



January 17, 2012

grayDUCK Gallery held an opening reception for “True Story” last Friday night. Wine and beer in hand, urbanites viewed the exhibit, aptly named for its insight into, as the gallery regards it, “the purity of perception.” Featuring artists Paul Beck, Allen Brewer, and Pat Snow, the contemporary art space transported guests into a very “East Village” scene with its stained concrete floors, aluminum ducts crossing overhead, and spotlighted, whitewashed walls.

Referencing artwork as the power he gives himself as a human being, Paul Beck’s portion of the exhibit stands out with its monochromatic tendency. The mixed media collection features symbols and icons, seemingly stamped amongst more ambiguous, unrecognizable people, shapes and objects. Having worked in the past as an animator with director Richard Linklater, and a writer/director for videos for the likes of Radiohead and the Black Eyed Peas, this local artist is no novice to a multi-media milieu. His use of negative space and absence, whether of color, explanation, or visual balance, all aid the conceptual coherency of his exhibited paper productions.

Allen Brewer speaks of the tactic of “blindness” that he has been employing in his art as of late, though it is almost more of a truth-seeking, unconscious technique rather than a deliberate maneuvering. He has been drawing through transcription of a picture’s details with carbon onto a substrate; from there he continues to draw and to paint without looking at his work. The “blindness” of the task allows his focus to be on the intricacies of his subject matter. He says, “By eliminating my own perception of the thing, I am getting closer to its truth.” The resulting canvases are unbelievable, in the most literal sense of the word. Ranging from literal pictorial representations to more abstract renditions of public figures or other subjects, the breadth of this project is impressive, new, and beautifully abstract.

Pat Snow uses paint and pen to depict stories in his exhibition. The recent Austinite uses conversational stanzas as transcribed supplements to drawings or paintings. One example is his entire-wall-sized collection of individual canvases of faces, sporadically intermitted by square messages such as “Stay No Go” or “Alright Alright” or “Umm Yep!” or any other seemingly insubstantial colloquialism... until the messages are witnessed as part of the collective statement on social cliché. As his artist statement describes, he is “continuously rearranging the visuals and stories he encounters to critique and explore narrative.” His work is an encounter with the personality and voice of the artist himself, a unique insight that utilizes visuals for masterful storytelling.

The aesthetic of the gallery is effective, hosting a collective of paintings and mixed media that display well together. Stylistically, the artworks both challenge and reinforce one another. For more information on grayDUCK’s past, current, and upcoming exhibitions, visit the gallery in person on Monroe Street — the space is illuminated by two strings of simple bulb lighting and is recognizable by its modern signage and modest domicile within a small parking lot set back from South 1st Street; or visit its online residence at <http://www.grayduckgallery.com/>.