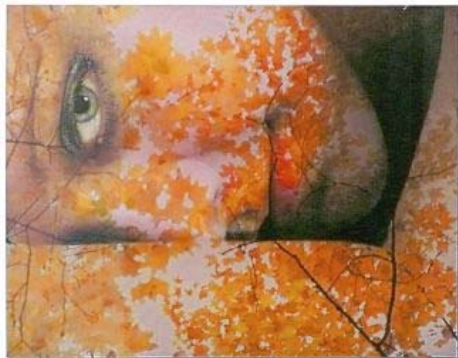


Spatial works show off small art group's expertise

Art Review

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By Mary Thomas, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



"The Awakening" by Julia Bodura is part of the "Interstitial" exhibit at the Pittsburgh Filmmakers Melwood Galleries, Oakland.

The largest artist organization in Pittsburgh just launched its centennial year highlight, the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh Annual, at Carnegie Museum of Art. But smaller artist groups exist here and one of them, Ag Works, has a laudable member exhibition at Pittsburgh Filmmakers Melwood Galleries through Sunday.

"Interstitial" comprises photographs by 10 artists who, one may infer from the show title, look at that which fills the intervals between the objects and activities that command everyday attention.

Sally Bozzuto, for example, gets her subject matter for one series "From Behind the Office Closet Door." Dust balls and hair wisps transform into graceful abstract compositions in black and white, forcing a new consideration of what most would rather eliminate with the pass of a vacuum cleaner.

But something doesn't have to be small to be overlooked. Hidden in plain site are the banal landscapes captured and given prominence by Matt Robison, such as the nondescript rural scene, "untitled (pancake breakfast)."

Julia Bodura's lovely images, sensual and dreamy, combine images of the artist with an overlay of autumn leaves. Titles like "The Dream" and "The Awakening" support the contemplative element of the work, which seems to linger in the zone beneath conscious thought, in the moments when the mind is free to dwell on things with less immediacy than that required to journey through a day.

Memory, it could be argued, is also an interstitial realm, visited in Bryan Conley's emotionally wrought impressionistic imagery, or the more fanciful found subjects of Mandy Kendall.

Ag Works, which gets its name from the chemical symbol for silver, is a Pittsburgh-based emerging artist collective that formed last year. Founding members were alumni of Pittsburgh Filmmakers School, but the group has expanded to include other photographers and even artists who employ other media.

This is the group's first large exhibition, and member Laura Jean Kahl, who manages Pittsburgh Filmmakers' theaters, says they hope to make it an annual event.

Ms. Kahl, who says she usually doesn't like to have pictures taken of her, recently turned the camera on herself. The resultant narrative work "Onerous Nature of Oneself" is bold and brave. Also exhibiting are Allen Benson, Ellen Bjerklie Hanna, Magali Duzant and Missy Jarzenske.

The photographers live in Pittsburgh and while they are beginning careers as artists they range in age from their 20s to their 50s. About 20 people attend meetings which include critiques of one another's works and support to "keep each other motivated to make new work," Ms. Kahl says.

The majority of members are photographers, and that is where the group's expertise is concentrated. But Ms. Kahl says artists practicing in any medium are welcome to attend Ag Works meetings. The next will be held at 7:30 Sunday in the great room on the first floor of the Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh.

The gallery is open noon to 7 p.m. today and Thursday, noon to 6 p.m. Friday, and during film screenings at Melwood Screening Room. Admission is free. For information, call 412-681-5449 or visit www.pghfilmmakers.org.

Louise Silk

Nationally known Pittsburgh fiber artist Louise Silk's name is locally synonymous with quilting, a skill she began to develop almost four decades ago. At 7 p.m. tomorrow, she will speak about her career and work in an illustrated talk, "Making Quilts Today: A Personal View," at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg.

Ms. Silk's talk is being held in conjunction with the exhibition "Rooted in Tradition: Art Quilts from the Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum" which opened Sunday at the museum along with "Cutting Our Own Paths: Contemporary Works by Paper Artists."

Her career path has followed the same historical timeline as that of the exhibition. Ms. Silk's work has been included in the prestigious "Quilt National Biennial exhibition of Contemporary Quilts." An instructor at Carlow University, she is author of "The Quilting Path: A Guide to Spiritual Discovery through Fabric, Thread and Kabbalah." Ms. Silk is known for memory quilts, which she accepts commissions for.

Free; information: 724-837-1500 or visit www.wmuseumaa.org.

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