



BET and BBSO play addresses issues of race

Exhibits at the Rose challenge viewers

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The three exhibits now showing at the Rose Art Museum are some of the most mentally taxing art exhibits I have been to in a long time, showing pieces that range from creepy to weird to just blatantly confusing. Chris Bedford and his associates brought the work of Walead Beshty, Ed Ruscha and Same Jury to campus. As Catherine Rosch '16 said in an interview with the Justice after exiting the exhibit, "I understand Renaissance art but I feel stupid for not understanding this [exhibit]."

As with most modern art, "understanding" is the act of interpreting the bizarre and seemingly unexplainable into something more meaningful. The exhibits, each with their own message and personality, seemed to be saying something—many of the pieces were elusive and mysterious—although it was, as with all art, completely subjective as to what exactly they were trying to depict.

Perhaps the most intriguing artwork displayed was actually on the floor of the museum. Walead Beshty's, "Untitled," was a mirrored glass floor, which, at the opening night, was smooth and unmarked but by the time I visited, was cracked and shattered in places. On a side note, I would not recommend wearing a skirt to this exhibit; everything from the stairwell to the paintings to the people visiting the exhibit was visible. The floor seemed to suggest that everything reflected, even the most mundane ceiling lights, was part of the artwork and should be included in the exhibit.

The first exhibit, "On the Matter of Abstraction," featuring the work of Beshty and complimented by other previously-owned works, spanned two floors in the front wing of the museum. The pieces on each floor seemed to go together but the pieces on the two floors were not cohesive. Most of the art pieces on the first floor had bright, neon colors and geometric shapes. "Yellow Curves" by Ellsworth



OLIVIA POBIEL/The Justice

SEEING RED: A student looks on at the simplistic painting "Body Tracks" by innovative artist Ana Mendieta while attending the spring opening of the Rose Museum.

Kelly, embodied the personality of the first floor. Even the title suggests the themes of bright colors and geometric shapes that, as mentioned earlier, seemed to prevail on the first floor. The piece was simple: two yellow curved semicircles, almost touching, on a white background. “Yellow Curves” was a very peaceful and soothing painting to look at but was overshadowed by the two much larger pieces framing it on either side: “Desert Fan” by Judy Chicago, a neat, rainbow checkered painting with a shiny façade and “Relational Painting” by Fritz Glarner, a painting with more disorganized and scattered colored rectangles.

I did not realize that one of the pieces of art was actually part of the exhibit until I saw it on the map. Untitled (#9) by Calvin Brown was a neon, long, rectangular sign set above an elevator that I had assumed was an “exit” sign. Upon closer investigation, however, I saw that it was in fact bordered by two bright green crosses, one on either end, and covered with lines and boxes in the middle. To me, this piece made the comment that something that seems ordinary can, in fact, be extraordinary. The idea behind this piece is similar to that of the glass floor—the idea that things that are not usually seen as art can be made to be art by being put in the context of artwork.

The second floor of “On the Matter of Abstraction” was a bit more violent and disturbing. The pieces possessed grotesque titles such as “Bleed” by Tina Feingold and “Father You Have Murdered Me” by Mark Bradford, as well as Ana Mendieta’s “Body Tracks,” a piece that was infamously painted in blood. The colors on this floor were more subdued than the neon top floor. This arrangement was no doubt unintentional and the question remains why the pieces were separated as such. Maybe this arrangement was commenting on human nature—how on the surface humanity appears to be bright, happy and simplistic but underneath it is really dismal, dark and actually quite frightening.

The Sam Jury exhibit, “Coerced Nature,” on the bottom floor of the museum consisted of strange, very disconcerting, and very unconventional pieces, possibly creepier than the gory pieces in “On the Matter of Abstraction.” These pieces were not violent and graphic, but they were disturbing in a more subtle way.

“A Thousand Pities,” depicted a face of ambiguous gender, age and ethnicity on a gray background. The pamphlet said that to create this piece, Jury compiled faces in mass media and superimposed them into, as the pamphlet describes an “uncanny visage.” The figure depicts “no one and everyone simultaneously.” The person represented real people but took them out of their context in order to make a distorted version of reality. Simultaneously representing and distorting images seemed to be a theme threaded throughout the exhibits. It represented reality but put it in a different context so that the mundane images could be seen as art.

“The Approach” was a video that moved through blades of grass and dying flowers until it focused on a figure, sitting hunched on the ground. The amplified rustling of the grass and the creeping way that the camera moved made the film feel like, according to Rosch, a “horror movie.” It was disconcerting moving through the tall grass and it was as if at any moment something was going to jump out at you.

Ed Ruscha’s exhibit “Standard,” took mundane words and images and turned them into art. As the bio said, Ruscha is interested in the question of whether we can capture the essence of objects in words. Ruscha says that “The words have temperatures ... when they reach a certain point and they become hot, they appeal to me.” This quote is an intriguing one because words are not usually personified in this way. What is even more intriguing is that Ruscha uses his love for words in order to create art—something usually thought of as pictorial. The whole exhibit was spotted with words. In fact, some of the pieces were just words in a particular font on colored backgrounds: words such as “Drops,” “Angel,” “Raw,” “OK,” “Mint” and “Air.”

The title of the exhibit “Standard” was reflected in about five or six paintings of Standard gas stations in different color schemes. There was one such painting called “Ghost Station” which was a paper cutout, barely visible. Another Standard station called “Cheese Mold Standard with Olive” was a moldy green and yellow color. As the blurb next to it said, it was as if the piece was “documenting the aftermath of a cocktail party.”

The current three exhibits at the Rose are an interesting bunch. Ranging from confusing to outrageous to creepy, “On the Matter of Abstraction,” “Untitled,” “Coerced Nature” and “Standard” were all definitely food for thought. In the end, most everything, from the art piece that looked like an exit sign to the person who represents both nobody and everybody to Roscha’s Standard gas stations, seemed to relate somehow to the glass floor. Everyday reality can be made art—it might not be beautiful, but it is the act of making something ordinary into something extraordinary that is at the heart of what it means to create art.

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