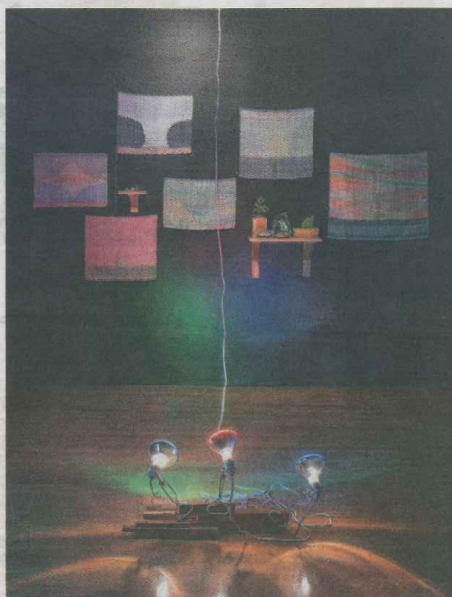


ART

## EXPLORERS

Charlotte Street's award winners  
plant their flags at Grand Arts.

BY  
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The Charlotte Street Foundation's *Visual Artist Awards Exhibition* presents a formidable challenge for the host gallery: connecting disparate artists, genres and mediums in a coherent way. Grand Arts is up to that task. Though each of this year's award winners maintains his or her own aesthetic, this show reveals a shared preoccupation with manipulating images and figures in order to reimagine them in new lights and lives.

Mike Erickson's imaginative paintings outgrow the clean lines of his flat acrylics and invite us to reconsider recognizable forms. "Friends Entangled With Enemies, Enemies Entangled With Friends, This Is Confusion. Friends Entangled With Friends, This Is Not Confusion" is perhaps the most straightforward of his pieces, depicting a coiling mass of snakes. Venomous corals curl labyrinthine around harmless kings, enemies disguised by friends.

Erickson's titles aren't subtle, but their delirious length mandates a separate contemplation. Consider, for example, his "A 5th Century Greek Vase With a Depiction of a Visit I Made, to Consult the Oracle at Delphi, About My Nagging Doubts Regarding the Official Story Behind the Boston Marathon Bombing, This Is an Ongoing Issue in My Lives." Here we see Erickson playing with time and suggest-

ing that, in ancient artifacts, we might find a remedy for postmodern confusion.

But verbal context isn't necessary to appreciate Erickson's technical mastery: the crisp fields of color, the minimalist presentation of the vase on the plinth. He riffs on the austerity of museums, contrasting rigid visual structures with the warmer, more fluid depiction on the vase itself. The scene skews proportions playfully: The oracle smiles, bare feet dangling from her perch. Her visitor is a hapless cartoon of a man, his muppet mouth turned comically downward, his arms lost in the folds of his garment. Erickson rejects the athletic bodies and aggressive poses we expect from Grecian art in favor of squat figures and casual postures.

Across the gallery, Paul Anthony Smith engages in a similar reimagining. His adorned prints manipulate ordinary figures (market-goers from Port Antonio, Jamaica) into shimmering, threatening specters. Smith picks apart the images with a ceramic tool, crafting tiny tears in the surface of the print to lift his subjects out of their setting — his version of picotage. The process creates a kind of full-body mask for

these figures, filtering skin color and clothing through the ruffled white rips.

"Port Antonio Market #5" captures a man looking back over one shoulder, his dark skin sparking static against the white shreds. Smith leaves his eyes exposed, peering, haunted, out of the mask at us. The other two "Port Antonio" pieces on display excise expression, drowning the hollows of eyes and mouths in monochromatic pools. Each of these pieces, however, is electric; his figures glimmer like mirages in the shadowy Port Antonio marketplace.

Grand Arts seems to have staged Erika Lynne Hanson's work in a sensory acceleration chamber. Thick black curtains secret her pieces away from the gallery's ambient light and sound; instead, our soundtrack is of waves crashing and rolling along a beach (from her video "But of the relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past"). Colored halogen lamps supply much of the lighting in the room, filtering our encounter with each piece through moody colors and long shadows.

Hanson undertakes a digital exploration of

From left: a Hanson weaving, an Erickson vase, Smith's "Port Antonio Market #5"

landscapes, combining inkjet-printed screenshots of national parks with weavings, bead work and object arrangements that reimagine them in another medium. It's a process that can seem, at times, opaque. Her screenshots and beadings cohere along loose themes of time and memory but keep us at an emotional remove — we consider these artifacts from an anthropological distance, as if they were relics from an alien world.

Hanson's weavings are notable exceptions, engaging us with pointed curiosity. The loose fibers and sunset-streaked colors of "potential future views from the past; apparently smog has something to do with it" evoke palpable nostalgia for these places. The weave structure is no less complex and beautiful. Her crafts emphasize the human hand in each exploration.

The winners of the 2013 Visual Artist Awards energize and elevate the mundane to strange new heights in their imaginative reconstructions. Grand Arts invites us to share in that exploration, and we're happy to encounter new worlds along with them.

E-mail [feedback@pitch.com](mailto:feedback@pitch.com)

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816-421-6887, [grandarts.com](http://grandarts.com)