



Syd the Pig by Pat Skye

SURFACE TREATMENT

Fiber Arts Exhibition

Where: UVAL, Kika de la Garza Art Center, 921 E. 12th Street, Mission.

When: Through April 1, 2017

Hours: 10am-6pm Tuesday through Friday
2-6pm Saturday. Call to verify.

Contact: (956) 583-2787

The Warmth of Fiber

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Artists use fabrics and imagination to express ideas

Although Fiber arts have long been recognized as craft, it seems to me that the Upper Valley Art League's annual *Fiber Arts Exhibition*, coordinated by Fran Wessel, director of the the UVAL fibers group, is on equal footing with local fine arts exhibits. For the past few years UVAL's fiber makers have been moving from traditional craft works emphasizing skill based techniques as an end in themselves, toward using weaving, quilting, stitchery, and appliqué as a means to express ideas, the accepted realm of the fine arts. Fiber arts evoke a psychological feeling of warmth from the use of material that we relate to physical warmth, protection, and home. While these fiber artists' processes remain basic to that field and ambience, their thinking does not.

One thing that makes this show truly outstanding are the fresh ideas. Linda Lewis has taken the traditional technique of burn-out, and through special adhesives, she has shaped pieces of newspaper into the non-burn-out areas for a surprising and awesome effect in her panels. Elsewhere, by using multi-patterned strips of fabric to mimic thin birch trees, "Birches" by M.

Rene Iannarelli, takes us for a walk in the woods, while Pat Cooper provides us with an abundance of wit; her wool baskets are just fun.

As excellent as these works are, I was blown away by Pat Skye's wonderful wall piece, "Syd the Pig." Skye was able to suggest Syd's possible sense of resignation through a masterful use of variously toned and shaped fabric pieces. She also brings the viewer into an analysis of her creative process by showing the drawing that she worked from, as well as the pattern for the cloth sections.

There are still a few works where craft still holds court. Nancy Algrim presents a comprehensive display of her uniquely beautiful stoles and hand-felted accessories. Her display includes a boldly felted necklace, and other felted jewelry pieces. Charlyn Trussell emphasizes quilting with her feel-good wall piece, "Another Time Another Place." However, this deceptively simple design offers a conversation in color theory.

Summarizing the positive community of these fiber artists is the collaborative work, "Over the Top Gal." Although heavy on techniques, it grabs attention through its complex design and use of tonal and color contrasts. The local group directed by Wessel collaborated on its making. Beginning with an idea for a 'faces' project – there are several 'face' works on display, they realized how varied their individual ideas and abilities were, and decided to all have a say in creating a single face with aspects and characteristics added by each maker. Thus, the artsy diva was born. "Over the Top Gal" reflects a joie de vivre that is evident in works throughout this show.

Now on display at the Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, UVAL's annual *Fiber Arts Exhibition* is a feel-good experience often punctuated by welcome aesthetic surprises, be sure to pay this viewer friendly show a visit.

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