

**Beyond Circumstance (catalog), essay, "Survival," by Margaret McInroe, 1995 Hunter College of The City University of New York, New York, NY**

**Survival**

Sustaining the survival of the creative thought is inherent in the works of Janet Henry, Dana Kane, and Drew Shiflett. Faced with a decision of how make an art work, the artist is presented with a situation that requires working through a structure, system or strategy.

**Drew Shiflett's sculpture, *Stage Set with White Cube*, is a hybrid of material and form. Images of survival appear both in the structure and in the materials that the artist uses. Layering an assortment of architectural materials such as plaster, wire, wood, paper, and electrical conduits, Shiflett creates an eccentrically shaped object, pierced by a protruding pipe. Though abstract, the sculpture recalls a nomadic shelter or a 'modernist' house. But what is the 'stage set' in the title? Perhaps this is another construction – the artifice of the theater. The state may refer to the theater or to the stages of concepts, decisions, or experiences in life. In this way she seeks permanence through an inherently fragile system.**

Janet Henry's *Them What's in the Moat Ain't No Different From Theys That's in the Castle* is an assemblage of color photocopies of dolls. Encased in clear plastic which is stuffed with shredded money and other bits of colorful paper, the pages are arranged by the artist for each installation. Henry describes the work as a soft touchable lariat due to its long, stretched appearance when installed. The viewer finds little narratives buried in the work. In one, a scene occurs at the Con Edison office. One character pleads, "I came in heah and gave you my money myself. You gots the money, why you cut my electric off?" Presenting these urban dramas of survival in contemporary society, the work is an ironic comment on racial and class politics. Outwardly attractive, colorful, and happy, the work presents the disturbing realization that esthetics can concern the survival of living beings and not just theories.

In the installation the dreaming between words and things Dana Kane suspends a series of seven floating white 'cots' or berths. Inscribed on the thin lines attaching the cots to the wall are the words: "endure bear undergo suffer tolerate submit" and on another, "cherish nourish maintain provide foster support love." Kane sees the piece as a figurative and literal support system, functioning as a resting place for the psyche and an area where projected "desire" convalesces and regenerates. In speaking about her work she quotes the words of Gaston Bachelard from his book, *The Poetics of Reverie*, "In order to know ourselves we must pay attention to our reveries." Kane creates an atmosphere conducive to the process of sustained dreaming where creative thought is nourished through solace.

**Margaret McInroe**