



Math Magician, 15" x 11", 2006, pencil, pen, ink wash, gouache, watercolor, metallic ink, photo retouch, roulette, graphite rub, metal point and Chinese white.

art and the city

BY JIM MAGNER

A Capitol Hill artist and writer, Jim can be reached at artandtheCity05@aol.com



Outreach Platform for the Lending Library of Useless Knowledge, 22" x 15", pencil, pen, ink, ink wash, gouache, photo retouch, watercolor, silver and gold metallic inks, burnishing, roulette, Chinese white, sumi ink, a b dick stylus and metal point.



Artist Profile:

Andrew Krieger

Drop in to Andrew Krieger's "Deep Ellum." You'll like it there. It melds comfortably with your lifetime of interpretations – the sorting-out of things that seem oddly familiar even if you can't quite put your finger on them. It's a friendly sub-real world of Madhatter repositories and substations populated by the functionaries and plodders who exist on the periphery of your daily hustle.

Or not. Maybe your anxiety levels will spike with the spiked square wheels – or work platforms that could collapse at any second in this dysfunctional world that comes uncomfortably close to our own advanced society. Deep Ellum has an apparent order in a clearly illogical existence – barely hanging on to sanity...but happily so. Like you and me.

Andrew Krieger's background in engraving shines through in these flawless renditions of the inhabitants and habitations of his not so imaginary world. His love of drawing and the legacy of the old masters are ever-present and the driving force of all his work. Not satisfied with 2-D depictions, he constructs quirky architectural structures modeled on his drawings, where fantasy takes form and ideas go to breathe.

Andrew earned a master of fine arts in printmaking at the University of Georgia, and his work can be found in private and museum collections. A parallel career in teaching young people with behavioral disorders has given him an understanding of the flimsy boundaries between logic and illogic and

the challenges of social expectations. He wants to continue to reach young people with discoveries of art and imagination – and how to survive creatively without becoming the crumbs of our utilitarian cake.

Andrew Krieger's work can be seen at www.andrewkrieger.com and you can obtain his excellent catalogue at www.lulu.com. It is also sold at the National Gallery of Art. He can be reached at groundzero.ahkrieger@gte.net.

Jim Magner's Thoughts on Art

Artomatic isn't just a big show, it's a life force – a living organism where artists congeal and thousands of people come to look, listen and live an art experience. Many of the artists have shown in the three previous events going back to '99, but a fair number of the regulars can't make it this year because they have private shows opening at the same time.

Also, a number of past participants, and thousands of local artists who have never participated, are afraid bad reviews will damn everyone and their status in the art market will be hurt. That's because Artomatic is not "juried," and there is no selection process to assure a high level of professional competence.

I personally don't agree and have entered work both in the 2004 show and this one. As a writer and reviewer, it is harder to grasp the depth of something if you don't jump in...even at the risk of drowning. But the fire-breathing dragon is the old "Company-You-Keep Principle." It goes like this: Anything will look good in the National Gallery and anything will look bad in a funky place.

Note to artists: Damn, have some confidence in your work; if it's good, it's good. Many thousands of people are going to look at it, and many thousands – people who would not otherwise see it – are going to like it. Sure, some artists at Artomatic are untrained; they have more passion than understanding of color or composition. But hey, color and composition can be taught – passion can't. I don't care how much technique you have, if you don't have raging belief, you're not going to get off the ground. Most of the artists at Artomatic get off the ground – they fly like hell all over the place – they zoom like Mighty Mouse on a mission of mercy. That's what makes it fun.

Note to art lovers: If you believe art is only about masters making masterpieces, then you will probably want to stay away from Artomatic. Go to the museums. But if you think the glory of art, like religion, is bringing people of all sorts together in a communal celebration of the spirit, you are going to love this thing.

ARTomatic

It's not quite as funky as 2004, but it is still a wildly unpredictable and wonderfully audacious visual encounter where everything is acceptable, and every little room has its own surprises and rewards. It's Artomatic 2007!

There is plenty of very fine art here by experi-

enced and highly regarded professionals, but it is truly a people's event, and therein lies its real strength.

Over 400 visual artists hang and build thousands of works of art and art-like things. Several hundred poets, actors and musicians perform continuously while thousands of people from all over the area surge through the hallways and flow through the larger spaces.

It's all happening at 2121 Crystal Drive, in Crystal City, Arlington, a short drive from the District – just over the river and through the hotels – and a short walk from the Crystal City metro stop. The building – where the Patent Office was ensconced – is being revamped and two floors, the sixth and the eighth, have been turned over to Artomatic.

The sixth floor is a maze of tiny offices (no wonder the patent examiners were so cranky), but they serve well to showcase the individual displays. Just make sure you get a map and check off the rooms you have visited; it's easy to get disoriented.

The eighth floor is one giant open space (with great views of the Capitol) and is where most of the sculpture and larger works have room to spread out.

As for logistics, take the Metro or park in the garages across the street for easy access to the row of restaurants and shops. They are free after 4 p.m. You can park under the building – free on weekends only – entering at 20th Street where it says "2011" and following the garage signs to 2121. The Crystal City business district has been very aggressive in cosponsoring the event, so check out the local restaurants and pubs for specials.

As someone who is participating, I'm very impressed by the incredible volunteer efforts to make this thing happen, starting with the chairman of the nonprofit, George Koch, and the hundreds of professionals who have given thousands of hours, and their expertise, in every aspect from organization to publicity to technology. This is a concept that could spread and make every town in America art friendly, but it all comes down to the nery dedication of the artists involved.

It is all probably too much for one visit – this is the kind of art that wrestles you to the floor and beats you up – so come back a couple of times. There are special events planned for almost every night, and performances are constantly changing during the whole six weeks. Check the Web site, www.artomatic.org, for updates, and click on "artist catalogue" for a look at the artists and performers. Also, check www.artdc.org for information. Be there for Meet the Artist night, May 4 and Cinco De Mayo on May 5, and the wrap party blowout on May 20.

Okay, as for the art, I don't have the room to name names. If anyone is interested, e-mail me and I will share my recommendations for things to look for. It is not a hierarchy of "goodness" or the best of anything. Art is much more complicated than that. What single standard could you possibly use? There are so many cultural and experiential differences – and so many different purposes

in making art. The only thing we all share is the compulsion to be creative...and the bullheaded determination to not let the crazy impracticality of it all stop us.

Art Expo

Learning & Product Expo: Art!
University of Maryland
Marriott Inn & Conference Center
Adelphi, Md.
June 1-3

Registration for the 2007 DC area event is now open. Visit the site to view the new teacher pages, the juried art competition rules, and to enter your artwork for a chance to have your work on exhibit. You can choose from 200 classes, and visit the exhibit floor jammed with art material manufacturers. For complete information: 310-463-4948, www.learningproductexpo.com/dc/home.cfm.

At the Galleries

Gene Markowski
District Fine Arts
1726 Wisconsin Ave., NW
through May 26

"Places & Things," is the theme of new paintings by Gene Markowski, a professor of art at Trinity University in Washington. Markowski has been exploring the abstract form for almost 60 years and these new works on wood with acrylics are a continuing means to give the viewer a new visual experience through color, shape, texture, and spatial relationships. His compositions are intellectually intriguing as well as visually grabbing and are really about his own personal recollections and responses to life – its places and objects. 202-328-9100, www.dfaonline.com.

Gene Davis
Marsha Mateyka Gallery
2012 R St., NW
though May 19

A wide range of paintings, drawings, watercolors, and prints are available in "Selected Works from the Estate of Gene Davis." Davis became internationally renown in the early 1960's as a Washington Color School artist and ColorField painter and was arguably the first artist to paint hard edge vertical stripes solely for their color expression. 202-328-0088, www.marshamateyka-gallery.com.

Ellyn Weiss
Rima Schulkind
Touchstone Gallery
406 Seventh St., NW
Second Floor
May 9-June 3

Ellyn Weiss gives you great color and motion in "Fortune Cookies" and is joined by Rima Schulkind with "Grounded." Opening reception: May 11, 6 to 8:30 p.m. 202-347-2787, www.touchstonegallery.com. ■