

The University Gallery is pleased to present Michele Blondel, an exhibition of recent work by this French artist. In her sculpture and installations, Blondel re-creates the atmosphere of her Catholic childhood and explores the religion's pairing of physical mortification and spiritual ecstasy. The exhibition is on view from January 29 through March 18, 1994, and has an opening reception on Friday, January 28 from 5 to 7 p.m.

Blondel is fascinated by the erotic underpinnings of Catholic ritual and dogma. Allusions to the body are evoked through articles of clothing or the hand-blown Baccarat crystal that the artist makes into sexually suggestive forms. These are often placed in arrangements with the paraphernalia of Catholic worship. Aspects of eroticism, spirituality, and memory are contained in Blondel's simple Guillotine Boxes, a series from 1991. Each box contains objects that recall memories of childhood or that provoke associations in a more adult world. In one, she places phallic and breast-like forms, a lace doily, and photographs of Bretonne women in their characteristic lace caps. In another, two elongated glass objects are arranged on a piece of lace, and a pair of shoes hang over a book that stereotypes women by nationality. The articles used in both individual sculptures and in larger installations are combined as provocative comments upon Blondel's religious and cultural heritage.

In Bene Pendentes, 1992, 13 lavishly brocaded liturgical vestments hang above the floor from iron lances. Below the garments are an assortment of gilded mirrors upon which have been placed complete sets of surrogate male genitalia made of blown-glass. The piece refers to the examination that papal candidates have to undergo to make certain that they are, in fact, men. The phallogocentric organization of the Church is cleverly called into question in that, despite the required proof of being male, Catholic priests are required to take a vow of celibacy. Exploring the juncture of Church dogma and human sexuality, Blondel seeks to have the viewer reconsider not only the contradictory practices of Catholicism, but the accepted traditions of any organization that has become entrenched in its own beliefs.

Michele Blondel divides her time between Paris and New York. In the United States, she has had recent one person exhibitions at the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, (1993); Tyler Galleries, Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia (1992); and the Corcoran Gallery,



Washington, D.C. (1992). Her work has been widely exhibited in Europe in both individual and group exhibitions.

The University Gallery is pleased to be publishing a jointly produced catalogue with the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, and Tyler Galleries in conjunction with three of Blondel's recent American exhibitions. The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue have been made possible by the support of the Association Francaise d'Action Artistique, and the French Cultural Services.

Also on view is the exhibition Recent Gifts and Acquisitions which features drawings, prints, photographs and works in mixed media that have been acquired for the permanent collection over the past three years. Included in the exhibition are works by Robert Cumming, Jan Groover, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Bruce Nauman and Catherine Wagner among other artists.

After these two exhibitions end, the University Gallery will be temporarily closed for approximately one year due to the structural renovation of the Fine Arts Center. The renovation is expected to begin in the spring of 1994. During this time, the Gallery plans to program film and video series, guest lectures and performance-based events at other sites on campus in collaboration with different university departments.

General programming support for the Gallery is provided by the UMass Arts Council and the University Alumni Association.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center.

