

Simplicity and emotion inspires artist

by Gabrielle Hutchinson September 25, 2013



LINES: Los Angeles artist Srboohie Abajian (center) spoke to guests at the opening ceremony at Pierce College's Art Gallery, on Thursday, Sept. 19. Photo by: Jonathan Andrino

The Art Gallery came alive on the evening of Thursday, Sept. 19, when the exhibit “Lines that Speak,” a compilation of line art that portrays family and the Los Angeles lifestyle, came to Pierce College.

Art Gallery Director Monika Del Bosque hosted the exhibition of works by Armenian line artist Srboohie Abajian, because of her admiration for the artist and her drawings.

“I thought her artwork would be very applicable to our students,” Del Bosque said. “I also really enjoy her line work.”

Students and teachers gathered around the exhibit to gaze upon the unique styles of art. Crystal Aghevli, a student who is thinking about majoring in art, loved all of Abajian's pieces, specifically the ones on her children.

"I was captivated by the children watching television," Aghevli said. "I was really curious to see her perspective on what our young people spend their time doing here."

Abajian was born in Yerevan, Armenia where she started her education in art, obtaining her Master of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees.

She has had many accomplishments, including exhibitions at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, Glendale's Brand Art Gallery and Laguna's Art Museum. She was also named Artist of the Year for 2013 by the city of Glendale and has been awarded grants by the Puffin Foundation and Creative Capital Funds.

Through her accomplishments, she knew her mission was clear: to reach out to the public to tell them what art means to her.

"Art can be entertaining and enlightening," Abajian said. "Entertainment in art is very common today, but that is not my goal. Art should change people's thinking, and can change people's lives and society."

She began studying art in 1977, and then a decade later, took her skills up a notch by sketching and oil painting. Between 1988 and 1992 she started her abstract paintings using experimental techniques. During this time she painted her first "Self Portrait" piece and "Agony," her first abstract piece. She also began her monotype pieces, primarily influenced by the deadly earthquake in Armenia in December of 1988, which killed 23,000 people and ruined 400 villages.

In 1993 she moved to the United States and continued her artwork. While most of us are used to the hustle and bustle of the Los Angeles life, Abajian was overwhelmed by the congestion in Los Angeles.

"When I first moved here, I was really surprised," she said with a smile on her face. "There were lots of cars, but no people."

Because of this, it inspired her 2009 artwork of auto portraits in Los Angeles and the relationship between cars and people.



Admiring the work of artist Srboohie Abajian, Elisa Ortiz, a 26-year-old illustration major (in pink), focuses on the perspective of the portrayal on Los Angeles on Sept. 19. Photo by: Jonathan Andrino

Between 1994 and 2000 she took a break from her artwork to concentrate on her two children. When coming back to the art scene in the latter part of 2000, she wanted to find her own style of art.

“After reading a lot about art, I decided I wanted to make simple and emotional art. For simplicity I decided to use only lines. For emotion I exaggerated the characteristics and moods of my subjects,” Abajian said.

Her inspiration came from many different artists—both painters and film makers—such as Vincent Van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Charlie Chaplin, and Hayao Miyazaki, just to name a few. During this time she also began her “motherhood” pieces in which she emphasized portraits of hands, specifically expressing “love and care.”

From 2001 to 2008, she focused on portraits and social content.

“I see cultural differences in this country and also different lifestyles, values and relationships, which inspired me to talk about social issues,” Abajian said.

She said that to her, it was a fresh look at American society and what it meant to her coming from another country.

After years of hard work, she was given her first chance to go public with her art with an installation at the Glendale Galleria.

“This gave me a chance to access a large audience,” Abajian said.

Her installation, titled “Getting it,” represents the idea that, “We can get from life everything we want. We can get material stuff and spiritual understanding.”

In 2012 Abajian had her second window installation, titled “Finding Value,” the idea about consumerism in Los Angeles.

Although the lifestyle change was very different from what she experienced in Armenia, she successfully adapted through her work. In many ways she felt that art changed her life.

“Being an artists is good because my mind is open to life, to society, and I have my perspective to say what I want to say through my art,” Abajian said.

And since she has a goal of expanding her art to the public, she decided that Pierce would be another way to reach out.

“I chose Pierce College so students could learn something. It’s about art and school. Not commercial galleries or money, but about education,” Abajian said.

She ended her presentation with the idea that art is always about discovering something new.

“I think being an artist is very special for me because art is a very powerful tool to say what you want to say to people,” Abajian said. “I am very happy being an artist. It is very fulfilling and satisfying when you have a message and you’re able to reach a big audience.”

The Art Gallery will display Abajian’s work through Wednesday, Oct. 23 in Room 3300.

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