

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

By Edith Newhall  
FOR THE INQUIRER

## Tutu/Truetrue

Though Margaret Murphy's sweet paintings of ballerina figurines and Joseph Hu's homespun facsimiles of common objects, which make up the current two-person show at Pentimenti Gallery, have little in common in any obvious way, both artists are exploring the power of simple, iconic images.

Murphy, one assumes, has chosen the ballerina figurine as the classic role model for young girls, a perfect, pretty doll who never gains weight or has a bad hair day, while Hu seems to be evoking the human presence that lingers within the well-seasoned personal object.

Murphy is a skilled painter, but the ballerina, an inherently cloying image to begin with, becomes too sugary too quickly in a show of 16 paintings of music-box ballerinas, kneeling ballerinas, stand-



"Brush" is one of Joseph Hu's facsimiles of common objects.

ing ballerinas, and so forth. Apparently Murphy also paints "bad girl" figurines, a few of which shown here would have had a mitigating effect. On the other hand, her video of a swirling music-box ballerina had a slightly sinister quality that struck me as a more accurate expression of her ideas.

Hu's work, by contrast, shows the benefit of a little inconsistency.

There are pieces here that are relatively straightforward facsimiles, such as his puffy paper, graphite, and gouache version of a Ralph Lauren striped shirt suspended from the ceiling that

looks like it holds an invisible body, and his "brush" of painted plaster with "bristles" of Hu's own hair.

Others, like a cast-resin liquor bottle and glass, and an acrylic-and-gouache-on-paper "knit blanket," take more poetic license.

But Hu's pieces work well together because they appear to have sprung from his intuitions about objects.

Pentimenti Gallery, 145 N. Second St., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, 12 to 5 p.m. Saturdays. 215-625-9990 or [www.pentimenti.com](http://www.pentimenti.com). Through June 16.