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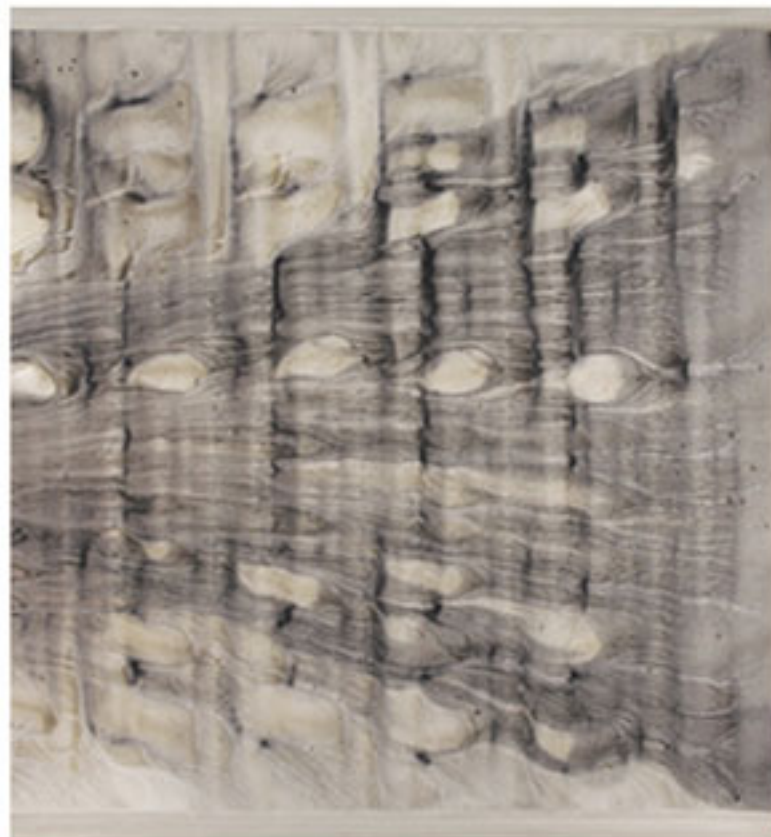
SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2016

VISUAL ARTS

Measuring Spoons for the Immeasurable

Three artists narrate the flow of passing time in a show at the MFA.

Posted By **CAITLIN ALBRITTON** on Sat, Mar 5, 2016 at 11:18 AM



Urban Landscape

VICKY COLOMBET

It seems as though the only thing that is truly timeless is time itself. Time's inexorable forward motion tends to enhance and highlight our own mortality, as we take note of how quickly we sprint from a carefree childhood, through awkward teenage years, and nosedive into adulthood. *Measured Life: Works by Vicky Colombet, Babs Reingold, and Tip Toland* is an intimate show that silently speaks of these undeniable cycles of life and death.

Measured Life: Works by Vicky Colombet, Babs Reingold, and Tip Toland.
\$17. Through June 26. Museum of Fine Arts, 255 Beach Dr. N.E., St. Petersburg. 727- 896-2667. fine-arts.org.

There's nothing morbid or gloomy about the works; in fact, death isn't even brought up on any of the wall texts. The artists address the topic through the push toward beauty. This cycle, like time, simply *is*.

These illusions of the real perpetually build up and break down my own notions of the passage of time.

A frail old woman, quietly taking a mid-afternoon nap in the nude, is immediately in view as one enters the gallery space. Tip Toland is known for her hauntingly realistic use of clay, and this work, *Milk for the Butter Thief*, is no exception, evidenced through its painstakingly accurate micro-detail. From the multiple wrinkles of accumulated loose skin pooling at her midsection as she lies on her side, to the raised veins on the top of her delicate hand, to the gentle mottling of her aging skin, Toland dares you not to tap this fragile woman on the shoulder to wake her up from her odd rest stop.

Because ceramics are porous, they tend to be cool to the touch. Not that I'm condoning touching Toland's mixed media sculpture (please don't!), but imagining the coolness of the old woman's earthy "flesh" furthers my line of questioning about this vulnerable human being: asleep, or otherwise?

"The Lee Malone Gallery is a small but flexible space that allows for focused exhibitions. In the past we have used the space for our Collection Conversations series, exploring themes through our encyclopedic collection," says Katherine Pill, MFA curator of contemporary art. "Once I learned that Mindy Solomon was giving the exquisite Tip Toland sculpture to the MFA, I knew it would be perfect for the Lee Malone Gallery space. It's a work that demands a peaceful viewing area, and meaningful context. Considerations of time — whether personal or environmental — are so important to our lives, and I think this exhibition as a whole allows for tremendous points of reflection."

It's not often that I want to be in a painting, but the seemingly endless flow of wave-like ripples in Vicky Colombet's *Urban Landscape* looks like the perfect place to sink into. Although she doesn't reference the body quite as directly as Toland or Reingold, Colombet's "meditative landscapes" act as stand-ins for the fluid, natural body. The paintings on one hand look simple in their approach to color and form. On the other hand, they take on a complexity in their transitions of light to dark sections, mimicking the slow, steady accumulation of sediment building up in the rocky nooks of a creek bed.

On the walls circling the sculpture are two graphite drawings by Babs Reingold. Focusing on human hair in her work, she plays with notions of attraction and repulsion that come with the normal process of hair loss. Depending on the circumstances, hair can be highly sexualized (sudsy Herbal Essence commercials, anyone?) or it can be repulsive, like that fateful moment when you find an anonymous, curly, dark hair on your hotel room pillow. Tracking the artist's own aging, Reingold draws the hair she has lost each day, and even dates the hairs just as one would mark the height of a child each year on a wall—as a recording of time and progress, or perhaps regression.

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Each of these female artists plays with illusion in this exhibition, whether it be the illusion of depth and movement in Colombet's flat paintings, Reingold's simple line drawings that can be easily mistaken for actual hair glued to paper, or Toland getting the last laugh with her hyper-realistic sculptures.

These illusions of the real perpetually build up and break down one's own notions of the passage of time. The show questions what parts of our life cycles we avoid or negate, no matter how anticipated they are. Most importantly, it asks us to reflect on how we measure our time here, whether that is in daily multivitamins, toenail clippings, or cups of morning coffee.