

# UM-Flint art exhibit invites touch

## REVIEW

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Hands-behind-the-back is the standard viewing stance at an art gallery.

But don't expect to use it at the exhibit now in the Fine Art Gallery of the University of Michigan-Flint.

The exhibition features the work of Joy Schroeder of East Lansing, Sue Long of Okemos and Susan Hensel of East Lansing, three artists who push their chosen media to creative extreme.

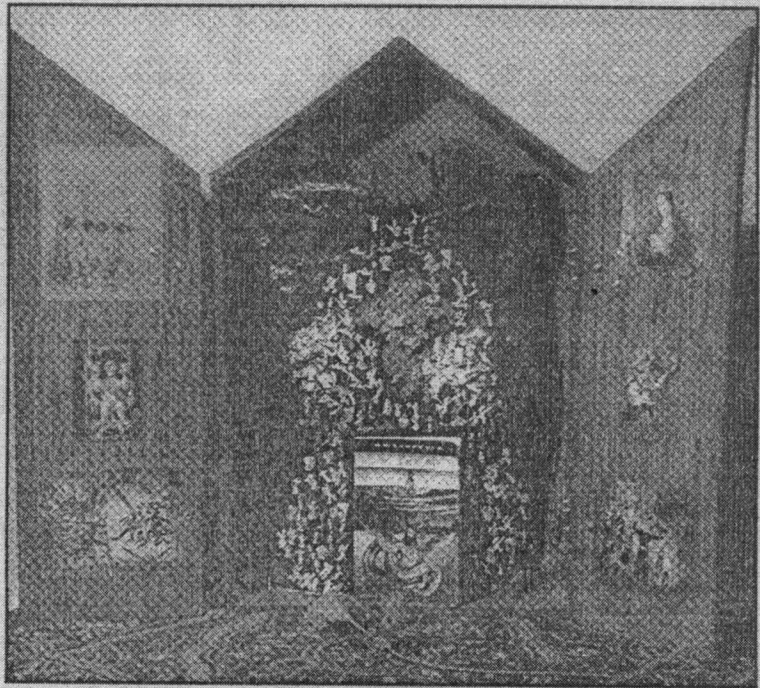
The result is an exhibit so richly textured that your fingers will literally tingle with the need to touch and explore these diverse works of 3-D art.

Schroeder's handmade sculpted paper, Long's basketry and Hensel's handmade books provide a fascinating re-discovery of familiar materials used in unexpected ways.

Hensel's art compels viewers to literally redefine their concept of "book." While her art sometimes takes the shape of pages bound together, it just as often uses "book" as a cultural icon or symbolic image in stunning, sometimes shocking, ways.

Her collage-like use of a variety of materials can transform the book into a sculptural object in which the pages become only one characteristic of many in some newly discovered form somehow still called "book."

In other works, a particular book provides the symbolic focus for mixed-media sculptures that defy easy description. In these shadow box-like affairs,



'Retablo for Kate' by Sue Hensel is part of an exhibit at the UM-Flint Fine Arts Gallery.

Hensel creates surrealistic portraits of authors and poets who were as famous for their personal lives as any of their writing.

A powerful and disturbing piece on Sylvia Plath, for instance, is a tomb-shaped box, which opens on a copy of "The Bell Jar," Plath's only novel, lying in state like a corpse on red satin amid ashes and withered blooms.

After Hensel's intense intellectualism, Schroeder's handmade paper designs provide an airy counterpoint.

Schroeder works her richly textured papers into deeply dimensional designs. All are beautifully dramatic in their minimal use of color and defin-

able image. Her stated intent of making the paper "stand on its own without paint and other media" is well-realized here.

Long's baskets provide an earthy, primal center between the other two, returning art to its most primitive, heartfelt forms. The huge organic shapes are made of objects from nature. Fur, feathers, dried plants, rocks, bones and sticks are woven together in a reclaiming and celebration of nature's art.

With three visions and methods, this unusual mix of art vibrates together into a profoundly cohesive whole.

The exhibit runs through Dec. 12. The gallery is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.