Cabrillo Gallery transforms into 19th century museum

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APTOS — Scott Serrano doesn’t want his works at the Cabrillo Gallery to be recognized as pieces of art.
Instead, he wants the viewer to feel like they stepped into a 19th century science museum.

“The more it looks like my artwork, the less happy I am,” he said.

Serrano’s “Picturesque Flora Wallaceana: Botanical Ambulations In Greater Wallaceana 1854 to 1857” runs through March 15.
If the viewer can’t tell that it is a piece of art, then “that’s when my work is most successful,” he said.

The work addresses subjects such as the war in Iraq, corruption and social-political battles.

But it does have a humorous vibe to it, Serrano said.

One series of drawings, based on Ronald McDonald, showcases the character in the time of the Aztecs. The myth Serrano created describes how the Aztec people worshipped the character as a god.

Other fictionalize narratives make up the exhibit, Serrano said, which is supposed to be set on the invented tropical island, “Wallaceana,” named after 19th century naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace.

“Oatman’s Five Lined Cactus Flower” by Scott Serrano.

The exhibit is more like a 500-page novel instead of an art exhibition, Serrano said. Some might just glance at the narratives, which would be like skimming a book, he said, while others might choose to spend more time and read them closely.

If they do, they will discover “very detailed stories,” Serrano said, adding that many levels of jokes and humor arise from the narratives.

This level of detail is typical of his work. “I’m very detail-oriented,” Serrano said. “I never do simple things.”

He works with a “very time consuming” stipple drawing, and prefers to give his pieces a tattered, aged effect.

“I want my drawings to look like they’re from another time,” he said. “I don’t want them to look like contemporary drawings.”

Currently residing in New York, Serrano studied art at Cabrillo College. He recently contacted Jamie Abbott, art instructor at the college, asking which venues in the area he could show his work.

After seeing the Cabrillo Gallery, he decided that it was a perfect fit.

“I love the Cabrillo Gallery,” he said. “I thought it was beautiful. I could see that I could install the exhibition there.”

After shipping his work to the gallery, Serrano put in four 12-hour days to get the exhibit up.

“My work is a big commitment,” he said.

The Cabrillo Gallery is located at 6500 Soquel Drive, Library Room 1002 in Aptos. Serrano’s exhibit will run through March 15. For information, visit www.cabrillo.edu/services/artgallery.