UNENDING

COMMENCEMENT

UCSB MFA'S SHOW AT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SANTA BARBARA

Megan Koth’s art focuses on personal grooming and the anxieties born from imperfect skin. Like Sharpe, Koth draws on personal experience — in her case, an internal abyss. She uses the theme of imperfect skin as the basis for various artistic explorations. Her painting “Abiution” mirrors the pose typical of models in skin-care advertisements — splashing water on one’s face in profile — but the inclusion of bright, prominent shadows on the face underscores how advertising distorts the reality of human skin conditions. In another series of paintings called “Dermascapes,” skin conditions are incorporated into landscape paintings, and their distinguishing features read as rugged terrain or natural landmarks.

After passing through a charred door, visitors to David Wesley White’s portion of UNENDING see “White Inferno, The Burning of Washington,” a model of the White House’s damaged shell in the aftermath of the British attack in 1814. White confirms that this subject intentionally parallels the damage wrought by pro-Trump insurrectionists on January 6, 2021. Though most of his fire is trained on the former president, White also scorches current neoliberal discourse, representing its inanity by highlighting similarities between such discourse and Republican anti-New Deal propaganda in the form of two posters shaped like dollar bills and titled “Altered Anti-Populist Propaganda.”

A chastity belt made of paper cell phones stands on a pedestal in “Rose Gold I-Phone Chastity Belt Pareidolism” by Serene Blumenthal. The work represents the tendency of popular media to parrot “bad history” for dramatic effect — such as the falsehood that chastity belts were commonly used in medieval times. In another three-dimensional work, Blumenthal shapes a series of clay masks into different expressions. In her video “Trust Clinic,” these masks influence her choreography much in the way one’s personality can be consumed by a projected facade.

Kio Griffith’s “Silence Moves Faster” installation takes up a whole room. Various materials and objects in this elaborate construction can be played with a violin bow or by hand to produce all manner of sounds. A text score is provided for those who can sight-read. For Griffith, even silent moments in this period have been riven with tin- nutis, and thus this installation explores the COVID time-space distortion, acoustics, and the distance between the object and the visitor.

—Nicholas Liu

INDY BOOK CLUB SEPTEMBER SELECTION:

DOMINICANA BY ANGIE CRUZ

Loosely based on her mother’s life story, Dominicana by Angie Cruz is an engrossing novel about immigration, motherhood, and finding independence. Our protagonist, Ana, is 15 years old when her mother makes a business deal that lands Ana married to Juan Ruiz, who is almost 20 years her senior. She leaves her home in the Dominican Republic to start a new life in New York City with papers that identify her as 19 years old. Once there, Ana knows no one and does not speak English, and Juan turns out to be a possessive, abusive, and disloyal husband. Although her marriage is a symbol of the hope that her family will soon be able to join her in N.Y.C. and escape the political turmoil at home, the life that Ana now lives is not what she had imagined it would be. But when Juan leaves New York for a trip back to the D.R., Ana begins finding herself again.

Set against the backdrop of 1960s New York, an era which is depicted in great detail in the novel, Cruz writes a visceral story that is at once heartbreaking and full of hope. Dominicana is both universal and laser-focused on the Dominican immigrant experience. Join the Indy Book Club on Wednesday, October 6, 6 p.m., at Municipal Winemakers (22 Anacapa St.) as we discuss the themes and story behind Angie Cruz’s beautiful work of fiction as well as other books written by Latinx authors. Learn more at independent.com/indybookclub.

—Colleen Fitch

—Charles Donelan