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Alan Artner | In the Galleries

Illinois journey includes abstract rural landscapes



Artist Bill Frederick presents a camera's point of view in the in-and-out-of-focus passages in this watercolor on paper titled "Roadside Restaurant" on display at Zg Gallery.

By Alan G. Artner
TRIBUNE CRITIC

EXHIBITIONS

Bill Frederick at Zg Gallery through May 31

As late as a decade ago, when the big contemporary art exposition was at Navy Pier, all showplaces in town saw an increase in visitors, as those who went to the fair also explored galleries. In the last two years, however, Art Chicago and its satellites have seemed to leave time for only better-known venues, so this week, with people from out of town in for Artropolis, we focus on four Illinois artists who may be seen only at newer spaces in each of the city's chief art "districts"—West Loop Gate, Pilsen and River North. They are reminders that there's still no substitute for the gallery experience.

For 30 years **Bill Frederick** has been a realist, as the span of his works on paper (and one canvas) at Zg Gallery attests. But where in the early graphite drawings "Railroad Bridge, Green Bay, WI" and "Consolidated Freightways" he seems to have begun where a Precisionist such as Charles Sheeler left off, the late ones more clearly indulge the fictions of Photorealism and the adjustments one's brain does or doesn't make to binocular vision.

Not that Frederick is orthodox about any of this. A camera's point of view is obvious in the in-and-out-of-focus passages in the watercolor "Roadside Restaurant" and double vision is apparent to a greater or lesser degree in ambitious recent drawings of gas stations. But neither is the work's reason for being as it would have been for a 1970s Photorealist or Harold Haydon, an obsessive about

binocular vision. Frederick, rather, uses them sparingly to italicize, if you will, the fiction of realist picture-making. They're more a way of keeping realism off-balance for the viewer. And in each image here everything unerringly works.

At 300 W. Superior St. 312-654-9900.

