



ON POINT: Fabric, sculpture, drawing and painting culminate in Re'Grimsley's subtly-rendered art.



REVIEW

Stitch Craft

Delicacy, intricacy and elusive beauty make for a powerful solo show at Selden

BY **BETSY DIJULLIO**

Meredith Re'Grimsley: Subtext and Intimacies

Through June 27

Selden Gallery, 208 E. Main Street, Norfolk

664-6880, www.theselden.com

THE FOUR BEST PIECES in *Subtext and Intimacies*—which are exquisitely and achingly beautiful—hover just at the cusp of understanding. They gently tease barely out of one's grasp, like a view that shifts in and out of focus, or like a fog that obscures and reveals in a maddening cycle. Just when epiphany seems possible, it slips away like a fugitive.

Bind Them on Your Fingers 1-3, Keep My Words 1-3, Lovely Bind, and I've Washed and Eaten are all created from some combination of handmade tea-stained cotton paper, watercolors, hand-embroidered thread, fuse-able interfacing and muslin. Over sensitively, subtly drawn and painted hands and faces is the most delicate, intricate stitching imaginable.

A trio of individual images comprise both of the first two series, with each frame in the sequence zooming in more closely to a pair of clasped hands and a woman's face and mouth, respectively. The latter two pieces feature expressive hands and forearms that have been cut out and connected through hand gestures and/or the use of threads.

With an aesthetic that is faded, nostalgic, Victorian and very feminine, Re'Grimsley stitches together ideas about the tension between sin, seduction, salvation and spirituality and how each is mediated by written, spoken and body language. The perplexing place-

ment and patterns of needlework in each intimate and introspective piece speaks volumes about desire and repression in an exotic, evocative, ritual-laden language that's only partially, fleetingly understood.

Other pieces in the show are either more obvious in their meaning, or more familiar—and somehow less satisfying for those reasons. Still, a six-block quilt entitled *Question*—that literally poses questions about abortion by stitching queries into repeating motifs of in vitro fetuses—is sorrowful and sublime in its content, its vaguely Art Nouveau needlework and its rich tones of terracotta, gold, green and pink. A contour drawing of a nude pregnant woman's torso in profile stitched over the squares provides unity by providing a simultaneously graceful and graphic focal point.

And *Remorse*, a mixed-media sculpture suspended from the ceiling—offering a nod in the direction of an artist like Petah Coyne—is, while not unfamiliar, nonetheless an apt non-

objective embodiment of the feeling of remorse. Suspended in a circle by ropes attached to the ceiling are eight attenuated cone forms that appear constructed from wrapped strips of deep blood-red fabric, similar to a rag rug. Each is tethered to the floor by a gracefully arching red cable of threads connected to clusters of metal washers that rest in a ring on the floor. On the one hand, the piece evokes a heavy, visceral feeling not unlike the weight of deep gut-wrenching guilt. Yet, though the forms are held down, they are also held aloft, which may metaphorically suggest the possibility of redemption, while the plurality of forms may suggest the communal nature of both our sins and our salvation. ●

