

ARTIST PROFILE

Studio 3 East:

Virginia McCracken: Thinking Inside The Box

By **ANDRIA WATSON** / CASA

CONTAINING THE INTIMACY of small intricate worlds, a series of 100 Boxes by Virginia McCracken at Studio 3 East invites viewers to enter abstract imaginary places. Those conceptual subjects will be on display through June 30th.

“I get completely lost in these environments I’m creating,” McCracken shared. “For the show, I wanted to do something different, and I’ve always been attracted to small spaces and imagination associated with boxes.”

One year ago McCracken was approached by gallery owner Erica Carter after a previous painting exhibition at the studio. They decided that in June of 2008, McCracken would return for another exhibit. After a month of deliberation on the medium and subject matter of the future show, McCracken, who is also a painter, started constructing three dimensional habitats for papier-mâché figurines, resulting in 100 pieces of delicate, almost fragile scenes of imaginary worlds.

“I never thought I would make 100 boxes when I started out! McCracken laughed. “It was just something that came together because I couldn’t really stop making them!”

Each of the boxes are different sizes; all done on the small scale. While making a few by hand, McCracken used cigar, tea, and cheese boxes as the three dimensional displays, adding depth and curiosity. For the materials found inside, she worked with objects she found while rummaging through flea markets. Each paper mache piece placed inside the boxes seem to tell an ambiguous story, but the juxtapositions of the figurines “eventually leave the viewer to



Virginia McCracken

wonder the meaning of the compositions and colors,” according to McCracken.

McCracken sometimes uses wire to connects pieces together in a larger display, such as in box #4. The result is reminiscent of a medicine cabinet gone wild with bright dollops of color and a visually tactile work of art. In box #6 McCracken created multiple levels featuring newspaper-

print objects, with fewer, more simpler, muted tones, pigments.

McCracken was born in Los Angeles. Her mother was an artist and her aunt was an art teacher, and their encouragement allowed McCracken to pursue her own artistic talents and goals.

“I was raised in a very artistic household, so I had a constant interest in art. I also had an eccentric neighbor, “Hadu,” who became like a mentor to me. She introduced me to pixies when I was a little girl,” McCracken smiled. “She would leave treasure maps in my mailbox and notes underneath rocks in the garden. She helped foster a rich imaginary side in my life that comes through in my art today.”

McCracken moved to Santa Barbara in 1970. When she went

on to college, she realized she wanted a career path other than art. She received her bachelors degree from UCSB in Clinical Psychology and received a masters degree from Antioch University.

“Art was something I thoroughly enjoyed, but I was also very shy about showing my work because it was so personal to me,” McCracken explained. “I wanted to ensure the well-being of my family and myself, so I explored art in my own time, and started showing ten or 15 years ago.”

With the jitters of exhibiting forgotten, McCracken has found her artistic center.

“To me, art is the surge of ideas and the satisfaction of an all-consuming, gratifying place that rewards the artist with rich and enviable experiences,” McCracken shared. “It’s been a great year doing exactly that.”

Studio 3 East is located at 3 E. De la Guerra St, and is open Tu-Sa, 12 to 5pm. For information, call 568-1216.



#6 by Virginia McCracken



#4 by Virginia McCracken