

Memorial/Spring Branch News

Houston Chronicle

Nov. 14, 2007, 11:43AM

Galleria-area artist's work on display through Nov. 22

John Jenkins' Genomics series combines DNA images, photos, abstract art

By VALERIE SWEETEN

Chronicle Correspondent

JOHN Jenkins was content to pull out his mixed media at a faster pace if it meant making the deadline for his solo show at Bering and James Gallery, 805 Rhode Place, Suite 500.

The fact is that Jenkins, a Houston native and Galleria-area resident, had already sold 17 pieces before the show even opened Nov. 2.

The draw is Jenkins' genomics series, which is designed to represent the basic element of life, DNA.. According to Jenkins' Web site (www.john-jenkins.net), the "sequencing of images and diagrams in each work create a visual pattern that is intended to evoke the modern fascination with genetic mapping and self discovery through investigation of most basic inner workings."

Austin James, owner of Bering and James Gallery, planned the show with Jenkins immediately after viewing his gallery submittals in February 2007.

The genomic 38-piece series has taken Jenkins three years to complete and will be on display through Nov. 22.

A second genomic series is currently underway.

James said that Jenkins captures important elements in his art.

"It's poppy, fun and sometimes melancholy," James said.

"With the DNA series, he sees it as a continuous strand. It weaves different lives together. With the exhibit, they'll be separated again as people buy them and take them home. The baseness is that it reeks of life in general. That makes it appealing because you can relate to it on so many levels."

The Genomic series, to name just a few insets, includes Marie Curie, Janis Joplin, Nefertiti, Harriet Tubman, Walt Disney, Stephen Sondheim, Nelson Mandella, Queen Victoria, and George Harrison.

Jenkins, a 1990 Elsie High School graduate, began painting in his first semester at Texas State University where he was studying theatre and comedy.

The progression from watercolors to acrylics led Jenkins, who was influenced by Rene Magritte, to form The KJT Art Factory, a partnership with Kay Beveroth and Tim Mikiten at the age of 19.

Works on canvas were generated by the group using various forms of technology.

"It was very graphic where we moved away from painting art work. We were using Warhol and others as influences. The creation fell to me for the final products," said Jenkins.

By 1995, Jenkins broke away from KJT to focus on works on paper.

His first independent group of work, *The Elements*, debuted in 1998.

Jenkins, who has worked various retail jobs, used mixed mediums and incorporated personal items such as spoons, keys, hair and plastic into the end product.

In 2003, Jenkins developed the *Genomics* series after being inspired by current DNA research.

His scientific knowledge was honed at a young age by his parents, Pam and Sam Jenkins, a chemist/physicist and engineer respectively.

"I loved the idea of the genetic code," said Jenkins. "It was a vague progression. It just fascinates me. This is a visual representation of the genome sequenced out. My mom liked it, and it's been big fun. It's a difficult fusion putting art and science together. Genetics is not something artists think about a lot."

Jenkins' exploration into uncharted territory has given him enlightening experiences.

"We'll have the entire *Genomics* series posted around the gallery," he said.

"I think you can see the universality of the idea. We're talking about what binds us together. It's not evil, right or wrong, but defines who we are as a species of people."