

# The Chronicle

See what's happening with Charles Steckler at Mandeville Gallery

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"Charles Steckler: Contrary to What Sometimes Happens," an exhibition of more than 30 works created "out of the throwaway artifacts of our material culture," is on view at the Mandeville Gallery through Dec. 11.

An opening reception will be held Wednesday, Sept. 21, 5- 6:30 p.m.

Steckler is the Dwane W. Crichton Professor of Theater and Scenic Designer in Residence. In addition to teaching and working on stage design, he is a draughtsman and collage and diorama artist. His mixed media pieces are characterized by a rhythmic layering of objects and images set in densely packed spaces, vibrantly colored or starkly black and white.

"My game is to turn frivolous stuff into expressions of my inner world," Steckler says.

"My materials are familiar and modest: household detritus, found discards, things too worthless to save, which I salvage and reincarnate. I look for correspondences among these materials on my worktable. Ideas emerge and connections are made during my process of arrangement, synthesis and discovery."

A self-described "non-discriminating hedonist," Steckler cites hundreds of diverse sources and inspirations for his work, from installation artist Kurt Schwitters to Japanese book bindings, puppets, Picasso, Chef Boyardee and the Nott Memorial.

Despite the wealth of influences and stimuli, he says he allows ideas to appear by keeping his techniques simple and direct.

"My method is to permit my materials – the bits of printed-paper, foil, seeds and string and so on – to wander about on my table all higgledy-piggledy. I animate these elements, jiggle them around until a coherence is revealed... This stage of the process can last days or weeks while the work stays open and fluid. Eventually I will look away, stop thinking about it. Sometime later, when I return, if it still seems right, out comes the glue."

Those interested in seeing the artist at work can stop by the Mandeville Gallery, Oct. 26 and Nov. 15, 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., to watch him create a life-size diorama on site.

Steckler received his B.A. from Queens College in New York and his M.F.A. from Yale University. He has exhibited nationally in numerous solo and group exhibitions and has designed stage sets for nearly 200 productions.

The recipient of dozens of arts awards, he has been a Yaddo fellow, an associate at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, a resident artist at the Vermont Studio Center, a Prix de Rome finalist and a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome.

He joined the Union faculty in 1971.

The Mandeville Gallery exhibition is co-sponsored by the Department of Theater and Dance and the Humanities Faculty Development Board.