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Review Studios exhibit reads new meaning into words

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Gobber's enamel-on-canvas *"Broker"* (2009) makes topical commentary on the current economic crisis.

Changeable is the word that best represents Archie Scott Gobber's pithy, text-based art.

So it's ideal that his painting *"Changeable"* was selected for display on the billboards above Missouri Bank's Crossroads branch. The enlarged reproduction is part of the bank's involvement in the Art through Architecture project.

The two halves of the compound word — "change" and "able" — inhabit separate but adjacent billboards, encouraging drivers and pedestrians to reconsider the meaning of each word on its own and combined.

Likewise, Gobber's sparse but absorbing solo show at Review Studios Exhibition Space, *"Archie Scott Gobber Is Better Off Now,"* invites viewers to actively engage with art that plays on the changeability of language.

"Better Off Now," for example, is a mammoth installation that rewards viewings from differing angles.

The white foam board letters affixed to freestanding cedar supports spell the word "nowhere" when one stands to the left of the piece. If one moves to the right, however, they spell "now here" because of their uneven placement.

Both expressions present a way to complete the delightfully ambiguous statement begun in the title.

In addition, the wavy arrangement of the letters, their typeface and their theatrical lighting are suggestive of the Hollywood sign, which is appropriate considering the sign's history of change.

Originally, it read "Hollywoodland." Twenty-six years later, the "land" portion was removed. As a prank, someone even altered the Os in "wood" to look like Es.

Gobber employed similar prankster tactics in *"Word,"* a humorous piece consisting of four large, three-dimensional letters the artist found and painted black-and-white.

It asks that viewers use their power of closure to mentally complete the word the letters allegedly form. They appear to spell "NEK'd" — a colloquial spin on "naked" — with the help of black tape on the wall for an apostrophe and a capital P turned upside down.

But attempts to figure it out are continuously frustrated. The middle arm on the E is painted white, except for a tiny rectangle at the end, and an addition of white to the K makes it look like it could be an R.

Gobber resumes the idea of making two letters exist in the same space in "The Audacity."

This puzzling canvas, painted with precision and brilliant colors, requires that viewers spend some time deciphering its dueling messages of advertisement and affirmation.

Dark brown letters with yellow outlines elicit a sign for "Rudys Muffler Shop," which Gobber has interwoven with another, more inspiring message: "Never Abandon Hope," in light brown and pink.

And Gobber's smallest work in the exhibit, "Broker," is a clever twist on a timely word.

Across three abutted canvases, he used vibrant enamel to paint the letters in the title. Manipulating color to differentiate the R at the end of the word from the preceding letters, he subtly comments on the current slowdown of the housing market and how broke real estate brokers might feel.

Although there are only four artworks displayed in Review Studios' cavernous space, they are big enough to hold their own and viewers have ample room to fully appreciate them.

the show

"Archie Scott Gobber Is Better Off Now" continues through April 17 at Review Studios Exhibition Space, 1708 Campbell St. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Friday and noon to 4 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 816-994-7134 or visit reviewstudios at www.ereview.org



"Better Off Now", a construction of foam board and cedar by Gobber, is part of his solo exhibition, "Archie Scott Gobber is Better Off Now," at Review Studios Exhibition Space.