

Artist moves viewers with monumental sculpture

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Heather McGill administers her Cranbrook Academy of Art students for removing pieces of her sculpture from the trash. Even though she's cut it into small pieces, they're still drawn to the remnants of discarded work behind her studio in Bloomfield Hills.

It really should come as no surprise to the head of the sculpture department though. McGill's imposing creations remind viewers of bits of popular culture on a large scale.

"As Claes Oldenburg simplified objects from everyday modern life in his sculpture, McGill plays off cushioning designs used by Nike in its sneakers similar to the way New York Pop artists like Andy Warhol created works inspired by commercial design, mass production and mass media," McGill slightly restructures the "air bladder" shapes then manually route them out of Styrofoam then stacks them to create floor sculpture topped with a sheet of laser-cut steel painted in white or powder blue. Wall pieces take on striking colors such as bright yellow or lavender. All of the recent sculpture and works on paper can be seen through Saturday, April 20 at Revolution Gallery in Ferndale.

Mass production

"I'm very interested in finding a shape that's mass produced, anything mass produced. It's manufactured. That's different from art, different rules," said McGill a native of California where she earned a master of fine art degree from San Francisco Art Institute in 1984. "Art

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Heather McGill
Sculptor

puts it through creativity which has a different set of rules. I wanted to make a collision between those two.

"I'm also interested in materials. I looked at design the last 5-6 years to show how manufacturers are using these materials. The work is very similar in the way they're built.

Building or constructing objects is something McGill's done since she was a kid. Her playfulness comes out in both the sculpture and works on paper. The laser-cut drawings of vintage autos mirror each other and form patterns that look like flowers or snowflakes from afar.

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"I use colors that are hard to ignore. The white floor sculpture is very specific, very general. I want the viewer to slow down and look at the thing itself."

It's hard to walk by the 45-inch by 37-inch untitled lavender wall piece constructed from urethane, epoxy and aluminum. A grid pattern of circles begs a closer look into the intertwined designs inside. For McGill, evolution seems to be key to creating new work.

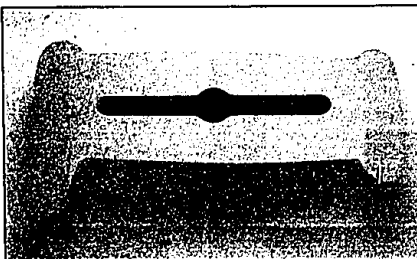
"Each piece I learn something from and progress it into another piece," said McGill. "I'm very interested in structure and how it references out in the world."

Fan

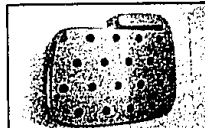
Revolution Gallery director Paul Kotula first became a fan of McGill's after seeing a show of her work at Hill Gallery in Birmingham in the early 1990s.

"It's incredible," said Kotula. "I like the clarity of forms and use of design as an element within the sculpture. The work is very, very current because the imagery comes from sneakers. There's something about the images that are so much a part of our life."

The concept behind McGill's work reflects the mission of the gallery founded nearly 10 years ago.



Wall sculpture: Heather McGill used urethane, epoxy and aluminum to create this untitled work.



Lavender wall art: It's hard to walk by the 45-inch by 37-inch untitled lavender wall piece constructed from urethane, epoxy and aluminum. A grid pattern of circles begs a closer look into the intertwined designs inside.

"The goal is to show contemporary art in all media that can change perceptions about body, mind and heart," said Kotula. "Heather's work is wonderful. All of these images are from things that help us move."

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Heather McGill
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