

Press release for exhibition

For Immediate Release: September 6, 2003

Euphrat Museum of Art

De Anza College, Cupertino, CA 95014

Art exhibition:

Daily Dramas: Currents and Undercurrents

September 30 – November 26, 2003

Closed Veteran's Day, November 10

Museum Hours: M — Th, 10-4

Open to tour groups by appointment.

Reception: Tuesday, November 11, 6-8 pm with artist presentations

Artists:

Mel Adamson, May Chan, Richard Godinez, Wayne Jiang, Linden Keiffer, George Rivera

Daily Dramas: Currents and Undercurrents features the work of six artists who depict people or imply human presence in various dramas of our day — some chosen freely, others imposed by systems or regimes.

In his small acrylic paintings, **Wayne Jiang** looks at the dramas surrounding the complex emotions and relationships of everyday life of an extended family. In *Sherman's Wedding*, we note a small, pensive boy in a dinosaur shirt, seated at a round table in a restaurant, with the remains of a Chinese dinner and a half-empty family-size coke bottle. Older family members have gone off to visit with relatives at other tables and left him alone. In Jiang's paintings we note how each person carries a different personal drama with them. In *Snapshot* a young girl tries to get an adult's attention with a camera, while a young boy tries the more direct approach of tugging at a man (his father? uncle?). Generational differences come into play. *Wedding Party* shows a man calling out and gesturing. All the other participants are facing different directions, with different emotions, whether assessing the scene, searching for someone, or lost in reflection.

Mel Adamson also takes a look at dramas in everyday life. Her large oil on canvas paintings often suggest different levels of understanding. Adamson plays with intimacy and distance, such as the psychological distances that can occur in a close relationship,

focusing on the symbolism of a commonplace activity that can be read as trivial or profound. In *He that Regardeth the Wind*, a father, apparently interrupted in some household chore, looks down at his young daughter who is contemplating a sphere or globe she holds in her hand. His face could be reproachful or solely concerned parental observation. Her face could be remorse or puzzlement. It's as if some recent action or this moment pointed to their future, when she would be grown, making her own mistakes and wielding her own power.

George Rivera takes the daily situation, abstracts it, finds the emotion behind it, and paints that. As the director of an art museum as well as a painter, he finds himself playing many roles. The emotional states are hidden. This is true for most of us. But in his mixed-media paintings we see the power of these emotions, the psychological dramas — such as feelings of being tugged at, suspended, stabbed in the back, or of wearing a clown's mask. His skill is revealing how these dramas play out, concentrating on the face and on postures and gestures of the body, using a few simple props (coat, mask), and one or several sweeping lines, which add an element of action or some outside force. On display are large self-portraits that allude to his personal dramas as artist and arts leader.

Richard Godinez paints people in situations with two realities, drawing from known art historical images. For example in *Setting the Table*, he alters the Norman Rockwell painting of the family ritual of Thanksgiving dinner, interspersing an image of a family looking for food in a garbage dump. In another work, he takes the Gustav Doré image of the Tower of Babel and adds the words "English Only," contrasting the biblical story with the real life problems of immigrants. In *Trompe L'oeil*, Godinez mimics fool-the-eye painting, in which images look like the real thing. Here the yellow ribbons and the body appear real. This was painted during the first Gulf War, when yellow ribbons were to mean support for our troops but then were altered to mean support for the war. The image alludes to how government and political entities twist the truth. While Godinez's artworks utilize specific past events, they continue to resonate today because the dramas of so many of us are altered by recurrent challenging social, political, and economic situations. Godinez tackles these challenges. He even shakes up our consumer lives and fantasies; *Geronimo and the Home Shopping Network* reveals complicity in turning different cultural symbols into commodities and fashion statements.

May Chan often uses articles of clothing to stand in for people and the drama of our lives. May Chan came to the United States from Hong Kong and much of her work is about journeys, maintaining and developing connections with people, daily rituals, and our roles in the cycles of life. In 1994 she started *Home-Land*. She cut her hair on the New Year and sewed it into a pair of shoes. Later she embroidered maps of Hong Kong and the United States on the shoes. *Connect* (1999-2001) looks like two shirts with the sleeves united in a way to form an infinity sign. She used paper from a Chinese calligraphy exercise book, which she imprinted with a heat transfer of a childhood song in a Chinese regional dialect. It symbolizes her connection with her family and the

language they shared. Chan's thoughts turn to life cycles. "Every day old cell dies, new cell regenerates....recycled hair, teabags, mother's letters...as shelter of my death, as shelter of my renewal." In *Seeking* (2001) she adds more shirts, sleeves connected again, this time made of mulberry paper from used and dried tea bags collected since 1997. For *The Pentagon* (2003), she interlocks five fiberglass-screen work-suits, which have heat transfers of computer-enhanced images of pointing fingers. The sleeves and legs of one garment seamlessly connected to the sleeves and legs of another. The title and shape are symbolic of the U.S. Defense Department and also of a fortress that we build to protect us from harm from others. "Yet the act of forming the pentagon also binds us together to form a vicious cycle of aggression within our community. To transform this cycle is to look inward, open up and let go of the aggression along with the habit of finger-pointing."

Linden Keiffer's paintings and installations reveal his thoughts about our lives in the greater scheme of things. Color and symbolism are important. In the early installation *Colored* he refers to a world based on skin color and prejudice. The central figure lives in a black and white world, looking out the window of a house with gray shutters, flowerpot, and hose bibb. But the man determines his own skin color, painting his right hand green (a blue paint brush is in his left hand, a yellow paintbrush clenched in his teeth). For *A Reckoning*, the use of color and symbols becomes more complex and Keiffer wrote of the drama behind the image, which is like a stage set with actors and props that recur in later works. Keiffer has gone from the indignities of daily racism to a tale of "life's sublime art. The art of enduring patience, the art of reform without prejudice, the art of evolution endless." In his recent *Enduring the Ages* his use of color and symbolism evolves further. He speaks of "the human condition versus the cosmic condition." A transparent green figure signifies new existence, new beginnings. While Keiffer sees us as dwarfed in the universe, his personal lesson is that "my fellow person is in essence my equal, for we are all truly connected...we are from the same water and dust... The circular chain continues to strengthen or weaken by our deeds."

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