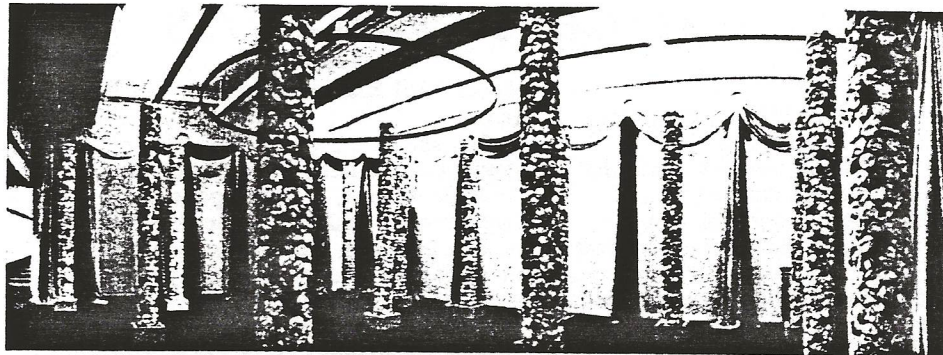


CHESELYN AMATO
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Earnest and compelling, Cheselyn Amato's installation *A Temple in Honor of Life Lived Every Day* is both diaphanous and specific, a curiously absorbing intermingling of prosaic and poetic effects. Amato creates a stoa, a kind of spiritual holy place, cognizant of tradition and history, but here constituted as a site for her to examine the multi-leveled textures of her life.

Eighteen large columns solemnly articulate the space, 12 set in a U-shaped configuration echoing the three walls of the gallery, with a tighter circle of six columns creating a central ring. While no altar is present, an august mood of ritual pervades—this is a space where one could imagine a sacred dance being attempted, some celebration of the spirit. Amato's columns are draped and intertwined with huge bolts of cascading fabric, a soft and variously colorful raiment that tempers their rigid verticality. The shafts of these columns are completely covered with smallish balls of carefully crumpled paper, an obsessive and ordered cushioning composed of the artist's personal history and concerns. These crushed sheets of mania come from the unending succession of pieces of paper that can come to comprise existence; it's all here, the junk mail, the urban detritus, all mixed in by Amato with Xeroxes of personal notes and photographs of the most intimate companions of her life.

Our voyeurism, our curiosity to peer into someone else's business, even if it means decoding crumpled sheets of seeming nothingness, makes this a wheat-and-chaff experience, with only the regular repetition of certain images and texts to aid in separating this from that. There's stuff to be gleaned in that sifting, however, as Amato is willing to reveal bits of the spiritual constructs that have given her life a focus and grounding, and that, like her installation, provide the structure around which her life can spin in every direction.



There was much in this display reminiscent of the best of its kind from the '70s, when confessional autobiographical installations were much in vogue. There is a similar frankness here, an openness to airing one's humanness and core beliefs in a public and somewhat theatrical setting. Amato's complex installation is a highly evolved backdrop for a rumination on issues such as love, faith, thought, and nurture—concepts that certainly can claim a right to enshrinement, celebration, and our attention. The reflections of a lifetime have led her to posit that our daily lives contain just enough wonder and majesty as to benefit from this kind of aesthetic enshrinement, if we would only consider trying to delve through the cacophonous morass that constitutes our daily paper trail. I think I believe her. ~James Yood