

CREATED IN CALIFORNIA

SUMMER ART FARE INCLUDES A VARIETY OF WORKS MADE IN THE GOLDEN STATE

BY LIZ GOLDNER

Three art exhibitions in OC this summer explore varied perspectives of art made in California, from paintings with colorful scenic vistas and a touch of history, to videos with relevant, yet wryly humorous, characteristics. These shows stand out visually and curatorially as strong enough to compete with the summer's many outdoor diversions.



Night Fishing, by Rex Brandt



Path Of Light, by Rex Brandt

In Laguna Beach, where the local art museum is cooled by ocean breezes, and colorful flowers grace nearby Heisler Park, the big exhibit this summer, Rex Brandt: In Praise of Sunshine, features scenic/modernist landscapes. On display will be 50 paintings by Brandt, hybrids of landscape and more abstract styles, that highlight this icon of American Scene Painting. The title of this show is taken from the artist's words: "Whether we are conscious of it or not, everything in the perceived world is in motion. Sunshine is the mediator, a pervasive quality in which things are lost and found, emerge and recede."

Rexford Brandt was born in 1914 in San Diego and grew up in Riverside at a time when Impressionism proliferated in the area. While influenced by this style, his education at UC Berkeley, including German Expressionist-style studio work, inspired him to incorporate Expressionism and abstraction into his art. After studying at Stanford and the University of Redlands, he joined the California Water Color Society. Brandt worked alongside Phil Dike, Emil Kosa Jr., Barse Miller and Millard Sheets – artists creating a distinctly American artistic style, depicting this country's landscapes and urbanscapes. Over the years, Brandt won numerous awards for his finely rendered watercolors.

Janet Blake, curator of historical art at Laguna Art Museum and of this exhibition, describes Brandt's blend of abstraction and realism, and his ability to express ideas through the fluid watercolor medium. The artist's watercolors in this show include *San Francisco Pattern*, 1960, *Strong Light*, 1968, *Balboa Ferry Sunday*, 1972, and *July Morning, Dory Fleet*, 1982. Blake adds

that these landscapes and harbor scenes are also influenced by Chinese landscape painting. Brandt's oil painting *Surfriders* blends "the mythic sunlight and leisure of the Golden State with close-up views of the reality of contemporary life on the California coast," explains Susan Anderson, an Orange County curator and art historian. She adds that this painting from the 1950s foretells of the sun, surf and youthful high spirits attitude that California art and culture would take in the 1960s.

■ **REX BRANDT: IN PRAISE OF SUNSHINE** :: June 29 to September 21, Laguna Art Museum, 307 Cliff Dr., Laguna Beach 949.494.8971 :: lagunaartmuseum.org

In *Time Jitters* at Grand Central Art Center, L.A.-based artist Jody Zellen creates a sardonic journey through our endless cable news cycle. In this video and painting installation, curated by center director John Spiak, Zellen alerts viewers to the mind-blowing aspects of the 24/7-news cycle. She achieves this with her over-saturated video and painting environments that amusingly and sometimes shockingly bombard viewers with visual information.

As an incurable news junkie, Zellen collects images from online and print versions of newspapers, and alters them. By reducing digital images to pixels, creating grids of color, tracing over images from the printed newspapers, and using Photoshop to combine all of these, she produces digital collages that bridge old-fashioned animation with 21st-century digital images that assault our senses. "I change the original images in myriad ways, and while they are diffused, they never disappear. Images of war, human-made, and natural disasters and the destruction they cause are ubiquitous in the media. By appropriating this imagery, I change the context, the way they communicate, and how what they represent is understood," explains Zellen. Yet her sense of humor comes through, enabling viewers to digest the plethora of new images in a new and even amusing way.

The exhibition features two side-by-side wall-size projections, with each animated screen containing images from Zellen's digital collages. One is a pulsating grid of 25 animations, all looping at different rates; the other is a full-screen linear presentation of those animations. Humanity is added to these screens with illustrations of human figures in black or white, walking and running through the frames. "I am also exhibiting a grid of gouache on paper paintings, 22 x 30 inch works that illustrate



Jody Zellen installation at Grand Central Art center



Time Jitters, still from video by Jody Zellen

the cycle of regeneration – birth, growth, death and decay. The works poetically and metaphorically echo these cyclical images, while the translucent pastel colors of my paintings contrast with the harsher flat tones in my animation," says Zellen.

■ **TIME JITTERS** :: June 7-August 10, Grand Central Art Center, 125 N. Broadway, Santa Ana 714.567.7233 :: grandcentralartcenter.com