

ART REVIEW | SHERRY LEEDY CONTEMPORARY ART

## Taking on New Roles



Misty Gamble's "Chanel No. 11" highlights the danger of valuing brand over identity.

**The movies never existed and the settings are improbable, but the images are powerful.**

**BY NICK MALEWSKI**

Special to The Star

Celebrity and fashion figure prominently in two equally engaging exhibits at Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art.

Judy Miller, a photographer based in Tucson, Ariz., is showing 11 color photos from her "Imaginary Dioramas" series. In this selection, wax representations of actors, musicians and performers are cast in cutting room-floor film stills from movies that never existed.

More than just proffering famous faces, these photos suggest the entertainment industry's manipulation of perception.

Miller takes pictures of wax figures in museums such as Madame Tussauds. She also shoots landscapes and interiors at various locations, such as inside the grand ballroom of the Queen Mary in Long Beach, Calif. Since 2004, she has been using her cache of pictures to

make photo composites of wax figures arranged against new backgrounds.

The effect is uncanny.

"Outtake #26, Uma," for instance, cleverly constructs what looks like a scene edited out of some film starring Uma Thurman. But something is amiss.

While the wax actress in the foreground and the wax Quentin Tarantino studying her from behind are believable, the faintly incongruous outdoor background — a photo taken on Miller's trip to Utah — betrays the overall illusion.

"Outtake #16, Woody 2" humorously highlights the artificial character of Miller's series. A mediocre likeness of Woody Allen, instead of inhabiting a Manhattan milieu, is set against two campground cabins shaped like teepees.

Elsewhere in the gallery, Misty Gamble, who teaches at the Kansas City Art Institute, is showing seven

With "Shoe Pile," Misty Gamble demonstrates the futility of mindless accumulation of luxury items. None of the shoes in the piece has a mate, rendering them unwearable.

### the shows

"Judy Miller: Imaginary Dioramas" and "Misty Gamble: Primping and the Currency of Worth" continue at Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, 2004 Baltimore Ave., through April 24. Hours are 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. For more information, call 816-221-2626 or visit [www.sherryleedy.com](http://www.sherryleedy.com).



PHOTOS FROM SHERRY LEEDY CONTEMPORARY ART

ceramic sculptures and installations in an exhibit titled “Primping and the Currency of Worth.” This grouping conveys that high fashion often comes with a high price.

Much of Gamble’s work has dealt with women and their struggles with body image and cultural expectations. Here the spotlight is on female trappings and the encumbering effects they can have on those who acquire them.

Three grotesque, life-size ceramic figures from Gamble’s “Chanel” series suggest a brand name product’s imposition upon identity.

In “Chanel No. 2,” an expressively rendered woman wears a bright yellow Chanel suit. The color of her clothes and her grayish-blue skin refer to Chanel-specific hues. “Chanel No. 11,” a frightfully grinning woman with yellow skin and a pink suit, is presented without arms, as if she were a mere mannequin for the clothes.

“Updo Stump” signifies someone who has become blinded by the pursuit of big, beautiful hair.

Meticulously styled hair, sculpted in clay, covers the face of this stunningly surreal bust. Gamble’s choice to call her creation a stump further impairs it

by equating it to a tree whose limbs are cut off.

“Shoe Pile,” the most visually striking work here, implies that a thing of need, through repeated purchase, can turn into a needless thing of luxury. A messy heap of pastel high heels and sandals is displayed against a wall papered partition.

None of the shoes has a matching partner, so their owner can’t even wear them.

Made of clay, the footwear, like Miller’s wax figures masquerading as movie stars, pretends to be something it is not.