

Spinning a new art scene

Mechanicsburg gallery features works made with vinyl records



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The Metropolis Collective is creating a significant buzz on Main Street in Mechanicsburg. Yes, you read it right. Those two words, Metropolis and Mechanicsburg, have seldom appeared in the same sentence, but that is changing.

On June 1, the Metropolis Collective opened in the historic space that used to house Fairey Godmother's vintage clothing store. The owners are an innovative husband-and-wife couple, Danielle Charette and Richard Reilly. They're dedicated to expanding the kind of visual art not often seen here, a varied range of works that have in common a complete lack of stodginess.

Their second show, opening tomorrow night, is "Sex, Drugs and Rock-n-Roll." You can already tell that this venture is not focused on people looking for a pretty picture in matching colors to put up over the living room couch. Most of the artists exhibiting in the Trash Art Gallery, toward the front of the building, are friends or friends-of-friends of the owners, contacts made when they lived in Manhattan.

Charette and Reilly still have a place in Greenwich Village, and the weekend before the show they will have trawled through galleries, lofts and living rooms of artist/friends, collecting up to 70 works to crate up and bring to Mechanicsburg to be installed for Friday's opening.

There's a whiff of glamour surrounding Charette and Reilly. They're the kind of couple that speaks as one, finishing each other's sentences, weaving in and out of an enthusiastic narrative. Charette has lived in Camp

Hill and New York. One day they were driving through Mechanicsburg, which they call "a beautiful little town," and saw the For Sale sign outside the Fairey Godmother.

"I love that building," was their immediate response. After they bought it, they said they waded through "utter decay and mess." They are now well on their way to adapting it to house two galleries and a raised performance area, called Stage Noir. Reilly has been a musician for many years, most notably with The Victims, "a first-wave NYC punk rock group" according to a news release, for which he did vocals and played the harmonica.

His day job was a different story. For two decades, he worked at the Adelson Gallery, an Upper East Side establishment that specializes in early 20th-century American art. His two-pronged existence, added to Charette's experience as a contemporary expressionist artist, led them to the idea for Metropolis Collective.

Charette said they are using their savings to achieve their dream of bringing a new kind of art to the area, created by emerging and established artists. So in the same show you will see a range of works by internationally recognized East Village artists as well as Outsider Art, defined by Charette as works done by artists who have no formal art training.



An oil painting by Rick Prol titled "Elegy."

IF YOU GO

"Sex, Drugs and Rock-n-Roll" and "Maniacal Vinyl" at Metropolis Collective, 17-19 W. Main St., Mechanicsburg. Opening reception 6-9 p.m. Friday. Exhibit continues through Sept. 28. Open 11-8 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday. Free. Info: metropoliscollective.com, 717-458-8245.

"We love art and we love people," she said about this "labor of love." The collective is an opportunity to "wake up central Pennsylvania and have some fun."

In addition to the Trash Art Gallery, exhibiting mostly works from their Manhattan contacts, there's a space adjacent to the Stage Noir called the Hole in the Wall Art Gallery, which eventually will be dedicated to local artists. For this exhibit, it's devoted to "Maniacal Vinyl,"

artworks from all over the country created using 12-inch vinyl recordings as a base for ironic visual imagery.

Although they are intent on bringing a little piece of Manhattan to Mechanicsburg, Reilly said, "There are a lot of cool people everywhere." They certainly turned up at the grand opening of their first exhibit, which he said attracted 600 guests and artists comingling.

Friday's opening will feature rock 'n' roll from Paul Kostabi's band, Damn Kids, in the debut performance on Stage Noir.

"We like irony," Reilly said, explaining their naming process for the elegant space they've called the Trash Art Gallery. It will be interesting to see how their venture makes its mark on central Pennsylvania's contemporary art scene.

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