

ART

SPOTLIGHT: AN ARTFUL FRIDAY

It's the third Friday of the month, and that means new shows at the downtown spaces of the Urban Culture Project. The Bank, 11th and Baltimore, opens "Sloppy Slobbering Monster," a national group show

focusing on emerging talent curated by the Kansas City-based Your Face artists collective, with a reception from 5 to 10 tonight.

In the same time frame Paraglyph, 23 E. 12th St., will open "Trajectones:

Installations by Miles Neidinger and Anna Watson."

Stick around for an after-party from 9:30 to 11:30 p.m. at Urban Culture Project's new Boley space, 12th and Walnut.



HISTORY ILLUMINATED

Exhibit of black artists explores moments of joy and heartbreak

By ALICE THORSON
The Kansas City Star

The inaugural exhibit at Pat Jordan's new Town House Gallery in downtown Kansas City, Kan., focuses on figurative works offering metaphor and commentary about black role of the mythical white auctioneer, even as the sensitivity of the artist's portrayal offers plenty of grounds to resist. It's a delicate balance, but Powell strikes it perfectly.

Powell, whose small watercolor "Knight Sacrifice" depicts a seated man at a chessboard as a metaphor for the game of life, is president of the Light in the Other Room group of black Kansas City artists. The exhibit features works by four other members — Ed Hogan, Ben Mercer, Joseph L. Smith and Anthony High — whom Jordan has shown frequently in the past.

The exhibit marks Jordan's introduction of Kansas City, Kan., artists Karen White and Cathy Colon, who are represented by individual portraits and a collaborative piece, "Jazz." "Jazz" is a collection of portrait vignettes of the greats, including Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie, B.B. King and Charlie Parker, rendered in pencil.

"Jazz" and "Bid em in" exemplify the strong historical bent of this show's artists, who also illuminate some of the less familiar corners of black



"18th and Vine," a watercolor by Joseph Smith

per Club" and "Stage Left."

Stage Left was a Chicago speakeasy; the Reverend Joy's place was "an old speakeasy in KCK," Hogan said, "where ministers would serve alcohol after church. All over the city, speakeasies were run by ministers in the 1950s."

In both pieces, Hogan portrays the after-services goings-on as a veritable bacchanal of writhing, dancing figures, all of them nude.

In "Chitlins' Supper," Hogan's take on another Sunday afternoon tradition, a similar nude cast of characters appears arranged around tables. Chitlins, regarded by some as a delicacy and by others as a throwback to the days when slaves were given the intestines when a hog was slaughtered, occupy an equivocal place in black culture.

Hogan, creator of the controversial minstrel show public artwork for the 2002 Avenue of the Arts, knows how to push people's buttons. His aim is to provoke fresh thought on received veri-

nudes he has embedded in the bark.

All of these artists showcase their facility with varied media and styles. Mercer's realist "Lady of the '30s," a three-quarter-length portrait rendered in pencil, lingers lovingly on the elderly woman's old sweater and intense expression. In his pastel "Siesta," on the other hand, Mercer abstracts and simplifies his subject of a man seated at a bus stop, displaying Mercer's willingness to push the boundaries of representation in the interest of formal impact.

High demonstrates his command of the collograph (relief printing) process and pays tribute to African power icons in "Cryptic Mask No. 6" and "Cryptic Mask No. 7." High tries his hand at watercolor in "Two Sisters."

Smith shows two masterful watercolors celebrating the social and commercial history of the 18th and Vine District and a pair of colorful African-inspired chargers combining figurative and abstract motifs. His selections succinctly embody the aims of the black artists of the Light in the Other Room.

ART CALENDAR

COMPILED BY CATHY IBARRA/THE STAR

OPENINGS & RECEPTIONS

SLOPPY SLOBBERING MONSTER AND STUDIO RESIDENCY PROGRAM, OPEN STUDIOS:

Reception, 5-10 p.m. Sept. 17; noon-3 p.m. Thursday, Saturday; closes Oct. 23. The Bank, 11th and Baltimore. (816-221-5115)

p.m. Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 1-5 p.m. Sunday; closes Nov. 19. Kansas City, Kan., Public Library, Argentine Branch, 2800 Metropolitan. (913-722-7400)

THE FIRST TEN YEARS: CONVERSATIONS WITH THE COLLECTION:

Opens Sept. 17; 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday; closes Nov. 28. Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, 4420 Warwick. www.kemperart.org (816-753-5784)

ALLAN CHOW & RICHARD RANEY: TWO-MAN SHOW:

Opening 6-9 p.m. Sept. 17; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. Leopold Gallery, 327 E. 55th. www.leopoldgallery.com (816-333-3111)