

At the Angell Gallery

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By Maria Calleja



I walked past Trinity Bellwoods park into the heart of hipster Queen West feeling a little out of place amongst the trendsetters. I was looking for the Angell Gallery which is holding the Summer Group Art Show with works from Alex McLeod and Michael De Feo, until August 29th.

At first glance I wondered why McLeod, a Toronto artist who uses 3D digital rendering, and Michael De Feo, a well known New York street artist, were in the same show. Gareth Brown-Jowett, Co director of the Angell Gallery made the connection for me. "They're both young artists who are different, they're pushing the boundaries in art, and they're unconventional."

The artists are both truly unconventional as their subjects, media and methods seem to challenge traditional thinking in art and life. McLeod's pieces are computer created 3D images with glassy reflective surfaces that sort of turn your world upside down. In his piece City Flicker Stars his dark city landscape is topsy turvy as upside down buildings seem to form from water and then drip back into liquid cloud formations. The clouds reflect city lights that become the stars of this downtown scene. He tries to show the connections between water, buildings and surfaces to explore the idea that our molecular histories are shared and that all things are connected.



City Flicker Stars

His other pieces which include C Island Seaport continue to experiment with different surfaces as trees seem to be made of glass and clouds appear to be made of cotton. This picture seems alive as if the sea had erupted sending up mountain ranges and a calamity of docks, and twigs to surround a central giant skull. With a black fortress the island seems like a place where ancient adventurers would plot and scheme about conquering the world.

Meanwhile De Feo's pieces also seem to push the artistic envelop as he successfully crosses over from street grafitti to the gallery. His promotion of street art is proving to the world that grafitti is just as important and evocative as the pieces hanging on gallery walls. In the Summer Group show De Feo has a series of self portraits that seem to defy the artistic genre. Most of the portraits are curiously painted over maps as De Feo tries to street tag places without actually visiting them. The pieces use different brush strokes and colours to paint slightly different versions of the artist's face. The large self portrait uses a textured background that seems like wrinkled lamination with the artist's white dripping face painted on top of it.



Untitled (Self-Portrait)

Both artists are definite fixtures in the art scene with Mcleod's work now being shown at the city's Lonsdale Gallery and having been at the Switch Contemporary Gallery in the past. DeFeo has been featured in the New York magazine and has shown paintings at the Aldrich art museum in Conneticut and the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York.

The work at the Summer Group Show made me question reality. That's all I can really ask for in an art show. Check out the show at 890 Queen St. West before August 29th.