

# EYECANDY HANGING AROUND

## Clay pigeons

**B**ozart is an easy mark for an art critic, with its mouldering hippie aesthetic, zen pretensions, and co-optation of indigenous people's cosmology; a free expression-touting boutique of banality. So why bother confronting something so seemingly benign? Blame a strongly averse reaction to the title of this month's show, "Functional Epiphany"—a dissonant, paradoxical concept that elevates the saleable over the seminal and simultaneously cheapens the idea of profound experience.

Susan Coville claims "an altered state swept over her... that the knowledge that she could create anything she could imagine permeated the clay." This begs the question why fairly competent ceramic vessels with butterflies, flowers, and fish resulted. It is as if Moses descended from Ararat with smiley-face pins rather than tablets, bromides rather than law. Shouldn't a brush with the omnipotent force of the universe yield more than an expensive set of attractive mugs? Will a vase adorned with the calligraphic characters of "peace, prosperity, and joy" (as another of Coville's works does) confer those benefits to you or merely diminish your chances at the second wish by a not insignificant amount?

Less flippantly dismissed is the gallery's generally flaccid lack of vision, whether schilling dreamcatchers, liberally lifting Georgia O'Keefe's mannerisms, offering an ineptly painted, fashionably heretical library, or trapping Barbie dolls in gelatinous resin. This dearth of imagination could explain Bozart's recent attachment to a peculiar muse, first seen a few months ago malappropriating a famous Expressionist, shoving his male figures to the margins while augmenting his females to pneumatic proportions. Tara Dunbar [ed. - who also happens to be C-VILLE's "Say Cheese" photographer] makes three appearances in the current exhibit, first flaunting inkjet photos of flash-in-the-pan alternapopstars, and then twice as a vacant-eyed mannequin. Celebrating the female form and fetishizing an unrealistic exaggeration of it are two entirely different things, and the latter isn't just Betty Boop silliness, it's hurtful. This aspiring artist confuses ubiquity with presence and being seen with mattering—mistakes the gallery makes often, as well. Honest, intelligent work is there, but examples like David Sagarin's photos of hands grasping bodies, or Larely Miller's estranged couple, flounder in a sea of mediocrity.

Artists trade financial stability, community status, and often peace of mind for the freedom to pursue a unique point of view. It's sad to believe that the talents housed at Bozart, though not exclusively there, appear squandered on the manufacture of tchotchkes for the affluent, or on a belief that their every excretion and tantrum is the portent of a preternatural gift. There is a larger community that deserves to be recognized, addressed, and served by the area's visual culture. Bozart's current show represents trends symptomatic of a primacy of pap which oppresses Charlottesville's visual arts community in general, choking more challenging work from its venues, and growing no longer just boring but painful. -T.W.

"Functional Epiphany" remains at Bozart, 211 West Main, through November 26. (804) 296-3919.



BILL RAUSBY

Downtown ArtSpace promises to "sex up stern geometry," in a showing of wall drawings entitled "Supra-market," and paintings by Julian Krelmez. Friendly, calming rifts on the organizational diagrams and flowcharts that structure our lives. Below the Jefferson Theater, 110 East Main St. 963-7976.

"Imagens de Mexico," paintings by V.E. Townsend are on view at Espresso Royale Café on the Corner, 1415 University Avenue. 923-3226.

Trompe l'oeil spoons, a lone shoe, a schematic cow, and a laughing boy on beautifully-patinated, discarded metal by Mike Fitts are on view through November at both Mudhouse, 213 West Main St. 584-6833, and City Centro, 323 East Market St. 295-1679.

The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression continues its exhibition of "The Artist as Catalyst," featuring artists whose work engages social and humanitarian issues. 400 Peter Jefferson Place. 295-4784

The Bayly Museum continues *Beyond the Vanishing Point: Media and Myth in America*, Photographs by Warren Niedich, through December 30. An exhibit in two sections: the first, "Camp O.J." depicting the media circus that surrounded a trial you may remember, second, "The Calico Series" form a restored silver mining town in Barstow, California described as part Williamsburg, part Disney theme park. The Bayly Museum, Rugby Road. 924-3424

"The Mystical Arts of Tibet," is an exhibition of sacred objects from Tibet's largest, most prestigious monastery, including watercolor tangka, ancient bronze statues, temple musical instruments, and color photographs from Tibetan refugees. Discussions held by prominent scholars are upcoming, as is the arrival of monks who will be creating, then destroying a sand mandala between November 28 and December 3. The Bayly Museum, Rugby Road. 924-3592.

Very Social Arts of Charlottesville holds its first **VSA Visual Arts Show**, featuring works by dozens of area artists at the Charlottesville Performing Arts Center, 1400 Melbourne Road. 979-9532.

Second Street Gallery's resurrects the Surrealist imagine