

INFINITE & IMAGINATION

Bonnie Gangelhoff /Southwest Art

MAY 2005

Meet six artists who bring their artistic visions to life in glass, collage, wood, and clay -BY BONNIE GANGELHOFF

JULIE MAREN

For **Julie Maren**, collages are similar to jazz music. "They both have multiple layers," says the Colorado artist. Indeed, the ability to follow visual rifts and improvise is what keeps Maren engaged in the creative process. Her lively collage compositions feature bits of fabric, doilies, yarn, antique lace, wallpaper and old sheet music-items that she coats with a gel adhesive and attaches to wood panels. For example, in *ALL THE DRESSES* Maren creates a montage of white frocks, including a First Communion dress and a wedding dress set against a black background. "In this piece, I was thinking about a woman's life and how inanimate objects can tell someone's history," she says. To create the collage, Maren layered gold leaf, wallpaper, and black paint and then used a light wash to depict the dresses. "The physical process of collage and its layers reflects the complexities of thoughts and emotions of a given time and space," the artist says.

On occasion, Maren's themes move in a darkly humorous direction, as in *UNTOLD SECRETS*, which features a magpie. As a child, the artist was intrigued by an old English rhyme about how the black-and-white birds had a secret. "They ate their children," she explains. "I don't know if it's true or not." Maren is also fascinated by the idea that the birds are known to be "creatures of comfort who like to build big nests." Thus, she says, magpies also symbolize comfort in her work, as do teapots, creamers, and sugar bowls.

Like most collage and assemblage artists, Maren is an unapologetic pack rat. On a trip to England, she returned home with a suitcase stuffed with old books and photographs. During a recent stroll in her own neighborhood, she spotted a silver paper snowflake and scooped it up from the sidewalk; it may debut in a future work. Maren's current projects include creating illustrations for a children's book, *Celia Cruz, Queen of Salsa*, which is scheduled for publication in June by Dial Press.