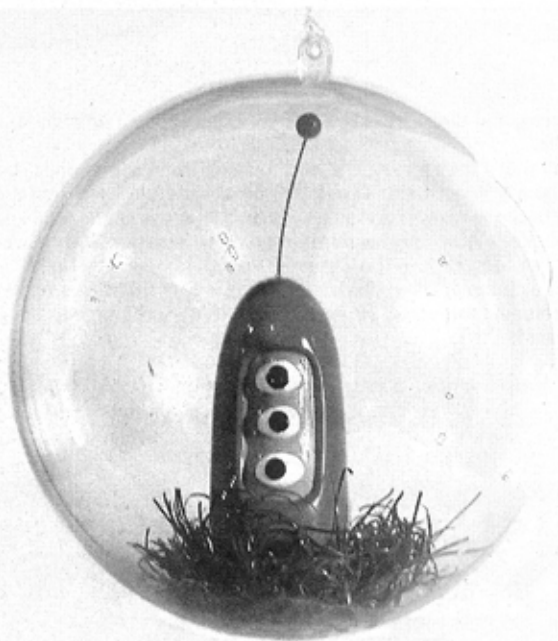


LIFESTYLES

An Ode To The O

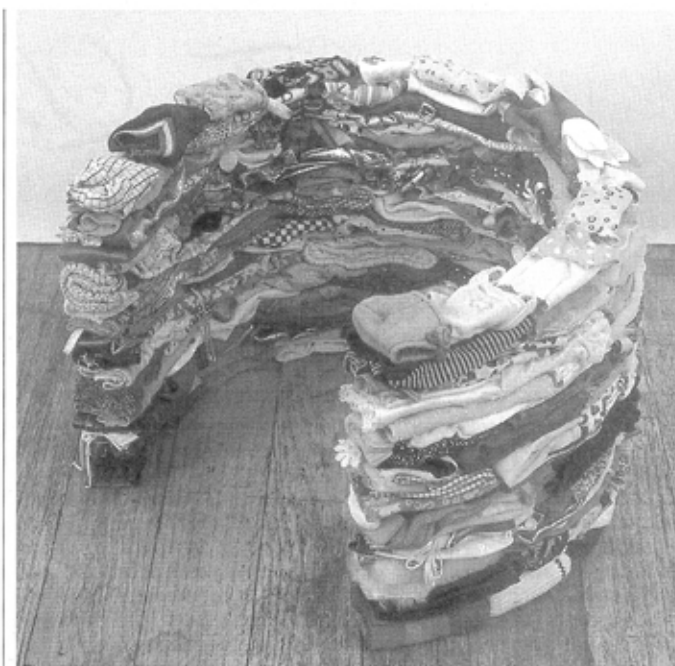
By Geraldine E. Vincent



"Pocket Rocket," acrylic on canvas, by Francis Holstrom



"Target with Four Faces," etching with softground and aquatint by Jasper Johns



"Grasp," folded doll clothing, by Derick Melander

IN THAT FIRST instance when man evoked communication through art, contacting instrument to surface, the circle, its shape, was given recognition. The mixed-media exhibition O, a celebration of all that is round, curvy and looped currently showing at The Shore Institute of Contemporary Arts (SICA) in Long Branch explores the journey of the circle and how it is perceived today, successfully expressing this through a variety of materials and mediums.

MatCh-Art, the curatorial team comprised of artist Matthew Fisher and art writer Christina

Vassallo, have combined their talents to derive the concept for the show, selecting the work of 31 artists to reflect upon the circle in contemporary art.

"It is important to us to maintain a scholarly approach in our curating style, but to also create a dialogue between the separate works of art and also to make that message accessible to the audience," noted Christina Vassallo.

Mirrored through the art on view is the idea that in life the circle embodies infinity, reflecting eternal existence or endless dissatisfaction, but also showing how unrealistic it is to strive for per-

fection. Some of the artists have incorporated the circular form into their work whereby others have used it entirely to encounter these issues.

Possibly the iconic work of the show is Derick Melander's "Grasp II," a partially open circle comprised of layers of stacked clothing over six feet high. Peaks of denim, argyle, stripes and straps can be seen in an effort to express the dynamics of social networks and defining boundaries within relationships. Given the size and character of this sculpture, along with its ability to inter-

act with the viewer, it commands a captivating presence within the art space.

Also of poignant interest are the opposing works of Mark Shetabi's mixed-media "Airport Parking Garage," turning the viewer into a voyeur whilst looking through a peephole where as John Torreano's somewhat kitsch "Wall Ball Installation," with all its sparkling acrylic gems, transpires empathy in the name of being watched, wherever we go.

"Om, Ah, Oh" by Mark Dagley has a truly elegant and serene quality. This clear filament wall installa-

tion could be seen as a perfectly spun of silk spider's web, without the ensnaring connotations.

The age of the work ranges from 1979 in the case of Jasper Johns "Target with Four Faces" but with the majority of the pieces being created in 2005. Most of the work is for sale apart from those on loan from private collections.

A converted olive oil factory, the space that is SICA, a non-profit gallery and studio space founded in August 2000 by Douglas Ferrari, has its own sense of the conceptual, the contemporary, with its cement flooring and exposed piping. It, therefore, lends itself quite grandly to the exhibition, complimenting each art work and literally giving each piece the space to stand out.

It is encouraging that more regionally based galleries are coming into existence giving

more artists more exposure and a real chance to reach the wall and/or floor space of the big city art houses. It is also important that the likes of SICA have an objective to increase the general public's awareness, accessibility, and appreciation of the contemporary arts in central New Jersey. This will certainly also give the art world more opportunity in its mission to flourish and expand its beauty over greater expanses of land.

"O" will be showing at SICA through January 7, 2006. Opening hours are Wed. & Thurs. 1-5 p.m., Fri. 11-8 p.m., Sat. 11-6 p.m., Sun 1-5 p.m. Tel: (732) 263-1121, info@sica.org. It will then travel to the Berrie Center at Ramapo College in Mahwah. The opening reception is March 20, closing on May 3.