

# Dimensional Notions and Motions at Santa Barbara City College Gallery

SBCC's Atkinson Gallery Comes Alive with Work by Alumni Made Good



*Tamar Siegfried Rosa Halpern's work | Credit: Josef Woodard*

By **Josef Woodard**

Wed Oct 05, 2022 | 9:21am

Up at Santa Barbara City College's Atkinson Gallery, visitors may notice a certain built-in contextual irony. What is likely the local art space blessed with the most dazzling panoramic view — harbor below and mountains beyond — also boasts a curatorial agenda generally embracing challenging contemporary art, and anything but pretty, scenic pictures. Savoring art here, post-ish pandemic, is especially satisfying in the absence of the long-standing Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara's sad, recent demise.

In the Atkinson's current two-person exhibition, the overview is fittingly both wide and in-house: Evelyn Contreras and Tamar Siegfried Rosa Halpern are SBCC art program alums who ventured upward and outward on their artistic paths. Contreras earned her

MFA at the University of Texas at Austin, while Halpern's MFA was at Columbia University. They bring separate but complementary aesthetics to the room, in which conventional media are subjected to fresh uses and reimaginings.



*Evelyn Contreras's work | Credit: Josef Woodard*

Materials and social commentary matter in Halpern's art, a twist-up on printmaking tactics blending plexiglass, aluminum, silk, linen UV prints, diffused photographic imagery, and other means. Ostensibly two-dimensional, her intriguing art expands its scope and messages via loaded texts printed on the floor (a rarity in this space), and such voluble titles as "ONCE I TASTED TIME I NEVER WANTED ANYTHING ELSE, AND THAT IS WHAT I'M DOING HERE. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN PROVE IT. ROLLING IN THE SHIT OF TIME LIKE A DOG ROLLING IN DEAD FISH AT THE BEACH." And... scene.

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Dramatic impact appears in a more surface level way in Contreras's playful yet probing work. Hand-crafting brightly colored and spangled variations on such antiquated objects as View-Masters and Rolodexes (jumbo facsimiles, with interactive hand cranks), she engages in vivid cultural crosstalk between nostalgia, retro-futurism, and a candy-coated brand of ritualism. Her large, neon-green "flipbooks" mimic antique film technology with her personal abstract prints, while the sparkly View-Masters house hyper-color-infused, symmetrical images of semi-psychedelia.

Seizing attention in a corner, "Suspension" makes its sensory point with a sculptural mass of plastic and mirrors, suggesting a frozen splash, a deconstructed royal crown, or both. A goopy animated GIF lurks inside on a small screen, optically multiplied with mirrors and evoking an energy source of some pagan worship, with Silicon Valley's blessing. In Contreras's art, elegance of finish mixes symbiotically with funk.

Evelyn Contreras's and Tamar Siegfried Rosa Halpern's exhibit is on view at Atkinson Gallery through October 19. For more information, visit [gallery.sbccc.edu](http://gallery.sbccc.edu).



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Fri Oct 07, 2022 | 18:56pm

<https://www.independent.com/2022/10/05/dimensional-notions-and-motions-at-santa-barbara-city-college-gallery/>



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