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### THEATER/FINE ARTS

Friday, December 2, 2005

## 'Collection' is fresh and inventive

By REGINA HACKETT  
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER ART CRITIC

**Jason Wood** collects trees and pieces of trees fallen in forests and parks. As his models, they are both the beginning of his process and the aspiration at the end of it.

A recent graduate of the University of Washington's master of fine arts program, he manipulates wood products into deft simulations of their original identities.

Sometimes he cuts a sheet of plywood into a stack of small squares. After rounding their edges, he pastes them together and sands them down. The end result is a tree whose voluptuous splendor stops you cold. Sometimes he starts with a tree, saws off each end and goes to work on the trunk and branches, lopping off and adding on. One of these trunks leans against the wall in the gallery, its surface studded with holes filled with darker woods, circles instead of rings for an abortive kind of time line.

Is his work the equivalent of turning a stump into a leg? Well, no. It's more like turning fossil fuel into dinosaurs. His sculptures have Fred Astaire's grace and Quasimodo's vulnerability. There's nothing quite like them.

Wood's sculptures are part of "Collections" at Crawl Space, a cooperative artist gallery on lower Capitol Hill that has survived to enjoy a second anniversary. Young artists unable to penetrate or uninterested in commercial galleries created and continue to run this alternative venue, which has produced some of the more innovative exhibits in the city.

Because the walls of the gallery are concrete, the artists dragged a large, white-painted wooden panel into the space so they could hang paintings and prints on it. **Diana Falchuk** commandeered it for the current exhibit and gave it the reverse of a back story.

On the surface is a forest or the outline of a forest in thick, gray/green strokes. Considering its billboard proportions, "Winter Unwrapped" is a homey sketch, fluid and oddly intimate. Had she left it alone at that point, it would have been likable enough, but she poked holes in the reality of what her drawing was trying to achieve. Thanks to gaps in the surface, we see what's underneath. Beneath the trees, their root structure is a kitsch interior, all pink circles. By portraying nature as tattered wallpaper, she brings the outside indoors and suggests its demise. Hers is a pitch-perfect Valley girl lament over lost horizons.

### ART REVIEW COLLECTIONS

**WHERE:** Crawl Space, 504 E. Denny Way  
**WHEN:** Through Dec. 11. Hours: Saturdays-Sundays, noon-5 p.m.

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**Chad Wentzel** saw Iceland from a plane in the middle of the day, light hitting glaciers and fracturing ice. In his drawing, "Iceland Must Be Beautiful," his land masses have a silky agitation as if the vellum under his brush were an Etch A Sketch and might at any moment disappear. For ice, he brushed on Epsom salts he'd dissolved in water and watched them crack as they dried into a fractured sheen.

**Todd Simeone** tips his hat to Damien Hirst's "The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living," better known as the sculpture featuring a tiger shark suspended in formaldehyde.

Simeone gives Hirst a classic American spin.

In "The Physical Impossibility of Life From the Head of Someone Dead," Simeone presents a baseball signed by Ted Williams in a Plexiglas case on a sleek cardboard stand. In a grisly coda to a great career, Williams's head was cryogenically frozen. By substituting the ball for the head, Simeone conflates a legendary public career with a dubious private end, shadowing a famous shark in the process.

**Bradley Biancardi** paints portals on canvas in oil paint. He's young and living in Seattle, but his work has an elderly English feel. If I'd heard he was 80 and lived in a cold-water London flat, I wouldn't have been surprised. **Anne Mathern's** white dove streams look like cake frosting framed. Titled "Constancy," her piece is the equivalent of a prop for a photograph. I'm hoping to like the photograph more.

**Webtowns**

More headlines and info from **Capitol Hill**.

**P-I art critic Regina Hackett can be reached at 206-448-8332 or reginahackett@seattlepi.com.**

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