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## Letter-writing artist invites Bemis visitors to join in

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WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER



Matthew Carlson's works, like this one, are themed "Shape-shifters."

Rebecca Herskovitz has discovered an unusual form of voyeurism.

The artist has occasionally written deeply personal letters she never intended to mail.

"It's very liberating," Herskovitz said. "But it's also disingenuous, because you're having an intimate relationship that's not shared, which is kind of like looking at erotic art."

Herskovitz has translated her letter-writing experience into a show called "The Things I Cannot Say." Visitors to the Bemis Underground gallery are invited to sit at a desk and write letters on the same kind of yellow, lined legal paper that Herskovitz used for her correspondence.

Herskovitz uses that paper in the show as a motif. She sketched nudes — symbols of one-sided relationships — on legal paper and framed them for display. She also sketched nudes on blocks of wood, allowing the grains and lines in the wood to function like the lines in the paper. Lines crossing sensitive parts of the anatomy can be viewed as a sort of censorship.

Some of Herskovitz's larger works are collages, featuring letters and nudes that have been glued onto a large plywood background.

Herskovitz's show also includes several landscape watercolors as well as a major oil called "Your Sadness Has Caught Up to You." An amazingly expressive painting, it shows an anguished nude emerging from a background of swirling colors, making it a mix of abstraction and representation.

Two other shows also opened last week at the Bemis Underground: Matthew Carlson's "Shapeshifters" and Tana Quincy's "Sodzo."

Shapeshifting refers to the popular theme in folklore and science fiction in which beings transform from one kind of creature to another — for instance, a frog into a prince.

Carlson's shapeshifters are human forms covered, from head to toe, with what appears to be multicolored seaweed.

Two motifs stand out in these works. Eyeballs are one. The heads of some of his shapeshifters have multiple eyes staring out of the paintings. He has also painted a series of wooden discs to look like eyes.

A second motif is the brick wall. One of Carlson's paintings features a group of humans and shapeshifters playing in front of a brick wall. He also painted the gallery's back wall to look like exposed brick.

The 21 small paintings in Quincy's show seemingly deal with healing. "Sodzo" is a Greek word meaning to "protect," "preserve," "heal" or "keep safe."

Her paintings show close-ups of bones, muscles, joints and tendons. The works, mounted on small brown boxes and hung on a brown wall, appear to float. Their layout also calls to mind an arched spine.

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