

short north gazette

masters of art at mahan gallery

by elizabeth ann james

there's a spiffy new gallery at 1042 n. high street. the spacious mahan gallery, refurbished under the direction of its new owner, jacqueline mahan, possesses gleaming white walls, an overlay of shiny hardwood floors, and great track lighting. as i recall, the vintage tin ceiling, painted white, retains a lamp motif. (as in florence nightingale's lamp.)

each month, one outside wall is covered with a smooth slick "painting" from that month's exhibit. in april, jill gallen-stein's photograph of a woman hanging out the window, astonished everyone.

peter scantland, ceo of orange barrel outdoor, shares mahan space, invisibly, and he's the guy who makes the temporary murals possible.

steve seeley and fernando orellana will present their ohio state university master's thesis show at mahan in may. transmissions from space will likely prove that mahan is on target in her desire to showcase emerging artists. the exhibit will be up for the gallery hop on may 1, but the opening is may 8.

seeley's mixed media prints are unusual; their cartoon-like edginess, their outer-space-inspired images, exist as pale acrylics rather than tech-brite splashes. and the artist often paints in layers.

similar to orellana, seeley uses text and is autobiographical. look closely and see iconographic figures: astronauts, birds, dogs...

like most contemporary artists seeley and orellana grew up with tv and the three c's: cartoons, comics, and computers. yet, the two artists are soft-spoken, diligent, and apt to infuse computer-savvy efforts with introspection.

seeley is interested in transitions and associations - this blends into that, this could be that and reminds us of this. other worlds and transitions. he knows silk screen techniques, and, says orellana, "many of steve's prints resemble silk screen paintings."

seeley says that orellana likes to be called one name, "fernando." fernando's work is the more "outré" of the two. his mixed media show includes three sculptural pieces, installations. he will show

"a long blue line, a strip, an installation with infra red and an attachment. and it moves and you can see through it and people will go crazy about it".

the quotation above is a compilation of how mahan and seeley described one of fernando's wall sculptures, and although i have not seen, i do believe.

orellana also employs radio communications - "the machine looked for god on the a.m. radio" - and is quite interested in quizzes and iq questions. there is a web site associated with one of these iq questions at the following address: www.question34.com.

use of space, outer and spatial, of text, and iconography, by both artists, help tie the double show together. both are keen observers of the arts scene. they surf popular culture for deep concepts, and they know how to combine paint, print, digital images and text.

jill gallenstein, mfa, recently returned from new york university to columbus with large imaginative color photos. she had a one-woman show at mahan in april. in suburban landscapes a solitary woman has been caught in various natural poses and in casual attire - underslips and frocks, no denims as i recall - against austere and familiar landscapes. low-hung apartments, flooded fields, parking lots. the photographer uses actual negatives and develops them. her sense of composition is solid; her ambiance, dramatic, not brassy.

jacqueline mahan, curator, director, owner, is a victorian village resident. she grew up in upper arlington, attended fort hayes, and earned her bfa at the boston art institute. her father is a noted bridge builder who worked hard to get where he is. the lane avenue bridge is but one of his accomplishments. her mom encouraged art museum trips and collected oil paintings. "i have a strong support system," the new gallery owner says.

mahan strives. she cares about emerging artists, and she wants to succeed. her leisure time is minimal. if she has some she hangs out with friends or walks her two chihuahuas, molly and dorothy - after dorothy from "the golden girls." she likes brian wilson and the beach boys, and once in awhile she watches tv documentaries and movies.

she admires novelist wally lamb; she's come undone and i know this much, fictional memoirs, were high points. she's trying to decide how she feels about philosopher ayn rand who's kind of making a comeback.

at 22, the energetic curator remains sincere and outspoken. she speaks well of roy g biv, and wearily of "elitist" art venues. yet, she's aware that ccad and osu send throngs of talented art graduates into the community.

mahan's non-silent partner is will fugman, former ccad student. he works part time in the preparatory program at the columbus museum of art.

"i couldn't have done it without him," mahan says. their combined efforts sizzle, and mahan openings emit new york energy. stuff is happening.

mahan gallery, 1042 n high st. is open mon-fri 11-7; sat-sun 12-6. 294-3278.

master thesis works at mahan gallery throughout may: a. segway #2, by steve seeley and b. finding god, by fernando orellana.