



## The Star-Ledger

### Small space, big talents

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ART

Maybe it's the swimsuit dentata, designed by Zurich performance artist Clarina Bezzola with a huge set of 10 molars arranged around its bare midriff, that catches the eye first -- it's displayed on a department store mannequin just as you enter the gallery.

Or the pseudo-living room lined with what at first seem to be family photos, created entirely from scraps pruned out of the slowly deconstructing Pabst brewery on South Orange Avenue by the comical "archaeologist" Matthew Gosser. (There's a conveyer-belt lounge chair and coffee table made from employee ID photos and catwalk grillwork.)

Or maybe it will be the human skull fashioned entirely from melted cassette tapes put out by '80s bands (Culture Club, the Go-Gos) by Brian Dettmer of Atlanta.

Whatever catches your eye, "Singularity in the Communal Tide: Culture & Identity in the Moment" at the Pierro Gallery in South Orange is an extraordinary exhibition, with something for just about everyone.

Organized by Rupert Ravens, the indie curator who assembled "Newark Between Us" for the city's arts council earlier this year, "Singularity" reproduces some of the international depth of that show in pocket form. Ravens places artists like Moscow's Victor Alimpiev and Brooklyn's Tom Broadbent right alongside Jersey favorites like Keyport's Grace Graupe Pillard, Montclair's Tom Nussbaum and the irrepressible German Pitre of Newark. And, just like in the earlier show, everyone benefits -- "Singularity in the Communal Tide" just rocks off the walls, full of shock and wit.

Which is always much better than awe. Take, for example, Nina Levy's resin-and-steel human figures, like "Father and Son" (2006), a life-size, realistic figure of a suburban dad in swim trunks holding his son on his shoulders. Levy, of Brooklyn, is interested in what Ravens calls the "subculture of parents," and when you walk around the figure, you realize the man's head has been replaced by the boy's body -- a melding of the two men in a mother's life -- or, darker, the incipient replacement of one love for another.

Ah, suburban life! Alimpiev is showing a video of little girls sitting in a classroom and drumming their pink-painted nails on school desks, and every now and then suddenly stopping, holding their fingers to their mouths, and looking about with barely disguised glee. These shots are interspersed with stock footage of a tremendous lightning storm on the horizon. The girls' drumming is amped up to thunder decibel levels, and when they stop, it is more than ominous. Chechnyan school seizure? Russian revenge? Or just the threat inherent in little girls?

There is a similar mystery and thrill throughout, from Israeli-born painter Dalit Gurevich's pictures about growing up to those razor-sharp anti-war painted collages by Graupe Pillard (there are 10 of them here) to Newark sculptor James Andrew Brown's wonderful "Memorial Poles" made for members of his family from scraps of materials left behind by his mother, a seamstress.

It is rare to see so much really high-quality art jammed together in such a small space -- you keep walking

through the gallery twisting this way and that, pulled by fresh objects at every turn.

Any show with Joan Semmel female nudes and Willie Cole steam iron prints would be full of graphic sophistication, but in the end it's sculpture that stands out -- Tom Nussbaum's epigrammatic figurines with their air of quiet desperation, A. Kimberlin Blackburn's beaded paeans to her native Hawaii, Newark's Les Ayre's lead-lined love letters and surfboards, and so on.

Just stick your head into the dark closet where they keep Oklahoma City artist Adam Brown's "Bions," glowing little robots that shut down as you approach. In the round and interactive, too.

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