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## Big, bigger, biggest

*Breadth* lives up to its name at Eyedrum

by Felicia Feaster

It feels slightly waggish to call *Breadth* the best show of 2002 when we are only two months into the year. But it's rare to see such a huge group show featuring 43 artists that offers more good work than bad. Doubly refreshing, *Breadth* has the one thing in short supply on the Atlanta art scene: a sense of humor.

Much of the work in *Breadth* traffics in the usual monumental scale of sculpture and the desire to beat one's chest boldly in steel and iron. But the artists are of a clearly irony-imbued mindset, and so they also play with that sense of enormous egos cast in metal. David Keating's wry "Make a Name for Yourself," is typical of the snarky sensibility running through the show. The piece is a laughably enormous totem pole with the artist's name spelled out in brushed steel in a self-consciously desperate cry for recognition.

A similar macho will to power and translate a diminished sense of self into brash, blustering material is lampooned in Robert Cheatham's incendiary "Kenosis," an installation melding an erect carved wooden dick, the Nazi stroke-fest *Triumph of the Will* and a chalkboard with a hilarious formulaic deconstruction of divine right.

Sculptor Bill Spence, whose own work suggests some ironic monument to the materials of home construction, curated *Breadth*. And, as its name suggests, *Breadth* is wide and deep, encompassing two buildings, an exterior courtyard and enough metal to keep the guys at Survival Research labs busy for a year.

*Breadth* was born out of Spence's sense of frustration at the limited venues available to local sculptors, especially those working on a scale as monstrous as some of the artists represented in his show.

Some of the work is so ridiculously monumental, in fact, it had to be lifted into the gallery yard with a crane, as with Zachary Coffin's riotous "Prayer Wheel." A device the size of a playground jungle gym, "Prayer Wheel" translates the interior, low-key, quiet work of spirituality into an enormous spectacle of boulders and metal that makes prayer into a muscle-bound Olympic event.

Like Coffin, many artists play with scale and with the boyish urge to Make Things Go. The show's delightful Gulliver's Travels dimensions and the artists' obvious joy in translating ideas into action gives *Breadth* a cumulative sense of fun. And though sculpture -- and fun -- are at times considered the province of boys being boys, several memorable pieces are by women who clearly relish tinkering as much as the next guy.



STAN WOODARD  
"Fluff-o-Matic" by Monica Vanschellenbeck

Rating: 0.00000

Monica Vanschellenbeck's hilarious "Fluff-O-Matic," for instance, is an instant sight gag in ducing immediate giggles with its careening movement, hot pink color scheme and familiar, soothing rhythm. The giant rotating drum, which has been gaudily decorated, suggests the hypnotic, meditative appeal of the caveman's fire revisited in the postindustrial tranquilizers of televisions, clothes dryers and, in this case, the intoxicating hum of the car wash.

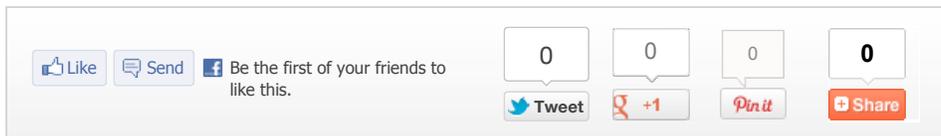
Big, bigger, biggest are only three of the common themes in *Breadth*. Fake nature and the multiple ways humankind tries to improve on Mother Nature proves one of the show's funnier elements. Jere William's tree-making kit typifies the ironic intelligence that runs through the show, as the artist imagines a tree packaged bit by bit like an enormous set of Lincoln Logs. Xan Deeb's outrageous contraption "Flow" is equally witty and aware of the common, perverse human desire to remake the world in this combination terrarium, aquarium, fountain, one-man band and shrine to Mother Earth.

From mutated natural forms to mutated tele-visual beasts, David Isenhour's beautiful abstractions of cartoon creature tongues and antennae look like imprints left from the best moments of the Saturday morning cartoons, visual translations of the "Pow!" "Hrmph!" and "Kerpow!" of comic book action.

Another meditation on our retinally stimulated brains, Hormuz Minina's mesmerizing video installation "Detached From" is as close to an out-of-body experience as you're likely to get at an art exhibition. While TV often gives a sense of powerful omniscience, Minina's is a startling new way of looking. An invented viewing machine that translates seeing into a psychedelic, kaleidoscopic head trip, "Detached From" suggests the tunnel vision of dream, or a near-death experience. The effect is destabilizing, hypnotic and unsettling, and one of many small wonders in a very big, impressive show.

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*Breadth runs through March 8* (with a closing party 7 p.m.– midnight featuring fire sculptures and performances) at Eyedrum, Suite 8, Martin Luther King Drive. Wed., Fri. and Sat. noon– 5 p.m. Closing night party March 8 from 7 p.m.– midnight features fire sculptures and performances. 404-522-0655.



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