

Wall sculptures adorn 1078 Gallery

By Michele French
Special to the E-R

An exhibition of wall sculptures by three different artists is at Chico's 1078 Gallery through April 1.

James Lilly maintains a studio in Claremont, but resides in Bellevue, Wash. One of the docents at the 1078 said it's easy to see the influence of Lilly's environment in his work because it reminded her very strongly of the scenery in Washington state.



Two of Lilly's works, "Seabeck Bay Altarpiece" and "Ozette," resemble medieval altarpieces. Hinged panels on either side open to reveal a triptych. When closed the front of the "altarpiece" displays the scene within. When closed the "Seabeck Bay Altarpiece" displays a faded Texaco sign and lettering that says "Silverdale 14." When this work is open, an aquatic scene appears in dark, mysterious shades of blue and green. There are free-standing shapes in the center and on the doors that represent sharks, bass, seashells and starfish.

The artist says: "My paintings are quite personal to me, each is about a special place

I have visited ... I hope to create an ambiguous feeling that asks the viewer to stop and examine each individual element ... I hope the viewer is able to experience the essence of that particular place..."

Christine Pendergrass, from Bend, Ore., has a group of ceramic fans in the show. These are tranquil, quiet works that are glazed in soft, earthy colors and the quality of classic Japanese art.

Pendergrass was given a grant by the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation of New York City, which enabled her to study in Sweden in 1985.

Describing her work she says: "The three themes which currently dominate my ceramic sculpture involve water works, the fan format, and the cloudscape."

The water works and fan formats are made from clay straps Pendergrass has handthrown on the potter's wheel. Of the technique she says: "...I take advantage of the intrinsic malleability of the wet wheelthrown straps ... The resulting forms lend themselves well to the transformation into rivulets of water."

The fans are formed from wedges of the clay straps and often retain ridges left by the sculptor's fingers. "After firing ... the wedges are assembled on a wooden silhouette of the fan

form so that the convergence of the throwing ridges creates a radial pattern...." The cloudscapes are individual forms "...handbuilt from white stoneware and impressed with crumpled tissue paper to create a dappled surface."

There are three examples of each concept in this show.

"Midnight Fan" is built of wedges and glazed in dark colors, an inky shade of midnight blue and a very dark gray. The gray forms a pattern of blurred, curving lines which spiral upward toward a flower pattern in the top right-hand corner of the fan. To the left of this design is a circular gray area.

"Tidal Fan" is an arrangement of the clay straps formed into waves which seem to splash over a wooden fan.

"Aura," which is displayed in the gallery's front window, utilizes the cloudscape format and also the ridged wedges. Thin, wispy cloud shapes float over the ridged sections of this fan.

In an entirely different mood Huntington Beach sculptor Karen Fuson's witty, whimsical wall sculptures comment on the role of women in American society.

She seems to be answering the old nursery rhyme, "What are little girls made of?..." by concluding that little girls are composed of equal parts of fashion accessories and kitchen

utensils.

As the artist's herself says: "The objects I make are symbols of what I feel our socioculture conditions the female to be, in both myth and reality. I incorporate fashion and beauty accessories with common domestic objects ... transforming them into embodiments of the symbolic female."

It is rather difficult to describe Fuson's sculptures. They are painstakingly handcrafted and meticulously and finely detailed. The various elements that form them are wigs, acrylic nails, costume jewelry, feathers, craft shop beads, purses, platform shoes, plastic spoons, kitchen whisks, and many other items of this sort. Moreover, these items when assembled are embellished with sequins, glit and glitter.

"Trophy Series: Nightingale" uses a wig, a pie pan, spools, metallic crochet thread, bangle bracelets and wide sequined braid to form a grimacing face the eyes, which follow you around the room. The face is made of the pie pan with spools for eyes and what appears to be a show buckle for a mouth. This is framed by spools which are tufted with the metallic thread to resemble firecrackers.

In other hands this theme might be heavy and didactic. Karen Fuson makes her point while making you laugh. ■