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Critic's Choice

A Brief Tour of Some of The Mid-Atlantic Region's Artists to Watch

22nd Annual Critics' Residency Program

At Maryland Art Place through May 31

By **Kate Noonan**

PAINTER, WRITER, AND CURATOR Robert Berlind presents a collection of works by nine strikingly different artists in Maryland Art Place's 22nd Annual Critics' Residency Program, showcasing the broad spectrum of art created by photographers, fabric artists, sculptors, abstract painters, and multimedia artists working in the Mid-Atlantic region. In this collection of diverse works, you naturally seek to make sense of the amalgam of images and search for unifying visual themes and theoretical ties. While the works are united by the curator's apparent interest in color, texture, line, and depth, conceptually they are as divergent as Baltimore's own art community.

As a brilliant welcome to the exhibition, Timmerman Daugherty's mixed-media sculptures evidence both a strong interest in women's issues and a personal history of collecting. Using primarily ceramic found objects, Daugherty sculpts whimsical female figures and animal menageries. In a humorous and not so subtle symbolism, Daugherty adorns her sculptures with blossoming flowers, ripe fruits, and preening women. The artist repeatedly questions women's roles and sexual stereotypes, as seen in "Back to the Garden," in which a pair of flesh-colored legs dually gives birth to a plastic doll and utters "oh darling" to a lover. Daugherty also frequently employs mirrors as decorative elements and primary focuses, addressing ideals of beauty and obsessions over appearance.

The exhibition's mood changes, moving from Daugherty's playful figures and Catherine Kleeman's brightly colored textiles to the more serious and socially conscious works, such as the photographs by Dennis Farber and Jacqueline Schlossman. Most perplexing is Symmes Gardner's multimedia installation "A Change of Plans," in which a montage of aerial videos is projected against the middle gallery's rear wall. In front of the projection, Gardner places six televisions at various heights, each of which plays a different series of movie clips: Elizabeth Taylor crashes a red sports car, a train wrecks, a polio-stricken girl falls out of a wheelchair and struggles to walk. Together, the images, set to an audio track of intermittent raindrops, indistinguishable singing, and instrumental music, create a disorienting and subsequently hypnotic environment of contrived chaos. In vain, you struggle to decipher the significance of the scenes, searching for links and clues until eventually lost in the endless loop of repeating images, unable to determine where it begins and ends.

Jacquelyn Singer, Diane Szczepaniak, and Isabel Manalo's works illustrate the extreme versatility of abstract painting. Labeled with such spatially evocative titles as "In Between, Underneath" and "Inside Out," Singer's flatly painted fluorescent canvases play with dimension and space. In "Push, Pull, Twist, Turn," colorless silhouettes dance against a green and blue background, recalling both the simplified one-dimensionality of Japanese woodblock prints and

contemporary iTunes advertisements. Here, Singer not only challenges the notion of space, but experiments with pop-culture imagery, transferring TV commercials to the realm of fine art.

Manalo's mood is decidedly more somber than that of Singer. Innocent shades of pink and brown paints fragment against a stark white canvas in the ominously titled paintings "After Chernobyl" and "Death March." Adding elements of collage to her works, Manalo imparts the softness of 1970s feminist art to disturbing yet innocently rendered subjects.

Szczepaniak pulls you into a Rothko-like environment of thinly layered colors. In her captivating series of paintings based on the eight stanzas of the Wallace Stevens poem "Sunday Morning," Szczepaniak meditates on monochromatic washes of watercolor. By taping off the edges of the paper, she produces both crisp lines and smears of paint, recalling Barnett Newman's zip paintings. Like Newman's monuments to the sublime, Szczepaniak's works carry a weighty sense of importance and seriousness, helping to set the overall tone for the back gallery, which also includes the aforementioned Manalo.

Rounding out the exhibition is Vincent Carney, whose powerful use of color presents slick and elegant images of urban decay. Works such as "Bathroom in Blue" and "Movie Theatre" show places that time forgot, left to slowly deteriorate into sad but hauntingly beautiful states of disrepair. Carney's sleek surfaces and sumptuous colors are a stark contrast to the melancholy stillness of the decrepit scenes. As the last works in the exhibition, they leave you with a poignant feeling of mourning for places you have never been, far removed from its bold and kitschy opening.