



## SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Myths & Legends"  
Where: Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, 921 E 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Mission  
When: March 14 – May 4, 2020  
Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday, 10am-2pm Saturday  
Contact: (956) 583-2787  
Free and open to the public when COVID-19 restrictions lift. Call to confirm.

### **Legendary Ideas**

This exhibition of fiber art is a high-spirited art show that offers a sense of normality at a time when we can use it.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

"Myths & Legends" is the annual exhibition and brainchild of Fiber Arts Unlimited. This is one of the Upper Valley Art League's subsidiary specialty groups and is focused on taking fiber, fabric, and textile crafts up to a higher level - often using creative thinking exercises to stimulate ideas and unusual treatment of materials. But whatever ideas and themes are favored, solid craftsmanship is always paramount. There seemed to be more variety this year and more experimental explorations. It's an exciting show! Jonathon Blocher's "The Font of Creativity" is one such example of unexpected thinking, with its tightly wound threads affording a perfect place for those idle paint brushes. More traditionally, Vicki Guerra looks at astrology with "Pisces", where the watery world is ideally expressed through her quilting technique,

About cats...Chris M Van Dyck has been submitting unusual and interesting work over the past couple of years, but this year she presented a true showstopper. Delving headlong into the shows thematic direction she created disarming sculptural cat installations including legendary ship cats. "When I found out about the ship cats," explained Van Dyck about her inspiration, "each one of these cats had a story and I wanted to tell these stories and feature these cats." "Ship's Cat #2: Emmy" depicts an orange tabby jumping ship into a sea of turbulent water; a tiny kitten watches from the deck. Emmy's story is posted next to the work and tells us that she was the *RMS Empress of Ireland's* ship cat. Having never missed a voyage, she jumped ship while in port in Quebec City. The crew caught and returned her to the ship, but again, she left. The ship sailed without her – a terrible omen. The next morning it collided with another ship, sinking and killing over 1,000 people. Clarifying the construction of her fuzzy cats, the artist discussed her technique. "They're all made with 100% lambswool," she exclaimed. "This was the medium I wanted because it was like sculpture; you can control it and I liked the control." She wrapped it, catching the wool with barbed needles and driving it into the form, slowly building the shape. Addressing the mythological, a black polydactyl cat installation also catches viewer attention with numerous paw-shaped lift-up tags containing the myths associated with this type of cat.

This exhibition is almost as strongly about divergent points of view as about fiber art works. What do we consider legendary? What myths do we recognize? This is a surprisingly broad exhibit in terms of specific subject and interpretive stance. Fran Wessel and Pat Cooper see certain artists as legendary; Wessel honored Gustav Klimt with a quilted interpretation of his "Adele", while Cooper lauds Mark Rothko with "Dark Matter 1-2", small Hadaki styled quiltings. Creative thinking exercises, "WORDS," commands one wall. Here, makers were given a word to visually interpret in fiber restricted to a standard size and shape. The word "Stack", offered surprisingly diverse results, depicting pancakes, books, smokestacks, horizontal layers, and yes, a stack of kittens. And all were exquisitely crafted with techniques including quilting and applique.

It is hoped that COVID-19 restrictions will abate in time to allow additional public viewing of this exhibition. A large exhibition of objects, it is a positive statement regarding the human spirit, and serves up a hearty array of ideas. It is a high-spirited art show that is very timely for the situation that currently confronts us; it feels like an open door to a sunny day.

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