

Time: 9:21:33 AM PST Currently: 50°F
 High: 51°F Low: 46°F
 Winds: 6mph

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Art Review: Pondering what can't be touched

By **Melonie Magruder**

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The new exhibit at the Brand Library Art Galleries is a bit like that YouTube video showing images of subatomic particle quarks magnified larger and larger till you see an entire galaxy.

In "Macrocossms & New Topographies," the four artists explore the physical world from the macro to the micro with fresh media combinations and compelling images that cast an outlier's eye on our environment.

Christine Weir offers several series of graphite on paper, mounted on panel, that gives new, intense, meaning to pencil work. Her "Lake" series shows a bird's-eye view of different bodies of water in silhouette ("Lake Summer," "Cochiti Lake") laid over concentric circles that could be light sources or could be that proverbial end-of-life tunnel that people with near-death experiences describe.

In exhibit notes, Weir said she overcame a profound fear of flying through special therapy that encouraged her to glance out an airplane window and appreciate a new perspective. Scanning Google Earth allowed her to indulge her attraction to airports, farms, lakes and governmental sites, incorporating all into her art from a distant but focused point of view.

There are many circles and orb-like variations in the exhibit — small worlds seen through the artists' eyes, and each has a different level of trust in those worlds below.

One of Weir's series shows vaguely military map-like silhouettes or what look like rifle scopes floating over white lights, with titles like "Basrah" and "Kirkuk." It's unsettling and starkly beautiful.

David Jang employs soda cans, wood, wax, oil, stain and even paper towels dipped in resin in his sculptural work, echoing those endless concentric circles like a Slinky on large panels that are tactile and satisfying. You feel he really handled his material, taking it from discarded rubbish to graceful imagery.

Jang said in his exhibit notes, "I find the experience of viewing this material within our environment as a sort of urban formalism. . . fearing that there's so much trash, people don't see it anymore." He fixes that problem by deconstructing the detritus to use as his medium, and his resulting sculpture is astonishing.

In "Novelty," Jang uses inverted potato chip bags, chicken wire and binder clips to create huge, silver pieces that resemble hydrangea blossoms. Jeff Koons wishes he were as creative.

Jang's "Provision Plan" is a tower of symmetrically arrayed soda can tops, clipped together and looking like a giant molecular model for a fearsome, environmentally destructive force.

In "Plastic Diamonds," hundreds of cut and stacked plastic water bottles are arranged like a translucent castle, the raggedy spouts and traces of dirt clinging to the sides being the only clues that Jang was determined to draw beauty and order out of a chaotic, disposable society.

Diane Silver's splendid freeway series showcases Los Angeles' famous freeway systems spray-painted onto large swaths of unstretched linen with silhouettes or photographic collages of a downtown skyline.

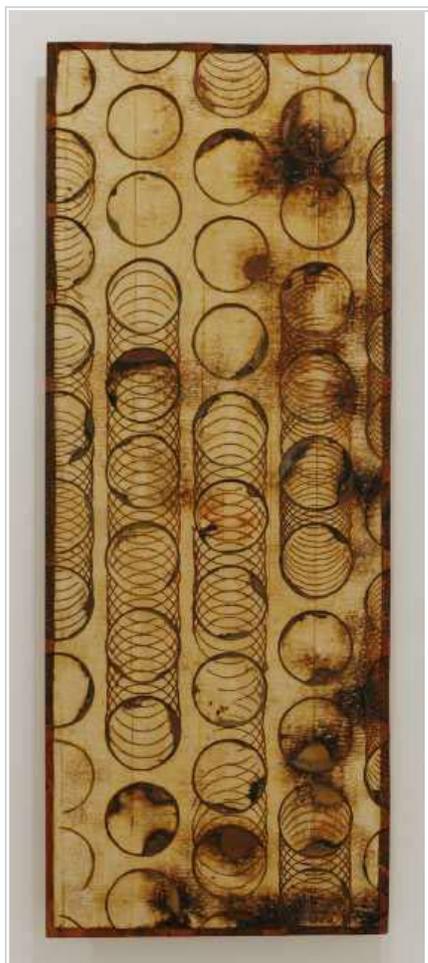
The grime and disorder of downtown street life are perfectly captured in a triptych, titled "Downtown Love Triptych" of wax, glass and miscellaneous media on board. Silhouettes of a man and a woman are separated by the silhouette of a shopping cart over a kaleidoscope of black and red. It's the simple things that bring the homeless together.

Silver noted that "Cities are beautiful from afar, but up close their charm becomes less evident." Her substantial pieces titled "Versailles," "Downtown" and "LAX" prove that a distant perspective does, indeed, give you the larger picture.

Gary Frederick Brown shows a series of monotypes and drawings that feature circles, waves, sparkles and explosions in space that synthesize Kandinsky with a cosmic eye. The orbs and ripples create a spatial universe, but fill it with what? Perhaps the answer is in the titles: "Trampoline," "Swamp Gas," and a gravid piece called "Meshy Birth."

Brown's monotypes start at the most elemental, like the microcosmic world in "Pee Tree Dish" and soar to the outer reaches of the galaxy with "Universal Birth." Celestial bodies are connected by an electric life force and illustrate the artist's statement that, "Far too much is known about physics, science and evolution for me to believe in God as espoused by organized religions."

This is the cosmos as created by art.



David Jang's piece, "Iso", a wax, oil, stain at the Brand Library Art Galleries new show "Macrocossms & New Topographies". (Scott Smeltzer/Glendale News Press)