

## A Show With Chutzpah

By Jennifer Landes

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Except for some rather delicate glass mobiles, which were not technically supposed to be in the show, the exhibit of abstract art at the Fireplace Project in Springs is a rather sharp-edged affair.

Bold lines and shard-like compositions dominate in the works by Richard Aldrich, Julia

Condon, Matt Connors, Cheryl Donegan, Kim Fisher, Alison Fox, and Dana Schutz — although each artist has his or her own unique approach to abstraction. (It is Ms. Condon who contributed the mobiles: She is also a painter, but her work in that medium was not available for the show.)

If there is something unfinished, unstudied, and unpredictable about the exhibit, which was curated by Avo Samuelian, it is not a bad thing. It somehow suits both the art and the space, which have a raw quality.

Mr. Connors, a graduate of the Yale University School of Art, is the most well represented of the artists, with 11 easel-size paintings, each somewhat illusive in their titling. "Dracula's Balls," "Flip," "Vases," and "Flowers of Romance" are titles that make some logical sense; "Foliage," "Russell Street," and "Horizon" less so. The central element of "Flip Flop" resembles a slice of toasted Wonder Bread. The colors are happy and often woven into patterns that have a painstaking and compulsive feeling. There is a sense that the artist is playing with expectations and having a little fun at the audience's expense.

Similarly, Ms. Schutz's painting with cutout squares and black velvet recesses shows a lot of chutzpah, even in a post-ironic, postmodern world. But once past the gimmick, the layers of color, thinly applied, have a pleasant, balanced quality with a splotchy brown and beige background in places that resembles a pattern of mold spores or a millefiori Murano glass paperweight. Ms. Schutz's paintings are titled with ellipses, having been collected for the show while still drying and not yet named.



"Flip" by Matt Connors at the Fireplace Project in Springs



"LILIPUT" by Alison Fox

Mr. Aldrich and Ms. Fisher's large-scale paintings stand out in a room dominated by smaller works.

Contributing just one work to the show, "Cuprite 4," Ms. Fisher, who was chosen for the Whitney Biennial in 2004, demonstrates that one strong work can hold its own in a setting like this. "Cuprite 4" holds one wall in the wood room with its various shades of killer lipstick-red, sharply divided with

straight edges to resemble facets. As the light hits the different shades, an illusion of multi-dimensionality is produced that belies the painted medium. A black airbrushed flint or dagger pierces the mineral violently.

Mr. Aldrich's "Swirling Green/Grey Abstract" uses thinly painted white lines to craze the beach glass-colored surface. The 7-by-5-foot canvas dominates his collection of four works, which are otherwise much smaller. A thick, pasty "Grey Monochrome," only 14 inches high, uses both paint and wax to portray a tactile nothingness that manages to be atmospheric.

Ms. Fox also gets a nice showing of smallish works. Her titles are suggestive but idiosyncratic, like an impenetrable code. "Dr. Pepper" is indeed red and somewhat effervescent. "Marci Frey" comes with its own sheet of cork, providing an instant 1970s den-paneling background for the work. Her frames, which have an abject quality, are damaged and seem as though she could have found them at the town dump down the road during a desperate, last-minute search for completion.

Ms. Dongan may show the most range in this setting, constructing abstractions from water-based oil paint and metallic tape on archival cardboard. Her black-and-white abstractions appear to be blown-up details of a larger composition. The paintings that employ frank color — pink, or canary-yellow, or plastic-blue — appear post-Cubist in their shard-like treatment of compositional elements. There is something confrontational and not quite beautiful about them.

The show can be seen at the Fireplace Project, 851 Springs-Fireplace Road (near Fort Pond Boulevard), through Wednesday.