

Arts

MOVING FORWARD



COURTESY OF A.P.E.

Linda Bond's "Draped"

At A.P.E., Canal Gallery, artists remember the past, look to the future

By STEVE PFARRER
Staff Writer

THE overwhelming shock of Sept. 11, 2001, may have faded somewhat in 10 years. But its repercussions — an ongoing war in Afghanistan, prisoners from the "War on Terror" still detained in Guantanamo Bay, the deaths of over 6,000 U.S. military personnel and tens of thousands of Iraqi and Afghan citizens — continue to be felt every day.

And for many artists, the decade since 9/11 has also been a tumultuous time, as they've attempted to make sense of the chaos that was unleashed when hijacked jets

were deliberately slammed into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

"It's very easy to look around and think 'The world is crazy and there's nothing I can do about it,'" said Linda Bond, a one-time Northampton artist now living outside Boston. "But I believe we can change things, that we can make a transformation and find nonviolent solutions, and that's something I try to show in my art."

Bond is one of a number of artists who are opening exhibits this week to showcase their work of the last several years. From collages of news headlines and photos to

■ See AT A.P.E. / Page C3

portraits of soldiers, from stark gray drawings of war's impact to colorful sculpted ceramic dioramas of anti-war protests, their work encompasses themes that have played out across the country and on overseas battlefields in the last decade.

Bond, who was once a member of the Hestia Art Collective, a group of female artists that painted the large outdoor mural "The History of Women in Northampton" — is displaying her work in Northampton's A.P.E. Gallery. A central part of the show consists of her drawings of U.S. servicemen and women and other images taken from news stories, drawings that are made from graphite and a seemingly heavily symbolic medium: gunpowder.

At first glance, the gray, dark images, inspired primarily by pictures from The New York Times and The Boston Globe, have an almost photographic quality: a soldier in camouflage fatigues, his face hidden behind his right arm, perhaps brushing away a tear; a flag-draped coffin; an aerial drone etched against the sky. But viewed up close, Bond notes, the detail dissolves, an effect that stems in part from her drawing materials.

She says her use of gunpowder — she grinds up small pellets of it to make it into a powder — is a reflection not of the material's association with violence but rather "for its more positive aspect. When it was first invented, gunpowder was used for fireworks, for entertainment. ... I see it as a metaphor for our potential to create rather than destroy."

Indeed, Bond sees her exhibit not as anti-war but more a chronicle of the human condition and the conflicted emotions that war can evoke.

"Right after 9/11, my immediate response was, 'What could drive a person to commit such violence? What's at the root of the kind of suffering that would push someone to such an action?' It's my way of grappling with the human condition."

Bond's exhibit includes part of what she calls her "Inventory Project" — small cards for each of approximately 190,000 U.S. firearms that the Pentagon reported missing in Iraq in 2007. Bond invites visitors to her shows to take the cards home and "register" them online. The goal, she adds, is to give some context to what would otherwise be just another statistic.

"If you imagine each one of these guns being used to kill one person, that's 190,000 deaths," she said. "That brings some real meaning to those numbers."