Pollard brings fresh perspective to stones and cactus in her new art

Artist STACEY POLLARD begins her work by looking for compositional possibilities within a shape or a shadow. She then captures these images by way of sketching or photography and takes them back to her studio where she begins an intricate process of reinterpreting what she’s seen into a layered painting. In the end, it will bear little resemblance to the original image.

“I use acrylic paint (both opaque and glazes), drawings, handmade papers, and other things to add texture and dimension,” she says of her work, which has found its way into private collections in the United States and the United Kingdom. Locally, her creations can be seen at The Los Gatos Museums Art Gallery, and online at slhpollard.com. “I use lots of layers and I work quickly, let things sit for a while, then come back to it, building up the surface over time.”

Some pieces take a few days and others months, but it all results in creations like her abstract “buildings” series, where familiar landscapes take on an arresting beauty, abstract look; her “stones” paintings which reinterpret the rocky California coast in an intimate but wholly abstract way; or her “cactus” series which offers a fresh perspective on prickly plants.

“When I’m working on a painting, I don’t want to illustrate a particular emotion or idea,” she says. “I just work with shapes, composition and image, and see what comes out. An image that reminds me of a certain feeling may mean something completely different to someone else, and that’s fine.”

Take a look at her paintings at slhpollard.com.

Artist ANDREA BORSUK’s work is unlike anything I’ve seen. She works primarily with oil painting, using wood as her canvas, as well as applying gouache on paper to create vibrant imagery. Her subjects often take on acrobatic positions amidst good luck objects like talismans. With such elaborate creations, it’s no surprise that her art has been widely seen in Santa Cruz and beyond.

“I think there is a real renaissance going on here (in Santa Cruz)—people are very excited about the arts and there is a palpable joy on the streets on First Fridays,” she says.

The local arts community is something Borsuk is plugged into: in addition to claiming a bachelor of arts degree from UC Santa Cruz, she teaches art at Cabrillo College and runs private workshops locally and in Tuscany, Italy.

“I learned to paint while studying in Italy,” she says. “I love the smell and feel of oil paint. I can let it drip and layer as well as get very detailed. Gouache and ink are more immediate and I became enamored with them when I started teaching watercolor at Cabrillo a few years ago.”

Borsuk’s inspiration for her work comes from “the absurd and the theatrical,” she says. “I seek out symbolic and visual ways that I can be transported to other worlds. I enjoy throwing disparate ingredients together to create a visual ‘stew.’”

She also likes to investigate the ideas of femininity and beauty through her art. “Why do we think a sunset is beautiful or a woman with ample body parts or with a crazy skinny waistline is attractive?” she asks. “I don’t know the answers and like everyone else, I am guilty of being seduced by all these images as well. What I am doing is questioning the authenticity of these images and setting them out for contemplation in an ironic and hopefully thought-provoking way.”

Check out her work at andreaborsuk.com.

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