

STYROFOAM

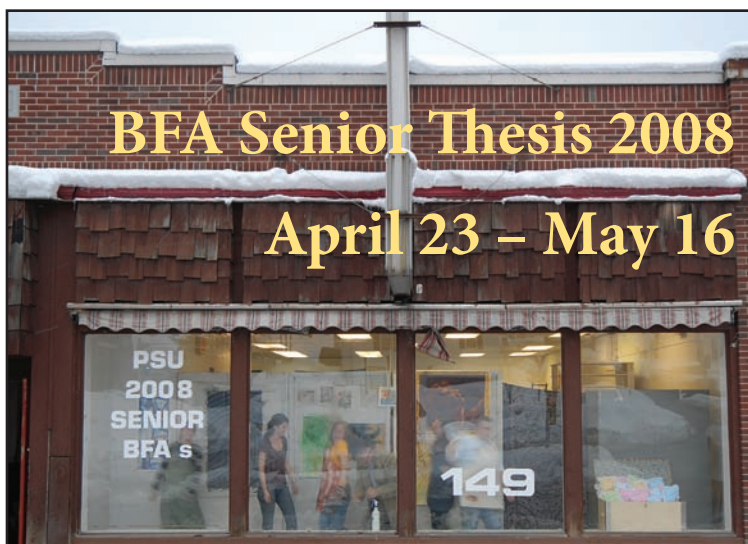


Do Cinderblocks Dream of Being Styrofoam? (detail) by Shirley Tse

Name a lightweight, manmade material that emits toxic vapors when heated, yet is historically used to package food. It can be carved or molded; it floats on water and is stubbornly non-biodegradable. If you are still stumped, this controversial substance is expanded polystyrene, commonly referred to by its trademarked name: Styrofoam™.

Rhode Island School of Design Museum
224 Benefit Street
Providence, Rhode Island

Through July 20



Capstone projects and artist statements by Plymouth State University graduating BFA students will be presented in two venues.

Studio Artists' Opening: April 23, Karl Drerup Art Gallery, 4–6 p.m.
Karl Drerup Art Gallery hours in Draper & Maynard Building: Mon. – Sat., noon–5 p.m., Wed. noon–8 p.m.

Graphic Designers' Opening: April 23, Silver Center for the Arts 5–7 p.m.
Silver Center hours: Mon. – Fri.: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., weekends: noon to 6 p.m. and during performances

Both facilities are situated on Main Street in Plymouth, New Hampshire.

Plymouth State UNIVERSITY
For gallery information call (603) 535-2614 or log on to plymouth.edu/gallery.

Fraught with environmental pitfalls and increasingly banned by municipalities for use as food-service packaging, expanded polystyrene nevertheless offers many material qualities that make it attractive to artists. Concisely curated by Judith Tannenbaum, the “Styrofoam” show offers a survey of Styrofoam art created within the past 25 years.

Several big names are represented, such as Richard Tuttle and Sol LeWitt, whose posthumously installed “Black Styrofoam on White Wall and White Styrofoam on Black Wall” starkly greets visitors upon entering the museum, flanking the stairway to the main gallery.

Soaring above, the gravity-defying silver expression of Heidi Fasnacht's “Exploding Airplane” does nothing to quiet the unease surrounding ongoing terror alerts and the recent airline maintenance debacle.

Contrastingly grounded and modestly introspective, Shirley

Tse's “Do Cinderblocks Dream of Being Styrofoam?” clings to the gallery wall at eye-level, inviting close inspection of the hand-carved markings tattooing its otherwise banal, utilitarian forms.

The small size of this show lends itself to a balanced viewing, which pays off when one encounters subtle, conceptual work such as B. Wurtz's “Untitled” sepia-toned photographs of implied architectural sites, or Steve Keister's Mesoamerican-inspired cast resin wall reliefs, all composed from the dips and bulges of molded packing containers.

With work ranging from Folkert DeJong's over-the-top figurative sculpture to hidden messages embedded in Bruce Pearson's colorful wall reliefs, “Styrofoam” offers the viewer a perspective on individual artists as they push the physical and conceptual boundaries of a material ubiquitous to the consumerism and material waste now so publicly called to question.

Meredith Cutler