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Four exhibits at Columbus College of Art & Design challenge expectations of visitors

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Lot 010212 by Donald Moffett in King & Grove Tides

The four exhibitions on view in the Canzani Center of the Columbus College of Art & Design present a wide selection of paintings, drawings and sculptures — just the types of items that one expects to find in a gallery.

Yet the works brought together are exceptional for the ways in which they toy with viewer expectations.

Donald Moffett: ‘The Radiant Future’ and ‘Mr. Gay in the U.S.A.’

An original member of the outspoken AIDS awareness activist group ACT UP, Moffett suggests that paintings shouldn’t just passively hang on a wall taking up flat geometric space.

His most recent works break up the visual plane with curving, cleanly sawed holes and move away from the walls by way of a variety of apparatus. *Lot 0808711* (“The Radiant Future”) hangs from wire on a wooden post, while a more elaborate configuration of stone donkeys and a concrete girder is used in *Lot 010212*.

The paintings also extend outward with a texture that recalls shag carpeting, which is created through an extrusion process at which Moffett arrived after training as a cake decorator. The surfaces work like an intoxicant that dissolves the invisible barrier between fine art and viewers, unleashing an urge to reach out and touch.

A separate space is devoted to “Mr. Gay in the U.S.A.,” Moffett’s urgent and instinctive experiment with the typically representational practice of courtroom drawing.

The 17 works on paper accurately convey the horror in the trial of Ronald Gay, who opened fire at a Virginia gay bar in 2000 because he resented having his last name associated with homosexuality.

‘Simulacrum’

The exhibit offers an assortment of sculptural simulations of familiar objects — rendered by 16 contemporary artists with an eye toward illustrating how objects hold more weight than their physical parts.

From a guitar amplifier by Kaz Oshiro to a three-quarter-scale vintage Pontiac GTO, *Untitled Project: Muscle Car*, by Conrad Bakker that the Chicago artist offered for sale through the classifieds, each work conjures up thoughts and associations that stretch from the visual to the personal.

‘Byron Kim: The Sunday Paintings’

In January 2001, New York artist Kim decided to add a touch of the amateur hobbyist to his practice and start devoting part of every Sunday to painting a picture of the sky. Exposure to an early Taoist philosopher who wrote of the connection between the minuscule and the infinite inspired him to complete each image with text describing his mood or his family’s activities on the particular day.

His approach elevates the relatively common habits of landscape painting and diary keeping, resulting in works that are simultaneously graphically intense and visually soothing, endearingly personal yet universal. Among the more than 20 canvases selected for the CCAD exhibit, the dichotomy is most palpable in the sky paintings created immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attack.