

**TERRI FRIEDMAN,  
STEPHEN SHACKELFORD**  
VICTORIA ROOM

180 Sixth St.

San Francisco, 94103, 415/255-0364

A 14-year coma hardly seems like an inspiring subject, but it's an apt metaphor for many things in America: the Pentagon, for example—a constant, overblown expenditure that exists in a state of suspended animation. Terri Friedman's "Sunny von Bulow is Still Alive" turns such a dragging, moribund situation into a surprisingly enthralling experience. The artist's inspiration is the languishing WASP heiress, the alleged victim of her Eurotrash husband, a woman who reportedly endures oblivion with ever-replenished floral

arrangements and visits from beauticians who warm her lifeless patrician pallor with pricey rouge. Hey, it's an intriguing enough concept to have fueled a major motion picture starring Glenn Close.

Friedman explores the perverse notion of the "decorated living corpse" with a lively combination of arts-and-crafts glitz and corporeal theory. The artist takes inexpensive and culturally "dead" materials—cardboard boxes, plastic tubing, colorful reclaimed garbage—and enlivens them with dazzling reflective surfaces and decorative curlicue patterns. Friedman's aesthetic is more '70s ranch-style suburbia than American aristocracy. It's as if she has given antiseptic medical objects a metaphoric coat of metallic spray paint. It's a frightening, but highly attractive practice. The show's best works exude the quality of gilded entrails. *Fantasies of Thirst* is a sprawling, suspended sculpture of blue tinsel intestines and bulbous shapes that resemble innards slipped into an evening gown. Similarly, a mirror-encrusted chandelier, titled *Over the Top*, is accessorized with glasses filled with colored water and little golden sacks the size of tiny tumors.

Aided respiration also enters into the artistic dialogue. In a series of kinetic sculptures, Friedman applies her low-rent aesthetic to Sunny's perfumed breath. An aquarium pump dangles on the wall and bubbles the water of a nearby Evian bottle. In another piece, a brand-name fan puffs up striped boutique bags at regular intervals, and in yet another, a tangle of transparent tubing glamorously displays the circulation of glitter-laced water—a lovely stand-in for blood. With such works, the artist alludes to disparate class conditions as she brings new meaning to childhood doctor games. Extending life with such mundane materials is an appealing fantasy in an age of health-care crises and flesh-eating viruses.

Friedman's work was entwined with PVC pipe and plant sculptures by Stephen Shackelford. His somewhat cryptic pieces also evince circulation as metaphor. The nourishing watering systems scale walls and floors, while ghostly strains of Patsy Cline songs emanate from the meandering white pipelines. Shackelford's work has the mundane, utilitarian appeal of an automatic plant-watering system, but his automated nurturing doesn't have a visual heart. ~Glen Helfand



**Terri Friedman**

*Fantasies of Thirst*, 1995. Mixed-media installation.  
Photo courtesy of the artist.