

Fine Arts

Seductive Aesthetics

Juried Erotic Art Show opens at Kinsey Institute

By Jennifer Eberbach

At the opening reception for the Kinsey Institute's second annual Juried Erotic Art Show, juror Karen Baldner admitted she had a tough time grasping the meaning of "erotic art" after being invited to select works for the show. Baldner is an artist and faculty member at the Herron School of Art and Design at IUPUI whose own works include challenging nudes and depictions of the human body, including the Bloomington Breast Project. As an artist, she has an intuitive sense of what art is. However, she turned to the dictionary's official definition of "erotic" in search of the point where art and the erotic intersect.

"Art meets the erotic because it is seductive," she said.

Baldner also used words like "arousal," "anticipation," and "invitation" to describe the qualities of erotic aesthetics. The works on display at the show are

arousing, titillating the viewer physically and intellectually. Nudes, images depicting a wide range of sexual expression, and works that mimic curves and flesh evoke the raw sensuality of the body. Other works in the show challenge our perceptions of sex, or investigate society's constructions of eroticism, but never by forsaking titillation.

John Hom's sculpture *Mirror Mirror* is this year's winner of "Best in Show." The ceramic sculpture resembles a patch of budding sexual organs of ambiguous form and gender. Baldner found the work "exquisitely sexy because it touches on everything... it is neither male nor female, breast nor penis."

IU student Chris Matusek's digital painting *Seven* highlights the numbering system for "what a woman wants" used by the character Monica on the TV show *Friends*. An image of an apple is presented, with its different parts diagrammed to correspond with Monica's favorite spots. Matusek pointed to the work's allusion to scientific techniques that seek to measure sexual arousal, explaining that her work "questions taking things out of context." Monica's "seven, seven ... SEVEN!" might not be right for every woman.

Many of the artists pick up on the humor in sex, body

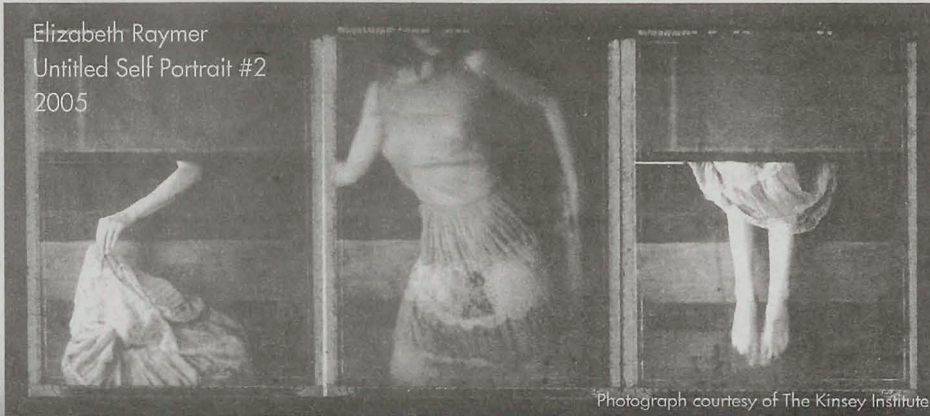
parts, and the things we do with each other. An IU Northwest instructor using the alter ego "Darlene Glitzen" contributed a "lesbian music box" containing a very adult, yet entertainingly childish, toy inside. "Darlene" claimed that the work's serious side "plays around with people's assumptions of what lesbian couples really do in the bedroom," as well as the gender of the artist.

Martin Weinberg, a sociology professor at IU and a former research sociologist at Kinsey, contributed his archival print *Wait for Green*. Weinberg expressed exasperated anger at incidences of rape on college campuses and puts the rule of waiting for sexual consent in simple terms. The work is a vertical triptych of female genitalia inside a traffic light. A line is drawn across the red and yellow lights, signifying that if your partner says "no," or isn't sure if she or he wants to, then don't. The reward is gained by granting the woman in the image her humanity and "waiting until she gives you the green light."

As a whole, the show celebrates sexuality and the human body with a soft edge that is not gratuitously illicit. The show grasps what is sexy, what attracts, and what expresses our sexual desires through works that delve into our fantasies. As Baldner explained, "the invitation is subtle."

The Juried Erotic Art Show will be on display until July 20, 2007, in the Kinsey Institute Art Gallery, located on the third floor of Morrison Hall, off of Third Street. The gallery is open Monday-Friday from 2-4 p.m. Learn more about the show on the Kinsey Institute's Web site at www.kinseyinstitute.org

Elizabeth Raymer
Untitled Self Portrait #2
2005



Photograph courtesy of The Kinsey Institute