Artists Meet Challenge of Size Limitations

NORMAN — Less is often more in the world of art, and this may well be the case with the 4th International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition — a touring show which challenged 70 artists to create works that would "fit inside a shoebox."

On display at the University of Oklahoma's Museum of Art, the show contains many works that are intriguing, thought-provoking and elegantly constructed, plus some that are enigmatic and hard to fathom, but worth pondering.

Helen Escobedo, a Mexico City artist, raises ecological concerns by portraying tiny garbage bundles and a blue skeleton bobbing on top of a recycled paper, pastel-hued "ocean" in "Nobody's Responsibility, It Floats."

Adding to the tiny ocean microcosm's impact is the fact Escobedo deliberately eschews precious materials and is the show's only artist to install her work in an actual shoebox, like a ship in a bottle.

A plucked chicken with a windup key where its head used to be satirically evokes the poignant "Plight of Being Pliant" in a urethane rubber-bronze sculpture by Honolulu, Hawaii, artist Hanae Uechi.

A bronze sculpture by Frank Sheriff, also of Honolulu, uses plucked chickens in a different context, chaining them to a high-heeled shoe with flaming buildings in it in order to pay mock serious "Homage to Chicks From Hell."

Communicating a much more benevolent view of woman as caregiver, a graceful, streamlined female figure becomes the "Cradle" for a baby balanced on her lap in a bronze sculpture by Chinese artist Chen Kwai-Lun.

A small figure sits contemplating a skull at the base of a "Jesus Cup" with a thorny stem in a bronze sculpture by Scott Katano of Mililani, Hawaii.

Another Hawaiian artist, Lawrence Seward, cautions us against cult-like conformity in a bronze, brass and aluminum sculpture which portrays row after row of kneeling figures worshipping the golden head of "One Icon."

A bloody red, painted wooden heart pierces a dark, mask-like male figure in "White Sox, Black Heart," a powerful, provocative, disturbing wood, paint and tar creation by Sam Hernandez, of Watsonville, Calif.

Organized by the University of Hawaii Art Gallery, the 4th International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition remains on display through Dec. 15.

— John Brandenburg