

SEARS·PEYTON·GALLERY

NEW YORK·LOS ANGELES

Susan Graham

CV

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2016 *Peculiar Flora*, Azarian Mccullough Gallery, St. Thomas Aquinas College, Sparkill, NY
Wielding Power, The FED Galleries at Kendall College of Art and Design, Ferris State University, Grand Rapids, MI
- 2015 Studio Wallpaper, Guttenberg Arts, Guttenberg, NJ
- 2012 Lux Art Institute, Encinitas, CA
- 2011 *New Gardens*, Schroeder Romero Gallery, New York, NY
- 2007 *Disaster Followed Fast and Followed Faster*, Schroeder Romero Gallery, New York, NY
- 2006 *Beautiful Ohio*, Mixed Greens Gallery, New York, NY
Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY
- 2005 *Drift*, Schroeder Romero Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2003 *Dreams and Arrays*, Avram Gallery, Southampton College, Long Island University, Southampton, NY
- 2002 *New Small Works*, Schroeder Romero Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2001 Holly Solomon Gallery–project at Chelsea Hotel, New York, NY
Insomnia, Photology Gallery–Collectors Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 1999 *Insomnia*, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, MI

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Spring Selections*, Sears–Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
- 2020 *Material/Fiber*, curated by R. Darden Bradshaw, Radial Gallery, University of Dayton, Dayton, OH
Visionaries–AMAG 20 Years, Azarian Mccullough Gallery, St. Thomas Aquinas College, Sparkill, NY
- 2018 *Line of Sight. Lethal Design.*, MUDAC–Musée de design et d'arts appliqués contemporains, Lausanne, Switzerland
- 2017 *Light in the Dark*, curated by Karin Schaefer: Sears–Peyton Gallery, New York, NY
The Expanding Matrix, curated by Fred Fleischer, Amelie A. Wallace Gallery–SUNY Old Westbury, NY
Crafting Resistance, Visual Arts Center at Boise State University, Boise, ID
- 2016 *Up In Arms: Taking Stock Of Guns*, Brattleboro Museum, Brattleboro, VT
Bittersweet: Susan Graham, Simone Shubuck, Wendy Small, Sears–Peyton Gallery, New

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York, NY

New Prints 2016, Soeffker Gallery at Hamline University, St. Paul, MN

Girls and Guns—Nancy Floyd, Susan Graham, Felice House, Rosemary Duffy Larson Gallery, Broward College, Davie, FL

New Prints 2016/Winter, IPCNY International Print Center, New York, NY

2015 *Barely There*, curated by Pamela Matsuda Dunn, Lesley Heller Workspace Gallery, New York, NY

Di Carta/Papermade International Biennial, Palazzo Fogazzaro, Comune di Schio Servicia Cultura, Schio, Vincenza, Italy.

2014 *Hooray for Hollywood (A Celebration of Holly Solomon)*, Pavel Zoubek Gallery and Mixed Greens Gallery, New York, NY

Studio Intensive Program Fellows 2013 20/20 Gallery Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, NY

2011 *The Bank and Trust Show*, curated by Dara Myers-Kingsley, Arts Westchester/Arts Exchange, Westchester, NY

Garden Paradise, curated by Lacey Davisson Doyle, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, Bridgehampton, NY

White-Hot, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY.

2010 *I Want Candy: The Sweet Stuff in American Art*, curated by Bart Bland, 1911 Historic City Hall Arts and Cultural Center, Lake Charles, LA, traveling to Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI

2009 *Trouble in Paradise: Examining Discord between Nature and Society*, Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ (Catalog)

I Want Candy: The Sweet Stuff in American Art, Fresno Metropolitan Museum, Fresno, CA, traveling to Nicolaysen Art Museum, Casper, WY

Play It Forward, Schroeder Romero Gallery, New York, NY

A Conflicted State, curated by Lauren Schell Dickens, ISE Cultural Foundation, New York, NY

2008 *Future Tense: Reshaping the Landscape*, Neuberger Museum of Art, Yonkers, NY

to: Night Contemporary Representations of the Night, Hunter College Leubsdorf Gallery and Times Square Gallery, New York, NY, curated by Joachim Pissaro, Mara Hoberman, and Julia Moreno (Catalog)

2007 *Laced With History* exhibition in 3 parts, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI

I Want Candy: The Sweet Stuff in American Art Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY, curated by Bart Bland (Catalog)

Ominous Atmosphere, Heather Marx Gallery, San Francisco, co-curated by Jeff Dauber

The Gun Show: Images of Guns in Contemporary Art, The Shore Institute of the

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- Contemporary Arts, Long Branch, NY
- 2006 *Bang Bang*, Musée International des Arts Modestes, Sète, France traveling to Musée des Arts et de l'Industrie, Saint Etienne, France (Catalog)
National Image, Sherman Gallery at Boston University, Boston, MA
Armed, curated by Nadine Wasserman and Rachel Seligman, Mandeville Gallery, Nott Memorial, Union College, Schenectady, NY (Catalog)
- 2005 *Heavenly—A Slice of White* curated by Julia Jacquette and Joie Rosen, Hunter College Leubsdorf Gallery, New York, NY (Catalog)
Monochrome Image, Elizabeth Harris Gallery, New York, NY
High Caliber: Images of Guns in Contemporary Art, Hunterdon Art Museum, Clinton, NJ
Dreamscapes, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI
- 2004 *A Stereoscopic Vision*, curated by Melissa Chiu, Dumbo Arts Center, Brooklyn, NY
War and Peace, Metaphor Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY
Rendering Gender, curated by Aaron Fine, Truman State University, Kirksville, MO
Inverted World, curated by Rachael Vaters-Carr, Artspace, New Haven, CT
- 2003 *Sweet Tooth*, curated by Sarah Tanguy, Copia, Napa Valley, CA (Catalog)
Perforations, Mckenzie Fine Art, New York, NY
Parking Lot, Ten in One Gallery, New York, NY
MIART, (Photology Gallery, one person booth), Milan, Italy
Fresh Meat, curated by Stephan Apicella Hitchcock, CEPA, Buffalo, NY
Celestial, curated by Lesley Heller, Work Space Gallery, New York, NY
Decade, Schroeder Romero Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
NADA Art Fair, Schroeder Romero Gallery, Miami, FL
- 2002 *Officina Americana/American Atelier*, curated by Renato Barilli, Bologna, Italy (Catalog)
Five by Five, curated by Shamim Momin, Whitney Museum of American Art at Phillip Morris, New York, NY (Catalog)
Toyland, curated by Sean Elwood, Alysia Duckler Gallery, Portland, OR
Armory Photo Show (Photology Gallery booth), New York, NY
- 2001 *War Games*, curated by Lesley Heller, Work Space Gallery, New York, NY
The Armory Show (Holly Solomon Gallery booth), New York, NY
The Art Show, ADAA (Holly Solomon Gallery booth), New York, NY
Stockholm Art Fair (Arena @ Feed Gallery), Stockholm, Sweden
Marginalia, films screening, curated by Marco Breuer, Millenium Film Workshop, New York, NY
How The West Won: Contemporary Visions of the American West, CMC Contemporary Fine Art, Santa Fe, NM
New Photography, Arena @ Feed Gallery, New York, NY

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- Picture Prone*, Avram Gallery, Long Island University, Southampton, NY
- 2000 *Demonstrosity: Deconstructing Monsters in Contemporary Art*, Tufts University Gallery, Boston, MA
- Viewing World Views*, World Trade Center, New York, NY
- Meat Market Art Fair (Arena @ Feed), New York, NY
- P.S. 122 Gallery (with Peter Gould), New York, NY
- TROUBLE shooting Gun Violence*, Tryon Center for Visual Arts, Charlotte, NC
- White Hot*, curated by Moukhtar Kocache and Regine Basha, Smackmellon Studios, Brooklyn, NY

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

- Johns Hopkins Hospital (Fourth Floor Adult Tower Elevator Lobby), Baltimore, MD
(Commission, Nancy Rosen Inc./Allan Kolkowitz/Bloomberg Philanthropies project)

COLLECTIONS

- Marieluise Hessel Collection–Hessel Museum of Art
- The Progressive Corporation Art Collection
- The Schio Municipal Art Collection, Schio, Italy
- Fidelity Investments Art Collection
- Johns Hopkins Hospital Art Collection
- The Montefiore Fine Art Program and Collection
- The West Collection
- Various private collections

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2019 Hortus Arboretum Artist Residency, Stone Ridge, NY
- 2015 Space and Time Artists Residency, Guttenberg Arts, NJ
- 2014 Grant Recipient–Sustainable Arts Foundation
- 2013 SIP Artists Residency, Blackburn Printmaking Studio, Elizabeth Foundation, NY, NY
- 2011 Studio Residency, Smack Mellon Studios, Brooklyn, New York
- 2003 Fellowship Recipient–New York Foundation for the Arts
- 2001 Pollock–Krasner Foundation, Sculpture Grant
- 2000 World Views Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, World Trade Center Residency
- 1999 Fellowship Recipient, Sculpture–New York Foundation for the Arts
- Grant Recipient–Ruth Chenven Foundation

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BOOKS AND CATALOGS

Loaded: Guns in Contemporary Art, Suzanne Ramljak (forthcoming 2021, Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.).

LIGNE De MIRE--MUDAC (book), Infolio (August 16, 2018)

Ligne De Mire (exhibition catalog), MUDAC, Musee' De Design et D'arts Contemporains, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2018.

Di Carta/Papermade International Biennial, Palazzo Fogazzaro, Commune di Schio Servicia Cultura, Schio, Vicenza, Italy, 2015.

Hooray for Hollywood (A Celebration of Holly Solomon), Mixed Greens Gallery & Pavel Zoubok Gallery, New York, NY, 2014.

The Bank and Trust Show, WestchesterArts, Westchester, NY, 2011.

Trouble in Paradise: Examining Discord between Nature and Society, Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ, 2009.

to:Night Contemporary Representations of the Night, essays by Joachim Pissaro, Tracy Adler, Mara Hoberman, and Julia Moreno, Hunter College Galleries, New York, NY, 2008.

I Want Candy: The Sweet Stuff in American Art, Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY, 2007.

Armed, essays by Derek Pardue and Nadine Wasserman, Mandeville Gallery, Union College, Schenectady, NY, 2006.

Bang Bang, Musée International des Arts Modestes, Sète And Musée des Arts et de l'Industrie, Saint Etienne, France, 2006.

Heavenly--or A Slice of White, essays by Julia Jacquette and Joie Rosen, Hunter College Leubsdorf Gallery, New York, NY, 2005.

Dreams and Arrays, essay by Edward M. Gomez, Avram Gallery, Southampton College, 2003.

Sweet Tooth, essays by Sarah Tanguy, Copia, 2003.

Five by Five: Contemporary Artists on Contemporary Art, interviews by Shamim Momin, Whitney Museum of American Art at Phillip Morris, 2002.

Officina America, ReteEmiliaRomagna, Essay by Renato Barilli, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, 2002.

Artist in the Marketplace Fifteenth Annual Exhibition, essay by Marysol Nieves and Lydia Yee, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1995.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

"Is Art Really Just a Luxury? New England Artists Respond to the Political Moment," Christopher Cappozzola, *Art New England*, September/October 2016.

"ArtBeat: Beyond the art on the wall--Brattleboro Art Museum presents Up in Arms: Taking stock of Guns," Trish Crapo, Greenfield, *Recorder*, September 14, 2016.

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- "Holly Solomon: for a Pop-Era Icon, and Extended 15 Minutes of Fame," Edward Gomex, *HYPERALLERGIC*, February 1, 2014.
- "Susan Graham Residency At Lux Has Memorable Outcome," James Chute, *Union-Tribune San Diego*, October 12, 2012.
- "Susan Graham: Artist Uses Porcelain, Sugar to Make Industrial Goods Seem Dainty," Lillian Cox, Encinitas Patch, October 12, 2012.
- "An Interview with Susan Graham," Robin Tung, DAILEYSERVING, October 12, 2012.
- "Dark and Light Combine in Brooklyn Sculptor's Work at LUX," Patricia Morris Buckley, *North County Times*, October 2, 2012.
- "Sweet and Scary at Lux Art Institute," James Chute, *Union-Tribune San Diego*, October 2, 2012.
- "When Bad is Good," Claire Lieberman, *Art Experience*, New York City, Summer, 2011, Vol. 1 No.3.
- "Brooklyn Local," Emily Nathan, *Artnet.com*, January 2011.
- "Starry, Starry Night," John Everett Daquino, *ArtSlant*, October 26.
- "Sweet Seduction in Varied Forms," John Goodrich, *New York Sun*, August 2, 2007.
- "'Armed'" exhibit explores attitudes toward weapons with grim, humorous works," Karen Bjornland, *The Daily Gazette*, January 18, 2007.
- "Power from the People," Cate McQuaid, Reviews, *The Boston Globe*, November 23, 2006.
- "A Stereoscopic Vision," Lauren Cornell, reviews, *Time Out New York*, September 2-9, 2004.
- "Dateline Brooklyn" A stereoscopic Vision, *Artnet.com*, Stephen Maine, August 2004.
- "Up in Arms," Judith Page, reviews, *Sculpture Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2004.
- "Dotty," *Artnet.com*, N.F. Karlins, July 7, 2003.
- "Up in Arms," *The New York Times*, Holland Cotter, March 21, 2003.
- "Woke Up This Morning, Got Myself a Gun," James Kalm, NY Arts Magazine, 2003.
- "Susan Graham and Julianne Swartz" "reviews, *Sculpture magazine*, Jan/Feb 2003.
- "Sweet Tooth Lets Artists Play with Their Food" *The Sacramento Bee*, Patricia Beach Smith, February 23, 2003.
- "The Power and Glory of Sisterhood, Past and Present," *The New York Times*, Edward M. Gomez, October 13, 2002.
- "Sci-Fi and Gardens," *The Brooklyn Rail*, William Powhida, Autumn 2002.
- Art in Review "Five By Five," *The New York Times*, Grace Glueck, June 14, 2002.
- "News and Around-Officina America," *Tema Celeste* 89, pp. 119, Jan/Feb 2002. (Photo)
- "Immagini che turbano le notti," *Corriere Della Sera* ed. Milano, September 19, pp. 59, 2001 (Photo).
- "Photology: Dreams on Show," *Modo via sannio* 24/30 n. 215, pp. 25. (Photo)
- "Fotografia/Dolce sonno," *IO Donna*, distribuito com *Corriere Della Sera*, no.37 15 Sept 2001.
- "Viaggio Tra I Colori," *Avvenire*, n.271, 15 Nov 2001.
- "The Aesthetic Bounty of Night and Day," *The New York Times*, Helen A. Harrison, August 19,

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2001.

"Perspectives," *The South Hampton Press*, Darius Yektal, August 2, 2001.

"Works of Containment an Color," *The East Hampton Star*, Robert Long, July 19, 2001. (Photo)

"Susan Graham & Kim MacConnel" *The Village Voice*, Choices Art listing, Kim Levin, April 24, 2001.

"Knaapt vart en massa," Kulturredaktionen, Goteborgs-Posten, Gunilla Grahn-Hinnfors, Mars, 2001. (Photo)

"Reviews, Susan Graham/James Cullinane," *NY Arts Magazine*, March 2000. (Photo)

EDUCATION

B.F.A. Sculpture, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

An Interview with Susan Graham

By Robin Tung

Daily Serving

October 9, 2012

On a Tuesday morning in September, I met with sculptor and photographer Susan Graham at Lux Art Institute in Encinitas, California. Graham was more than halfway through her five-week artist residency and opened her studio to me, allowing an up-close view of her sugar and porcelain sculptures in the process of assembly. Graham shared stories from her childhood in Ohio, articulated her thoughts about working, and touched on how September 11 has altered the view of some of her earlier art.

Robin Tung: Thank you for opening your studio. What are you working on while you're here?

Susan Graham: I made a sugar toile piece previously, and I proposed making one here and expanding it with porcelain. I've been doing temporary sugar pieces that are large-scale. I have five weeks here and estimated that by making some pieces out of porcelain, I could come back in and expand the piece by adding sugar [while here] because sugar doesn't really ship well.

RT: So the materials aren't mixed—it's either a piece of sugar or a piece of porcelain.

SG: Yes, it's not sugar and porcelain mixed together. It's sugar or porcelain. In the piece, it's mixed, which is new to me. I've never put them side by side. So it's different whites, a different way of doing an on-site piece.

RT: What do you mix the sugar with?

SG: It's sugar and egg whites, an icing mixture. It's something I started using a long time ago because I was in New York and didn't have any money. I had gotten a studio though, but didn't have tools and just wanted to start making things. I was looking for a material that would mean something to me.

There was nobody artistic in my family, really, but my grandmother had a craft club and she lived next door. They made bouquets of tiny flowers out of salt dough. And I thought they were amazing. For myself, I was thinking of something that seemed feminine, sweet and domestic, and also I wanted to work off material that was white.

RT: Themes of escapism or imagination with wide-open spaces, natural phenomena, and vessels like cars and planes, are often visible in your work. And it seems like there's this binary to the pieces, like the gun made out of sugar.

SG: That's something that I always do—with the binary you mentioned. It seems whatever I'm doing, I end up doing two opposing things at the same. With these photographs I try to take something that's obviously very fake but because I'm using either really fast film and making it super grainy and flat, or pinhole images which give a sense of atmosphere, it makes the photographs seem like there's a much bigger space even though it's obvious that it's tiny.

RT: You cited "Puzzle Bottle, 1995" by Charles Ray in an artist statement. How was that piece influential?

SG: I was curated into a show at the Whitney Phillip Morris. They had us respond to a piece in their collection. I didn't ever really read what Charles Ray said about that piece, I just looked at it and imposed on that figure in the bottle what he'd done, and turned it around, depicting these big open spaces. Did you read what I wrote about that?

RT: You wrote about wanting to create what that figure was looking at, or imagining.

SG: What he was experiencing given his tiny little space. There's this existential problem this little man has. There was a Shakespeare quote that was actually misquoted to me, and then I came up with something parallel for my title.

RT: *A Universe with Edges Would Be All Right if Only I Didn't Dream.*

SG: That's what I came up with though the Shakespeare quote is something different. Basically something about the universe in a nutshell.

RT: I like that it's misquoted and then re-imagined to fit the work.

SG: It has a lot of layers, and the more time I get to think about it, the more complicated it gets... Everything that I make has a personal beginning. It starts with imagination and associations, and then in a lot of the pieces, politics and things in the real world will start coming in. There is a playful element to it. I think everything I make is a little humorous. I manage all this stuff by making it a little lighter, and pretty harmless in the presentation.

RT: Can you speak to influences or inspirations early on?

SG: When I was in undergraduate at Ohio State University, I was not allowed to study art and—

RT: Wait—why were you not allowed?

SG: Because it's not practical. I'm the oldest kid. My dad, who worked for General Motors, told me what college I should go to, that I should be an engineer, and work for General Motors. My first semester I took chemistry, calculus, and art history. The second semester I took chemistry, calculus, and photography. I was influenced by a book of someone who had photographed carnies. It was a strange world. And I really responded to the black and white.

And, my dad had a gun collection when I was a kid. And my brother came down into the basement with a gun, he found one of them. That was a big childhood experience that was freaky because he was really little and the gun was really big. It took me the longest time to recognize that guns were a giant part of my childhood.

Later after I became an artist, and my father cut me off financially, and I moved to New York City, the guns ballooned into politics between him and me, and I had to think about guns in American culture . . . I asked him for a list of his guns, and then I made a lot of the collection. He died about four years ago.

RT: I heard this quote that journalism's responsibility is to tell you what happened, but art and fiction should tell you how it felt. I loved your photograph of the planes circling and suspended around the towers. It made me anxious.

SG: Right, nothing's happening [in the photograph]. September 11 is so taboo I don't really mention it. This is something I have not talked about during this residency, or for a long time. But, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council used to award raw space in the World Trade Center to artists. I was there during the session before September 11. After, the Council suddenly got all of this money and attention for artists who made work in the World Trade Center and a show was put together to travel to museums. It turned out that not one venue would touch that show. A lot of us had imagery with the World Trade Centers even though it had nothing to do with September 11.

Our studios looked north toward the Empire State Building. And I had read about a plane crashing into the Empire State Building . . . in the 40s, I think. So I was doing things with planes and buildings back then. I made the buildings out of sugar, and had them lean towards each other. It was very sweet actually. I also had images with the planes because helicopters would go below you when you were up in the Towers.

But those images mean something different now even though I didn't intend that . . . And that's it, it's done. That's one of those things where politics and what's going on in the world changes really changes things. It made me aware of how I can't really control the message of what I'm

making. Because it's ruined, it's put away. I can't show those photos. Maybe someday. But they don't mean what I meant them to mean.

Graham showed me around the museum installations and led me down into her living space below the studio so I could view her permanent porcelain gun brushed over with resin. The Lux Art Institute artist living quarters were spacious and designed with contemporary décor: antler candelabra, animal print throws on a leather sofa, streamlined kitchen appliances and a hallway leading into a minimalist bedroom with a king size bed. We returned upstairs shortly after so I could ask her my last two questions for new artists.

RT: What struggles have you seen for artists trying to emerge?

SG: If you're trying to go some place with a lot of artists, an art market, and actually emerge, I think you have to really figure out what your voice is and what you can do on a long-term basis. It can't be external. It has to be very self-driven and it has to be specific.

I was a guest artist at a college and there would be graduate students still doing a little bit of this and a little bit of that. You will never get anywhere working like that. Some artists can do a little bit of everything but they have an overarching idea that they can explain. I thought, *You're not going to get anywhere if you don't figure that out.* Otherwise no one will know who you are because they'll never recognize your work. You don't have to be so eccentric to be recognized, but you have to commit to making something specific to you.

RT: Any other advice for young or new artists? How would you encourage artists to define success?

SG: The first success is to define for yourself what you want to do. And then figure out how to do it. Do you need a studio or not? Some artists that I know dispense with the studio because it's expensive. On the other hand, not having a studio can make it so that you can't do certain things. Figure out what you need to do what you want to do. And then start pursuing all those things available to new artists: art programs, studio programs, alternative spaces. For some artists, to not be attached to a commercial gallery with a brand works; you can float around showing in a lot of different places and situations. Show your art wherever you can. Get people to see your stuff however you can do it.

Make what you want to make, figure out how do that in a way that you can afford, and get people to see it.

Chicago Tribune

Susan Graham residency at Lux has memorable outcome

By James Chute

The Chicago Tribune

October 8, 2012

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."

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Dark and light combine in Brooklyn sculptor's work at Lux

By Patricia Morris Buckley for The North County Times

The San Diego Union-Tribune

September 13, 2012

The conversation in artist Susan Graham's childhood home could be quite ordinary, until the subject of the end of the world came up. And it came up often.

"I had many relatives who were Christian fundamentalists, so they talked about the end of the world a lot," said Graham, who grew up on an Ohio farm. She's now based in Brooklyn. "There was always the fear of a natural disaster."

Her childhood has always informed her sculptures, including a sense of foreboding, a tie to nature and a love of crafts. Today she is known for her sculptures of hard things such as pieces of machinery, created through the sugar or porcelain.

For instance, in one exhibition, she created a lawnmower, guns and trucks in porcelain. Taking such a common object and making it look pure or endearing is jarring to the senses, which is exactly what she intends.

"The materials I use give the feeling of domesticity or sweetness," she said in her artist's statement. "The subjects are ones that make me uncomfortable."

Graham, who opens a residency at the Lux Art Institute in Encinitas today, is the only artist in her family. But her grandmother lived close by and had a craft club.

"What she did is nothing like what I do," she said. "She would make things like salt-dough flowers. But that's how I knew the possibilities of sugar."

Graham moved to New York City for grad school, but found she couldn't afford the tuition. Instead, she put all her money into a studio, and she began to work. She had no money or tools, so she remembered her grandmother and started to craft objects from sugar.

"There's a history of sugar sculptures," she said. "Henry Tudor had ornate sugar centerpieces he used at celebrations. I was using sugar alone for a while before I started soaking it in resin to make it last longer. A friend suggested I use porcelain so I could do something permanent. Porcelain looks like sugar, so it struck a chord in me. But I still do temporary pieces as well."

Graham's sculptures and photographs (she often captures images of natural disasters) have been displayed at the Bronx Museum of Arts, the Whitney Museum at Phillip Morris and the Neuberger Museum of Art.

While at the Lux Art Institute, Graham will return to creating a temporary piece of art. She is re-creating a toile wallpaper with sugar that's reminiscent of the wallpaper she had in her home growing up. Once again, she'll be drawing from her childhood for inspiration.

"This is the way I process images and objects," she said. "I like to conquer and tame things that bother me. One way to do that is to transform it into something that's mine."

Graham will be in residency at Lux through Oct. 6. As part of Lux's mission, visitors will be able to watch her at work in the studio. After she leaves, her work will remain on exhibit through Oct. 27.

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Sweet and Scary at Lux Art Institute

By James Chute

The San Diego Union-Tribune

September 27, 2012

“The reaction I get quite often — because I know I come from a family of non-artists and I know lots and lots of people who don’t talk about these things in any kind of analytical way — is they just look at them and go, ‘That’s really cool.’

“And I have to admit, that’s sort of what I’m thinking people probably will think. ‘That’s made of what?’ That’s always the question. ‘How did you do that?’

“Sometimes, people just end up staring at the stuff,” said Graham, whose art is on display through Oct. 27 at the Lux Art Institute, where the Ohio-born, New York-based artist is in residence through Oct. 6.

But there’s an entire world embodied in Graham’s delicate but deceptively powerful art. There’s her father.

He and his daughter were often in conflict over his gun collection. It’s replicated in Graham’s art (which also includes other common items). She grew up in Dayton, Ohio, and he was a strong figure with distinct opinions, including that everyone should be allowed to have guns (except women, as he wouldn’t allow her to go to a shooting range) and that his daughter shouldn’t be an artist (he initially withdrew financial support when she switched her major to visual art in college).

“The gun thing is very powerful,” Graham said. “Even if you are a pacifist, you run into them. You know they are there. They are everywhere. They are ubiquitous.”

And there’s her grandmother, too.

She lived next door with her husband (another gun enthusiast) and had members of her craft club over to her home, which was a significant influence on Graham and her decision to use sugar as her primary medium (along with porcelain).

“They made all kinds of stuff,” Graham said. “They didn’t make things from sugar, per se, but they made things from stuff in the kitchen. They used to make little flowers out of salt dough, all kinds of little things. And I kind of knew that sugar would be a good material for me to use.”

And there's Graham.

She uses her art to express things she's unwilling or unable to talk about: her conflicted feelings about the guns, for example, and the fascination and repulsion those guns have brought her over her entire life.

"In a sense, the art is about things that have gotten to me, almost like problems I can't solve," Graham said. "You know, things that are going to bug me on an ongoing basis. Things like the gun stuff. Things that are conflicted ..."

"I actually have kids, and I'm sort of not obsessed (but concerned) with what's going to happen eventually. I don't talk about it too much. It only comes up in the art really. But it's the idea that somehow we can't keep going the way we are and have things be OK on the planet."

There's more if you consider her art long enough. But perhaps it's enough to just wonder and delight at her delicate, magical objects, which are being increasingly shown in galleries from Milan to New York.

And don't be afraid to stare.