

Art

Beneath the Surface, We Meet

Ambitious dual show plumbs our collective unconscious

"Under the Influence"

On display through January 4 at the Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, 1650 Harrison St., Hollywood, 954-921-3274; and through September 30 at Girls' Club, 117 NE Second St., Fort Lauderdale, 954-828-9151.

BY MICHAEL MILLS

Under the Influence" is nothing if not ambitious: more than 60 artists, some represented by more than one work; three curators, all artists in their own right; and two separate venues, one of which will display its portion of the show for nearly a full year.

The exhibition is a joint venture between the Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, which contributed one of the curators, Jane Hart, and Girls' Club, which contributed the other two, Michelle Weinberg and Francie Bishop Good. Promotional materials characterize the show as "a multimedia exploration of [how] artists influence one another on every level" and refer to "collaboration and cross-pollination of ideas and methods."

There's even something that sounds sort of like a mission statement: "Through local social networks and collaborations, mentor/student relationships, and by virtue of conceptual or aesthetic sympathies, artists affect one another. Art production patterned after do-it-yourself business models — so popular among emerging artists today — has an antecedent in the feminist collectives of the '70s and '80s that challenged the isolation and originality of the individual artist prominent at the time."

While this may seem like not much more than a fancy way of restating the obvious, it strikes me more as a rationalization for bringing together so much diverse art by so many diverse artists under one banner. There's an air of "Let's put on a show!" about the whole enterprise. Although a show of this size and scope might typically be expected to be a juried competition, or maybe a survey of a large permanent collection, "Under the Influence" is neither — although chunks of it come from various private collections, like that of Girls' Club itself.

A few words about Girls' Club, which I'm writing about for the first time. It is a private foundation, started in 2006 by Fran-

Florida's most prominent arts activists and philanthropists, though even that sweeping generalization seems inadequate. *New Times* named Good the year's Best Local Artist, citing her and her husband's involvement with, to name just two examples, the Museum of Art/Fort Lauderdale and North Miami's Museum of Contemporary Art. The title of a Gertrude Stein biography, *Everybody Who Was Anybody*, comes to mind when considering the couple's cultural connections.

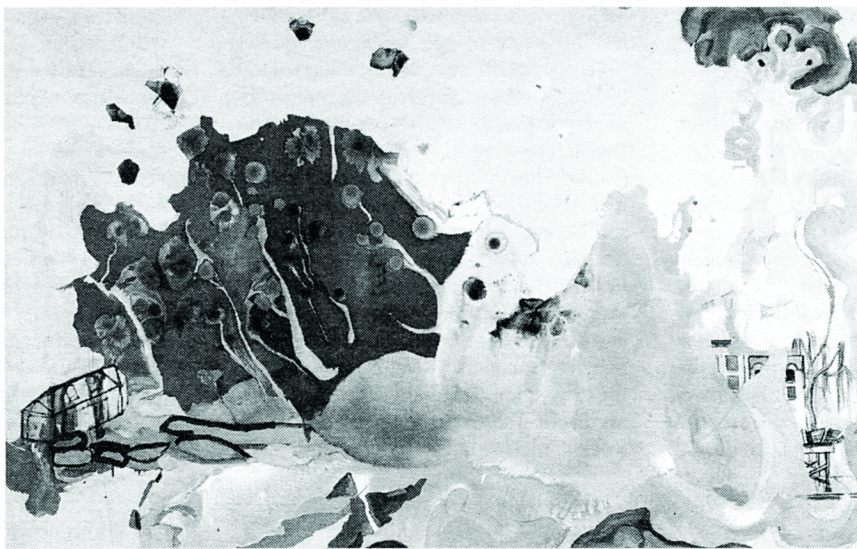
Girls' Club opened its headquarters in downtown Fort Lauderdale last fall, when it presented its first yearlong exhibition, "Talking Heads." The space, a few doors down from City Hall, is a warehouse that was redesigned by local architect Margi Glavovic Nothard, who created the dramatic exterior staircase that the Museum of Art/Fort Lauderdale used during its King Tut extravaganza (and which has remained out of commission pretty much ever since). Along with storage areas, an ingeniously concealed office, and Good's personal studio, the transformed space is also home to a bright, airy two-level gallery, which is where the bulk of "Under the Influence" is on display.

disparate works might have in common. But then I noticed that a number of the artists seem to be working with a set of similar compositional components. It's as if they had somehow plucked the same random ingredients from a great cultural unconscious — certain shapes and colors and textures that reappear in seemingly unrelated works. It sounds a little offbeat, I know, but it's also consistent with the show's stated concerns.

Welty compiled seven minutes' worth of wrong-number messages.

Unless wall text panels have been added since I was there, the Girls' Club installation is presented without supplementary information. The Art and Culture Center segment of the show is given a more traditional treatment: text panels that establish more specific contexts for the work. It's an approach I much prefer.

Overall, sculpture and especially video have a considerably stronger presence at Girls' Club, although there's a video at the Art and Culture Center that really got under my skin. I hesitate to single out just one work in an exhibition that's so much about the dynamics of the group, but if I were in the unenviable position of having to pick a Best in Show, it might well be *Karaoke Wrong Number 2001-2004*, a DVD for which artist Rachel Perry Welty compiled seven minutes' worth of wrong-number messages from her answering machine, then filmed herself in a virtuoso lip-sync performance



Elizabeth Condon's *Realms of the Dynasty*: The flight motif kicks in.

of them, back to back and with no props. I can only begin to characterize the range of responses this deceptively complex piece provoked in me. It made me smile, it made me laugh, it made me wonder how long Welty had to practice to get so good at lip-syncing to these highly varied voices. Maybe that's why I like it so much. Hey, maybe that's why I like "Under the Influence" so much. It's the kind of show that sneaks up from behind and takes you by surprise.

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