

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

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Galleries By Edith Newhall

Making most of Bridgette Mayer's space

It's been fascinating to see how artists have responded to the Bridgette Mayer Gallery's redesigned space since its official reopening in November 2011 — in particular, the ways in which the gallery's "old guard" have rethought their former quarters when having their first solo shows in the "new" space.

It's the same historic building, of course, but it now has one very long wall running along a somewhat narrow hallway, and one huge, spectacular one in the back that literally draws gallery visitors like a giant magnet. The new iteration is also as polished and professional as it used to be cozy and relaxed.

Surprisingly, though, considering they might have been intimidated by their new digs, all of the long-standing gallery artists who've had one-person shows at Mayer since 2011 have risen to the challenge, none more so than Tim McFarlane. In his first solo show in the new space, he has managed what many artists before him have not been able to do — find the right balance and scale of works for the hallway and then make the most of that huge back wall.

With "Presence," McFarlane has also created one of his most cohesive bodies of work to date; the small paintings displayed in the front room and along the hallway announce that right away. In each, energetically painted gestural lines form netlike compositions that coalesce with varying background colors, conjuring different places and experiences, musical rhythms, and McFarlane's own riff on the physical act of painting.

So many paintings of the same size need not have



Tim McFarlane's "Pink Mirror" (2012), an acrylic on panel, is part of his "Presence" show at the Bridgette Mayer Gallery.



Stuart Netsky's "A Leopard Doesn't Change Her Spots" (2013), in the Bridgette Mayer Gallery's Vault Room. In his solo show, the artist muses on the life and character of Marie Antoinette.

been hung so close together — a strategy that's been employed in other shows here to take advantage of the long wall but that tends to undermine the individuality of works — but the paint-

ings across from them are varied in scale and color and more anomalous in this show, such as his bucolic, lovely *Vortex*, which combines a gestural composition with an inner open

space that looks like a clearing in a forest.

McFarlane's enormous site-specific painting, *We Dance to Pray*, on the back wall is the most exciting, visceral use of this wall to date,



A sculpture by Brent Crothers at Drexel University's Leonard Pearlstein Gallery.

allowing viewers the sensation of walking into the painting. At the same time, it is a logical progression in his show (as was Eileen Neff's photographic work on this wall in her show at this time last year), not straining to be a separate "project."

In the gallery's Vault Room, Stuart Netsky is making his first solo appearance at Mayer, with a small but pithy exhibition of digitally printed rubber floor mats and mixed-media sculptures that muse on the life and character of Marie Antoinette, in particular her superficiality, extravagance, and hypocrisy. This is a historical period tailor-made for Netsky's wit and fluency with materials.

Two of his rubber mats, *Kings*, combining images of Yul Brynner, Michael Jackson, the Cowardly Lion,

Henry VIII, the Disney version of *The Lion King*, and others, and *Queens*, with a similar diversity of female rulers, hanging downstairs, should not be missed.

Bridgette Mayer Gallery, 709 Walnut St., 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturday. 215-413-8893 or www.bridgettemayergallery.com. Through Oct. 5.

Subdued, sympathetic
"Spatial Translations" at Drexel's Leonard Pearlstein Gallery, a show of four InLiquid-affiliated artists, still has 10 days to run (InLiquid is a Philadelphia nonprofit organization that seeks opportunities and exposure for visual artists).

This is an emphatically tasteful, quiet show of impeccably crafted art that at first gives an impression of blandness — in other words, each artist's contributions might have stood out better in less sympathetic company.

Therefore, consider Annette Cord's paintings based on patterns formed by systems; William Cromar's installations and sculptures; Brent Crothers' found material sculptures; and Paul Fabozzi's diagrammatic drawings as entirely different investigations of space, which, in fact, they are.

Leonard Pearlstein Gallery, Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts and Design, Drexel University, 3401 Filbert St., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. 215-895-2548 or www.drexel.edu/westphal/resources/venues/LeonardPearsteinGallery. Through Sept. 18.

"Galleries" by Edith Newhall and "Art" by Edward J. Sozanski appear in alternating weeks.