

More than a page from a remarkable book

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God is not dead. But we may need to rethink the forms he — or she — inhabits.

In "Life Is a Page," Ruth Laxson presents 15 recent God Doll drawings at Marcia Wood Gallery. The latest in her ongoing series, they strike discomfiting poses — literally and metaphorically — offering a quirky perspective on gods, faith and contemporary culture. They sport dangling limbs, misplaced features and other signs of their makeshift and mutable status. Rather like our ideas of God can be.



MARCIA WOOD GALLERY

Artist **Ruth Laxson's** exhibit, called "Life Is a Page," presents 15 God Doll drawings that present her varying perspectives of faith. The exhibit runs through July 19 at the Marcia Wood Gallery.

REVIEW

"Ruth Laxson: Life Is a Page"

Through July 19. 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Prices: \$700–\$12,000 (prints, paintings, drawings, sculpture); \$45–\$300 (artists' books). Marcia Wood Gallery, 263 Walker St., Atlanta. 404-827-0030; www.marciawoodgallery.com.

Bottom line: Delightful and provocative new drawings by this Atlanta-based artist accompanies the debut of her 30th artists' book, along with an impressive survey of her paintings, prints, sculpture, mail art, prints and earlier books.

And thus debuts the Atlanta resident's most recent artists' book, "Ideas of God." It is Laxson's 30th, accompanied by the new drawings and an extensive survey of earlier books, paintings, prints, mail art and sculpture, spanning more than 40 years of artistic production.

Laxson is internationally recognized in the artists' book arena. Her works are included in major museums and book collections, among them New York's Museum of Modern Art, London's Tate Gallery, Yale University Fine Art & Architecture Library and the Rhode Island School of Design, which is currently showcasing Laxson's archives.

For an artist who works in so many mediums, the 84-year old's affinity for papers, text and language finds endless, fresh and imaginative uses. Laxson collages, stitches, rips, inks, erases and imbeds meticulous tidbits that make up lyrical, gently provocative creations.

The gawky and delicate God Dolls, for example, are the perfect foil for the commentary buried within. Their figures are filled with scrawling line and intertwined words, symbols, scribbles and markings. Poetic fragments lurk in their interiors like scattered clues to the human condition.

In "Bravery," a veiled female clenching one fist walks away from signs of war. Her headdress, like a beekeeper's, buzzes with energized squiggles and

mathematical notations. She lays claim to her "inner God Doll," remarking that "somebody's gotta keep a cool head."

"Ragdoll" offers a more painful view of humanity, emphasizing our vulnerability, while "I'm All Eyes" grants visionary powers to a peculiar figure with eight fluttering eyes. She stands over a truck, a roadway and a church; like any good deity surveying her world, she is both inscrutable and reassuring.

Ultimately, Laxson's God Dolls — and her ideas of God — seduce us with humor, wisdom and innocence. Their creator uses them to specific and canny purpose, probing religion, politics, and the creative process with an unflinching voice.

Yet her own optimism is evident, as her particular poetry suggests that our inner gods remain accessible, even if in a fragile and constantly changing state.