



"2004 Juried All Media Exhibition" at PVAC By Garrison Frost

Every summer brings the "Juried All Media Exhibition" to the Palos Verdes Art Center. This year's show has been curated by Nancy Silverman-Miles, the executive director of Gallery C in Hermosa Beach. The show has a reputation for being something of a mixed bag, which isn't a bad thing by any means. The show usually turns out to be a pretty fair gauge of what's brewing in the South Bay arts soup – for better and for worse. I was particularly interested to see what influence Silverman-Miles would have on the annual show.

The good news – and the bad news – is that despite the curating efforts of one of the South Bay art scene's more forward-thinking figures, the show looks very similar to shows in years past. There is some good stuff, and some not so good stuff.

The quality in this year's show leans heavily toward the two-dimensional art. That is to say, the art on the walls comes off better than the art on the floor. One of the simpler pieces in the show, "Calling Home," by Loraine Shue-Weber, turns out to be one of the strongest. The painting depicts a young man in a nondescript uniform using a phone in the corner of what appears to be some kind of institutional setting. None of the visual clues sets a definite setting, but the attitude of the subject and the background imply that the subject is borrowing the phone, that others are probably waiting. It could be a prison, or it could be an army barrack. Either way, the emotion of the painting is valid and evocative. Anyone who has ever used a public phone to make an important, hurried call can connect with this work.

I also can't say enough about "Winter Riverside" by Jim Zhenhua Zhang. This watercolor – apparently first painted in a notebook – is by far the most technically adept piece in the show. Like many of the best watercolors, the medium dominates the subject matter. It's beautiful, and I can't imagine how the artist pulled it off.

Srboohie Abajian gets honorable mention for one work, but it's another piece by the artist, "Rainy Mood of February, 2002" that I really liked. It's one of the many quirky pieces in the show that catch your eye and force you to reassess almost everything else in the show. I had the same reaction to Nancy Goodman Lawrence's "Lobbying in the Holiday Inn," a simple collage piece using different maps to delineate the forms of two old ladies sitting in the lobby of a cheap motel.

Oh yes, and it's always nice to see work by Frank Matranga getting some play. He's one of the area's longest serving artists and he has earned the right to be included in any juried show in this area.

The "2004 Juried All Media Exhibition" runs through August 13 in the Palos Verdes Art Center's Beckstrand Gallery. (July 20, 2004)

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