



*Emerson* by Rosemary Kane

#### SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "2020 Members Exhibition"  
Where: Kika de la Garza Art Center, 921 E 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Mission  
When: February 8 – March 7, 2020  
Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday, 10am-2pm Saturday  
Contact: (956) 583-2787  
Free and open to the public

#### **Quantity with Quality**

This is the largest all-members show by the Upper Valley Art League, and it may also be their best.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Filled with good artworks and a range of emotional tones, the "2020 Members Exhibition" by the Upper Valley Art League is now on display at the Kika De La Garza Art Center. The technical bar has been raised again and broadened as the membership expands. Visitors to the show are greeted by Ana Luisa Lopez' remarkable "Monarch Prom Dress". Yes, it's really a prom dress, but its impact is striking in design and execution, making it definitely art-to-wear; interspersed with shades of light blue tendrils, its large butterflies surge against the dramatic dark blue fabric. The novelty of this piece and its unexpected genre sets a festive introduction to this exhibition.

"Fifty-four artists are showing work," said Rosemary Kane, a multi-media artist who helped with the organization of the show. "I heard that there was somewhere around 140 pieces; It's the biggest all members show UVAL has had." The show features mostly wall pieces, but sculpture,

ceramics, and sensitive wood-turned pieces are also presented in a centralized display area. Placed higher than other artworks in this display, Rick Sullivan's metal rooster sculpture is visually aggressive. It appears to be rising for a new day. Nearby, Curtis Whatley branches out into glass and iron Modernist sculpture.

Although there are no single themes or subjects that create a focus for the exhibition, there are a number of highly realistic works that are exceptional for their ability to engage the viewer on more than one level. The traditional portrait, "Emerson" by Kane, speaks about the subject through the position of her body, and the intensity of her attitude seems to put us in the actual presence of this girl. Easily distracted, I was captivated by the impressive treatment of her ruffled sleeve. Sheri Rundell also paints in a hyper-realistic style, but her focus here belongs to the flora. Her "All in a Row" painting of four sunflowers is superb in its technical virtuosity and compositional aplomb. A small work, it overpowered other works around it. Sue Sill's "White Wing and Prickly Pear" stood out as a traditional Rio Grande Valley wildlife painting. With beautiful and crisp botanical details, it stands as a surprisingly lonely image in this show.

At least three artists had work that successfully evoked a sense of emotional disturbance through effective visualization. Imelda Rivera's oversized painting, "Love", is explosive. Her bold red, black, and white high-contrast abstraction takes us through the excitement of the love experience with its highs and lows and everything in between. From a distance, her placement of tones suggests the surging of a fierce, unnamed, creature. On the quieter side, Steve Ortiz' haunting "Untitled" metal print of a man's head is a photograph that exists somewhere between a modern Frankenstein and a diver whose helmet has broken; it conveys the uneasy feeling that something is not right and its car-crash aesthetic fascinates. There is nothing ambiguous about Lopez' "Stalker"; the large eye against a dark background creates an uncomfortable and chilling visual.

Generally, this is an interesting show whose membership primarily leans toward clearly representational subject matter. Fortunately, there is enough diversity of personal interests and insights expressed in this exhibition to nullify what could have been a pedestrian viewing, which sometimes occurred with past exhibitions. The "2020 Members Exhibition" has turned out to be a delightfully upbeat UVAL members' show and a worthwhile viewing experience.

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