



Little Red Book by Linda Lewis

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: **Flights of Fancy** by Fiber Arts Unlimited
Where: UVAL, Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, 921 E 12th Street, Mission
When: Through April 7, 2018
Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday, 2-5pm Saturday
Contact: (956) 583-2787

Craft and Fine Art

UVAL's fiber artists moved beyond their comfort zones for this delightful show.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

"Flights of Fancy" is a pleasurable experience for anyone who still feels a bit of time-change stress. UVAL's 2018 fiber exhibition, on display at the Kika de la Garza Fine Art Center, offers a lifting of spirits with this generally upbeat and lighthearted show. Whimsy begins at the entrance with a quilted wall hanging designed with abstracted bird shapes and plastic bottle parts, but works taking a more serious stance also elicit positive feelings. This is the strongest show so far for the UVAL fiber arts group. The works are well thought-out in terms of idea and design, and the techniques are impeccably executed, with the exception of a large Pop padded canvas work that almost makes up for shortcomings with its spunky scale.

According to UVAL member, Fran Wessel, the fiber artists were encouraged to think outside the craft-box, expand on their techniques, and push their thought processes for the most interesting portrayal of their idea. "One of the things we talked about is taking a fiber technique and going deeper," exclaimed Wessel, "we've had people make things out of plastic bags. Next year will be an expansion on what we are trying to learn; we've got to be learning all the time, if we aren't, we're bored." A few artists already seem to be ahead of the game. Marilyn Carren's "Neural Network", woven from electric and electronic cords, seems to be wildly out of human

control. This work strays deep into the depths of expressive imagination for the sake of meaning beyond technique. Linda Lewis offers several notable pieces. Her “Little Red Book” contains pages constructed with a paper and string fiber, exposing words in Chinese print. It has the deceptive appearance of innocent weightlessness, and her “History Teaches Nothing” brought me to a breathtaking stop, causing me to forget the surrounding quilted works emitting their joyful expressions of a non-threatening world. “History” tackles relevant social commentary through a brilliant combination of concept, technique, and perfect execution. It requires a closer look at its typewriter keys, all displaying a hammer and sickle, and the endless fiber page being typed. The page is stitched from pieces of a book, one page after another, all connected and “typed” over with the hammer and sickle symbol.

There are more unusual works in this show. “Feather Carrier” by Pat Cooper is a lush tactile work that combines crochet, deer antler, beads and feathers, reminding us of North America’s Native American heritage. Cooper also shows a collaborative work, “Fly Me to the Artists’ Moon”. This wall piece consists of thirteen moon images by different artists combined into a single work. “Word Challenge” is another collaboration, this time by the Fiber Arts group. This large project displays different visual interpretations to the words, “Growing”, “Bugs”, and “Journey”. The members went distinctively different directions with their interpretations, spending up to a month working on each word-idea. A bench is provided for comfortable viewing. Nancy Algrim, inspired by the sculptor, Giacometti, created sets of small dolls wearing fashionable attire reflecting contemporary fashion.

Although the show title suggests creatures of flight, “Flights of Fancy” was meant to include any imaginative subject or approach. There are still plenty of bird motifs to be seen, including the witty random bird and butterfly images sewn from shopping bags, grocery labels, and fabrics strewn about the gallery space.

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