

Glass House

AN INSTALLATION IN A BANK, SCULPTURE AROUND TOWN, AND A GALA OCCASION.

BY ROBIN RICE

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GALA Visual Arts

Vox Populi, 17 N. 2nd St.,
through June 28, 925-4249.

Though the 5th annual GALA (Gay and Lesbian Artists) exhibition is a show of work by lesbian, gay and bisexual artists, there is no consistent theme, or even consistent attention to sexuality, in the show. The keynotes in this year's GALA, one of the best ever, are quality and variety.

Many names will be familiar to Philadelphia art aficionados. However, the large group exhibiting in the three rooms of Vox Populi also includes some noteworthy artists who will be new to most visitors. Two prestigious jurors, curator and historian Judith Stein and photographer David Lebe, chose work which ranges from the more conservative — Patrick W. Egan's memorable expressionist portrait of *Jackson Pollock*, the traditional crafting of Don Alderfer's geometric *Love Quilt* (quilted by the Mennonite Brethren Council for Lesbian and Gay Concerns) — to the more experimental: Brian Dennis' site-specific *Rabbit-Run-Null*, an installation suggesting a fire at the bottom of an elevator shaft and accompanied by text and beautiful proposal drawings.

Geometric abstraction and minimalism were among the few stylistic directions I couldn't find. The latter might be suggested by the chaste graphics of Stuart Netsky, whose long-term interests in classical forms and ingestible-substances-as-art-media are reflected in the pale raised beige lettering produced by "escape Valium on paper." The ironic resonant words Netsky has chosen for three framed pieces, reminiscent of Hamilton Finlay's pure Roman lettering, are *ESCAPE*, *KNOWING*, and *ETERNITY* — all, I think, perfumes less subtle than Netsky's art.

Joel Kaylor is showing funny ceramic shirts, Western ones. *Buffy Likes to Dress Up*, which has Buffy's name on the label, has coyotes — and moons for them to howl at — on the yoke. Fred's shirt is decorated with pastel bucrania (bovine skulls).

With his genius for getting the most out of the least promising spaces, Virgil Marti transforms a nasty little alcove into the perfect setting for his *Black Light Poster: The Great American Past Time*, a day-glo scene of a chained man being beaten by a cop.

Jeanne Nugent draws tiny tinted anatomical abstractions on torn-edged squares of paper which suggest the fragmentation implicit in subjects like *Breathless* — lung shapes pierced with round regular holes. Nugent's pencil is a delicate studious instrument for meditation on the fragility of life itself.

Rob Clarke uses his pencil in a bold and mocking manner to show us that Joe Camel and his friends are doing more exciting things than smoking cigarettes.

Among many photographs, Tim Aubry's *Plague* diptych collage stands out. Bouquets of roses against peeling paint convey a profound sense of mortality.

Michele Celebre's *Waiting Dance I and II* combine landscape, figure in motion, and direct drawing during the printing process to create a sense of time — or perhaps life itself — as a kinetic force opposed to the passive act of waiting. In *Episodes*, E. Brenckman mats photographs and printed autobiographical text in a journalistic format. One distorted image in each group may be a self-portrait, and the whole ensemble has a self-observing journalistic quality: my life as a magazine photo feature.

A number of works involve found objects and a plethora of materials. Vaughn Stubbs' elaborate *Dinosaur Period Fabrierge Egge* (sic) is faceted with pearly ovals and balanced on the backs of three tiny golden Tyrannosaurus Rex skeletons. Julie Paez's *Summer Days* (spelled out in Scrabble letters) is an assemblage of presumable mementos: a souvenir plate fragment, jewelry, tiny figures organized with painted designs on a weathered fence picket.