

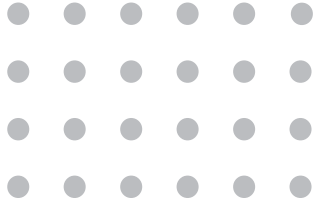


Couples

April 1 - June 2, 2008

Curated by
Karen Shaw

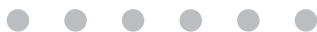
Islip Art Museum



Couples

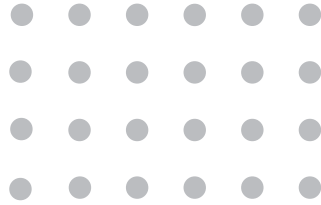
April 2 - June 1, 2008

**Miriam Bloom & Ron Morosan
Sally Brogden & Todd Johnson
Jeanette Cole & William Childress
Paula Elliott & James Burgess
Virginia Maksymowicz & Blaise Tobia
Leslie Wayne & Don Porcaro**



Curated by Karen Shaw

Couples



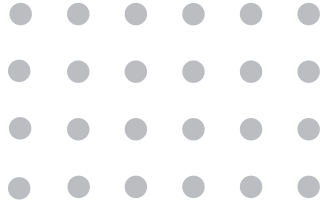
I have known the six couples chosen for this exhibition for several years. A few of them have been in exhibitions at the Islip Art Museum or the Carriage House individually in shows covering various topics. Despite my familiarity with the idea of couples—I am part of a couple myself—this is the first time I have had the opportunity to consider the subject and curate an exhibit on this multi-faceted theme.

Although I know many artist couples, I chose these particular pairs for the diversity of their work. Here at the Islip Art Museum we like to show as many types of media as possible on whatever subject we are addressing.

The museum staff and I created a questionnaire to submit to the artists that touches on their unique situation. The questions, while not being deeply personal, probe the ways these artists work together and apart and deal with the slings and arrows, joys and frustrations of being a working artist in the 21st century.

When I visited the apartment of **Miriam Bloom and Ron Morosan** to select the pieces for the show, I was initially struck by how different their work was. But once I looked closer, I saw how some of the shapes that Miriam sculpts from clay and papier mache creep into Ron's drawings. I had the same experience when I visited the studio of **Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz** in Philadelphia. His photographs and her sculpture seem different, but both explore pairings as well as architectural elements.

Jeanette Cole and William Childress both explore a minimalist genre but do so in different parts of the country. Jeanette, who paints and draws, is a professor at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Bill, now retired from academia, works in both his large, light-filled studio in Virginia and his studio in Westbeth on small, cerebral works that reflect his



interest in language and philosophy.

Todd Johnson and Sally Brogden are ceramicists, but each uses clay in a very different way. Sally's sculptures are elegant and minimal while Todd's work veers toward installation and refers to contemporary art history. They both teach, work and live in Knoxville, TN.

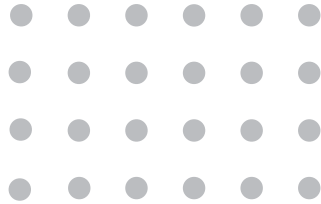
Paula Elliott and James Burgess are both painters. James's paintings are mostly large diptychs, (a form of coupling), in thick paint with many elements. Paula's works are a bit sparer but full of evocative shapes and atmosphere.

Leslie Wayne and Don Porcaro's works seem so different and yet so similar. Leslie, a painter, and Don, a sculptor, both use vibrant color. Leslie's work is abstract and explores the use of paint dimensionally while Don's sculptures in the round are whimsical and refer to cartoonish creatures and imaginary beings.

The *Couples* exhibition is primarily about the work of creative, hard working artists who just happen to share their life together and do so in varied ways.

Viva la difference!

Karen Shaw/ Senior Curator/ April 2008



Thinking About Couples

The idea for this show came about while we were installing a 2007 exhibition about painting surfaces. Two artists in the exhibit approached the topic with diametrically opposed methods. One created elegant, shaped canvases with smooth opalescent finish; the other produced huge abstractions with aggressive slashes and thick impasto.

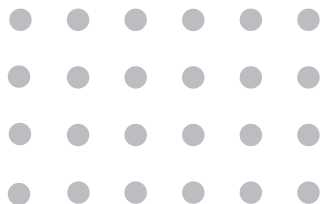
Imagine our surprise to learn the artists were husband and wife. Even more surprising was a conversation in which we pointed out the almost shocking dissimilarities in their work, only to learn the artist-couple thought their works were similar, even identical.

“Not in execution, of course. But in deeper ways. In our mutual concern with the idea of surface, of our similar choice of palette, in our exploration of the same medium, “ they explained.

Looking at their work anew through their eyes, we began to consider artist-couples and wondered about the way intimacy, cohabitation and love affect the artistic process.

Couples is one of our most open-ended exhibitions. The common theme that unites the works in our galleries is not aesthetic approach or content, but identity. We have presented the work of six artist-couples whose only overt links are traditional marriages of more than a decade and careers as artists.

We have asked each artist-couple to describe their working methods and the affect of their marriage on their work—our museum version of “Oprah.”. We have published their responses in entirety. Some couples say their works have nothing in common, while we see similarities; others say their works arise from the same basic interests, while we see few connections. Permutations and combinations of responses



abound, while a conclusive theory of matrimony and artistic production remains illusive.

Nonetheless, it's fun to wander the galleries and mix and match. It's revealing, even voyeuristic, to read about our artists' personal lives and opinions about art and their mates—and the connections between the two. It is life-affirming and touching to learn how supportive each member of these couples is of the other.

Couples does not draw conclusions. Perhaps a psychiatrist could uncover conflicts and tensions, subconscious motives and fissures by analyzing the works in this exhibit. We can not. What we see are six committed relationships among equals that result in each artist being the best he or she can be. We leave conclusions to our visitors.

Mary Lou Cohalan/Director

About the Placement of Couples

Whenever possible, our curatorial staff has installed the works of our artist-couples together. But because of gallery configurations in the Islip Art Museum, the work of some couples has been separated.

The following is placement information:

Miriam Bloom & Ron Morosan:

Miriam Bloom's sculptures are in Gallery 1 and 2; Ron Morosan's work is in the east hall.

Sally Brogden & Todd Johnson:

Both artists' works are in Gallery 3

Jeanette Cole & William Childress:

Both artists' works are in Gallery 1

Paula Elliott and James Burgess:

Both artists' works are in Gallery 2

Virginia Maksymowicz & Blaise Tobia:

Virginia Maksymowicz's installation is in Gallery 2; Blaise Tobia's photographs are in Gallery 3

Leslie Wayne & Don Porcaro:

Leslie Wayne's paintings are in the south hallway; Don Porcaro's sculptures are in Gallery 3

About the Artists

The following pages contain answers to the questionnaire Karen Shaw distributed to artists we have included in *Couples*. Our questionnaire invites our artist-couples to describe their artistic relationship to their partners and to consider both practical and emotional effects of working and living together.

Some of the artist-couples completed individual questionnaires; others answered a single questionnaire as a couple. Their answers are revealing.

Most maintained their work was not directly affected by the other; Some acknowledged give and take, and similarities of artistic vision and concern. All expressed great joy in being an artist-couple—being with someone who understood all the demands of artistic process, from the mundane to the profound.

It has often been said that happy couples look alike after long periods of cohabitation— as if they belong together. Although our artist-couples pursue individual paths, their affect on each other occasionally produces works that seem to reflect their shared compatibility.

As you walk through the Islip Art Museum galleries, see if you can make the matches.

Ron Morosan

Artist's Statement

Title: Couple Theory

The installation of three gouache and two pencil drawings is my statement on the theme of this exhibition. Couples, the significant and primal relationship of male and female, a relationship from Eden to prenuptial agreements, is probably one of the most fascinating and popular themes of modern society. Countless novels, films and newspaper pulp-style stories have been created around the relationships of famous couples from film and literature as well as the visual arts: the F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda Fitzgerald marriage and the Alfred Steiglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe marriage are two that come to mind. Then there are the continuous newspaper reports on current film stars and their partnering up and separations, a process that is grist for a huge news print market.

I have invented the term "Couples Theory" to refer to the couple as a theme for an art exhibition. I ask: what is the theory of couples? Is it a theory of conjugal linkage? Two people decide they will live and work together in a calling that is clearly not followed by the majority, a difficult path, but one that is rich with creative work and individual enterprise.

Of course all creatures link-up; otherwise we would not have a reproductive principle. But, as a theme for an art exhibition, the artist-couple becomes a story about individual artists. The narrative of that story takes place outside of the art work in the realm of interpretation and the context of the art world.

As a summary for this "statement" let me say that "the context of context" is part of the theory of couples, and "the art world is a cultural system in which viewers create their own meanings." With couples, too, people will create their own meanings, and that is a theory of couples.

Miriam Bloom

Artist's Statement

These sculptures represent the reconciliation of two aspects of existence, the world of everyday experience and the feeling of timelessness that also infuses our lives. The forms are created out of totally known geometric solids, ideal volumes that have a sense of the eternal. The subtly irregular contours as well as the painted and written surfaces provide the narrative, a quality of perceived linear time.

The three sculptures in this exhibition all deal with the concept of two entities. *Now and Now* is partly about how two beings together experience each moment. *Bifurcation with Consequences* is a biomorphic shape and its other. *Subaba* is a Buddha form which has a full emptiness coming through it; two extensions from the main body suggest two individuals.

Miriam Bloom

Questionnaire

How long have you been together?

All of our adult life

How does being a couple affect your work?

It is wonderful to be able to discuss what we see and what we are working on.

Did you meet through your work?

Yes. We met as scholarship students at the Ox-Bow Summer School in Saugatuck, Michigan.

Do you share a studio? No

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Or only when finished?

I often discuss my work with Ron, especially when the work is completed.

Do you problem solve together? Often

Do you think that your spouse's work influences your own?

Yes. Ron's work is so inspiring.

Do you think there are similarities to your spouse's work.

Yes. There is a concern with ambiguity, poetry and mystery.

Are there conflicts being married to another visual artist? No

What questions do you think should be asked that are relevant to a show about couples?

In what positive ways do you assist one another in your respective areas?

We can sometimes see aspects of each other's work in an objective way that is not immediately apparent to the artist who has just completed the work.

How do you further each other's ambitions and foster creative activity?

We do all that we can to encourage each other.

What might be destructive to a positive relationship, i.e., competitiveness, envy or unwillingness to adjust to the artist needs of one another.

When you love someone, you want the best for them.

Ron Morosan

Questionnaire

How long have you been together?

Early seventies

How does being a couple affect your work? No answer

Did you meet through your work? Art residency.

Do you share a studio? No

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Or only when finished? No answer

Do you problem solve together? No

Do you think your spouse's work influences your own? Not really.

Do you think there are similarities to your spouse's work?

Sun shines on both of us.

Are there conflicts being married to another visual artist?

Is the Pope Catholic?

What questions do you think should be asked that are relevant to a show about couples?

Not sure, but:

. How do you further each other's ambitions and foster creative activity?

. What might be destructive to a positive relationship, i.e., competitiveness, envy, unwillingness to adjust to the artistic needs of one another, etc.

We are very supportive of each other and help each others career...no competitiveness or envy, no attempt to hurt each other's career.



Miriam Bloom
Subaba 2004
Earthenware, slip
22" x 20" x 16"



Ron Morosan
Overhead Projection Overheard 2005
Gouache
14" x 12"

Sally Brogden & Todd Johnson

Artists' Statements

Sally Brogden

Beneath consciousness lies that great area of the soul (subconscious) which is still a total mystery, but which demonstrates its workings in dreams, in the somnambulistic state under hypnosis and which existed before one's earthly life and which will exist after death. From there arise...(anxiety)..., the passions, love, hate, and all that occurs without reflection

Gerhard Von der Lippe Gran, 1893

My work focuses on simple abstract forms. I am fascinated by the associations we make as we interpret the world around us, and it is my hope to create objects with a broad and ambiguous reference; forms that are perplexing due to their many allusions. My works draw upon references to human form, nature, and mass-produced objects. They reflect my fascination with ambiguity. Embracing the plumpness of anatomical form as well as the symmetrical rigidity of machine-tooled objects, I strive to heighten potential readings.

Todd Johnson

I've long utilized the image of a cup as a metaphor for everyday experience. As a middle school art teacher, my workday reality is sharing the images and ideas of other highly regarded artists with my students. In the studio of late, I've concentrated on reworking cups into pieces by artists I admire as a way of acknowledging my daily occupational relationship to the larger art world.

Sally Brogden: Questionnaire

How long have you been together?

Since 1988

How does being a couple affect your work?

Having a partner who you can talk to gives one confidence that you have someone to bounce ideas off of. It also means that there is an innate support structure and understanding for time spent in the studio

Did you meet through your work?

We met while in school, yes.

Do you share a studio?

No. We have very different working styles and sharing a studio would be a distraction.

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Or only when finished?

I appreciate getting feedback from Todd more than he appreciates feedback from me...hence he has no interest in sharing a studio with me. I ask for feedback at all stages as needed. He asks for feedback when packing and shipping his work.

Do you problem solve together?

No

Do you think that your spouse's work influences your own?

Not really.

Do you think there are similarities to your spouses's work?

I think that we both value clean, austere material handling and communication. We look at, talk about and appreciate the same work. This discussion is where we meet and communicate about work and art making.

Are there conflicts begin married to another visual artist?

Not really

Todd Johnson: Questionnaire

How long have you been together?

Sally and I have been together 20 years.

How does being a couple affect your work?

We have someone to bounce ideas off of and we understand what it means to be an artist with all its inherent difficulties. I think that helps us support one another.

Did you meet through your work?

Yes, in school.

Do you share a studio?

God no!

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Only when finished? Or not often?

I don't want to hear from Sally, but I give her advice when I am asked.

Do you problem solve together?

Rarely

Do you think that your spouse's work influences your own?

No.

Do you think there are similarities to your spouse's work?

We obviously work in the same material (ceramic) and have similar value systems and interests about art, but our ideas are vastly different.

Are there conflicts being married to another visual artist?

Financial pressures on limited resources.



Sally Brogden
Untitled 2007
Ceramic, gun metal grey
26" x 4"



Todd Johnson
Saucers With Four Face Cups (For J.J.) 2007
Clay, wood
33" x 24" x 4"

Jeanette Cole & William Childress

Artists' Statement

My work concentrates on surface and how it can reflect the illusions of human relations. The places between, the space between us, the layers, barriers seen, transparency seen through. *Bittersweet Sampler*, as a title, refers to the boxed candies that can be bought in stores and given as tokens. My paintings reflect these layered exchanges and the territory they magnify in memory.

Jeanette Cole

Jeanette Cole

Questionnaire

How long have you been together?

26 years

How does being a couple affect your work?

We keep a conversation going about art and ideas in general. Bill is a good barometer for me when he comments on my work. I think being a part of a conversation about art challenges me intellectually and places me in such a rich environment.

Did you meet through your work?

We met when I took my St. Lawrence University students to visit his studio when they were in New York for a winter term. I had seen his work in a newsletter about artists who had received CAPS grants. I was interested in what he did and I wanted my students to hear what he had to say. The last thing he wanted was for a group of students to interrupt his studio, but he was persuaded by the honorarium I was able to offer.

So you share a studio?

Sometimes we share space to photograph work, but basically, no.

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Or only when finished?

It depends, usually only after it's done or in general terms.

Do you problem solve together?

Not on aesthetic issues, only in regard to logistics of showing and day-to-day practical issues.

Do you think your spouse's work influences your own? No

Do you think there are similarities to your spouse's work? No

Are there conflicts being married to another visual artist?

We have never imposed our own ideas on each other. We have the advantage of protecting each other's time to do work. When we have professional obligations for showing, we can act as each other's assistant and know what to do. I think it's a real advantage. We have about a decade separating us in age and we have never been competitive with each other. If we were closer in age, that might have been a factor.

William Childress

Questionnaire

How long have you been together?

Jeanette and I have been partners for 26 years

How does being a couple affect your work?

Jeanette and I met at a relatively mature stage of my career and any direct influence on my work would be difficult to identify. On the other hand, she opened the door to a completely new intellectual passion when we first stood together on an archaeological site on property we own in Virginia. Having a college minor in archaeology, Jeanette introduced me to a profoundly different way of looking at the landscape as a record of human interaction with nature over vast periods of time. Ever since, I have virtually had a second career as an avocational archaeologist.

Did you meet through your work? Yes

Do you share a studio?

No, we do not share studios. Since we live in several different places, we have multiple work spaces. The nature of our work is so different that it would be difficult to functionally share a space. In our common working display area we sometimes have work installed simultaneously, although on different walls.

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Or only when finished?

Jeanette and I work very differently—particularly with regard to time spent on a piece. My work develops very slowly and meticulously. Jeanette gives me the space to be completely immersed, only remarking on it when it is clear that a particular piece is resolved. It's more a matter of her eventually noticing the piece and taking the time to contemplate it. She is an ideal partner for her sensitivity to my need for privacy when I am struggling to resolve the trajectory of my idea.

Do you problem solve together?

In many of life's ways, but not in our work.

Do you think your spouse's work influences your own? No

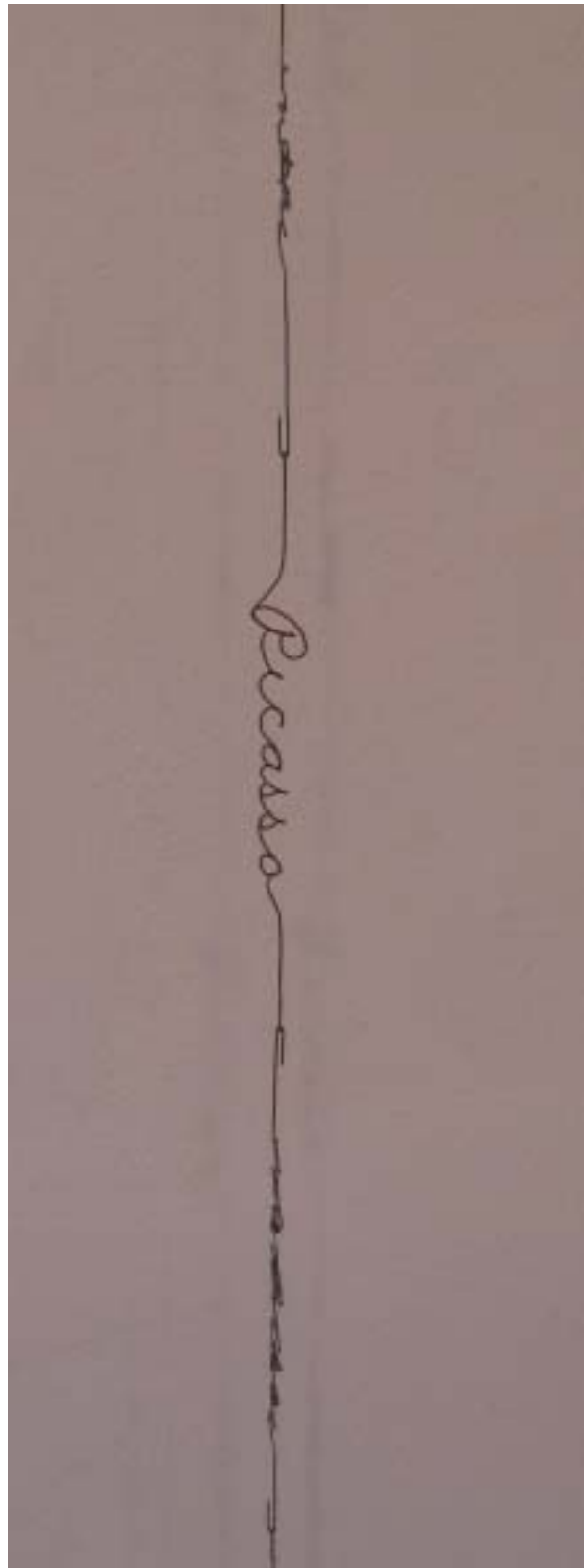
Do you think there are similarities to your spouse's work? No

Are there conflicts being married to another visual artist?

I could see that there might be in some artists' unions but that has not been the case in our marriage. At least, that is, not from my point of view.



Jeanette Cole
Bittersweet Sampler 2006
Mixed media paint on plywood
(One of 12 panels)
20" x 14"



William Childress

Cartesian.theater/act.n+1/string//exemplary.roles:pocket.scientist (no.pablo.picasso)

1994-2003

wire

13' x 1/2"

Paula Elliott & James Burgess

Artists' Statements

In the *Shadowgraph Series*, I have introduced charcoal as a primary medium, limited the number of shapes, and accentuated the contrasts between wispy and blurred contours to simpler, clear cut forms I think of as “soft geometrics.” The appeal of charcoal is that it enables me to work from the inside out, in slow, successive applications to form subtle shapes with delicate, nuanced edges.

The relationship between an object and its shadow is not always self evident. My treatment of this correlation tends to make the connection between the two highly tenuous and uncertain. A shadow form may become a nearly autonomous shape departing radically from its corresponding object, or it may cease to be a visual echo altogether, acquiring more substance and heft than its object. Tracking the shadow back to its “logical source” can become problematic: of what object is it the shadow? The result of such ambiguities, variously humorous, unsettling or bizarre, provides a wide scope for invention.

Paula Elliott

In my recent paintings I aim to convey the sense of a dynamic world of biomorphic and geometric forms interacting in combination with abstract spatial forces reflecting the “fabric of space” of modern physics. In the mix of such elements, cutting across all categories of description, my hope is that everything appears to be happening at once—in a commingling of images representing different spheres and perspectives of organic life, and of inorganic matter ranging from the subatomic to the celestial. And lastly, I have endeavored, in the words of Wallace Stevens, to show things as “unreal as real can be.”

James Burgess

Paula Elliott

Questionnaire

How long have you been together? 34 years

How does being a couple affect your work?

Stimulating and reinforcing. Having a partner who is also a painter means there is a second set of eyes familiar with the aims and concerns we each have as artists and who understands the time and effort involved in making art.

Did you meet through your work?

We met at graduate school where we were both working for MFAs in painting.

Do you share a studio? No

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Or only when finished?

We generally show each other work late in the process or when we are finished. However, if either of us is working out a problem and we want a different perspective, we will call upon one another.

Do you problem solve together? Sometimes

Do you think your spouse's work influences your own?

Not directly, though our very differences in approach to painting contributes to productive exchanges in our mutual pursuit of fresh ideas.

Do you think there are similarities to your spouse's work?

No. We have many shared views but express ourselves quite differently.

Are there conflicts being married to another visual artist?

No. Quite the opposite. We support, assist and learn from one another in positive ways.

James Burgess Questionnaire

How long have been together? 34 years.

In a general response to the remaining questions, see statement below:

Proust thought that the nature of an artist's creativity bore little or no relation to his or her social, interpersonal character. It was an autonomous, separate realm, not easily accessible to ordinary curiosity or inquiry. This adds a measure of mystery and of the unknown to couples who are both artists; each for the other represents, in their artistic endeavors, an unpredictable and complex set of motivations and potentialities which can be witnessed but not fully shared or penetrated. To be exposed, especially for an extended period of time, to the workings of another artistic sensibility, to become aware of its range and depth, its eccentricities and obsessions, its imaginative sensitivities, its curious bias of consciousness, is a great pleasure and privilege. Such prolonged, intimate acquaintance cannot help but enrich one's own artistic resources, particularly in appreciating the differences in stylistic approach and aesthetic intent represented in the work of one's partner. At the very least, it clarifies, by way of contrast, the character of one's own artistic gifts and orientation. More importantly, it reinforces a common value and purpose: the affirmation of art!

The distinguished painter Isabel Bishop, who was a friend of both Edward Hopper and his wife Jo, once remarked to me that for years they shared a studio which was divided down the middle by a white line, separating their work spaces. If Edward happened to cross the line in the course of his work, all hell would break loose: Jo would castigate him unmercifully for his transgression while he elicited his typical passive-aggressive response by remaining belligerently silent. It turned out that Isabel once served on a painting jury with Hopper to which Jo had submitted several of her own works for consideration. They consisted of inferior, lamentably obvious imitations of his. During the selection process, Hopper moaned "I can't go home tonight, if one of her works isn't selected." Everyone on the jury took instant pity on him, and together chose one of Jo's works for the show.

Edward, immensely relieved, returned calmly home.



Paula Elliott
Smoke and Mirrors 2007
(Shadowgraph series)
Charcoal, Acrylic on paper
30" x 30"



James Burgess
Multiverse 2006
Oil on two panels
8' 10" x 13' 4"

Virginia Maksymowicz

Artist's Statement

My goal as a visual artist is to create iconographies that can communicate ideas to a range of audiences. The imagery usually incorporates the human figure, most often the female figure. The ideas revolve primarily around social issues and are presented through narrative or metaphor.

Central to both the imagery and process of my sculpture over the past thirty years has been life casting, i.e. making molds directly from the human body. This technique manifests a type of presence that is virtually impossible to achieve through carving or modeling.

Closely allied with life casting has been my use of the partial figure, sometimes with repetitive elements. By using only a segment of the human figure, an artist can seduce an audience into becoming active participants instead of remaining passive viewers. With the part standing for the whole—in narrative as well as visual terms—the possibilities for interpretation are extended.

The link between the human body and architecture has a respected artistic legacy. It can be seen in the terracotta wreaths of the Della Robbia family and in the type of historical medallion plentiful at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. There is also the long-standing tradition of caryatids and atlantes.

My installation at the Islip Art Museum brings together all of these concerns and influences. Taking advantage of the fireplace and mantel that is an integral part of this historic house, two life-size partial female figures (cast directly from a model) perch upon their pedestals. They are both vulnerable and anonymous in their attempt to hold up the surrounding structure in a narrative about hearth and home.

Blaise Tobia

Artist's Statement

I am interested in storytelling; virtually all of my work conveys stories of some kind. I am interested in the urban landscape and the products of human culture, especially people's self-representations.

I want to work beyond the expectations and limitations of the singular photographic image, so most of my work is multiple-image (paired, sequenced, collaged). I am interested in how human vision and camera vision differ and how visual and verbal representation differ. I am a maker of notations more than of finished works. I am often influenced by accidental discoveries made in process. The content of work and its form interact in ways that cannot be anticipated.

My paired-image series came about initially as I was randomly picking images to be printed on the same sheet of paper. Soon, I was making deliberate choices about the pairings; eventually this process became the defining characteristic of the series. For the viewer, seeing two images presented together stimulates a process of interpretation that is different (and often more perceptive) than when a single image is being considered. Beyond formal and perceptual concerns, I have a point of view about the world that I observe and I want to convey it in my art, but without being didactic or doctrinaire. I want some of my own doubts, and some of the humor I see in the ironies of the world, to come through.

In making complex visual art works, I want to raise many parallel issues simultaneously. I want to offer connotations, to imply connectedness, to stimulate speculation and imagination. If I can, I want to encompass more into a work than I can easily define, so that it continues to be interesting to me as well as possibly to others.

Virginia Maksymowicz & Blaise Tobia

Questionnaire

How long have you been together? 37 years (married 34)

How does being a couple affect your work?

It probably smooths out the work, over time, usually for the better and perhaps occasionally for the worse. In a close, empathic couple relationship, some of the extremes that an artist acting solo might exhibit tend to be avoided. We act, to some extent, as each other's conscience. On the other hand, our range of interests and expertise are larger than all but the most extraordinary individual's, and we can feed ideas and information to each other in a very beneficial way.

Did you meet through your work?

No. We met through a mutual friend as undergraduates at Brooklyn College. Virginia was an art major and Blaise was a physics major. However, he was becoming disillusioned with science and, since he was already interested in photography, decided to become an art major. Both of us then went to U.C. San Diego for our MFA degrees.

Do you share a studio?

Yes, we do now. We haven't always done so, but that has been based on the circumstances of jobs and/or real estate rather than upon our personal preferences. Certain areas of the studio are more "hers" and other are more "his."

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Or only when finished?

Most often, all through the process; occasionally only when finished. But we almost always discuss it together. We try to help each other by, as much as possible, imagining each other's work from the viewpoint of an unfamiliar observer.

Do you problem solve together?

Yes. In fact, it's something we greatly enjoy.

Do you think that your spouse's work influences your own?

Definitely. Although we work very differently and are interested in different subjects, we influence each other's vision and way of thinking.

Do you think there are similarities in your spouse's work?

Yes. In terms of process, there are many ways photography is like sculptural casting: there is a negative (or at least there used to be!), and many positives can be taken from it. In terms of form, Blaise tends to work in a series and Virginia tends to use multiple images as well; at times we both have used text in combination with image or form. We are both interested in making art that functions within a high-level artistic discourse but that is accessible to non specialists.

Are there conflicts being married to another visual artist?

Perhaps if we were both working in the same media, or if one of our careers had taken off while the other's hadn't, there would be conflicts. However, we are seldom in direct competition with each other and neither of us has achieved enough artworld fame for jealousy to be a factor. As it is, because we face similar problems and share similar experiences, it has probably made us more empathetic as a couple.

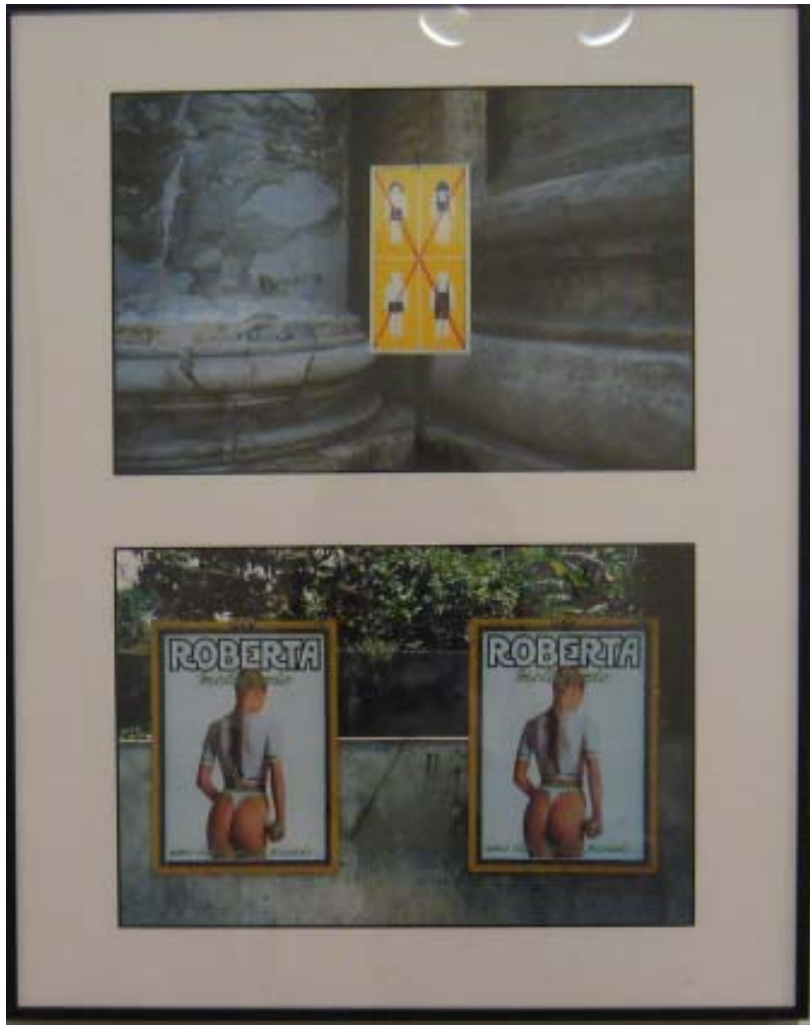
What questions do you think should be asked that are relevant to a show about couples?

The ones that have been asked are quite good. One could get a bit pushier and ask, "Have you ever remade your partner's work (at least to some extent)?" Or "Have you ever given a really bad piece of advice?" Our answer to both of these would have to be yes.

Answered by Virginia Maksymowicz



Virginia Maksymowicz
Couple 2008
Two life-sized body casts in hydrocal FGR
5' x 5'



Blaise Tobia
Signs and Wonders 1990-2002
Archival C-print
(One of 17 photographic pairs)
8 1/2" x 11"

Leslie Wayne & Don Porcaro

Artists' Statements

My concerns with abstract painting are twofold. First is with abstraction as a visual language—how post-modern abstraction holds its ground in a world represented primarily through the force multipliers of photography, video and the digital media.

Second is with my own work, my aim being to inspire a sensation that is analogous to looking at nature, eliminating interpretation as a mediator and providing an equivalent experience to being in the natural world, something tectonic and grand.

I see this as a secular expression of the romantic vision. Capturing the corporeal essence of nature—flux caught in freeze-frame—without reference to time, in effect stops time, even if only for a moment. And so my paintings are ultimately more accurately described as not so much images of landscape as visual manifestations of physical forces.

Leslie Wayne

My current investigations explore the whimsical possibilities embodied in ideas of animation and contemporary culture, from the strange worlds of Bosch and Guston to Japanese anime.

These series of sculptures, entitled *Nomad* and *Avatar*, have bodies, legs, posture and personality, and are highly poly-chromed with synthetic color, suspending easy assumptions about time and origin, function and definition. They are frozen in animation, either laden with the memory of recent activity or pregnant with possibilities of the yet unknown.

Don Porcaro

Leslie Wayne & Don Porcaro

Questionnaire

How long have you been together? 25 years

How does being a couple affect your work?

D: We critique each other's work and ideas regularly. I often guide the way Leslie approaches the feasibility of her projects, and in turn she critiques my use of color. She's also a detail monger, which I am not.

L: Don is a great problem solver and engineers a lot of my more complex panels. He's a great idea man in this way and my concepts often get developed out of the kinds of possibilities I wouldn't necessarily anticipate.

Did you meet through your work? No

Do you share a studio? We share a floor but have separate studios.

Do you show and discuss your work all through the process? Or only when finished?

D: We are mindful to be sensitive to the other's working process, but have different styles of sharing our opinions. I need more time to live with my work without interference, whereas Leslie will often ask for feedback before a painting is done.

L: We share a floor where our studios are and so see each other's work regularly. I think we give each other tough and honest feedback, but I give it freely (sometimes unsolicited) and Don is more careful to wait until I ask. It's a delicate balance.

Do you problem solve together?

D: I generally engineer my pieces by myself. But every once in awhile, I'll get stumped and talk through a problem with Leslie and she will come up with a solution I hadn't thought of.

L: Some of my projects need a lot of advance problem solving, with regard to shaped panels or panels that get installed directly into the wall. Don is my house engineer, which is a huge advantage.

Do you think your spouse's work influences your own?

D: Over the years you can see the definite but subtle influence we've had on

each other. My work has become much more whimsical and colorful, whereas Leslie's work has developed in ways dimensionally that they might not have otherwise.

L: I've definitely influenced Don's use of color. And I am certain that had I not observed how he's built his work over the years, I would not have the same approach to my work that I have now, which is that anything is possible and that a painting can be as much an object as it is an illusion.

Do you think there are similarities to your spouses' work?

D: Only in terms of color.

L: Our palettes have gotten closer, though are still distinct.

Are their conflicts being married to another visual artist?

D: There can be when career pressures insert themselves, but we've managed to find a way to be always mutually supportive first.

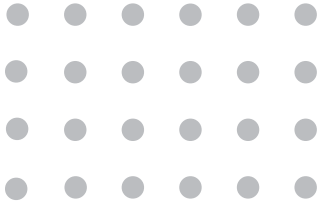
L: It's sometimes difficult when our careers go up and down to navigate our own needs with regard to the other's. I think we do a pretty good job of it.



Leslie Wayne
A Hefty Hunk of Burnin' Funk 2005
Oil on wood
30" x 26"



Don Porcaro
Nomad #20 2008
Stone, metal, paint, rubber
13" x 16" x 16"



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Couples.

Slate of the Arts



NYSCA

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