

REVIEWS

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plant books because, for her, they carried an ambiguous emotional valence. Here, by alluding to an ambivalent landscape where cure might be an ally of harm, she employs her erudite knowledge. But then—the artist's move as opposed to the herbalist's—she glues this knowledge onto parodied prize ribbons, purloined, perhaps, from some harvest festival. These mismatchings keep you on your toes. I mean, what is the prize for, curing or killing?

By similarly grabbing at the iconography of flags, bunting, and banners, the drawings in this show also grease the frontiers between categories. Morton's cultural promiscuity, her refusal to genuflect to boundaries, allowed her to tie together writing and painting and to revel in the perversity of letting language be sculpture. In the openness of the dialogue she activates between styles, genres, and materials, it often seems that the work intentionally remains not-yet-finished, as if she knew that everything we say should have a tentative quality.

Laurence Hegarty is a writer and artist based in New York City.

Esperanza Cortés

Neuberger Museum of Art
State University of New York
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Esperanza Cortés's concerns: domestic violence, race, and religion, are precipitated by her passion for making penetrating, and precise objects. Her ten multi-media works in this exhibition "Revelations"—some free-standing, others hanging on walls or from the ceiling—project a level of consciousness that would never accept salvation.

Works like *Charm Bracelet*, a wall piece made of framed frescos, roses, charms, and glass beads, addresses with agonizingly blunt imagery one seemingly unresolvable pattern common to many abusive relationships. The four painted images: a lacerated pelvic area,

a bruised mouth, a blood-stained and bruised eye socket, and a nipple contusion, are each flanked by decorative charms. Clearly, the trinkets are given to make the hurt go away; unfortunately they come from the same source as the pain. The chain—the bracelet minus its adornments—symbolizes the oppression in her life.

The exhibit's centerpiece *Throne* is Cortés's chance to break the generational abuse cycle. It is her daughter's baby wicker chair, covered with extremely delicate ceramic roses (each with an oversized, thorn-like stem), all painted red, placed atop a pedestal which is covered with blood-red velvet, then surrounded by a circle of dirt and more unpainted roses; as such it is one final attempt at protecting her child from what she may perceive as a predestined fate.

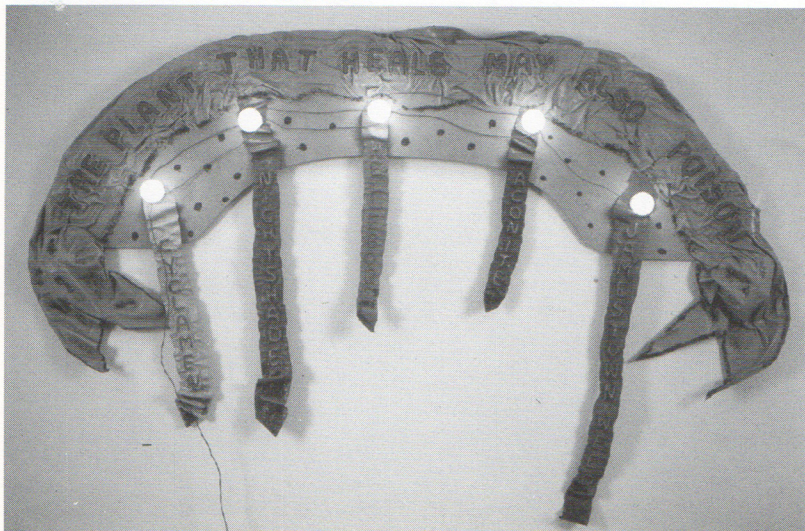
A pair of mixed-media, wax reliefs *Untitled I* and *Untitled II* can best be described as Adam- and Eve-like. One shows a solemn woman standing, supporting her

very pregnant belly with both hands, her body covered with a fertile, scarlet-red tree. The companion piece, an eyeball-less male, hangs across the room. He stands with his hands cradling his heart, a heart which spawns a network of crimson branches, but his are sparsely leafed, trunk-less, and without roots. Here, the artist effectively relays her experience with male dominated relationships as a bilateral, self-esteem problem. The hammered metal ornaments on both works are reminiscent of an ancient iconic format, making her unfortunate message timeless. One final element, a holy-water cup, appears at the bottom of her "Eve" painting, for those who feel engaged enough to pray for her.

Dominick Lombardi is an artist, writer and curator based in Valhalla, New York.

Ree Morton

The Plant that Heals May Also Poison, 1974. Celastic, glitter, light bulbs, and paint on wood, 46" x 64" x 4" Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin.



Esperanza Cortés

Throne (detail), 1996-98. Bamboo chair, clay, soil, velvet. Courtesy of the artist.

