

Capturing time and place

Installation depicts suburban life in recent decades

By **TIM BROUK**

tbrouk@jconline.com

Movies like "E.T.," "The Goonies," "St. Elmo's Fire" and "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" can do more than fill up your family's old VHS tape cabinet. They can bring artistic inspiration.

"Oak & Tardis" is the new installation exhibit by John Cessna, a Purdue University master of fine arts student.

Opening Monday and continuing through Saturday at the Rueff Galleries inside Purdue's Pao Hall of Visual & Performing Arts, the show consists of 10 large photographs depicting suburban life.

The way the images were shot and set up suggest a 1980s to '90s cinematic influence.

"I shoot tableau," said Cessna, who uses a Nikon D-300 camera. "Everything is constructed much like a still from a movie."

The rest of "Oak & Tardis" is a recreated 1980s suburban basement. The artist collected rolls of carpeting, a deer's head, his grandfather's old chair, a very '80s couch and some tacky furniture from Goodwill.

"As I was leaving Goodwill with this table and lamp, a lady told me 'What a good combination,'" Cessna recalled. "I don't know if she was serious."

Cessna applied "god-awful" wallpaper to the walls behind each of his photographs to further promote the suburban basement feel.

An old television completes the installation. It loops several 30-second videos programmed to screen in a random order.

Cessna majored in film and video as an undergrad



By John Terhune/Journal & Courier

John Cessna, shown here in his studio, is preparing for his installation, "Oak & Tardis," to run Monday through Saturday at Rueff Galleries in Pao Hall at Purdue University.

at Purdue. His videos match his photographs in look and specific details. "Saturday Afternoon" consists of two men in suits talking outside of a house and drinking whiskey. One has a black eye.

Still, the main part of "Oak & Tardis" consists of the large photograph prints. They range from the creepy to the comedic. "Never Again" has a "Weird Science" feel as a young woman is helping a young man connect wires and electrodes to his boxer shorts. But then "Exodus" has a "Halloween" feel with muddy footprints leading away from a suburban house in low light.

The artist added a little sci-fi, too. While "Oak" is an ode to generic suburban street names, "Tardis" comes from the time machine in "Dr. Who." Then there are the papers on a table in the photograph "My Current Project."

'Oak & Tardis'

John Cessna will give a lecture on "Oak & Tardis" at noon Thursday and a show reception will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday. The Rueff Galleries are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

'Bodyoptic'

Stephanie Paine's "Bodyoptic" will open Monday and continue through Saturday in the Rueff Galleries as well.

On the Net

<http://OakAndTardis.com>

Underneath the panicked man's beer bottles and pizza crusts are formulas on how much force the Death Star in "Star Wars" would need to detonate

the peaceful, weaponless planet of Alderaan.

"It's detailed," Cessna said, "and delightfully nerdy at the same time."

Cessna's show uses skills he has developed studying photography, video, and the new Electronic and Time-Based Art program at Purdue. Assistant professor Fabian Winkler has followed Cessna's "Oak & Tardis" work.

"John's show explores a very current theme. We now see a first generation of artists that have grown up in the 1980s and '90s and how their memories of these times influence their art practice," he said. "In John's case we see an intriguing investigation of the changing condition of suburbia in the 1980s/'90s and a surprising mix of suburban culture with the cinematic representation of the surreal in photo and video."