

Jeff Shore and Jon Fisher Collaborate on *Trailer* at McClain Gallery

By Jim J. Tommaney | Apr. 21 2014



Photo courtesy of McClain Gallery

A trailer nestled in the woods

When art is hard to describe, it may be all the more intriguing. The installation at McClain Gallery is by two collaborative Texan artists, Jeff Shore (Houston) and Jon Fisher (Dripping Springs). They have worked together since 2002, and this is their second solo show in Houston.

A person stands in the center of a large room. This offering is kinetic, with much of the movement on film. A visitor pushes a small red button, and a film appears, close to sepia in tone, suggesting days past, memories, traditions, a simpler life, before, well. . . you know - all that. Nostalgia seeps into our perception.

A series of images flickers onto a large screen on one wall. Large wooden semaphores unfold on film, as though a flower. An exercise bike turns, resembling an ancient spinning wheel, or the wheel to a prairie wagon. Humans are absent - this is a tour of a museum of the mind, with no interpreter, except for you.

A trailer, nestled in the woods, appears, so close to the trees you wonder how it got there. This is the old-style trailer, small, silvery, to be towed, devoid of luxury. The lines are art deco, before it became fashionable. Inside, four stools with no backs, as in an ice cream parlor. The stools are empty, but one senses that they once were filled with teenagers, chattering away, eager to share gossip and flirt, ordering a vanilla coke, with a cherry.

There is music, but it supports the sense of exploration without intruding on our visual progress. Drumsticks on automatic players beat tattoos on drums, then retreat, to re-emerge later. A paper lantern expands and contracts repeatedly, like an accordion, another repetitive image.

In the film, an invisible aura hovers in the air, but it is serene, peaceful, not ghostly or threatening. The camera moves, but we, standing in the center of a room, observing, are motionless. Echoes of circuses invade my mind, and resonate; other images may invade yours.

The artists are wise enough to include the big finish. Other walls were enhanced simply with blank projections of colors, a different color on each wall, but suddenly each wall, and some in an adjacent room, come alive with pulsing images, varying, and we are inundated with visuals, a tide of impressions, some now familiar, sweeping us along with them. Then the images fade, the music dies, the flower closes, and it is over. It is just 12 minutes, but it could be a lifetime.

The artists describe their work as follows: "The playful complexity of the installation, with its "invisible" computers, self-generating musical compositions, and projections still relies on the viewer to build connections between the actual objects, visual components and sounds, to create narratives anew."

On view in an adjacent space is one of their incandescent "Flower" works, and also "Bellows", a stand-alone piece that combines elements found within "Trailer" with a video monitor.

I have provided my reactions to "Trailer", which intrigued me. See it for yourself, and create your own narrative.

Jeff Shore and Jon Fisher: Trailer continues through May 31, at McClain Gallery, 2242 Richmond Avenue, Tuesday through Friday, 10 to 5:30, and Saturday, 11 to 5. For information call 713-520-9988 or visit mcclaingallery.com. Admission is free.