

Eclectic mix makes for interest-catching exhibition at Axis Gallery

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Published: Thursday, Aug. 15, 2013 - 12:00 am

I always look forward to Axis Gallery's National Juried Exhibition because it gives us a look at small works by artists from around the country, and it is invariably of high quality. This year's show, the eighth annual, is no exception.

Juror Glen Helfand selected 35 works by 32 artists, from a field of 423 images entered by 192 artists. Perhaps because Helfand is a Bay Area curator and writer, there is a greater-than-usual number of works by California artists, including two from Sacramento and one from Davis. Other California cities represented include [Santa Rosa](#), Oakland, [San Francisco](#), Berkeley, Piedmont, [Grass Valley](#), [South Lake Tahoe](#), Venice, Chico and [San Diego](#). Justifying the "national" title are works by artists from Massachusetts, [New Mexico](#), Michigan, Texas, [New York](#), Florida, [North Dakota](#) and Missouri.

Gioia Fonda and Ianna Frisby, the Sacramentans, offer witty works that involve stitchery. Fonda gives us "The Flesh Wheel," a color wheel of flesh tones made out of fabric sewn together, while Frisby offers "Men's Shirt, Jacket and Pants Wardrobe," an advertising image she stitched over with needlepoint to give a three-dimensional effect. Arthur Culang, the Davis artist, is represented by a conceptual drawing critiquing the large amounts of money given to political candidates in 2011-12 U.S. Senate races.

But it was a [New York](#) artist who caught my eye first. [David Samuel Stern](#) of Brooklyn presented a surreal, disturbing and ultimately funny image of a man's face that had been disassembled and rewoven together with the features jumbled. I also liked Brooklynite Justin Amrhein's graphite-and-collage image of a mysterious apparatus.

Michael Koehle of Oakland entered two strong pieces: a fascinating small sculpture made of what look like iron filings that form a furry, rutted landscape, and a digital photo of a sink that is very sensual and painterly. I also liked a small sculpture of embracing ceramic figures bound with rubber bands, titled "Overly Attached," by Carmen Lang of [Grass Valley](#), and a poignant sculpture of the disassembled limbs of a Superman action figure made of wood by Matthew Gottschalk of Oakland.

Danielle Lawrence of San Francisco got two pieces in, wall sculptures that mimic respectively a drapery of pure paint and a section of solidified fat titled "Lipo." And Bro Half of San Diego has three brightly colored watercolors on view, two of Hawaii and one of [North Dakota](#) that have a punchy, slightly primitive edge.

Humor is the hallmark of Chico artist Trevor Earl Lalaguna's installation involving fabric-covered manacles and photos of the artist trying to perform everyday tasks while wearing them. William

M. Tarnowski of Boston presents a visual conundrum in “Ambiguous Hemicylinder,” an optical puzzle.

Tressa Pack of Oakland offers a moody and romantic inkjet print on silk of a landscape of tangled trees that contrasts nicely with Missouri artist Teresa J. Harris’ spare drawing of a figure atop a column of tiny text and [North Dakota](#) artist Jennifer Nelson’s tiny, precise rendering of a donkey pierced with arrows.

Helfand, who writes for ArtForum and other art publications, and teaches at three Bay Area art schools, did an admirably eclectic job of selecting works for this year’s show. He awarded prizes to Culang for his political-money piece, Bill Shelley of [Santa Rosa](#) for a drawing of a draped figure, and Lalaguna for a watercolor of nude figures fighting.

AXIS’ EIGHTH NATIONAL JURIED EXHIBITION

Where: Axis Gallery, 1517 19th St., Sacramento

When: Noon to 5 pm. Saturdays and Sundays, through Aug. 25