

CELESTIAL TERRESTRIALS:

Between Heaven and Earth

The exhibition *Celestial Terrestrials: Between Heaven and Earth* will show paintings, works on paper, sculpture, and videos by 20 contemporary artists dealing with the complex subject of supernatural intermediaries. The exhibit is curated by Elisabeth Kirsch and will be at the Greenlease Gallery at Rockhurst University from October 22 through December 3, 2011. There will be an opening for the exhibit on Friday, October 21, from 6 – 9 p.m. at the gallery. A catalog accompanies the show.

The artists, from Kansas City and other parts of the country, include Marcus Cain, Russell Easterwood, Gear, Tanya Hartman, Diane Henk, Ke Sook Lee, Christopher Leitch, Linda Lighton, Kim Lindaberry, Richard Montoya, Dylan Mortimer, Nora Othic, Jason Pollen, John Sandbach, Ron Slowinski, Renee Stout, Sun Smith-Foret, Vivian Torrence, Dan Younger, and Richard Welnowski. The exhibit will also include non-Western art from Asia, Africa and the Americas that depicts such figures as Asian Bodhisattvas, Hopi Kachinas, Navajo yei masks, and Nuchus from the San Blas islands.

Since the beginning of time, human beings have prayed to, depicted, danced, and sung to invisible entities or energies that are believed to have intercessionary powers with the creator or universal life force. From the earliest paintings of the “Animal Master” in prehistoric caves, to the ancestral guardian figures on African reliquaries, to the countless statues of saints and angels in western churches, and even to the super-heroes and heroines in pop culture media, men, women and children have long sought help from spirit guides of one kind or another.

Iconoclastic cultures have used texts, alphabets, sacred spaces, abstract patterns, and narrative devices for the same purposes.

In the past 30 years, postmodern criticism vigorously dealt with issues of gender, identity, media, and race in the arts, but typically rejected all notions of the spiritual. Some of the most acclaimed artists of our time, however, did not.

Movies such as the 1987 German film “Wings of Desire” by Wim Wenders, Tony Kushner’s wildly successful plays and subsequent television series “Angels Over America” from the 1990’s, and Bill Viola’s internationally known videos dealing with metaphysical concepts, have all garnered audiences and honors.

In popular culture, graphic novels and blockbuster movies with Spiderman, Superman, the X-Men and countless others striving to save mankind have never been more popular. Obsessions with aliens, the undead, and super-galactic creatures have also seeped into both low and high-brow culture. As Nabokov once pointed out, there is only one letter that separates the cosmic from the comic, and this exhibit encompasses the full territory.

For further information, please contact Gallery Director Anne Pearce at 816.501.4407.