

Heated-up art finds balance between illusion and reality

By Judy Birke

NEW HAVEN — There are few aesthetic tasks more demanding than the effort to let less be more.

In the current exhibit at Arts + Literature Laboratory, artists Jay Tracy and Guilford's Jefri Ruchti take on the challenge in an effort to create a balance between reality and illusion.

Tracy's images explore the relationship between the visible and invisible worlds by generating visible forms through the manipulation of materials sensitive to common forms of invisible energy, each work created by applying heat to the surface of temperature-sensitive coated paper. Ruchti's charcoal drawings address the variations experienced when observing the sky at different distances.

Unified in the absence of dramatic narrative, both use a limited repertoire of materials, color and form to create a dialogue between the coexistence of process and discovery, information and abstraction and order and randomness. Both artists ground their work in a formal format that controls the space and holds them together, lending a structural cohesiveness to the pieces; Tracy's

reductive shapes and patterns contained within highly ordered parameters, Ruchti's images visually connected by a series of grid-like panels of ordered variations.

Tracy's "thermogenic drawings" possess an elegant graphic quality that quickly piques one's interest. These cryptic images of spatial uncertainty, subtle tonal variations and oblique allusions to the visible world, play with both the eye and the mind, evoking an ephemeral quality reminiscent of bits of memory that surface and fade away. Although created by invisible means, seemingly improvisational and uncomposed, one finds tangible visual

associations in the information that evolves.

In one image, for example, blurry contours, stark streaks of light and dark, shifting pools of movement, suggest the fleeting aura of auto headlights at nighttime, expanding and contracting as they move. Another image evokes the architectonic linear order of skyscrapers, while yet

ART REVIEW

Title: "Jay Tracy and Jefri Ruchti"

Where: Arts + Literature Lab (ALL), 5 Edwards St., New Haven

When: Through Sept. 25; Friday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m. and by appointment

Admission: Free

Info: (203) 671-5175



Jefri Ruchti

Jefri Ruchti's "Sky #6 in 30 pieces" charcoal on paper.

another conveys the density of trees in a landscape setting. Some images become more abstract and economical, their minimal markings merely an ephemeral moment suspended in time and space, hovering somewhere between the visible and the invisible.

Ruchti's works are more grounded.

"Sky #6 in 30 pieces," is

the more interesting of the two series included here.

Using subject matter that is disarmingly simple, Ruchti creates a subtle network of tangible atmosphere. Maintained by the tightly defined external grid format, he integrates varying forms, tones and surfaces to evoke nature's changing energy.

Ranging from literal cloud-like forms and references to horizon, to undefined muted abstract smudges and swirls, Ruchti's gentle markings give the work a loose dialogue, the lyricism of the interior bypassing the confinement of the exterior.

Judy Birke of New Haven is a freelance writer and art consultant