

UNREPRESENTED

WILLIAM SHEARBURN GALLERY
129 WEST SAN FRANCISCO STREET, SANTA FE

“Thirty spokes converge upon a single hub; it is on the hole in the center that the use of the cart hinges. We make a vessel from a lump of clay; it is the empty space within the vessel that makes it useful. We make doors and windows for a room; but it is these empty spaces that make the room livable. Thus, while the tangible has advantages, it is the intangible that makes it useful.”

—Lao Tzu

In other words, it is the Un that makes the world go round. What isn't matter is what matters most. The nothingness between the canyon walls rebounds the echo, and the darkness of the night allows the starlight to shine. Whatever it isn't is exactly what you need.

Curator David Solomon, the man who brought you *Bang* and *The Underground* among other offerings *alternativos* over the past ten years or so, outdoes himself with *Unrepresented*, a two-part exhibition that packed the William Shearburn Gallery with back-to-back openings and positive attention to Santa Fe's best and brightest in terms of contemporary art. Sydney Cooper shone in *Un Part One* with a couple of her signature semiprecious metal-leaf panels. Viewing Cooper's work always involves bobbing and weaving to catch glimpses of her overlapping imagery embossed as drawings onto the mirror-like finish, making them pleasantly perceptual and mildly interactive. The pictures, say an oversize eyelash curler juxtaposed with a coal-fired power tower, often send subtle messages concerning technologies of femininity in an increasingly material world. The shift of local light as the surfaces catch the color of your T-shirt is also part of the equation and in the case of the unsealed silver-leaf pieces (my favorites) the way they age over time to tarnish and reveal or further obscure the images is a process-oriented extra that means the pieces respond to time as well as space.

The show stopper in this first half of *Un* was undoubtedly Rocky Lewycky's *Prayer for Al-Qaeda*, a large white piece of paper intricately pierced in a pattern that resembled an Afghan prayer rug and hung so the light shone through it. Closer inspection of this unabashedly beautiful object reveals images in the Dremel-work of a civilian house being bombed and an AK-47 assault rifle. The final puncher was a deep incarnadine circular sun symbol where you would put your forehead if the rug were on the ground for prayer. This solar sign was painted on the surface in the artist's own blood. The U.S. has spent 165 billion dollars on the war in Afghanistan with no positive results. I interpret Lewycky's piece as a prayer for peace and an end to all the bloodletting, at home and abroad.

Un Part Two, opening two weeks later, refilled the gallery with more and different strong art. Chris Collins' condom castings hung from the ceiling like giant sex raindrops and lolled into piles on the steps coming in. Cast in gleaming white plaster, their eroto-references are myriad, prompting one freaky strange Californicator to make the bizarre comment that they reminded her that “if you're ever shipwrecked you can always survive on breast milk and cum.” While that concept seems a little specious, there is no doubt that as a sculptor Collins is up and...uh, y'know, fer shure.

Continuing this wild wackiness was Clayton Porter's excellently executed image of a monumental rabid rat with day-glo lollipop eyeballs devouring a little man-child in some kinda graphic novel pieta. You gotta wonder what the ...? But it's really well-drawn and hard to take your own eyeballs off of. This all dovetailed nicely with Jonathon Morse's meat-butterfly in shatterland print (his slap-it-on-the-scanner technique just keeps getting brighter and better) and with Tuscany Wegner's wondrously complex teensy assemblages of discarded packaging, colorful plastic toys, and party supply rejects. Inhabiting a wall all their own in scattershot semblance, they looked like piñata prizes from another planet or dried and taxidermied species of post-apocalyptic anime sea creatures. Wegner's genius sparkles in her marvelous ability to take each element of her quirkified assemblages and push them well past total transformation to produce new gestalts yet leave enough source still visible that the familiar becomes incredibly, excellently odd.

That all these artists (and not just those mentioned above) exist in Santa Fe without representation says far more about the empty spaces in the gallery scene and the grand absence of fearless dealers (with notable exceptions) than it says about the artists or the unrelentingly good work presented here. In the end it is recognition of a commonly held intangible that Shearburn and Solomon make good use of, and bringing it into the light of a clean bright space for our viewing pleasure definitely deserves our respect.

JON CARVER



Rocky Lewycky, *Prayer for Al-Qaeda*, paper, blood, and light, 58" x 33", 2009