

ART REVIEWS

ART REVIEWS; Folk Art, Seascapes And Musings on Conflict

By D. Dominick Lombardi

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Folk Art of the Southwest: The Goldfinger Collection

The Gallery at KGS II, 18-24 The Parkway, Katonah. Through Sept. 30. (914)232-6402.

For more than 15 years, June and Myron Goldfinger have been collecting the folk art of New Mexican artists of both Navajo and Mexican descent. The exhibition now at The Gallery at KGS II focuses on works that deal with animal imagery.

The premier artist of this particular type of folk art is Felipe Archuleta (1910-1991). His desire to create animal carvings instead of traditional New Mexican Santos figures was an influential step in the development of Southwestern art, offering him and many others, including his grandson, a much broader scope of possibilities with respect to content.

This exhibition consists of 85 hand-carved and painted figures, made with wood from fallen cottonwood trees. Many of the sculptures are decorated with common objects such as whisk broom fibers and bottle caps that add texture, color and interest.

What I found most compelling about these works were their facial expressions. There's a perplexed turkey, a crazed lynx, a proud rooster, a maniacal cat, a quizzical-looking pig and a hyper Chihuahua.

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A second exhibition here features the oil paintings of Jean Jack -- simple, somber and austere-looking -- which serve as a marked contrast to the lively carved figures.

An adjacent room contains the palladium prints of David Michael Kennedy. While Mr. Kennedy may be better known for his intimate and revealing portraits of rock stars, or his haunting and memorable images of Native Americans, I found his platinum prints of New Mexico's State Penitentiary in Santa Fe to be the most compelling of his works here, because they are so clinical and straightforward.

Kathy Kennedy: Pinhole Seascapes

Candace Perich Gallery, 27 Katonah Avenue, Katonah. Through Sept. 21. (914)232-3966.

Kathy Kennedy makes beautiful photographs of the northeastern coast line. In using a pinhole camera to create these works, she greatly extends the time the film is exposed to light, which registers any movement within the picture plane as a blur. This blur works best when Ms. Kennedy focuses her attention on the simplest of vistas. There are clear details in these photographs because of static elements such as rocks or the distant horizon line, factors that play well against certain distinct atmospheres, such as a late evening fog or an early morning mist.

In works like "Seascape #52," "Seascape #12," "Seascape #30" and "Seascape #41," there is almost a dry ice effect created by a rising marine fog. In "Seascape #12," and in "Seascape #21," Ms. Kennedy arranges the camera's view so that the horizon line falls very near the center of the picture plane. This, and the fact that there is a minimal amount of detail, makes these two works the most modern.

"Seascape #19," with its coral blue colors, fast-moving wispy clouds and wind-swept waters, has the greatest appeal. It's dreamy, even otherworldly, quite pleasing to the eyes and mind.

Pietro Costa: Conflicts and War

Katonah Museum of Art, Route 22 at Jay Street, Katonah. Through Oct. 26. (914)232-9555

The current show in the Marilyn M. Simpson Sculpture Garden of the Katonah Museum of Art is a thought-provoking installation by Pietro Costa.

"Conflicts and War" consists of seven variously sized cylinders partly buried in the ground. Each has a colored neon ring light at the top and a simple neon word light at the bottom: "I," "you," "Us," "them," "his," "hers" and "G."

As the show's curator, Ellen J. Keiter points out, the number seven has a multitude of references including the seven deadly sins and the seventh day on which God rested after creating the world. Depending on how the words connect -- I-you, us-them, his-hers ---- the pairings suggest a sort of face-off or conflict.

The most compelling aspect of this installation is how each of the lights pulsed on and off. For instance, the "God" cylinder was like a quickened heartbeat. The "I" neon light was faster, a more anxious beat. "Hers" was rhythmic, steady, almost calming. "His" looked somewhat like a radar blip: 1-2-3, then a pause, then 1-2-3 again. All these effects add a certain personification to an otherwise lifeless combination of objects.

In stepping back from the entire installation, it became clear that the translucent cylinders that house the lights would be more impressive at night, which is not an option given the museum's hours. Nevertheless, this is a work that brings layers, and layers of subtlety to the meaning of conflict and war.

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