



Yes to YES

Gallery one of many to invigorate Main Street District

MATT MORRIS // SEP 7, 2011

YES is one of several recent additions to Over-the-Rhine's gallery district along Main Street, which is being invigorated with a new wave of DIY energy. Along with the print studio and store Static Age, the design collection Losantiville, the clay studio MUD on Main and the Final Friday PopShops — one-night-only bazaars that show up in empty properties — Main Street's galleries are becoming more geared towards affordable, accessible art and design.

Part exhibition space, part shop and part studio, YES at 1417 Main approaches all its endeavors with a "can do" spirit of empowerment. The pervasive aesthetic there is like a grassroots response to Urban Outfitters witticism, favoring artworks that borrow from design principles: clean lines, high levels of craftsmanship, poppy color and smart humor. To me, the YES look is typified in its current solo exhibition, Hey, featuring 10 limited-edition works by Matthew Hoffman (on view through Sept. 22).

YES is operated by three artists who use the space as their studios: Andrew Neyer, Alex Jameson and Shane Bruce Johnston. They all pitch in financially, so that its survival isn't dependent upon art sales. I recently talked to Neyer about new projects they have in the works.

"Originally we were just looking for a space to work, and then when we came across this place, it would've been stupid not to make the storefront more a part of it. Then we started thinking more about a gallery," he recalled. "We called it YES because we wanted it to be this positive, good source of new things."

The 10 works that comprise Hoffman's exhibition are all editions (of five, 25, 50 or 100, variously), but nothing has been mechanically fabricated. While everything looks like sleek products and clever souvenirs, it's all handmade by Hoffman. Starting with a play on words, the artist has created a blanket, a lamp, a set of clothes hangers and several other objects that visually embody their titles.

"Hipstir" is a set of drink stirrers cut from five fluorescent hues of acrylic. The punch line is that they are cutouts of a pelvis and femur: hip, stir, get it?

The exhibition lands at the jocular end of conceptual art. The one-liners from which each concept originates are weighted with strange importance when Hoffman cuts out 100 of the same object, investing enormous time into the intense, detail-oriented labor.

Sometimes the humor runs a little dark. A fluffy blanket is printed with the slogan, "Knit a sweater out of that last thread of hope." The piece "Asalted" (sic) is a wall trophy made from two plastic Wiffle ball bats — one white and one black. They've been drilled with small holes to become salt and pepper shakers, which is funny, but the title calls beatings in the streets and riots to mind.

But exhibitions are just part of the YES operation.

"We're trying to create as many different outlets so that we're not limited to one medium or one type of art," Neyer says.

They've just finished their first issue of a freely distributed monthly newspaper called Newsprint, as an experiment with spreading word of their goings-on. They're currently working on a web channel of videos as a tie-in to an upcoming project in Newsprint.

Their recently launched project called Mr. Prints has two functions. At the studio, they are running a PIY — Print It Yourself — service. For a small fee, the gallery crew will guide customers through making their own prints on shirts and tote bags that are available for purchase, or on their own blank surfaces they bring in with them.

The Mr. Prints press is built into a wooden “truck” constructed around a bicycle that will be ridden around downtown.

Neyer explains, “When Mr. Prints is outside of YES, we’re doing free print runs. We’re doing truck routes with designated stops like the CAC and Fountain Square. It’s just a cool way to distribute free artwork. People are getting it, essentially, hot off the press.”

YES is trying new things in how to make an art space sustainable, how artists can be designers and how news and ideas can be distributed in less-anticipated channels than social-media websites. It seems like if they haven’t given something a shot yet, they probably will soon.

HEY: MATTHEW HOFFMAN is on view at YES gallery through Sept. 22. YES will be participating in ArtWork's first-ever Box Truck Carnival as part of MidPoint Music Festival Sept. 22-24; get more info [here](#).

<https://www.citybeat.com/arts-culture/visual-arts/article/13011169/yes-gallery-review>