

Review: Shows at Bruno David and Sheldon celebrate American interiors, Barbie and catharsis



By Ivy Cooper, Special to the Beacon



COURTESY: BRUNO DAVID GALLERY. PHOTO: DICKSON BEALL

Damon Freed: Calm, Cool, Coherent (Installation view-detail)



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Damon Freed. *Cracked Vessel*, 2008. Acrylic on canvas. 72 x 72 inches.

Posted 4:29 p.m. Thurs., March 19 - The Bruno David Gallery has an eclectic mix of appealing shows this month.

Missouri artist Damon Freed shows "Calm, Cool, Coherent," a collection of large canvases featuring luscious, abstract color fields bounded by notched, hard edges. They're informed by Chinese landscape painting and have the exquisite modulations of color field painters, such as Mark Rothko, or minimalists, such as Max Cole.

In the Front Room, Mario Trejo's "Catharsis" is a series of relatively small works comprised of scratches on a black acrylic and ink field. The results are frenetic nests of white energy; they're absolutely stunning.

The gallery's big draw this month, however, seems to be the one-two punch in honor of Barbie's 50th anniversary. Larry Torno's "When is a Doll not a Doll?" features close-up photographs of classic early Barbie dolls, looking gorgeous but more plasticine than ever. The photographs look like they're straight out of the pages of this month's "Vogue," a reminder that fashion itself is founded on the principle of artificiality.

If Torno's photographs are a loving homage to the doll, Tiffany Shlain's 2006 video "The Tribe" is a fond send-up, using Barbie and her is-she-or-isn't-she Jewish identity as a lens through which to examine cultural assimilation and exclusion.

Through April 4 at the [Bruno David Gallery](#) , 3721 Washington Blvd. For more info, call 314-531-3030



David Hanlon, *Bedroom; Iowa City, IA*, 2006, chromogenic color print, 14 x 14 inches, courtesy of the artist.



David Hanlon, *Kitchen; Lexington, KY*, 2003, chromogenic color print, 14 x 14 inches, courtesy of the artist.

Across the street from Bruno David, at the Sheldon Art Galleries, "American Interiors: Photographs by David R. Hanlon" is an extensive showing of the artist's deadpan views of quotidian spaces, both public and private.

Focusing on oddball corners, hallways, basements and exhibition halls, Hanlon offers us vignettes of the overlooked spaces we inhabit on a daily basis.

Some work better than others, and I must express a preference for the colder, more anonymous scenes, such as the light filtering onto a hotel room's beige wallpaper, or the parquet floor of a Baroque painting gallery, which clashes unexpectedly with the tile pattern in one of the artworks hanging on the wall.

Mixed into the group are some surprisingly specific scenes: an elevator lobby in Louis Kahn's Salk Institute in La Jolla, Calif., and the parlor of the house where Abraham Lincoln died. This last work is particularly elegiac.

Hanlon is an associate professor at St. Louis Community College at Meramec; his works are featured in a book, "American Interiors."

Through May 23 at the [Sheldon Art Galleries](#) , 3648 Washington Blvd. For more info, call 314-533-9900.

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