

## 'Konstruct' exhibit displays power of assemblage



Ben Schwab "There Were Once Many, But Now There Are Few" oil on canvas (photo courtesy the artist)

### *Troy*

You might say that nearly all art is constructed from smaller parts. Often this is carefully hidden. And sometimes the parts are left visible, integral to the way we understand the whole.

"Konstruct" pulls four artists together who make this point in very different ways. The result is an absolute sardine can of artwork, large and small, in the compact Scarlet Seven Gallery. Cluttered would be an understatement, but luckily clutter is part of the show's appeal. Having almost no space to walk between the artworks really gets you into the experience.

One of the artists, Abraham Ferraro, quite depends on overwhelming the viewer — his newly reconfigured installation "Directions" inundates with brazen color and connected shapes up and around, overhead and in your way. Scores of individual cardboard objects in odd shapes, many of them makeshift packaging boxes looking like arrows, are assembled in a network of squarish tubes and peg-and-hole junctions, as if from a homemade version of the ventilation system in the movie "Brazil," with some Rube Goldberg thrown in.

The work is huge, and "Konstruct" almost comes off as a Ferraro show with three auxiliary artists, but one key element is easy to miss: Every piece has been mailed, as is, to the gallery where it was first shown. Seven pieces were sent to Scarlet Seven — you can see the address labels—while most was originally mailed (and displayed last year) at the Art Center a few blocks away. It was more cogent there, I think, but more holistic and intimately affecting here.

## **More Information**

### **If you go**

#### **"Konstruct"**

**Where:** Scarlet Seven Gallery, 137 Fourth St., Troy

**When:** Through Aug. 20

**Hours:** Wednesday 3-7 p.m., Thursday and Friday 3-8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 11-3 p.m.

**Admission:** Free

**Info:** 518-312-1564; <http://www.scarletsevengallery.com>

Once you notice Regis Brodie's ceramic objects scattered on pedestals and tables throughout, you get pulled in another direction. These vessels continue his lifelong balancing act between form and surface. From the tiniest bowls to bottles standing 3 feet tall, there is a quiet confidence in how he equalizes the vessel's shape with the patterns and glazing over (and inside) its surfaces. The indented, leafy imprints on three of the largest speak to nature as a kind of affirmation — they are not merely decorative, which can be the sorry chink in a ceramic artist's good intentions, but give an appropriate heft to the clay itself, to the visual weight of the form.

Although Ben Schwab has only three pieces here, they are just enough to remind you of the subtle, large complexity of his visual strategy. Though abstract at a glance, each has an apparent photographic perspective built in, and the incomplete geometric shapes eventually clarify just enough to suggest buildings seen from above.

A multitude of different grays form a mirrored view of some sort of dense urban landscape in "There Were Once Many, But Now There Are Few." A horizontal incomplete strip of blue near the center suggests water, with its built in reflection, but top and bottom

do not quite match except in their angularity. The title suggests a place now destroyed — maybe a war zone — and there are a few "buildings" that do seem to be in shambles. As such, the implications penetrate as you absorb what is actually the Mideast, which we've seen for ourselves in the news.

Schwab's ability to seize this kind of view, take it apart, and then give us enough of the pieces to make it just barely cohere is quite singular, even if deliberately (and thankfully) ambiguous.

Wendy Ide Williams also creates paintings and mixed media works that depend on combining many pieces, though they are not abstract. These pieces, even if generic, are botanical or zoological in their intention. The rounded, twining, layering of shapes is nearly an aquatic fantasy kept to the flatness of the canvas, a patterning that is like a colorful microscope slide made large.

Scarlet Seven is a rare thing north of Hudson — a bona fide commercial art gallery. There aren't more such galleries for a simple reason: There aren't more art buyers. So go. Enrich yourself. Take part. Just as at any gallery in Manhattan, the show each month has to stand on its own, showing good art by meaningful artists. This busy, bustling barrage called "Konstruct" does just that.

*William Jaeger is a frequent contributor to the Times Union.*