



'Skein'



'Double Squiggle'

Sullivan Goss photos

Questions of Balance, and Answers

By *Josef Woodard,*
News-Press Correspondent



Ken Bortolazzo,
'Equipoise'

When: through September 30

Where: Sullivan Goss,
7 E. Anapamu St.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily

Information: 730-1460,
www.sullivangoss.com

SCULPTOR KEN BORTOLAZZO DEFTLY BLENDS THE HARD, SHINY SURFACES OF HIS SCULPTURES WITH DELICACY IN 'EQUIPOISE'

Santa Barbara-based sculptor Ken Bortolazzo has longed been respected for his uncanny ability to coax grace and delicacy from the tough stuff of metal sculptures. With his fascinating new body of works, seen in the Sullivan Goss exhibition dubbed "Equipoise," he lightens up and sets his sculpture in gentle motion.

With these smaller, delicate pieces, the artist digs deeper into the functional paradox of hard surfaces and dense materiality and a careful balancing act in which component parts of each sculpture are set on pivot points and invited to move, gently and lyrically. Think Alexander Calder mobiles gone dynamic and steely sturdy. He also makes more references to nature, whether directly in his small, tabletop bird and tree pieces, or poetically in the larger works.

In the center of the entrance gal-

lery where "Equipoise" is housed — and a very centering presence — is the squat, immobile, but also sensuous piece from 2009, "Embrace." With its interwoven tangle of steel "limbs," the older work serves as a kind of anchoring factor in a room full of its more kinetic and balletic colleagues.

Of these new pieces, even the most rectilinear and industrial of the lot, "I-Beam," boasts a sense of gravity-defying levity. The lovely "Squiggle" asserts its series of simple, and yes, squiggly, lines and counterweights to make the piece dance, with a gust of fan-blown wind or a nudge from a visitor's hand.

With "Estacas," two tilting fan-like or palm frond-like forms sway and twist every so slightly, blowing in the wind of its own small electric fan below (this may be the first Sullivan Goss exhibition in which electric fans were part of the instal-

lation apparatus). "Perched" is one of the subtlest of the works here, based on four arcing lines, strategically perched on a fulcrum.

But, as with the other pieces in the room, we reflect less on the geometry and engineering of the artistic matter than the dreamy end result, a critical aspect of what feeds the success of this artist's new body of work.

Two of the larger new kinetic pieces can be found positioned outside the entrance of the adjacent building, home of the Arts & Letters Café and other gallery spaces. Eyeing the tilting motion and discreet design, we might immediately reference memories of the similar kinetic sculptures of George Rickey, one of Mr. Bortolazzo's mentors, which resided a block away, on the Museum of Art entryway for many years. Some kind of artistic continuum and torch-passing this way comes.



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