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Academic Inspiration

By Nadine Wasserman

Art and Design Faculty Show



An intriguing selection: College of St. Rose Art Gallery.

College of Saint Rose Art Gallery, Albany, through Oct. 11

Generally, the goal of faculty shows is to let students see the work of their professors. Because of this, the exhibitions are often crowded and disjointed and not the best way to show an artist's work. The current show at the College of Saint Rose is an exception. Despite being a diverse mix of graphic work, sculpture, drawing, painting, collage, and photography, the exhibition of 57 works by 26 artists doesn't feel overly dense or repetitive, and viewers will find many interesting connections between pieces on display.

At the entrance to the exhibition is Kris Corso Tolmie's *Pre Flight Series*, a group of 10 small copper plate etchings, on one side, and Ann Breaznell's two poster-size interpretations of typography called *Slab Serif I* and *Slab Serif II*, on the other side. These works set a contemplative tone for the overall exhibition. Close by is a group of five works on vellum by Deborah Zlotzky. Her imagery falls somewhere between organic and paranormal, and the vellum lends a quality to the forms that make them delicate and diaphanous. The shapes, at once grotesque and alluring, seem to have been conjured in dreams or in séances, as they are

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neither clear nor definitive but rather ghostly and ill-defined. Andrea Hersh's oil paintings seem to also emerge from some extraterrestrial realm. In *Summer*, a weird orange doglike figure bedecked with ribbons prances on puffy clouds while two green cartoony arms reach out to poke and pat it. In *Ring Toss*, similarly odd shapes appear in a martian landscape. The paintings are at once humorous and discomfiting; they recall dreams and fantasies with all their attendant joys and perils.

Taking a different approach to human tragicomedy are Sarah Harrington's interpretations of greeting cards titled *Birthday Alphabet*, *Optimism*, and *I Talked, You Listened*. Her series called *Life and Other Journeys* is exemplified by *Optimism*, which describes an optimistic outlook on the cover and then inside reveals a diminutive glass "half full." And speaking of optimism, Gina Occhiogrosso's *Charted I Try #22* renders her obsessive thought, "I Try," into an embroidery pattern of cross-stitched animals, thus revealing a Pollyanish experiment. Her other piece, *Snow White (revised)*, is a digital manipulation of the sanguine Disney version of the fairy tale. In Occhiogrosso's hands it is the dwarfs who find their happily ever after once they realize that the heroine has no use for them. Another painter who uses humor to approach more serious subjects is Brian Cirimo. His *No Man's Land* is a cartoony version of a violent landscape of bombs, barbed wire, and exploding heads and organs.

Other paintings and photographs in the exhibition are less abstract in their approach, but are no less heady. Scott Brodie's oils on canvas are titled with complete explanations of the clothing depicted, such as *The felt fedora was given to me by Paul after his father passed away. I think of Paul and his dad when I wear it in the winter. The "driving" gloves were a gift from Yvonne. I often wear them at the same time as Paul's dad's hat.* Ben Schwab's cityscapes are similarly very personal. He renders them as a narrative of "the city" as a dynamic and changing entity. His paintings depict less an exact replica than an interpretation of a place through light, line, composition, and color. Chris De Marco's color photographs of the Wildwood boardwalk clearly are about a certain place, but instead of capturing the frenetic activity of the locale, they present images of its kitschy props, alone and

somewhat defeated or awkward looking. Similarly, Andrea Kohl's photographs of a collapsed barn bring out the beauty of decay in duotone, while Sharon Siegel paints two views of Stonecrop in intimate detail.

William Jaeger interprets each place in his photographs by capturing a particular light or angle. In *Bella New York*, two trucks frame a restaurant that emits a neon glow on the surrounding snow, and in *Sentry, Castleton*, a single lightbulb emits a greenish glow onto the snowy scene. Ken Ragsdale's work is less about a particular place than a compilation of memories of places. His two mixed-media works include images of farm machinery, a swing set, trees, mountains, a camper, and a station wagon. They are more dreamscapes than realities. Rob O'Neil's *Rock and Sky Series* is a wall installation of eight panels, each with its own Polaroid interpretation of a piece of sky paired with rocks and measuring instruments.

While each artist is limited to a small number of works, the works chosen exhibit the depth, range, and skill of the current faculty at Saint Rose. It's a snapshot of the vibrant potential of the art scene in this region.



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