Critiques in, and of, their context

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

SOCIAL AFFECTS
At: Mills Gallery, 551 Tremont St., through June 12. 617-426-8835, www.bcaonline.org

DAVIS, CHERUBINI: Sleepless

LAUREN DICIOLCIO: And so it goes...

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Storage and tension

Sculptors Taylor Davis and Nicole Cherubini work together to probe the point at which their individual aesthetics merge into one vision. Their new show at Samson, like an exhibit last year at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, had me scrutinizing each piece for what each artist contributed, which can get in the way of comprehending the work as a whole.

Still, there is something both edgy and tender about what they achieve. “Thane” features a four-square stoneware grid (Cherubini is the ceramic artist), delicious with the artist’s finger marks, sitting on a pressed-wood pedestal (Davis works mostly in wood). Three of the squares are filled with rolled up digital prints; one features images of dried flowers; another borrows from a catalog of agricultural equipment; the third features the larger-than-life smile of one of the artist’s nephews. It’s porous storage for memories and emotion.

“Upstairs” is a white vessel with yellow and ochre paint splashing along the outside bottom; gullies stroke the inside. It rests on a silver lamé pillow stitched with a denim pocket on a painted blue pedestal. The paint stops close to the bottom, revealing a band of wood grain. The firm clarity of the pedestal balances the tart messiness of what sits atop it. These works are not seamless; they do not feel like the product of one imagination. But there’s something pleasing about their tensions.