

The World is a Campus

A RICH SHOWING OF ALUM ARTISTS CONNECTED TO UCSB, PLUS A FRONT GALLERY SHOW BY UNIQUE DREAM-SCAPE PAINTER PHOEBE BRUNNER, BRIGHTEN THE SULLIVAN GOSS ART GALLERY THIS MONTH

By Josef Woodard,
News-Press Correspondent



'The Artists of UCSB' and 'Phoebe Brunner: Breathe'

When: through June 3

Where: Sullivan Goss,
7 E. Anapamu St.

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

Information: 730-1460,
sullivangoss.com



PHOTO BY TONY J. MASTRES

"Nostalgia VI" by Tom Pazderka.

The Sullivan Goss' curatorial forces that be opted not to pussyfoot about or take rhetorical roads less traveled with its current group show, "The Artists of UCSB" with "UCSB" in jumbo font. The gist: all artists aboard are alums of the university, and some are past and current teachers there. The show came about as a response to a gesture from the University to try to mediate the gap between life and culture on campus and in the Santa Barbara community, and was timed to run during the recent all-Gaucha reunion.

If there is a gap, real and/or perceived, between the "remote" outer Goleta-based campus and the greater Santa Barbara scene, its importance and deep impact on our city's cultural life — especially in the arts — has been immense over the years. Apart from the institution's mentoring



"Kitchen Interior with Seascape" by Bruce Cohen.

COURTESY PHOTOS



"Plume" by Phoebe Brunner.



"The Ridge Road" by Phoebe Brunner.

powers, many of its alums have landed in the upper echelon of significant artists in Santa Barbara, and beyond. Hence, there is a calm but assured weight in the seemingly simple moniker promising "The Art of UCSB."

While this could have been a much larger exhibition, the concentrated gathering of art in the back-gallery space of Sullivan Goss' triple gallery downtown compound offers a survey both diverse and complimentary to the art touched by and honed at UCSB. In a case of further good timing, the show overlaps the always look-worthy MFA show at UCSB's own AA&D Museum, through June 4. MFA shows, particularly in recent years, have offered a valuable glimpse into the University Art Department's evolution, and tips us off to young emerging artists worth watching, some of whom settle into the Santa Barbara scene.

From that recent MFA group, one of the more immediately affecting pieces in the Sullivan Goss show comes from recently graduated MFA Tom Pazderka. His dire, gray-scaled "Nostalgia VI" is slightly ominous and all too timely — a view of a tall, noxious

smoke cloud of the sort we're too familiar with from December's Thomas Fire debacle, and with an art material list including actual ash, oil and charcoal.

Fittingly, images and mythos of beach and ocean-adjacent life makes its way into several of



"The Nimble Tide" by Phoebe Brunner.

the works here, most iconically in Hank Pitcher's "Eric's Board at Sands Beach," painted this year and a fine addition to Mr. Pitcher's growing body of surfboards-as-figure portraits. John Nava (who, like Pitcher and other artists here have shown at Sullivan Goss) offers up one of his actual figurative/seascape paintings, "Summerland," a large and realistically rendered study of a young woman at water's edge, but viewed from behind, a distancing perspective.

Oceanic concerns weigh in differently in the case of Nicole Strasburg's "Mirage," a deceptively tranquil and minimal painting of a watery blue backdrop punctuated with several oil derricks. With this piece, the customary landscape/seascape/riverscape imagery we've come to expect from the gifted Ms. Strasburg takes a more explicit environmental turn, whereas her ecological sentiments are usually implied in her art's adoration of nature.

One of the most striking works in the show comes from Bruce Cohen, whose clever and stylized "Kitchen Interior with Seascape" bears a title which identifies the blended strategy of the artist. A crisp interior and orderly geometric pictorial structure is offset by glimpses of the unrulier sea, peeking through rectilinear windows.

A similar play of soft against hard is at work, in a very different way, in Julika Lackner's "Yellowstone Early Morning," with elements reduced to minimalist essentials. Clouds hover above, misty washes below, and sharp-edged, flat-planed silhouetted mountains stake out the lake middle ground of the composition. Voila, a landscape painting which pays homage to its subject, but follows the discerning artistic scheme of the artist, in equal measure.

Some artists in this UCSB-touched group have established a strong personal stamp by embracing multiple media and disciplines, as is the case with Rafael de Pera de la Cabada, who shows works in two and three-dimensions here. Mary Heebner, whose diversified work over the years

UCSB

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Singing and Picking up a Friendly, Perfect Storm

By *Josef Woodard,*
News-Press Correspondent



As expected, Brad Paisley delivered on multiple fronts when he steered his current Weekend Warrior tour through the Santa Barbara Bowl on Saturday night, his first Bowl show since playing there in 2006. As a hit-making singer-songwriter who has very much landed in the upper echelon

of living country greats, and whose stunning guitar mastery is sometimes underrated, he is something of a triple threat as modern country stars go — quadruple, if we include his easy-flowing sense of humor and unpretentious way of making an audience feel at home.

Of course, as hot and warming as his musical content was on this Saturday night out, there was a deeper cause at the core, with proceeds going to a variety of local charities in this time of need and recovery in the area.

CONCERT REVIEW

The country music superstar has lived in Montecito for several years but kept a low profile until outing himself as a charitable and community-minded figure in recent months (including a performance at December's Unity Shoppe telethon).

He engineered this special Second Responders benefit show in the wake of the Thomas Fire and Montecito mudslide catastrophes. That trend has thus far included Bowl-sized efforts by Jack Johnson (back in March) and Katy Perry (coming to the Bowl

COUNTRY STAR AND GUITAR WIZARD BRAD PAISLEY WOWS THE BOWL CROWD, CHARITABLY

this Saturday), and other Santa Barbara-connected celebrities with a community-related passion and compassion in their veins.

From the outset on Saturday, we were made aware of the charitable undercurrent and attention to the subject which inspired the star to put this show together, soon after the January 9 mudslide debacle in the town Mr. Paisley and his family calls home. What opened with a procession by the Ventura City Drum and Pipe Band, through the aisle and up on stage, ended with the star inviting a packed stage full of first

responders in fire departments around the region onstage while Mr. Paisley called on the George Strait song "Fireman" and then his own party-timing chart-topper "Alcohol" to close a memorable evening.

Following the drum and pipe introduction, television talk show personality Ellen DeGeneres (also a Montecitan, who has given generous airtime to the mudslide and its starry residents, including Mr. Paisley) came up, at first playing a parade drum,

PAISLEY

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has found a fruitful resonance at the juncture of book works, illustrated texts, and abstract imagery in mixed media, shows book works, but makes her biggest splash with the large and sensuous "Venus: XVII Sweet-Worded Desire."

Dug Uyesaka and Tony Askew, artists with strong and long community links, have mastered the realm of assemblage and collage (a medium, incidentally, with some deep roots at UCSB, via the late and widely-respected collagist faculty member William Dole), and show examples of both media here.

Among the artists with Sullivan Goss' gallery embrace is Patricia Chidlaw, who recently had a fine exhibition here, showing her 2011 painting "Twilight Tank Cars," a railroad image of dusky, melancholic beauty. We almost hear a lonely train song in our mind's ear. And then there is Phoebe Brunner, the distinctive and dream-dusted landscape painter whose own new work can be seen in the front of this very building, in the form of her show "Breathe."

As usual, like a traditional landscape artist, Ms. Brunner summons up elemental natural forces and forms, but always with at least a semblance of surrealism tossed into the recipe. She has created a special dimension to call her own, as if the influence of dreams or other reality-altering influences have led her to new vistas, off to the left of the world we know. And she continues to paint this "place," knowingly and assuredly.



"Big Love" by Phoebe Brunner.

Take her canvas "Plume," a very different cloudscape than Mr. Pazderka's fiery vision in the back room. Here, an expansive orange cloud form asserts an almost mystical presence. Orange clouds appear again in a set of nine small paintings of orange poppy fields, and as wispy puffs in "The Ridge Road."



"Yellowstone Early Morning" by Julika Lackner.

The undulant power and nature of waves seems to inhabit every physical component in "The Nimble Tide," with water, tidal rock forms and other aspects of the image in a rolling wave of integrated visual vigor. "Big Love" is a dramatic yet still slightly magic realistic scene of selective rain downpours over a field of poppies.

Attesting to the self-awareness of her alternate landscapist intentions, she lends the title "Slowly, Slowly We are Drifting" to a scene of hills and oak trees generously dusted by pockets of mist. Mist and clarity, internal logic and natural splendor, deftly combine in Ms. Brunner's world.

While it's dangerous and incomplete to ascribe an artist's work and voice to an institution on their resume, we could easily say that Ms. Brunner is one of countless fine artists UCSB can be proud of having in its annals.