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## Small works offer big impact with vivid colors

Artist says small things should not be 'diminished or dismissed.'

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Barbara Schreiber in her Third Ward studio. Courtesy Barbara Schreiber

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Some artists use their work to portray their environment as they would like it to be. Others strive to depict a more realistic portrait of that which surrounds them.

Third Ward resident Barbara Schreiber's works on paper bring her naturally cheery disposition to a deeply flawed world. The result is intimate and accessible paintings and drawings that appear joyful and light at initial glance though reveal troubling and dark undercurrents upon further study.

Schreiber says she filters the world through reality allowing her inherent good nature to collide with the obstacles and challenges life hands out to create her vibrant and somewhat playful works. Professionally exhibiting her work since 1977, Schreiber has an impressive list of institutions, museums and galleries that have featured her work, including Atlanta's High Museum of Art, The Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, The Museum of Modern Art's PS 1, The American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and the Sorbonne. Local exhibitions have included Winthrop University Galleries, the McColl Center for Visual Art, Dialect Gallery, Elizabeth Ross Gallery and Joie Lassiter's New South Gallery.

Much of Schreiber's bold and intensely colorful paintings are small in scale. "1000 Recent Paintings," an exhibit at the Nexus Contemporary Art Center, offered each work on soft press paper that was precisely 2.5 inches by 2.5 inches square and displayed collectively using 3000 "T" pins for mounting.

"My initial foray into smaller works was out of necessity as I have a bad back," Schreiber said. "Being strongly independent and self contained meant I didn't want to have to rely on anyone but myself to move around paintings so my work started getting smaller. Additionally when I was raising my daughter, I wanted to do work that I could pick up and put down as time demanded. I see these small works as narrative fragments that are often exhibited together in ways that tell a story."

Schreiber, a woman of small stature, said she came to recognize her work said something about smallness itself. "I was a small work myself and wanted to present an argument for the seriousness of small things," said Schreiber, "Just because something is small, it should not be diminished or dismissed."

Bright and vivid colors and sharply contrasting hues invite people into Schreiber's work where invariably they are surprised at the mayhem that is happening just below the surface. "Defending the Flower" (an acrylic on soft press paper) depicts two hummingbirds with bright green breasts, white and red throats and blue wings. They dart about a red trumpet flower as one bird appears to be less than playfully stabbing the other in the chest, drawing a drop of blood.

"I work to create a point of entry for everyone in my work," said Schreiber in describing her approach. "I use bold and intense colors because these represent who I am. There seems to be an antipathy towards color in Western culture, even class distinctions can be found in color. I'm peasant-like, I like colors that speak to me, and strong sense experiences."

Like many artists, Schreiber believes that it is up to her audience to ultimately understand and appreciate her work. "I'm not interested in controlling the interpretation of my work," said Schreiber. "People bring their own experiences and sensibilities to art and what is most important to me as an artist is that there is a personal and original response to my work. What that may be I leave to the viewer."

With the artwork of Barbara Schreiber, the response will be anything but muted.

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