

Material Exuberance

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Coffee Shop Notes

Sara Stallard

Barbara Hardaway, renowned collage artist from Maryland, hosted an open reception featuring her artwork from May 1st to May 3rd, at The Summit Building, in Silver Spring, MD. The three-room gallery teemed with her colorful and playful exuberance, both in the exhibition and in the artist's personality as she zipped around in her electric scooter and chatted up a storm with friends and visitors as they enjoyed the music and refreshments along with the many pieces of work on display. Her creative repertoire was in full force, with large mixed media compositions on the walls, richly ornamented items such as shoes and leg braces, and a small installation of computer and electronic equipment which was painted and covered with a colorful and cheerful variety of decorative appliqué. Please see link: <http://www.articulatedeaf.com/hardaway.html> for images from the show, courtesy of the artist's permission.

Much of Hardaway's work is political in nature—being both disabled and a popular professor of English at Gallaudet University, she infuses her art with philosophical outlooks about life and frequently uses wit, both subtle and obvious. In one example, the details on a decorative keyboard, the letters WWW in the American manual alphabet appear, and in many of her collaged compositions (which frequently feature women), there are wry observations about love and its accompanying miseries. As an African-American, Hardaway embraces a lot of African motifs in her style, but her work is quintessentially American in that it deals with materialism as a vehicle of expression (this is especially notable among many mixed-media artists). For instance, she converted her old leg braces into beautiful objects, which could signify the adjustment of one's attitude about disability. Much of her work was for sale, and the artist can be further contacted through her website:

<http://www.barbarahardawaystudio.com>

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