixed media

And Erica Prince—whose work we'd seen in her Spring MFA show at Tyler—is a producer of wholly earnest and great-looking hand-made and found objects. Her array of stuff is all placed together on what could be a high banquet table and projects into a futuristic life on Mars with pretty little alternate-universe figurines. The large narrative behind her thinking, though not quite as full-blown as Matthew Ritchie's storybook cosmos, has a real-world urgency that gives it heft. How bizarre is it, really, to imagine us—or alternate surviving life forms—living down wormholes, safe beneath the surface of a polluted earth?



Heather Cleary, Untitled, 2012, digital print

Whether or not measurement and perfection are on people's minds, they seem to be in the air in this show. Heather Cleary's photo of a carefully assembled still life arrangement with a *trompe l'oeil* black line suggests a perfection in the real world, and yet, and yet, we can't help but doubt the photo's authenticity.



Aaron Finniss, Phase 1000, 2011, magnetic tape

There's no doubting Aaron Finniss's real world linear object, however. This piece of stand up magnetic tape is not only real, it has a bit of magic to it.



Marcelino Stuhmer, Get ready to shoot yourself, 2009, 2012, black aluminum frames, paintings on panel, plexi mirror (whole and in shards), single channel video, 9 minute loop

As for Marcelino Stuhmer, he is totally creating an unreal. cinematic-funhouse reality. Walk through and crunch on the broken glass, and beware you don't get hurt, for real. Amid the mirrored noir cinema

reflections are panels of cinematic noir paintings that further confuse the space and bring painting into a spatial relationship with the body and with the cinema—at once disorienting, dark, and playful.

The annual Vox emerging artist's show has consistently been a bellwether, although sometimes chaotic, sometimes confusing. This show is neither chaotic nor confusing. But it's definitely worth the visit.

Artists juried into the show ([which runs to July 29](#)):

Lorne Blythe, Anna Breininger, Heather Cleary, Steve Cossman, Matthew Craig, Lisa Fairstein, Aaron Finnis, Amanda Friedman, William Holton, Sacha Ingber, Yun Yi Lee, Dante Lentz, Linda Lopez, Leora Lutz, Erica Prince, Esther Ruiz, Susan Scott, Amy Smith Garofano, Marcelino Stuhmer, Sarah Tortora, Clay Woodruff, Trey Wright, Matt Ziemke

More images at [Libby's flickr](#) and [Roberta's flickr](#).