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Cut to the Chase

Ian Chase's latest installation is a maze of contrasts

IAN CHASE'S "PHYSICAL ACCESS/PURE STYGIAN"

Opening reception on Friday, June 18 from 6-9 p.m.
Nullspace Gallery, 108 E. Adams St., Jacksonville
716-4202 nullspacegallery.com
The installation runs through Aug. 4

Ian Chase is part of small yet crucial group of locally based artists who have been quietly pushing the renaissance of independent galleries in downtown Jacksonville. Well-known in the area as a restaurateur (he owns Avondale's much-loved Fox Restaurant) and accomplished musician (as onetime bassist for psych-rock demigods "Rein Sanction"), he's also a longtime player in Jacksonville's clandestine, creative underground that is coming to prominence in spite of itself. Like contemporaries Kurt Polkey, Mark George, Tony Rodrigues and Madeline Peck Wagner, Chase bears the markings of an intuitive tribe that has patiently shrugged off labels, finding strength in a mindful use of insight rather than giving in to bloated self-consciousness.

Chase and his cohorts have focused on converting their understanding of art history and a present sense of direction into a propulsive energy that aims at the upper stratosphere of their chosen medium, labels and the future of fine art itself. Folio Weekly recently picked Chase's mind in an e-mail interview for a little combat wisdom and asked him about his latest installation at Nullspace, "Physical Access/Pure Stygian."

Folio Weekly: Is there a theme to your work?

Ian Chase: The theme for my latest show and much of my body of work is contrast; the name of the show [at Nullspace] is "physical access/pure stygian" and both themes deal with

contrast ... translated by the use of contrasting organic and non-organic materials such as wood, wax and cotton contrast against neon, plastic and paint.

F.W.: What media and materials are used in the show?

I.C.: I use all kind of materials: fluorescent and incandescent lighting, Plexiglas, rope, wax, plastic, metal, toys, taxidermy, video and anything I can get my hands on. I came to my latest body of work through the endless search for references. When building and photographing studies to make paintings, I realized, "Why not use the reference as the piece?" Doing so removes a layer of non-interaction between artist and viewer and gives me an opportunity to work three-dimensionally.

F.W.: Do you feel a "spiritual lineage" with other artists known for installation/environmental art, such as the Dadaists, Allan Kaprow and the Fluxus scene, Nam June Paik, Tony Oursler or even Kenny Scharf and Gary Panter?

I.C.: I know I follow a line of artists that tries to embrace or blur the line between art of previous decades through appropriation and redefining what making art is about.

Personally, I like to give myself more and more complex assignments in order to challenge myself artistically and hopefully take the work in new directions.

F.W.: You are probably known as much for your work with Rein Sanction as your visual art. How has the psychedelic experience shaped or informed your life and work?

I.C.: My work could be described as psychedelic and its similarities could include a richness of imagery or a "trippy" value. Yet

psychedelia would imply nostalgia, which is directly counterintuitive to my practice. I'm trying to avoid irony and nostalgia. I describe the work as contemporary art.

F.W.: Do you feel any affinity with any other area artists or musicians?

I.C.: I feel a kinship with all Jacksonville artists. I draw inspiration from music and musicians and bands most of all. National Dairy is a very special band and good friends. I'm also impressed by the work of Chris Williams, Big Dunn and everyone at Burro Bags. We've got a ton of great visual artists in town and I'm lucky to call most of them good friends. Jim Draper is a definite leader as well as a mentor to the art scene and longtime staples Mark George and Tony Rodrigues are both doing fresh work and are great friends and supporters of the scene. I also dig the work of Tom Pennington, Shaun Thurston and Madeleine Peck.

F.W.: Would you describe your work using phrases like "outsider art" or "untrained art" or are these purely academic terms? Do they apply to you?

I.C.: I'm not really down with the outsider or untrained stuff; I think it implies a "kooky" art brut image. Self-taught is acceptable.

F.W.: What's next?

I.C.: I try to have at least one solo show a year. As well as making visual art, I make videos for bands. I use video in my practice as an artist, so making the leap to rock videos was easy. I came to visual art from a musical background, so I'm able to decipher the music and translate it into a visual format. □

Dan Brown

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Frederick D. Jones
Female Figure at Shore, ca.1950
Oil on masonite
13" x 10"

TRADITION REDEFINED:

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APRIL 23 – AUGUST 29, 2010

Traditions Redefined is organized by The David C. Driskell Center for the Study of Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland, College Park.

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