

Matthew Isaacson & Lisa Sanditz

Duet Gallery

Modestly tucked into the side of a building in Grand Arts Center is Duet Gallery, a bright and airy space dedicated to exhibiting the work of “meaningful pairings between an artist from St. Louis and a carefully chosen complementary artist from another city.” Recently, Matthew Isaacson (St. Louis) and Lisa Sanditz (New York) presented works concerned with their mutual interest in agricultural production and the Midwestern landscape. Through a multi-media and gently colored installation of drawing and sculpture, Isaacson and Sanditz poetically hint at the imposing nature of technology and humans on a fragile, though adaptable, landscape.

Entering the space, a makeshift horizon line of drawings on the wall leads to a central vanishing point. These mixed-media compositions converge in a corner with small, sketchy drawings of weirdly alien, near-geometric shaped trees and power lines. With minimal yet calligraphic mark-making Sanditz captures this familiar imagery with an ephemeral

respect. Like two positively charged magnets, the trees and power lines seem to repel each other yet are forced together constantly by us. The work is a reminder that trees are formed into unnatural, one-sided, u-shaped beings so that our power lines stay intact and we can (thank heavens) get our Facebook and E!news.

As the drawings radiate from the corner into larger compositions they confront the viewer with their angsty scribbles, bright colors, and splashy representations of trees and foliage reminiscent of intestines. The monochromatic and meditative use of pen and ink on one drawing is immediately challenged by the intense neighboring compositions of spray paint and acrylic. These painted orbs act as foliage, dead zones, and voids on an otherwise traditionally gestural landscape drawing.

Throughout the gallery, Isaacson’s mixed media constructions teeter and interrupt the vast sea of concrete floor. Isaacson turns plaster, wood, acrylic,

foam, duct tape, and more into stratified structures suggestive of oil rigs, pumps, and transformer towers. With their satisfying and comfortable designer-color palette, these sculptures are also nerve-wracking, as they seem to hang on by a thread in their nontraditional and wonky assembly. What’s on the top should be on the bottom and what’s on the bottom doesn’t make any sense. This calculated but casual display matches the arrangement of Sanditz’s drawings on the wall. Everything seems like it could come crashing down at any second.

The most collaborative piece in the exhibit combines one of Isaacson’s sculptures with a painted blimp by Sanditz. Tied to the “rig” with fluorescent yellow string, the cute and colorful blimp can’t actually go anywhere, stuck like a balloon in a tree or a power line.

-Amy Reidel

