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Same Difference: Glass Sculpture at the RoCo

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Contributed by: [Buffalo.com/YourHub Emily Dulanski](#) on 2/13/2008

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Michael Rogers: + 'Gathering'
Provided by: Gerry Szymanski

The Rochester Contemporary Art Center, though small, is currently host to some large pieces of artwork. Michael Rogers and Jack Wax, both glass workers with similar influences, display some very different pieces.

Michael Rogers, professor at Rochester Institute of Technology and former chair of the School for American Craft, shows most vividly his love for literature and philosophy. His piece titled Neruda involves cast glass shells that hold up strips on linen that curve and cross over each other. On this linen is written pieces of Pablo Neruda's works, and causes the viewer to reflect on a very specific image: Neruda, walking alone on a beach at sunset, with all the workings of his theories and famous writings jumbled together in his head. Sometimes one thought will cover another, or one will come from beneath and win out over that one.

Another influence of Rogers' that is often expressed in his work is his experiences in Japan. There are two most notable displays of this: the first involves glass cast crows hanging upside-down by wires. Hanging fake crows upside down is a very popular practice in Japan, used to scare off other crows. Rogers takes his piece to a different level, however, by having some of the birds wrapped with what looks like honeycomb, with a jar and squares of it on a table beneath the crows. The viewer is reminded of the stickiness of honey and at this point, may think of these birds not only as a means to scare off crows, but as a kind of twisted fly paper, as well.

The second piece that shows Japan's influence on Rogers is Gathering, which is glass casts of a popular antique toy in Japan that was made of animals with large eyes, almost like a precursor to the trendy animation style. Rogers puts his own spin on it by attaching pincushions to the backs or heads of these dolls.

Jack Wax, professor and Chair of the Glass Department at Virginia College, has also been influenced by experiences in Japan, but is much more subtle about it. Wax's Echo Image, Untitled, Falls, and Percussion are all similar in that they are essentially repeated, patterned images that are intricate and look very labor-intensive. This idea of image patterning and repetition is reminiscent of fractals, and look very mathematical. Logic and mathematics are commonly associated with the Japanese people, and this seems to be where Wax brings his influence in. In addition, his piece titled Falls, when viewed from a distance, looks like it could have been taken from an old Japanese silkscreen landscape painting. By far, it is his most beautiful piece in the exhibit.

Michael Rogers and Jack Wax have on display an interesting, thought-provoking exhibition. It is a landmark for anyone interested in modern art, and especially sculpture. It will run at the Rochester Contemporary Art Center from February 1st through April 6th.

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