

## Visual Arts



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539 Words

Small-scale realms - both natural and strange, avian and alien-like - unite two exhibits at Spun Smoke. One focuses on San Francisco artist Jeanne C. Finley's video work "Protocol," which captures the birth of two hummingbirds inches from her studio window; the other on Toshiaki Noda's 2- to 3-inch-high ceramic works. Resembling curious interstellar debris or mutant plant pods, glazed in unexpected hues within and without, Noda's miniature fine art vessels are the result of happy accidents that occurred when the artist pushed on the clay or layered glazes. The pieces are worlds away from the traditional functional wares peddled by his ceramic dealer parents in his native Arita, Japan, an area known for centuries for its fine porcelain. "They respect what I do, and they say, 'Very interesting,' especially my dad, who's a crazy businessman - he always talks about business, and always pottery, and he says, 'Yeah, you make great product,'" says Noda, 33, with a laugh. The Queens artist, who also works as a studio assistant to Jeff Koons, was a printmaker until six years ago when he took in a ceramics show by Japanese potter Ryota Aoki. Today, less refined objects provide daily inspiration: the dirt, garbage and smashed cans Noda sees on the street. "That kind of stuff attracts my visual sense a lot," he says. "Anything that shows age and time, the experiences that objects have in the world with time." "Protocol," in contrast, had the effect of slowing time in Finley's studio. The process of shooting the feeding, development and departure of two minuscule, speckled hummingbirds in a walnut-size nest lodged in the bougainvillea outside her studio window only took three weeks last year. But it utterly consumed her. "I became completely obsessed with it and I shot hundreds of hours of footage, because even though it was always the same, there was this slow evolution to what was happening," says the professor of film and a graduate at California College of the Arts. It also dovetailed with another project on the relationship of parents to children. "Part of it was letting the camera roll, but I had to be constantly present. I couldn't leave because any moment something could happen, so it became a very meditative place for me in the studio, which is usually chaotic. At the urging of Spun Smoke owner Patricia Sweetow, Finley, 59, developed the documentation into an artwork, intercutting the footage of the mother feeding the chicks and their fluttering wings with images of a Headlands-area radar tower shrouded in fog. Now with the birds departed, the bougainvillea sadly, accidentally chopped away, and the tiny nest on display alongside the video, Finley is left with a valuable reminder: "If there was any residue left in the studio, it's just that the experience reminded me of the pleasure of deep-focused looking as an artist."

If you go

Jeanne C. Finley "Protocol" and Toshiaki Noda: Reception Thursday, May 21, 6-8:30 p.m. Exhibition through June 27. Noon-6 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Spun Smoke, 2440 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. (510) 788-5860. [www.spunsmoke.com](http://www.spunsmoke.com).

Caption:

Jeanne **Finley** captured the beginning of life for two tiny hummingbirds in "Protocol #1." Jeanne **Finley**

New Yorker Toshiaki Noda uses a wheel to form his ceramic pieces, which resemble interstellar debris or mutant plant pods. David Schmitz.

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