

Visual Arts **Review**

Motiff, Townsend and LAVA

at the Swanson Reed Contemporary

Variety in art keeps us coming back for more, and the three soon-to-close shows at Swanson Reed Contemporary presents different reasons for viewing. Beauty dominates Monique Motiff's Skyscapes. Whimsy underscores Rebuilt Domestic Devices by Travis Townsend. And thought-provoking discussion arises from the performance piece "As the World Turns" by the LAVA House's Aron Conaway and Hallie Jones.

Motiff's pieces are serene, beautiful scenes painted masterfully in a difficult technique. The 18 works in the exhibition are a variation of wax encaustic painting. She uses oil, tar and wax on either wood panel or paper (I'm impressed by how she uses such a heavy mix on fragile paper). The works have an alluring inner glow that attracts gallery co-owner Chuck Swanson to Motiff's pieces. "I love the richness of the surfaces from her glaze process," he said. "I really want to touch them."

Motiff's untitled pieces depict silhouettes of trees in a brown so dark they look black. There is no earth to "ground" you, giving the viewer the feeling of floating in mid-air or lying on his or her back looking upward. The multi-hued background colors are layers of gold, orange, mint green or pale violet. The overall effects resemble trees at dusk, against water and

through brilliant sunlight.

"This perspective is meant to give the viewer an experience of feeling and seeing the world without rules or laws," Motiff said. "These works should not be viewed as a 'landscape' in a traditional sense. The placement, size and detail of the forms are done in a way to portray tension between the soft melancholy atmosphere and foreboding of the tree-like forms. My paintings are intended as an escape from earthly troubles below."

That they are.

The playfulness in Townsend's pieces suggests he thoroughly enjoys creating his work. His wood, paint and mixed media sculptures give you pause, and then make you smile. In "Chair and Bowl," he placed a wooden bowl under a diving board-like plank with a small chair perched on the end. A tiny chair shows up again in "Chair and Egg Conversation." NASA should be on the lookout for "Framp's Processor" — the sculpture resembles a satellite that has collided with other objects in space after too many years of service.

"Playing off the functionality of tools, instruments and toys, Rebuilt Domestic Devices are idiosyncratic objects that record and discover their own making," Townsend said. "Parts are often transplanted, left behind or recycled. Viewers can see that my objects



Untitled landscape by Monique Motiff.

have handles, openings and movable parts, but the physical or metaphorical functions of these objects are left to the imagination. In an increasingly fast, displaced world, I'm attempting to build personal, whimsical and sometimes clumsy inventions that relate to our domestic experience."

We always need avant garde art to push our minds past comfortable boundaries. The Louisville Assembly of Vanguard Art (LAVA), a collection of local artists working to promote Louisville's underground art and music, is on the cutting edge, so much so that they have dedicated the LAVA House (at 927 Shelby St.) as a location for young artists to experiment.

"As the World Turns," by Aron Conaway and Hallie Jones with assistance by other LAVA artists, is a mixed-media video installation and performance piece first presented in the gallery's lower level on Feb. 20, then again dur-

ing the First Friday Gallery Hop on March 5.

Named for the long-running soap opera that was first broadcast in 1956, the video/performance piece expressed the idea that, "The ideal family, school, neighborhood and world portrayed on television became accepted as a social normality," Conaway and Jones explained. "Idealistic situations and standards absorbed via the living room had only a partial basis in reality. People accepted television as if it made them an eyewitness to events, especially in relation to live TV broadcasting."

The work of Motiff, Townsend and LAVA is at Swanson Reed Contemporary, 638 E. Market St., through March 27. Hours are Wednesday through Saturday 11 a.m.-6 p.m. For more information, call 589-5466.

JO ANNE TRIPLETT

Contact the writer at leo@leoweekly.com

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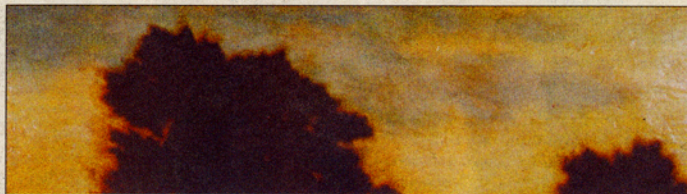
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