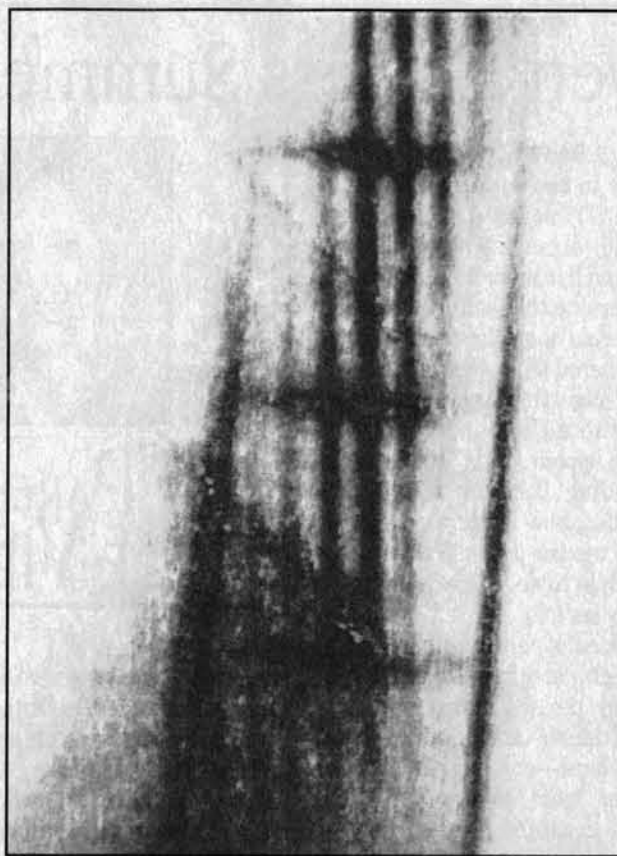


Charcoal on paper *Detail of Sky #6* in 30 pieces [fair February snow showers] by Guilford's Jefri Ruchti



Jay Tracy of Santa Fe, New Mexico created *Untitled #2207* through thermogenic drawing on vintage fax paper

Experimenting with Heat, Space, and Beauty

By Leah Lopez Schmalz

Special to Living

In New Haven and need a quick art pick-me-up during lunch or before a weekend dinner? If so, the two small shows on display in Labs I and II of New Haven's Arts + Literature Gallery may be just right.

In Lab I, Guilford's Jefri Ruchti's two large multi-piece charcoals lend a bit of grandeur and expanse when set against Jay Tracy's (of Santa Fe, New Mexico) small, intimate, thermal works. A few steps away in Lab II, Guilford resident Anne Culver contributes [*Metramorphosis*], an installation that features walls of drawings and floors full of numerous little dumpling-like pieces.

Ruchti has been working on sky compositions for the last couple of years. His compositions are both individual works and pieces of a larger whole. According to his artist's statement "edges, which would be all exterior edges in a one-piece composition, may also be regarded as interior edges in a multi-part composition. Adjacent edges may repel or attract or blend."

Sky #6 is a billowy wall panel that consists of 28 smaller subdivisions; seven swirling charcoals across by four down. It reinforces how color can play such a huge part in perception. In black and white the piece seems menacing, or at the very least stormy, however if you forget about color, or use your mind's eye to superimpose bright white and baby blue on top of the image, you realize that it could easily be the bright blue sky of a September day.

Sky #7 is a visually linear set that runs nine individuals wide by six high. Its horizontal sweeps seem more the part of sunsets



and dwindling days. Unlike #6 it reads like a book—top to bottom, right to left, reach the bottom and turn the page starting again in the upper left corner. Maybe it's this sensibility combined with the light to dark, and not those side-to-side striations, that imply the end of the day and the beginning of another.

Serving as a nice balance, Tracy's small black-and-white framed pieces flank both of Ruchti's large works. In this selection from his 100-piece series *FACSIMILSE*, Tracy draws on sensitive paper with the invisible medium of heat. A tie between this work and Ruchti's is that unlike the charcoal sky images, these small "drawings" tend to invite shape association skills that cloud-gazing might: a mini-blind window treatment, DNA test matrix, and the last bit of standing grid from the World Trade Center.

After absorbing the first room, I moved slowly to the back room. Getting a small glimpse of what was in there before actually entering the room, it hit me that the slightly off kilter feeling was me trying to assimilate artist statement with visual impact and my true thoughts. The whole thing was slightly frightening (not horror fright, but more this-is-very-peculiar fright). There were these little parts all over the room, like pieces of thoughts not yet been strung together to form an actual



A mixed media piece by Guilford resident Anne Culver; a detail of her ALL Gallery Lab II show *Metramorphosis*

sentence. My mind had a hard time making sense of these mixed media pieces. Some looked like slugs, some like muscle tissue, and others a tad pornographic. Then as I spun, taking in the black-and-white images posted and the painted folds of the "sculptures" strewn about, Culver's intent started to click—moments of change, the indefinable trying to be defined, potentiality, and emergence. Unfortunately, identifying and naming the concept did not make it any less unsettling.

While seemingly different, all three sets of artwork really do complement each other. They all work to explain kinetic energy of one form or another through posed or captured moments in movement. Ruchti is able to freeze the sky in mid development, Tracy wrangles to make invisible energy tangible, and Culver immortalizes the squirming seconds before blob becomes being.

This really was a perfect bite-sized set of shows, but if I might

suggest, consider walking straight to the back room first (Lab II) and then close with the images in the front room. Those little slippery bits spilling off tables, clustered in corners, and lining the walls poised for the moment they can take over the world may not leave you with much of an appetite for your lovely sushi meal.

Join ALL Friday, Sept. 9 from 6 to 8 p.m. for the artist reception; the Lab I and II exhibits run until Sept. 25. The gallery is at 5 Edwards Street in New Haven and is open Friday through Sunday noon to 5 p.m. and by appointment. For more information about the show, gallery or other upcoming events visit www.allgallery.org.

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