

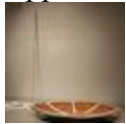
# Intrigue is missing in ‘Fascinators’ exhibit at La Esquina

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Special to The Star



Jacob Banholzer used a range of materials including paper towels, boning hooks and rubber nipples to make “Got Dominion?” (2011).



If the title of your exhibition trades on the word “fascinator,” which suggests someone who is extremely interesting or a diminutive headpiece, you’d better make sure you’ve chosen wisely.

The curatorial statement for “The Fascinators” group show at La Esquina emphasizes a fascinator’s ornamental properties and contends that the featured artists are united by “a keen awareness of the properties of their chosen medium.”

It seems a minimum expectation that an artist understands, most keenly, her or his chosen medium.

Of the six regional artists, four men and two women, some still students, some recent alumni, two focus on what appear to be the disposable aspects of their media.

Monica Dixon’s timid exploration of material feels unsure, incomplete. “Shiver” has the promise of plenty: large plastic packing bubbles filled with paint, an intriguing conceit of ripeness, yet upon close inspection we see that the plastic bubbles are simply covered with paint. It’s a disappointing revelation; the work seems sadly half done. Plastic egg cartons suspended in pantyhose are similarly anemic.

Marcus Miers' "Icons" series of paint blobs that you might scrape off a palette are almost as tentative and throwaway as Dixon's material. And yet, the blobs almost emerge as significant, if only from sheer repetition. At the end of the series you may be convinced that he could be on to something.

Jacob Banholzer uses materials that may seem insubstantial — paper towels, zipties, packing peanuts — yet the work feels substantial and complex. "Sorry," a sculptural balancing act, suggests the fragile relationship between two common wood forms, which are joined by a flocked sculptural element. The dark flocking adds an unexpected luxury to the piece.

Marie Dougherty's photography engages the quotidian narration of a life. In "Becky and Bonnie," a young girl kneels in a gravel road, cupping the face of a three-legged dog. With her blowing hair and ripped jeans, the girl embodies childhood's promise and temporal nature.

In "Bonnie," the dog merely wanders the gravel road, veering toward some illusion of the road's end. Dougherty has captured a keen sense of rural isolation in these two lonely yet elegiac images.

If you think that something is eerily precise and yet not quite right in Neil Griess' paintings, you'd be correct. He makes photorealist paintings of small dioramas he constructs. While the scenes are uberrealistically rendered, you can't quite make visual sense of them. They are cluttered and just don't add up. His works are a pithy commentary on urban decay, failed planning and visual cacophony.

Matthew Blache's "Trough," a 20-foot length of steel, pine and ink, bites deep into the gallery space. Yet, for all the work's weight, it feels surprisingly light and beguiling, a tribute to how well the artist handled his materials. Perhaps the velvety surface belies his works' weight, but more important, Blache's uncluttered craftsmanship suggests Martin Puryear's purity with some of the same conceptual heft.

What unites these artists is mostly the promise of what may emerge as they continue to develop.

An exhibition title and premise that is more about the artwork and less about curatorial affectation would have served the artists and the audience better.

### **On display**

"The Fascinators: The Inaugural Charlotte Street Biennial of Regional BA/BFA/MA/MFA Candidates" continues at La Esquina, 1000 W. 25th St., through Oct. 15. Hours are noon-5 p.m. Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday. For more information, 816-221-5115 or [www.charlottestreet.org](http://www.charlottestreet.org).

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