

Danielle Mailer

**Cornwall Free Library
Cornwall, Connecticut**

Danielle Mailer's whimsical figures leaped and shimmied across the walls at this exhibition, appropriately titled "Dreaming in Color." Artichokes and grape clusters grew from their pubic mounds; totemic masks climbed their legs; teapots, trombones, and chili peppers replaced their internal organs.

Mailer's unwavering focus throughout this show of life-size Masonite cutouts, *giclée* prints, collages, and freestanding metal sculpture was the female body. The cutouts, painted with acrylics, projected a festive extroversion, while the mood of the prints was often more sub-



Danielle Mailer, *Downward Dog*, 2007, mixed media collage with rice paper. 16" x 20". Cornwall Free Library.

dued. *Downward Dog* (2007) portrays a yogic figure arched across a running stream; overhead, a bird flies toward the moon. Other images celebrated solitary moments with a cup of tea or a book. In *Goddess of Small Things* (2006), a stylish figure at ease in an orange armchair gazes at the book in her lap. Despite the mass of tendrils climbing toward the ceiling and the leaves sprouting from her cleavage, the figure expresses a stillness. Mere mortals rarely experience introspection so intensely.

Frida Kahlo's dreamlike sequences came to mind as precursors to Mailer's autobiographical symbolism: Mailer's husband is a jazz trombonist, the chili peppers allude to her Peruvian heritage, and the artichoke is one of her favorite vegetables. Her work is improvisational, riffing on cultural associations between femininity and nature. With exuberance, Mailer invites us to share in her creative process.

—Johanna Ruth Epstein