

Artist's exhibit is comment on material world



Artist Srboohie Abajian of Glendale in front of her "Getting It" monotype prints being displayed at 2 West Broadway at Orange in Glendale on Thursday, March 3, 2011. Abajian's prints are being displayed by the Glendale Area Temporary Exhibitions (GATE) through April 1. (Raul Roa/Staff Photographer)

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Artist Srboohie Abajian never knows when inspiration might strike her. For instance, an idea will sometimes flicker in her mind while she's driving, causing her "to stop and get any paper I find in the car and write very fast," she said.

Inspiration for her recent art work, on display in a window near the northeast corner of Broadway at Orange Street. at 180 Broadway in Glendale, presented itself by way of observation. "It is a social commentary on how we live," Abajian said.

Titled, “Getting It,” Abajian used the piece to contemplate the values people place on the material and spiritual objects in their lives. She sees a world with too many advertisements and not enough art, a world in which people are consumed with what they buy.

“They want this good, material life,” she said.

Some are indifferent to it, and Abajian juxtaposes the two lifestyles with exaggerated human forms born of an original style she’s created using monotype images on canvas with lines of black paint.

In one image, for instance, a couple examines art in a museum. In another, figures carry shopping bags.

“Some people want to read,” seeking philosophy, and perhaps, spiritual understanding from museums and theaters as well, Abajian said. “Other people like good cellphones, good cars and shopping all the time.”

It may seem ironic that her exhibit sits directly across from the Glendale Galleria. It’s not. Her work was accepted by Glendale Area Temporary Exhibitions (GATE), which displays artists’ pieces in otherwise unoccupied spaces. Some spaces available to GATE are relevant to the artist’s message.

“Some drawings were based off sketches she made of people shopping in the Galleria,” said GATE curator Tucker Neel, who had a part in accepting her work into the GATE program. “I thought she had a unique sense of line and direct observation of the world around her,” he said.

Abajian has had dozens of showings from Finland to Russia to Los Angeles.

Born and raised in Yerevan, Armenia, Abajian earned her Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from the Art Academy of Armenia.

She met her husband, Mark, an Armenian American, during his one-year visit to Yerevan to teach English. In 1994, she moved to the United States at 35 years of age and learned English (her third language after Armenian and Russian). The couple settled in La Crescenta, where they are raising their two children, now 16 and 13.

When her children reached ages 5 and 2, Abajian returned to her art after a six-year hiatus. By then, she had already painted for 10 years, having transitioned from creating highly realistic oil paintings to abstract pieces. Upon resuming, she thought, “Now what? What’s my voice?”

She deserted realistic paintings and ventured to her new, original style, one that emphasizes what she calls a “vibrant, rich line,” to make “very simple and emotional art.” She said, “Realistic pieces are academically strong. I decided, I can draw, but this is not art yet. Art is not just copying what you see. True art is making people think and making people feel.”

“Getting It” is on display at 101 N. Brand, Suite 180 on Broadway at Orange Street through April 1.

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