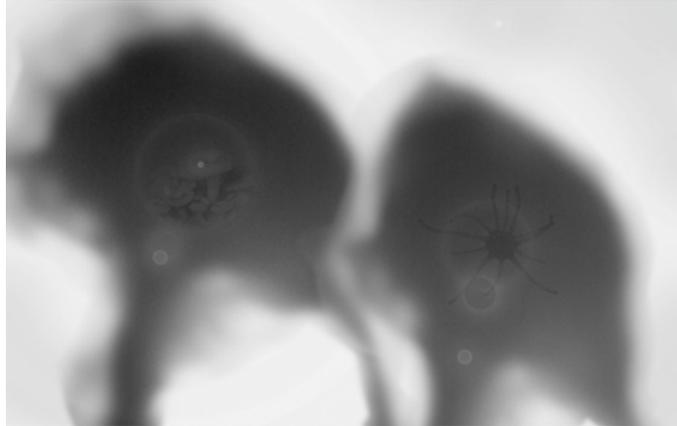




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Minefield of the Mind



Artist duo provokes thought and solution to life situations

by Sally Deskins

Art shows typically reel the viewer into new ideas and insights, but the art usually stays on the wall and out of our lives. Artists Corrie Van Sice and Susan White want to utilize the practice with an alternative approach — art functioning as a solution to everyday problems.

The two Kansas City-based artists transformed the Bemis Underground into a quasi-mind-tripping playground for more than the viewer's eye with their new show *Navigating the Neurosphere*. They want visitors to use the exhibition — which includes sculpture, audio and electronics — to decipher positive and negative facets and participate in some introspection.

Van Sice, a recent graduate of the Kansas City Art Institute Interdisciplinary Studies program, explores how sensations influence emotion and reason through her video, sculpture and installations.

Established sculptor and installation artist White examines the role of psychology in propelling us through our daily lives.

They met through a mutual friend to work on White's website, and quickly learned of their similar interest in musings of the mind.

"In *Navigating the Neurosphere*, we are interested in creating an environment that is suggestive of the breadth and vibrancy of this mental landscape," said White, "and offer tools to navigate the minefield of the mind."

White said they work best through first exchanging "composed manifestos," exploring ways in which minds create landscapes.

They begin "wandering from the playful field of imaginative ideas to a darker realm where a kind of haunting self-talk threatens to waylay each of us at some time or another," White said, and then move "to the



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calming quiet of a meditative space providing a respite from the constant mental activity that we are engaged in daily."

They talk about their ideas then collaborate on the physical installation, ultimately hoping to encourage participation with viewers.

The show includes a series of pieces that are "tools for introspection." Each is designed as an aid; one comical piece is a "personal zapper" that would train a person to avoid circular thinking by way of negative reinforcement through a mild electric shock.

A large video installation entitled "Mindgames," is White's work. It delves into the sometimes haunting self-talk that follows us around in our daily lives.

"Mindgames," said White, is an extension of a previous work entitled "Action Figures," which was a group of more than 700 so-called "action figures" that jetsam everyday life, mimicking things like to-do lists, reminders, aspirations, drawings, scribbles and phone numbers. The jetsams were mounted on wax bodies and stick legs, forming thought patterns around the gallery floors.

"Mindgames," said White, is the "cousin" of "Action Figures," and might instigate similar mind-maddening thoughts.

In a preceding exhibit, Van Sice designed a small shell-shaped listening device called "Memento." She said it was meant to "temporarily relieve the pain of loneliness and longing by transporting the handler to a more comforting space."

For this exhibit, the artists imagine "large lumbering shadow figures and the sound of tedious listing reminiscent of relentless internal chatter," but, Van Sice said, it's not all annoying mind babbles.

"White's skygazing room is a space for the lightness and clarity of harmonizing thoughts, and the bobbing of lighted tendrils extending from the floor conjures up the fertile, playful flowing of creative thought," she said.

Van Sice said she enjoys creating these types of inclusive works.

"They propose new Object-User relationships that could possibly be more fulfilling than our usual interactions [with art]," she said.

White said she hopes viewers recognize the show as mirroring everyday challenges.

"It shows the common nature of the vibrant mental energy we all experience constantly," she said. "The sense of discovery and wonder, the constancy of questioning and doubt, and the peaceful sense of falling into nature to find a quiet place."

Navigating the Neurosphere opens Friday, Nov. 7th, with a reception from 7-9 p.m. at the Bemis Underground, 724 S 12th St., and continues through Dec. 6. Admission is free. For more information call 408.2397 or go to bemisunderground.org.

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