



Jazzbones balcony gallery showcases best of local art

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DARK VISION. "Dark Angel," by Houston Wimberly III, on display now at Jazzbones. (Photo by Natasha Jaksich)

Local artists gathered on Jazzbones' upper floor to share stories and good times with fellow artists and art lovers for the "True Locals" artist reception Nov. 2.

Jazzbones' "True Locals" balcony art exhibit features paintings and other visual art forms on opposite walls of its upper floor, plus on all three walls of its raised dining area. Patrons of this stylish-but-casual nightclub and restaurant can dine amid the artwork while listening to the live music that Jazzbones features seven nights a week. In addition, nearly all of the art is for sale.

Included on the walls is Jeff Olson's "Reaching for the Sun in 3 Motions," a mixed media project that combines newspaper, synthetic fabric and paint on a backing of recycled wood. Also by Olson is "The Story of the Soil," an acrylic on canvas painting that seems to focus more on the namesake soil than on the life growing from it.

Houston Wimberly III, whose work is also showing at the Embellish salon, graces the exhibit with "Slot One," a series of panels that showcases a skier's gradual metamorphosis into a jet. Also, "Dark Angel" depicts a winged human figure from behind, clutching a ball of fire in one hand in front of a red-orange background of cemeteries, corpses and a darkened Statue of Liberty.

Wimberly said that "Dark Angel" expresses his feelings about what's going on in the world and the American government's part in it. He emphasized, however, that he wants each viewer to find his or her own interpretation of it – one woman found it to be an uplifting image of hope, he recalled. "Whether you love it or hate it, I want you to have a reaction," Wimberly remarked.

"Jazz and Assassins" by James Hume is a collection of paintings labeled I, II and IV that depict jazz musicians with the words of a noir-like narrative painted over them. Originally a full series of four paintings, the series is now missing its third part, which has already been bought.

Hume explained that the words are from an author who asked him to paint her poem. He did so in front of several live audiences with his painting accompanied by live music; the first was painted at Jazzbones to the electric stand-up bass music of James Whiton, who also played at the reception.

More than just paint, Dave Davison's share of the gallery is painted on small blocks of wood rather than paper or canvas, and the piece "Revelation" includes mixed media such as nails, an opened sardine can and the arms of a doll. Several other pieces include abstract figures of women that might call Picasso to mind, including "Mother and Daughter," "Mule Team," "Sad Turtle" and "Doofy Dog." The piece "Gash" has a piece of the wood block splitting off and painted with darker colors than the original block, suggesting decline and death of the fraction as it breaks away from the whole.

Laura Eklund's paintings feature realistic human figures with rich, atmospheric color. Two of her paintings were created from a haunted house that she worked at during the Halloween season; "Haunted Suzanne" is a portrait of one of Eklund's co-workers and shows a blood-streaked girl clutching a teddy bear, while "Haunted Laura" is a self-portrait of a bloodied Eklund's reflection in a mirror.

Less dire is Eklund's painting "Connie's Betty," a painting of Betty Paige in mermaid form. Eklund's friend who commissioned the painting insisted on paying before the painting was finished, then moved away without collecting the finished product. Because of this, "Connie's Betty" is not for sale while Eklund tries to find its rightful owner.

Artist Teddy Haggarty's paintings, many of them untitled, look like what elementary school children would paint if they had enough time and focus. Haggarty described his paintings as impressionistic in style. "I'm not abstract," he commented.

One of his favorite pieces at the exhibit is a portrait of Nicole Voss, Playboy magazine's Miss August 2006, which he painted from an autographed headshot. At the reception, he borrowed a pen to raise that painting's price by \$1,000 so no one would buy it. "I want to send it to her," Haggarty decided.

"True Locals" will be showing on Jazzbones' second floor through Dec. 2.