

Information

This article was written on 22 Jan 2013, and is filled under [shows](#).

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Trent Miller & Toby Kaufmann-Buhler at Watrous Gallery

Spackle's very own Trent Miller and Toby Kaufmann-Buhler are currently filling the James Watrous Gallery at the Overture Center for the Arts. While these side-by-side solo shows contrast each other in media, palette and imagery, it seems that each artist worked in a similar manner or approach. I'm not talking about how they make marks or develop form. I'm thinking of their general artistic philosophy. They both seem to be on a journey. Both leave a fair amount of ambiguity and give the viewer few reference points. They both want you to energetically join in their journey as you move through the gallery. What the journey is, is what varies.



“Spindrift and Tether”

Trent Miller

Miller's show, “**Spindrift and Tether**” includes a variety of 2-dimensional media: quick small paintings, large well-developed oil paintings and framed charcoal drawings. Many of his drawings seem to be trying to create a narrative. Sometimes haunted and sometimes optimistic, there seems to be a hint of *Moonrise Kingdom*. His large oils on canvas are what really draw me in. These non-objective paintings are dominated by large constructions that suggest scaffolding or ships and are painted in vibrant colors. They're mysterious, intense and a breath of fresh air in the middle of a Wisconsin winter.

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It Was Never Quite Day or Quite Night

Oil in Canvas

45" x 36"

Trent Miller

Kaufmann-Buhler gives the viewer three definitions from which to begin their journey in to "**Hidden States**":

1. The state is unknown and lost, yet there is a constant desire to bring order to it and to discover more about it.
2. This is a state of creation, where the point of view is fixed and the world outside is unknowable, so we create with a limited scope.
3. This is a state of change, which is forced, invisible and unlimited.





Unseasonal Events Change Hands

1-channel video projection

Toby Kaufmann-Buhler

I've always been fascinated with the multiple dictionary definitions for a single word or phrase, and found the definitions of "Hidden States" particularly compelling. With this information, I felt well-prepared and ready for contemplation while viewing Kaufmann-Buhler's work. The piece that most resonated with me was *Unseasonal Events Change Hands*. The piece is beautiful. It captured my attention for a long period of time. It includes 24 small screens that catch a 1-channel projection (this means all 24 images were being projected from 1 projector, something that is technically very challenging). The screens hang in a logical, but scattered order, engaging a cube of space that is about 8' x 8' x 8'. The piece is accompanied by music composed and created by Nathaniel Bartlett, which is well paired and creates a beautiful ambiance in the gallery.

Kaufmann-Buhler's sense of ambiguity is well-executed with this piece: most of the imagery in the video is cropped so that it includes the sky and the sense of time is strong. This is in part inherent to the media of video, but I found my experience and subsequent interpretation of it was very tied to a sense of time as well. I can relate to this piece as a child looking forward at all of the possibilities in life and also as a middle-aged adult in the present I have a strong memory of carefree days and spend moments every day that capture the essence of that time. Who doesn't need to breath a little deeper and play a little more? One of the things that I often wonder while viewing artwork is if I am interpreting it in a similar way the artist or others are. While I like artwork that can have multiple interpretations, I just like to know if I am on the right track. In this case, I could look to the artwork to answer this: I felt my interpretation was reinforced by the use of hand puppets to create the bird imagery against the sky. Who didn't do that as a kid? Or as an adult?

Both Miller and Kaufmann-Buhler are very approachable and eager to hear myriad interpretations of their artwork. Be sure to attend their gallery talks this Sunday, January 27, from 2-3pm.

Toby Kaufmann-Buhler: *Hidden States*

Tret Miller: *Spindrift and Tether*

January 11–February 24, 2013

Gallery talk by the artists: Sunday, January 27, 2:00-3:30 pm.

James Watrous Gallery at Overture Center for the Arts

201 State Street, 3rd Floor

Madison, WI 53703

Tel: 608-265-2500

Gallery website

Hours:

Tu, Wed, Thurs 11-5

Fri & Sat 11-9

Sun 1-5

Closed Mondays



Rachel Bruya is an artist who also writes. Additional information at www.rachelbruya.com.

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