

'Household Media' offers a mixed bag

By ROBERT TROTTER
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"HOME IS WHERE the art is" is the inscription greeting visitors to "Household Media," an exhibition at the Virginia Beach Arts Center. Its message is direct, but what follows is not quite so simple.

In a collection of works — materials is probably a better word — viewers are treated to a display ranging from the bizarre to the ridiculous. Much of it is funny, satirical and whimsical, taking in everything from a family vignette of a spaghetti dinner to a rancid place setting featuring an oversized cockroach and a rat the size of a cat.

If this turns you off, there are baskets made from clothespins and Lynne Sward's "Broomba Fetish." For the latter, be sure and read the title card. Sward, one of the area's brighter talents, can be counted on to deliver a personal statement that shines in its own light.

Martin Johnson's large abstract pieces are brash statements of stretched form joined by tense striations of painted fabric. Johnson incorporates things from around the house that many of us usually toss out; hence, an interesting wall hanging fashioned from worn out hanging razors.

REVIEW

ODU's Anne Bousquet touches an emotional chord in all of us — that moment when we decide a useful standby is ready for the trash bin. "Singer" is the remains of a black sewing machine that was "dropped and busted up in several pieces," according to the title card.

Resting on its pedestal, "Singer" looks as if it had been left there by the trash man. Bousquet decided "to reward it by sending it to heaven," complete with halo against a deep blue sky filled with sharp-edged white clouds. You can almost hear a choir in the background.

"Household Media" is a strange collection of emotions tied together by bits of furniture, fans, a broom, clothespins. . . you name it. To stimulate the imagination is a noble thing, but to try and get a response with what looks like tiny embryos in a clear broth or to show the strangest depiction of indigestion you will ever see is hardly a class act.

The exhibition is more reminiscent of performance exhibitions from the '60s and '70s. In the past — and it would go well here — there have been exhibitions in which an actual meal of unnaturally colored food was prepared. You haven't really dined until served a portion of bright-blue mashed potatoes. Like "Household Media," it was different, but it just didn't taste the same.

"Household Media" doesn't lack imagination or daring, but to what avail? Texture, form and color are only words until a serious and conscientious artist puts them to work; otherwise, having a talent isn't worth a nickel. Where "Household Media" is funny, it succeeds, but when it attempts to deal with life it becomes tasteless.

"Household Media" will remain on view through Feb. 3 at the Virginia Beach Arts Center, 1711 Arctic Ave. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday; and 1 to 4 p.m., Sunday. Free.