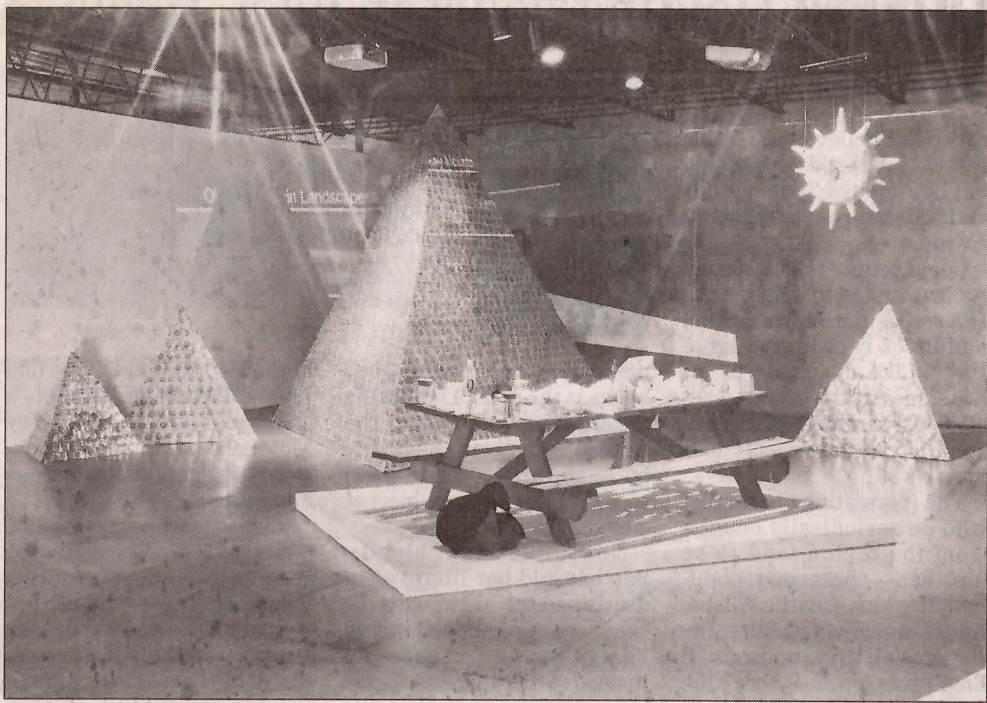


GALLERY WATCH



Carlos Rosales-Silva

Flattened Lone Star beer cans were used to construct the four pyramids that are part of the Okay Mountain artists' exhibit at Creative Research Laboratory.

Okay Mountain's group effort embraces creative differences

By Jeanne Claire van Ryzin

AMERICAN-STATESMAN ARTS CRITIC

A video in the exhibit "It's Going To Be Everything," by the nine artist founders of Okay Mountain gallery, poetically sums up the unassuming yet comradely spirit of the independent group.

"Heavy Lifting" shows the gang of nine — Sterling Allen, Tim Brown, Peat Duggins, Justin Goldwater, Nathan Green, Ryan Hennessee, Josh Rios, Michael Sieben and Corkey Sinks — as they wander to different locations near their East Cesar Chavez Street gallery and as a group attempt to lift all manner of heavy objects: an alley trash bin, a child's blue wading pool full of water, a motorcycle, a picnic table, a train car. Sometimes they succeed; sometimes they don't. But either way their mood never strays from a kind of optimistic open-mindedness as they go along their curiosity-driven collective adventure. After all, successfully conquering the next big thing isn't this group's goal. It's the fact that they took on a new creative challenge.

And shouldn't that be the goal of every artist?

In a day and age when contemporary art is increasingly making itself the stuff of privilege, celebrity and insider status, the artists of Okay Mountain are a welcome breath of unpretentious creative energy for Austin. The collective opened its East Austin exhibit space in 2006, and it

'It's Going To Be Everything'

When: noon to 5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays through Feb. 29

Where: Creative Research Laboratory, 2832 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. (inside Flatbed)

Cost: Free

Information: 322-2099, www.okaymountain.com

Artists' talk: 6 p.m. Monday. Free.

operates on a collective basis with the group of nine sharing expenses and decisions about the changing exhibits that feature emerging national and international artists. On only a few occasions has the collective used their own gallery to exhibit their work, preferring instead to position themselves as proprietors of a portal to independent art. (All actively exhibit at other galleries, and Duggins, Seiben, Allen and Green have had critically acclaimed solo exhibits recently.)

Hence, "It's Going To Be Everything" feels like a joyous celebration of the group's self-effacing style. The crux of the show at the University of Texas' Creative Research Laboratory is that each of the artists came up with a drawing exercise for the group. Ride the bus for a day and draw five randomly chosen people. Draw the answer to a question

from a MySpace survey. Make a drawing for each day in October. Using Microsoft Paint, add a layer of pixelated images to a group drawing.

The resulting drawings, grouped according to challenge, demonstrate that the Okay Mountain gang might work as a collective, and all share a very graphic style of line and composition, but each employs a totally singular approach. Sweet, cynical, quirky, celebratory, reflective, quixotic and downright goofy — take your pick of creative sentiments.

Of course, the collective's penchant for fun pops in a few special projects created specifically for the current exhibit. In addition to the video work, "All the Beers We Drank Together" is four "beermids" made of flattened Lone Star beer cans with one pyramid large enough for a few folks to crawl into. In the center of the gallery, the gang situated the wooden picnic table that usually occupies the Okay Mountain yard and used it as a work — and snack break — space as they installed the exhibit, leaving taco wrappers, water bottles, notes, sketches and yes, beer cans, as evidence of their collective effort.

"We were here," the littered picnic table seems to announce. "And we had fun making art."

Thank goodness some in today's art world aren't afraid of a good time.

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