

Collections from the Community featured at AU's artSite in Wellsville

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It all started with a mouse. A real one. Linda White, secretary in the main office at the School of Art and Design, Alfred University, began collecting toys nearly 20 years ago when she reacted rather strongly to a mouse running through her office. Karen Cushing, then a student in the art school, brought in three more mice the next day, and that was the start of a collection that now includes literally hundreds of toys, most of which have been donated by students, alumni and faculty. White's toys will be among the collections included in "More is More: Collections from the Community," which opens Friday with a reception at 5 p.m. at artSite, 114 N. Main St., Wellsville. The exhibition continues through March 14; artSite is open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays; other hours may be arranged by calling 585 593 3003. Students in the culinary arts program, School of Applied Technology, located on Alfred State College's Wellsville campus, are catering the reception. "The collections are varied, excessive and, in many cases, eccentric," said Sharon McConnell, director of the Fosdick-Nelson Gallery for the School of Art and Design, who curated the artSite exhibition. "Each comes out of a different desire to collect," she said. Collections featured at AU's artSite in Wellsville 2-2-2 Exhibitors include Andrew Deutsch, assistant professor of sonic and video arts, School of Art and Design; Jennifer Dworak, a Hornell resident and Deutsch's spouse; Bill Hastings, artist and educator at Ithaca College; Marnie Hastings, teacher of speech and hearing handicapped in the Ithaca City School District; Mike Hornbeck, an optician from Hornell; George Hrycun, an adjunct associate professor, School of Art and Design; Brent Kelley, an instructor in the culinary arts department, School of Applied Technology, Alfred State College; Mary Lum, professor of painting, School of Art and Design; Joseph Scheer, professor of printmaking, School of Art and Design; Fred Tschida, professor of glass art, School of Art and Design; and White. Their collections range from 50 garden claws to daily lottery tickets for an entire year, a large stack of red "read" books, more than 200 pairs of antique and vintage eyeglasses, more than 100 hand-tied flies, more than 300 miniature animals made from ceramic, glass, cast metal and plastic, an assortment of lamps, hundreds of scanned moths, antique books and ledgers that have been altered with children's drawings, and the famed and well-loved art office toy collection. While White's collection of toys grew spontaneously - and almost exponentially, others are much more deliberate about their collecting practices. Take Lum for example. "My work is rooted in the process of collecting," said Lum, whose work features "found fragments" of text, taken from various sources, and collaged together. While few of her collections contain items of monetary value, Lum takes collecting very seriously. In January 1991, she recalls, when the first President George Bush issued his ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and the war ensued, she decided she would collect something with a date stamp for every date of the war. She chose expiration dates on food, and even though the conflict ended in March, she continued through the end of the year. "Sometimes I would find myself going to two or three stores," searching for foods with that day's expiration date. Not only was it time-consuming, but she also found herself buying food she doesn't even eat, just for the date. At the end of that year, "hysteria about the millennium" was beginning, and Lum decided to expand her ephemera collections to reflect the final decade of the 20th century and the end of the millennium. Every day for 10 years, from Jan. 1, 1991, until Dec. 31, 2000, Lum collected dated material. After the food expiration dates (1991), she collected dates from the mastheads of newspapers (1992); dated first paragraphs of New York Times stories (1993); lottery tickets (1994); ATM slips and obituaries of people who died after long illnesses (1995); weather maps and horoscopes (1996); comic strips with dated frames (1997); police reports and New York Times front page photos (1998); police reports, weather maps and stock market information (1999); and dated receipts and TV guides from newspapers (2000). Portions of what she calls her Millennium Project have been shown as art installations; most still exist, stored in archival boxes or bags in her studio. Of all of the dated collections, the first has proved the most fleeting. Those food expiration dates she worked so hard to collect were often printed in fugitive ink that has disappeared over time.