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Visual arts

Margaret Kilgallen: Exhibition offers a new look at late S.F. artist's work

By Kimberly Chun

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

It's been almost a decade since influential Mission School artist Margaret Kilgallen died at the far-too-youthful age of 33. Poised on the brink of what looked to be vibrant career, the folk-art aficionado was already a model for so many, in particular female artists, when she died June 26, 2001, of complications from breast cancer weeks after the birth of her daughter, Asha.

Now, Ratio 3 Gallery owner Chris Perez says, the time seems right to revisit her work. The longtime Mission denizen worked with Kilgallen's husband and collaborator, Barry McGee, to select the works for "Margaret Kilgallen: Summer/Selections" at Ratio 3 — a bittersweet endeavor, as it turns out.

"It's been fun and at the same time a little sad," Perez says. "It was around this time that she died, so I think it's going to be a little emotional for some people who remembered her and were close to her. But I feel like the exhibition is really going to honor the work and really present it in the best way possible."

Perez met and be-



Reception 6 p.m. today. Through Aug. 5. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Wed.-Sat. Ratio 3, 1447 Stevenson St., S.F. (415) 821-3371. www.ratio3.org.

Whitney Biennial and McGee, a graffiti legend, arrived at the New York City museum to install Kilgallen's work at the exhibition. Recently, Perez says, "I'd been thinking a lot about Margaret's work, and I thought it was time to reconsider the work and think about it and see it. I feel that her work is a little under-recognized and, at the same time, has an incredible cult following, with a lot of those people being part of a younger generation, most of whom have not seen the work in person — just in magazines or books or one or two pieces here and there."

Perez approached the estate and proposed the show. It's a coincidence that "Summer/Selec-

MOCA in Los Angeles — Kilgallen also worked in graffiti, under the tags of Meta and Matokie Slaughter, and her art played a pivotal part in the "Art in the Streets" exhibition's landmark predecessor, "Beautiful Losers: Contemporary Art and Street Culture."

But Kilgallen's art extended beyond the urban jungle, judging by the simple, sublime purity of line and near abstraction of some of her more nature-focused images of trees, leaves, branches, rain and waves. Some of the more than 45 works on paper and canvas at Ratio 3 are being shown publicly for the first time.

"There are a few that might surprise people," Perez says.



Margaret Kilgallen's acrylic on paper works, at right and top

Margaret Kilgallen's acrylic on paper works, at right and top left, are among those at the Ratio 3 show.

Artworks courtesy Margaret Kilgallen Estate and Ratio 3

work, embodied on the paper, once again.

"I think the reason the

someone like Alice Neel, Eva Hesse or Anne Truitt, artists who were

years, and then it ended. There's a limited body of work out there in the