

**COLLECTING**

**Summertime and the Buying is Easy**

Summer is a nice time to buy art. Less stress and a vacation mentality are perfectly conducive to indulging oneself with a gift, a reward for a hard year's worth of labor. Galleries themselves adopt a some-

what more laid-back attitude as well, slowing down a bit and perhaps showing work that is a little unexpected. It is their quiet season, and many organize big group shows — exhibitions which include pieces by artists they have shown before as well as those they may be planning to show in the future. This structure provides the opportunity to sample a large number of works easily, and to get a sense of a given gallery's general aesthetic. Out of a dozen or more artists included in a group show, perhaps a couple catch one's eye and prompt further investigation. (Most galleries are apt to have slides of additional works.) It is not a bad idea to keep an art notebook, in which to

jot down the names of a few artists who seem interesting. Likely, if you visit galleries regularly you will see their work again. While sometimes we fall in love immediately, other times it is a gradual process of becoming familiar. Summer is also a good time to appreciate the urban experience. Take a well-deserved Friday off and wander around downtown. Have lunch at Y.J.'s or Honeycomb's or Lydia's or Lulu's or the Bluebird. Go shoe shopping at Bob Jones. Buy a loaf of olive bread at La Fervere, the gorgeous bakery at 17th and Summit. Explore Union Station. Wander around River Market and get Chinese or Italian or Middle Eastern groceries. Stroll the Avenue of the Arts installations on Central. And visit galleries. When you travel, you are compelled to purchase souvenirs. If you don't live downtown, to go is to travel. Let an artwork be your souvenir. You will cherish it.

(Also regarding collecting, see Ben Shockey's review of *Insider Art: Kansas City Art Professionals Collect* at Village Shalom on Page 34 in the Art Review section of this issue.)

If I were so lucky as to have \$10,000 or so to spend on art from Kansas City galleries this month, here's what I would buy:

**Jay Sheldon, Leedy-Vouklos**  
*Untitled Blocks*  
3 for \$900 (\$300 each)  
MDF, latex balloons,  
Automotive primer

Displayed on pristine white wall-shelves, these three little cubes by Jay Sheldon — a recent graduate of the M.F.A. program at Virginia Commonwealth University who is currently residing in Kansas City — feel like curious commodities, whispering of some mysterious function. Painted a satisfying matte gray, the crisp, surrealistic objects are punctuated by tiny orifices from which the playful, loose ends of white

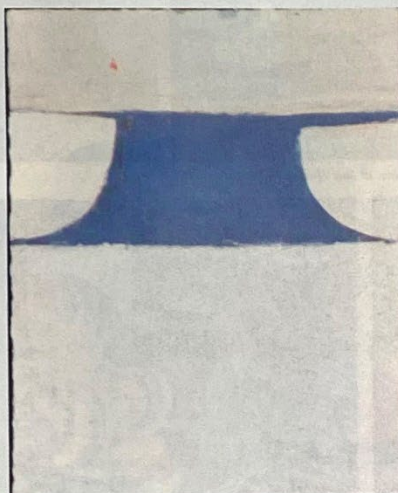
latex balloons curl outward, teasing. While highly seductive — one longs to insert a finger into an opening — the perfect hard edges of the squares lend them a sense of contained detachment. As such, they seem surrogates for psychological states,



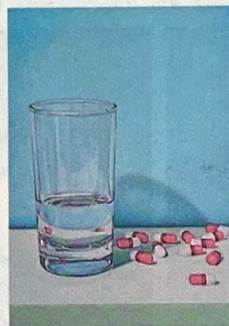
John Torreano at Nease



Jessica Snow at Nease



From left, Michael Wille at Leedy-Vouklos; Tom Gregg at Leedy-Vouklos; and Peter Feldstein at Sherry Leedy



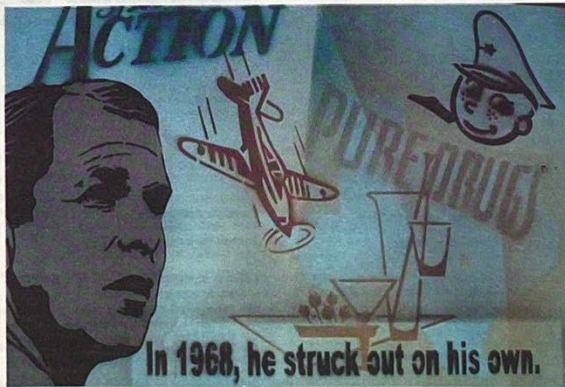
covely begging for attention yet coolly pushing us away in defense.

**Michael Wille, Leedy-Vouklos**  
*Bowling Green No. 125*  
\$800  
Acrylic on panel

There is something about the cornflower-blue, anvil-like central form in this abstract painting, emerging poetically from amidst a dense white field and seeming to float there, that makes it feel strangely iconic — and which brings Robert Motherwell to mind. The surfaces of this and a similarly appealing orange and white work by Michael Wille — from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio — are informed by layers and layers of paint, built up and scraped into, such that the white ground is roughly textured and subtly informed by underlying blues and reds. While striking for their simple forms, both paintings achieve a real sense of weight and richness and objecthood; one just wants to live with them.

**Peter Feldstein, Sherry Leedy**  
*Untitled Print #610*  
\$400  
ink jet print/digital drawing

From a series of digital prints featuring stark black silhouettes centered on clean white paper, *Untitled Print #610* reads as one permutation of an infinite number of possibilities for how a series of simple geometrical units might be combined and configured. "610" is printed below the form like a page number — another is numbered "2219" — which leads one to imagine volumes and volumes of such shapes, each of which takes on the quality of an individual character in an expanding alphabet or population. That there is no explicit mathematical logic behind Feldstein's process of deriving the silhou-



Archie Scott Gober at Dolphin



Jay Sheldon at Leedy-Vouklos

ettes lends them the quality of a personal, symbolic vocabulary: beautifully multiplicative.

**Jessica Snow, Joseph Nease**  
*Major Tom's Journal, Page 5*  
\$500  
pencil, paint and ink on paper

For Joseph Nease's summer exhibition *Space Oddity*, San Francisco-based artist Jessica Snow (who Nease contacted after discovering in the recent *Pierogi Flatfiles* show at H&R Block Artspace) created five small works on paper imagining what Major Tom from the David Bowie song would have seen from his spaceship. Her delicate abstract "journal" pages, of

which this is one, capture a child-like sense of fantasy, sweetly enticing as delicate, detailed abstractions while doubling as maps of a dream-like outer space. Snakes of rainbow colored squares, networks of cellular forms, gorgeous target-like orbs, faintly drawn constellations, and maze-like trails of pink lines populate the page, feeling simultaneously micro- and macrocosmic, trippy and tender.

**John Torreano, Joseph Nease**  
3 "balls," *Wall Ball* installation  
\$600  
wood balls, acrylic gems, krylon

While to recreate New York-based artist John Torreano's entire *Wall Ball* installation — comprised of dozens of variously sized, colorfully-painted wood "balls", embedded with acrylic gems and affixed to two walls of the gallery to suggest a

disco-style universe — would be a bit much, one yellow "ball", set high in a corner, won me over. Like a sparkling eyeball, the piece's single green jewel seems to silently survey the entire room from its lofty perch, filling one with the sense that, indeed, Big Brother is watching. I would pick a couple of other *Wall Balls*, for installation in unexpected locations, to add to the effect.

**Archie Scott Gober, Dolphin**  
*The Bush Biography: He struck out on his own*  
\$3000  
pigment on paper

It is a joy to see some overtly political art displayed in a gallery in Kansas City, even if it took the election of a second Bush for this work by Archie Scott Gober to be created. In the six panel piece, which draws on the history of activist art and propaganda in its use of clear, stenciled graphics and combination of text and image, Gober brilliantly traces George W's less-than-awe-inspiring career. Each piece includes the phrase "he struck out on his own" coupled with a given year, making punning reference to our leader's fumbling quest to find his niche, with the family legacy both enabling and dispelling his floundering. As the years progress, varied but closely related back-grounds shift from martini glasses and an airplane (1968) to a wad of cash and an oil funnel (1975) to a wad of cash, baseball icons and a holy cross (1989) to a G.O.P. elephant, a wad of cash, a gas and oil logo, and a banner reading "the people's choice" (2001). Beautifully executed, sharply ironic and yet subtle enough to feel very smart, this work leaves one wanting to see more of Gober's work — and longing for more work in general that is explicitly content-driven.

**Tom Gregg, Leedy-Vouklos**  
*Pills*  
\$3600  
Oil on panel

A well-deserved winner of the Charlotte Street Fund Award last year, Tom Gregg's latest paintings (many of which we on view last month at George Billis in New York) are tighter, more charged, more focused and sexier than ever, with a delightful sense of menace dancing right amongst their cherry reds and lipstick pinks. Here, a spill of larger-than-life, candy-like capsules beg to be swallowed — Gregg even gives us the crystal-clear tall glass of water with which to do so. While the high-key color of the pills, the lime green table on which they sit and the sky blue background recall the saccharine sensibility of the 1950s, what comes around goes around and here we again in the *Valley of the Dolls*, popping Prozac, Zoloft, Ritalin, Viagra, etc. Delivering a cliché with exquisite finesse, Gregg's iconic pills become a metaphor for all kinds of escapism and temptation, for our inflated sense of the relief, release, retreat they might provide. How can we resist?

— Kate Hackman