

ART

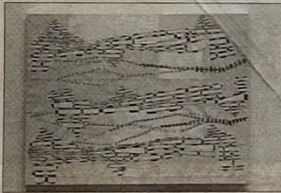
All in the translation

BY CARA WALZ

Three artists at Joseph Nease Gallery share a penchant for unique materials. Instead of paint, James Brinsfield uses tape, paper, and markers on his large-scale canvases. Rachel Hayes sews together patches of polyester fabric and vinyl. And John Torreano constructs palm-size balls out of wood, acrylic gels, and krypton paint.

In his statement, Brinsfield explains that his materials "aren't a surrogate for paint." Instead, according to the artist, they're a practical means to "relay visual information." He wants the viewer to read the canvas "the same way one would read the printed page, a graph, or a map." Combining this practical, diagrammatic approach with the intrinsic concerns of abstraction and using music as a point of departure, Brinsfield seeks to translate aural sensations into a visual language.

The attempt to translate a sentence from one language to another inevitably results in misunder-



"Tableau" by James Brinsfield.

standings. The same is true here. At their best, Brinsfield's forms flow vertically across the surface. In "Streambox" and "Tableau," a grid of patched-together sheets of cream and light-blue paper provides the first layer, on top of which the artist applied interwoven sections of streaming black-and-white forms and thin strips of color. The resulting imagery has something in common with music; but it also alludes to other beautiful complexities: cellular growth, plate tectonics, and transportation networks come to mind.

The pieces laden with overt references to music, on the other hand, seem too cerebral and contrived. The stark black forms in "Overdub" and "Blue Milk" interrupt the ebb and flow that makes Brinsfield's work exciting to look at. When a German tourist says "Goodbye," he's unaware that there may be more appropriate sayings, such as "See you later." Like the tourist's vocabulary, these two pieces lack nuance: Something gets lost in the translation.

Rachel Hayes' material exploration resulted in *Constant Chameleon*, an installation concerned with the hide-and-seek dynamics of camouflage. The largest of Hayes' three panels, draped along two adjacent walls like a curtain, dominates Nease's rear space. This panel's outer layer — alternating bands of sheer yellow and clear vinyl — mediate one's perception of the layer beneath, a patchwork of colorful and varied fabrics. It wrestles with visual dynamics normally reserved for the painter: shadow, reflection, opacity, glaze, and color interference.

Hayes' work holds appeal both formally and intellectually, but her presentation needs some fine tuning. The smaller panels appear as afterthoughts. In this context, the largest panel deserves one's full attention.

John Torreano's "Lucky Balls" bear witness to

his layered paintings and constructions involving unique materials, but they embody very little of the artist's fascination with circular motion, spirituality, and astronomy. With no prior knowledge of his work, one might mistake these little orbs for paperweights from a high-end gift shop: beautiful, a bit strange, and mildly humorous. As with Hayes' work, this problem is due, at least in part, to presentation. Had there been 100 balls scattered across the floor, well, then... maybe.

James Brinsfield: *Post Abstraction*;
Rachel Hayes: *Constant Chameleon*;
John Torreano: *Installation*
through June 3
at the Joseph Nease Gallery
1819 Central
816-421-2166

In with the new

The H&R Block Artspace has on display work by this year's crop of graduates from The Kansas City Art Institute. This is a respectful move by the school, one that acknowledges four years of toil and dedication. Although the work is housed within a new, expansive space, it's difficult to take everything in, but one experiences a palpable joy amid the chaos as one bears witness to new work by emerging artists in all disciplines.

Nathan Shay's scaled-up "Rock 'N' Chair" sits atop a small rug and waits for a sitter. Constructed out of steel and painted blue, the chair takes effort to climb into, and the weight of one's body sets the whole thing in motion. When it rocks, it feels as if it's going to overturn. Remember that sensation from when you were 2 years old? By inviting the viewer to interact with his sculpture, Shay helps an adult feel like a kid again.

Andrea Trout's "Surveillance" displays a promising, detail-oriented sensibility. She festooned a shoe-shine box with all things stolen — rusty nails, house numbers, snapshots of strangers, and so on — complete with a tiny electric light at its center. And Matthew Wood's "untitled" explores a unique material application of milky-white acrylic over geometric cutouts. The shapes exist far beneath his painting's surface, alluding to what is buried, forgotten, or barely perceptible.

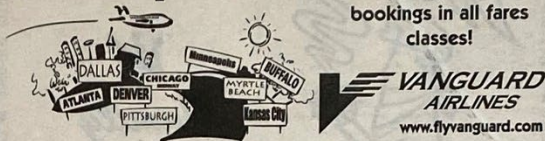
Even without the use of a crane — no one could afford to supply him with one — Miles Neidinger managed to create "exoticycle - organization," a tangle of bicycles that begins inside and spills outside, cascading down the outer wall from a second-story window to the ground below. This huge mass weaves together and defies gravity without bolts, wires, or extra hardware. Neidinger's careful use of balance and tension attests to the fact that a good space can be its own inspiration. Here's hoping that the senior show continues to happen at the Block so that every year one can see the up-and-comers pull out all the stops.

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