

**Erotic Art**  
**Blackstone River Gallery**  
**68 South Main Street**  
**Woonsocket, RI**  
**May/June, 2005**

Erotic Art in downtown Woonsocket sounds like an oxymoron but Co-directors Lori Sturgill and Karen Talbot of the Blackstone River Gallery have mounted an intelligent exhibition of broad scope and vision. The high ceilings and tall windows of the second and third floor galleries of this newly developed mill building greatly enhance the work of the ten New England artists in the show. Each artist has examined a wide range of content by exploring overtly sexually-charged to subtly sensual and suggestive imagery.

One of the most striking works is a photograph by Katherine Copenhauer that greets the viewer upon emerging from the staircase into the top floor gallery. The large black-and-white digital print ironically entitled, "House Cleaner," reveals a nude woman holding a cigarette in one hand and a toilet brush in the other as she stares shyly yet with disdain into the lens of the camera. It's a provocative and highly charged image that exudes sexuality but also engages the mind with paradox.

On the opposite wall of the large gallery space is a series of six small color photos by Monique Cousineau that utilizes bondage and body piercing in a decorative and beautiful fashion. In several works, the naked back of a female model is pierced with curved rows of hypodermic needles and then delicately laced with monochromatic ribbons. Other images show the model's hands symmetrically bound behind her back with a black silk rope and the long braid of her own hair. Pain, pleasure and the aesthetically-beautiful are gracefully intertwined and very carefully balanced in Cousineau's work.

This is an edgy but smart show for this new gallery in Woonsocket's newly established Arts & Entertainment District. It's well worth the drive and hopefully an indication of further exciting exhibitions.

*Michael Cochran*