

RECENT + CURRENT WORKS OF NOTE



“David Collins: Clearstory”
Valley House Gallery and Sculpture
Garden, Dallas
August 27-September 24, 2011

David Collins’ work, “Under Eaves,” is architecture-as-verb. It’s a splayed cache of angles, parallelograms and scalene triangles that commingle to suggest the shape of a life. It’s already been worked over but — fortunately — we get to redact it yet again. It becomes a space we enter that’s reminiscent of sunny days and sleekness. The piece exerts a flung shape that lets the whole apparatus open up and sing. Newsprint in the upper-right corner hints of a resident. We might wonder if it was read with coffee and eggs before a trip to a swanky office. Or was it part of an afternoon idyll enjoyed with icy cocktails served on a broad veranda? In other words, “Under Eaves” does exactly what much of really fine art does; it invokes a narrative.

Not only is Collins an extremely talented artist, he’s very articulate. When he talks about his work, he manages to maintain an openness of interpretation without devolving into the “it’s whatever you think it is” jive. He’s intelligent and so is his work. The name of his current show, “Clearstory,” is a riff on the architectural term “clerestory.” The operative trope, of course, is light intentionally brought into interior space. More precisely, it’s an illumination that doesn’t fire up so brightly that it dispels enigma. The sense of a “sanctuary,” so to speak, is kept — yet the “outside” pervades and enlivens interior scenes.

Collins reminds us that liminal spaces are the richest terrain. Moreover, he’s utterly comfortable with memory and dream. He seems to enjoy showing off his familiarity with the lithe alchemy of conscious activity melded with

the unconscious. While his monopoints have a distinctive Japanese vector, they, too, suggest a fluttering intimacy with psychological undertow. “Slip Stream” is aptly named. It shimmers with just the right suggestion of movement and liquid we can’t trap. It’s gloriously evocative but, ultimately, a keeper of secrets. “Clearstory” is good stuff. Some of the best the city has to offer, in fact.

— PATRICIA MORA

“Selfless. Selfish. Selfiness.”
Brand 10 Art Space, Fort Worth
September 9-October 15, 2011

While most people take their “self” for granted, it is a privileged thing. Having a self is something to which you arrive variously and frequently, moment by moment since you tumbled out of the birth canal; it is always changing, becoming something other than what it was just a moment ago. Not inborn, it is constructed and allowed by money, education, and location on the globe. The message of “Selfless. Selfish. Selfiness.” and its nine artists — Annie Arnold, Carol Benson, Shelby Cunningham, Val Hunnicutt, Wura-Natasha Ogunji, Kerry Pacillio, Terri Thornton, Kathy Webster and Tiffany Wolf — is precisely this, namely, that the self is always under negotiation.

Austin artist Wura-Natasha Ogunji’s “Two” is a short, smart single-channel video with a message about finding one’s self in another. Dressed not identically but to reflect one another, two young African-American women face off in a desiccated industrial lot under a big blue Texan

sky. They almost but not quite hug each other while intermittently jumping up and down. As though mimicking the sounds of birth and death, the video jumps and stutters while the women scream, yelp, and breath.

Tiffany Wolf’s “Bride Brain and Baby” and “Bride Brain and Book” are two series of inkjet prints showing the artist as dubious and ironic bride. The bride sloppily eats baby food while holding a baby doll, drinks wine while reading a cheesy romance novel, and plays solitaire again with a glass of wine, all while wearing her veil. There is a strong patina of Pictures Generation in this body of photographs, sharply cut by the Wolf’s own stellar comic presence in what amounts to an acerbic critique of the obedient housewife.

Shelby Cunningham’s “Every movie I have seen in the past 10 years, 2002 – 2011” reveals a sense of self formed, manipulated, sometimes mollycoddled, and sometimes beaten up by the Hollywood juggernaut. Cunningham has meticulously and, as it would seem, obsessively rendered in watercolors on 10 large sheets of paper the ticket stubs for all the movies she has seen. The effect is at once comic and mind boggling.

“Selfless. Selfish. Selfiness.” does not so much simply interrogate the politics of identity but rather questions its bedrock — the self, being selfless, selfish and the new condition of selfiness. And it does so without the political correctness that so often comes with the territory. The works in this show are subtle yet poignant, well crafted and conceptual.

— CHARISSA N. TERRANOVA

REVIEWS CONTINUE NEXT PAGE