

VISUAL ARTS & ARCHITECTURE: Homage to South's clichés

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REVIEW

"Something About the South: Southern Art by Southern Artists"

Through April 18. 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Mondays-Fridays.

Gallery Walk at Terminus, 3280 Peachtree St.

770-435-5180 or 404-239-8376;

www.terminus-atlanta.com.

Bottom line: Mission accomplished, but show as a whole lacks spark.

In an upscale setting for a down-home exhibition, Buckhead's Terminus hosts "Something About the South: Southern Art by Southern Artists." Comprising 31 works largely culled from private collections, the show meets its mission of highlighting Southern themes and heritage — traditional landscapes, homage to regional culture, references to food, family and community.

But here's the rub. Despite accomplished paintings, prints, photographs and folk art, the show as a whole comes off as cliché.

Case in point: Debbie Fleming Caffery is an exceptional photographer. Her Southern imagery is moody and textural. No less so is the elegant 1987 image on view — a lone figure silhouetted against burning sugar cane. Unfortunately, in the company of lesser works (haystacks and a glitter-encircled Elvis), Caffery's photograph reads like a still from "Gone With the Wind."

Atlanta's Kathy Yancey turns out quirky collages that reveal manners, mores and gracious interiors. The artist's eye for detail reflects a local preoccupation with decoration, while remaining attentive to relationships and the world at large. But we don't have one of those Yanceys; rather, we have an Elvis.



An exception to the exhibit's nostalgia, Tim Fitts' photograph "Atlantascap 12" is a textured and desolate image of constant urban change.

and cityscape in a savvy and desolate portrait of constant urban change. This, too, is our heritage, and a thought-provoking look into the future.

In fact, there are three Elvis references here, along with a duo of Cokes, ample kudzu, barbecue, abandoned cars and pickup trucks — the ABC's of Southern typecasting, equally present in the cheery array of folk art.

Is the show appealing? Yes. Does it say something about the South? Certainly.

But what it seems to replay is an oversimplified and nostalgic look into the past, perpetuating persistent (stagnant) regional stereotypes. Where are the artworks that capture a truer, more complex Southern ethos?

Tim Fitts offers one notable exception. His layered photograph of I-85 casts speeding cars, signage