

HAW/CONTEMPORARY

Haw Contemporary steps into Dolphin's former space with inaugural group show

Dana Self, Kansas City Star, October 17, 2013

Morning has broken at 1600 Liberty St.

Lightened from the weight of the furniture behemoth that squatted there during its Dolphin days, the front gallery is spacious and friendlier to the art.

Wilbur Niewald's remarkable small abstract painting "Lake" (1961) introduces the inaugural show of nine gallery artists at Haw Contemporary, aptly titled "Open."

The color blocks in "Lake" preview the carefully controlled abstracted realism that Niewald has pursued throughout his career. By contrast, Eric Sall employs the excitable gestures and geometric forms for which he is known in his large painting "Westward."

Sall and the rest of the artists in the exhibit show work from 2012 or '13.

In Archie Scott Gobber's "Whatsit," one of his ubiquitous word paintings, the phrase "it is what it is" is mirrored, yet imperfectly. As with all of Gobber's art, it can be interpreted in a variety of iterations, yet always challenges any notion of a status quo.

A complementary dynamic characterizes the large gallery, where works teeter between tight and obsessive and spatially expansive. Anthony Baab, Justin Gainan and Anne Lindberg focus on repetition, infinitesimally tiny lines and a dense all-over treatment.

Gainan's pen and paper companion drawings have a poetic affect, as he alters the pen pressure around the paper, manipulating pulsating waves of intensity. Making a corner in both of the drawings by leaving a thin line of paper exposed, Gainan creates a sculptural divide, linking these drawings to his three-dimensional work.

The triptych "Thread Drawing, 24, 25 & 27" continues Lindberg's long-standing study of optic effects, rhythmic densities and color relationships. Stitching colored thread in pristine rows to cotton mat board, Lindberg displays a tense, choking control that creates a beautiful, yet emotionally limiting experience.

In Baab's monumental, dimensional "poratrix separates," he layers cut-out inkjet prints to create a sculptural, web-like labyrinth of pattern, non-pattern and density. His structural image exists in the interstices of imagination, architecture and an elusive geometric code.

Opening up from the obsessive claustrophobia induced by Baab's work, James Brinsfield's and Michael Krueger's paintings, along with Mike Sinclair's photograph, share a narrative romanticism.

Krueger, known for his accomplished colored pencil drawings, has traded pencil for acrylic paint on

linen. In “Land Nor Sea,” his familiar, personable icebergs have unfortunately lost some of their zip.

Where Krueger’s pencil drawings are expressive and wildly imaginative, counterintuitively, the liquid paint feels flat and weirdly lifeless, despite Krueger’s gestures and patterns within the icebergs.

Sinclair’s “Lemon Shake Up (Backside), Strong City, Kansas,” along with Brinsfield’s airy “Domestic Bliss,” introduce a nimble freedom into this tightly constructed installation.

In Brinsfield’s painting, a delicate sensibility in the composition’s airy openness coexists with his pinpoint focus on materiality. Spray-painted graffiti lines intersect with spattered pink paint on paper mounted to the canvas, creating a pathway that leads into the painting’s interior and exits out the bottom. As in life, soft, gentle lines coexist with the prickly and sharp edges.

Sinclair’s photograph of a fairground’s snack trailer focuses on the young girl inside. As she gazes from the confines of her job, her ennui and frank stare center the image. Sinclair, as always, captures the essence of a certain kind of experience and community.

“Open” lives in the two primary spaces of Haw Contemporary, while the third space houses a small show, “Mount,” organized by Peregrine Honig and featuring Adriane Herman, Jack Daws, Donna Huanca, John Woods, Sarah Xenon and Terry Allen.

On exhibit

“Open” and “Mount” continue at Haw Contemporary, 1600 Liberty St., through Nov. 2. Hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and noon-5 p.m. Saturday. For more information, call 816-842-5877 or go to HawContemporary.com.