

A R T R E D U X

Floor 4 Gallery

Since opening last February with the group show *All The Young Dudes/The Big Pink Show*, Floor 4 Gallery has proven itself to be an intriguing and inviting space to see new art by, so far, recent graduates from the Kansas City Art Institute. In May, *The Last Show What's the Big Idea?* featured the work of the two "artists in residence" at the space, David Sindelar and Matthew Wood, a.k.a., Woody, augmented a sound installation by Chris Willis on the night of the opening.

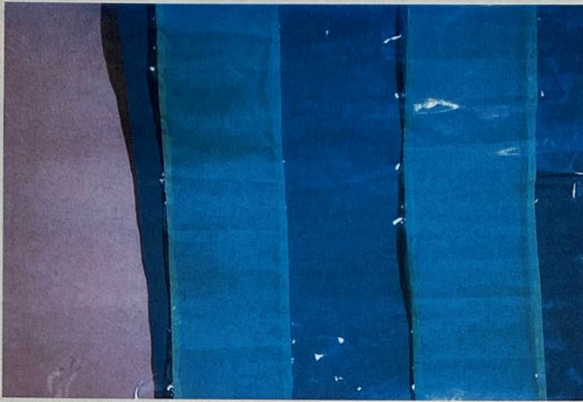
Both Sindelar and Wood studied in the painting department, graduating with BFAs in May. Their works reflect an increasingly open attitude toward departmental classifications, each challenging traditions of painting by pushing materials, presentation and technique. The pairing of the work is a good match that creates a complementary dynamic despite different approaches and aesthetics.

Sindelar's compositions are fascinatingly sculptural, created with components including individually shaped wood elements covered in plush black velvet, coiling silver springs, fishing hooks, colorful lures and rubber bands. Installed on large white walls (save three ceiling-hung sculptures called *Balls to the Walls*), the pieces relate and react to the space. Individual character and whimsy are seen in a grouping of small pieces called *Velvet Revolution*, seeming almost precious in comparison to the larger installations that cover entire walls.

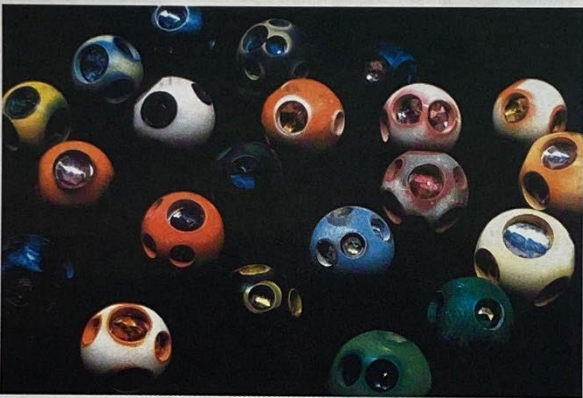
Family Tree, for example, connects delicate and organically shaped velvet forms with silver springs and hooks. Bringing to mind aesthetics of a cosmos, the biomorphic forms are independently beautiful with interdependent harmonious tension. Also humorous and sly, *Family Tree* resonates a distinctive "spat," arranged as if Sindelar threw a ball of paint against the wall. Another work, *AV-52*, is installed vertically, with multicolored rubber bands stretched between and attached to two adjacent groups of velvet forms, spanning approximately three feet. Despite the playfulness, an underlying seriousness teases the senses but alludes to precise distinctions; relationships with ecology, astronomy and biology are conceivable, but unconfirmed.

Wood's subtle, magnetic paintings balance Sindelar's sizable installations. The paintings are slick and somewhat graphic in appearance and content, with highly polished, deep wax surfaces. Beneath their nebulosic veneers are angular schematic forms of often pale color, countered with small, bright colored grid areas. Like a legend on a map, they appear off center, often in the lower edges, outside of the main composition. The compositions are inspired by airport terminal diagrams, with titles like *JFK*, *Midway*, *Denver*.

Some of the larger (and new) paintings (*Miami*, *San Francisco* and *San Juan*) are shaped and lean against rather than hang on the wall. These works approach sculpture with glowing grounds of peachy-pink. Other smaller canvases are no less interesting though, such as *Niagara*, a stunning piece with a cool green ground and a brown, black and blue grid. Though recognizable as paintings, the works are mixed-media collages that challenge the viewer to identi-



Constant Chameleon (detail), 2000, vinyl and polyester, Rachel Hayes.



Lucky Balls, 1999, wood balls, acrylic gems, Krylon, John Torreano.

fy a brush stroke. During my visit, Wood talked about his exercise in "taking the hand out of painting" and challenging traditions associated with the making and installation of painting. *The Last Show* identified two very different artists addressing individual issues, but whose works commingled in a beneficial dialogue.

Grand Arts

Larry Buechel's recent show, *Eye To Eye*, through June 3 at Grand Arts, features work true to its title: a lot of probing eyes. Buechel earned his BFA with an emphasis in sculpture from Kansas City Art Institute in 1986, continuing with an MFA in sculpture from University of Delaware, Newark, in 1994. He is currently Studio and Technical Director at Grand Arts. In this installation, Buechel turns the tables on the viewer by altering the gallery experience to one where instead of a visual feast of art, the viewer is made

to feel consumed by a tyrannical eye, which happens to be his.

This point is immediately made in a huge digital painting depicting an extreme close-up of Buechel's eye titled *Eye Contact*, measuring 10' x 15'. Situated as a sort of wall, the painting controls the space by acting as a barrier, blocking off part of the gallery. Its imposing nature repels with a cold frontality. Also decorating billboards outside of Grand Arts and downtown, the large eye is impersonal and chilling, devoid of the context of a face or personality.

Observatory is a kinetic work in the front of the gallery, with four tv monitors spinning on top of a tall black four-legged base. The dizzying piece features the same eye, blinking and expressionless on each monitor. The piece is unsettling, both conceptually and physically obviously referencing surveillance and the inability to escape the ever-

moving, tireless eye. The spinning monitors are also hard to view for too long without becoming nauseated. Smacking of a sci-fi creation, the motorized contraption resembles a futuristic mechanical beast, capable of chasing down those who step out of line.

More whimsical is a small moving monitor atop a yellow tripod used for land surveying, perhaps intended as a pun. The monitor features the same eye, only this time it can follow the visitors via a remote control operated by another person in the gallery. Entitled *Hello*, the piece is friendlier and more about interaction and play than confrontational control. On par with *Hello* was *Kaleidoscope*, a video viewed through a hole in the wall. Using a favorite manipulation of perspective, the small hole revealed a variegated, surrounding collage of the eye, blinking and pulsating.

Encore is perhaps the most interesting sculpture in the show, and also very clinical. Six sculptures comprise the piece, each on a shiny metal low square base, with long shiny dowels sprouting in regular rows of graduating heights. Mounted on top of the dowels are small black vertical bases with several attachments: a magnifying glass on each, amplifying a prosthetic eye with a bright red archer's bow-sight, centered and poking towards the viewer's own eye. The imagined effect evokes a glaucoma test (or worse), where the patient must focus while a pulse of air is blown against the eye.

Each piece at some level encroaches on the viewers' space and perceptions in an intrusive, off-putting manner. The works' combativeness could be considered their strongest aspect, but it is uncomfortable, an aesthetic based on anxiety. In the presence of the work, the affect is acute. But once physically removed, its lasting power is negligible.

Joseph Nease Gallery

Three separate shows at Joseph Nease close Saturday, June 3, James Brinsfield: *Post Abstraction*; John Torreano: *Installation (Lucky Balls)* and Rachel Hayes: *Constant Chameleon*, are uniquely engaging as well as mutually enhancing. The strong connective threads binding the works are not surprising considering the relationships among the artists. Brinsfield was a student of John Torreano, Hayes a student of Brinsfield. But rather than being derivative, the distinctive works radiate a spontaneity and joy.

Torreano, most well known of the group, is director of the MA studio art program at New York University, with many exhibitions nationally and internationally under his belt. Despite this, his *Lucky Balls*, though delightful, are faint in comparison with Brinsfield's dynamic paintings and Hayes's spectacular installation in the rear of the gallery. The 19 *Lucky Balls* are about the same size as a pool balls. They are all different with nuances of bright colors, crafted from wood with round hollows that reveal faceted interiors of multicolored acrylic gems. The bright balls are entic-

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