

on the arts

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showcase



ANTONIO PURI
AT PENN COLLEGE



PERFORMER PROFILE:
SARAH WILLIAMS



**ARTIST FEATURED IN
SCULPTURE
MAGAZINE
EXHIBITS AT LYCO**

YOUR WEEKLY ARTS GUIDE TO CENTRAL PA

CASEY MCGUIRE

AT LYCOMING COLLEGE

By MATTHEW PARRISH
mparrish@sungazette.com

Like every artist, Casey McGuire was influenced by her family, but when your father's a taxidermist, "family influence" takes a weird twist.

McGuire, originally from Shrewsbury, Vt., remembers her first experience with her father's profession quite vividly.

"I was [around] 9 years old and I came into the house in the middle of the night. The lights were off and I got snagged on something," McGuire said. "I couldn't really move, so I turned the light on and saw that I was caught on a duck ... the duck was on a stand and its legs were in mid-air like it was swimming ... I screamed and woke everybody up."

McGuire said that creepy experiences like this were common in her household.

"Those are scenarios I grew up with," she said. "People in suburban settings don't typically have that. You don't come home to coyotes in your sink."

Her father's profession led her to a preoccupation with "frozen beauty" and attempts to preserve life; this interest has greatly impacted the way she makes art.

"I'm comfortable with animal bodies and the process of body and death," she said. "It seems so natural. It doesn't seem bizarre to me. That's where a lot of my work comes from."

And while McGuire has used taxidermy in her art before — "I had an installation that I used salmon fish heads from a taxidermy supply studio," she said — most of her art is dead-animal-free, being more inspired by ideas

that originate in but aren't restricted to taxidermy, like "contrived beauty."

Her idea of "contrived beauty" comes from the fact that her grandmother, Margret Todd McGuire, was a Rockette.

"I'm very conscious of that kind of objectification: females using their bodies and being at the center of the male gaze," McGuire said.

McGuire has had three solo exhibitions, including "Haptic Wake" at

the C.U. Museum of Art at the University of Colorado, where she received her master's in fine art in 2007; "Levitating Qualities of Light Through Closed Eyes" at the McMillan Gallery in the Dairy Center for the Arts in Boulder, Colo., in 2008; and "The Insatiable Feeling of Soft Ground" in the Space Gallery at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art in Grand Rapids, Mich., this year.

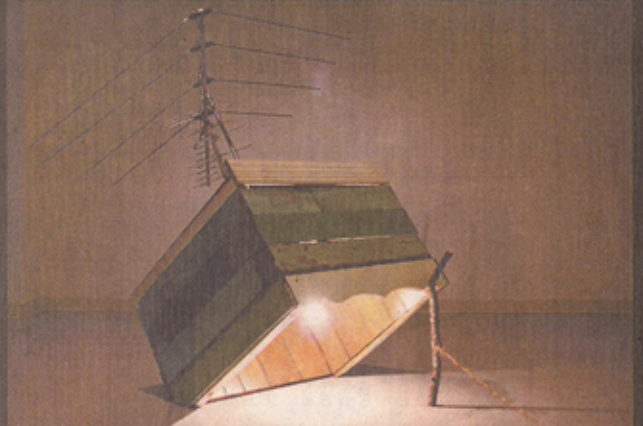
She was interviewed by Sculpture Magazine in 2009 and has been a guest lecturer at the University of West Georgia, the Vermont Studio Center, the Center for Visual Arts in Denver, Colo., and the University of Colorado.

The work McGuire has on display as a part of her "Unpredictable Things: Installations Focusing on the Uncertainty of Home" exhibit at Snowden Library (until Nov. 19) comes from an idea that's an extension of her concept of "frozen beauty" but is more directly related to Gaston Bachelard's idea of an "artificial paradise," McGuire said.

"With my installations, I think of an 'artificial paradise' and how people try to create one with their



MCGUIRE



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Casey McGuire's "Unpredictable Things: Installations Focusing on the Uncertainty of Home" exhibit will be on display in the gallery in Snowden Library at Lycoming College until Nov. 19. The opening reception for the exhibit was last Thursday.

homes," she said. "I'm pushing people to examine the safety nets they've created."

For McGuire, part of this analysis includes what happens to homes after they're abandoned. The artist said that on her street in Carrollton, Ga., nine homes have been abandoned in the last year.

"They were just left with bikes in the yard, wind chimes on the porch — with remnants of interaction. It's a sad fate."

These vacant houses create the perfect setting for another one of McGuire's interests, haunted houses.

"They have a weird energy," she said. "I experience them like a story of the history of the house. I experience these piles of rubble, couches, garbage and weird things that people left behind and think, 'How do those objects interplay with the history of the house?'"

Sometimes this "weird energy" affects McGuire a little too much. "Empty houses freak me out. Sometimes my dark hallways scare me — I run from one end of

the hall to the next. I can't watch horror films. They affect me very physically — my heart races and I get anxious," she said.

The influence of these experiences can be seen directly in her work "Diving Through Surface into Light," which is a part of the Lycoming exhibit. McGuire said, "I was provoked by the eerie qualities of abandoned houses in Carrollton. In my previous installations I have looked at the dysfunction of the concept of home and how these dysfunctions are amplified through objects and body."

Another work that is part of the show, "Terrestrial Apparatus Poised for Lights Out," is a box trap that is constructed out of wood the artist "scavenged" from local abandoned houses.

She said, "The box trap's construction out of these materials refers to the current climate of the housing crisis and its effects on the ideology of the 'America Dream' of owning a home, a house trap."

The opening reception for the exhibit was last Thursday.