



Mavens: Haggerty Gallery at the University of Dallas

By Peggy Heinkel-Wolfe
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The trio of artists selected by Christine Bisetto for *Mavens*—Linnea Glatt, **Tom Orr** and **Kathy Webster**—came up with five works each, yet their efforts seemed to multiply as if there was an endless echo in the room. Glatt, **Orr** and **Webster** all reside in the minimalist world but do so at maximum volume. These artists are thrill seekers; their core materials defy the laws of gravity, the basic principles of engineering and the very nature of light and movement. Within this realm, humans hold a very precarious position.

Orr's masterful works radiate like a brainiac kid rolling out a science fair project designed to manipulate light waves. *Bridge*, for example—with its delicately taped complex of 4-by-6 inch glass plates—looks like an esoteric model of a polymer chain. Through the delicate reflection and refraction of light, the work harbors an unnerving fragility even as it holds itself together. Set up on the floor, *Bridge* may be at a child's eye view, but the work is definitively hands-off.

Likewise, **Orr's** *Peacock* casts a colorful yet elusive plumage of light on the gallery's wall. The artist makes no effort to hide the apparatus responsible for this illusion—a clever machine filled with dozens of tiny, multicolored mirrors—which rests in plain view on the gallery floor. *Radio*, however, is a wall piece—an arch of two-by-four fencing wire mounted over a poster-size piece of clear laminate covered with vertical stripes, looking rather like a UPC bar code. The conflicting patterns cast through the striped laminate fool the eye, coaxing a momentary loss of balance and encouraging a virtual freefall into this piece of three-dimensional Op Art. Similarly, the longer you stand in front of *I Do*—**Orr's** carnivalesque corner covered in mirrored tiles—the better the *Tilt-A-Whirl* effect of the ride.

Kathy Webster also takes her work to the extreme in her radically oversized models of blister packs. Their shapes, derived from common hard plastic packaging, seem oddly familiar to the touch. Their monumental scale, however, endows them with an organic, whole-body sense, as if these monstrous discount goods have literally swallowed up the consumer.

Like the saccharine-sweet icing of a three-tiered cake, a finish of metallic car paint pushes **Webster's** objects over the top, exuding a positive, candy-coated decadence. *Timex-I*, with its t-shape inspired box cast in fiberglass, is already slightly familiar. But its metallic blue finish with orange flames that lick up from the bottom ushers the form from the discount jewelry counter to the Hot Wheels aisle—all in all, a decadent preteen fantasy.

360 Swivel Green & 360 Swivel Blue might have started as blister packs for disposable razors, but now they sport an irresistible finish in hip, metallic blue and kelly green, courtesy of **Webster's** collaborators—artists who practice their craft in custom autobody and motorcycle shops. Likewise, *Tombo Mono* zigzags up and down, obviously the packaging of something sold in multiples. Its edges are rounded and smooth, multiplying the cool energy that comes from a deep green metallic finish that seductively reflects viewers as they circle the work. It seems to be whispering, "Buy one, get two free."

Linnea Glatt also uses scale to push elements of geometry to excess. *Ascending/Descending* begins with a simple component—dozens of clear Christmas ornaments filled with clear resin. Glatt first planned to suspend plastic doves in the resin, but in the process discovered the much more appealing distortion created when these balls are mounted over the birds instead. She positions the balls and birds to mimic a

crystalline structure. The result is a giant snowflake comprised of tiny white birds frozen in midair, half of the group flying up, the other half flying down.

Flip Side works nicely off **Orr's I Do**; it too has a healthy dose of a funhouse aesthetic. Glatt begins with two round mirrors, one convex and the other concave, which form the center of a flower. One has petals of gray fur; the other of pastel pink, blue, yellow and green. Gaze into one mirror and you're right side up; in the other, you're upside down.

Flip Side is a solid piece but it is Glatt's wall-size rendering of eyeballs that is truly disarming. Like a child's Spirograph doodles, *In Full View* is meditative and tactile. Glatt weaves cotton thread over headless nails—back and forth, in and out, filling in color and overlapping big, baby blue irises with black, penetrating pupils. The pupils have umbilical cords, their tails drooping all the way to the floor. *In Full View* is a crowd of disembodied onlookers, overwhelming you with their lingering gaze if viewed head on—or, staring a hole through your back if you dare look the other way.

In many ways, *In Full View* sums up *Mavens* rather nicely as multiples working toward a single gesture. The show's locus of control emanates from the material use of light and hue. Both roll in waves through the gallery, forever bouncing.