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New Mayer in Town

A group show pushes beyond the gallery's signature aesthetic.

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Just when you think you've got a gallery's aesthetic down, along comes a show that proves you've got it only half right. "Sum of All Parts" at Bridgette Mayer is a group show with much new work by 16 gallery artists. Many of the works cleave to the gallery's signature aesthet-



I'll house you: Deirdre Murphy's paintings, such as *Home on the Range*, are edgy, elegant and familiar.

"Sum of All Parts"

Through Jan. 14.
Bridgette Mayer
Gallery, 709 Walnut
St., first fl.
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www.mayerartconsultants.com

ic—layered abstract paintings with spiritual leanings and pattern and decoration chops. But a few works range beyond, a reminder that truly good galleries aren't monolithic, but rather elastic enough to risk a little quirkiness.

Take Jean Gaudaire Thor's paint-on-paper collages with their appropriated Greek or Roman imagery (from books) that the artist has "enhanced." The brut painted interventions (a stick tree here, stocky legs there, a horse given a tail) pull the ancients off their pedestal and ask you to think of them as what they really might have been: primitive people. Iconoclasm like this isn't new (Monty Python did it oh so well in animations), but the treatment here is subtle and lovable.

Kate Davis Caldwell's small acrylic paintings of mundane matter (a house, the night sky) look like bad Polaroid snapshots. Based on thrift shop finds, the paintings are odd little pretenders, dispassionate yet dark and questioning. This is work in a new direction for the young artist who's got a solo show in the gallery in 2007.

Tim McFarlane's new acrylic painting on the theme of ladders is a tour de force that continues themes from his recent solo show. Paintings by Neil Anderson, Clark Gibson, Elyce Abrams and Deirdre Murphy are edgy, elegant and familiar. Brooke Steyler's trippy antinuclear animated video *Factory Man* in the vault is a treat.

The most surprising and edgy piece of all is the postcard image by Dana Hargrove, a digital montage of the faces of the 16 artists reduced to outlines and cloned in Photoshop to make a blizzard of people—snowflakes whose individual beauty might be lost in a storm.

Since opening four years ago, Mayer Gallery has grown into a place where good taste, beauty, serious content and a little fun come together. Each year Mayer's programming gets a little bolder, and I look forward to the upcoming year's shows. ■

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