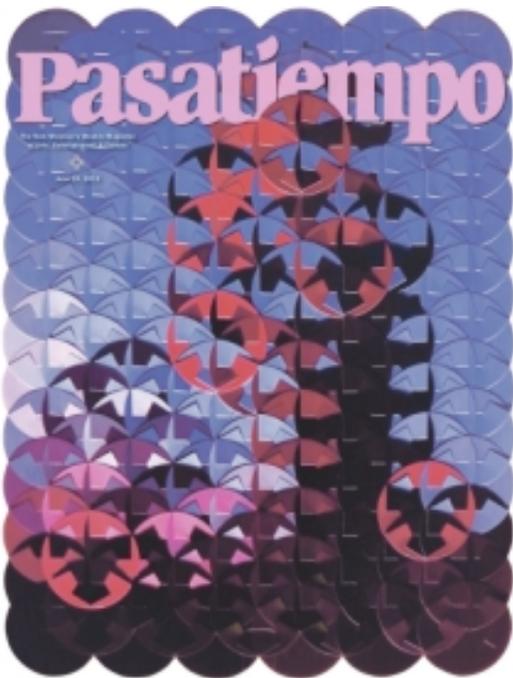


## Binary Visions: The Art of Kate Petley and Rusty Scruby

By Michael Abatemarco

Two-dimensional artwork is not typically thought of as being constructed, like sculpture and architecture. But in the work of Colorado-based artist Kate Petley and Texas-based artist Rusty Scruby, paired together in Turner Carroll Gallery's new exhibition *Construct*, material is brought together in unusual ways and combinations. Scruby transforms photographic prints into woven



textiles, cut and assembled by hand into abstractions that, while maintaining a photographic appearance, are also structural, fabricated with precision. The immediate effect puts one in mind of pixelized imagery, resembling something not unlike a painting photorealist painter Chuck Close. A key difference is that Close's paintings are essentially figurative, coalescing into recognizable portraits the farther away from them one stands. Scruby's abstractions, on the other hand, retain a sense of being representational without being too specific. His piece called *Keeping Up Appearances*, included in *Construct*, looks like lilac blossoms surrounded by

green leaves, but it is impossible to tell if that was the subject of the original photographs from which the piece was made. The nuances of color and form come from Scruby's processing of the cut-up photographic imagery.

Petley's work is looser and more gestural than Scruby's. Though it would appear to be the result of a kind of action painting, it is no less a construct than Scruby's photo reconstructions. Petley uses layered materials -- specifically transparent film -- arranged on an aluminum surface and coated in resin. "I use resin like someone else might use some another type of medium

in constructing a collage,” Petley said. “It allows me to combine transparent film and different materials together. It makes me a little different than a painter.”

Colors in Petley’s work can have a graphic intensity and purity, like DayGlo fluorescent pigments. Her manner of mixing resin and industrial film creates a depth and richness to her panels. *One Perfect Breath* resembles a seascape, but Petley never makes the reference explicit. “All of my two-dimensional work has been primarily abstract or not representational. I’m referring to the surroundings we commonly encounter, but I’m handling it using abstract forms.”

Light is also an important element in Petley’s work. She works with transparent or translucent film and clear resin. Because of these materials, her work takes on a certain luminosity. “Sometimes light is almost everything to the piece. It’s important to these pieces that will be shown at the gallery because the kinds of materials I use and the way that I use them really reinforces what light does in a way that we all take for granted. I started working with transparency quite a long time ago. I became interested in how to preserve that amazing quality of light that can happen when you have a rich transparent color. Over time there’s been a lot more painting, and mark making, and drawing, all going on simultaneously, within these resin panels.”

The acrylic resin is a pliable medium that takes time for her to prepare. It is a two-part epoxy resin that must first be mixed before it can be worked with. “It’s not easy stuff to use,” Petley said. “It’s stays liquid long enough for me to get the job done, but there is a time constraint for sure.” Depending on the particular brand she is using, the resin begins to dry within anywhere from 20 to 40 minutes. “Not a real long time. I have to be ready. If there was another material that would do what this does, I would use it. But there’s not. It’s the only thing that will give me the results I’m looking for.”

Petley's resin panels represent the first of the artist's two-dimensional works to be exhibited in Sante Fe, although she did an installation at the Center for Contemporary Arts in June 2002. "I did a large weather-balloon installation there," she said.

While the word "construct" applies equally to the working process of Scruby and Petley, their bodies of work are distinct. Each artist breaks down barriers between traditional mediums such as painting, sculpture, and photography, but they do so in different ways. In choosing to exhibit these two artists together, Turner Carroll has set up what seems to be a dialogue between freeform spontaneity in Petley's work and pattern and order in Scruby's. Neither artist works exclusively in the mediums presented in the exhibition. Scruby, for instance, has made photo-based sculptures and wall reliefs in a variety of materials, as well as large-scale installations. And Petley's commissions have included architectural designs, notable a pedestrian-and-bike bridge in Houston. She has also worked in case resin and fiberglass. "I think it's going to be interesting to see the blend between Rusty and I," she said. "We deal with what we see in the world in different ways, so I'm hoping that will be something to explore with this show."