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Assiduous Adaptation

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Assiduous Adaptation

By

Shelley Caldwell

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Master of Arts

In

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Assiduous Adaptation

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This thesis has been examined and approved by the following thesis committee:

Chair of Committee, Liz Miller

Committee Member, Brian Frink

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“Nature is beset by clutter, confusion, and jumble.” –Vernon Hyde Minor

Growing up in a rural environment, you both witness the wonders of the natural world and learn to be resourceful with what you already have. This lesson has had a profound impact on my work as an installation artist whose practice combines mixed media drawing with subjects from nature and daily life. Drawing spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*) silhouettes upon legal pad pages then displaying them alongside actual plants—each accumulated to near absurdity—exemplifies the creative impulse behind the work; combining familiar items and imagery into large-scale installations transforms the space they inhabit as well as their ordinary meaning into something extraordinary. Both in color and form, the simultaneity of artifice and authentic establishes an environment in which to immerse the senses. Allowing the audience to move around and within the work affords the opportunity for contemplation. A plant and its shadow reflect that, however banal, there is great value in the mundane items or experiences that occupy daily existence. Emphasizing the deemphasized, the work recognizes and reveals that which is often overlooked—while undoubtedly beautiful, nature is also diligent, unrelenting, and aggressively powerful.

—Shelley Caldwell

*Audience members who wish to nurture a plant are welcome to adopt a small plant to take and enjoy.