

## VISUAL ARTS



Illustration by Cheyne Rood. "Verdant Secession."

## Intro to Aesthetics

Emerging artist draws a line from Plato to James Joyce

by ERIN E. SMITH

**"AN ARTIST'S TASK IS TO TAKE HIS OWN SENSE OF LIFE AND NARROW IT DOWN THROUGH DEDUCTION."  
—CHEYNE ROOD, ARTIST**

Against a backdrop of violent rain and wind, a woman balances a precarious stack of packages. Her mysterious form stands in contrast to the night. She is hollow, filled with a void. She drowns in the rain shower, sinks into the storm, a figure of dependency, catastrophe and rejection.

This is an ink drawing by 23-year-old Cheyne Rood.

A resident of Camillus, Rood captures the intensity of human emotion in each of his drawings. They are not narrative. They tell no immediate story. Yet, each depicts a flash-photo image of a single emotion.

Rood explains that this woman is Maria, a character from the story "Clay" in James Joyce's "Dubliners." He was inspired to create this drawing when he spent a year in Japan and read Joyce's short story collection, feeling a bit like Bill Murray in the film "Lost in Translation."

While Rood is still a relatively obscure artist in the Central New York arts community, he is slowly making a name for himself. A graduate of Colgate University, Rood's first exhibit was at the Visual Arts Showcase in Liverpool last month. In mid-2006 he will show at the Delavan Art Gallery.

Despite Rood's lack of formal art training, his ink drawings convey remarkable professionalism. Rood renders realistic interpretations through minimalist techniques. He uses contour to delineate movement and energy. His black ink-squiggles dance across 24" by 30" sheets of plain white paper.

"An artist's task is to take his own sense of life and to narrow it down through deduction," said Rood. This process follows from concept to image to concept, whereby the artist begins with an idea, translates it through visual means, so that the viewer can then take this image and conceptualize it once again.

"I focus on realistic interpretations of

life," said Rood. "My drawings are minimalist and contemporary, but I don't draw mere abstractions."

Ironically, Rood never thought of himself as an artist until college when he was a student of philosophy, studying the theories of Plato and Aristotle. Both philosophers were rational thinkers with causally-based approaches to philosophy, Rood said. Aristotle was insightful and believed you don't need a demonstrative proof to show how to live your life. "You just need to live the best you can," said Rood.

Rood contends that motion and energy are essential elements in leading a balanced, fruitful life.

"Motion is about progressing, challenging oneself. Finding truth and the right path. How best to live," said Rood. "When I was in university, we talked about motion as being essential."

Rood claims his first exploration with art began back in the ninth grade.

"I stopped using lined notebooks for class," said Rood. "I would write in sketch



Illustration by Cheyne Rood. "Woman by Piano."

books because I could control the flow on the page."

During a lecture in his senior year at Colgate, a friend noticed Rood's notebook covered in sketches. At his friend's advice, Rood began sketching on individual sheets of paper. Two years later, Rood has completed over twenty drawings, ranging from landscapes to figures to bowls of fruit.

He prefers working in cafes or coffee shops. One day after returning from Japan, he was drawing in Nancy's Coffee Cafe in Armory Square when a woman visiting from Tel Aviv, Israel approached him and wanted to buy his drawing. Revealing his inexperience in art dealing, Rood was flattered and stumped.

"I didn't even know how much to ask for," laughs Rood, recollecting the incident. "So I told her \$30."

Rood's drawings may not stay that cheap after his exhibit at the Delavan. While he is currently employed as a risk assessment underwriter with The Hartford, an insurance company, he wants to be more involved in Syracuse's growing arts scene.

"Armory really seems to be the cultural epicenter of the city," said Rood. "The Delavan and The Redhouse are great for the community. With the development of culture, art is being channeled into different mediums, new venues." While his exhibit at the Delavan is next in line, Rood hopes that in the years to come he will continue creating art with the same dedication and infused with the same values that he now holds.

"I want to try new things," said Rood. "But I want my artwork to be continuous with who I am." ■

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