
Posted on Fri, Dec. 02, 2005

Exhibition goes with the faux

Several of the works, however, are too real to be false.

By Edith Newhall
For The Inquirer

For all its humor, "Faux Show" would be even better if it had stuck more closely to its theme. Only 14 of the show's 20 artists addressed the concept of imitation or fakeness.

I'm still puzzled by the inclusion of Steven Wise's two small paintings of numbers, Charles Hobbs' carved wood snake, and Merrilee Challiss' quiltlike, stitched-together drawings (created with Chris Lawson and Andrea Paschal). The latter two borrow from American craft traditions, certainly, but you'd never think faux.

The most sophisticated of the indisputably faux-minded contributions include Candy Depew's bone-china skull, shimmering with gold luster and crystals, Rain Harris' rococo confection of ceramic curlicues and wallpaper, Virgil Marti's trompe l'oeil beer-can wallpaper, M. Ho's large "copper" penny, and Joseph Hu's more quietly fake cardboard espresso cup and saucer - plus an ersatz sugar packet and cream container.

Paul Swenbeck's flowerlike wire-and-Plexiglas piece, which could pass for a ceiling fan, or a '60s light fixture, or a combination of both (it isn't functional), Roberta Fallon's fictional Philadelphia Weekly review of "Faux," and Jane Irish's drawing *Free Speech* take a more abstract, and ultimately more satisfying approach to faux.

Chris Vecchio's sneaky, motion-activated sound piece emitting the startling noises of breaking glass, barking dogs, burping, and 333 other sounds, is, of course, the crowd pleaser. Imagine a faux Tony Oursler, minus the visual effects.

Esther M. Klein Gallery at the Science Center, 3600 Market St., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. Through Dec. 30. 215-966-6188 or www.kleinartgallery.org.

Painted snaps

At first, the opalescent light that suffuses Sarah McCoubrey's fastidiously painted scenes of rural New York brings to mind masters of the American sublime such as Martin Johnson Heade. But if you forget, for a moment, that McCoubrey is a painter, her images of such mundane subjects as a solitary Weber grill or a plastic pool, and her portrayals of landscapes intersected by worn billboards and high-tension power lines, have something in common with the snapshot aesthetic of Stephen Shore's photographs.

Mistaking her two oil paintings of a giraffe statue in a miniature-golf course for unfamiliar back views of the Philadelphia Zoo made me want to see what McCoubrey, a Philadelphia native who teaches at Syracuse University, would make of some of this city's rough, but also achingly beautiful, edges.

Locks Gallery, 600 Washington Square South. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Through Dec. 17. 215-629-1000 or www.locksgallery.com.