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Susan Graham residency at Lux has memorable outcome

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New York-based artist Susan Graham completed her residency at the Lux Art Institute on Saturday. In addition to a dozen works on display, she's leaving behind an elegant, exquisite "Toile Landscape Wallpaper" that she created at Lux. Her work, including her undeniably fascinating "My Dad's Gun Collection," will be on view at Lux through Oct. 27.

"It's gone very well," said Graham on Saturday. "There was so much more contact with the public than I thought there would be. I had to do a lot of talking.

"But hearing myself talk gave me some ideas."

Several of Graham's previous "Toile Landscapes" are on display, but in her most recent work it's as if the piece is growing out of the wall rather than merely adorning it.

"It's gotten much more organic," said Graham. "I'd like to go even further, but I'm leaving tomorrow."

The installation employs a crosshatch pattern that Graham says was inspired by the wallpaper in the bedroom where she grew up in Dayton, Ohio. Some of the elements are made of sugar and others out of glazed porcelain.

There are replications of native plants, which Graham encountered while staying at Lux, and there are tiny cellphone towers, radar installations, and the like, which are also common in, but not necessarily native to, Southern California.

An accomplished photographer, Graham has documented the temporary piece. It will be dismantled at the end of October. The porcelain elements will be returned to Graham, who may use them in other projects, and the sugar elements will be given to members of Lux's staff, who have become attached to the work.

Graham, however, is accepting of the work's eventual demise. For her, part of the attraction of working with sugar is its fragile, temporary nature.

"It's about the process rather than some final product," she said.

Still, she had to admit: "I'm really happy with the way it turned out."