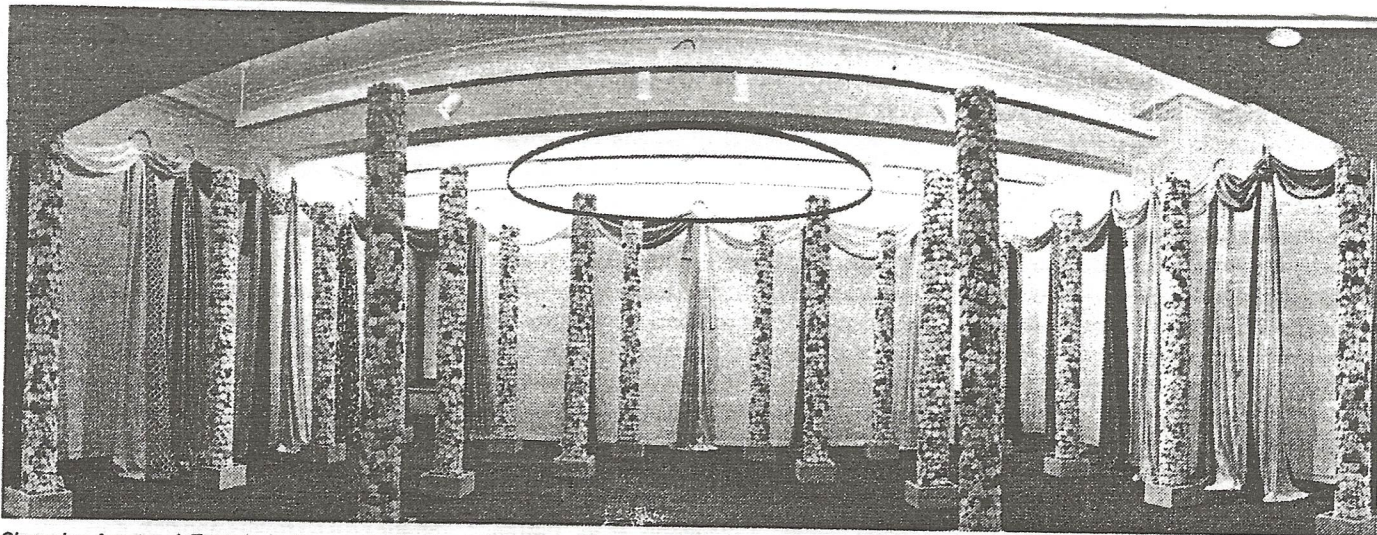


Review by Tina Wasserman in *DIALOGUE: Arts in the Midwest*, Sept/Oct 1996



Cheselyn Amato, *A Temple in Honor of Life Lived Everyday*,

mixed media with sound, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, 1996.

By Tina Wasserman

"Cheselyn Amato: A Temple in Honor of Life Lived Every Day"/Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/13 April-9 June

In Cheselyn Amato's recent installation *A Temple in Honor of Life Lived Every Day*, the transience of memory was restated as physical fact. Eighteen large "classical" columns formed the centerpiece to this work and were constructed from thousands of paper balls, themselves fabricated from paper detritus and memorabilia collected from a 12-year period of the artist's life.

The content of this saved and accumulated material comprised everything that the artist may have come across through more than a decade of life. Work memos, cash receipts, recipes, maps, notes from classes taught and taken, photocopies of family photographs, and more, punctuated the surface of the columns, transforming them from their classical roots into monuments dedicated to memory and everyday existence.

This material residue of the artist's life was built into the columns in such a way that their content could be literally "read"—themes, narratives, autobiography, and even history emerged. While the content or images depicted on some of the paper balls appeared to be unique and original (a child's drawing, for example), others (like bank withdrawals and shopping lists) were repeated simply because they were the residue of life's repetitive tasks; they became a kind of lexicon of everyday charges and duties. Others were less autobiographical and appeared more purposely iterative and consciously chosen.

The repeated inclusion of an image of Anne Frank, Hebrew text, and striped paper (a strong reference to concentra-

tion camp uniforms), provided a visual framework for Judaism as a subtext. Utopian, symbolic, and textual aspects of Judaism were significantly referred to in the other parts of the installation as well, underscoring the relationship between the self and history.

Autobiography, monumental history, and the less significant castoffs of everyday life coexisted to create a picture of a person, a life; history and identity. Traces and threads proliferated and duplicated into a meaningful clarity. Even the job memos that Amato included created something of a coherent narrative. All of this resulted in a kind of articulation that is rare in the production of art these days: Amato's installation so clearly pronounced her existence that is ultimately affirmed life.

*Tina Wasserman is a writer and a media artist living in Chicago.*