

Mini-galleries spread art around

Sara Agniel may have closed her Wickenden Street Gallery to move her base of operations to New York. But she has kept a Providence connection, putting together shows in out-of-the-way venues such as empty storefronts and office reception areas.

As she has done in the past, Agniel has curated a series of shows to mark Perishable Theatre's annual Women's Playwriting Festival. Those are sprinkled from Perishable, at 95 Empire St., to Olneyville Square's Hive Archive, where a half-dozen of Jill Colinan's quirky cloth dolls are on display in the window.

It's great that Agniel has been able to create mini-galleries across the city, but in truth, they are not great spaces for displaying art. You can walk right past Elizabeth Keithline's delicate wire mesh sculptures in the window of the Lerner Building at Westminster and Eddy streets and not notice them because of the window glare.

A half-dozen of Kim Kazan's paintings are clustered in the waiting area of the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, 385 Westminster St. Some of the pictures are behind a large couch, which makes it difficult for close inspection.

Kazan's paintings feature martini-drinking monkeys and stuffed animals, along with an image of the Virgin Mary encircled with red airplanes instead of a halo.

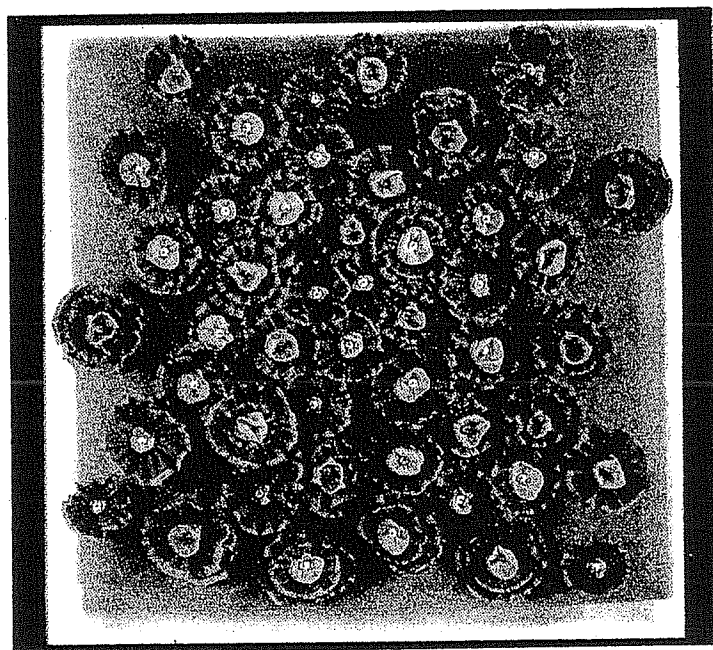
Perishable offers perhaps the best space, although the lighting could be better, given the subtleties of Cristin Searles's fabric wall reliefs, delicate as a ballerina's tutu. Searles has taken sheets of satin and organza, embellished them with beads, cut openings into them, or fashioned them into cones, boxes and flowers that protrude from the space's raw brick walls.

You can make an appointment to see Keithline's work, but if you stare hard enough you can make out from the street the centerpiece of the show — a wire piano and bench. Charred bits of wood in the legs of the bench and feet of the piano give a clue to how it was made: Keithline wrapped wire around an actual upright piano — one destined for the local landfill — then set it afire, leaving just the wire shell.

From a technical standpoint, Keithline's work is pretty interesting; as art, though, it's a little contrived.

The four shows of women artists are up through June 24. Hours at the Perishable Theatre and RICH are Mon.-Fri. 10-5; at Perishable, you can also see the artworks 90 minutes before performances.

The show at the Hive Archive, an artists' cooperative in Olneyville Square, is visible 24 hours a day. Call Agniel at 272-1522 if you want to see Keithline's work up close.



red love, a work in organza, satin, and glass beads by Cristin Searles, is on display at Perishable Theatre, in one of four art shows being held in conjunction with the theater's Women's Playwriting Festival.