

Discover new sculpture at 'Lost & Found'

In 1943, Pablo Picasso took a pair of handlebars, attached them to a bicycle seat and mounted them on a wall. Thus he galvanized the art of assemblage, or 3-D collage.

Today that spirit lives on in "Lost & Found," an exhibit of the work of Liz Sweibel and Donald Shambroom at the Boston Center

VISUAL ARTS

Mary Sherman

for the Art's Mills Gallery. Both artists use found, often discarded objects in their work to mine the everyday world for poetic moments.

In one of Sweibel's pieces, a latex mold of a wooden floor appears to have some round object hidden underneath it. Another piece consists of wires poking out from the wall like some odd industrial growth. Another includes a tiny clay pot, sprouting grass while precariously perched atop an architectural spindle.

Shambroom's work is made up of equally disparate parts, but, typically, his are more massive and overbearing. "A Bent Space With Two Pillars" consists of two posts, appearing to jut out from the floor at slight angles, like upturned legs, dividing the gallery's space. His "Letter to Eileen" includes doll house furniture placed atop a desk, nearly every inch encased in a layer of wax. For "Bird in Flight," an old wooden two-wheeler ends in an impossibly elongated and tapered base.

In some cases, Shambroom's objects have been left intact, and only their function has been called into question. For "One Hundred and Fifty Feet," hinged rulers lie partially opened in a pile, measuring — what? Their own irregular length?

In "Times of Day, Scroll No. 2," a strip of blue tape runs from the ceiling down the wall into a hanging tape dispenser. What is it taping together? The ceiling and the wall? Here Shambroom seems to

ask, "Does tape always have to be used to attach one thing to another? What if it is a terrific blue? Could it then exist merely as a colored line? A linear delineation of a hidden architectural support?"

On one level, Sweibel's and Shambroom's work appears to have much in common. On another, more emotional level, however, their work clearly diverges.

Shambroom combines the world of childhood fantasy with a nasty adult undertone in pieces such as "Letter to Eileen." All the fixtures in the work are filled with wax and surrounded by lumpy, crude shapes. Only a tub is not completely negated; instead the wax has been cut into tiny bits and thrown down like a torn-up, angry diatribe.

Likewise, "The Portable Center of the Universe," is made up of four meat pulverizers used to pound flesh-colored clay into an edition of 10 "prints," and "The Young Cherry Tree" isolates a cherry seed hung from a gold chain and encased in a thin glass tube, denying it any chance to grow.

There's a definite menace to all Shambroom's work. No surprise, then, that his rare use of color includes the visceral, oozing red of ground pigment or the dirty yellow of beeswax. Nor that mallets, kitchen utensils and burnt furniture figure prominently in his pieces.

The work is effective in this respect, but also bleak and unrelenting.

Sweibel's work is more tender and has the grace — in its use of cast-offs — to sidestep maudlin sentimentality in favor of an ingratiating charm.

Her rusty wires, fragile in their decay, make a gallant attempt to delight, by their ability to twirl with the slightest breeze. That one of her cylinders ends in a tulle skirt tips us off to Sweibel's playfulness.

Less heavy-handed than Shambroom, Sweibel lets her materials suggest and evoke a narrative. The result may be less emotionally fraught, but it is also infinitely more subtle and upbeat in its ability to elicit a smile.