

Left Hanging in Mid-Air

SBCC'S ATKINSON GALLERY HOSTS MEXICAN ARTIST CLAUDIA PEREZ-PAVON'S FIRST SOLO U.S. SHOW

By Josef Woodard,
News-Press Correspondent



Claudia Pérez-Pavón,
'Suspension'

When: through April 5
Where: Atkinson Gallery,
Santa Barbara City College,
721 Cliff Dr.
Hours: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Mon.-Thurs.,
10 a.m.-4 p.m. Fri.-Sat.
Information: 965-0581, ext. 3484,
www.sbcc.edu/art



Claudia Pérez-Pavón photo

Installation featuring 'Buscar lo real,' left, and 'El ojo y el espíritu,' foreground

Continuing with this season's roster of ripe, refreshing, satisfying and slightly odd shows in Santa Barbara City College's Atkinson Gallery, March's fare features the work of Mexican artist Claudia Pérez-Pavón, in her first solo U.S. exhibition. "Suspension" is a more than apt title, and conditional description for her art and this show. Gently surreal imagery on transparent or fragile surfaces hangs on the walls, or on framed, two-sided paintings suspended from the ceiling.

In a show in which single artworks interact with and inform others, a deceptive lightness and levitating feel makes its way into the space of the Atkinson Gallery, currently in a temporary building while the "real" gallery on the other side of campus undergoes reconstruction. In a way, the art adding up to "Suspension" creates its own internal world and sensibility, in which dreams and atmospheric qualities converge, but ask questions more than supply easy answers.

Contrary to the age-old tradition of art exhibitions in which artworks are hung solidly on the wall or, in the case of sculpture, set squarely on the floor, the art in Ms. Pérez-Pavón's show hangs in mid-air, literally and otherwise. Even a piece like "Samilla," grounded with the solid, bold materiality of oil-on-mahogany, has a cosmic, floating air, with its construction of floating painted-wood rings suggesting a sectioned and dismantled decorative bowl, in a zero-gravity dimension.

Cross-talk between pieces in the shows takes on different forms. "Dear-Deer," a drawing and stitching wall piece, on paper and acetate, sends out a sympathetic signal to a "floater" piece nearby, "El ojo y el espíritu." In that oil-on-filament work, the image of two sleeping deer, with green rays emanating outward from the animals, basks in a mystical radiance.

Questions of cultural identity and waking self-consciousness filter through much of this art, as well. "Edna-Etnia," for instance, is a wall piece in which the female subject in question is a blurry merger of native and assimilated identities, begging the relevant multicultural issue of whether the discrete ethnic parts or the combined whole take precedence in one's sense of self.

"Handmade Banality," a piece with a loaded but meaningful title, is another suspended, framed painting, which goes in a more pointedly surreal, Magritte-like direction. In it, a dodo bird has been sliced open to reveal the fruity innards of an orange, and the sum effect is encased in psychedelic visual debris.

With the larger multi-media piece called "Buscarlo real," a little girl holds a curious pet (or stuffed animal: it's not clear) in a painting on plastic sheet hung in front of long scrolls of fragmented wallpaper — fragmented in form and in content. Cozy domesticity and youthful innocence blend in with the stuff of vague irrationality, expressing a juxtaposition of sweetness and vulnerability, enhanced by the fact of the art's flotation factor.



Diego Liedo photo

'Hana.mov'



Diego Liedo photo

'Semilla' (detail)



Diego Liedo photo

'Aurora' (back)

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