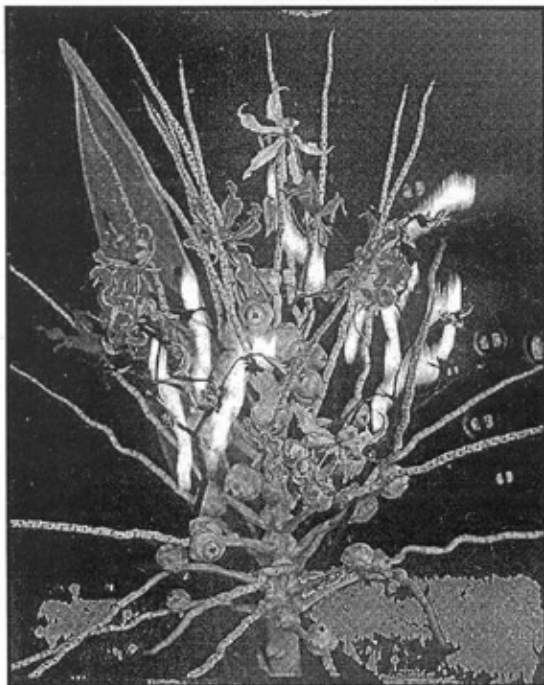


Photos, collages are alluring, unsettling

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CORRESPONDENT



COURTESY PHOTO

"Candle Bouquet," a dye-infused photograph by Anna Tomczak

SARASOTA — Anna Tomczak's dye-infused photographs and Susan Zukowsky's collages and objects, presently at Mira Mar Gallery, have two things in common.

Both use objective and subjective space in their work, and compositions that are symmetrical and orderly, but psychologically asymmetrical and unsettling.

Tomczak's process for producing her photographs requires the use of a 20-inch-by-24-inch Polaroid view camera and Polacolor Transfer film. The negative/positive film, once pulled out of the camera, is separated. The negative material placed over moist drawing paper and roll pressed; transferring the image onto the paper.

The results are soft, earth-toned, weightless floral still lifes, arresting, desiccated specimens imbued with a translucent, romantic light.

At first glance, the space they inhabit is rational and parallel to the picture plane. On further investigation, the ambiguous scale of the objects leads the viewer to a subjective space within the composition.

In "Candle Bouquet" (2001), we see the paraphernalia of a ritual. An arrangement of roots, stems, flowers and the corona of moving candles appearing random until the nuance of their position, relative to the rectangle of the photograph, make clear the poetic diligence of the artist.

Zukowsky's mixed-media collages are non-linear narratives that can be intuitively understood. Her theater behind the proscenium of the picture plane is one in which image and mood

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appear in uneasy agreement.

Romantic heroines in the lead roles are feminine, vulnerable and on the verge of being misused. A feminist agenda could be inferred. Common objects in her work are eggs, a bed, luxurious décor and beads sewn onto cut-out paper interiors that suggest repressive confinement.

Her sculptures are physical extensions of the collages. But the use of multiple images here

is informed by the use of *port-manteau* imagery — where two images conflate into one. The consequence is that the usual understanding of two separate images is nullified, and generates in the observer a composite explanation for the sculpture.

"Hope Chest" (2003) combines a print inside a box of a painting of two women in a bath, with two half-spheres of glass glued upon it. In each sphere, one of the women's breasts is glued to its base. The box has a clear glass lid and pearls and beads are scattered throughout its interior. The object is a reliquary of female fantasy, as well as female anxiety.

Both artists have achieved an authentic voice — ambiguous and haunting, one that speaks volumes about the special sensibility of women and the world they inhabit, both within and outside their bodies.

REVIEW

Anna Tomczak and Susan Zukowsky

The exhibit will run through Jan. 3 at the MiraMar Gallery, 1284 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Call 366-2093 or access www.miramarmar.com