



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM EXHIBIT

Claymation Takes The Spotlight

Artist's Show Highlights Old-Fashioned Stop-Motion Animation

By **SUSAN DUNNE**

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Dancing was Allison Schulnik's first love. She did it as a child but then gave it up. But when she went to art school, she found a way to dance again.

"Animation is the perfect marriage of dancing and painting," she said.

Schulnik rejected contemporary trends in

computer animation in favor of experimental stop-motion claymation, which conveyed balletic movement the way she wanted, and appealed to her sense of texture.

It's time-consuming but satisfying. "I have to set up all the figures and shoot a frame, and then move them all and shoot another frame," she said. Film goes at 24 frames per second. It takes about a year for Schulnik to make a five-minute film, working mostly alone.

Schulnik's films "Mound" and "Eager" are

mesmerizing, combining anthropomorphic flowers, misshapen animals, macabre characters who have no faces or whose faces morph into different shapes and objects, and moody music. Hieronymus Bosch is one artist whom she admires and who influenced her, and it shows.

An exhibit of Schulnik's work is on exhibit now in the MATRIX gallery at

SCHULNIK, D3



'PURPLE POS-SUM Cat' by Allison Schulnik.

Schulnik

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Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford.

Schulnik carefully plans out the storyboarding and animatics, but when she begins to make the film, she leaves things loose. "I want an organic, freeform ballet," she said.

The exhibit features the two films, in addition to porcelain sculptures, drawings, gouaches and paintings inspired by the

same aesthetic. To display them, the MATRIX gallery has been transformed into a space resembling an old-fashioned parlor. Picture a granny with avant-garde tastes. Schulnik painted the wallpaper pattern on the tan-and-red walls herself. She chose ornate sculpture pedestals and picture frames from the Atheneum's collection, which are intentionally left dusty and even chipped.

"They were walking me around the museum and I saw these pedestals and I loved them. I said, 'Can I have them?'" she said. "So they found me more." She added

that they reminded her of a scene in the 1985 movie "Return to Oz," in which Dorothy enters a parlor filled with unusual objects on ornate pedestals.

The unusual objects — a purple cat that looks like an opossum, a white fox, gnomes, a golden bear, shells — sit outside the video projection area, which is blocked off from the gallery by a sumptuous gold-fringed red curtain borrowed from Hartford Stage. "I'm creating a sanctuary for the characters in the film," she said. "They are the guards protecting the theater space."

Patti Hickson, Emily Hall Tremaine

Curator of Contemporary Art, said Schulnik's show kicks off a four-part series of MATRIX works by Los Angeles artists. Ruben Ochoa opens on June 5, Frohawk Two Feathers on Oct. 2, and Michael McMillen early next year.

ALLISON SCHULNIK: MATRIX 168 will be at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 600 Main St. in Hartford, until Sunday, May 4. Details, hours and admission: <http://www.thewadsworth.org>.



'SHELL NO. 3' by Allison Schulnik.



PHOTOS BY ALLISON SCHULNIK

A SHORT FILM titled "Mound" is shown as part of the Allison Schulnik exhibit, which is part of the MATRIX series at the Wadsworth Atheneum.