

## Seattle artists Linda Davidson and April Surgent: mosaic mavericks

Seattle artists Linda Davidson and April Surgent create mosaics in varied media, with maverick twists.

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By **Michael Upchurch** *Seattle Times arts writer*

A mosaic can be a curious thing. A single piece of it can be a tiny work of art in itself. But put all the pieces together, and you've got something symphonic in scope.

Two exhibits by Seattle artists, Linda Davidson's "Ormolu" at Catherine Person Gallery and April Surgent's "Into the Surface" at Bellevue Arts Museum, explore the tension between small-scale components and large-scale effect in maverick ways...

...April Surgent's panoramic glass-panel installation, "Into the Surface," is as unusual in its methods as Davidson's "Ormolu." Surgent, working from photographs she takes, conjures ghostly images of everyday Seattle street scenes.

She has, she says in her artist's statement, "no desire to capture the magnificent or extraordinary" in her work. Still, there's an eerie grandeur to the way she zeros in on the ephemeral nature of urban life: the way pedestrians slip past one another, the way the city landscape itself is in constant flux, the way human presence and brick-and-mortar background merge into a single, interpenetrating entity.

Comprising more than 100 6-by-12-inch panels, "Into the Surface" is a slippery visual fugue. Figures in full or partial view — a bicyclist, a photographer, striding shoppers — inhabit a palimpsest of street-scene detail. An interior view of a bus seems to dovetail into an exterior glimpse of the vehicle. Storefront signs, stadium roofs, window reflections, market-stall flowers, shipping cranes and other local sights crowd the "canvas." Solid outlines keep giving way to blurry echoes, and the overall effect is extraordinarily complex and rich. The crowning touch may be that, while the mural panels are flush at the bottom, they're skyline-ragged at the top.

Surgent's main item is paired with a video installation, accompanied by ambient sound, that covers much the same subject matter as her glass-panel assemblage. Images of teeming urban life and infrastructure, again, are layered over one another. This video component doesn't have the power of the mobile life she captures in her glass-panel frieze — but it hints, fascinatingly, at how she gathers and transforms her material.



April Surgent's "Into the Surface" consists of glass panels, steel, wood, sound recording and video projector.