

ART REVIEW

Dreams not as simple as they seem

By Mary Thomas
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To step into a dream during daylight hours, visit "hi-tech/lo-tech (sight + sound from Quebec)" at Wood Street Galleries, Downtown. You have your choice of four.

Diane Landry's "Ecole d'aviation" ("Flying School") is a place of surreal beauty. In a darkened gallery, a bevy of colorful, mechanized umbrellas softly open and close as they're randomly lit from below.

The slight flutter they give, the plaintive accordion-like sigh emitted by the bellows at their bases and the shifting shadows they cast upon the ceiling create a mesmerizing atmosphere of reflection and memory.

In the adjacent gallery, sprawling "Species: Rut" by Jean-Pierre Gauthier is light, airy and inviting. A fanciful found-object construction with a Rube Goldberg quality, it's activated when motion detectors sense someone walking between the dips and loops of its aluminum tube framing.

Sounds such as that of a metal strip tapping a turning glass bottle are picked up by small microphones and relayed to speakers, which in turn may cause an

adjacent object — a galvanized tin bucket for example — to emit its own rumble. As more sources join in, a clamor is created before the sound drops off level by level, much in the way it happens in the frog ponds that inspired Gauthier, though in an opposite order of volume.

The messy janitorial cart of Gauthier's "Le grand menage" ("The grand housekeeping"), a component of a larger installation exhibited in 2000, could satirize compulsiveness or symbolize dissolution of duty. Or maybe, with its twirling brush and oozing soap bubbles, it's just having fun.

"Ondulation," a contemplation-inducing work by Plumbing for beginners that they describe as "a composition for water, sound and light," is a remarkable concept. Occupying most of the gallery is a low rectangular water-filled structure, the surface of which changes from serene and glassy to rippling or agitated in response to sound waves fed into the reservoir.

Lasers and theater lighting shine across the water's surface and are reflected upon the room's walls in patterns that correspond to the tones emitted. The sound becomes not only visible, but magical, as ethereal mountains

of light rise and then dissipate in rapidly moving mist-like flows that resemble liquid nitrogen streaming across a floor.

Plumbing for beginners is a collaboration between Finnish artist Mikko Hynninen and [The User], the group that presented "Symphony for dot matrix printers" at Wood Street and, more recently, brought the Silophone project to SPACE gallery.

Each of these artworks combine commonplace materials with sophisticated computer programming, hence the title of the exhibition. The show is part of The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's Quebec Festival, complementing a season of significant programming that's energized Downtown and introduced new ways of experiencing and thinking.

The exhibition continues through May 15 at 601 Wood St., Downtown. Hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays. For information, call 412-471-5605.

Cloud Harp

"The Cloud Harp," by Canadian artist Nicolas Reeves, a "meteo-musical" installation that responds to passing clouds, has been getting a workout since its April arrival. Part of the Que-

bec Festival, it's at the corner of Penn Avenue and Seventh Street, Downtown, through June 13. Tip: For the best experience, walk around back, away from street noise, and check it out during different weather conditions.

SPACE curator

Sharmila Venkatasubban has been named the assistant curator of the new Pittsburgh Cultural Trust gallery, SPACE, at 812 Liberty Avenue, Downtown. She'll work with Wood Street Galleries curator Murray Horne to organize exhibitions. A native of Florida, Venkatasubban has been arts editor for In Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh City Paper and is completing a master's degree in cultural studies at Carnegie Mellon University.

'The Ties That Bind'

At 1 p.m. today at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Shadyside, artists Mary Weidner (exhibiting), Tina Brewer, Connie Merriman and Jill MacKay will give slide-illustrated talks on the theme of family dynamics in their work (free; 412-361-0873).

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