

# SPA: What's Cooking, Top Secret and Carnival of Sorts

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Marc Awodey: "Check Out"/Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur

Dollops of butter melt into the pockets of a perfectly crisp giant waffle, eliciting a Pavlovian response for breakfast enthusiasts. A beautifully crafted art book of a sandwich — complete with layers of mustard, lettuce, tomato, cheese between the sliced bread cover — evoke the delectable joy of this lunchtime favorite. Figures in line at a grocery check out may bring to mind how separated we sometimes are from sources and production of our food.

Michael Heffernan's oil painting "Diagonal Waffle," Marcia Vogler's "Dream Sandwich" art book, and Marc Awodey's oil painting "Check Out" are among works by 26 artists in "What's Cooking," at Studio Place Arts in Barre. "What's Cooking" considers our lives at the kitchen counter and in the dining room. Food, meals, preparations, connections and distance from our sources of nourishment are explored.

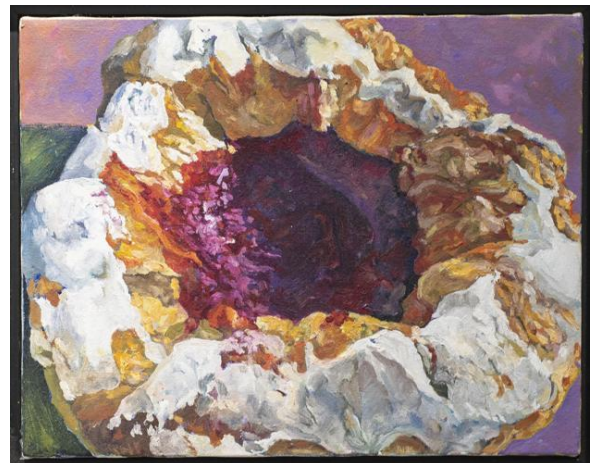
Coded works by Kristen Dettoni in SPA's Second Floor Gallery bring together images and messages. With clues from the artist, viewers can decipher them, finding haiku in tiny glass beads, names of inspiring women and more.

In SPA's Third Floor Gallery, four artists' work comes together in "Carnival of Sorts" — with collage, whittling, model making, and textile art by Jason Galligan-Baldwin, Matt Lutz, Herb Rieth and Tyler Smith.

The three exhibitions open this week, with an Art Social on Saturday, June 29, including an artist's talk by Karen Dettoni.



Kathy Black: "Cerialia"/  
Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur (on left)



Michael Heffernan: "Jelly Filled"/Photo by Jeb  
Wallace-Bodeur (above)

Whimsical, generous, anticipatory, thought-provoking — in “What’s Cooking,” works in many media invite viewers to explore relationships we have with food and its preparation.

For many of us, food is love — meals shared with people we are close to, food we prepare or have perhaps grown, food that evokes moments or places or celebrations.

Love infuses two fiber arts pieces by Marya Lowe, of Jericho, both from her “Recipes from Heaven” series. Each of the two quilted wall hangings, “Swiss Steak” and “Cinnamon Rolls” is meticulously composed of scores of small fabric pieces, then machine quilted in patterns and fluid lines of stitches.

Each is in a gentle palette — lavender and brown in “Swiss Steak,” yellows and golds in “Cinnamon Rolls,” and features a crockery bowl. Among the fabric pieces are snippets of handwritten recipes — favorites from her mother and other relatives and friends who have passed away.



Alexandra Bottinelli: “Food Series (Mothers)”/Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur



Marcia Vogler: "Oh Sweet Tomatoes"/Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur

"The recipes themselves are heavenly, and very dear to me ... they came from ladies now in Heaven," Lowe explains on her website, where the complete recipes are found.

Three art books by Marcia Vogler of Charlotte — "Ramen," "Dream Sandwich" and "Oh Sweet Tomatoes" — offer delightful discoveries when opening the creative volumes, tomato haiku and soft-boiled egg preparation among them.

Poet/writer/artist Roger Weingarten takes viewers to the dining room, where his towering "Pescatarian: The Genesis Machine" slowly spins on a rotating turntable. Bronze and other metal fish, a water spigot, ornate enameled antique stove legs, a pendulum, a vintage grinder, and more come together as a figure of a woman seems to climb the highest peak.

Three pieces by the late Marc Awodey (1960-2012) draw viewers to consider our food sources. In "Check Out," there is an isolated quality to the ongoing food transaction. Two photographs in ornate gold frames "Untitled (Chicken)" and "Untitled (Meat)," cellophane wrapped and price labelled pieces of meat, are remote from the animals they were.

Artist and textile designer Kristen Dettoni, whose solo exhibition, “Top Secret” fills the Second Floor Gallery. Dettoni previously had work at SPA in the “Cranbrook Connections” exhibition featuring work by New England artists who had studied at the acclaimed Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. Much of Dettoni’s career has been with textile mills, designing patterns for woven fabrics.

“For me there is no separation between art and industry. My creativity is fed by both, working between extreme restrictions and boundless opportunities,” she says in her artist’s statement.

A few years ago, Dettoni read the book “The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America’s Enemies” by Jason Fagone.



Travel Code (ABCOUDE HOLLAND) by Kristen Dettoni/courtesy of SPA

“As I learned more about Elizebeth Smith Friedman and codebreaking, I got to thinking about the similarities of code breaking and pattern designing, my profession,” Dettoni explains on her website.

“Being a pattern designer, I am always putting images in repeat. The basis of a cryptanalyst is someone who is looking for a repeat to then decode the message. This got me to thinking about having hidden messages in a collection of designs that I created for commercial interiors. I love the idea that a pattern can be more than just something visual,” she explains.

In “Top Secret,” viewers can crack Dettoni’s codes with help from her labels, an accompanying book, and QR codes that link to videos.

A set of embroidered pieces with vertical lines run the length of one gallery wall. In these, bar code to spell names of inspiring women decoders. Exquisite little beaded works of potted plants with tiny glass beads have messages embedded in Morse Code.

“Carnival of Sorts” in the Third Floor Gallery features riveting and thought-provoking work by Jason Galligan-Baldwin, Matt Lutz, Herb Rieth, Tyler Smith. The work by these four diverse artists connect to themes of childhood, memories, and family.

In Lutz’s models, fantastic intricate machines and craft are tethered by thin lines to tiny human figures and buildings. With comic book like images, Galligan-Baldwin’s collages are rich with social commentary — the more one looks, the more is there to discover.

Reith, whose interest in sewing comes from the strong women who raised him, brings together raw-edged textile pieces, loose threads, safety pins, pop-top tabs in bright textured compositions. Smith’s longtime whittling fascination and skill are here in beautifully crafted wooden spoons and little figures — apples and colorful creatures among them.