Teaching by artful example

VIBRANT WORK BY SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT FACULTY LIVENS UP THE NEWLY RENOVATED ATKINSON GALLERY

By Josef Woodard,
News-Press Correspondent

Art Faculty Biennial
When: through September 26
Where: Atkinson Gallery, Santa Barbara City College, 721 Cliff Dr.
Hours: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday and Saturday
Information: 965-0587, ext. 3484, gallery.sbcc.edu

A lthough the current exhibition at SBCC's Atkinson Gallery, a showcasing of the talented art faculty at the college, is one brimming with vitality and enlightened variety, a certain, strange aura of lamentation also sneaks into the room, when you least expect it. What initially seem to be faint sounds of weeping become waves and degrees of emotional intensity and serio-comic dramatizing.

Have no fear, dread or loathing: it's only the sound of art making its multi-media presence known, in the form of Elizabeth Folk's campy multi-sensory sculpture, "How to Cry on the Internet." Three small video screens are tucked into an odd, carpeted structure — some kind of variation on the theme of a cat-clawing play structure, a comfort zone of sorts — where we find hysterionic cries in the "act," overlaid by psychedelic munch effects, for further emotional distancing. It becomes the subtle, cry-baby soundtrack to a show that is anything but moopy.

"How to Cry on the Internet," Elizabeth Folk

It is more than fitting that the new Atkinson Gallery season — the first new full season in the newly renovated gallery-with-a-view after nearly two years spent in the humble utilitarian digs across campus — kicks off with one of the regular faculty shows at the college. Now a bi-annual occasion, the faculty shows manage to serve a different purpose, showing by example the ever-changing nature and diversity of the SBCC Art Department from the mentor perspective, while serving the purpose of giving attention to locally based art and artists worth checking in on. That list includes a few new artists in the mix since the last such exhibition in this space.

From the painting angle, the work here varies boldly, artist to artist. Laura Krifa, who impressed mightily in her UCSB MFA show a few years ago (and in the recent UCSB alumni show) and now teaches at SBCC, is up to her cracked classicism agenda with the painting "Lambs." It's another wowing example of her unique, elegantly painted canvas, with hints of sex, violence (is that berry juice or blood?) and mythology rejuveged, with sumptuous skin tones and sneaky undertones in tow.

On another wall, another large painting beckons: Rafael Perea de la Cabada's "Square One." It is a seductively ritualistic image of a symbiotic pair of amoeba-like creatures meeting in some dreamy middle dimension. A different sort of meeting is involved in Dustin Metz's "Half Night, Still Life," which craftily fuses (and confuses) the artistic traditions of the nocturne and the still life. Christopher Ulvo, one of the newer additions to the art faculty who had a one-man show on campus last year, asserts his goonzo comical aesthetic with delightful images from a "Prehistoric Park," where presumably static dinosaurs lurk amidst a shiftily proprietor and a drinking toad.

Sculpture has its day, and moves in various directions and materials, in the show. Aside from Ms. Folk's wry, weepy charmies, Stephanie Dottson's "Drug Rug" is a rug-like relief piece of hypnotic design, roughly similar to the artful weave of "Turn Time," Liv Aanrud's jumbo-scaled bowtie, a rainbow-colored textile art piece. Michelle Orato's "Again and Again" deftly stirs up metaphorical and direct emotional trouble with a window frame, broken pans and damaged hands, suggesting a residue of crime and/ or wages of passion.

"Turn Time," Liv Aanrud

On more archetypal and form-based terms, Ed Inks' "If Not One" is a mutating cast aluminum and rust-colored (and rust-themed) composite blob, at once sensuous and slightly sinister, while Nathan Hayden's "Shapes for Shadows" is a mock-studious collection of elemental forms in clay, with holes strategically placed as if for easy transformation into macro-milagros. Christopher Bates demonstrates his sure and luminous skill working with glazed porcelain in pieces graced with titles which thicken the interpretive plot — "Yoho Bowl" and "Dog Bonz!"

In the "other" categories of the college's seemingly balanced Art Department options, Marie Schoeff shows two of her cryptically elegant, abstract dry-point prints. Thomas Larson shows examples of his long-honed book art style, with accord-

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