

“Lynda K. Rockwood is good at exploring how sculpture can occupy space in a tentative way yet have a presence that causes the viewer to slow down and look more closely.”

Gail Grinnell’s work, on the other hand, focuses on nature in very different ways, despite the fact that her work shares similar themes with that of Rockwood: a layering of materials, a visual vocabulary that involves nature, and a passion for making unique and surprising forms. I first saw Grinnell’s work in a solo exhibition at the Francine Seders Gallery several years ago. The work I viewed in that exhibition featured drawings on wood depicting tangles of knotted rope-like forms that seemingly snaked over and through the wood grain of each piece. I was initially attracted by the gutsy use of the wood and loved the dichotomy of beautifully rendered marks on rough-hewn wood planks. They spoke to me as images of survival and tenacity—threads to family life that at times can constrict as well as unite relationships.

Grinnell has been producing work that layers not only materials like fabric, paint, cloth, collage and paper, but also ideas and evocations of her family history and the layered inner dependencies that mark life. Several works from her *Bitter Love* series appear in this exhibition and challenge the viewer to think of them as plant, body, pattern, muscle, tendon, garment, ruffle, or ghostly spirit. Writer Susan Beal speaks to these issues in a 2006 review of Grinnell’s work:

“...Grinnell’s large-scale organic forms are made up of vintage dressmaking patterns layered with silk and polyester interfacings and overlaid with intricate black-and-white drawings of human anatomy. Illustrations of sinew, ligament, tendon, muscle, and bone are likened to tailor’s tools, conflating the connectivity of the body with the craft of the clothing that covers it...”

Elizabeth Bryant elaborates on the *Bitter Love* series in the following excerpt from the exhibit brochure. She states:

“...her surfaces form a skin both tough and fragile, durable and depleted. Her figures morph and swell, pulling against gravity like half-filled balloons billowing like laundry on the line, boneless and buoyant as jellyfish.”

Work such as *Eddy* and *Curl* evidence this “flowering” departure from the rectangle thus allowing her billowing forms to “float” over and on the wall. Grinnell’s



“Scrap” - 2004 ©
graphite /shellac / polyurethane on plywood
70”h x 25”w
Gail Grinnell

earlier work also embraced transparency as she combined silk, tissue paper and cellophane to create collages that evoked ethereal laundry hung on a line. Much of Gail’s work subtly alludes to the quotidian tasks of domestic life. She married at a young age and raised four children. Her childhood was impacted by the art of sewing as her mother devoted many hours to this task. Therefore, the act of making work that utilizes sewing techniques is, for this artist, a life affirming process – connecting her with her past. Gail states: “I want the process for making my pieces to be evident, so that when looking at the work one can imagine the movements involved in its making – the repetitive motions for making the work corresponding to the repetitive requirements of being a caretaker.”



“Curl” - 2008 ©
ink / acrylic / polyester
43” h x 34” w
Gail Grinnell



“Eddy” - 2008 ©
ink / acrylic / polyester / silk / beads
43” h x 26” w
Gail Grinnell

Layered Histories presents the opportunity to go “beneath the surface” and into the heart and soul of these artists’ work. The viewer is invited to relish in the contrasting layers of materials (silk to bronze, paper to stone, and polyester to wood) and contemplate the ideas behind the images and forms featured in this exhibition. It is a pleasure to present the work of Lynda K. Rockwood and Gail Grinnell to our constituency.

Cheryl H. Hahn
Director and Curator
Larson Gallery

Susan Beal is a writer from Seattle, Washington

Elizabeth Bryant is an art historian and writer residing in Seattle, Washington

Matthew Kangas is a writer and art critic living in Seattle, Washington

Susan Platt is a free lance writer, art historian and curator based in Seattle, Washington

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