

Chris Utterback 08/29/12

*RAZE/RAISE*, an installation by Jeff Page

Denver artist Jeff Page's installations at Auraria's Emmanuel Gallery flirt with abstraction and revulsion in equal measure.

Obsessed with texture and the juxtaposition of natural and found objects, Page has spread a number of high-concept installations across the city in recent years, before being invited to the Emmanuel for one of curator Shannon Corrigan's efforts to showcase local artists in solo exhibitions.

"I've been following his work for a few years now," said Corrigan, and the product of her invitation is *RAZE/RAISE*; a daring exhibit that's bound to start some heated conversations in the classroom.

Even if any of the deeper meanings of *RAZE/RAISE* pass you by, you won't soon forget the texture of Page's pieces. What Corrigan calls "pelts" are torn pieces of latex dashed with queasy watercolors, often coated with human hair on the reverse side. Some are thrown on the wall, some hang from hooks like pieces of flesh. With the Emmanuel's minimal presentation that eschews any posted titles, the effect is akin to a cavemen displaying his spoils.

That's no accident, says Corrigan. Page's work is often driven by the fragile balance between humanism and animalistic tendencies, and with this show specifically, "he is openly describing gay culture," she says. With the ingredients of hair, flesh, and a

sense of unease, Page could be studying the subculture or the reaction to it from the squares. Or both.

The subtext is made more explicit with a grimy disco ball hung from the gallery's second floor that's tied by latex to the show's centerpiece. And that centerpiece is commanding, indeed, a wooden structure of cast off wood, grimly decorated with torn off latex 'skin' disembodied molds of hairy beards. It's as if Buffalo Bill from *The Silence Of The Lambs* had an altogether different taste in evening wear.

Page's process for most of his 3-D work, pouring liquid latex into molds, studding it with hair and objects, and then tearing it apart, is imparted into the feeling of his art, which does seem like the product of a tug-of-war between two opposing forces.

"I was wondering what the reaction would be," muses Corrigan, "But apparently there's a real hunger for this kind of art on campus." Given the trappings of RAZE/RAISE, a truly apt description.

RAZE/RAISE runs at the Emmanuel Gallery, (1205 10th Street Mall, closed on Mondays) until September 6th. That day also includes a closing discussion with the artist.