

ART

Sage shows women's world of art

BY THOMAS LAIL

Special to the Times Union

TROY — "Networks," the current show at Russell Sage College gallery, presents the work of 14 artists who are members of the Women's Caucus for Art, an organization committed to promoting the historically overlooked art made by women and to creating a more inclusionary art world.

These are admirable goals and something is working, for many of the names included in the show are familiar to area art-goers. And one can understand why artists would want to be viewed in a certain context — here, that of the Women's Caucus.

Nevertheless, it's time to address an issue in the local arts scene: artists who over-show. The same artists crop up in too many local venues and shows suffer, far too many looking like re-combinations of the same people.

REVIEW

"NETWORKS." Through Saturday, Dec. 19. Russell Sage College Gallery, Schacht Fine Arts Center, Troy. 445-1778.

The arts scene suffers because space and schedules are limited; worse, artists suffer because their work is not given enough time out of the spotlight to make the viewer's response fresh, to let the work evolve and push to the next level.

That said, "Networks" is a mixed bag of mediums and messages ranging from photography to sculpture. Interestingly and to the credit of the organization and its members, there is a varied content.

Of particular interest are Katherine Kreisher's two photographic works (each a pairing of hand-colored photos). "After the Ceremony" depicts an enigmatic grouping of garden hose, discarded fabric and the collapsed remnants of what seems to be an arbor. The photographs (slight changes in placement and vantage point occur from the first to the second) traffic in the mystery that surrounds such ephemera, locating the profound in the most common of materials and circumstances with great success.

Ragellah Rourke may not be as familiar as some of the other names in the show and is well represented. "Burning for You" is the more striking of her two paintings, playing off a kind of funky representationalism that might fall somewhere between Jim Nutt and Elizabeth Murray's painting.

Pat Loonan Testo's two upended, out-of-whack interiors continue her

ongoing sense of stage-set minus players but are less brooding here, a lighter palette lending a less menacing quality to the depicted environments. This result has mixed success. One can understand why Loonan Testo wants to keep her options open and resists relying on familiar tricks but seems here to risk making the pictured domiciles too banal, too everyday.

Sculptor Marjorie White Williams fares well here, particularly with "Mamillaria Candida" a large, free-standing breast constructed in characteristic fashion of laminated plywood. The simple, minimal geometry of the form plays interestingly off the unitary forms of '60s and '70s Minimalism.