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WE'RE NOT TALKING TRASH . . . WE'RE TALKING 'POIGNANT TRASH'

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By Gregory Kiewiet

The work in SAIC alum Connie Noyes's (MFA 1980) latest show Poignant Trash at E/C Gallery continues her exploration in the recycling of disparate elements (garbage like Styrofoam, roofing paper, and other shiny, plastic surfaces) which undergo an alchemical-like process under the artist's hands. Combined with enamel, resin, and asphalt, discarded materials are transformed into aesthetically-pleasing pieces that are compelling both for what they are and how they came to be.

After graduate school, Noyes became interested in taking pictures of trash – window-shades, wood, ripped paper, cardboard, thumbtacks, spray-paint, or whatever she could find. The artist would then make collages, set up still-lives, and photograph them, 'deconstructing' them materially or through the photos.

Post graduate life, however, for Noyes was not always productive. For six years after graduating, Noyes did not make work – partly out of fear and partly because she wasn't having fun. "I felt like if I had the idea, then I didn't have to do the work," she said in an interview with F News.

a href="http://images.fnewsmagazine.com/2010/10/22_trash.jpg">



The return to process and the fun came when watching her two-year old daughter stick the tips of magic markers (non-toxic) in her mouth and watching color ooze onto the paper. "Oh my God, she's having fun," Noyes realized.

"I'm always asking myself: What happens if I do this? What do I have to lose? No one has to see it," says Noyes.

The first stage in Noyes's recycling process in painting began when she was working in San Francisco. The constant cleaning of paint brushes left her with jars of sludge that she was unsure how to dispose of, so Noyes started experimenting with the

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material, along with tiny cut outs from discarded photographer's mattes, on the oil-paintings she was working on. Absorbed in what she was doing, Noyes soon found herself with what she jokingly calls "a sludge farm".

"People started giving me their sludge . . . I was a sludge magnet," Noyes said, laughing.

Interested in the different qualities the sludge created, the different things it could do, and the element of surprise that it provided, Noyes began regularly using the sludge as a texture under her paint. The painting on the surface became "this skin" that was covering "the less desirable materials," says Noyes.

This kicked-started her in a whole other direction.

The artist's first show of recycled material was in 2007 at Estel Gallery in Nashville, Kentucky . The displayed works had been created when Noyes wanted to "repurpose" trash from the move to a new studio.

"I first fell in love with the roofing materials" says Noyes, referring to the piece Conform. "That was the material that first grabbed me."

The 17 pieces on display vary in looks, textures, and size, from the white shimmering exquisite 8 x 6 inches Envelop me no. 1 to the densely-layered black provocative 60 x 48 inches Conform. Particularly striking are the pieces – like the two mentioned- where the skin of the glossy resin and enamel – often wrinkled – teases and tempts the eyes and hands – while latching on to the mind.

Poignant Trash is on view at E/C Gallery until October 23.
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