

## Jane Deering Gallery

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### **ART REVIEW: Appointment-only contemporary visions - Jane Deering Gallery is a new space with new ideas**

By Josef Woodard, NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

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There's a hot new art space in town, and it's hiding in plain sight, for the most part. Because of the vicissitudes of zoning ordinances, you can't just drop by the Jane Deering Gallery, which is Deering's home. But even though visits require an appointment, it's a very welcoming place once you're inside.

**Local contemporary art fans, a demographic that has felt somewhat disenfranchised of late, owe it to themselves to arrange a visit.** Deering, who is making it her business to represent interesting living artists from various parts of the world, hails from Massachusetts by way of London and, as of this year, by way of Montecito.

Her in-home gallery space, which she plans to keep open a few months each year, bustles with contemporary art, although only the living room serves as an actual gallery. Later this year, Deering will present exhibitions in Gloucester, Mass, and in Boston, but the rest of this month is devoted to the Montecito gallery.

While the Deering Gallery has a homey vibe, the easygoing feel only goes so far. The work has a strong emphasis on intriguing color photography, but also covers other media, tending to be challenging on different levels, while easy on the senses.

Summerland-based Richard Aber has a mutant, acrylic-on-canvas piece, "Grid-10-06," hanging over a fireplace. The piece wears its tweaked formality lightly, and the surface's warm appeal combines with a loosely binding grid structure, making for a pleasing blend of the tactile and the formal.

One of the more striking artists Deering represents is Neeta Madahar, a London native whose photography is deceptively clean and well-crafted. With deliberately polished lighting and a look suggesting advertising or a natural history museum tableau, Madahar captures elements of nature -- a bird's progress, vivid flora in a backyard -- while seducing the eye in a new way.

In contrast, Massachusetts-based photographer Shellburne Thurber shows large, elegant images of scruffy institutional spaces where renovation is in progress. With an approach

reminiscent of Santa Barbaran Richard Ross' acclaimed "Museology" series, Thurber draws on disorienting properties of light and color to transform the decrepit and the transitional into stuff of wonder.

Photographer Wayne McCall, another Santa Barbaran, fits neatly into the prevailing aesthetic, with his strangely dignified, large color images of crumpled paper juxtaposed with the more reputedly respectable deposits of nature and culture.

Boston-based painter Shelley Reed engages in the postmodernist game of appropriation, but with a distinctive spin. With the oddly alluring oil-on-canvas paintings, Reed swipes and revises imagery from the works of old masters, including Baroque painter Rachel Ruysch, a rare female of the Dutch painters of that era. But Reed filters the imagery through a palette of black and white, thus enhancing focus by compacting the data.

Reed's smart and likable work, like other art in Deering's gallery-slash-domicile, may lend a kinder, gentler air to the business of contemporary art. But it does so without any softening of artistic integrity or suppressing of innovative ideas. The Deering Gallery may be an experimental, part-time venture, but it's an idea whose time and place have come.

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