

Motion: the key to art, reaction

Surveying the works in Tom Blodgett's and Mike Kelly's "Drawings on Paper" exhibit is not a simple or mindless way to spend time. It is not, as some may consider art-viewing, a passive or a particularly graceful process.

The art connoisseur, upon approaching each piece, is forced by intrigue to place her nose two or so inches from the rendering, to cock her head and squint a little.

Then she must step back, remaining faithful to the up-close picture, and look again, this time possibly struck by something delightfully new or maybe strangely familiar.

The actions continue, repeating themselves. "It's part

everybody to (his or her) way of thinking," says Blodgett. "There has to be something for everybody."

"Drawings on Paper," a collection of recent works by the two Oregon artists, is currently hanging at the University art museum, along with paintings by James Lavadour. While it is indeed a two-man exhibit, Blodgett and Kelly agree that it is not plagued by typical group-show problems.

For example, there isn't the characteristic lack of cohesiveness says Kelly, adding that often group shows are simply "mishmashes" of works jumbled together.

"I think Tom's and my work do well together," Kelly says.



Photo by Karen Stallwood

Mike Kelly (left) and Tom Blodgett, whose "Drawings on Paper" exhibit is currently on display at the University art museum, feel their works are symbiotic.

of the response," says Blodgett. The recognition of mediums used, of elements, of color, of space and of shapes, gives each picture a unique life for each individual taking note.

And this sort of bantering, of energetic intercourse between artists' renderings and viewers, is what Blodgett and Kelly seek. "Even though the images are personal, the images invoke responses that live," Blodgett says. "It's fun to get questions... individual responses."

"The artist cannot direct

However, there are obvious differences.

While both use several mediums — pencil, ink, watercolor, charcoal and torn paper to name a few — Blodgett tends to use more of them. His pieces have a worn-blanket quality; a cultivated, worked look. Kelly's drawings, on the other hand, have a faster, spontaneous quality. He calls it "fresh" and "just born."

Both artists admit that in their works they are interested in interiors, composition and the

"kinetics" of drawing. But while Kelly deals primarily with figures — "My work tends to be more elemental," he says — Blodgett's pieces are usually detailed scenes; confrontations between two or more people, complete with dialogue.

Kelly describes the work of the two men as "symbiotic," and says that both approach art from an "old fashioned" standpoint; neither are avant-garde, he says.

Both artists tell "human being stories," says Kelly, adding that Rembrandt was a mutual teacher. "We're walking similar trails," he says.

Kelly sees his work as an ongoing struggle between shapes and space; between the edge and the air. He says he works quickly, consciously placing each line — monitoring its position with exact precision. "To you it might be ambiguous," he says pointing to a streak of grey outlining a leg. "But to me it's meaningful. Lines and shapes are really important."

Light is evident in both artists' works, but neither are obsessed with shadowing. Light is "a slave, not a master," Kelly says. "It's definitely not the primary thing."

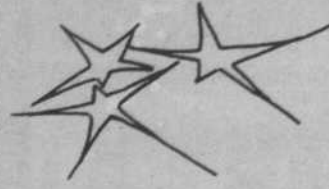
Similarly, the factor of time, or the distinct lack thereof, plays an important role in each work: Blodgett's art is definitely related to some period in the past, although it's intentionally ambiguous. Kelly, on the other hand, ignores time in his work. He says he enjoys taking the rendering of a model posing in, say, an academic setting, and giving it "personal beauty" and a role in society.

Blodgett describes his pieces as kinds of self-portraits. They are, essentially, parts of himself. "It's allegorical," he says. "In my own world there are things that are important, events that have happened that are personal," he says.

Kim Carlson

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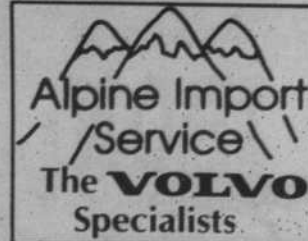
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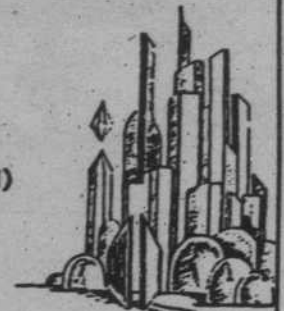
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