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### Wild Card

Latest Bemis Underground show embraces ambiguity

by Sarah Baker

*Fudgelock* is among the most diverse and mysterious exhibits yet offered at the Bemis Underground.

"The show is over the top," said Rachel Ziegler, director of the Underground.

Curated by George Sisson and featuring the work of seven artists, the gallery website is short on explanation behind this show, and the work of many of the artists isn't explored in much depth in the press materials.

This lack of information leads to a bit of confusion — the show's opening has been pushed back a few times and is now slated for Oct. 10 — mixed with a liberal dose of intrigue. It seems like the best time to learn more about this show might be when it finally opens, and even then, really, it's a gamble.

"We chose this show is because George champions a uniquely lighthearted, playful and, at times, madcap approach to art making and curating," Ziegler said. "He is an artist of noisy hilarity. One moment his audience will find him to be amusingly cute and cuddly and the next they will be completely lost in his wake of reckless amusements."

Sisson chose six other artists to work with in his show: John Bruggeman, Jake Gillespie, Sara Kovanda, Jessica Wynne Plymate, Pawl Tisdale and Raws. The artists will show a mix of painting, video work and fiber art.

If you don't get the confusion, here's some insight from Sisson's bio: "George Sisson is the self-described 4-year old, spayed Himalayan cat that paints with whiskers and tail. George's sculptures most often reside in a box of clay pellets. She splits her time between Lincoln and Catland."

Hmm.

The other artists in the show adopt a mix of straightforward and sarcastic.

Omaha artist Bruggeman lives has worked as a studio assistant to Jun Kaneko and shown work at the Bemis and Lincoln's Sheldon Art Gallery. Gillespie, who recently moved out of state, will show in Omaha after the success of his 2007 Sheldon Show Alphabet. Sara Kovanda finds inspiration from music, she's been a musician for many years, and composes paintings as she would electronic sound. Aliens, radio waves and space travel guide her work.

Plymate, owner of Lincoln's boutique aorta, creates original apparel that will likely be the fiber art component of this show. Raws paints monsters and other beats celebrating the weird, the homoerotic and the controversial with "masked self-portraits of rotting metal."

And Tisdale, probably second only to Sisson in his bio, says he "swims



blindly through synapse firings to demonstrate the absurdity of pretentiousness while at war with his own seriously squirrely ego."

The work, from the images available online, does seem to be a hodgepodge that somehow feels connected, mostly through its penchant for the odd.

Bruggeman's large-scale sculptures are familiar to an Omaha art audience, and in this show will likely stand out in their relative simplicity. Many have probably seen Gillespie's stop animation videos, more of which he'll likely show here. Some of Tisdale's work has a Saturday morning cartoon, claymation feel to it. Two of his pieces, both mandalas, stand out in their intricacy. Kovanda's paintings, abstract but saturated with color, play off of Sisson's work, which is also abstract but more raw and unhinged. Finally, Plymate's fiber art appears in the form of appliquéd, hand-sewn apparel and will likely give the viewer the chance to walk out with the feeling of the show on his or her back.

Though the work does seem to fit, in an odd sort of way, how it's installed, what new pieces might appear and the ultimate look of this show are all up for debate, which seems to be just how Sisson wants it. Ziegler concurred.

"Sisson is the wild card curator of the Bemis Underground 2008 season," she said.

Fudgelock, curated by George Sisson and featuring six other artists, opens in the Bemis Underground, 724 S. 12th St on Oct. 10 from 7-11 p.m. The show continues through Oct. 24. For more information, visit [bemisunderground.org](http://bemisunderground.org) or call 408.2397.

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