



GALLERIES



Philippe Blanchard's Cave Rave

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Kunstkammer/Wunderkammer

The challenges of putting on a graduate showcase don't defeat curator Rosie Spooner

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BY DAVID BALZER August 04, 2010 21:08

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To the modern-day viewer schooled in Tim Burton and *McSweeney's* indie-rock preciousness, the term Wunderkammer, or "Cabinet of Curiosities," connotes stylized antiquity, usually of the baroque kind: a quaint space stuffed to the gills with sculptures, maps, biological specimens, the fruits of colonial pillage, etc. This doesn't much resemble a contemporary art gallery, where, often, austerity and theoretical didacticism reign supreme.

Emerging curator Rosie Spooner thus sets expectations high by naming InterAccess' annual Emerging Artists Exhibition after this phenomenon. In her essay, she explains the challenges she faced: how to come up with a unifying idea for a show that is based, simply, on showcasing the best submissions from recently graduated new-media artists? "Embrace the variety," is her reasonable answer, and so, in this context, the title becomes more a statement of purpose than a strict definition of content. "The Wunderkammer," she says, is "a site for expanding one's knowledge and cognitive capabilities through direct engagement with the new and unknown."

The show isn't quite radical enough to do that, but merits a look nonetheless. On entering, one finds the standout piece, Philippe Blanchard's *Cave Rave*. Likely to recall Shary Boyle for many local viewers because of its combination of illustration and projection, *Cave Rave* is a cute statement on postmodern primitivism. A circle of worshippers holds up linked arms amid stalactites, while aurora borealis-like lights — on closer inspection, the default screensaver for Mac OS X — swirl in front of them.

Nothing else in *Wunderkammer* is quite as clever or captivating, though each piece goes after its own form of magic. Donna Legault and Jo SiMayala Alcampo have creative, ambitious ideas which don't quite translate in practice due to technological and spatial limitations: Legault's sculptural piece is intended to respond to noises made by viewers but feels too cramped (it was partially broken when I saw it); the sensors in Alcampo's interactive, singing plants require a bit of work to get going.

Better are Christina Kostoff's *Daydream* — a grid of moving machine chains in a wall, an ostensible play on Duchamp's *Fresh Widow* — and Laura Payne's intriguing study of James Earl Jones, *Can You Tell Me?* Indeed, Payne's work, with its intention to reveal, might be closest to Spooner's idea of a Wunderkammer object. A hypnotic loop of Jones' audition for *Sesame Street*, in which he seems overly, awkwardly methodical, it is both familiar and startling. Jones could be a politician, an inmate, a terrorist, a news anchor. More than Blanchard, even, Payne makes something old and borrowed seem new again.

» EMAIL DBALZER@EYEWEEEKLY.COM; TWEET @DAVIDBALZER

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