

New views of EROTICA



"Athenia" by Kris Hostikka

Two Long Beach art exhibits focus on the wonders of 'sensuality'

By Shirle Gottlieb

Special to the Press-Telegram

Last September, Artscape Gallery sent out an open invitation for all interested artists to submit entries for an exhibit of erotic art to debut in the year 2000.

Before you start snickering, let me assure you that the proprietor of Artscape, Jeanine McWhorter, conceived this as a serious examination of the subject — one that is exemplified by its title, "Erotic: Redemning the Definition."

ART REVIEW

What: "Erotic: Redemning the Definition"

Where: Artscape, 2226 E. Fourth St., Long Beach

When: 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday through Feb. 13
Information: (562) 434-3024

What: "Ordinary Women: Naked Truths"

Where: Beare Romance Gallery, 4142 E. Seventh St., Long Beach
When: noon-6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday through Jan. 31
Information: (562) 435-4561

In addition, all entries were individually judged by a panel of art professionals: Rob Hankins (executive director of the Public Corporation of the Arts), Dominic Cetara (CSULB art professor/studio artist), and Stacy Davies (erotic fiction writer and freelance theater critic).

As McWhorter explained in her prospectus, "We are more than ever exposed to images of anger, violence, hatred, profanity, death and destruction —

believing that it is OK to put those images on display ... while references of human sexuality are constantly censored.

"Let's start the millennium not concentrating on the worries of 'sexuality,' but on

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"Slice of Life" by Karin Swildens

LIVE!

PRESS-TELEGRAM

ART: Erotic from a new angle

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the wonders of 'sensuality.' In this exhibit, we wish to open minds again to the ecstasy of the human form. The body is beautiful ... wonderfully textured with endless varieties. By showing this artwork, we want you to experience it all."

The \$500 first prize was awarded to Karin Swildens for "Slice of Life" — a small, abstracted bronze sculpture of minimal simplicity that evokes the formal elegance of Brancusi. In complete contrast, the \$200 second prize went to Oliverio for his charming, mixed-media folk-art tableau of miniature clay figures. Untitled, the work nevertheless suggests a modern version of Adam and Eve making love under the thorny tree of knowledge, while the devious snake hides in the shadows and teen-age boys sit in a circle watching.

Third place (\$100) was shared by Eva Kolosvary-Stupler and another entry by Swildens. The former created "Can-Do," a whimsical assemblage sculpture that is guaranteed to bring a smile to the most cynical skeptic; while Swildens produced "Combo," a sophisticated, high-

fired, sensual ceramic form that can be enjoyed from three perspectives.

Other treats not to be missed are Kris Hostikka's three watercolors that reference Tantric sexual positions and the art of Indian body painting; Chris Huicochea's fresh, spontaneous charcoal drawing of two superimposed nude figures; and Bob Jakobsen's untitled photograph of a nude female painted with white stripes that dramatize the voluptuous curvature of her back.

Across town at the new Beare Romance Art Gallery, "Ordinary Women: Naked Truths" serves as a complement to the Artscape exhibit. A photographic essay of female nudes by George Metivier (a longtime Long Beach photographer who is well-known for his aerial views of the landmarks in the coastline city), this collection of 22 photographs was created as a labor of love by a man who is enamored by the beauty of the female form.

Somehow or another, women heard through the grapevine that Metivier was photographing "ordinary women" from everyday life with respect and dignity. By word of mouth they came to his studio, all of them requesting that Metivier

photograph them nude in safe, natural, unthreatening surroundings.

All in all, the project evolved into a collection of 200 females from all walks of life: sales clerks, office personnel, computer operators, teachers, psychotherapists, doctors, chefs, students, journalists, mathematicians, and poets — even mothers with children.

Some of the photos are mysterious and dramatic (one female is shrouded in veils, another is dancing with a shawl over her head); some of the scenes are straight middle-America (a couple painting their new apartment, a student doing her homework, a young girl playing a guitar; a mother and child beaming with joy). My personal favorites are "Naïad of Rte. 1" (a poetic image of a blond, ethereal, Scandinavian goddess); "Crystal of Dreams" (a beautifully composed portrait of two women concentrating on the mystical powers of crystal); and "Looking for a mate" (a moonlight vision of a woman wandering through tombstones in the cemetery).

Shirle Gottlieb is a Long Beach free-lance writer.