

SHOW ON FOURTH STREET

New Definition Of Erotic Creates Classy Exhibit Of Works At Artscape

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Gazette Art Writer

Currently hanging at Artscape, a gallery on Fourth Street, is a show titled "EROTIC, Redeeming the Definition." This is a juried group show that explores sexual themes in a spicy but dignified way. It received sponsorship from Penthouse Magazine and The Rubber Tree, a local adult gift shop in the Shore.

An exquisite male torso by Philip Hitchcock, of simply stunning virtuosity, flanks the entry to the room in the back of the shop, where the show is set up. This is a fitting allusion to the glorious past, but this show manages not to bind itself too closely to outmoded themes. It is rather an exploration into contemporary sexual awareness, with just a few backward glances, sometimes in jest.

EYE ON ART

A variety of media characterizes this stylish exhibit. A series of three watercolors by Kris Hostikka of geometric Tantra-inspired shapes relates to the sinuous sensations of sex. There are breasts and bodies, but, clearly designed as icons, these figures square off into compressed space, looking as though if they had the room, they would simply slither out of the frames.

A blood red yarn sculpture, whose title escapes me, appears to be the lips of a woolly labia with torn arteries still attached. It looks as though it's just been snatched from the body of a

monster and tucked into a corner at the juncture of two walls.

Two found object sculptures, done with distressed wood, dolls and plumbing fixtures, by Eve Kolosvary-Stupler exhibit two very different women enjoying crystalline rivulets playing over their bodies. In "Cold Shower" and "Hot Shower," one is virginal and robed, and one is abandoned, legs apart. They well illustrate the show's preoccupation with self-examination.

There's one whole wall by various photographic artists. Notable here is "Untitled" by Heather Gonzalez, Wade Hammond and Mark Solter. A beau-

tifully lit full color photo of a recumbent figure is a masterpiece of light and shadow. A work of transcendent vision, it is utterly quiet, and poised as an arrow frozen in flight.

In a mesmerizing photograph by Carlos De Avila called "Patriarchal Crown," the head of an erect penis is surmounted and pierced by a silver ring — an incredibly taut rendition of sexual awareness.

"Vessel," by Shelley Rugthorpe, is very similar in feel to a prehistoric goddess figure, all breasts and belly, here depicted as a female figure draped in gauzy material. Like many of the images in the show, there is clearly some element of not just historical reference, but also a humorous allusion to how our ancestors viewed sex and its mysteries.

Coffee wash on paper is another kind of media used for three graphic drawings of vigorous consensual activity by Darcy Bartoletti. Wholesome and

invigorating, these could function as a tutorial, they are so literal.

There are several bronze sculptures by Karen Swildens, whose work took a first and tied for third in this show. "Penis Paperweight," "Slice of Life" and "Combo" are all rounded, heavy and anatomically correct portions of genitalia and proximate limbs.

"Erotic Basketry," believe it or not, just rounds out the list of media in the show. In these charming references to penile figures — one with feathers at the base of it, and surrounded by rings at the summit — one sees clearly the fetishes of primitive cultures. An acorn just at the tip of another woven phallic shape is used to represent the urethral opening, in a bow to naturalistic materials and whimsicality.

Artscape is located at 2226 E. Fourth St. This show runs through Feb. 13. Call 434-3224 for hours. Street parking is free.