



Summer Camp

By Jason Foumberg

THE ART WORLD IN SUMMER IS PRETTY QUIET, SO IF A GALLERY isn't shuttered while the staff vacations in St. Barts, they're likely having the ubiquitous summer show, which usually amounts to revisiting the stock that didn't sell from the past few seasons. Sure, it's forgivable to take a break, but what's an art enthusiast to do when the temperatures get too high, and the cool white cube beckons? Some galleries take the opportunity to take a risk with their summer show by exhibiting artists and ideas just a touch outside of what's safe during the in-season. Here's a few worth checking out.

"Summer Group Show" at Contemporary Art Workshop

This venue, perhaps the oldest non-profit visual-arts space in Chicago, has been granting solo exhibits for emerging artists as long as anyone can remember. The summer group show, installed in two sessions (July-August and August-September) continues the mission. On view are twenty-two works by nine artists, all either in art school or recently graduated, from Chicago and beyond. The media ranges from painting to sculpture to installation, most of which are stylistically similar: controlled messiness, lots of black paired with neon colors, graphically strong, and for lack of a better word, hip, as if everyone went on a field trip to New York's New Museum and took extensive notes at the "Unmonumental" exhibit. That's fine; it looks great and feels fresh, and there's something to say for making an attractive picture even if meaning isn't immediately available.

542 West Grant Place, (773)472-4004

"Several Landscapes and 3 Landscapes (or more) in the Modern Style" at Western Exhibitions

Closing out Western Exhibitions' season before it moves to the North Peoria hotspot is a show with a loose curatorial premise about landscape. Most of the paintings discuss mankind's involvement with nature. Megan Euker's studies in oil continue a series wherein she observes bathers who use water for healing purposes. (Larger paintings are currently on view at Linda Warren Gallery.) Her brush is getting to a point of confident application, similar to Claire Sherman's small studies of large events in nature, such as a geyser or a crater. In a painting by Dan Attoe a Native American ghost gazes out from a scene with pristine mountainscape, and an inscribed phrase warns, "There is no life on other planets." The sentence is perhaps in response to a nearby painting by Kevin Cosgrove of a semi-truck on a murky road with an ashy sky and a cloud that hangs like a crusty stain.

The highlight of the exhibit is the smaller back gallery with landscapes in the "Modern style," likely a jokey title that culls all the ghosts of landscape-painting's past. Indeed, art-historical influences abound here in a joyful way. Carl Baratta's expressionist painting "The Faithful Protector (after Nick Englebert)" is a slight departure from his comic-book style. The monstrous characters are pushed back, and there's a narrative about a spirit protecting a (dead?) body lying in a forest clearing. Baratta's sense of color reigns, and the whole scene undulates from ground to sky.

1821 West Hubbard, (312)307-4685, Saturdays through August 16