

M.A. Papanek-Miller

“ . . . and deer began to dance around the fire.”

July 6 – October 9, 2009

Dawson Community College **Gallery126** Glendive, Montana



Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust 1.1



Looking for Alice: "taking (the) water(s), II



M.A. Papanek-Miller in her studio.

Dawson Community College *Gallery 126* is pleased to announce the inaugural exhibit of its third season, entitled “ . . . and deer began to dance around the fire.” The art work of M. A. Papanek-Miller is now on view from July 6 – October 9. *Gallery 126* is open Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Tuesday - Thursday 6:30 – 9:00 PM. Summer hours are Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Located in room 126 computer lab next to the library. For more info and to see the 2009 – 2010 gallery schedule go to <http://www.dawson.edu/>

When you come to see this show, it might be fun to bring a friend to discuss the artworks, and together you can decipher the many possible meanings and associations M.A. Papanek-Miller presents in her images. Both analytical and playful, she deliberately bombards the viewer, with a collection of visual image-layers to be read, as a narrative. See if you can discover the narratives embedded in the image layers.

For instance in the work, *Looking for Alice: “taking (the) water(s), II*, one of three art works just completed for this exhibit, you will find a frog, deer, buffalo, horse, bird, snowman, fence, an Uncle Sam doll wearing a bunny-eared hood, a game chip with a water goblet, and so on, mostly symbolized by drawings of ‘real’ toys. What does this say? What connections do you make? Papanek-Miller considers the interaction between viewer and artwork to be a vital component of her artistic process. Her intention is to initiate a dialogue or conversation with the viewer and her multi-layered images. She uses line and transparency to build her images. *After-images* she has culled from the theater of her mind. These images are layered one over another provoking chance, and seasoned with reflections from stories, songs, and rhymes of childhood.

The primary theme in Papanek-Miller’s art work centers on her deep concern for the environment, specifically regarding her interests in animals, land and water access, use and ownership, and her love of toys. She has given her toys the big job of bringing awareness to the perils of these life giving forces – water, land, and animals. The players acting out the narrative image layers in her artwork are often toys drawn from her extensive personal collection. The toys serve as guides for the viewer, to provide safe passage into her complex idea path. Why toys? She believes that toys are beautiful, magical, and fun objects. And that they bridge our diverse global population serving as “contemporary amulets”, “time devices”, and truthful conceptual tools. She is attracted to toys as social barometers and cultural souvenirs.

Papanek-Miller describes the surfaces of her art works as intimate and active, also, a conceptual component of her artwork. They often include transparent cloths, printed fabrics and weathered paper. Another important part of her message is imbued in the foundation or supporting layer of her artwork, weathered paper, a process Papanek-Miller developed which results in an “environmental imprint”. Nature and water collaborate to make this imprint, achieved by placing paper out of doors for many days to create an activated ground to determine a first visual layer.

Papanek-Miller’s work is intimate in scale and often in series. She uses a mixed media palette of graphite, charcoal, acrylics, oils, gouache, and collage (through a photographic digital capture and archival printing process). Visiting with the artist, I learned that some part of each art work glows in the dark. It could be said that her images are active both night and day, as is nature. She signs her work using a stamp imprinted with graphite to represent the marking of animals for tracking and observation.

This compressed packaging of the collected visual information in her work often parallels with various media systems, events, or experiences through time that have become culturally expected. For example: 1. The shifting of images on the television and on the computer, 2. The flipping through of pages in print, 3. The transport of the body through space in travel and 4. The perception of auditory focus and depth in sound and music. Every component in Papanek-Miller’s artwork contributes to the overall meaning of the piece.

M. A. Papanek-Miller was born in the vicinity of Chicago, Illinois. She received her M.F.A. degree in Art from the University of Houston, Texas in 1984 with a dual emphasis in drawing and metals. She has exhibited widely across the country, most recently her work was on exhibit at the Missoula Museum of Art. She was one of the recipients of the 2004 State of Minnesota Artist Initiative Grants co-supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, and she completed a large commission through the Seattle Arts Commission for the new federal justice center building in Seattle, Washington which opened to the public in November 2002. Currently she is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Art, Media, and Design at DePaul University in Chicago Illinois; formerly she served in the same capacity at The University of Montana, Bemidji State University in Minnesota, and Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle Washington.

Mary Ann Papanek-Miller, MPAPANEK@depaul.edu The artist welcomes one and all to contact her with questions, comments, or inquiries.