

XHIBIT

2010 Fall Exhibition



About **XHIBIT**

This catalog displays the works of artists currently exhibiting at the Preston Contemporary Art Center; all pieces are available for sale. See additional works on our web site: www.prestoncontemporaryart.com.

For inquiries regarding any of the work, please contact Paul Schranz at pschranz@prestoncontemporaryart.com or call 575 . 523 . 8713.

Collectors

To receive *Xhibit*, our quarterly catalog, please email us your name and address for the print version, or simply request an electronic version by email to info@prestoncontemporaryart.com.

You are also invited to contact us by email if you would like to be added to our exhibition announcement email list.

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Preston Contemporary Art Center

1755 Avenida de Mercado
Mesilla, NM 88046
575 . 523 . 8713

Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday 1 - 5 pm
All other times by appointment.

Current Exhibition:

October 8 - December 18, 2010

Contributors:

President:
S. Tinsley Preston, III

Gallery Director:
Paul Schranz

Commentary:
Mary Anne Redding

Artist Biographies:
Bonnie Schranz

Creative Director:
Lisa Cordova

Printer:
Sundance Press

Cover

Work by: Jonathan Morse,
Marbles 8, 20.3" x 28",
archival pigment print

Fall Exhibition

October 8 - December 18, 2010

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| SARA LEE D'ALESSANDRO | 3 |
| KAREN VON FELTEN | 6 |
| JONATHAN MORSE | 9 |
| MICHAEL & MISATO MORTARA | 12 |
| MARK POMILIO | 15 |
| Commentary | |
| MARY ANNE REDDING | 18 |

One of the joys of being the gallery director is the response we receive from the artists we show. With very few exceptions, our artists attend the opening receptions and freely give of themselves in conversations with many of our gallery visitors. They also support us with lively and informative follow-up Artists Dialogues. These events have been outstanding on every occasion, and they give our community a chance to further understand the value of the creative efforts of the great people whose works are on exhibit. They honor us with their talent and their time.

The October Exhibition is one of our finest, and all of the artists plan to attend the reception and Artists Dialogue. They come to Mesilla from diverse locations and work in varied mediums. From Santa Fe, NM comes photographer Jonathan Morse and from Cuba, NM ceramic sculptor Sara Lee D'Alessandro. Mark Pomilio of Tempe, AZ will exhibit drawings and sculptural bi-folds of paper and wood. Karen von Felten brings drawings and paintings from San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, while Michael and Misato Mortara will show blown glass from their studio on the Island of Hawaii.

People ask how we assemble an exhibition that is so diverse, yet somehow cohesive. The cohesion exists in the artists' honest pursuit of the unknown, use of a history of skills in that pursuit, and in the individual works that celebrate that effort.

Changes are coming.

The Preston Contemporary Art Center is turning it up. Beginning in January, instead of four exhibitions annually, the gallery will present six openings, each with fresh new contemporary artists from every corner. As always, the Preston Contemporary Art Center will continue to offer the best creative and intelligent art in all mediums.

Paul Schranz, Director
Preston Contemporary Art Center

Sara Lee D'Alessandro

“I pursue pulse rather than idealization in my work. The shifting play of light and shadow gives the sculpture animation and a sense of being inhabited. These are Spirit Vessels. The personable scale and ground-based installation allow a causal relationship, *petit tableaux vivant*, with the viewer. I wish to connect on a physical or visceral level rather than an intellectual one.”



Ambition, 81" x 14" x 12", terra cotta

Sara Lee D'Alessandro says that her “dance with clay as a medium” has lasted for more than 40 years. Selections from her current *Spirit Cases* series are large abstract forms in clay imbued with richly textured surfaces, allowing deep shadows and creating a responsiveness to light that is enhanced and animated by the sun’s transit.

D'Alessandro gained basic experience in ceramics at Pratt Institute where she earned her B.F.A. following time spent as a member of the Peace Corps in Brazil. She apprenticed herself in 1976 to Richard Miller, a figural sculptor working in New York City, to gain further knowledge of sculpting processes. In 1978 she was awarded a residency with the East End Arts Council, Riverhead, NY, followed by a year’s residency with the North Carolina Council on the Arts, living and working in Oriental, NC.

As a member of New York’s scenic union Local 829 in the 1980s, D'Alessandro began doing sculptural work on sets for major feature films and Broadway productions. She says that scenic work gave her experience with materials and processes not ordinarily available, as well as provided a good living. However, sculpting on new productions at the Metropolitan Opera House over a 12-year period ruined her desire to sculpt in tabletop scale, the size usually associated with ceramic work. This theatrical influence remains a major aspect of her large sculptures and their relationship with the viewer.

D'Alessandro has an extensive exhibition record, including numerous venues on the East Coast and in New Mexico. In 2009 she was awarded first place for her sculpture in the juried “From the Ground Up” exhibition at the Las Cruces Museum of Art.



Mud Clown, 5'4" x 33" x 19", terra cotta



Aspire, 7'5", polychrome terra cotta

Karen von Felten



Rope Crossing, 60" x 40", acrylic on canvas

“Several footbridges cross a small seasonal stream near San Miguel de Allende in Mexico. In encountering this site, I was fascinated with the rich metaphor represented by the bridges, and I responded in my artwork, often repeating the same composition in a variety of media and sizes. Throughout our lives, we face and cross borders. We look down into the depths and out to the past or future. We may experience apprehension as we face change, the passage of time, and disintegration, but we may also experience the rich possibilities of renewal.”

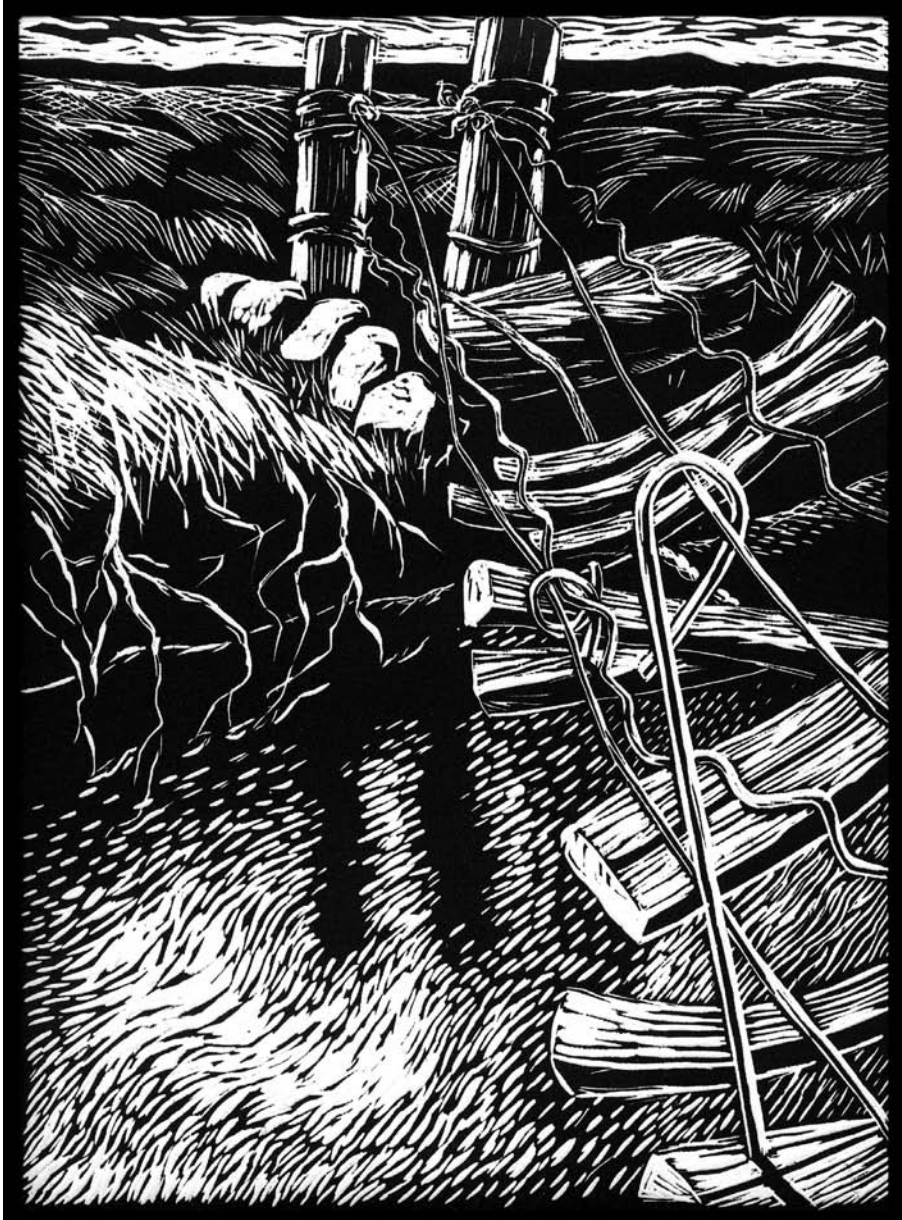
Raised in Phoenix and then in Northern California, Karen von Felten holds a degree in Fine Arts from Santa Clara University. Working during the 1980s in the Silicon Valley in book and magazine publishing, she continued to pursue her fine art, but having little continuous time to develop ideas and bodies of work left her frustrated. In 1992, von Felten and her husband put their Bay Area lives on hold for 18 months and headed for San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. There she devoted herself full time to her artwork and encountered a number of themes that still engage her today, including the bridges that comprise the *Suspensions* series.

von Felten says, “The bridges serve as metaphors for persona, as well as more universal changes, the past and future, fear and adventure. Taking the risk to move to Mexico was a test to see if I would pursue my art. It was very possible in my mind to fail, and that would have put the issue to rest so I could get on with life.

Fortunately, it went well. Nothing ever went so right for me. It was like flying.”

The inspiration and the intention behind the content in von Felten’s work are consistent with her interest in drawing and expression. She explains that observation is part of a deep scrutiny in search of the form, light and spaces that serve both expression and drawing. Memory and metaphor are tied to the emotional content of her work.

After returning to the Bay Area in 1993, von Felten continued her artwork, which is exhibited and collected in the USA, Mexico and Australia. From 2004 to 2007, she taught at Santa Clara University as an adjunct lecturer for printmaking, painting and life drawing. After many visits over the years to San Miguel, she and her husband built a studio there where she is currently working on new monotypes, drawings and paintings.



Charco Footbridge, 12" x 9", Linocut



Flooded, 48" x 72", Oil on linen

Jonathan Morse

"I'm self-taught and low-tech; my inability to do something slick and seamless frees me for something more..."



Marbles 3, 21.4" x 28", archival pigment print

Santa Fe photographer Jonathan Morse says, "For a long time I have not been comfortable 'taking' a picture (those seen images of the world around me I can simply remember), preferring to 'make' a picture instead...Our lives are collages of textures and impressions, input from here and from there, pastiches of pleasures recalled and pain endured. My current work too is not-so seamlessly cut and pasted, revised and revisited, and drawn upon from all my experience. Our daily lives may seem routine, so how nice it is to find that in our artspace we can paint caves again, or simply howl at the moon. I'll leave the real world to those other photographers to place their well-worn rectangles upon, for the visions I assemble become truly my own."

Morse explains that his *Marble* series started with various scans and photographic capture, then proceeded subtractively. "Anyone can scan (or photograph) stuff. I have to bring some value-added thoughts, input and material. I honed, deleted, added color from various drips and fragments from the past...traveled from the

easily seen reality to the dreamier feeling-state, and cut away until the essence emerged and endured as ink on white paper. And as with every one of my series, I lost patience with the similar and made each print a different exercise: without development in a series there is only repetition, product." Intent upon the process, not merely the product, Morse found that bits of organic material crept in, berries from the yard and twigs from a walk. Marble and glass intertwined.

Morse studied experimental and extended photography at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York and was awarded a Photography Fellowship from the Massachusetts Arts and Humanities Foundation. His work is in numerous public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art Photography Department, the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House and the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy. Most recently he taught digital imaging for fine arts and studio practice at the Santa Fe Community College.



Marbles 7, 19.3" x 28", archival pigment print



Marbles 6, 20.3" x 28", archival pigment print

Michael & Misato Mortara



Mirage Folded Lip Vase, 9" x 10", blown glass

“There is something both dramatic and dynamic about the manipulation of a molten mass of glass, such that the process has almost as much appeal for me as does the product.”

Imagine a studio designed and built on three acres of rain forest at an elevation of 3000 feet and adjacent to the Volcano National Park on the Island of Hawaii. This is where fulltime artists Michael Mortara and his wife Misato create glass pieces of exquisite beauty.

Their studio, 2400 Fahrenheit Art Glass, is set up for the production of limited edition series designed by the Mortaras. They include blown, cast and fused glass. Misato Mortara designs and produces her own work in the studio, as well as collaborating with Michael. With the help of a hot shop assistant and other glass artists working on the Island of Hawaii, the studio produces a wide range of highly specialized pieces.

Michael Mortara explains, “Hot glass is a medium in constant motion, where balance, timing and rhythm are the essential tools in the process. Once you start, you can’t stop

until it’s done, and after more than 30 years in glass, I’ve conceded that it is the glass that is really in control, as much as I would like to think otherwise. It is always fascinating for me to see how the influences of my experiences and environment manifest themselves in the work that we do. It is in that process of interpretation and reinvention that we validate ourselves as artists. I have never made any attempt to direct the medium away from what it does best. My work is successful for me if the people whose lives it becomes a part of derive some satisfaction from its beauty and a sense of mystery as to how it evolved.”

The Mortaras’ work can be found in galleries throughout the United States. In addition to private collections worldwide, their art glass has been included in the Collection of Hawaii State Foundation of Culture and the Arts, the Contemporary Museum of Honolulu, Hilton Hotels and the Four Seasons Resorts.



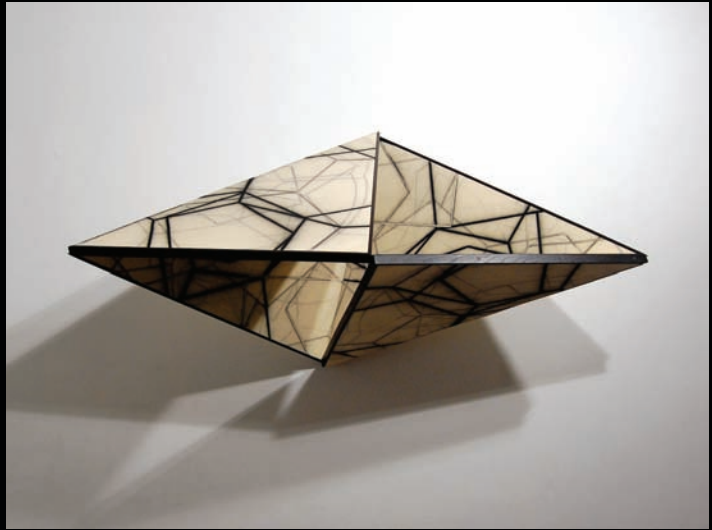
Autumn Tall Vase, 22", blown glass



Lava Slab 2, 18" x 5" x 3", blown glass

Mark Pomilio

“My method, motives and conceptual considerations are centered on visually articulating mathematical constructs in association with natural systems of growth, as well as recent developments in the life sciences, in an attempt to express their profound relevance within our current era. I have chosen to create imagery that expresses a developmental process rather than an overt visual depiction.”



Shadow Cell II, 30" x 60" x 20", charcoal on paper, mounted to foam core and wood

Mark Pomilio's current paintings, drawings and bi-folds embody principles of geometry, fractals, cloning and single cell manipulation. These interests have led to invitations to lecture nationally on topics as diverse as art and mathematics and the role the visual arts can play in highlighting the social ramifications of advances in the Life Sciences.

Pomilio explains, "The geometrical forms used to create my images are informed and inspired by the manner in which scientific research visually expresses cell structures. Scientific publications offer geometrical pictorial forms of the pentagon and hexagon, which are varied in their arrangement, and each construction has differing associations. In my work, I have combined these forms with an original form I have invented, which resembles the contour of a house in perspective. Conceptually, this form is representative of the family nucleus, which is on the verge of profound changes, as new discoveries in cloning and the life sciences interface with society. The six-sided house form also has the inherent ability to pictorially unify the other geometrical forms. All three forms are utilized to create a work that addresses my individual and societal concerns, as well as my formal and aesthetic sensibilities. The basic structuring of the systems has been directed

towards the creation of my painted and drawn imagery. The more recent creation of the bi-folds has grown intuitively from previous bodies of work and represents additional complexities that have allowed me to develop innovative ways of working with charcoal, paper and wood. Conceptually, the bi-folds are meant to imitate the folding and multiplication of cells as they reproduce and generate into complex organisms."

Pomilio's artwork has been featured in many solo museum and gallery exhibitions nationally and internationally, including Xu Beihong Art Academy, Beijing, China; the Chapelle Saint-Louis de la Salapetriere, Paris, France; and Art Resources Transfer, New York City. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Painting and Drawing within the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. He previously taught at Baylor University and at The University of Michigan's School of Art & Design. During his tenure in Michigan, Pomilio completed a number of public art projects, many of which are permanently installed throughout the University's Ann Arbor campus and neighboring communities. He received his MFA from the University of Michigan, his BFA from the University of Pennsylvania, and a four-year studio degree in Painting from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.



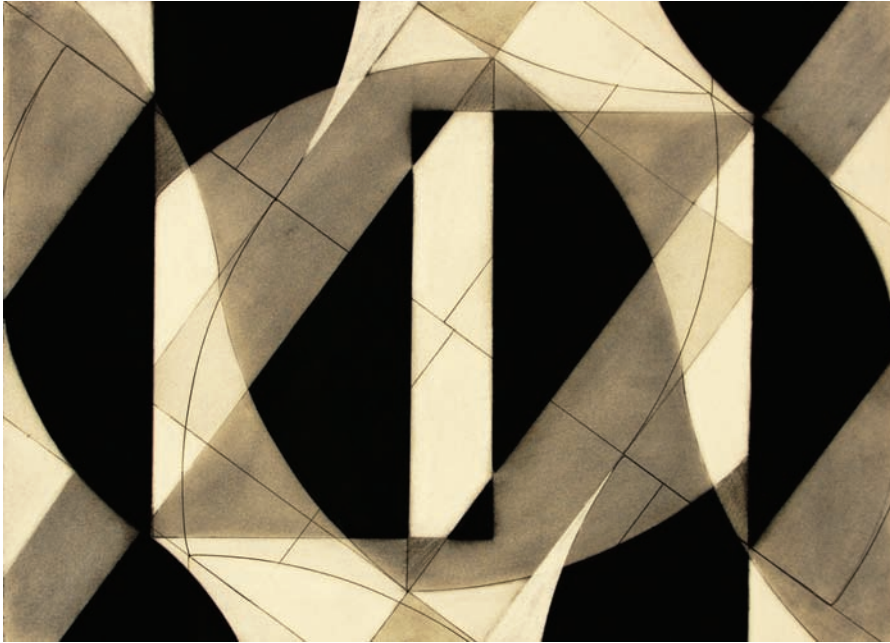
Tree Drawing I, 86" x 30", charcoal on paper



Tree Drawing II, 86" x 30", charcoal on paper



House Divided II, 48" x 78" x 20", charcoal on paper, mounted to foam core and wood



Mark Pomilio, *Untitled I*, 21" x 29", charcoal on paper

Commentary

Mary Anne Redding

Curator of Photography
Palace of the Governors/ New Mexico History Museum
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Artist Mark Pomilio speaks eloquently about the creative process all the artists participating in the exhibition are consciously engaged in when he states, "...forms are utilized to create a work that addresses my individual and societal concerns, as well as my formal and aesthetic sensibilities...I have chosen to create imagery which expresses a developmental process rather than an overt visual depiction."

Pomilio goes on to say, "My method, motives, and conceptual considerations are centered on visually articulating recent developments in the life sciences." What is most interesting about his approach is that he neither condemns nor celebrates single cell manipulation, cloning, or less emotionally charged topics such as the basic principles of geometry. For example, fractals are geometric figures just like rectangles, circles, and squares, only more complicated. Less emotional unless one is enrolled in a high school or college level mathematics course

exploring algebra and geometry, in which case, everything is emotionally charged. Like cells, which are the building blocks of all life, Pomilio's pieces are structural. Many are three-dimensional and remind us that our bodies are composed of cellular constructions—inside and out we are three dimensional, although we often rather conveniently overlook this fact as we go about our daily lives. *Shadow Cell I*, *House Divided II*, and *Cloned Cell Study X* float in space the way the fantastic spaceships of the *Battlestar Galactica* or *Star Trek* fleets hover among the constellations. Pomilio's more abstract references to recent trends in the life sciences gives viewers the license to bring their own interpretations of these issues to his work. Polemics aside, it is undeniable that advances in cell manipulation and cloning bring the world to a threshold in biological science that has far reaching ramifications both personal and political.

A digital printmaker grounded in the traditions of both photography and print making, Jonathan Morse echoes Pomilio's sentiments when he states, "The

process enables a confluence of visual sources and personal influences in the service of making something new and unique." Always experimental, never satisfied to repeat himself, the artist and his artwork are something of an enigma. Morse is interested in exploring the mark-making abilities of photography and digital technology. Of all of his series, *Marbles* is the most minimal. The pieces are drained of all but hints of color, a splash of lime green, red in outlines used to draw the eye in, pale pinks and cool blues hinting at layers. Bits of tempered glass shards, white marble shavings, white on white, transparent layers. Dried grasses and flowers, twigs and leaves, these recognizable flotsam and jetsam gathered from the garden, provide touchstones to the more abstract elements of his pieces. The work is cool like the winter ice princess. Delicate ice crystals are gathered at the edge of the magic frozen pond where the detritus of fall have collected near the shore. The collages Morse makes and unmakes rely on composition, rhythm and visual movement to convey their meaning, which is ambiguous and intuitive.



Jonathan Morse, *Marbles 5*, 19.3" x 28", archival pigment print



Michael & Misato Mortara, *Rainforest Calabash*, 14" x 10" x 10", blown glass



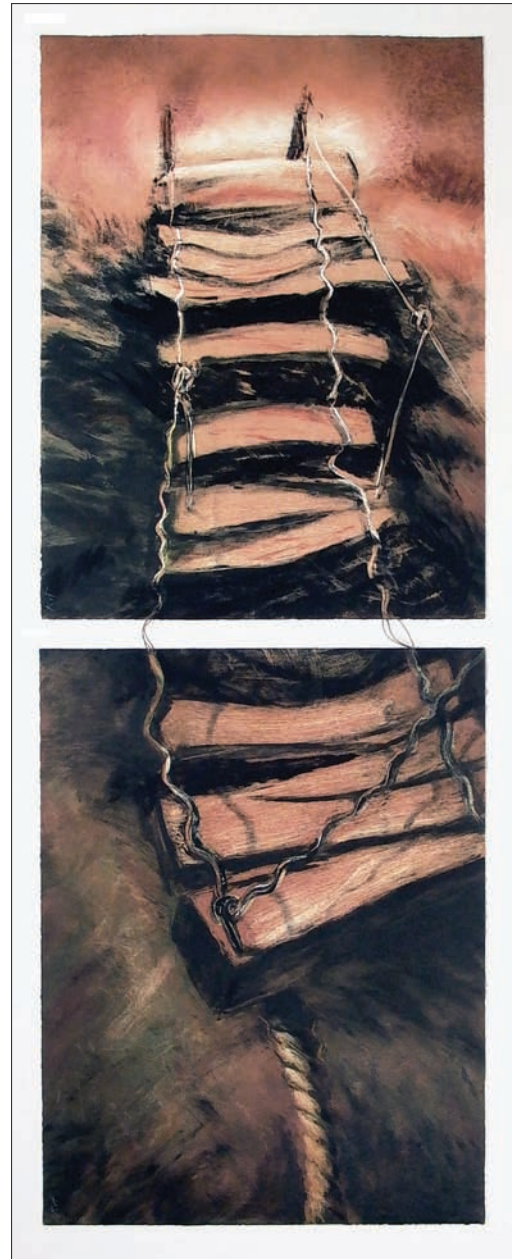
Sara Lee D'Alessandro, *Sulcus*, 27" x 13" x 10", terra cotta

Master glass craftspeople, Michael & Misato Mortara also insist that the importance of process has almost as much appeal as the product when manipulating a molten mass of glass. Michael says, "Hot glass is a medium in constant motion, where balance, timing and rhythm are the essential tools in the process. It's the drama of taking a liquid and turning it into a solid." Like the other artists in this exhibition, this husband and wife team also comment on how the influences of experience and environment manifest in their work. Misato reflects, "In Hawaii, the ocean is an everyday part of our lives. The ocean has the same character of refraction and reflection that I find in glass." Michael and Misato collaborate on limited edition series inspired by the humid beauty of the tropical Hawaiian rain forest where they have made their home and studio. They also work independently on pieces that are not collaborative, although in reality, traditional glass blowing always requires a team effort. It is much easier to control the desired shape of a vessel with an assistant doing the glass blowing while the lead artist manipulates the form at the far end of the blowing tube. The colors the Mortaras achieve in each of their pieces are saturated and bold: water—the deep blues of the Pacific waves on a bright clear day; fire—molten lava streaming down mountain sides; the deep oranges of the last rays of sunset; the greens of wet palm leaves and vines washed clean following a mid afternoon rain; the pinks and yellows of topical flowers. Yellow hibiscus is the state flower of Hawaii; Maui's flower is the pink lokelani or the pink cottage rose. These hot colors belie that the glass will be cool to the touch.

Sara Lee D'Alessandro creates *Spirit Cases*, and like people, each is unique. The forms are organic, with highly textured surfaces that respond to the atmosphere as light shifts in direction and intensity with the movements of the sun and the seasons. What interests this ceramic artist is the visceral plasticity of clay: its immediacy and her ability to immerse herself up to her elbows in an earth material that has the "ability to record history, the embodiment of flux, the ability to render motion, and the capacity for deep shadow and intricate texture." Usually installed in groups, it is the artist's intention that viewers interact with her large pieces by moving among them, becoming part of the

assembled grouping. Her background of building sculpture for sets in theater and film is apparent. It is almost impossible to resist reaching out to touch the scalloped edges, the spikes and points and nubs of the pieces. Clay is fragile and easily damaged, but forbidden surfaces are enticing. There is an earthy sensuality in her forms, organic fungus sprouting in profusion out in the dappled late summer fields. The viewer begs the question, will this mushroom be edible or is it poisonous? *Ambition* is decidedly phallic—encased in sticky sweet pale blue frosting, swirled icing on a delicious cupcake. Define *Sulcus*: a deep narrow groove or furrow, as in an organ or tissue; any of the narrow fissures or grooves on the surface of the brain that mark the cerebral convolutions. D'Alessandro's *Sulcus* is an internal organ or an excavated ship brought up from its resting place on the ocean floor covered in barnacles and brine. *Aspire* looks like witches' hats piled high, stacked up one upon another.

Memory and metaphor are moored to Karen von Felten's dark and haunting bridges. The series is entitled *Suspensions*, a nice play on the multiple meanings of the word, "suspension." The bridges, sourced from an actual place in Mexico (El Charco del Ingenio, a millpond in a canyon near San Miguel de Allende, Mexico in a nature preserve that the artist frequents) become fitting metaphors for the current deteriorating state of affairs in Mexico. The artist says, "With the passage of time, the footbridges disintegrated from use, weather and pilfering of wood for firewood by the locals. The changing grasslands, the rise and fall of the water, the building and disintegration of structures are subject to constant change against the timeless geological background." Although probably unintentional, the work also becomes a metaphor for the barrier fence currently being built along the US/Mexico border. No longer are bridges suspended, metaphorically, across a shared border; rather, barrier walls are erected, and in the "war" against drugs, guns and illegal immigrants, bridges are forgotten and left to fallow until becoming unusable. The history of the Mexico/US borderlands is ancient, complicated and forever changing against a timeless geological background. von Felten uses black and white for dramatic contrast to depict a land where there is no



Karen von Felten, *Vertical Diptych*, 46" x 17",
monotype with hemp twine

longer true black or white. There are only shades of desperation. The addition of color in several of her pieces gives them a strange unearthly glow—images following the apocalypse. *Mad Max* is fighting for his life in a broken culture where murder and vengeance are the order of the day at the end of the "Oil-Age."

