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Newest group of Newington-Cropsey artists presents proposals

by Amy Pate

Three visiting artists from the Newington-Cropsey Foundation gave several members of the Vanderbilt community a glimpse into their artistic processes as they create statues for the "Garden of Great Ideas."

The artists are the third group to participate in the "Garden of Great Ideas" sculpture program at Vanderbilt. The first group of sculptures was unveiled in December 1998 and a second group is scheduled for unveiling in April 2000. The third group of sculptures is scheduled for unveiling in spring 2001.

The artists are approaching topics of mistreatment of women, North American land use and the concept of self in their works.

Viviane Silvera explores "the role mothers play in the maiming and violation of their own daughters" in her proposed piece, entitled "Moral Dichotomies between Individual Rights and Cultural Practices."

Displaying four models of variations of the piece, she explained that she was interested in how mothers sacrificed their female children to cultural norms, whether those norms are enforced through genital mutilation, plastic surgery or honor killings.

"You cannot maim the child without maiming the mother," she said. "I didn't want to vilify the mother. I wanted to show the struggle, the conflict she feels." In her artist's statement, she confronts the dilemma of these women. "Does being a good mother mean you protect your daughter from the patriarchal order,

or do you ensure her place in it?" she writes. "Cultural codes are set up saying that in order to be a good mother, you have to protect your child while simultaneously dictating the maiming of your child."



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New sculptures planted in 'Garden of Great Ideas'

by Tara S. Donahue

A trumpet fanfare played Nov. 13 during the unveiling of three new bronze sculptures added to the "Garden of Great Ideas" collection at Vanderbilt. Sponsored by the New York-based Newington-Cropsey Foundation (NCF), the "Garden of Great Ideas" includes outdoor art on permanent display at Vanderbilt and other campuses. The sculptures at Vanderbilt are a gift to the University by the NCF.



The third sculpture was created by Viviane Silvera, a sculptor and teacher in New York City. Titled "The Fault" and based on the topic "Moral Dichotomies," Silvera used the poem "Quake Theory" by Susan Olds to reflect on the question, "Why would a mother sacrifice her daughter?"

At the base on the sculpture, located between Tolman and McGill Halls, the words to the poem are inscribed. A mother bent over in apparent distress walks across the poem, while her infant daughter reaches up to her with outstretched arms.

"Within the exploration of the universal mistreatment of women, mothers themselves play a role in the violation and maiming of their own daughters," Silvera said. "Throughout all time societies have this in common, from the practice of female genital mutilation, to foot binding to mothers who force their daughters' bodies to standards of beauty and thinness."

"Mothers are put in a great cultural paradox when we conceive of them as nurturing while there are so many instances of maternal violence," she said.

The piece, according to the artist, is intended to be viewed from several perspectives. As the viewer moves around, the child's perspective, the mother's perspective and the outside party's perspective can all be seen.

