



*Plumbago-A Bugs Eye View* by Dee Tunseth

#### SURFACE TREATMENT

What: UVAL Members Exhibition  
Where: UVAL, Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, 921 E 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Mission  
When: Through Dec 2, 2017  
Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday, 2-5pm Saturday  
Contact: (956) 583-2787

#### **Mélange of Artworks**

This year's exhibit includes watercolors, paintings, digital prints, mixed media, and crafts; be prepared to wander around.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

A generous number of artworks are on display at the Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, demonstrating a variety of media and techniques. However, after Dee Tunseth's encouraging welcome works at the entrance, the viewer falls upon a confusing exhibition installation. UVAL's "Members Exhibition" this year lacks a unity of spirit, spreading a mute ambiance around the large gallery space. Conservative directions dominate, focusing on landscapes, floral interpretations, and a few figures.

Tunseth's watercolors are masterful ventures into the subtleties and inherent beauty of watercolor with precise drawing combined with exacting tonal interpretations and colors, and they set a standard not achieved by most other artworks on display. Apart from those initial works, there is no clear artistic focal point that could comfortably facilitate a visitor's viewing path. Chris Leonard's iconic ceramic jugs command a central location and draw us in, but other

3-D craft works seem randomly placed. Nancy Algrim's visually sensual and tactile felted wool bag is tucked against the wall beneath her unrelated painting, and this seems to represent the overall organization: arrangement by artist rather than by medium or subject. Logical on paper, but visually, not so much. Among the paintings, "La Homa Sunset", an acrylic by Karla G. de la Fuente is ominous with its stark white rectangle encroaching upon the natural Valley landscape. Complete with the silhouette of a helicopter in the distance, the rectangle bodes man-made development that is gradually overtaking the Valley's natural vistas. Novice painter, Humberto Gonzales shows definite promise with his oil painting, "La Lomita".

The craft works stand out in this member's show for their craftsmanship combined with expressive content, while both qualities are at a premium in many of the fine art pieces. Leonard's and Algrim's works demand close attention to the artists' passionate responses to their materials, while Fran Wessel's fabric art work combines charm and pathos. Her wall piece, "I'm Blue", a representational image of a cluster of blue elephants, is well-designed with outlines boldly stitched and white tusks flashing. Although the blue is soothing, the background is aflame. These elephants are blue on many levels, notably that a few days after this opening, President Trump tried to reverse this country's ban on elephant ivory. Rebecca Young continues her exploration of tissue boxes with her collage, "Everyone Needs a Comforter." Ironically, this work mimics the craft field with its quilt-like composition.

The past few years have boasted showings by the membership that reflected a polished look, a feeling of confidence on behalf of the artists. Confident works emit a warm energy and provide a positive art experience. This year, the ambiance was not that of confidence, but rather a visual/mental/emotional search without resolution. Too many works in this show seem to be hoping for a reason to be. Or maybe become. Their uncertainty is palpable. Hopefully, these are by newer members whose improvement and confidence will blossom in future exhibits, but for now, skills still needing attention resulted in failure to communicate ideas or meaning. Uncompleted meanings may be the real subject in this year's show.

The Upper Valley art league offers regular workshops to its members in a variety of media. Those who are interested should contact the organization. Process may be the important element this year.

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