

Art Review: More Proves Better at 500X's Energetic College Show, "Fresh Meat"

Fun adverts, two hip art world jurors, and the 500x openness to experimentation has created an exciting college art exhibit. Jurors Cris Worley—owner and director of Cris Worley Fine Arts in Dallas— and Erick Swenson—international art star— selected 43 from 900 pieces, presenting a strong exhibit of what turned out to be primarily North Texas talent. Occupying both floors and resisting the “more is better” tendency, the show has a sprawling, spacious quality. The majority of pieces display a figurative inclination and graphic strength conveying resolved consideration. Yet there are also several surprises including some accomplished ceramics.

Not surprisingly one work resembles *Fresh Meat*: chopped logs filled with silicon representing muscle, fat and sinew. *Amputee* by Rachel Muldez (University of Dallas) is an anthropomorphized and didactic reminder of our planetary destruction, yet the work remains disgusting and darkly humorous, overcoming it's preachiness through craftsmanship and humor.

Many of the works exhibit a similar methodology, combining craftsmanship and boldness with tongue-in-cheek irony. Gregory Ruppe's (Texas Christian University) graphic mash-up paintings satirically combine a Pop Anime stylization with Chinese scrolls. Sculpturally, Ruppe offers another set of amputated body parts, legs below the knee in repressive/sexual school girl pumps and stockings. Nearby, Jess Peri's (University of North Texas) digital prints continue the reductive strategy on product packaging, turning Bon Ami and Cliff Bars into Pop abstractions. Benjamin Terry's *Coral Snake* (University of North Texas), primarily a white figurative work, presents another bold color pattern this time challenging figure/ground assumptions. Terry's piece balances the darker figurative, mixed media work of Giovanni Valderas, and both of the artists' strong pieces are reminiscent of Matthew Bourbon's work.

A brace of colorful abstractions by Trey Egan (UNT) display dexterous paint handling, challenged in new media by Rusty Chapman's painterly *Creation Myth* stop frame animation. Around the corner is a profoundly sarcastic photo, *Ashley III* by Elva Salinas (Texas Woman's University), parodying fashion photography and, by proxy, the ill-advised trend to promote fashion photos in museums and art centers.

Not to be overlooked is the M. Kate Holmes *Hand Holding Shirt* (University of Texas at Arlington), two Picasso-esque striped long sleeve shirts with one arm fused to connect both garments, and the audacious *Here's Another One* by Shelby David Meier (TCU), a vinyl laminated two-by-four presenting itself as a commonplace two-by-four. Conceptually echoing the exhibit, the poignant experiment collides with the plausible simulacra, generating new discussions and welcoming new voices.

- Ryder Richards