



Contemporary Florida

Paintings & Photographs

Generously underwritten in part by
Dolph and Sharon von Arx
Exhibit organized by the Naples Museum of Art

Florida Weekly Home Get Email Edition Login

NAPLES FLORIDA WEEKLY

YOUR NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT SOURCE

May 14, 2009

Home News Business & Real Estate A&E Hurricane Guide 2009 Photo G

Marketplace: REAL ESTATE | AUTOMOTIVE | SHOPPING | DINING & ENTERTAINMENT | PROFESS

ENJOY SUMMER FOUR LESS 4 Days From \$540
Sanibel Island, Florida
Click for Details

A&E

Arts & Entertainment News Sandy Days, Salty Nights
Community Calendar Society Cuisine

Hold the palm trees

Naples Museum of Art showcases 46 painters and photographers living, working in the Sunshine State

BY NANCY STETSON nstetson@floridaweekly.com

IF IT'S PALM TREES AND MANGROVES and pelicans you want, you might have to look elsewhere.



Juan Diaz' Perfect Taste 2009 (top). Jonathan Green's Cemetery (left) and Clyde Butcher's Ochopee 1986 are on display at the Naples Museum of Art.

The "Florida Contemporary"

exhibit at the Naples Museum of Art has a few of the ubiquitous symbols of the Sunshine State, but the focus of the show is really on the artists, all of whom call Florida home for at least part of the year.

"I didn't want to do a lot of things that were touristy," says Michael Culver, museum director and chief curator.

For Mr. Culver, who's a newcomer to Florida himself, having lived here just three months, curating this show was "one of the best ways to learn what's going on in the state, and to meet the artists visually."

"I'm a virgin to Florida art," he says. "I got to discover them, to see their work with new eyes."

When he began talking to artists, they asked him if the work had to have Florida as its subject matter. He told them no. The prerequisite was that they live in the state or work here for extended periods of the year. The art itself did not have to be about Florida.

So the paintings

and photographs in the

exhibit vary in subject matter, from portraits and nudes to landscapes, animal studies and dreamscapes. The styles vary from representational to abstract, realism to expressionism. "There are some traditional

works that are very traditional in the way the artist has used the subject matter and work, and some are very innovative, not only in the subject matter, but also in the way they used their materials," Mr. Culver says.

He points to "Bel Air" by Dannica Walker. The painting shows the back of a vintage Chevrolet Bel Air, with fuzzy dice dangling from the rear view



mirror. "I think this is an untraditional way of (using) watercolor," he says. "You think of it as transparent. But this has an un-watercolor feel to it. It's opaque."

In contrast is Jean Banas's large abstract, "Torrid Zone," a 50-inch-by-38-inch acrylic on paper that almost glows with its audacious hot pinks and oranges. "It has a wonderful feeling of warmth, exactly what the title suggests," Mr. Culver says. "It has a sizzle; the heat encompasses you. She has a Rothko kind of technique."



Well-knowns and new discoveries

Mr. Culver had no preconceptions when he started pulling together the survey show — the kind of show he says "is probably one of the most amazing things a curator does... based almost exclusively on finding great images."

In considering what to include, he took into account the whole range of an artist's work, not just one or two pieces.

Among the 50 artists he chose are some familiar names: Clyde Butcher is represented by two photos; one of Jonathan Green's paintings is included in the show. Naples artists, in addition to Mr. Green, include Juan Diaz, Connie Bransilver, Rod Busch and Lynn Davison.

"It's funny, though understandable, that I chose a lot of artists people have seen before, simply because they're good artists," Mr. Culver says. "(In this show) you can see artists (whose) work you've seen throughout their career, and you get to discover for yourself new artists."

Or, you might see familiar artists in a different light.

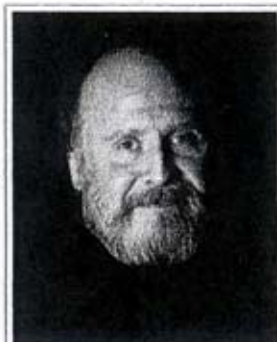
Those familiar with Mr. Green's luminescent, colorful paintings might be surprised by his 14-inch-by-11-inch oil on masonite painting titled "Cemetery."

The work shows two women in a graveyard looking at each other, and possibly holding hands. The woman on the left is dressed in gray, holding a black book, and the woman on the right is dressed in black, holding a gray book. The white gravestones on the grass behind them glow like blank pages.

The piece — small, dark and somber — was painted in 1986.

"Contemporary doesn't mean the work was done last week," Mr. Culver says, though the exhibit does include pieces painted this year. "It means it's an artist that's working now, but they could've been working for 30 years."

About Mr. Green and "Cemetery," he says, "I was discovering him. The things he's doing now, today, are really wonderful, but this image just captivated me. There's a lot of stuff going on. It's almost an apparition. They're almost ghostly."



CULVER



COURTESY PHOTO Bridge Structure No 7 Tampa by Marc Barrett

"Though the paint is applied, you can almost see through the color... the headstones seem to float. There's no sense of space here, it looks like one plane."

'Perfect Taste'

In contrast is Juan Diaz's "Perfect Taste," an acrylic and oil painting done this year. Three figures populate the painting: In the foreground, a woman in a red dress stands at a cutting board by the sink, knife in hand. A figure of indeterminate gender is in the middle, tasting something at the stove and making a sign of approval. And in the background, a ghostly figure of a blonde woman sits at a table.

"Perfect Taste" could be a friendly domestic scene, but the odd colors (algae green, mustard yellow), the ominous shadows, odd angles and low ceiling make it look like a

classic film noir image. Is this a murder about to happen? (Poisoning? Knifing?) It's hard to tell.

The artist illuminates each figure with a different type of lighting: candlelight, light bulb and moonlight. "This looks almost theatrical, almost (like) a movie still," Mr. Culver says.

'Modesty' and more

Lynn Davison's oil on canvas, "Modesty," shows a nude woman grappling with plastic, though it's debatable whether she's putting it on or pulling it off of her body. The artist has depicted the body with the unforgiving eye of a dressing room's bright fluorescent light: She shows all the mottled pinks and blues of the flesh, the weight, the sags — in short, the reality of the human body touched by age and untouched by plastic surgery or airbrush.



COURTESY PHOTO Bream in Highlights by Karen Glaser

Commenting on the title, Mr. Culver says, "It could be false modesty. Or the title could be ironic. Is she putting on the plastic or taking it off?"

Another disturbing work is Richard Currier's "Within One's Self," a 76-inch by 56-inch oil portrait. The oversized, closely cropped face stares out at you in two panels, one tilted toward the viewer. Red string runs across one of the panels, dissecting an eye. It's continued as a red painted line that dissects the other eye.

"He's playing with you, and with all of us," Mr. Culver says.



PHOTO COURTESY / TRUDY LABELL GALLERY in the Big Cypress by Joel Babb

Douglas Nesbitt, an Orlando-based photographer, is represented by two pieces. His "Easter Sunday" shows two boys in their Easter finery in Winter Park. One in the foreground stands proud, in a light blue three-piece suit and black hat. Behind him stands an older boy in a royal blue plaid suit, arms folded over his chest.

"He's so grown up, he's taken on a sense of adulthood," Mr. Culver says. "He's going to church."

The curator compares painters and photographers to Ernest Hemingway: "He cut and cut and cut until everything in

the sentence had to be there and everything else was gone. If you removed anything, it would destroy the sentence. And that's the way a good painter, a good photographer, should be."

Mr. Nesbitt's second photograph in the exhibit, "Windows," shows a group of office buildings in green, red, yellow, blue and white. "It almost looks like a tapestry," Mr. Culver says. "When most people think of photos, they think of realism. This is as abstract as you can get, taking a real thing and abstracting it."

Mr. Nesbitt is one of the few artists in the exhibit to have more than one piece on display.

The first of many

"It's nearly 50 artists and 69 works," Mr. Culver says. "In some cases, I took two works, especially with photographs and, in some cases, with small paintings." Five "wonderful little paintings" by Sara Elizabeth Pedigo, for example, work together as a group, he says.



COURTESY PHOTO Silver Palms, Bahia Honda, Florida by Benjamin Dimmitt

"I might get some criticism for not including this person or that person," Mr. Culver says. "But there is always room to discover more artists, and there will be future shows."

"We hope this will become an annual celebration of the art produced by Florida artists."

He plans to include sculpture in Florida Contemporary 2010.

"I want every artist to feel that this is their museum," he says. "The community feels that this is their museum. We want to draw in artists from around the state."

"What speaks to me is the work... that's what intrigued me and led me to include these artists. I wanted each of the images to be so special that people would stop and look at them... would want to spend some time with every piece (and) be aware of the subject matter, the medium it's done in, the color, the movement of it, the reality, the non-reality — whatever it is that particular painting or photograph does."

"Each one of them says something."

The 46 artists in "Florida Contemporary" are:

Joel Babb Jean Banas Marc Barrett Donne Bitner Thomas Boone Connie Bransilver Helen Burkett Rod Busch Clyde Butcher Jill Cannady Linda Carpenter Greg Colvin Frank Corso Richard Currier Lynn Davison Cheryl Anne Day-

Swallow Madeline Denaro Juan Diaz Ben Dimmitt Sandy Donn Lee Dunkel Karen Glaser Kevin Grass Jonathan Green Brenda Heim Jeremiah Jenner Wolf Kahn James Kerr Grace Leal Kathleen Maling Gabrielle Mayer Jan Miller Patrick Moser Douglas Nesbitt Kim Northrop Michael Palmer Sara Elizabeth Pedigo Lincoln Perry Audrey Phillips Jeff Ripple Isaac Allen Sandy Maggie Taylor Anna Tomczak Jerry Uelsmann Dannica Walker Kerry Ware Isaac Allen Helen Burkett Clyde Butcher Jill Cannady Juan Diaz Sandy Donn Karen Glaser Jonathan Green Patrick Moser Lincoln Perry Dannica Walker Kerry Ware

If you go >>What: "Florida Contemporary" >>Where: The Naples Museum of Art, 5833 Pelican Bay Blvd. >>When: May 14-June 28 >>Info: 597-1900 or www.thephil.org

If you have any problems, questions, or comments regarding www.FloridaWeekly.com, or other comments, please see our contact section to send feedback to Florida Weekly. Use Conditions.

Copyright © 2007—2009 Florida Media Group LLC.

Twitter | Facebook | RSS



Newspaper web site content management software

DMCA Notice

