

Jodi Birdwell

stacked, packed, cuffed



The McLean County Arts Center presents *stacked, packed, cuffed*, an exhibition of new painting, drawing, and sculpture by Jodi Birdwell, from March 7–April 19, 2014. An Opening Reception for the exhibition will be on Friday, March 7 from 5pm to 7pm in the Armstrong Gallery during Downtown Bloomington’s First Friday and will be free and open to the public.

Jodi Birdwell’s exhibition *stacked, packed, cuffed* combines her drawings, paintings, and sculptures with found objects into intimate installations. These installations behave much like still lifes in painting conveying metaphor and commenting on the passage of time.

The initial inspiration for this body of work began with the found object of detachable cuffs from men’s dress shirts. The unique rectangular shape with a little tab towards the top of the side is repeated throughout Birdwell’s drawings, paintings, and sculpture. The shirt cuffs, while common and anonymous in their day, are personal objects alluding to a strong work ethic and a moral ethic of utility, frugality, and preservation. This prudent mentality is supported in other parts of the installations through the orderly accumulation of ceramic forms made by Birdwell and stored in old wood boxes and bowls. The ceramic forms imitate objects of nature like stones, worms, and sticks, but also take on likenesses of hand tools, roof shingles, and building hardware. These collections bring to mind the proverbs of our grandparents, “A place for everything and everything in its place” and “Waste not, want not.”

The human presence is represented in the installations by the placement of found wooden chairs adjacent to the drawings, paintings, and sculptures. They are suggested places to sit in order to stack, unstack, pack, and unpack the objects and their meaning. The consistent color choices of shades of gray, brown, black, and white unify the installations and speak of practicality and purity. And yet, accents of hot red-orange and cool slate-blue colors reveal the vitality and meditation behind the work.

Jodi Birdwell is a multi-media artist in Urbana. She earned her MFA from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in Printmaking. She is a Professor of Art at Lake Land College in Mattoon, IL.

The exhibition is generously sponsored by Lori Baum & Aaron Henkelman, and Debra Wozniak.