



Cloak of the Ancient Goddess

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *What Next???* By Susan Fitzsimmons:
Bronze Sculptures and Prints
Where: Galeria 409, 13th Street, Brownsville
When: Through November. Hours: Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 12 to 5 pm, and by appointment
Contact: (956) 455 3599.

Transitions

What Next??? suggests the way many of us feel these days. For this exhibit, artist and UTRGV art administrator, Susan Fitzsimmons, shows not only sculpture, but also has transformed and blended shapes and textures from her sculptures into a series of prints. She has transitioned her ideas from one art platform onto another with an artistic process that relies solidly on her sense of play. Finding shapes and textures, Fitzsimmons re-orientates them into pleasing combinations, then adds the spontaneous musings from her own creative mind. Chance happenings are always welcome. The comfortable space of Galeria 409 currently features a large number of her bronze sculptures and digital prints.

For the sculptures, materials such as cardboard, wood, and cloth are ultimately dipped in wax as the basis for her final works. Often, partial ideas are welded together post-casting for a completely unexpected result. Miscast scraps may also enter into her

sculptures. Recently, she has begun adding color to the bronze surfaces, as in the “Cloak of the Ancient Goddess”; it sports an intense blue patina, enhancing the concept of the cloak. This work also incorporates a piece of weaving that Fitzsimmons did some years ago, adding an additional textural experience. “I used traditional casting techniques and I dipped pieces in wax, adding a weaving I did many years ago,” she explained. “Dipping it 13 times was really a long process and then it didn’t burn out long enough - this work is rescued from that casting event. The texture came out nice.” It’s a beautiful sculpture, and to me, the ragged edges from the under-processed burnout express the concept of “ancient” better than the planned result ever could have done.

The artist reflects on Heidegger’s thoughts on the sculptural object. “It has a reality of its own,” she cited. “It’s physical and it becomes very real as you look at it, and you can look at it from many different directions.” And that’s what she likes about her sculpture.

Her eloquent transition of sculptural shapes and textures into prints is significant. With this artistic act, Fitzsimmons echoes the psyche of the country in these days of national change. Although the print format is the opposite of its 3-D inspiration, her abstract visual message stays the same. The prints fall into two groups: those embracing the sculptural elements, and those that appear more linear and painterly. “Merged Work on Paper #3” boldly usurps the vertical bands found in the sculpture, “Passing Through the First Threshold”. Its sculptural pattern reverberates rhythmically in the print.

According to Fitzsimmons, the prints evolved last summer when she broke her arm, and while healing, discovered the joy of digital art. She became fascinated with the creative act of merging her old paintings and sculptures. She played with the images, transporting them into the digital space. “Some have a more obvious connection to my sculpture,” she confessed, “and some are more related to my old paintings. I have a tremendous amount of work under the bed.”

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