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High tech meets handmade  
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# TECHNICAL MEETS SPECTACLE

## 'TECHNOCRAFT'

Through June 3  
Jamestown Arts  
Center,  
18 Valley St., Jamestown  
(401) 662-3839  
www.jamestownartcenter.org

BY JESS BRALEY

It was a once-in-a-lifetime performance for the nearly 60 people who were lucky enough to catch the inaugural flight of Luke Randall's and The Low Anthem's Ben Knox Miller's "Moth Machine" at the opening of Jamestown Art Center's latest show "TechnoCraft."

As a whole, the traveling show organized by Wakefield's Hera Gallery had high points and low points, like any other, but the utter and sheer brilliance and beauty of the "Moth Machine" honestly eclipsed everything else in the room.

The massive "Moth Machine" spent most of the May 3 opening covered in a sheet, motionless, surrounded by a slew of amplifiers, pedals and wires, a handmade public address system, handmade violin saws and an assortment of different percussion instruments, including a typewriter, old Pepsi bottles and a kid's xylophone. Randall started the performance by removing the sheet.

"Aren't you worried people will leave if it's under wraps the whole time?" Randall asked, answering himself quickly. "No I'm not. When the moth flies, whoever is here is meant to be here."

The sheet came off, the lights were shut off, just the light of the other sculptures providing the ambient lighting. As the strobe started flickering and the moths started spinning, it created this overwhelmingly beautiful flight of the moth gliding before your eyes, the shadows on the ceiling, just adding to the fluttering, soaring creature. So beautiful that it simply just needs to be seen to be believed.

Among the other highlights were a pair of standing sculptures by Mark Esper entitled "A Circle of Friends Discuss



Behold the 'Moth Machine,' by Luke Randall and Ben Knox Miller. But you have to be there with the lights off to appreciate it. PHOTOS BY JACQUELINE MARQUE



'A Circle of Friends discuss James Clerk Maxwell,' Mark Esper, 2002, is made with electric circuits, infrared sensors, electromagnets, permanent magnets, acrylic and polycarbonate plastics, wood, floodlight, Bondo, fish line and nails.

James Clerk Maxwell" and "It's in the Air," a sound-responsive black on black tex-

tile piece from Cheryl Sleboda entitled "Dunkelheit" and China Blue's "Fire Flies."

Esper's statues, situated in the corners of the room, used magnets, circuits, motion detectors and an air compressor to create a pair of fanciful kinetic sculptures that were at times both beautiful and functional masterpieces.

China Blue's "Fire Flies" consisted of a pair of blue blinking "fireflies" trapped in a bell jar and a glass domed cloche in front of a mounted picture of the swirl of blue light in the trees, the fireflies in flight.

The brilliance of Sleboda's work was noticed most clearly by viewing the piece in a quiet gallery early. Triggered by sound, the piece lights up, blinking as it picks up on ambient room noise. Barely flickering at the beginning of the show, by the time the moths took flight, the piece was aglow with flickering lights, responding to the noise of the crowd.

Also of note were John Kotula's iPad drawings entitled "Science Fiction Writers." It was actually another Hera project of Kotula's, the "World's Smallest Art Gallery" on a kiosk in Peace Dale along the South County bike path, and the work of artist Suzi Ballenger, who also has three textile aprons on display, that brought about the idea for "TechnoCraft."

According to Kotula, the idea was to bring together artists at the same point in their careers, who were working around or with the idea of technology. As Randall put it during his "Moth Machine" performance, this is "high tech and handmade."

"This is not art," Randall said. "These are things you work with."

And in one simple sentence, the artist manages to bring to light the constant struggle not only between art and craft, but art and technology. These may be technological masterpieces, but they are also often quite beautiful and ethereal, transcending what it means to be technology and art at the same time.

Jamestown Arts Center is open Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

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