

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 17, 2005

WHAT: Exhibition: ***Sheila Pepe: Mind the gap***

WHEN: February 5 – May 13, 2005
Opening reception, Friday, February 4, 5-7 pm
The artist will be present at the opening reception.
Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11 am - 4:30 pm and Saturday-Sunday, 2-5 pm.
Please note that the Gallery will be closed March 12-20 for Spring Recess.

WHERE: University Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Located in the lower level of the Fine Arts Center
Press release text and press-quality images are also available. Please email
jklind@admin.umass.edu.

Sheila Pepe: Mind the gap

Responding to the architectural idiosyncrasies of the space in which she works, Sheila Pepe creates site-specific installations that are a blend of sculptural and graphic elements. The artist entwines materials such as shoelaces or yarn—in this case, nautical tow-line—into networks that span the room while allowing for a visitor's comfortable passage. Contrary to what might be thought, it is the systematic precision of her handcraft that makes for a seemingly random accretion of solid forms, the shadows of which contribute to an atmosphere of perceptual play. Pepe's installation will be on view at the University Gallery from February 5 through May 13 with an opening reception and a chance to meet the artist on Friday, February 4 from 5-7 pm. Sheila Pepe will give a talk on March 24 at 7 pm in the University Gallery. All are welcome to attend

For one of Pepe's more recent projects at the Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art in Florida, Michael Rush, then Director of the PBICA, wrote eloquently of the artist's aims and interests.

"...Sheila Pepe grew up in an Italian immigrant family in New Jersey. It is not accidental that her preferred materials include shoelaces and rubber bands. Her grandfather owned shoe repair shops, and she has been consciously paying homage to him in her work for several years. Pepe's fierce intelligence as an artist is cast in a deep appreciation for everyday life and simple encounters such as one might have in a corner store...or over the phone....She enjoys purchasing her ingredients from mom-and-pop shops and relishes having been taught to crochet by her mother.

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"Her artistic enterprise is far from simple, however. Pepe has much more in common with such internationally known artists as Robert Gober, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Jessica Stockholder than she does with neighborhood sewing circles, yet she would feel comfortable in the company of either group. Herein lies Pepe's enormous appeal: her work is propelled by an enduring identification with both the stuff of home life and the complex problems of art historical inquiry, especially the formal concerns of modernism. Her entangled constructions initiate profound interrogations of sculptural space while engaging the human body in the making and viewing of art. There is no passive way to encounter a Pepe installation.

"Pepe's work is an invasion of the exhibition space: it is a seemingly chaotic assemblage of insultingly "low" materials that disorients the viewer and forces bodily interaction, including, at the very least, stepping around, stooping under, looking up, looking through, and exercising faculties of mind and imagination....Beneath the seemingly arbitrary joining of her shoelaces (and, in this case, almost fifteen hundred feet of super-durable nautical tow lines) is a rigorous architectural plan that stares modernism in the face, at once embracing and dismantling it."

Sheila Pepe was born in Morristown, New Jersey, in 1959, and lives and works in New York. The artist has had recent one-person exhibitions at the Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth, Florida (2004); the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, California (2003); and The Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro (2002). Her work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions including *The Photogenic*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (2002); *Verging on Real*, Wave Hill, The Bronx, New York (2001); and *Greater New York*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York (2000). Pepe is represented by Susan Inglett, New York, and Bernard Toale, Boston.

An illustrated catalogue will be published by the University Gallery and will be available for purchase during the spring semester. The catalogue will include edited conversations between Ms. Pepe and Judy Pfaff, an artist whose site-specific installation *Boa* was presented at the University Gallery in 1982 and who was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2004. *Sheila Pepe: Mind the gap* is supported in part by funds from the UMass Arts Council and a generous gift from Wendy S. Evans Fine Arts, Inc. (UMass Alumna 1979).

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center on President's Drive, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 am to 4:30 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 pm. The Gallery is also open during evening performances at the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall. Parking is available on Haigis Mall, In front of the FAC, and across the street at the Robsham Visitors Center. Accessible parking is located on the North (pond) side of the FAC, just up the sidewalk from the Gallery. The University Gallery is closed Mondays, holidays, and March 12 - 20 for Spring Recess.

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