

Press Release for exhibition

For Immediate Release: September 1, 2004

Euphrat Museum of Art

De Anza College,
21250 Stevens Creek Boulevard
Cupertino, CA 95014
(just east of Flint Center on the De Anza College campus)
408 864-8836

Art exhibition:

Edges: Lucy Arai, Diana Pumpelly Bates, Julián Cardona, Nancy Mizuno Elliott, Titus Kaphar, Saaba MBB Lutzeler, David Maisel, Consuelo Underwood

September 27 – November 24, 2004

Museum Hours: M — Th, 10-4
Open to tour groups by appointment.

Reception: Tuesday, October 12, 6-8 pm with artist presentations

Artists:

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The exhibition *Edges* highlights formal solutions — for example, the way a painter handles the edge of a form. Since how we delineate or frame an issue affects our understanding of it, the exhibition also explores edges with respect to timely content, whether on a personal, regional, or global level. The artists work in painting, sculpture, photography, textiles, and mixed media.

Saaba MBB Lutzeler's pastels are portraits of people in environments. Often these are friends or other artists. Lutzeler focuses on moods, which she achieves through exaggeration and unusual compositions. Edges are a major concern. Whether she uses linear marks or varies the edge where two adjacent planes meet, she finds the associated decisions to be a constant and fascinating challenge. "What line quality? What color? How to achieve tension, focus, depth?" Lutzeler will sometimes add lines that result from contour drawing, following the edge of a form. A pensive self-portrait with pomegranates is enlivened with a blue/green line that travels from the fruit, along

the arm, up her chin, around her nose, then over an eyebrow, enlivening a traditional art form and a self-study.

Titus Kaphar takes the painterly focus on edges and turns it on its head. In his *Visual Quotations* series, he works from selected 19th century paintings but only paints the African Americans. He does so in oils on dry-erase whiteboards, so all the surrounding area is white. A hard edge separates the two. This is all the more compelling when a white figure overlaps a black figure, such as in *Visual Quotation, Leutze* (2003); which references Emmanuel Leutze's *George Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851). Here the African American appears disjointed — a head, part of an arm, half of a leg. Kaphar emphasizes edges to call attention to the secondary roles African Americans played in a composition. He states that artists used formal devices, such as "light vs. dark, up vs. down, to visually reinforce institutionalized views of race and hierarchy." Kaphar wants viewers to consider the individual represented, to see "a people of dignity and strength, whose survival is nothing less than miraculous."

For **Nancy Mizuno Elliott** edges are a source of constant invention. For her chalkboard series *May I Take Your Order?*, she draws the outlines of the often ignored people who serve us in fast food lines. Along one edge is vertical writing telling something about the person, for example "I build and race model cars." Elliott also exhibits watercolor collages related to poetry by Stacie Cassarino. Here she emphasizes the edge of the paper by creating multiple colorful borders and overlapping them with collage elements that project beyond the rectangular paper. Elliott's work and approach to art is distinctly "edgy." Elliott: "I am a mixed bag when it comes to education, class, gender, and ethnicity. And consequently, I am a mixed bag artist when it comes to subject matter, medium, and language." "In general, my work deals with female psyche, intimacy, power, feminine esthetics, and my mother. I confront embarrassing moments, unpleasant feelings, and difficult situations, while maintaining my wry humor that tempers the discomfort of my subject matter." Influences are punk rock ("I am continually questioning my need and the culture's need for control, cleanliness, and closure."), multiculturalism, and women's craft (Though my work, at times, reeks of "girlie" esthetics, it is not kitsch. I am not a slumming cultural tourist for my reverence is sincere.)

The remaining artists in the show relate to edges even more so in a conceptual manner: edges between disciplines, edges and destructive behavior of humans (crossing the line of acceptable stewardship of human and natural resources), being pushed to the edge (death), overcoming barriers (building character, finding spiritual resources).

The Lake Project (2001-present) by **David Maisel** is a series of aerial photographs of Owens Lake, the site of a formerly 200-square mile lake on the eastern side of the Sierras, which was drained in order to bring water to Los Angeles, and became an epic environmental disaster. In documentation terms we are looking at the edges between natural landscapes and landscapes degraded by human actions. By 1926, the lake was

depleted, exposing vast mineral flats. Fierce winds dislodge microscopic particles from the lakebed, creating carcinogenic dust storms. The lakebed has become the highest source of particulate matter pollution in the United States. The concentration of minerals in the remaining water is so artificially high that microscopic bacterial organisms turn the water a bloody red. Viewed from the air, vestiges of the lake can appear as a river of blood. Recently the region came under a plan to control the hazardous material spread by dust storms. After decades of destruction, the ground has been flooded by the Environmental Protection Agency. With each successive layer of intervention, previous scars are covered over, and cycles of negation and erasure expand into a grid system overlaid on the barren lake. But Maisel leads us to metaphor. He considers the edge or transition between documentation and poetry, the beautiful and the horrifying, environmentally impacted landscapes and disturbing inner psychic landscapes, forcing us to look for solutions in multiple areas. The Lake Project has been recently published as a monograph by Nazraeli Press (see www.nazraeli.com).

In terms of content **Consuelo Underwood** addresses a very real edge, the border between the U.S. and Mexico. Underwood works with weaving and textiles, sometimes traditional, sometimes uniquely innovative. In *Ingles Only — Proposition 209*, she paints symbols and embroiders a California map of the 1880s indicating regions where different languages were spoken. "At that time anyone could speak twelve languages." *Micantocutli's Wrath* is an ikat and silk-screened weaving — with images of Ohlone burial site bones. At the bottom are witnesses, such as the Virgen de Guadalupe, to these deaths as a result of colonization. The wall installation *Border X-ings* uses drawings on the wall, wrapped elements, and an unusual red leather grid that looks like barbed wire. It refers to the ten sites where the U.S. government has constructed a 14' steel wall to secure the border. Drawings of state flowers are contained by borders. "Are flowers and wildlife also supposed to choose to which which flag (one via England and the other via Spain) they owe allegiance to?" Underwood calls attention to border issues, a lack of understanding, respect, and good problem solving. "Sometimes there is more concern for plant and animal life than there is for human beings."

Ten years ago photographer **Julián Cardona** began to document, in the border with the United States, the violent entry of Mexico to globalization: the social effects caused by low wages paid by the industry assembly plants; the degradation and decomposition of the social networks in a border controlled by power structures allied to financial interests of transnational companies, and more. See *Juarez: The Laboratory of Our Future* by Charles Bowden and Julián Cardona, Aperture (1998). His photographs probe inside the *maquiladora* world alongside the border. *Dying Slowly* shows difficult edges: the border between life and death, death in life. Dead end jobs, monotony, pressure. Cold, mechanized environments. Ignorant, indifferent, or misdirected management. Child laborers. Murdered women. Little responsibility. In *THE TRUTH, Evidence of a Failure*, we see family members searching for the bodies of their daughters in the desert. As the worldwide cheap labor market grows, what ethical or moral lines is one

willing to cross for profits, for a job, for cheap purchases? How do we sell our humanity, compassion — lose the confidence, will, or creativity to change things?

Diana Pumpelly Bates's bronze sculptures focus on the edge between physical and spiritual worlds. Bates sees the betterment of the exterior world as going hand in hand with internal spiritual growth. *Tahirih* (Pure One) is an outdoor work with an ascending base like a steppingstone, then a leg element, a reaching out, a veil. It refers to a 31-year-old woman who in 1848 pulled off her veil at a public conference in Bagdasht, Persia, an act of emancipation heralding the dawn of a new era. A woman suffrage martyr, at her death she declared: "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women." She is highly revered in the Baha'i faith. *Personal Odyssey* is Diana Pumpelly Bates's self-portrait. It is a giant eyelike form appearing to swim in a liquid. Some of her works specifically witness injustice. *Strange Fruit* refers to the Billie Holiday song about lynching of African Americans. An artwork, *Seshemu/Union*, with a flaming element atop a column that descends into a cavernous bowl form, conjures the generative forces of nature. It is based on an Egyptian design considered a sign of knowledge — in the sense that "knowing" equals sexual intercourse, and one "knows" divine power by feeling it. In *Kyrie*, which means "Lord have mercy," one element reaches up but is bound to the earth. A scarf-like element alludes to more ethereal aspects of human reality. "Every day is a prayer. Every day is asking for mercy. We are here to accomplish something. We are reaching for that."

Working on handmade paper, **Lucy Arai** applies *sumi* ink in washes that suggest organic shapes, natural phenomena. Over these she employs *sashiko*, traditional Japanese running-stitch embroidery, in concentric circles or fluid patterns. The effect is a formal beauty — the soft and hard edges of the washes, coupled with ordered linear stitching, along with the varied edges of the handmade paper. When Arai writes about the work, she states that stitching is a daily discipline of meditation, that historically black ink on white paper was thought to reveal a person's humanity, their aesthetic, moral, intellectual and emotional character. For titles, Arai uses object or accession numbers — year, object added, object in series. The works are then about a larger transformation — through work and through life experiences.

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Call Jan Rindfleisch 408-864-8836 for more information.