



Rub, 2002. A video still of a belly, from single channel projection with sound.



Items Matching [ART], 2000. Folk art wishbone people, one of 130 objects purchased as "art" from eBay.



Family Colors, 2005. Latex paint and vinyl on museum walls, with paint colors derived from body parts, such as toenail, stretch mark or mole. 10 by 22 by 10 feet. Image from Avampato Museum, Charleston, W.Va.



Illume, 2003. One of 32 digitally printed images mounted on fiberglass. 18.5 by 6 inches. Each image was installed on streetlight poles throughout Delray Beach, Fla.

Hanging On and Holding Out, 2006. Site-specific installation consisting of painted walls, projected video, sound, drawings, photographs and sculptures. 10 by 23 by 10 feet.

Image from Contemporary Artists Center, North Adams, Mass.

Jody Servon: conceptual artist



By Linda Coutant

For artist and curator Jody Servon, art is problem solving. She identifies an idea or issue, then figures out the best way – and most appropriate media – to share it with others. Her art might fill a room, or hang on streetlight poles. It might be photographs of relatives' belongings, or merchandise purchased from eBay.

"I don't think artists necessarily are working in one medium anymore," says Servon, an assistant professor of art and director of Appalachian State University's Catherine J. Smith Gallery.

"People are doing many different things. Just as there's a mixing of cultures, I think it's a lot more natural for people to make different kinds of work. This younger generation is using sound, and including video, photography, sculpture – it can all work together," she said.

Servon, a recipient of two North Carolina Arts Council grants in 2006, is highly regarded for incorporating all these elements into what is known as installation art. Her work has been included in exhibitions, public projects, and screenings throughout the United States and Canada, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami, Fla.; Tucson Museum of Art in Arizona; Contemporary Museum in Baltimore, Md.; Avampato Museum in Charleston W.Va.; McColl Center for the Visual Arts in Charlotte; Kimball Visual Art Center in Ogden, Utah; and Exit Art in New York.

Her "Hanging On and Holding Out" project – which reflects her revelations following the death of her father – consisted of painted walls, projected video, sound, drawings, photographs and sculptures. Its venues have varied from six large windows in downtown Charlotte, to a corner in a group museum exhibition, and an entire gallery for a solo show.

"I think of installation art as like a painting or drawing in space. It doesn't make sense for me to paint a chair if I can use a chair. For me, it's three-dimensional drawing," she said.

"It's a different way of working, because you really think about the floor, the ceiling, even the smell sometimes," she said. "I think about the materials that make the most sense for my idea. I don't limit myself, my work can be all over the place."

For "Items Matching [ART]," she explored Americans' inherently personal definition of art by filling a room with more than 130 items purchased online from eBay, all under \$10. A New York Times review described the exhibit as "an absorbing slice of American life."

In the public art project "Illume," she solicited volunteers to photograph details of their daily life and work in Delray Beach, Fla. Their images were mounted on 18.5-by-6-inch fiberglass and displayed on 32 streetlight poles throughout the city.

In "Above and Below," she created a 22-by-31-foot shadow of an airplane by placing grass carpet at the bottom of a hotel swimming pool that is in direct line with traffic from Palm Beach International Airport, thus "silencing" the disturbance under rippling water.

Servon is equally known as a curator, having organized numerous exhibitions focused on contemporary art. Exhibition reviews have appeared in ARTnews, South Florida Times, The Miami Herald, Neural Online and El Pais.

As a teacher, Servon enjoys encouraging Appalachian students to think creatively and to find just as unique ways to express themselves and their ideas.

"I want students to be creative thinkers and effective problem solvers, and to be culturally aware that you have the possibility to excite people with interesting ideas no matter what you do," she said. "Art doesn't always have to be in a museum. It can happen in all sorts of places." ^{AE}

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His Teeth, 2006. Ultrachrome, 34 by 44 inches

Artist Jody Servon recalls that her grandfather's dentures were a strange thing to receive in the mail. But, her aunt who sent them after cleaning out her late grandfather's chest of drawers suspected that Servon could use them creatively some day.

This photograph appeared in her installation work "Hanging On and Holding Out," a collection of images, sculptures, drawings and more that capture the parent/child/family relationship – what Servon describes as "the things you hang on to and the things that you let go of and the memories that you have." (See story on page 7.)

Of this image, Servon says, "The mouth is something so personal. It's the way to communicate, and what happens when you have the device left but not the person who surrounds it? It's this larger than life presence."