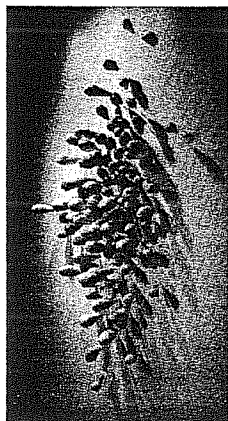


**INSTALLATION: CRISTIN SEARLES**



Cristin Searles, *Cheeky* (side view), PVC vinyl, stuffing, lucite rods, 48 x 78 x 8", 2006. Photo: Bannister Gallery, Rhode Island College.

A whimsical series of seven three-dimensional wall hangings, each differing dramatically in pattern and color, comprises Cristin Searles' *Installation*. Nearly all of the work is sewn by hand, blending millinery supplies, buttonholes, felting and beading in abstractions that convey a sense of playful geometry while slyly subverting the worlds of fashion and home decor.

The ocean, the woods, domestic and feminine archetypes—all serve as inspiration. Biology and botany are primary sources as some works refer directly to the natural world.

*Urchins*—a grouping of five black or orange sea urchin-shaped objects made from buckram, batting, stretch satin, and glass beads—hangs low off a white wall near the entrance. A neighboring work, *Froth*, made up of thirty-seven similarly shaped objects of varying sizes, suggests the rambling stepping-stone design of mushrooms and moss-covered stumps and rocks found in a woodland. Absent any other landscape elements, the pieces combining mohair, millinery wire, and glass beads are jarring but poetic in their existential space.

A sense of feminine sexuality and personality infuses much of the work, notably in *Romance*, featuring dozens of conical-shaped objects of varying sizes using silk organza, glass beads, and pink and pale colors to create a wall of women's breasts. The floral pattern of *Relish* subverts notions of bride and wife, wedding, and wallpaper by arranging rose-pink and soft gold petals coupled with entwining black stems on a veiled square. *Burlesque* is more subtle—a work that seems organically influenced by sand dollars—using a pattern of circles within circles and the media of silk organza, rat-tail ribbon, horsehair, and fishing line. Although the image is abstract, the effect appears as a parody of the kind of woman's garment you might see at a prom or a wedding. *Doug Norris*