

Hudson gallery owner says mission is to 'enlighten, surprise'

"Transcendent Functionalism" looks at everyday objects



IMAGE 2 OF 7

Transcendent Functionalism installation

Pairing functional and transcendent as a premise for an exhibition seems odd.

We use objects in our everyday life – computers, chairs and kitchen utensils and the like – to perform important tasks, but to call them transcendent pushes it a bit.

On the other hand, art traditionally is far removed from such utilitarian notions. In the world of objects and things, transcendence is usually reserved for painting, drawing and sculpture with their elevated sense of purpose. Functional and transcendent are rarely coupled together.

But these days, the lines are blurrier. Decorative arts — furniture, fabric and folk — are seen as more equal to their counterparts in painting and sculpture, opening a wide range of interpretations and arrangements from all sorts of methods and materials, presenting myriad aesthetic and conceptual opportunities.

All of this mixing and matching isn't new, yet under Hudson gallery-owner Jeff Bailey's eye, the idea is taken to a whole new level in the exhibition "Transcendent Functionalism" open through Jan. 28.

More Information

If you go

"Transcendent Functionalism"

When: Through Jan. 28

Where: Jeff Bailey Gallery, 127 Warren St., Hudson

Hours: Thursday-Sunday, noon-6 p.m.

Cost: Free

Phone: 518-828-6680

Website: www.baileygallery.com

With 14 artists and nearly 30 objects, ranging from a "glowing" chair to a wall installation made from acrylic polymer and acetate on Plexiglas, the exhibit is brimming with ideas that just manage to stay together in such a tiny space on Warren Street.

Add a planter, complete with actual soil, draping fiber constructions like breasts, a spooky Shaker overcoat over a mannequin, and you have an unconventional and uplifting collection. But it isn't always lofty and erudite. Some like the wood and rubber installation "This Keyboard is

a Piece of Shit" by Stephen Eakin get directly to the point in the most direct and practical way.

Since closing his Chelsea gallery and reopening in Hudson in 2013, Bailey has quietly pushed more than few boundaries, but always subtly. What might be the gallery's most-serious quality is how playful it is. Unrestricted by any aesthetic orthodoxy, Bailey is free to roam and create exhibits that take a holistic approach to art and design.

As Bailey enters his fifth year in Hudson, he sat down with the Times Union to answer a few questions.

Q: The current exhibit is a wonderful collection of objects that pushes a few boundaries. How did it all come together? What was your process?

A: Art, design and craft overlap in many ways. The artists' and designers' work in the exhibition reflects this overlap, either in the materials used (recycled or repurposed, new or old, unique or mass-produced) or in the images depicted.

Q: Is it about sculpture and design in a different context? Or is it about the decorative arts finding the higher calling of art?

A: It's more about unique characteristics of objects and artworks, and how they relate to one another through form, function or time. A mannequin wears a Shaker cloak that is approximately 100 years old, overlooking contemporary chairs cast in recycled plastic by Kim Markel, all facing a photograph of flickering candle resting on an apple by Colby Bird.

Q: What is the curatorial mission of the gallery?

A: To enlighten and surprise.

Q: The space is quite small. How has this influenced your exhibitions?

A: I once visited a dealer of antique metalware in Istanbul's Grand Bazaar. His stall measured maybe 6 feet square. It was packed with objects from several centuries. So, in a way, the ground floor of a town house seems liberating.

Q: You had a gallery in New York City for several years. Why the move to Hudson?

A: The cost of running a business in Manhattan was becoming prohibitive. I was a weekender in the area for years. Hudson is a great town, and I found a great space.

Q: Are the artists you work with primarily local, from New York City or beyond?

A: Mostly from New York City, but also local and from the Southeast and West Coast. Four of the artists in the current exhibition live locally.

Q: The awareness from the New York City art world of Hudson only seems to be increasing. What's your take on the Hudson scene these days?

A: Come visit!

Tim Kane is a frequent contributor to the Times Union.

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