



### Now & Then;

#### Time connects works in DeCordova's annual exhibition

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At the grand entrance to this year's DeCordova Annual Exhibition, Ahmed Abdalla's muted and mysterious wall painting "de Cordova" spans the space beneath an exposed brick archway. An architectural remnant of the original building, the graceful brickwork was preserved when the museum underwent an extensive expansion several years ago. Abdalla's recently completed painting looks much older. Within its multiple layers of faded browns and grays, a whirlwind of indecipherable markings resembles hieroglyphics, mathematical formulas, archaeological plans and scientific diagrams.

Past, present and future weave together in the 2001 Annual, just as they do in the work of Abdalla, an Egyptian-born artist who lives in Somerville. From Brett Bigbee's oil-on-canvas odes to contemporary family life, rendered with the crystalline calm of an Italian Renaissance painting, to Sarah Walker's abstract allegories bridging mental space and cyberspace, the art on view reflects a yearning for connections.

Although the 2001 Annual, as usual, was assembled with no common theme, medium or aesthetic, the pieces by 10 individual artists cannot help but resonate with one another, offering an additional level of correspondence for the visitor.

On the whole, this Annual - which runs through Sept. 2 - showcases a strong selection of art, especially in such noncutting-edge media as painting and pinhole photography. "Reflection Loop" - Kelly Heaton's interactive grid composed of faces from hundreds of Furby's - chatters and flutters, **but ultimately proves less satisfying than the tiny, understated black-and-white photographs in Annu Palakunnathu Matthew's "Memories of India."**

Quiet contemplation surrounds the sculptures Janice Redman has crafted by mummifying such ordinary household objects as keys and spoons, drainpipes and faucets. Wrapped in cotton batting, the items that once functioned as a part of daily life have become mere memories, frozen in three-dimensional poetry. In "Cataract II," Richard Klein investigates the very nature of seeing by recycling dozens of eyeglasses. Sculpted into an arc emanating from the corner of a gallery, the refashioned lenses form a cascade while casting a spray of dappled light and shadow onto the walls behind them. Both the substantial object and the insubstantial reflections become part of the art, whose title could refer to vision as well as the scenery being viewed.

The familiar landscape of Cape Cod turns wild in Marian Roth's large-scale pinhole photographs in high-octane colors. Houses and yards and groves of trees swoop and soar with cinematic abandon in these haunting images, recorded by a van that the artist has converted into a pinhole camera. As she drives along, light entering a small hole in the vehicle's exterior throws the passing vistas onto large sheets of paper. In this surrealistic universe, a molded plastic lawn chair can loom as a ghostly presence over shadowy branches, and houses can twist into nightmarish stalkers.



The horror Kelly Kaczynski has imagined fills one gallery and seems to be on the verge of taking over another. Tidy stalactites of paper cubes dangle from the ceiling of her installation, "untitled; uncanny," while rubbery bubbles spill across the floors and walls. A nearly lifesize model of a deer, issuing more bubbles from its mouth, lies on its back, presumably the victim of whatever has gone awry in this strange setting. Kaczynski hints at a narrative but leaves only a trail of bizarre clues.

**Matthew looks to the cultural peculiarities of her Indian homeland to find the ingredients for her "Bollywood Satirized" series of pseudo-movie posters. If her photographs are hushed to the point of transcendence, these posters are bold and garish as they tackle matters including racial discrimination and the role of women in Indian society. "Kala Patti" features a moustache long enough to strangle three people. "Dowry Violence" tells the steamy tale of a knife-wielding man threatening to kill his fiancée if her parents don't buy him a Honda.**

Unencumbered by such real-life concerns, Dean Snyder's rawhide and wood sculptures are free to revel in their quasi-organic fantasy world. "Boogle" sits on the floor, inflated almost to the point of bursting, with wooden stoppers inserted into its puffy hide. "Joop" is practically airborne, a cartoonish creature in the vague shape of a head or a hot air balloon, hovering a few inches above the gallery floor. Dozens of turned wooden pipes sprout like hairs from its bulbous top, but it is unclear whether this is an advanced life form or a rudimentary organism on the level of an amoeba. Snyder has used his sculptor's skill and boyish imagination to mold objects that the artist hopes will ask, "Where did I come from and what the hell am I doing here?"