

"Pure / Surrender" review from Creative Loafing

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Three-for-one, art-for-all: Reviews of new shows at Young Blood, Kibbee and Beep Beep Galleries

Posted

by Jessica Blankenship

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Allen Taylor

When it comes to giving the best in new and established local artists a platform to show their work (and doing some serious hustling to actually sell it), few galleries can compete with Young Blood and Beep Beep. Positioned a few miles apart off Ponce de Leon, the two Atlanta-centric art hot spots have been consistently offering up local wares with no hesitation about ranging from the extremely irreverent to the intensely evocative. Simultaneously, they've taken great and clever strides toward morphing Atlanta's underground art scene from purely a labor of love into a money-making enterprise, by having a heavy hand in bolstering what is now a growing trend of serious art collection. Atlantans are buying and collecting local art now more than ever - Young Blood and Beep Beep are a big part of the reason why. (Don't think anyone's getting rich, folks. I just mean that now an artist might occasionally see a few bucks. We still have a long to go before local artists are getting their just financial propers.)

Then add to the mix relative newcomer Kibbee Gallery (positioned fortuitously half-way between Beep Beep and Young Blood, behind Fellini's on Linwood.) They opened last year with a like-minded mission, backed the creative force of adept local arts conductor Ben Goldman, who is almost the curator of the current MINT Gallery show, America. Their induction into Atlanta's subterranean arts fold was natural and immediate. Not surprising, since these galleries mark a community of businesses that promote artistic (and hopefully fiscal) success through cooperation and support, rather than exclusion and competition.

Each gallery has a pretty money spot around one of Atlanta's busiest thoroughfares, plus the tireless creative and business energy of their proprietors (whose encompassing knowledge of Atlanta artists results in some truly inspired, gallery-initiated artist collaborations.) The culminating atmosphere among these spaces is something special. On the occasional night like last Saturday, July 10, the Ponce Posse (okay, I'm still working on a cool name) will throw down in full force by each premiering new exhibitions. This does something pretty damn sweet to the art-goers; maybe it's seeing many of the same faces at multiple galleries in one night that raises the energy of the overall experience, as if it reminds patrons that they actually do live in a city where there is a thriving, supportive community of artists, fans and collectors. And bonus - since you're both there, you can totally hit on that girl at Beep Beep who you were too pussy to talk to earlier at Kibbee. Nights like July 10, with multiple openings punctuating the neighborhood, turn the east midtown stretch of Ponce into an art relay race - it's a damn good time.

If you weren't there last Saturday, never fear - the shows are ongoing and I've done the hard work for you. Check out these mini-reviews of the fresh offerings at Young Blood, Kibbee and Beep Beep Galleries:

Of all the galleries hosting events that night, Young Blood was the party: It Came From Left Field is a three-person show featuring new work by Ming Donkey, Herbert Rieth III, and Jason Baldwin. And all of it is, ya know, good. The only people who should have a problem with this show are Herbert Reith and Jason Baldwin; being put in a room with the sensory explosion that is Ming Donkey's multi-media installation is like asking to be ignored...even if your work is entirely deserving of focus, which Reith's and Baldwin's certainly are. Plus, Ming Donkey was assaulting our ears (I mean that as a compliment) with his one man rock band, so yeah - what an attention whore (again, that's a compliment - both his art and his music deserve a helluva lot of attention.) It's actually probably a better idea to not see this show during an event; go during some quiet off-hour when you can have a chance to spend some time with all three artists' work.

The multi-disciplined, pre-eminent Southern creative Michi Meko has paired up with graffiti art envelope-pusher Born in Pure / Surrender at Beep Beep Gallery. The sculptural assemblage works of old wood and repurposed industrial materials give off a texture and tone that's at once trashy and elegant. Some pieces portray a clear stream of consciousness, engaging-the-materials kind of approach, while others are more deliberate in their assembly and thought. If there is one regret to be pinned to Pure / Surrender, it's a wondering about how big and how far a show that holds such a degree of psychological and physical weight might have gone had its artists not been contained to Beep Beep's diminutive space. Even the art itself knew that; during the opening, one of the pieces fell off the wall - which was honestly kind of rad and seemed like a perfectly natural thing to happen, given how vital and almost kinetic these works are. On the other hand, there's something about assembling these heavy elements in close

quarters that makes the work as overwhelming and immediate to the viewer as the issues that artists are exploring clearly are to them. So falling artwork and small spaces be damned - you should see this show.

Joe Tsambiras I have to confess: I never made it to the Kibbee Gallery opening that night. I was in the middle of getting sick (summer colds are bullshit, by the way.) But when I visited a few days later, I was immediately glad that my first exposure to Winsome Want was a quiet afternoon alone in the gallery. The works of Karen Cleveland, Allen Taylor, and Joe Tsambiras cover such a range of beguiling characters and engaging emotions that you might want your alone time with this show. You want the room to feel the bright, bold feelings from some pieces and the privacy and solitude to let others' quiet, strained moments creep over you - which they will. The artists of Winsome Want have presented a collection of work that isn't afraid to be sweet and innocent, portrayed in a way that acknowledges the requisite toughness and gritty vulnerability that comes with daring to be sweet and innocent - while at the same time, being fiercely primal with hyper-natural desires and intentions.

It Came From Left Field. Young Blood Gallery. Thru July 31. Sun -Thurs, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.; Fri - Sat, 12 p.m.-9 p.m. 404-254-4127.

Winsome Want. Kibbee Gallery. Thru July 31. By appointment. 404-839-0331

Pure / Surrender. Beep Beep Gallery. Thru Aug. 8. Fri - Sun, 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.