

# The Boston Globe

Food & Arts

**Annual Tufts event gains focus and depth ; Juried exhibition and other group shows mark the summer**

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Arts & Reviews / galleries

5x5: Tufts Fifth Annual Juried Summer Exhibition

At: **Tufts University Art Gallery**, 40R Talbot Ave., Medford, through Aug. 10. 617-627-3518, [ase.tufts.edu/gallery](http://ase.tufts.edu/gallery)

Ten Artists, Ten Walls

At: Victoria Munroe Fine Art, 179 Newbury St., through Aug. 2. 617- 523-0661, [victoriamunroefineart.com](http://victoriamunroefineart.com)

Drawn In At: 13Forest Gallery, 167A Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, through Aug. 1. 781-641-3333, [13Forest.com](http://13Forest.com)

The **Tufts University Art Gallery** has a challenge each year with its annual summer show, which spotlights artists from the university's neighborhood, in Medford and Somerville. It's great community outreach, and it gives local artists a handsome venue. But there's a finite number of artists in the area worthy of that venue. The first two exhibits had real spark; the second two devolved into unfocused catch-alls.

The gallery came up with a clever solution this year, paring the number of artists down to five (last year there were 23), and giving each enough space to create an installation. While the result is mixed - some installations stand head and shoulders over others - the exhibit feels leaner and deeper than the questionable potpourris of recent summers.

One of the standouts, August Ventimiglia's "Chalk Heat/Heats," neatly ties together process-oriented, conceptual art with athletics, referencing the Tufts outdoor track nearby. Ventimiglia's elliptical drawings (each titled "Heat"), laid on their backs on pedestals, were made with grinding repetition as the artist circled charcoal around the oval until it disintegrated, creating velvety piles of black dust. Then there's "Chalk Heat," a larger drawing on the floor, which the artist made by embedding white chalk into the treads of his running shoes. It's an elegant installation, minimalist in presentation and charged with the sweat of effort.

Architect and first-time father Kyle Larabee makes a heartfelt tribute to his daughter in "She Loves Me/She Loves Me Not." The installation's foyer features a variety of dead flowers, plucked of their petals, broadcasting wasted life and unfulfilled longing. Beyond, there's a bright nursery with a crib, toys, and more, covered with colorful petals; all of this parent's yearning and hope has come to rest in this room.

Cut-paper artist Randal Thurston offers up the delicacy of technique and depth of content he's known for in "The Pale Hours." Symmetrical banners of black cutouts billow off the wall, each with a design built from skulls, femurs, and ribs, and featuring a figure who appears, within the mirror-like symmetry, to often be running from himself. The works reference Bosch, Klee, baroque frames, and design elements in Eastern European churches to create bleakly funny confrontations with mortality.

The other two installations fall flat. Roy Pardi's "Ring," an interactive circle of suspended round light bulbs that respond to human presence, is pretty and momentarily fun, but the feat of technology outweighs the

artful content. Mindy Nierenberg's well-meaning "Bibliotheca Publicus: An Endangered Species," a tribute to public libraries featuring a reading table, card catalogs stuffed with bits of art, and walls covered with text about the library's magic and threats to public funding, is plodding and obvious.

Still, this year's summer exhibition comes out on top. It's thoughtful and carefully edited, and the five installations are smartly dissimilar, formally and thematically. They make Medford and Somerville seem a rich and varied neighborhood.

All together now

It's the season for summer group shows. Victoria Munroe Fine Art has done a neat job of it with "Ten Artists, Ten Walls." Highlights include Todd McKie's "Seafood," an installation of friendly sea critters made from chunks of driftwood - typical McKie, disarming yet technically arresting. Kelly Spalding's paintings on old dishcloths enchant with bold lines and patterns painted over wobbly, faded fabric.

Christine Hiebert's frenetic, edgy drawings made with blue tape on paper pop like unexpected lightning in the night sky. Chuck Holtzman's graphite, ink, charcoal, and colored pencil drawings hang on the wall across from Hiebert's, all layer and subtlety in contrast to her works, which are all surface, yet they have a similar buzzing electricity. In a different room, Natalie Alper's mixed media on paper drawing "Untitled, November #2" is lulling and seductive, a fine web of lines with a pearly sparkle, like dew on a spider web, only it opens in the middle, beckoning you in.

That's five of the 10; the rest are as rich, ranging from Joel Janowitz's moody, Expressionistic watercolor landscapes to James Kennedy's small, meditative hard-edged grids on canvas. The group comes together nicely and shows off this gallery's range. The artists differ in form and content, but share a relentless focus.

Infinite detail

Keep an eye on Yossi Veissid, who with David Colombo and Nancy Popper has a show up at 13Forest Gallery in Arlington. Veissid, an architect, makes ridiculously minutely detailed drawings. He scans them and blows them up, so his digital prints here are larger than the scale at which he made the drawings. His best pieces depict cityscapes, which with so much detail appear infinite (the ones dealing with figuration are less captivating). "Into the Void" peers down into an urban chasm, with red buildings rising up to meet us on every side and sailboats floating magically in the abyss.

Popper has a wry, light wit and seamless technique. The women she portrays in her prints are flat, with garments and bobbing heads but no bodies. Colombo's prints, featuring maps and odd animals in trees, are too coy, better suited to pattern design than fine art.

Caption: Above: one of August Ventimiglia's "Heat" drawings on display at Tufts; below: an untitled work by Kelly Spalding, at Victoria Munroe; right: "Into the Void" by Yossi Veissid, at 13Forest. tufts university art gallery victoria munroe fine art lisa tang liu/pigmentia photography

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