



Tether No. 4 by Toribio Palacios Jr

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Clay Exhibition"
Where: Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, 921 E 12th Street, Mission
When: Oct 13-Nov. 3, 2018
Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday, 2-5pm Saturday
Contact: (956) 583-2787
Free and open to the public

Art from the Earth

A modest survey of clay works from this area.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Ranging from simple craft to the artistically sophisticated, the "Clay Exhibition" at the Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center includes pieces by two ceramics instructor-artists, Alexander Comminos and Chris Leonard, and a few of their students. Exhibition organizer, Chris Mari Van Dyck, UVAL member, thought of Comminos when she wanted excellent large pieces for the show, and hoped that he would know students who might be also interested in showing work. Along with Leonard, he did. Comminos has a number of ceramics on display although we have seen several of them elsewhere. "Right now, I'm on hiatus," he countered, "change of schools, change of institutions, change of direction. My work here represents leaving and moving forward. I'm about to hop into a series on totems, and it's all going to be form and surface." Although

Comminos is still interested in his complex surface effects, the recent works forego the complex buildup of glazes that have become his ceramics signature. His surprisingly lattice-shaped piece, "Material Nature", represents movement upward – dreams, energy, and passion. The curvilinear ceramic sits on an unstable wood structure as a remembrance of hardships and supportive people. "It's a story," Comminos remarked. "It's a narrative."

There are a few other works that deserve attention. The "Tether" ceramics by Toribio Palacios have a bold impact. Not necessarily objects of beauty, these pieces have a raw and commanding presence that holds our attention. Extrusions sprout unevenly from "Tether 4", as if proclaiming a new life form, flaunting self-assurance while other pieces in this show emit an underlying self-consciousness. Leonard, an artist whose titles are as interesting as the works they identify, shows a triptych, "Three Part Disharmony", that has a lot going on within its broken-tiled surface. A visually quiet piece of three sections, its contrast of parts doesn't work well from a distance, but Leonard explained that, after all, he was working up close. Stylistically, it is quite harmonious; the disharmony comes from its differing inspirations. One panel reflects a visit to Japan, the panel, "Cat on a Hot Tile Roof", includes shards of broken pots from fellow ceramists, and the remaining panel, "Into the Great Wide Open", comments on social norms - it is the fish out of water that sailed across the border wall that Leonard also ties in with Tom Petty's death and OxyContin. "Everybody has problems," he explained. "No matter how many." Nearby, Lucille Lockhart's "Limitless Collection" arrangement is cool and elegant with graceful circles. Her work and Commino's "Material Nature" are both unlikely form choices for ceramics and stand apart from massive clay sculptures and utilitarian pottery found elsewhere in this exhibition. With her "Limitless Collection", Lockhart wanted to create something that could be read as both micro and macro. To her mind, the circle was a logical shape that occurs as a tiny atom as well as an enormous celestial orb, and her "Limitless" pieces can be grouped for an extensive installation reflecting the nature of either one. They may be viewed as objects magnified or minimized.

The "Clay Exhibition" opening reception shared space with UVAL's annual fundraising event this year. The small 5"x7" and 8"x10" fundraiser artworks, mostly wall pieces, were installed right along with the larger clay works, resulting in a mild ambiance of disorder. The more popular works from the fundraiser have now left the premises, and the clay pieces have more room to breathe.

Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art, UTRGV, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at nmoyer@rgv.rr.com