



DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park

Karl Baden, *Shriners' Convention, Boston*, 1984

## Take My Art, Please!

What's fascinating, funny, and tends to hang on the wall? Give up? It's ***Lighten Up: Art with a Sense of Humor***, and it's at the **DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park** through May 28.

Let's face it. There can be something a little intimidating about art—especially when it's in a museum. In an effort to ease the tension, *Lighten Up's* artists use humor to engage the viewer on an immediate emotional level, sticking with the notion that it's hard not to connect with art that makes you laugh out loud. Familiar faces—like those in William Wegman's signature weimaraner portraits—appear alongside playful visual gags like Jeffu Warmouth's *Bagel Belly* (1999), a photo series of a portly stomach being smeared with cream cheese and lox.

But it's not all one-liners and visual puns. Christopher "Lucky" Leone takes on American art history and connoisseurship with his *Rockwells Updated: Looking (Crap Art)* (2000), an irreverent lampoon in which Norman Rockwell's classic *The Connoisseur* (1962) is digitally retouched to include the image of what appears to be a gigantic sock monkey. Still other works straddle the line between humor and simple documentary, such as Karl Baden's *Shriner's Convention, Boston* (1984), in which a lone Shriner pilots his diminutive car down a city street. He looks ridiculously small in contrast to the high-rise buildings in the background—proof that reality is often its own punch line. But seriously... wouldn't art be a lot more fun if we could all just lighten up a little?