SPA's 'All Aboard' takes you on a transportation journey

By Mary Gow Arts, Correspondent
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Julia Pavone: "Wanderlust", Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photos

Trains, planes, cars, submarines, hot air balloons, boats, flying saucers, orange tractors, fantastic wooden vehicles — there are lots of ways to get where you want to go or can imagine going.

"All Aboard," a new group exhibition at Studio Place Arts (SPA) in Barre, showcases two- and three-dimensional art about all kinds of transportation. A painting of the first

automobile in Rutland in 1903; movable wooden submersibles and dirigibles; a 10-story parking tower in clay with matchbox-sized model cars — the show features real and imagined conveyances in artwork by more than 20 artists.

Leslie Fry: “Go with the Flow”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photos

In “Unwanted Gifts” in SPA’s Second Floor Gallery, artist Carrie Caouette-De Lallo takes a delightful and wry look at gifts she has received or given over the years. Caouette-De Lallo acknowledges in her artist’s statement that she sometimes laughs out loud painting these celebrations of the dangle earrings, can of corn, and more. Viewers are likely to identify with them and laugh as well.

Carrie Caouette-De Lallo: “It’s an Electrolux — I Had to Give $15 for it”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

With layered abstractions capturing rhythms and seasonal shifts of rural Vermont, “Square Roots” by Rebecca Padula fills SPA’s Third Floor Gallery.

SPA has a long tradition of selecting a lighthearted theme for their summer Main Floor Gallery exhibition as students are on vacation and tourists are visiting the area. “Sharpen Your Pencils!” “What’s Cooking?” “That Cat” are among the themes of recent summers.

Sue Higby, executive director of SPA, said, “We purposely set out to select a group show that is playful and opens up the imaginations of people of all ages. It tends not to be serious social commentary”

In the summer, Higby noted, “We are all wanting to hit the road and go to concerts, go visit friends, go to the beach.”

Matt Neckers: " A Comprehensive Catalog of Every Unfinished Journey Ever Taken"
Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

This is really about that dynamic feeling of moving from one place to another, going on an adventure," said Higby.

Children in the SPA summer camps were among the first to get their hands on "A Comprehensive Catalog of Every Unfinished Journey Ever Taken," an interactive installation by Matt Neckers, of Eden.

Neckers' installation features a wall chock full of bright magnetized cut-outs that can be gently moved — a bit like a giant refrigerator door packed with fabulously imaginative vehicles. Steamships, rocket ships, airplanes, cars, tanks, road segments, clouds,

astronauts, even some monsters — Neckers's pieces can be turned, and rearranged into fresh configurations, and explored. One could play a marathon game of "I Spy" with the installation and still discover new pieces.

Anne Davis: "Night Rider", Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

Rosalind Daniels, of Cabot, draws viewers to the sleek style of automotive design details. Her photographs "Three Circles" and "Taillight" get up close to the flash of car lights. Daniels' textile piece "A Slice of Red" considers angled car detail in a softer medium — her photograph is printed on cotton and quilted, lines of stitching highlighting the geometry of the design.

In "Kay-Bota," a ceramic shard mosaic by Bette Ann Libby, of Waitsfield, a woman in a floral-patterned dress, wearing blue beads and turquoise earrings, traverses a summer field atop her jaunty orange tractor. The piece was inspired by Libby's tractor-driving neighbor.

The parking tower with curved ramps stands like a skyscraper in “Park” by John Brickels, of Lowell, Massachusetts. Sculpted of clay, the tower is populated by brightly colored cars parked on its many levels.

Janet Van Fleet: “Stone Car”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

In the watercolor “Man vs. Nature,” by Jean Cannon, of Burlington, the oil cars of a freight train pass by a thicket, as an empty bird’s nest perches in sapling branches.

Robert Waldo Brunelle Jr., of Jericho, considers “The 1st Car in Rutland, VT.” In Brunelle’s acrylic painting, owner John H. Frenier, in driving cap, takes his Victorian-looking family for a ride in his 1903 autocar.

In SPA’s Second Floor Gallery, in vivid acrylic paintings, Caouette-De Lallo transports viewers to the place and moment she received or gifted “Unwanted Gifts.” In rooms with lavender walls, blue staircases, vermillion floorboards and bright rugs and decor, a woman with dark hair holds or wears the present. Her accepting expressions speak volumes.

These are actual gifts — “nice” cocktail olives, Ecuadoran poncho, and moisturizer are among them. Her titles capture what was said in the moment of generosity.

Besides being a painter, Caouette-DeLallo is known for her drawings, often serious studies of light considering common objects. In her artist’s statement, she notes that her process in her drawings is very meditative.

She also notes, “In contrast, my paintings are celebrations of color, and I can often be heard laughing as I paint because they are also celebrations of the world in which I find myself, a world that is filled with irony, generous spirits, and plenty of joy.”

Rebecca Padula: “Field Notes #2”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

Rebecca Padula’s abstract paintings, each one in a square format, in “Square Roots” in SPA’s Third Floor Gallery, explore life and land in rural New England.

With patchwork-like geometry, Padula evokes cultivated fields and towns. Textured and multi-layered, her works may bring to mind weathering and the passage of time.

“Abstraction allows the viewer to enter the work as they would the land — gradually, personally, reflectively,” says Padula in her artist’s statement.

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