

# A really big show

The 'RISD Graduate Thesis Exhibition 2013'  
By **GREG COOK** | May 21, 2013

<http://thephoenix.com/boston/arts/154089-really-big-show/#ixzz3dyfqntFF>

It's impossible to wrap your mind around the entire "RISD Graduate Thesis Exhibition 2013." This showcase of tomorrow's-art-stars-today is both invigorating and overwhelming, with work by 194 students getting their master's degrees this spring filling the cavernous Rhode Island Convention Center (1 Sabin St, Providence, through June 1). Writing about it is like reporting back from a whirlwind tour abroad, inevitably somewhat random and incomplete. But here are some things I noticed.



Weston's 'Cactus Brooch.'

Ed Brown's *Artists Bluff* is a sensuous video of a ski area (areas?) — a gondola climbing a peak, snowy evergreens, skiers seen from afar winding down the hills like ants on holiday. Brown screens it on a television installed a few inches inside a hole cut in the gallery's wall. The footage is exquisite, though nothing particularly moving. But somehow his presentation makes you feel like you could fall through his "window" into a winter wonderland.

Claudia Bitran's *The Zone* videos open with a riff on *Let's All Go To the Lobby* — a popcorn tub puppet warns us to shut off our cellphones and refrain from smoking. It's followed by a dead-on evocation of a "Korean horror" flick, all twitchy cuts, twinned girls, and surreal bloody messes. A "Latin action" movie follows, starring a woman in a blue jumpsuit climbing (cardboard) walls, shooting guns, riding motorcycles, slapping people, and having mad hot sex standing against her apartment wall. After that is a snooty "French" art drama. Bitran's videos are part parody, part homage; narratives don't exactly develop and there are not many jokes per se. But like the DIY remakes of popular films that Mos Def and Jack Black "swede" in Michel Gondry's 2008 film *Be Kind Rewind*, Bitran's movies crackle with catchy, jaunty verve.

F. Taylor Colantonio turns braided rugs 3D with eight floppy woven cable pots and two tall blue-and-white vases (which remind me of the Japanese vases in John Singer Sargent's iconic painting *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts). Something typically hard and

breakable becomes soft and flexible. Witty and clever.

Mallory Weston's jewelry combines cute cartoony design with prickly humor, as in her *Cactus Brooch*, which she pieced together from little green metal plates with nails sticking out all over it. Don't know how you wear it, but I love its look and kooky kick. She also offers *Pill Necklace*, which looks like a giant red and white pill turned into a clutch; a necklace of fuzzy rabbit fur clouds dripping cartoon rain of nickel (I think); and twin vomiting smiley faces.



Bochynski's 'William and Patty Hearst.'

Joe Bochynski sets up his freestanding, absurdist sculptures as couples. In *William and Patty Hearst*, a payphone on four legs faces a ventilation duct with a neck of artificial grass attaching it to a lit-up column for a body. Another pair is half a bathtub with an industrial light inside standing atop a rickety wooden cart facing a tiled cabinet stuffed with illuminated Christmas lights. They have weird, charming personalities, like aliens rejected from some 1960s sci-fi television show.

Marco Gallegos knows how to make furniture, as is evident from his elegant, minimalist eight-foot-tall ash plywood and steel fan. But you'll also be impressed by his *Home Brewing Station*, a handsome white oak and stainless steel trunk stocked with everything you need to begin making your own beer, and his bike saddlebag for stylishly transporting bottles of libations.

In Scott Alario's earlier series *Our Fable*, he staged photographic fantasies with his wife and baby daughter. Here newer photos from his *What We Conjure* series retain some of that play, but dial down the magic, and I miss it some. There's still dreamy carrying-on, as in a shot of his daughter squinting in a spotlight under a constellation of stars or his photo *Preparing to Collect to Nature (All the House Plants)*, which depicts a naked lady hidden amidst a jungle of potted plants. But Alario has achieved straightforward, warm, steady observation in these velvety black and white photos. He stares into a compost bucket. A girl kneels surrounded by seed packets arrayed in neat rows. A man (I'm assuming it's Alario himself) holds his sleeping girl in his arms outside a house at night.

Anna Huemmer's *Good Object 2* is a blob mounted on its own pedestal. It's not the lumpy shape that catches you (it resembles a surreal playground climbing, ride-on thing), but Huemmer's choice of material. The sculpture is covered in a skin of distinctively rubbery orange squares cut from traffic cones.