

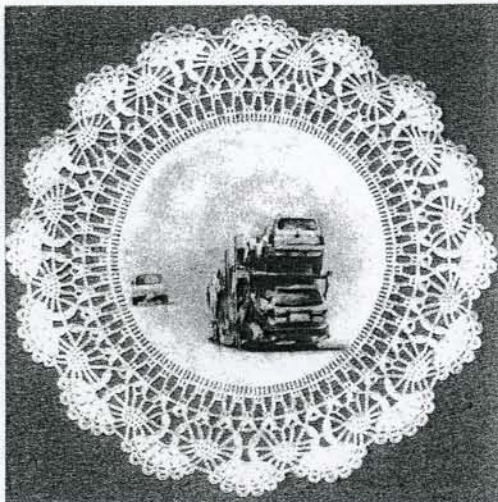
ART NEW ENGLAND

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Bernard Toale Gallery/ Boston, MA
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COLLEEN KIELY: ON THE ROAD

What does one make of pictures of cars, trucks, and buses on paper doilies, pinned on the wall like so many butterflies? Colleen Kiely's installation of drawings presents specimens that would be difficult to collect, being some of the heaviest machinery on the road. There is nothing daintier than a Jeep here, among pickup trucks, school buses, trucks hauling logs, and cars towing boats on the highway. Each "specimen," as it were, is displayed in the context of its natural habitat—passing another car or in a traffic jam, suspended in motion. And in fact they were



Colleen Kiely, *On the Road: Rear View # 45*, graphite on doily, 8" diameter, 2003.

collected in motion, scenes and samples from the artist's own long commute. *On the Road* is an installation fraught with contradictions, most of which are left unresolved. The contrast between heavy machinery and dainty paper cutouts is too much, at first—how much do a cement mixer and a snowflake have in common, after all? But the doily, delicate as it may seem, is just another mass-produced object. Its machine-punched filigree is infinitely reproducible and therefore not quite as ethereal as it seems. The traffic, on the other hand, is delicately rendered in graphite. In a way, even the Greyhound bus seems less substantive than the lacy nothing it's portrayed on. And this vehicle, and all the others, are enveloped in a bit of a romantic mist, though it may just be exhaust fumes.

Kiely is best known for her paintings of cuddly creatures. When she blows these up beyond life-size, their doe eyes become somewhat threatening. She is skilled at making the cute, the beautiful, or the delicate become grotesque. These drawings perform that process in reverse. In miniature, the most brutal, lumbering features of our environment become substanceless, and almost dainty.

Mariana Mogilevich