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Crossing Borders: Art collective disrupts at Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery

By Sophie Braccini



Photos Sophie Braccini

At the intersection of "happening" and "exhibit," the Global Art Project offers an immersion into contemporary mixed-media art in the downtown Lafayette Jennifer Perlmutter gallery. Perlmutter has opened her space to Carl Heyward who invited several GAP partners inspired by the idea of pushing their practice and crossing borders. The exhibit opened on Sept. 5 and will be on display at 3525 Mount Diablo Blvd. through Oct. 3.

Heyward is a Bay Area mixed-media artist whose work has been nourished by his musical background as well as his visual art training. His focus is to create art that impacts people. He is interested in experimenting and working alongside other artists, even if the result is ephemeral. What counts for him is unadulterated spontaneous inspiration, as he believes that when pure creativity manifests, the artist that trusts it will be able to deal with anything.

About 10 years ago when Heyward started getting interested in social media and its potential immediate impact, he started collaborating with kindred spirits from all over the Western world and together they started GAP. The collaborative organized yearly residencies in Europe, Africa, North and South America until the pandemic stopped the engrossing experiences.

The co-creative process had to evolve and the exhibition "Crossing Borders" came to be at the invitation of artist-gallerist and GAP member Ron Weijers. The first iteration was presented in a 14th century cathedral at Campo-Santo in Ghent, Belgium, the second one is in Lafayette.

The large space at the gallery is filled by art pieces that are each unique but create a harmonious journey. Observing one creation after another feels like meandering in a varied landscape where a new discovery awaits at each bend in the path.

Thirty different artists from the Bay Area to Europe, Africa and Asia explore personal, psychological, political and even aesthetic limitations imposed by the dynamics of fear. In the words of Heyward, the resulting work stimulates thought, sheds light into corners of darkness and through a reciprocal process, then elevates thought and experience and in some cases, perhaps, offers options to habitual automatic modes of thinking and being.

Na Omi Judy Shintani, for example, is a local artist that thinks of herself as a narrator who tells people's stories through different media. The piece she presents at the exhibit, called "Dream Refuge," evokes the immigrant children that are imprisoned in the United States. The child figures on the floor with their mylar foil blankets are surrounded by the Japanese-American children who were encamped during World War II, a story close to home for Shintani. The large 3D display includes a soundtrack mixing sounds of the night and of children.

French/Columbian Mar Daines sent "Waiting to Fly" - a beautiful hanging piece where origami representing boats are held in a fishing net. What the artist asks here is "Where is home?" Is it a place where you were born? Is it a place where you feel you belong? Is it where you can be yourself and be loved? Can you be true to yourself, when where you call home is not really your original home? Does the fact of not living where you were born condemn you to be an immigrant throughout your life?

Several displays talk about children, voices that are not being heard, children who have disappeared. Others evoke passage from one region to another, from one state to another. It deals with relationships, connections and disruptions. Heyward noted that at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has created a myriad of borders and challenges to our very existence, GAP moves forward, creating platforms for collaboration and communication, appreciating the fragility of life and the necessity to continue with compassion and humanity.

The gallery is open Wednesday to Saturday from 2 to 6 p.m. The experiential voyage is sure to inspire and ignite the imagination of viewers.



Na Omi Judy Shintani with her creation "Dream Refuge."

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