

Westword

ART BEAT



The entire set of Upper Galleries at the Arvada Center (6901 Wadsworth Boulevard, 720-898-7200) are given over to Testify, a solo featuring recent pieces by Colorado artist Riva Sweetrocket. Arvada Center curator and director of exhibitions Jerry Gilmore got to know Sweetrocket when the now-defunct Studio Aiello represented both. I missed Sweetrocket's efforts when they were exhibited at Aiello, so Testify was the first time I'd seen her work in depth. I have to say, it's very impressive -- if a little weird.

The show is made up entirely of large-format drawings done in chalk pastels. Sweetrocket manages to utterly control the powdered pigments and get almost-photographic realism in her depictions of everyday objects, people and animals. The style of her drawings is neo-pop, and there's more than a little tip of the hat to '60s great James Rosenquist. This is particularly apparent in the drawing "Sunny Side Up," a composition containing a sunflower, a fried egg and a pair of women's legs.

I loved some of these drawings, which are both exquisitely crafted and thoughtfully conceived. "Comfort Food" (above) -- essentially a vision of the apotheosis of a block of ramen noodles floating in the air surrounded by a halo, with twin lambs below and a pair of white doves above -- is incredible. -- **Michael Paglia**