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Brush up your imagination

Exhibits to highlight abstraction in art to compose new images

BY SUSAN SCAFFIDI
For The Californian

The Bakersfield Museum of Art is taking a big risk this week — opening three exhibits of abstract art simultaneously for its winter show. Why is it a risk? Because the organizers of the exhibition don't know what you're going to see.

Opening today, the winter exhibit encompasses two solo shows — a retrospective of California artist Dennis Hare and a new series of paintings by Bakersfield transplant Kuzana Ogg — plus a group show of drawings by Scott Hassell, Pamela Diaz Martinez and Anne Marie Rousseau.

BMOA curator Vikki Cruz said the exhibition is based on the idea of abstraction in art — the use of shape, form, color and line to compose an image that may not have any basis in concrete reality.

"What I really think is kind of fun is there really is no wrong way to interpret the work," Cruz said. "Each time you visit a work you can see something different."

That's Dennis Hare's credo. His show at the BMOA is the first major retrospective of his 35-year career, ranging from what he calls "tightly-controlled" watercolors to abstract figurations to giant abstract "assemblages" of ordinary materials and even junk. Titled "Dennis Hare: Without Restraint," the show represents Hare's journey as an artist.

"(The title) means letting yourself go and not be fearful and that's what I've tried to do with this show," Hare said.

A self-taught artist, Hare started out to be an athletic coach and teacher, building on his success as a world-champion beach volleyballer. While playing in a tournament in Santa Cruz in 1979, Hare visited an exhibit of Impressionist masters in San Francisco. The visit changed his life.

"I saw 'The Entrance to the Public Gardens at Arles' by Van Gogh, and right then and there, I knew I was an artist," Hare said. "Not would-be, could-be, should-be — I was an artist."

Hare said the next day he bought art supplies and began painting. Even though he helped support himself by giving volleyball lessons, Hare continued his career as an artist, moving from more tradi-



FELIX ADAMO / THE CALIFORNIAN

"Children of Rosarita," a mixed mediawork by Dennis Hare, is part of the Winter Exhibitions show that will run through April 19 at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

Winter Exhibitions

When: Opening reception 7 to 9 p.m. today; exhibition runs through April 19

Where: Bakersfield Museum of Art, 1930 R St.

Admission: \$10 non-members; \$5 for students with ID; free to members.

Information: 323-7219 or info@bmoa.org

tional types of art to his current works that use "found materials" — junk, really — and other non-traditional items, such as tar, emulsions and lacquers.

"I have some junkyards that I like to look through first," Hare said. "My art store is now Home Depot!"

The results of Hare's abstract assemblages are images that leave a lot of the imagining up to the viewer. Hare said each person who views his work will focus on something different, based on his or her

own history and preference. And that's just what Hare intends.

"All I try to do is inspire people to find what's inside of them," Hare said. "Because I think everyone's an artist — not necessarily a painter or sculptor, it's just what makes your life happy and what you love."

'California Crude'

Hare's show is the anchor of the BMOA exhibit, occupying two of the museum's galleries. Cruz said she decided to expand the exhibit after being approached by recent transplant Kuzana Ogg, who moved to Bakersfield with her husband, Wade, who works for Chevron. Although Ogg has traveled the world and exhibited across the United States and internationally, she said she was inspired by the unique sights in Kern County to create a series of images she calls "California Crude."

"I was really fascinated, just amazed to see all the machinery integrated with living spaces," Ogg

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"Lead by Nine" is a work by Scott Hassell.

Eye Street

“I think this is the first time Bakersfield has done anything like this. I know this is the first time The Empty Space is doing this. It’s exciting to see how this is going to take.”

— **Michael Pawloski**, the Empty Space theater board member who is producing the show.

Play in a day? Plan is a-OK

Empty Space will attempt project

BY STEFANI DIAS
The Bakersfield Californian
sdias@bakersfield.com

The Empty Space theater will learn what a difference a day makes when it debuts “Project: Play in a Day,” a 24-hour whirlwind of writing, directing and acting that will culminate in an all-new show Saturday night.

“It could be amazing or it could be a hot mess,” said Michael Pawloski, the theater board member who is producing the show.

The project had been in the works for four years, ever since Pawloski was tipped off to the idea by a colleague at a drama therapy conference in Chicago.

Scheduling issues — allotting a full day that didn’t conflict with any other shows or rehearsals — kept in on the backburner.

“I think this is the first time Bakersfield has done anything like this. I know this is the first time The Empty Space is doing this. It’s exciting to see how this is going to take.

“Can we put on a quality play in 24 hours? That’s really the question.”

The fun starts Friday at 9 p.m. when Pawloski meets with the five playwrights — Matthew Christensen, Kayla Frayre, Michelle Guerrero, Porter Jamison and Michael Mejia — and gives them an envelope with a writing prompt. Each writer has the same suggestion, which must somehow be incorporated into the 10- to 15-minute one act that will be written over the next 11 hours.

The playwrights will also start planning based on their assigned director and

‘Project: Play in a Day’

When: 8 p.m. Saturday

Where: The Empty Space, 706 Oak St.

Admission: \$10

Information: 327-7529 or esonline.org

actors.

“I put together the list with directors and actors that work well together. Someone will have two (actors) some will have four. Some will just have female actresses, some will just have men.”

Although Pawloski will oversee all production details Saturday, he’ll leave the writers under the care of fellow board member Guerrero Friday night.

“She’ll be taking the lead for the playwrights. I need my sleep.”

By 8 Saturday morning, directors Tish Gamez, Bob Kempf, Kara McDonald, Lexi Philippi and Eric Tolley will arrive to familiarize themselves with their playwright’s script before the actors arrive at 9 a.m.

The cast of 14 — a mix of Empty Space veterans and newcomers — consists of Mariah Anthony, Amy Hall, Ed Hughes, Faith Hall, Chance Johnson, Victoria Lusk, Michael Moore, Karisma Normandin, Hudson Sanders, Ellie Sivesind, Nancee Steiger, Austin Still, Luis Torres and Deva Wiloth.

The time crunch may weigh most heavily on the actors, who don’t have the benefit of the full “day.”

“We say 24 hours but really the actors have from 9 a.m. to maybe 7, 8 o’clock to have it memorized. They have a limited amount of time.”

After a couple of run-throughs for each one act, the show will face its audience at 9 p.m.

Along with seeing the show take the stage, Pawloski looks forward to the companion “Art Show in a Day,” curated by the theater’s gallery director, Jesus Fidel.

“He is doing almost the same thing with our gallery,” Pawloski said of Fidel. “He gathered different artists that are going to come the same night as the playwrights.”

Playwright Guerrero will have double duty, taking part in the art show along with Fidel, Jorge Guillen, Donald Meyers, Alexandra Ortiz, Ron Warren, Jason Stewart, Jared Ormerod, Kayleigh Peaker and Kristina Saldana, J.R. Ignacio and Timothy Lemons. Given the same prompt as the playwrights, the artists will have until 7 p.m. Saturday to complete and return their work to be hung in The Empty Space Gallery.

The production is part of the theater’s project series, one-act shows centered on themes like fairy-tales and heroes put together by people eager to create new content. Pawloski was happy to note that the series has grown based on interest.

“Our project series, we’re all about giving people a chance. ... It used to be a yearly thing but now if someone wants to take on a project we do it.”

BMOA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16 said.

The artist was not only inspired by the pump-jacks that seem to spring up anywhere and everywhere around town, but also by the piping and instrumentation diagrams associated with her husband’s oil industry work. The result: abstractions of congregation plants in an aerial view; combinations of color, geometric shapes and lines that depict machine parts, equipment and other mundane objects.

Whether you will see those objects or something else is entirely beside the point.

“It doesn’t really matter what the viewer sees; I’m not going to be upset,” Ogg said. “I want them to see what they bring to it.”

“I’ve tried to label these (paintings) as vaguely as possible so someone doesn’t see this as a diagram, and they’re supposed to learn something from it,” Ogg said.



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“26c Cogeneration Plant, 2014” by Kuzana Ogg is part of the Winter Exhibitions show that will run through April 19 at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

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