

Review, The Hook:

Talk show host: Casey wants you to play games

By Laura Parsons

Everyone understands what a “date movie” entails, but what about a “date art exhibit”? Rosamond Casey has created just that with “Catch the Baby,” an installation at Chroma Projects that is ideally experienced in tandem. It's designed to foster couples' communication, but viewers don't have to be lovey-dovey sweethearts to benefit from Casey's show *de deux*; it works equally well for close friends, siblings, parents and children, bosses and employees, even estranged spouses.

At the heart of “Catch the Baby” are 18 photographic images depicting two figures in relation to each other. Casey has used wooden sculpting mannequins, sometimes painted for aesthetic effect, to create dramatic scenarios that ingeniously avoid any inherent suggestion of gender or age. Like non-abstract Rorschach images for two, the photographs serve as a deck of cards in a game Casey has developed in consultation with psychiatrist and family physician David Waters, as part of the University of Virginia's Science & Art Project.

In the game, two players select three identical cards, and then, separated by a divider, individually reflect upon what the images mean in connection to their relationship. Players then place color-coded glass baubles on each card to indicate their feelings about the image, after which they remove the divider and take turns talking about their interpretation of each card, while the other player listens in silence.

A tabletop game alone, though, does not a visually stimulating exhibition make, so in addition to three tables set up for play, Casey has hung larger prints of the cards' images horizontally along the gallery's walls. Below the photographs are transcripts of previous game players' interpretations, printed on green-striped dot-matrix paper and placed on clipboard-like squares, suggesting clinical importance. A pen lies next to each printout to let viewers add their own impressions of each image. The installation also includes several of Casey's painted and posed figures, as well as her meticulously crafted packaging for the game.

But is “Catch the Baby” successful as a tool of communication? I played the game with a good friend, and our different ways of seeing the same images were, in fact, surprising and illuminating. I learned she often worries what I will say about her artwork, and she discovered I am in awe of her determination and career momentum.

Well thought-out and beautifully executed, “Catch the Baby” is a good excuse to make a play date with someone you love.

Rosamond Casey's exhibition, “Catch the Baby,” was on view at Chroma Projects Art Laboratory, Charlottesville, Va.