

ART REVIEW

California artists show diversity in museum show

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Art has evolved along with changing times and tastes. Religious art, except for masterpieces of the past, is now found only in places of worship, and controversial pieces such as "Nude Descending a Staircase" (1913) are as acceptable as the stiff 18th century portraits of the nation's Founding Fathers.

The Museum, California Center for the Arts, Escondido's current exhibition "The Next Wave: New Painting in Southern California" offers examples of another phase in art's evolution. It is not meant to be a comprehensive collection, guest curator Noriko Gamblin said at a press preview, but a sampling of what's happening now in our extended local area.

"There are hundreds of very good artists that I might have invited to submit work. But you can't include everyone. These 20 artists are those with whom I feel an affinity. They speak to me," Gamblin said.

The 70 pieces that are Gamblin's final choices are by artists working in the coastal corridor from Santa Barbara to San Diego. In light of the artists' backgrounds — hometowns, their differing teachers and mentors and their experi-

■ "THE NEXT WAVE: NEW PAINTINGS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA"

When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays; noon to 5 p.m. Sundays (closed on Mondays and holidays); through Sept. 10

Where: Museum, California Center for the Arts, Escondido, 340 N. Escondido Blvd., Escondido

Tickets: \$5, general; \$5, seniors; \$3, students; free, children 12 and under

Info: (760) 838-3148

ences — the show represents a much larger area: the universal world of art.

Gamblin and the museum staff have done an excellent job in hanging. The two large galleries, one smaller one and three passageways that double as hanging spaces, provide sufficient room to display individual artists' works in groupings.

Some exhibitions that offer something for everyone become hodgepodes. Not so here. One element that ties the show together is a gallery of the artists' photo portraits by Judi Russell, with statements by her subjects about their artistic philosophies. Seeing all the faces together and knowing something of their thinking processes suggest a family or a group of people with a close-to-



An untitled reverse portrait by Salomon Huerta.

intimate commonality.

Another accidental tie is thematic. Six of the artists include birds in their work. (Could they all have studied with Alfred Hitchcock?) The bird in Ruprecht von Kaufmann's "The Oath of Hippocrates" is passive, sitting

quietly on a high windowsill observing a team of doctors around the bed of a dying or critically ill man. Hummingbirds in Enrique Martinez Celaya's "Quiet Night (recollection)" are deadly, pecking out the eyes of a man's head 20 times life-size with a cascade of blood.

Stephen F. Curry, whose oversize still lifes were a hit in a previous show at the museum, also features birds in his work. In "Glare," three giant blackbirds strut across a canvas, while the subject of "Still Life" is indeed still, a dead canary lying on its back.

Three of the "Next Wave" artists — Linda Besemer, Ingrid Calame and Salomon Huerta — are currently showing in a prestigious New York City museum. They each have pieces in the Whitney Museum of Art's Biennial 2000.

Besemer's work in the medium-size gallery catches viewers' eyes immediately. Her style and form are unusual, probably unique. Besemer paints acrylic stripes onto a Plexiglas sheet, then carefully removes the abstract images and drapes them over rods. In "Fold #1," "Fold #30" and "Fold #8 (You're so square)" figure and ground, back and front are the same.

The enamel-on-aluminum pieces by Calame hang on an adjacent wall. Her style on



"Annetacin" by Lesley Soast

"FootCK" and "BOE, pf" is bold. The enamel intensifies her abstract slashes of color. The piece "#13 Working Drawing" shows her inspiration, tracings of objects she has found on the street.

Huerta is an unusual portraitist. He paints heads from the back, setting up mysteries about what the subjects with different hairlines, different coloring and different ways of holding the head might look head-on.

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Huerta also shows such a man full-length from the same angle, and a portrait of a house.

Philip Argenti's pieces suggest that the artist is well organized and systematic. "Dream Car" is a stripped vehicle within an oval, on an abstract field with evenly spaced hanging triangles. His other two pieces show the same order. Jane Callister turns food into art. Except for its giant dimensions "Chocolate Drip" is an appetizing diamond that's just beginning to melt. Dan Cornally does interesting shapes from diverse and not always recognizable subjects, such as a man's name (Earl) and what seems to be a target's bullseye and a can-can dancer's legs.

Gail Roberts of Valley Center and Jean Lowe of Encinitas do North County proud. Roberts' finely detailed studies of tree trunk sections continue her artistic dedication to the environment. Lowe departs from the papier-mache furniture of previous Escondido shows to create five ancient-looking book frontispieces.

The show has a new delight in every grouping. Yanhee

Min's house paint-on-aluminum panels are hard-edge minimalism. Sharon Ellis draws brilliantly colored landscapes of a land that exists only within her imagination. Richard Allen Morris' acrylics on wood or small canvases comment on the process of creating art.

So it goes from gallery to gallery. Lerley Saar relates the embarrassing history of slavery in "Anastacia — Slave and Black Martyr." The painting of a woman who was murdered because she refused the advances of her master has a real muscle, and pictures of slave ships in the upper corners of the canvas. Steven Crigoli's still lifes delight in a style similar to that of Morandi.

Laura Owens' three-dimensional bees hover around a painted hive. Scott Reeder shows a surreal tunnel entrance, sleeping bag and rock pile. Adam Ross sees landscapes of the future that recall cubism. Darren Waterston works on a big scale and from a vivid imagination. His version of the boy who plugged a hole in a dike with his finger is a host with mice shapes.

"The New Wave: New Painting in Southern California" is a highly accessible show. This critic's recommendation: Enrique Martinez Celaya's subtle