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Teresa Sherman
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Contact: Teresa A. Sherman '09, (309) 556-3181

Merwin and Wakeley Galleries to Feature Lithographs and “Contraptions”

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Exhibits by Illinois-based artists Michael Barnes and Tammie Rubin are on display at Illinois Wesleyan University’s Merwin and Wakeley Galleries beginning Monday, Jan. 13 with an artist’s lecture by Barnes to take place from 4 to 5 p.m. and an opening reception for both shows from 5 to 6 p.m. in the galleries (6 Ames Plaza, Bloomington).

All exhibits and events are free and open to the public. Regular gallery hours are Monday through Friday from noon to 4 p.m., Tuesday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m.

Barnes, a lithographer, uses the eighteenth-century technique of plate-printing to address modern political concerns in his series *Malignant Arsenal*. On display in the Merwin gallery, his images feature various weaponry formed by tumors and growths the artist has described as “grotesque” and a “commentary on past, current, and, certainly, future use and misuse of power.” By depicting a historical range of inherently violent objects in states of sickness and decay, Barnes illustrates “how human nature and the quest for power have not changed over time.”

The head of the printmaking program and an associate professor of art at Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, Barnes earned a master of arts and a master of fine arts from the University of Iowa in 1995 and 1996, respectively. His collections of lithographs and drawings have been featured in galleries across the nation, and in 2000 and 2004 he was the resident artist at the Frans Masereel Centrum in Kasterlee, Belgium. Currently, Barnes’ work is represented at Cervina Haas Gallery in Scottsdale, Ariz., among others.

He is Gone, a collection of ceramic sculptures Rubin has subtitled “imagined contraptions for final communications,” are on display in the Wakeley gallery. Taking on the theme of death and its finality, Rubin uses brightly colored and oddly shaped pieces as “an attempt to create a mythology in which created contraptions allow one last communication with

the departed.” According to the artist, “These ‘contraptions’ embody an absurd idea, both hopeful and sad, but maybe also beautiful.”

A Chicago native, Rubin is an assistant professor of art and design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Rubin has also taught at the Kirkland Arts Center in Kirkland, Wash., and the Art Institute of Seattle. In 2003, she earned a master of fine arts in ceramics from the University of Washington. Recently, she was awarded a grant from Artist Trust, Grants for Artist Projects. Her current research interests include the changing historical view of ornament and pattern in contemporary culture.

For additional information, contact Carmen Lozar, director of the Merwin and Wakeley Galleries, at (309) 556-3391.

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