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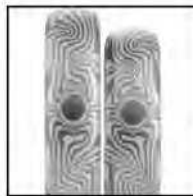
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VISUAL ARTS BY SYLVIE PEDERSON

Andrade Paintings at Jacobs, Walsh installation at DIVA

Disposition of Age," at the Jacobs Gallery through May 29, showcases Grants Pass artist Virginia Andrade's recent abstract paintings. Her desire to come to terms with society's attitude toward age and the invisibility of older people, women especially, led the artist to experiment with new forms and materials.

Andrade's paintings have a pronounced, seductive, tactile quality. She uses an unusual combination of layered powder pigments and gouache and manipulates the colors directly with her hands. "There's no separation between body and medium," she said. "The whole process is quite intuitive."

The paintings are all earth tones: ochres, sienna, blue-grey and green, muted reds and pinks — colors of the Southwest, the desert. They retain an appropriately powdery quality despite the gouache. She investigates the effects of time on the surface of rocks, walls, earth, skin. Her pigments evoke the colored dust of crumbling stone, fine residues accumulating on the surface of boulders, traces of lichen. Ink lines drawn in a gesture add further markings, and the paper contributes a granular texture and buckles slightly, like old parchment or tanned animal skin retaining some life does.

Another effect of time is wear, tear and erosion. Andrade subjects the surface of her paintings to "scratching, scraping, rubbing and scoring," yet beauty, softness and a sense of serenity result. This "beauty in how things age" is what Andrade wants to convey — how "color fades and softens, lines blur." She wants us to acquire "a new awareness of, and sensitivity to, the mysteries of aging."

Into the abstract palimpsests she creates, one may read the creased surface of a boulder (*First Impressions 1*) or that of old, cracked walls with their successive layers of paint peeling off, shreds of posters still glued here and there, traces of graffiti marks, plaster falling off in places (*Life Force, Pulp Friction, Life Force, Somerset*). Or one may envision a desert landscape viewed from the sky (*Soul Mates 1, First Impressions 2*).

The paintings are often horizontally or vertically divided by arbitrary lines evoking the subjective lines that separate internal and external perceptions of reality. Yet relationships are born, bonds are created, links are made. She represents this simultaneous process by mysterious abstract characters that appear on the surfaces — circular marks or shapes viewers may variously construe as pebbles, eggs or cells.

They huddle together (*Spoke the Walrus 6, Lean on Me*), squat like boulders on either side of a dry riverbed (*Soul Mates 1*), rise like bubbles (*Paradigm Shift 1, Soul Mates 5*), perch together over an horizontal line like so many Humpty Dumpties on a wall (*Lean on Me, Grounded*), peek on either sides of window-panes (*Bi-Partisan*), mate (*Soul Mates 4*), play balance games (*Spoke the Walrus 3*) and in general engage in all manners of social behaviors (*The Egg and I, Soul Mates 3*).

Andrade views them mostly as eggs, symbols of the new fertility she experiences now. "The eggs are still there waiting to be born and come to life, but now I'm producing ideas," she said. "This is about a renewed feeling of fertility, a rebirth, reinventing myself by accepting my age."



Lean On Me by Virginia Andrade

"End of the Line: Fragments of the Material Age," Mike E. Walsh's site-specific installation at DIVA through June 26, indicates the artist's formal range yet is consistent with his interest in history and an archaeological approach to human artifacts. Walsh selected 252 cards from *The Oregonian* file on the Eugene Library's defunct card catalog for his installation.

On opening day, I observed viewers as they stepped into Walsh's room — first, expressions of surprise and delight, followed by playful exploration. The cards, hung low from the ceiling with mono-filament in an otherwise empty room, form six groups of six-tiered rows of six cards each, with a dozen small piles of shredded cards on the floor beneath. Like pale butterflies or leaves hovering in mid-air, the cards transform the space and impart an impression of lightness. It's a catchy mood. Pathways encourage you to walk around and immerse yourself. Move, and the cards come alive. Blow, and they flutter about you.

Walsh describes the installation as an act of mourning, "infused with nostalgia and reverence [that] laments not just the passing of the card catalogue, but the spirit and sense of our own history that vanished with it, as we forgo slower, more scenic routes, the green valleys, for the sterile speed of cyberspace."

It is not just filing systems that become obsolete, but the very items filed away. By choosing the catalogue of a newspaper, Walsh reminds us how short-lived, quickly obsolete and easily forgotten news stories are. Walsh's work is rich in conceptual ramifications, with a sparseness of means and delicacy of touch that brings us to reflection through seduction.

EW

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