

Roads Less Traveled

Artists Ponder Life's Ephemera in Multi-Layered

By Douglas Max Utter

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The three artists currently on view at the Cleveland Artists Cooperative Project are women who work in print and collage media. Their images explore the delicate balance of fate, history, and a more personal sense of gravity, lightened by a grace notes of touch and encounter—life's defining ephemera, which the delicate scratches of etching and more brutal dislocations of collage convey uniquely well. That all three of these artists are widely traveled also unifies the works in Multi-Layered, which seem to describe cultural differences and the surprising variations of self that emerge from the luggage alongside random souvenirs and crumpled itineraries.

Margaret Kimura and Masha Ryskin have shown collaborative mixed –media installations at Spaces. Born in California, Kimura attended the Cleveland Institute of Art but grew up in Tokyo. Ryskin was born in Moscow, attended the Rhode Island School of Design, and has lived in places ranging from Iceland to Indonesia. Perhaps because of their multinational experiences, the fragmentary nature of any life and self-perception seems in high focus in their work.

Ryskin sometimes includes teabags, overlaying intaglio and layers of tissue or glassine. String flails from the tea's ethereal sepia stain and roughly torn edges sketch a sensibility haunted by the fractal configuration of foreign coastlines. Her use of tea seems both Russian and Japanese, Juxtaposed with Kimura's collages, and alludes to the ceremonial and social uses of tea, remembering human presence. Her titles often push otherwise abstract images in more associative directions. Dancing Bear, for instance, consists of several layers of tissue paper and intaglio printing, veined with teabag string, thread and ink. Noting the title, Ryskin's overlapping shapes suddenly resolve themselves into the figure of a Russian bear, pale, scarred and abstractly emblematic: an ursine Moby Dick.

Margaret Kimura's collages use dress patterns and antique cloth samples given to her by her grandmother, who still sews every day at age 86. In Baba II, irregular pieces of the draft pattern's brownish tissue from a ground from which an irregular white paper shape emerges, part dwelling, part vessel, covered with stitching, words and postage stamps. Ryskin and Kimura begin their difficult aesthetic balancing acts with moments of radical dislocation, but they are most concerned with mending, reorganizing and reconstituting a world after the elisions of geography and time.