

A primary hue takes on myriad nuances in Gloucester

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 19, 2014

Adin Murray's "Rayleigh Scattering," on exhibit at the Jane Deering Gallery.

GLOUCESTER — Stand in the kitchen of the Jane Deering Gallery, in Deering's home in the Annisquam neighborhood here, and gaze out toward the shed in the backyard. Blue fills the frame of the shed's doorway — a deep, breathless sky blue that couldn't possibly be contained within the confines of such a small structure.

Adin Murray's 6-foot-square painting "Rayleigh Scattering," hangs solo inside. It's part of a refreshing group show, "Blue arrived, and its time was painted," the rest of which is in Deering's house (open by appointment).

Murray has painted a luminous sky dwarfing a sun-dried Australian landscape. That thin bottom fringe of auburn grass and trees effectively anchors the cerulean expanse because Murray has rendered it with near photo-realist care. Pearlescent clouds limned with violet and orange-gold throw an aura upward, which the sky swallows, and then grows bluer.

The show takes its name from "Azul," a poem by Spaniard Rafael Alberti, and snippets of verse have been mounted on the wall throughout. The text in the shed mentions "ecstatic blue." That's the color of Murray's sky.

Murray is a Cape Ann artist, and "Blue" mixes local with national and international talent. Chris Baker, of Maine and California, reimagines the Baroque masterpiece "Las Meninas" in his painting "Study After Velázquez."

A cobalt glow lights up Velázquez's shadowy recesses in the room where he depicted himself painting a young princess and her servants. Using a thin film of plastic as a kind of stencil, Baker delineates figures and paints within their contours, each a balance of sharp lines and tart, runny smudges. It's disarmingly strange – garish, ghostly, and affectionate.

Most of the work here, while smart, is not as unnerving. Tom Fels made his cyanotype "Arbor 6.16," by climbing up into a tree and holding up a 3-foot-tall piece of photographic paper, exposing it to the sun and the shadows of rustling leaves. The results evoke the touch and movement of a friendly breeze.

There's plenty more. Esther Pullman's photographs of architectural details create spaciousness, even in small settings, with angles and turns that make the eye pivot. Tess Jaray's untitled abstract silkscreen of increasingly blue bars describing an inverted pyramid has a basic, flat form, but color you could fall into. All told, the show's effect is clarifying and direct, like a cool dip on a sunny day.

Surfing On and Beyond the Surfaces:

Artist and UCSB Professor Harry Reese shows an intriguing set of paintings in 'Pattern Recognition' reportedly the swan show for the Jane Deering Gallery in Santa Barbara CA.

--Josef Woodard, SBNewsPress Correspondent 13June2014

For the eye's and mind's sake, the current Harry Reese exhibition of abstract at Jane Deering, 'Pattern Recognition' offers aspects of conceptual contemplation and sensuous, visceral pleasures. But beyond the art of the matter, the show is tinged with a bit of swan-songly rue, in that it represents the final show in the much-valued Deering gallery adventure in town, at least in this space and incarnation. It's the end

of a mini-era in the challenging turf of private contemporary art galleries in town.

Ms. Deering, based in Massachusetts for much of the year, has, while 'wintering' in Santa Barbara during the past several seasons, bravely presented contemporary art in a few different venues, the best of which was the current Canon Perdido space she has share with Frameworks for the past couple of years.

Life, the rigors of the art market and real-estate go on: her lease up, the space will become part of the expanded Handlebar Coffee haunt, and the gallerist talks of such possible humbler art-showcasing ideas down the road, including taking over a wall in this space.

But we digress, albeit only a bit. one of the virtues of the Deering shows has been a focus on contemporary artists who have made Santa Barbara their home, for a few years or many, with links to local academic institutions and otherwise. In the case of the multi-faceted and multi-notional Mr. Reese, he has been a provocative fixture for decades, a UCSB art professor going back to the 1970s, a mixed-media artist with a strong interest in book arts, and a publisher of books and prints, with his wife Sandra Liddell Reese, through the Turkey Press & and Edition Reese, and more.

As for the Harry Reese we find at the Deering gallery, 'Pattern Recognition' comprises a series of abstruse yet direct abstract explorations in paint, marked by a sense of natural forces -- decaying, rusting, oxidizing, dripping, morphing -- and surfaces and materials ever in flux. There is an illusionistic quality to the surfaces of these pieces, which can be reflective or glistening, as if in the palpable presence of glaring light. But they are also paintings of well-worked artifacts, which involve palpable, rough-to-the-touch layers while channeling impressions of other visual realities. it's not an easy read, as paintings go, but it's a rewarding one.

In his written statement, the artist cites a statement by Friedrich Kittler, that 'aesthetics begin in pattern recognition,' and also admits that his strongest influences often come from poetry, literature, philosophy and music, more than visual art, as such. He surmises that 'these paintings are not what I'm searching for, but what I find.'

Not surprisingly, given his admitted range of influences and references, the artist's paintings come equipped with linguistically-charged titles, to add to the visually-charged gambits involved. In 'Last Call' and 'Miles,' the reflective surfaces touch on the push-pull of finished product and partly tromp l'oeil-style surreal finish.

One of the bolder pieces in the gallery, 'Consensual Hallucination,' appears at once ruggedly earthy, invested in what, to quote the Thelonious Monk song, is an 'ugly beauty,' while presenting the aspects of a painterly puzzler on its own terms. Another dichotomy, in paint and in words, is the piece called 'New Archive,' with its bursting splash of a sensual pigment as the main 'event' in the composition, asserting itself above murky layers of sludgy blue residue.

In some of these paintings, in a way celebrating both artifact and artifice, we get some parallels to the motley, decaying surface in paintings from a certain era of German master Gerhard Richter's oeuvre. A set of smaller pieces follows an expressive logic quite different than the main body of art here, built up from semblances of brushstrokes or paint-dipped thumbprints, and odd-shaped shards appearing like airborne debris in a muttering, scrambled thicket.

Variations on the general theme of the show appear elsewhere, as well, expanding on what is essentially a changeable aesthetic search-and-fine effort. In 'Cascades,' for instance, washes of gray and white are put forth, in ways suggesting both fluid and fabric impressions, and mashed somehow together. This is just the backdrop for a deep blue calligraphic gesture in the center, disarming for its sense of a centering motif or visual plot line in an exhibition otherwise resistant to easy readings or hierarchical optical lingo.

Mr. Reese's intriguing body of 'findings' in the painting medium make for a fitting fare-three-well to a gallery that has dared to challenge the pictorial and stylistic norms of much of Santa Barbara's private gallery scenery. It was awfully nice and thought-provoking, while it lasted.

ART REVIEW: Beauty in the Everyday, the Anywhere - LOCAL PAINTER LESLIE LEWIS SIGLER AND EAST COAST PHOTOGRAPHER ESTHER PULLMAN COME TOGETHER IN 'EQUIPOISE'

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent
May 9, 2014

For locally-based realist-with-a-mission painter Leslie Lewis Sigler and the East Coast-based photographer Esther Pullman, currently blithely cohabitating the Jane Deering Gallery show "Equipoise," there is nothing especially exotic at hand in terms of subject matter, or the iconography of what comes before their artistic crosshairs. Yes, Ms. Sigler has honed her skills and insights by painting a series of poetic still life "portraits" of antique silver, of the fanciful, heirloom sort, and Ms. Pullman has been taking pictures of niches in old, evocative houses in New England. And yet the underlying mantra of each artist has more to do with celebrating and elevating the commonplace, finding beauty and mystery in the everyday.

Together, the two related but individualistic artists get along famously here. The show manages to nicely showcase and gain strength from their efforts to invest common objects and domestic spaces with uncommon

meditative focus.

Ms. Sigler, whose work occupies a distinctive place in the pantheon of Santa Barbara painters and who has had impressive shows at the Faulkner Gallery and the Architectural Foundation in the past few years, has a style that is identifiable at a glance. A canny still life painter, she lavishes her patient realist style on silver pieces that take on the feel and the personality of separate characters, with unusual descriptive titles, i.e. "The Intended," "The Pilgrim," and "The Sidekick," drawing our narrative feelers into play while in the act of looking at the art.

In these strangely compelling (and compellingly strange?) paintings, we're lured by the sensuous reflective glistening surfaces and curves, the ornate designs and portrait-like centrality of each object. Shadows cast on neutral gray/brown backgrounds remind us of the material "objectness" of each subject, while distorted reflections in the silver hazily hint at the environment of the objects, as in "The Luminary," the pitcher in "The Cultivator," and the serving utensils of "The Three Graces" and "The Utopian." Through these fuzzy reflections, our reality panorama expands to an unseen domestic space beyond the precious silver object.

Said space, in the figurative sense, could be a space where Ms. Pullman's camera does its exploratory work, in her "domestic geometry" series. In contrast to the vaster scale and sweep of her large photographic works, seen in a memorable show at the old De la Guerra Street location of Jane Deering Gallery a few years ago, these photographs are intimate and spontaneous, elliptical up-close views that ferret out intriguing angles and "found" or forced geometric designs, seeking expressive possibilities in a common house.

Most intriguingly in this exhibition, which affords each artist their own separate corners as well as blending their visions, are the intuitive pairings. On one wall, Ms. Sigler's small, vertical spoon studies are matched, in size though not necessarily in form, with Ms. Pullman's probing images taken during a residency at noted late American artist Fairfield Porter's house in Great Spruce Island, Maine. What results in this east-meets-west artistic linkage is akin to an alluring, half-abstract visual conversation of imagery, with harmony and rhythm arising between them.

If art could speak – in words, that is – the conversation might be something circling the subject of the ample magic lurking in the mundane, awaiting liberating expression through the filters of artists with their lights on.

ART REVIEW: Art, Craft and Modern Mischief - BOSTON-BASED ARTIST ELIZABETH ALEXANDER METICULOUSLY BLENDS CRAFT, CONCEPT, SCULPTURE AND INSTALLATION IDEAS IN 'MARY MARY'

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent

April 11, 2014 11:51 AM

ART REVIEW

Elizabeth Alexander | *Mary Mary*

When: through April 26

In the deceptively calm and deceptively decorative new exhibition at Jane Deering Gallery, Elizabeth Alexander's *Mary Mary*, what you see is not necessarily what you get. Key word, 'necessarily.'

Lace 2013 Paper, graphite powder, glue . 36 x 28 inches

This patient and redefinition-seeking Boston-based artist is ostensibly working in the sculptural and installation art modes, using paper and porcelain sources that have been meticulously cut, reshaped, artfully defaced and sometimes slyly mimic material realities as something other than what they are. The Deering gallery show sports artworks, from an elaborate faux lace table runner as gallery centerpiece to intricate paper-constructed 'still lifes' -- suitable subjects and a blackened paper piece that evokes ornate ironwork; it seduces the eye through the detailed precision of its X-acto knife artistry and beneath-the-surface themes at hand.

It helps to get some contextual back story on Ms. Alexander, who earned her MFA at the respected Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan, and studied art in Scotland and France, but has also been an ironworker, like her father before her. She translates that facility fascination with challenging physical materials to work with -- a spectrum running from iron to paper, in the fastidious degrees she demands -- to create dazzlingly, dizzyingly handcrafted cutout pieces.

Bowl of fruit 2012 . Paper, glue, wood . 15x15x16 inches

Apart from the quietly mischievous table setting in the gallery, with its echoing imagery of a fanciful building and abstracted decorative filigree, she ups the ante of her paper-mastery with paper sculptures of a fruit bowl replete with fruits, and, on the gallery's back wall, rosy lengths of sausage and a full-scaled life-deprived pheasant. The objects and subjects themselves are perfectly fitting fodder for 19th-century still life and trompe l'oeil painters, here transformed into a post-modernist twist via her papery art supply of choice.

A series of early art school-era pieces finds her deploying her cut-out methodology to both process-minded and metaphorical ends, by taking pages from a vintage botany book and carefully excising the beautiful plant subject from the surrounding framing -- removing the content from its context, to create a subverted relationship of positive/negative, and figure/ground.

Beyond the realm of her fine (in more than one way) paper art, we also find a few examples of her deconstructionist reworking of delicate pieces of china, which have been shamelessly and quite arduously and time-consumptively, subjected to carved-out revisions and image impositions. Her intricate design, whose blackness triggers association with metal work, somehow neatly also triggers longing for craft and physicality of bygone eras, as local as the soon-to-be-demolished corrugated metal-exterior blacksmith/ironwork building and property just down a few blocks on Anacapa Street.

Magnolia Warbler 2014 . hand-cut bone china (found object) . 4 x 4 x 4 inches

Somehow, lurking behind the vague and harmless audacity of her end results are deposits of wistful melancholy, and also dry humor. She alludes to some imagined and hinted-at elegance of being that has been lost or diminished in this digitalized age. The art also suggests a kind of inherently vulnerable social decorum, conveyed through tellingly fragile mediums -- easily torn or burnt paper, defaced precious china, and emblems of imperiled antiquity and order. Beauty is at hand, and at risk.

ART REVIEW

Elizabeth | *Mary Mary*

When: through April 26 . 2014

Where: Jane Deering Gallery . 128 E. Canon Perdido Street

Hours: 11am to 5pm Tuesday-Saturday . Information: janedeeringgallery.com
. 805-966-3334

Review: Chris Baker *Pacific*

One Rembrandt Inspires Many Forms at Jane Deering Gallery

Tuesday, March 25, 2014

by [CHARLES DONELAN](#)

Twelve figures present themselves to the viewer in Chris Baker's large (106x 132) new painting "Pacific" -- 13 if you count the chicken. They're mostly recognizable California types, and with the brilliant sunshine, modern architecture, and laid-back style of their setting, they could hardly be anywhere else. At the center of this majestic, brilliant-hued composition, a guy with a white beard almost holds the attention of a dude in baggy shorts, a red shirt, and a sombrero. To the left, children

frolic, and to the right, a trio plays music, defining the image's limits. Other characters occupy the middle, too, like the blonde in the yellow sundress, or the plaid-shirt man with the ball cap. White beard even has a sort of echo in the form of another white bearded man who stands behind him, gesticulating. Generous with color and light, the picture combines an old-world sense of grace and complexity in its composition with a fresh palette that is worthy of David Hockney at his best.

What's not immediately apparent, and what makes Baker's work so interesting and special, is that the inspiration for *Pacific*, which occupies one entire wall of the gallery, comes not from the likes of Hockney's iconic "Beverly Hills Housewife" of 1966 but rather from Rembrandt's much, much more iconic "The Night Watch" of 1642. Hanging on the wall opposite "Pacific" is another of Baker's large new paintings, the 48 x 72 "The Night Watch Abstracted" (2014). Elsewhere on the walls and in the gallery's flat files, myriad examples, each executed in a different idiom, all point to the same conclusion – Baker is obsessed by "The Night Watch."

"The Night Watch, Abstracted" (2014)

If you're a painter and you are going to become obsessed with a single great painting, "The Night Watch" is the way to go. Packed with endless information not only about the merry band of sitters, who weren't watching anything when they commissioned the picture from Rembrandt, but also about the possibilities of painting, its visual interest feels unlimited. In his abstracted version, Baker remains remarkably faithful to the arrangement of the figures in the original but lets loose within that with a tour de force of painterly distortions. Dragging a scraper across many of the figures with a light touch and a sure hand, Baker introduces the kind of horizontal smears one associates with a sticky printing roller – or the abstractions of Gerhard Richter. Baker employs other postmodern painting gestures here, as well, and a side-by-side comparison of his painting with Rembrandt's original in digital reproduction reveals that such techniques as the incorporation of hard, stencil-edged fragments of negative space are in fact nothing new, as Rembrandt was using them in the 17th century.

In a brief artist's statement accompanying the show, Baker suggests that his project is best understood as a search for order through observation of and meditation on Rembrandt's sublime sense of composition. While ordinary artists are often reluctant to acknowledge their influences out of an anxiety that they may be second best, for Baker, the influence of Rembrandt would appear to induce a kind of ecstasy. With *Pacific*, he emerges from the long shadow of "The Night Watch" into the bright light of his own imagination.

<http://www.independent.com/news/2014/mar/25/review-chris-baker-pacific/>

ART REVIEW: A Bigger Picture, a Classic Declassified - CHRIS BAKER'S EPIC PAINTING, 'PACIFIC,' TAKES REMBRANDT'S CLASSIC 'THE NIGHT WATCH' AS A DIRECT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent

March 14, 2014 11:54 AM

ART REVIEW

Chris Baker | *Pacific*

Despite the presence of studies, back-stories and supportive energies, the current fare in the Jane Deering Gallery basically qualifies as a one-painting wonder. Even casually walking by the gallery space, Chris Baker's *Pacific* screams out to the senses, in a side-of-a-wall, mini-mural kind of way, its whopping 106-inch-by-132-inch dimensions all but lording it over one long gallery wall, and engulfing our sightlines.

Chris Baker . *Pacific* 2014 . Oil on canvas . 106 x 132 inches

And yet, if this seemingly casual gathering of figures in an identifiably iconic Southern California setting initially settles easy on the mind -- giving double meaning to the word 'Pacific,' as ocean and peaceful feeling -- the conceptual plot thickens and taps into something deeper and art-historically entrenched. *Pacific* takes, as its primary inspiration and model, Rembrandt's classic and epic 1642 painting *The Night Watch*, aka its original title, '*The Company of captain Frans Banning Cocq and lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch preparing to march out.*'

Chris Baker . *Night Watch, Abstracted* 2014 . Oil on canvas . 487 x 72 inches

Mr. Baker, who has studios in Carpinteria and Sedgwick, Maine, has

maneuvered a post-Modernist flip here, unabashedly channeling and structurally mimicking Rembrandt, while lending a refreshing new twist in the realm of figurative art-making. He switches out the oody and dim-lit nocturnal setting of the original with bright, unrelenting California mid-day, and exchanges the 17th military aggregation for a motley crew of casual-dress Californians, slacker, possible scholars, and a jazz trio appreciated by a baying dog.

But clearly, the formal and organizational connection of the two paintings conspires toward an artistic, odd coupling across centuries, painting idioms and geo-cultural coordinates. As the artist explains in a statement, 'This is not a utopian order, nor is it a natural order. Rather, it is an alternative order -- one that is large, wide, in color, imperfect.'

Across the room from the 'big picture,' hangs his piece, **The Night Watch, Abstracted**, service as a kind of point of reference and/or departure from the more than twice-as-large painting across the way. Elements of the original have been scrubbed, scraped, blurred and blackened, as is windswept by the gusts of art historicist memory and contemplation.

With **Pacific**, the vast scale belies its ambivalent, easy-does-it, leisure-soaked imagery. We instantly recognize the archetypal stuff of the SoCal lifestyle, from the swim-suited fashion, shorts (with camouflage pattern, mixed with the colors of the Ethiopian flag -- how SoCal is that?), and the odd presence of an older man positioned in an arch, pontificating pose, a direct lift of the central figure in the Rembrandt. He is the surrogate 21st century, Californian stand-in for captain Frans Banning Cocq.

These disparate characters are curiously collected here, in a mannered, frozenly theatrical way in this stage, set-like space. They could have been enlisted from a mega-mall or fresh off the strand in Venice, California, in the lazy, sunlight-kissed atmosphere with mild mountains in the background, a geometric, modernist beach house and the classic eucalyptus tree -- seemingly indigenous to California, but actually a non-native, like so many things on this far coast.

In the dramatic arts, in theater, opera and film, the process of updating and re-contextualizing old standards of the repertoires is an accepted part of the creative process. Updating and modernizing Shakespeare or Verdi, say, is a gesture toward making great art universal and of-the-now, as well as a potentially controversial prospect. In the fine arts, the long arm and ominous echoes of art history feed into what comes next in ways that can be more poetic or twice-removed, or also sometimes realized by moving in an opposite direction.

Mr. Baker's notion is, at once, bracingly direct, and sneakily complicated. With **Pacific**, somehow, the careful blend of transformation, adaptation and allegiance becomes a subplot in the fascination of the painting -- and the project itself. The painting, this one looming tableau of a painting, is the thing, yes. But it's also just the starting point.

ART REVIEW

Pacific Study 1.5 2014

Watercolor on paper . 6"x9"

Chris Baker | *Pacific*

When: through March 29 . 2014

Where: Jane Deering Gallery . 128 E. Canon Perdido Street

Hours: 11am to 5pm Tuesday-Saturday . Information: janedeeringgallery.com
. 805-966-3334

**ART REVIEW: Landscape, Revisited and Rethought - 'THE LAND HAS MANY PARTS'
OPENS THE FIVE-MONTH JANE DEERING GALLERY SEASON WITH PROVOCATIVE AND
POETIC IDEAS ABOUT LAND**

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent

January 24, 2014 8:11 AM

ART REVIEW

'The Land Has Many Parts'

In *The Land Has Many Parts*, the first show of the five-month season at the Jane Deering Gallery, the closest thing to landscape paintings, as we commonly know them, is Julian Kreimer's *Knee* and *Our Claim to What Is*, and close is a relative term. In these paintings, the Brooklyn-based artist burrows into thickets of natural underbrush and forest-like terrain,

without the usual landscape art bearings of horizons or focusing features of flowers, tree, skylines or other comforting points of familiarity.

Julian Kreimer . *Knee* 2013 . Oil on linen . 36x36 inches

These busy, bushy areas into which our sense are plunged could be an actual, rugged and unspoiled forest location, or a scrubby nature patch off the interstate. So much for pretty, neatly composed and idealized pictures plucked from the stuff of nature. The land in this art has many possible implications, inspiring and foreboding. So goes the art in the gallery, more generally.

Titled after a page in an illustrated-by-the-British-author, Nigel Peake, from his book, *In the Wilds, The Land Has Many Parts* involves several artists' considerations of land -- its meaning, symbolic import, its harsher realities, and state of fragility. Not incidentally, the show also serves as something of an antidote, or at least alternative, to the prevailing wisdom of the locally popular landscape and 'plein air' painting tradition.

In an exhibition statement, the underlying theme of the art in the room has to do with 'connecting landscape to power, memory, modernity, cultural and climatic shifts.' All told, the Deering show is a bold opening act as the first of a handful of shows during the mostly Massachusetts-based gallerist's January-to-May stint out West in her Santa Barbara satellite space. For several years now, she has been running her Santa Barbara gallery space in various locales, most recently in this atmospherically charged location, across the street from the Presidio.

Set with cool, context-staging dramatics on the back wall of the space, Brooks-trained photographer, Jacob Hessler's large print *Brittle Remains* is a minimalist slice of natural life, an eerily arid image of wintry, leafless, tree forms in Namibia. It suggests a barren landscape, but is very much of this planetary visual vocabulary.

Jacob Hessler . *Brittle Remains* 2012 . Archival Inkjet Print . 40x60 inches

In another case of landscape tropes rendered afresh, Adin Murray's *Cloud and Light Study* series involves muted, black-and-white meditation on the meeting of land, sea and sky, but under bleak-ish, reductive, expressive

circumstances. Land takes on yet another meaning and timbre in the British artist, Hazel Walker's surprisingly affecting, subtle paints inflected with spare washes of Americana, *Elsewhere 9* and *Mining Town*. Wisps of architectural forms assume larger significance regarding the mix of structure and land usage, without excessive fanfare.

Elsewhere in the land of alternate landscape painting, Sue McNally's *Ice and Rock Pile* finds realism yielding and interweaving with a lean abstractionist's code of picture-making; and Magnolia Laurie's oil-on-panel, real-meets-and-mates-with-the-unreal imagery is laced with and informed by poetic titles, *between here and nearest land*, and *it's hard to trust these qualities*.

From a perspective comprehensible to many Americans, including the fast-developing realm of Santa Barbara's formerly open and semi-agrarian topography, Kim Parr Roenigk's trio of large, impressive paintings of the Baltimore-area, housing development where she lives, detail the before-and-after reformation and 'taming' of once-unsullied soil and land. It's the old, familiar story of gentrification and suburbanization, told through light-and-shadow-sensitive paintings of a suburban tract, in which a former farmhouse and vacant lot are sacrificed to the bedroom community cause.

Kim Parr Roenigk . *Maple Cliff 1* 2009 . Oil on paper . 30x41 inches

As an unintended companion piece to art about the invasion of suburbia into open spaces in and around our cities, Amanda Burnham's large, imposing and impressive *Overpass* is a fittingly hectic and dense ink and collage 'homage' to the info, population and architectural overload of an unspecified city. She addresses the subject in the context of a rough-around-the-edges and cartoon-ish portrayal of a cosmos fit to burst, and less organized than surfaces might suggest.

Amanda Burnham . *Overpass* 2013 . Ink and collage on paper . 40x6