

Findings by Students of Life and Art

ANNUAL SBCC STUDENT EXHIBITION FEELS EXTRA DENSE, BUT THE STANDOUTS SHINE

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent



Annual Student Exhibition

When: through May 17

Where: Atkinson Gallery, Santa Barbara City College, 721 Cliff Dr.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mon. through Thurs., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fri. and Sat.

Information: 965-0581, Ext. 3484, sbcc.edu/art



'Big Wheel,' Charles Starr



'Crystal Rays,' Sumio Ueda



'Trophy,' Ben Eckert



'Seed Pod,' Luis Alberto Velazquez

In the presence of varietal density in a gallery setting, such as is found in the Annual Student Exhibition at Santa Barbara City College's Atkinson Gallery, the eye naturally seeks out anchor pieces, art that jumps out for attention and becomes a focal point around which the rest of the work radiates. In this show, in these eyes, that single piece doesn't so much jump out as dangle before you, in mid-air, in mid-gallery, begging to be decoded and even touched (no, don't do that).

We're talking about the elephant seal of a piece in the room, Luis Velazquez's "Seed Pod," suspended from the ceiling and basking in its own peculiar logic and materiality. A moss-covered, torso-like object suggests a life form, possibly alien, possibly undersea, possibly dreamworldly. Affixed to this torso are plates that have been broken and folded over patches of fur, like some Dadaistic facsimile of oysters, mixed with dinnerware.

Fundamentally, it's a delightful conundrum, a "go figure" scenario with no easy or pat interpretation, but one that keeps luring the eye and mind back to its time and space, while taking in the rest of this year's student art harvest.

Curated by UCSB Art Department faculty member Jane Mulfinger, the student show feels even denser than usual, packed into the smaller gallery that is the temporary Atkinson Gallery, while the larger gallery with a killer view undergoes renovation across campus. Charming as the genuine Atkinson is, somehow, the hermetic enclosure of this windowless temp building can manage to tighten up the art-concentric concentration factor.

Speaking of works that tug at the senses with an extra flair or mysteriousness, the sole video art piece in the gallery is something to pay attention to — this despite the fact that its sound element forces the gallery visitor to notice it. Oliver Murray's "Spark" is a hypnotic, non-linear paean — we assume — to the mysteries of love and the actual and metaphorical matters of fire, joined lips, fondled flesh, and hearts, the squeezable rubber kind and otherwise. Watch its loop a few times through, and the jump-cut montage effect may well keep you watching a few times more.

From a more traditional artistic standpoint, one of the clearly impressive artists in the midst here is Jessica Presley-Grusin, whose drawing skills are put to fine and contextually interesting use in the Cubist-ish "Self Portrait in the Style of Tamara De Lempicka" and the detailed miniaturist etching "Lepidoptophilia," all about love of butterflies.

In contrast to that quiet but exacting, compact graphic statement, Mackenzie Pringle's "September" announces itself with a complex splash, as a mixed media tangle-up confab of tubular imagery, circuitry, body parts and gizmos. Her assembly of parts makes the gonzo whole buzz and quiver.



Atkinson Gallery photos

'In Limbo #2,' Egor Sapov

In the realm of the painting senses, Sumio Ueda's "Rising Blue" heeds a tilting geometric grid of blue-to-white squares, a checkerboard in transit, which is quite the opposite end of the abstractionist spectrum from Jannet Gregory's rugged and raggedy post-Pollock action painting "Influx."

Interweaving the abstract and figurative quite nicely, Dayne Grace Christenson's "What Hides Beneath" consists of skeins of jabbing brushstrokes, out of which a pensive portrait subject half-emerges. We've all had days like that.

Among the sculptural works in the exhibition, including some fine and polished ceramic work and more conventional sculptural objects, there are other simple and surreal gestures given us notice to be noticed.

Amber Silva's "Baby Goddess" mutates a baby doll — a found and artfully abused object — into a three-faced deity of sorts, while the altered material in Norman Krohn's "Jacket" is carefully shaped chicken wire in the place of an inviting fabric. In all of the above cases, the willful rerouting of what we expect — from the imagery and the material used to achieve it — playfully enlivens the senses, roughing us up into a bit of wakeful awareness.

In such moments, we think less about the nature of art students trying to find their way than the universal power of art to get our daily life-benumbed juices flowing again.

WANTED:
Quality Paintings
(1850-1970)
Sullivan Goss
AN AMERICAN GALLERY
7 E. Anapamu Avenue
805.730.1460

GOT A NEWS TIP?
Give us a call on our
NEWS HOT LINE
or send us an Email at
news@newspress.com
805-564-5273
SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS