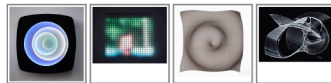


Algorithm and hues: Digital works at Art House

Friday, July 31, 2015



Craig Dorety: *Offset Circles – Yellow Flowering Tree Against Blue Sky*, 2014



Michael Abatemarco

Art House seems to have broken gently upon the scene in Santa Fe since last year, when it moved into the spot on Delgado Street that was formerly occupied by Eight Modern. Little fanfare has accompanied the new venue's premiere exhibit *Luminous Flux*, a show of digital art and new media. The venue, devoted to exhibits featuring works from the art collection of Carl and Marilyn Thoma, is a homey, welcoming sort of gallery, like several you'll find along nearby Canyon Road. It's not particularly big, and in order to see a couple of the pieces in its current exhibition *Luminous Flux 2.0, New and Historic Works From the Digital Art Frontier*, visitors must thread their way through the kitchen. But the incongruity of the space and the works housed within it create their own kind of magic, and *Luminous Flux 2.0* is full of surprises.

The Thomases have been collecting for several decades and philanthropy is part of their objective. Their Thoma Foundation lends artworks to other venues, provides grants to individual artists, and funds art initiatives. "We just feel like the arts is one of those mediums that can cross a lot of bridges and hopefully inspire people to do great things," Carl Thoma told *Pasatiempo*. "Most everything we collect we're going to give away. Who knows where these collections will all end up?"

use of recycled materials recalls the use of salvaged fabrics in traditional quilting. The artist's "film quilt" is backlit by an LED light-box. LED technology is also used in Jim Campbell's *Home Movies, Pause* in which the artist, a former engineer in Silicon Valley, took old home movies shot on film and recreated them digitally. A grid of diodes hangs several inches from the wall, projecting a low-resolution version of the home movies, blurred deliberately to the point of near-dissolution. The viewer is left watching a tantalizingly familiar but obscure set of moving pictures. "You don't need to see a lot of information to form an opinion," Thoma said. "That's the way we live our lives. You don't need to see a lot of an image to know what's there."

Among the most compelling works in *Luminous Flux 2.0* is Craig Dorety's *Offset Circles – Yellow Flowering Tree Against Blue Sky*. The piece is a series of layered circular panels inset with LEDs that cause each circle to glow, as though from within, with its own light. The shifting colors and offset composition of the concentric circles is designed to mimic the effect of ocular hallucinations produced during migraine headaches. It's a disorienting work with a hypnotizing effect that makes it difficult to pull your eyes away.

Part of the problem with collecting works in new media is that it often requires monitors, hard drives, projectors, and other equipment in order to be seen, plus it draws a lot of power. "The maintenance to keep all this equipment working eats up a lot of time and that's the downfall of it," Thoma said. "This show is mostly pretty small pieces but we've got pieces so big they can really only be in a public facility. They'll take up your whole living room."

The Thomases don't just collect works in digital media but are also avid collectors of contemporary Japanese bamboo, Spanish colonial arts, and early 20th-century modernist works. But the focus of their contemporary collection is on Color Field, hard-edge, and Optical Art works, as well as pieces in new media — works that lie at the intersection of art and technology. "Our collection centers around art that takes a lot of thought before it gets produced," Thoma said. "You can say that about all great art, but this work is a little bit more systematic in the sense that it has to be done precisely or it doesn't work." ◀