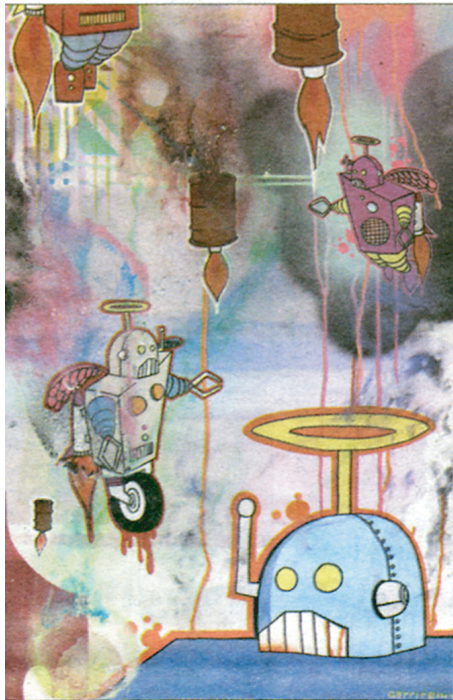


ALMOST FAMOUS

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COMING OUT TO A BIG VIEW

Fourteen young-ish artists received a debutante's ball of an opening reception last weekend when *The Future of Fine Art, Emerging Young Artists of New Mexico* was launched at the Gerald Peters Gallery (1101 Paseo de Peralta, 954-5700, through Oct. 29). With more than a dozen artists—mostly under 30—soaking up the wall and floor space with at least as many different ideas about how and what art maybe-oughta-could be, it'd be generous to characterize the exhibition as



The *Future of Fine Art* could just be a battle between humans, robots and sentient oil barrels, at least according to Gerrit Krusemark.

something of a hodgepodge. Which isn't to say that it's a bad thing at all—mostly it's an *almost* thing. The artists fit loosely into a few categories, such as those *almost* ready to be in a gallery exhibition or those *almost* ready to have a breakthrough that takes them beyond the curse of talent or those *almost* too good already to be saddled with a survey-style exhibition pinning their work to their youth.

Take Michael Namingha—commanding prime wall space in the entrance to the sprawling gallery's contemporary quarters—already relatively successful, with a family pedigree in art and an obvious eye for both contemporary materials (his works are inkjet prints on canvas) and a crisp, no-nonsense and seductive aesthetic. There's something there, or *almost* there, but Namingha isn't going to hit his full stride until life hands him the chops to saturate his work with something other than highly capable graphic design. Coming from a grittier underbelly of the world than Namingha, Gerrit Krusemark's work stands out in an oddball triptych dubbed "Robots vs. Humans" for his blend of retro-sci-fi iconography, analogue paintwork, moody, trance color blobs and grad school varnish fetish, with the artist's tutelage under the school of the urban spray can evident but not overwhelming.

If we took Namingha's big picture world view, sense of restraint and self-marketing and combined it with Krusemark's comic, gravelly low-pop cavalierism, we'd have something to fear and revere; a kind of unholy child of Warhol and Basquiat all rolled up in one. Not that either of those two needed to be more than they were, but at the end of the day, there are people who dabble around with making stuff and there are people who honestly take themselves seriously as artists—it's a hard job because it's not a day job, it's a calling—and it remains to be seen how much of New Mexico's future, as depicted here, will answer that call and push themselves and their work accordingly.

Even though much of the work is waiting for either a breakdown or a breakthrough, there's plentiful raw talent on tap; Cyrus McCray and Tanmaya Bingham both display an envy-inducing and easy level of draftsmanship that's enough to make you catch your breath in wonder. A steel and cedar bear sculpture, "Tashtego," by James Burnes is an intuitive and fluid conversation between material and sculptor—each line, each curve, each mark a poetry that would make Melville gurgle seawater with briny glee. What fails to attain similar presence appears to be of little concern to co-curator Devin Peters; his goals, as an organizer if not an artist, fall under a bigger vision. He writes in an intro to bios on the artists: "Each artist represents a larger group of artists...despite the diversity of the work, each has a common denominator: a strong love for art and a commitment to carry it into the future." Inasmuch as the city itself has pinned much of its future on art and the young creative culture that will propagate it, Peters has chosen an opportune time to emerge from the shadow of his father's art empire. It could be that he's destined to be part of something new and very exciting in Santa Fe opined the gallery's Special Projects Director Tom Tavelli, "There's a home-grown group of talent here that's under 30 now," he said. "Twenty-five years ago this wouldn't have been possible—I'm a guy who went through Santa Fe High as a kid and I don't remember us being that sophisticated and together. We lacked a view of the large world."

BREAD AND BUTTER

Of course when your world view gets large and interconnected enough you can start to get hung up on improving the way various interrelated systems operate: the dynamics, economics and environmental impact of food production, processing and distribution for example. That's what seems to be on the mind of a bunch of artists who aren't really satisfied with art for art's sake anymore and who, for awhile at least, are playfully harassing the seat of government with an overtly politicized exhibition on all things food-related.

The Food Show (State Capitol Rotunda, Old Santa Fe Trail and Paseo de Peralta, 986-4589, through Dec. 16), a project of the Santa Fe Council for the Arts, is packed with 3D objects, video projection, a smattering of paintings and an impressive collection of photography, as well as plentiful information about buying local and organic, even when it comes to meats and dairy—a very good idea for people paranoid about things like mad cow disease and avian flu.

But the don't-miss-it feature of the show is Chrissie Orr's giant bread mandala, outdoors, around the less travelled end of the building, it's the kind of thing that must be loved—if for no other reason than to give the grounds staff nervous fits and the birds an orgiastic party—but there are so many other reasons. Starting with the fact that by using simple, natural materials and a widespread traditional—even sacred—form, Orr suggests, not to belittle Gerrit Krusemark, the possibility of a future in which it doesn't necessarily have to be robots vs. humans.