

Rhode Island

Main Gallery at the University of Rhode Island/Kingston

IMPRINTS, PUNCTURES AND OTHER POINTED MANEUVERINGS

Bringing together five artists who have different, distinct styles, this group show felt like five separate entities. While some of the two-dimensional work seemed to share vague impulses toward abstraction, each artist has identified an idiosyncratic territory upon which—to borrow from the exhibition's title—to maneuver.

Jean Blackburn and Dave Cole's three-dimensional work couldn't have been more different. Cole's piece, *Electric Blanket*, simplified the intricate arts of weaving and knot tying by transforming a very particular practical object into a quirky quilt. Simply put, he made a playful blanket with thick electrical cords, relying on irony and pun to reveal the strength of both eye and hand, and he also exhibited the 4-foot wooden knitting needles used to knit the blanket.

Blackburn's work, while also transformative, tips furniture upside down and backwards upon itself to create amazingly complex sculpted figures of an architectural nature. A bed and a crib are joined as symbols of growth, then disassociated as she cuts into both and makes them into hybrid cousins. An odd deco bureau becomes a complex of architectural designs, somewhat reminiscent of cliff-side villages carved out of stone. A simple, round table sprouts compartments carved below its surface yet connected to it at the same time. Taking cast-offs and giving them new life, Blackburn re-creates functional objects by turning them into strange beauties in a kind of furniture afterlife.



At the University of Rhode Island/Kingston: Jean Blackburn—*Collector*, wooden dresser and enamel paint, 1998.

Irene Lawrence, Merle Temkin, and Fran Siegel each play different visual "games." Lawrence does so with heavy patches of paint, scored here and there, and spread across the canvas to suggest patterns that might not be there. Temkin "plays" with her own fingerprints, repeating them over and over to create abstract patterns that often resemble topographic maps in a sometimes subtle, sometimes obvious reference to seeing beyond the surface. Utilizing a process too complicated and painstaking to go into here, Siegel embellishes simple repetitive images by giving them a nearly three-dimensional quality. She punctures the surface of her Plexiglas works and underlays them with screening so that each piece appears to have many levels to it. The result is a very tricky and enticing optical illusion.

—John Pantalone