

Will Spector

Dr. Sample

Hum-104

24 April 2024

Campus Commentary Three: Annual Student Art Exhibition

Davidson's Annual Student Art Exhibition debuted in the Van Every/Smith Gallery in Davidson's Visual Arts Center on April 24th. The 60+ works on display represented a wide variety of media, techniques, and subject matter. The show exhibited a noticeable trend towards abstractism in its many forms, not surprising when viewing works of college students. In order to achieve novelty in visual artwork, students must think abstractly as to not only show off technical skill but to also demonstrate creativity, difficult to achieve in an age where so much has already been done by artists. This show accomplished that (perhaps implicit) objective well, presenting artwork that displayed both immense technical ability and novel ideas in student artists. A particularly intriguing aspect of the show was the use of space, another obvious curatorial success. Artwork adorned not only the walls but also the floors, while some three-dimensional pieces perched on white pedestals in the center of the main room. Several pieces hung from the ceiling. Digital artwork occupied televisions protruding from the walls. Most of the space was in some way occupied, and unoccupied space served to draw attention to that which was occupied.

Some standout works included Parker Smith's *Spring Creek*, a large oil/acrylic painting depicting a semi-transparent girl on a rock under a tree. The color palette of this painting was bright and striking, and its placement in the center of a wall in the main gallery drew my eyes to it. A particularly interesting three-dimensional piece was Belle Mckissick Staley's *The Burglar's*

Crisis, a knitted ski mask cast in bronze with what appeared to be a small diorama of a room inside. This piece felt very raw—it seemed to indicate some sort of battle within the mind of the burglar, aware that stealing is wrong but also in need. The removal of the human face from the piece placed emphasis on just the ski mask, representative of the shoulder-devil, the intent to steal, while the dollhouse-esque diorama felt like the shoulder-angel: innocent, untouched. Understandably, this piece received an honorable mention for the juror's award. A piece that stood out to me in particular was a charcoal depiction of a Washington D.C. metro station, a setting that I immediately recognised as a lifelong resident of the city. D.C.'s stations are underappreciated architectural marvels, and this piece seemed to draw attention to that reality. Throughout my childhood I was fascinated by the rectangular-honeycomb style of the ceiling in underground D.C. stations, and as I've grown I've lost my naive curiosity and appreciation for the building. This drawing revived some of that appreciation.

The 2024 Annual Art Exhibition was undoubtedly a success in all senses of the word—both the curation and the quality of the artwork were stellar. Perhaps more importantly, the artwork on display was extremely diverse, demonstrating a different but equally valuable skill set from every single Davidson art student. Moreover, the pieces were made by students from every class and by both art majors and non-art majors, meaning an even more diverse representation of prior experience. A college art show should aspire to this: an opportunity to have a diverse array of work displayed for all students, which this show clearly had. Davidson's 2024 art show was an utter success, and should be attended by anybody with the time, as it is on display until May 8th.