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Art Review: *Paper Sculpture Show' is work in progress*

By Leslie Hoffman

Stepping into "The Paper Sculpture Show" at the Regina Gouger Miller Gallery might lead some visitors to wonder whether they've stepped into an art show or an art class. Stacks of paper and small, folded sculptures dot each plywood table. A docent stands guard over a table of scissors, glue, tape, X-Acto knives, a Polaroid camera, thumbtacks and map pins.

The art in this brilliant new show on Carnegie Mellon University's campus didn't arrive in crates and boxes; the visitors themselves make the sculptures and leave them in the gallery. The exhibition stems from a book, "The Paper Sculpture Book," where 29 artists each supplied their vision for a paper sculpture project. The book got its genesis from a plan by Cabinet magazine in 2001 for five artists to create pieces that could be built from layouts printed in Cabinet; the problem was that readers refused to cut up their magazines.

Curated by Mary Ceruti, Matt Freedman and Sina Najafi, the show opened in New York a day before it opened at CMU on Sept. 5. Stemming from a humorous beginning, and taking cues from the Fluxus art movement, as well as from material-conscious contemporary artists, both the show and book are amusing.

For example, Minerva Cueva's "Homemade MVC Student Identification Card," asks people to make their own fake student ID cards. The gallery supplies a Polaroid camera and film for "students" to take pictures of themselves and use in the making of their card.

But for a few days, the gallery was out of film, leading people to improvise. Pieces from the other sculpture projects, such as comic artist Chris Ware's "Paper Dolls" began to find their way onto the IDs. One of his comics of a nude old woman is on a card with the identification "Naked Old Lady." Part of the fun of the exhibition is not just what the artists have concocted, but what their concoctions lead others to create.

In "Things You Don't Like," Ester Partegas supplies the blueprint for creating a yellow recycling bin. Sheets of hand-drawn notebook paper accompany the plan. The idea is to write down a list of "things you don't like," crumple them and get rid of them. It's pretty difficult to resist the urge to uncrumple other people's lists to see what bothers them.

Several of the pieces in the show are also rather self-referential. Glenn Ligon's

"Pictures at an Exhibition" is a portable gallery. Allan Wexler's plan for the show's furniture serves double-duty. The plan gives instructions for making the furniture out of sheets of plywood and also can be constructed as a mini version of "The Paper Sculpture Show." Gallery director Jenny Strayer says the pieces of furniture were rather difficult to construct. "I think Wexler only worked them out on paper," she says.

Although fun, this show is time-consuming and not without its challenges. Not only are some of the pieces, such as Aric Obrosey's "Paper Work Glove Recto Verso," difficult to make, but also most of them require a solid chunk of time -- 30 to 45 minutes -- to construct. Not that this should be a deterrent;

if people don't want to finish their piece all at once, they can return, Strayer says. But when the show first went up, she says, the lack of pieces on the wall was startling.

Even in this more advanced stage, where dozens of sculptures have been completed, the show demands a lot for people to process as they explore the gallery. There's still not as much sculpture on display as there could be, and it takes participation to fully understand the exhibition.

"The Paper Sculpture Show" is hip and with-it, and Pittsburgh is not behind the times when it comes to sponsoring this show; it's still as new as can be. For these reasons, it deserves attention -- and lots of it.

"The Paper Sculpture Show" runs through Oct. 12 at CMU's Regina Gouger Miller Gallery in conjunction with "Rudy Shepherd: Affirmative Actions" and "Memorial Project Vietnam" by Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba/MATRIX 203. For more information, call 412-268-3618.

Leslie Hoffman is a freelance critic for the Post-Gazette.

The Paper Sculpture Show is organized by *Cabinet* magazine, Independent Curators International (ICI), and SculptureCenter. It is curated by Mary Ceruti, Matt Freedman, and Sina Najafi, and accompanied by *The Paper Sculpture Book*, which contains the entire exhibition in unassembled, take-home form. The traveling exhibition is organized and circulated by Independent Curators International. The exhibition and its accompanying publication are made possible, in part, by support from the Peter Norton Family Foundation.