

## Coming this week — serious summer fun

July used to be the dead month for Des Moines fine arts. Not anymore. This year the kind of big, brilliant shows that galleries used to hold back until autumn is opening this month at four different venues.

Travis Rice's exhibition "Contamination" is the largest one-person show ever at Moberg Gallery, taking up the entire gallery plus an outdoor wall. A 1980 Italian cult film of the same name inspires it. That sci-fi classic was about alcoholism, green eggs and coffee with the green eggs plotting to take over the world. I don't make this stuff up. You can leave all expectations at the door of the exhibition.

"I've always had issues with germs and bacteria. I became interested in the way they move and multiply. I observed some bacteria that expanded into aerial routes, detracting and retracting to new hosts. That's the way they are. That's what I tried to capture in my prints, then in the paintings. Those are my ideas about what a 3D diagram of a sneeze might look like," Rice explained.

Rice's meditations on bacterial growth also include neon sculptures, 3D paintings, video monitors and several metal sheds filled with fluorescent lights and props one might use in decontamination zones. Some of those are covered with metastasizing green eggs. All are covered with textured fluorescent film and separated from each other with shredded colored paper, a Rice trademark. This show is serious summer fun. Through Aug. 20.

James Ellwanger's new exhibition "41 degrees/93 degrees W" presents a series of 10 portraits of Des Moines. Each composition is printed on four layers of Plexiglas stacked on top of each other. The background prints are satellite photos of Des Moines while the top three layers consist of various images within the satellite photo. Each set of prints is made in an edition of five, and many have already been sold.

Ellwanger will also be showing a series of sculptures he's been making out of motorcycle parts. Each portrays an animal, complete with a taxidermy tickbird. "I like to think about what it might be like some day when our pets are all robots. Plus it's a lot of fun to work with motorcycle parts," he said. The show begins July 28 and runs two months in the former Fitch Gallery, 304 15th St.

Steven Vail Fine Arts' new exhibition also opens July 28 and studies "Selective Color" in printmaking. Artists come from five different countries and use minimal



Travis Rice in one of his "Contamination" houses.

color for dramatic effect in reductive art. Works range from figural to virtual abstraction and include Eric Fischl, Donald Sultan, Carlos Amorales, Robert Cottingham and seven others.

Vail quoted Alberto Giacometti while explaining the inspiration for the show. "My colleagues admonish me, 'paint with more color.' Isn't grey a color too? If I see everything in grey, and if within that grey I see all colors that impress me and that I would like to convey, why should I use another color?"

Works range from a screen print with flockings from Sultan's seminal Poppies series to black on black etchings of butterflies from Amorales. The exhibition has already attracted interest from the New York City art media. One national writer expressed hope it would travel to the Big Apple.

This Friday, Olson-Larsen Galleries opens "Three Takes on Photography" demonstrating different approaches by Peter Feldstein, David Ottenstein and Dan Powell. Feldstein uses cliché verre, a technique first practiced in the 19th century, applying ink and paint to glass, film or translucent paper by etching, rubbing and daubing. He then scans his "positive" and manipulates it digitally. Ottenstein presents new prints from travels through Iowa and the West. Powell's hand-manipulated photographs feature out of focus objects blended with unusual scenes, enhanced by bleaching, toning and the application of pencil and oil paint. This show runs through Sept. 3. CV