



Points of Departure

Three artists wonder as they wander in their work

MATT MORRIS // JAN 6, 2010

The three recently-opened exhibitions at downtown's Weston Art Gallery in the Aronoff Center for the Arts couldn't be more different, with Rick Mallette, Alice Pixley Young and Steve Zieverink each boasting their own flair.

Rick Mallette originates from Saginaw, Mich., and earned his BFA from Western Michigan University. He earned his Master's in Painting and Drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he stayed on as a teacher until moving to Cincinnati in 2002. His 21 paintings all depict grotesque, tragicomic faces alongside a vast wall drawing filled with nervously doodled cartoons.



A list of pan-cultural associations is seemingly suggested by his work — the images especially resemble the faces of spirits and demons as depicted on ancient Mongolian and Tibetan artifacts. But they could as easily evoke Mayan and Incan iconography, gargoyles or Italian Renaissance painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo's fanciful portraits of faces constructed from fruits and vegetables.

In other words, these soupy, sticky, colorful works feel elaborately informed by art history. The confectionary "Split" is smeared with wide, horizontal strokes and built-up layers that demonstrate the painter's fidgeting search for a stopping point. "Green Teeth, One Eye" is the most vibratory, with roiling areas of knifed-on paint shoved into a generally facial

configuration.

Mallette's requirement for a subject onto which he can anchor his luscious paint adventures is not unlike that of Pierre Bonnard, another nearly abstract painter who used his wife, kitchen or cat as points of departure. (Incidentally, they both use fiercely acidic violet in small, well-considered places.) Mallette's playful, gummy paintings are a sufficient cushion between two installations that couldn't be further apart in concept.

Alice Pixley Young is a well-established force in the local art community; she is currently an instructor at the School for Creative and Performing Arts. Young's Night Fall brings folk tales and horror films to mind (especially in the darkly lit, wrecked children's bedroom that concludes the exhibition). Her artist statement's reference to Carl Jung's term "Hell Descent" is terribly appropriate.

While the exhibition begins brightly with silver-tape hexagons and burnished metal birds flashing across blue walls, night certainly does fall in a twilight space with a Alice Pixley Young's Night Fall stylized felt, cardboard and Astroturf forest along the back wall.

The disorder of a nightmare and the dark beauty and intimacy of fairytales ensconce a central collision between Young's focus on patterns of all sorts and her more literary, narrative-driven tableau. Geometric patterns painted directly on walls and paper lanterns sewn together with red thread foreshadow the haphazard quilt and upturned bed of the final installation. She has collapsed the various meanings of the word "pattern" in her investigations, making use of both pattern-as-instruction and pattern-as-repeated motifs.

In contrast to Young's flight of fancy, Chicago artist and Unit 2 Art Collective member Steve Zieverink's installation in the upstairs gallery is an educational experience through which he offers prescriptions for simpler living and information about the environmental crises along the coasts of Alaska.

To fully utilize Zieverink's experimental classroom requires time, reading and listening. Those who look only to Zieverink's aesthetics will find an environment like those of Conceptual artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov. Central to his installation is a Living Station — a rugged self-sufficient shelter that he hopes to relocate to the outdoors after the exhibition. Inside and out, Zieverink provides reading materials, a documentary, a listening station and a table of preparatory work that preceded the barn he built.

These three exhibitions continue at the WESTON ART GALLERY (650 Walnut St., Downtown) through Feb. 28. A lecture and film screenings curated by artist Steve Zieverink occur Saturday at 7 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public. Visit www.westongallery.com for information about upcoming artist talks.

<https://www.citybeat.com/arts-culture/visual-arts/article/13015426/points-of-departure>