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Oli Watt and Andrew Winship

“Another Saturday Morning Tragedy: The Collaborations and Work of Oli Watt and Andrew Winship,” Roots and Culture, through Sat 10 (see West Side).



Oli Watt and Andrew Winship, Momentum, 2007.

–4 stars–

Roots and Culture is among Chicago’s latest alternative spaces. Started by Eric May, the venue programs films, lectures and even cooking events. The focus here is on community and interaction among all types of creative people, an agenda clearly on display in this collaborative exhibition by Oli Watt and Andrew Winship.

The show looks at disaster through the lens of morning cartoons. For years, TV networks enticed generations of kids to get up early on Saturdays, kicking off their weekends with sugared-cereal commercials and a side of comedic violence as their parents slept in. This paradox of fun and destruction forms the basis of the print works (mixing screen with woodblock) by Watt and Winship. In Mickey Mouse, the rodent—rendered like a harsh newsprint photo against a crisp, colorful background—turns away in horror over the catastrophic demise of a colorful, happy-go-lucky colleague. The lunacy here is cranked up by the idiotic grin plastered across the mouse’s face.

Not all the pieces work as well. Lucky Charms, for instance, is technically excellent but much too cluttered. The most successful keep the juxtapositions simple, like a wrecked car hurtling toward a happy gnome in Momentum. The rugged dynamism of the crash butts up against the smooth image of the oblivious cartoon character. —Erik Wenzel