

Abstract works from husband and wife

By Cate McQuaid

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

PROVINCETOWN — Ilya and Resia Schor made their names as goldsmiths, crafters of

GALLERIES jewelry and Judaica. But the couple, who

studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in the 1930s and migrated first to France, and in 1941 to New York, also created abstract art. Ilya's inward-turning sculptures and Resia's brazen wall reliefs are the subject of "Abstract Marriage: Sculpture by Ilya Schor and Resia Schor," curated by their daughter, painter and critic Mira Schor, at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum.

The odd, fascinating show implicitly addresses schisms in the New York cultural world in the mid-20th century: between art and craft, between explicit expressions of Jewish faith and the tendency of many artists to omit references to their Jewish identity in art, for fear of anti-Semitism. The Schors straddled these gulfs.

"Abstract Marriage" spotlights Ilya's Cubist-influenced sculptures made in the years before his death at 57 in 1961. Resia, a painter, never remarried, and took up her husband's trade in order to support her young family. Consequently, metal began to dominate the art she made in private, while she sold her jewelry and mezuzahs. On view here: Resia's Neo Geo-style metal-against-gouache pieces executed between 1976 and 1990. The works don't fit together in many ways. They are of their respective moments. Ilya's pieces retain a jeweler's sense of intimacy and balance, while Resia adopted metal into a painter's aesthetic. Yet there are harmonies.

Although Ilya's sculptures are not big — the freestanding ones tend to run around 30 inches tall — they have a monumental quality to them. Most of them are assertively vertical, and suggest figures or towers. Their intricate construction and contemplative composition imbue them with strength. His brass piece "Angel" stands tall on four legs, with a bulb of a head and a body that swerves around patches of negative space. Thick brass wires ending



Ilya Schor's "Angel" (left) and Resia Schor's "Nike II."

in loops emanate from the form like a prickly aura.

Resia's "Nike II" hangs beside it — not an angel, but a headless winged goddess, based on the ancient Greek statue "Winged Victory of Samothrace." Resia pared that florid form down to scissoring metal blades riveted to a black Plexiglas ground, with a red stripe shooting up across the middle to offset the emphatic thrust the metal lines make in the opposite direction.

She applied social conscience to her abstraction in several works, such as "B-2 Stealth," in which the sharp, birdlike silvery metal form of the bomber stretches across a gold-leaf moon ringed in blue. "Lockerbie," a jagged lament, makes a ring out of shuddering white metal lightning bolts around a blue stretch of gouache studded

with black rectangles, like plane windows.

Ilya's "Warrior" feels comparatively contained, a lyrical construction of brass shapes jutting from a central spine that ends in a spearhead. You can sense him considering every curve and rivet as he strived to push at and maintain equilibrium. Resia's pieces read more like exclamation points, driven by hope, wrath, love, and loss.

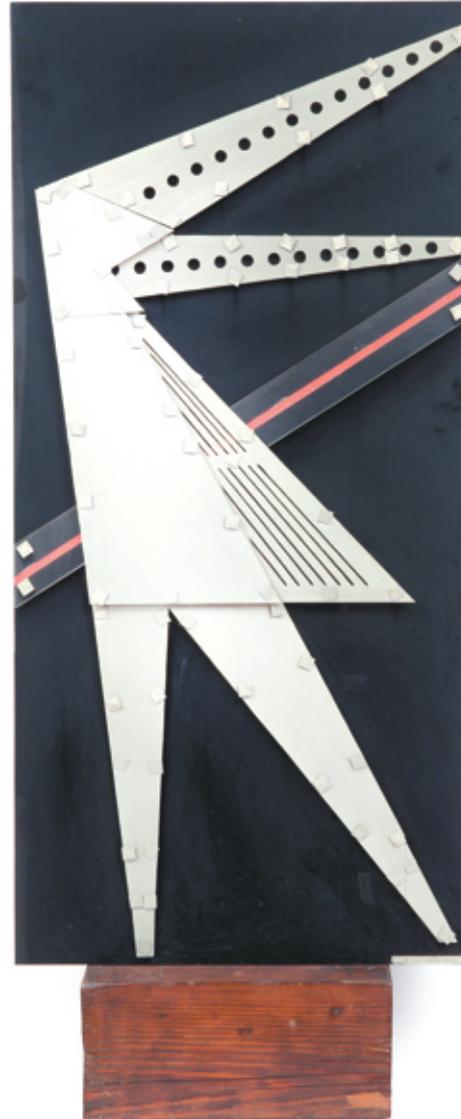
Not just beauty

Mira Schor has a small show of her own work up at artSTRAND — freshly made, it seems — you can still smell the paint. She clearly takes sensual delight in the medium, indulging in thick swaths of jungle green and white. A horizon line runs through these works, and they are mounted in relation to it, so where the horizon is high,

the painting rides low; this places them all in one quirky pictorial world.

She makes diagrammatic cartoons about creativity's quandaries, and how need and desire, receptivity and action, relate to the creative act. A square-headed protagonist, often carrying a book, stands in for artist and viewer. In "Private Garden" that figure lounges back in dark glasses inside a giddily green bubble, which also contains a big, darker green form that might be a teardrop or a punching bag. Nobody said the creative life was easy.

The yellow figure — we'll call her female — holds her book like an offering in "Visual Pleasure at Night." The black nighttime around her is pregnant with green; neon blades of grass rise along that horizon line. A dizzy yellow-green sign drops



ABSTRACT MARRIAGE: Sculpture by Ilya Schor and Resia Schor

At: Provincetown Art Association and Museum, 460 Commercial St., Provincetown, through Sept. 29. 508-487-1750, www.paam.org

MIRA SCHOR

At: ArtSTRAND, 494 Commercial St., Provincetown, through Sept. 11. 508-487-1153, www.artstrand.com

SALLY CURCIO

At: Harmon Gallery, 95 Commercial St., Wellfleet, through Nov. 30. 508-349-0530, www.harmongallery.com

in, reading "visual pleasure." And, oh my god, it is! The spare lines, the thick paint, the swoon-worthy colors.

There's a whiff of tension here between the gooey glory of paint and the intellectual armature of theory upon which many paintings are built. It's not just beauty — it's the ideas behind it, which even in an onslaught of color and materiality, hold to their tensile strength.

Miniature worlds

Sally Curcio builds glittering little worlds beneath the square bubbles of windows usually used as skylights. Working with fabric, pins, and a bevy of tiny objects, Curcio's terrarium-like constructions on view at Harmon Gallery in Wellfleet offer up the absorbing intricacies of a well-made miniature world.

"Miami" depicts the pale sands of Miami Beach sandwiched between limpid aqua waters and rows of high rises — mostly crafted from hundreds of tiny beads strung onto pins stuck into a fabric pad. For "Garden of Earthly Delights," she fastened foam rubber into fleshy folds, and outfitted those and some pale plastic orbs with fake eyelashes, which bob on a blue ground. They flirt, they entice. They'd giggle, if they could.

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