



Against Their Nature by Phyllis Leverich

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "South Texas College Art Faculty Exhibition"
Where: Chase Tower Lobby, 200 S.10th Street, McAllen
When: Through August 28, 2020
Hours: 9am-6pm, Monday-Friday, 9am-3pm Saturday
Information: Luis Corpus at lacorus@southtexascollege.edu or (956) 665-3480

STC Art Faculty Exhibition

STC faculty artists offer distinctive expressive interests in this Chase Tower exhibition

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

A satisfying art experience for long-waiting art-lovers beckons from the Chase Tower Lobby gallery. Deep into COVID-19 deprivations, the "South Texas College Art Faculty Exhibition" will feed those hungry visual senses that may have been lying dormant. This is a sophisticated show with a variety of approaches; spoiler alert: paintings are the strong suit here. While some works are new, most, if not all the works, have had restricted showings at STC, but are new to the general public. The Tower is the perfect location for this time; the hours are friendly, and the gallery is COVID-safe.

An abundance of paintings employing different styles and media gives the visitor's art preferences a challenge. As is typical with STC artists, deeper underlying concerns lurk within most works, but at first glance, this collection reflects a mellow attitude; the landscapes in particular are calming or restful places where skies play a major role. Richard Smith's "Night Train" divides the sky into a band of slow-moving clouds lingering above a deepening blue sky whose light is almost lost. The flat black landscape below pierced with the distant light of an oncoming train signifies that, yes, day is gone. Sarah Tamez reflects upon the twilight sky and its restful feeling with her digital photograph, "Twilight at the GC 1", but the sunlight still defines a peaceful land. The collage, "Poppies: Night" by Carl Vestweber, suggests less quietude as a

massive number of neatly arranged yellow-dot-stars blanket the night. Reluctant to leave day behind, a group of poppies yearn upward.

Two abstract paintings offer contrasting motivations. Tom Matthew's large abstract acrylic "White Space Major" is a visual tone poem with hard-edge bands of compromised color holding firmly to their place on the picture plane. Demonstrating a strongly contrasting mind-set, Alex Commino's abstract expressionistic "Funk 1" screams against containment, and color moves in and out of itself disregarding any desire for formal structure.

Matthew's and Commino's works both leave the desire for the representational image behind, and without hesitation, Comminos reveals his captive angst. Among the artists who inject their recognizable imagery with conceivable angst, we find Phyllis Leverich, Chris Leonard, Nathan England, Scott Nicol, and Luis Corpus, all of whom have produced art with restless/disturbing undertones, but who control emotional angst through the whiplash of conventional composition.

Leverich's encaustics could easily serve as the definition of mixed media. Her pictures combine scanned 19th century illustrations reorganized into her statement of whimsical horror with beeswax and oil paint. "Against Their Nature" shows beasts spewing blood-colored Corinthian wisps while perched on the shoulders of a confident showman. Their paradoxical yet beautiful effluvia swirls around the surrounding space and the showman.

"Donde se adoraban los dioses abandonados en el desuso", a seductive mixed-media painting by Corpus, has a slick, commercial feeling, which brings the meaning of this work to life. The linear depiction of an old God slightly overlays the sensual portrait of a Mexican beauty. There's a defiant tension here; the woman is the embodiment of new life, suspended between the power of the new and the tradition of the old. Leonard's watercolor triptych, "How Much is That Doggie in the Window?" shows a series of twelve closely placed pups in a grid-composition, who project a variety of facial expressions, not all of them happy. Nicol's "Untitled" encaustic of skeletal-like configurations emits deep frustration, while England plays with passive-aggressive notions in "Call Me and I'll Tell You".

These artists offer distinctive interests including the figure, portraiture, landscape, animals, and imaginative projections. This is an excellent opportunity to get out and safely see art that informs. Wear a mask; distancing is easy.

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