



The Chronicle

LabourLove sets up shop at Golden Belt

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On May 15, Golden Belt welcomed its newest resident to the grounds of the burgeoning creative campus: the LabourLove Gallery.

The first art retail outlet in downtown Durham's freshly renovated warehouse complex-cum-art space, LabourLove Gallery is owned and operated by Hillsborough couple Kelly Dew and John Pelphrey.

Opening a gallery has been a dream of long-standing for Pelphrey and Dew.

"We wanted it to be an unpretentious space," Pelphrey said. "A place where everybody passing by feels welcome."

The gallery is artist-driven, and many of the artists featured in LabourLove have never had a professional show before.

"I just wanted a good starting place for young artists," Dew said.

The walls of LabourLove are currently host to a series by three up-and-coming artists: long-time Raleigh resident Luke Miller Buchanan, fresh-faced Durhamite and former New Yorker Kevin McGoff and Dew herself.

Dew's featured work is a series completed while pregnant with the couple's now two-year-old son. The pieces are collaged together with wallpaper, newspaper and magazine clippings and other detritus of interior design commingled with paint. The composition of each artwork reflects the stage of her child's natal development, explained Dew. The series, as a whole, is a labor of patience, development and, appropriately, love.

McGoff's work, all of it oil on canvas, takes on a sheen of pop-realism.



Media Credit: Michael Naclerio/The Chronicle

The LabourLove Gallery recently opened its doors in downtown Durham's Golden Belt, a newly renovated art facility. Managed by two Hillsborough residents, the gallery features work by several young artists.

"I paint African-American people," McGoff said. "Sort of viewing it through a white person's experience. I'm fascinated by it, and most things I paint are informed by that."

From urban snapshots to television freeze-frames to a crowd-pleasing portrait of Barack Obama sensually indulging in an ice-cream cone, McGoff juxtaposes neon-vibrant color with soft, almost aural lines to create a sensation that is both mesmerizing and old-school nostalgic. A portrait of JFK has the decidedly non-African American subject, the lines of his face ruddy with harlequin interpolation, wrapping its cartoonist lips around a fat, white cigarette. The piece stands in trenchant contrast with the realism of other pieces.

Luke Miller Buchanan's work is powerful objectively, but its context against the exposed brick wall of the born-again Golden Belt creative campus makes it even more so.

The Golden Belt complex, formerly Golden Belt Manufacturing Company which closed operations in 1996, lay empty and dormant for a decade before it was purchased by a developer in 2006. According to Buchanan, his scenes of wasted factories, rusted steam plants and post-industrial decay are lifted from the very streets that surround the gallery. The series is a visceral reminder of the history of the very walls upon which the work rests.

"The ability to reclaim a building and change what it's for but keep a nod towards what it was goes along with my painting," Buchanan said.

LabourLove Gallery is open and inviting, beckoning not only young artists but young clients as well. Because the artists are all relatively new to the scene, their original works are priced well below what one would expect to pay at a gallery. For those who are not in the market to furnish a house, the gallery also offers giclee and t-shirt prints of its art at prices within a college student's budget. Sure to be a hit as well are its beautifully reupholstered pillows and pieces of vintage furniture, also featuring prints of the art.

LabourLove Gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m.