

# For young artists, a mature vision comes on

By Mary Sherman  
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

Young artists tend to be numerous. Hundreds are represented in the current graduate shows at Harvard University, the Museum School, Boston College, the Rhode Island School of Design and others. And, for the most part, the work displays a remarkable degree of sophistication, talent and competence. Within 10 years, however, most of these brilliant novices will have quit. Frustrated by the (almost inevitable) inability to earn a living from their art, tired of working at another job to make ends meet, sick of the isolation of working alone and with little support, many of these young people will give up. By the age of 30, most of these talented aspirants will have assumed another career. By the age of 40, the only ones left will be those who view their work as an avocation of sorts or those who were lucky enough to find a gimmick, earning them easy access into the lucrative market.

As the work in the local shows indicate, part of these young artists' problem is time – not a mastery of skills. Anyone with a desire to learn, degree of patience and willingness to practice can be taught how to produce a realistic looking object, compose a work of art and manipulate a medium. What distinguishes the layman from the artist is what one does with those abilities. Most artists starting out lack the confidence that comes with experience. They repeat



Charles Grigg's "Stromness."

successful formulas, creating work that looks like variations of others. Sometimes, it even *looks* better. The struggles, trials and difficulties that the original artist went through to arrive at his own expression – when adopted – can frequently be bypassed. Yet, the result remains no more than what it is: the beginning of a maturation process, the acquisition of a role through mimicry instead of understanding. This is the process explored in this week's reviews.

GABRIELLE RUSSOMAGNO  
PHILLIP SCHWARTZ  
"innocencequilt"

*Different Angle Gallery, 35 Wareham St., Boston, through June 9*

Gabrielle Russomagno and Phillip Schwartz recently finished school. And, the rawness shows in this, one of their first exhibits, in which the work is fresh, but clearly



Gabrielle Russomagno's "Diana and Jackie."

in a formative stage.

Schwartz, who makes sculptures and wall reliefs, appears torn between creating haunting figures, shrewdly built of distressed wood; whimsical statues, reminiscent of Halloween paraphernalia; and elegant constructs, composed of found wood and copper. All these combinations are exhibited, meticulously crafted and so descriptively rendered that, except for a simple and forlorn twist of gilded leaves around a dead branch, they smother any signs of expression.

Similarly, although Russomagno's black and white photos of young girls, in some instances, are affecting, they have yet to convey her aim: "... what it was like to be a girl, to be sensually alive in unaffected simplicity, reveling in its power yet frightened by its mystery." Besides the fact that the girls in the pictures

may be too young for her needs – in some cases, they seem to be only 4 or 5 years old – the scenes are frequently forced and the models too aware of the camera.

This is not to say that Russomagno's photos or Schwartz's works lack a certain appeal – only that that appeal needs to be better defined, emphasized and stripped of all that is extraneous. An assurance and conviction in their abilities still needs to be earned.

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