

# Art & Design

Death By Design, Co. | April 7, 2005 | by Jake Malooley



Last January, Michelle Maynard and Teena McClelland offered Gallery 400 visitors an intriguing concept: made-to-order death. The SAIC grads shot and edited more than a dozen customized horror movie-style slayings, some which feature Chicago art personalities like Phillip von Zweck, Alex Jovanovich and Duncan MacKenzie.

Maynard and McClelland's new show—which is, ironically, lifeless—screens some of these deaths on two small TVs. The front of the gallery has been impressively transformed into a living room—set postslasher scene: A couch has been ripped to shreds and splattered with fake blood; a table is impaled in the center with an ax; and a camera sits atop a tripod. With self-explanatory titles like “They’re Eating My Flesh” and “Agghhh!,” the three- to five-minute shorts attempt to lampoon the horror genre, appropriating and exaggerating its schlocky conventions. In “Lost in the Woods,” a monster quickly makes a rag doll out of a bearded, flannel-clad victim, flinging the man back and fourth between his foam/latex claws. As the mauling continues in slow motion, an odd look of calm comes over the woodsman’s bloody face and he and the monster share what appears more like an intimate moment.

Despite the absurdity of all the shrieking, fake blood, latex organs and severed limbs, neither the special effects nor the dialogue wallow deeply enough in hyperbole to evoke even chuckles. Akin to home movies and inside jokes, these amateurish horror shorts might be entertaining to those involved, but they are puzzlingly dull to everyone else.