



Be Yourself by Vicki Guerra

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *Fiber Arts Exhibit*
Where: UVAL, Kika de la Garza Art Center, 921 E. 12th Street, Mission.
When: Through Apr 2: Hours are Tues, Wed, and Thurs, 10am to 6pm; Fri, 10am-2pm; Sat, 2-6pm.
Contact: 956 583-ARTS

Beyond Technique

The Upper Valley Art League's *Fiber Arts Exhibit* is a pleasant surprise. This year's showing has a decidedly more polished look than its predecessors, and the works on display go beyond their craft techniques by incorporating relevant ideas and unique design decisions. Many of the works in this show could comfortably slide over into a fine arts exhibit and not seem out of place.

Specific themes are evident and displayed together, giving the exhibit a relaxed cohesion. For instance, a group of works using the elephant as a motif allows the viewer to easily experience a variety of viewpoints on a single subject. While one artist protests the cruelty of the ivory trade, another uses elephants to make an analogy about self-concept. But no matter the subject or statement, fabric as an artistic material conveys an involuntary sense of emotional warmth and comfort to the viewer. Most of the works are wall hangings.

Many of these makers are members of UVAL's fiber workshop and call themselves the "Out of the Box Fiber Arts" group. "The group decided that we would do some themes," explained Fran Wessell, coordinator of the group and fiber artist. "Sometimes we just wanted to do our own thing, but then we decided to do home or houses, or whatever makes you feel like home, and we did elephants, and we did trees." Vicki Guerra's work is outstanding throughout several themes. Her work combines good ideas with excellent composition. Her "Be Yourself" elephant work gives us a lesson in self-concept, while her "Yellow Roses" is masterfully designed with the illusion of motion and depth, and an impressive interpretation of petals.

There is an impressive group of strictly formal pieces – think abstract design informed by shapes, colors, or textures. Renee Darkis' large fiber and silk work, "Chaos," contains vividly contrasting colored cloths, keeping viewers' eyes in constant motion with no resting place, even though its vertical, horizontal, and diagonal planes seem carefully organized. Linda Lewis shows three intriguing large textural works made of paper and fiber.

Humor is also on display; "Pearls before Vine" by Gloria Dietrich is a 3-D wall piece that first elicits a smile, then respect on behalf of the artistry. The small, exquisitely quilted wall piece, "La Calavera Verde Limón," by Charlyn Trussell, makes us feel happy. Just when we wondered if anything fresh could be done with a calavera.

Pat Cooper's "Shaman Basket," Tunisian crochet on a deer antler, is a beautiful work that speaks mysteriously of a culture apart.

The viewer-friendly installation and the professional quality of the work in this show combine for an excellent viewer experience. "If you look at our first exhibit, and then this one, we are making some progress," continued Wessell. "We're trying really hard to learn new things and new techniques, and then express it in our own way so that we're not copying anyone else."

This year's *Fiber Arts Exhibit* has definitely succeeded.

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