

Artists open doors on their dreams

Parallel exhibits take different routes in contemplating universal human experience.

By TANYA HARTMAN
Special to The Star

In a recent interview in the Atlantic, writer Andre Dubus III says that “the desire to step into another person’s dream world, is a universal impulse that’s shared by us all.”

Christopher Troutman and Michael Lasater open portals to allow for such glimpses in concurrent solo shows at the Kansas City Artists Coalition. While Troutman creates monumental drawings to express fragments of observed life across cultures, Lasater constructs single-channel compositions that act as undulant imaginings, addressing memory and the construction of narrative identity over time.

REVIEW

The challenge of such endeavors is to elevate the investigation of self through formal and poetic means to address the universal experience of being human. Both artists succeed in different, yet complementary, ways, creating spaces that allow viewers to step into visual reverie.

Through drawing, Troutman, an assistant professor of art at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, translates the unconscious outward into marks that weave a narrative. The works in the exhibition are created in charcoal and ink on paper, with the occasional addition of gesso washes.

In a recent interview, the artist observed that “drawing is the most natural material. Every child draws, and I use drawing materials because of the intimate relationships that I can have with them.”

Troutman’s work is technically beautiful and loose, with stippling, dripping, crosshatching and a dazzling array of tonalities articulated across monumental drawings of urban environments that seem to exist in a realm somewhere between the American Midwest and Japan, where the artist lived after college.



FROM THE ARTIST

Michael Lasater’s exhibit at the Kansas City Artists Coalition features single channel videos, including “Ready Set,” seen here in a still.

On exhibit

“Christopher Troutman” and “Michael Lasater” continue at the Kansas City Artists Coalition, 201 Wyandotte St., through Jan. 17. Hours are 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday. For more information, call 816-421-5222 or visit kansascityartistscoalition.org.

“My wife and son and I go back to Japan every summer,” he said, “and it is a strange experience to fly from the Midwest to another world. I try to splice the two worlds together in my work.”

The resulting images are arresting and unique, enormous inner-city warrens of tiled roofs, dilapidated stairwells, alleyways and vaguely anonymous city dwellers who observe passing fragments of each other’s lives.

In “Hillside Activity” (2012), a 96-inch by 150-inch ink on paper

triptych, two boys on one roof watch an elderly couple having a barbecue on another roof. A steep and narrow stairwell separates them. Troutman invents ambiguous narratives and hybrid environments, building them from his imagination and imbuing them with the aesthetic of a graphic novel (most drawings are composed in panels).

If you have ever doubted that drawing still has resonance and relevance, this show will renew your faith in the profundity of

marks on paper.

In trying to express his own work’s intentions, Michael Lasater quotes from William Faulkner, who writes in his novel “Absalom Absalom,” “living is one constant and perpetual instant.”

Walking into Lasater’s exhibition, one is gently immersed into a realm of sound and luminous image. Lasater, a professor of mass communications at University of Indiana, South Bend, holds degrees from Oberlin College in Ohio and Julliard in New York City and has worked as a musician,

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In works such as “Three Times III,” Troutman builds his narratives from imagination and imbues them with the aesthetic of a graphic novel.



FROM THE ARTIST