

## In South Austin, a new gallery presents fresh art



Jill Schroeder, who opened Grayduck Gallery in South Austin in May, stands next to a piece titled 'Parade of Days.'

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Stepping out of the heat and into the new Grayduck art gallery, you are surprised to land in a flourish of natural light and an air of cool whiteness, piqued with colorful canvases that line the walls.

Sitting just off South First Street, west of the moon tower on Monroe Street, Grayduck is at the edge of a miniature strip of shops but transcends its storefront. The C-shaped gallery of about 1,300 square feet is a pleasingly minimalist space with stained-concrete floors and a high ceiling, all lighted from above by a row of roof-level windows.

There is a sense of freshness about the place, converted from the bones of New West Records, into a modern room for staging art. The design sits at the cross-section of industrial studio space and do-it-yourself minimalism — warehouse-chic, if you will.

Owner and curator — "gallerist," I discover, is the modern term — Jill Schroeder emits a similar vibe of stylish calm. She beams when talking about what most excites her in her new enterprise: the interaction with artists whose work she admires. A native of Minnesota, where she studied studio art and art history, Schroeder and her boyfriend, a paramedic with the City of Austin, came here on something of a whim. Four years later, after a stint volunteering at the Blanton Museum of Art and jobs with marketing firms, it seems clear that Schroeder has launched into her chosen career.

May's opening night helped set Grayduck on the right foot. Asked how many attended, Schroeder thinks and wonders aloud, "How many people do you think can fit in here?" They opened to a packed house.

And packed for good reason. The inaugural show was a forceful pairing of distinctive works that complement one another. J. Haley's large paint-marker drawings of cars, erratic sketches, really, with sarcastic accompanying titles ("Upgraded Suspension" on an old beat-up van, for example) were countered by L. Renee Nuñez's clever and colorful explorations of endangered plant species, with delicately complex layers. The first exhibit showed a confidence of color and ideas. "There's definitely an energy there," Schroeder says.

Grayduck is a necessary addition to Austin's gallery scene, with new shows booked monthly, through early 2011. Schroeder, who is somewhat reserved, becomes animated as she describes a recent trip to Denton to see new works. She grins, recalling the long drive home with an ungainly stack of canvases stretching into her back seat.

Entering what Schroeder calls the retail room, she apologizes — "I sold a few pieces and they took them right off the wall" — but the tiny room is full of smaller, playful gems such as a cotton tote bag screen-printed with the image of a plastic bag.

"Each time we have a show ... I'll just keep on adding work; smaller pieces that are less expensive. I'm trying to keep everything under \$200 in this room so people can afford to buy art if they can't afford to buy the things out in the (main) room."

The first show felt vibrant and eclectic. After May's grand opening, Grayduck has just transitioned to a brand-new exhibit, "Objectivity," expanding slightly out of Austin, with two Denton artists, Scott Wright and Jennifer Leigh Jones, and Nadine Y. Nakanis and Annie Feldmeier Adams, of Chicago. "Objectivity" is on view through July 25.

### **Grayduck Gallery**

**When:** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday-Saturdays, noon to 5 p.m. Sundays

**Where:** 608 W. Monroe St.

**Cost:** Free

**Info:** [www.grayduckgallery.com](http://www.grayduckgallery.com)