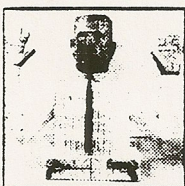


Art show makes an 'Anxious' bid to the market

REVIEW/by Mary Sherman

Anxious Art at Bernard Toale Gallery

Anxious Art," the gallery owner Bernard Toale confides, "should be called 'Anxious Art Dealer.'" The exhibit consists of the kind of work that Toale would like to show but thinks may not be marketable. In essence, then, this is a test.



'ENDANGERED SPECIES'

Like the local cartoonist David Sipress' piece, two sets of chips, — one labeled "Ja" and the other "Nein" — Toale is willing to, to use the cliché, let the chips fall where they may.

Naturally, given such an apprehensive premise, one would expect a radical departure from other shows. But that is not the case. Most of the work is figurative. And there is a strong narrative bent to the art as well.

However, the political and social issues raised by the works make them uncomfortable and, by extension, difficult to sell: They are more reminiscent of the kind of work one would find in an alternative or non-profit space.

Immediately unavoidable is Willie Birch's papier-mache bust of a black man titled "Endangered Species": It is positioned right in front of the elevator door.

Next to contend with is Taro Chiezo's "Three Girls," three different small, pink dresses menacingly scooting around the floor on motorized cars.

After that, however, the work becomes tamer, if only in the sense that it doesn't physically confront you.

Most of the standard politically correct stances are covered. Vivienne Koorland's "How I Live, I" includes newspaper clippings and a village scene, based on a Yugoslavian child's drawing of World War II, to comment on the continual presence of war in this century.

Franc Palaia inserts a glowing landscape in a gasoline container to suggest the destruction of nature by modern technology.

And K.K. Kozik makes paintings coyly attacking stereotypical images of the West by describing such characters as cardboard cut-outs.

In some cases these pieces' points are obvious and, otherwise, of minor interest. But one of the best such pieces is Konstantin Simun's sculpture, "Highway." A tire halved and fashioned into an S stands in front of two pipes that look like exhaust pipes. These are joined to a pair of gold lines that suggest the lines of a road — an apt metaphor for America as the highway of excess and greed.

Among the show's other highlights are Charles Le-Dray's "My Hands, My Father's Hands No. 1," in which a white collar and small sleeve — both torn from a shirt — are mounted on black and encased in a glass frame. Once one notices that the collar is so small that it would strangle even a child's neck, the piece's ominous message becomes clear.

Also noteworthy are Marnie

Cardozo's mirror photos of different parts of her body. As an examination of the human body, a tangible record of age and a summary of a life, the work bears much resemblance to John Coplan's work.

Small in format and taken with a pinhole camera, however, the work is more intimate and, in some ways, more disturbing than his.

Naturally, such work is hard to live with and, as a consequence, Toale's apprehension is understandable. But, given the fine pieces on view, it is lamentable that commercial viability must remain a prerequisite of mainstream exposure. □

"Anxious Art" at Bernard Toale Gallery through Sept. 18.