New exhibit opens at Purdue

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A half-eaten doughnut.
Two dingy chairs cov-
ered in years of grime.
Crumbled pieces of paper.
A new, shiny red Toyota
Prius?

These are some of the
objects that make up
John Cessna’s installation
work, “Perverse Prius.”
The second year Purdue
University master of fine
arts student is one of five
artists included in the
thought-provoking “Gar-
dens and Machines: The
Suburban Life.”
The show runs Mon-
day through Friday at the
Patti and Rusty Rueff East
Gallery inside Purdue’s
Pao Hall of Visual and
Performing Arts. Gallery
hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
The Prius is on poster-
sized photographs taken
by Cessna depicting the
theme “I drive a Prius.
Don’t worry about it.”
While humorous, the pho-
tos depict the Prius driver
dumping garbage from the
driver’s seat and another
shot of the Prius outside
of a seedy motel to comment
on how the hybrid car
does not necessarily make
the driver more respon-
sible.
“I hate the idea of ‘If I
drive a Prius, everything is
fine’,” Cessna said.

Cessna and his crew of
producers — Will Cabral,
Kevin O’Shea, Bijoy Shah
and Dan Skubal — ob-
tained the Prius from “a
friend of a friend.” The
photos are cheaply framed
to resemble the kind of
wall art that would hang in
an auto mechanic’s wait-
ing room. The com-
mentary in the mock wait-
ing room is effective. Cessna
blends his own creations
with the found objects
flawlessly.

Cessna is joined by
fellow graduate students
Micah Bowers, Michael
Jamison, Aaron Nemec
and Juan Obando. While
these students’ disciplines
intermingle, “Gardens and
Machines” was brought
forth by a new fine arts
field, Electronic and Time-
Based media. Shannon
McMullen is in the middle
of her first semester as
an assistant professor at
Purdue but she has been
at Purdue as a visiting
scholar since 2007.
McMullen said “Gar-
dens and Machines” is
a conceptual show that
made her young artists
think of how suburban
culture has affected them.
“We started with a lot of
reading and concept prepa-
ration before going in the
gallery,” McMullen said. “I
wanted each student to get

If you go

The Patti and Rusty
Rueff West Gallery will
feature the photography
of Purdue MFA student
Andrea Dalley Mon-
day through Friday. A
reception for Dalley’s
work will be held from
6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday.
A “Brown Bag Lecture”
will be offered at noon
Tuesday in the gallery.

Shannon McMullen, assistant professor of visual and performing arts, is shown in the
Patti and Rusty Rueff Galleries at Purdue University. McMullen teaches electronic and
time-based arts.

their individual perception
of suburbia.”

Jamison’s “Shadows”
combines lawn ornaments
and suburban yard critters.
Silhouette cut-outs of a
dog, cat and three rabbits
are decapitated and red
paint comes out of the
black necks.

In “I Never Saw a Chit-
timood,” Bowser uses
three small, black and
white television screens to
loop video shot of mund-
dane suburban “everyday
life” events including
washing dishes, sitting on
the toilet and watching the
curtains rustle from the
breeze.

Born in Colombia,
Obando had a broader
take on American suburban
life. His “Abstracting & Insert-
ing” series is based around
the American flag. Most
images have Old Glory in
red, white and black.
Nemec tackles 1980s
suburban culture using
video games. “64K Memo-
rizes” is a visual and audio
piece. Nemec recorded
and remixed music from
his old Commodore 64
computer game system
and the music meanders
through the exhibit.

McMullen sees most
of the pieces in “Gardens
and Machines” as projects
where artists can expand
upon. Even during the
show’s first week, Cessna’s
“Prius” has been added
to daily. Bites have been
taken out of the doughnuts
and trash has been added
to work along the way.

“It adds to the humor,”
McMullen said.