

Unending – An Invitation and Opportunity for Artistic Reflection

BY Daisy Scott / VOICE

BOLDLY QUESTIONING AND EXAMINING A PLETHORA OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES, *Unending* is an

exhibition to be reckoned with. From intimate reflections on beauty expectations to intensely political works, the exhibition, which fills the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara with the talent of UCSB's 2020 Master of Fine Arts students, will be on display through September 12th. That's one last weekend to take in the unique insights of our society's rising generation of artists.

"I think what will be interesting to the Santa Barbara community is [not only] to have a glimpse at what the Master's art students are undertaking within our community and at UCSB, but also to see a kind of evolution of work and thought throughout this bizarre and devastating time," shared Alexandra Terry, MCASB Chief Curator.

Rather than combine the six featured artists' works in one display, the MCASB gallery showcases each artist's work through distinctive, individual vignettes throughout the room. However, all of the artists' pieces clearly contribute to each other, as they are ever within viewers' peripheral vision.

The pieces feel further

united through each artist's commitment to expressing individual commentary. This overarching connection is best conveyed through the exhibition's title itself — *Unending*.

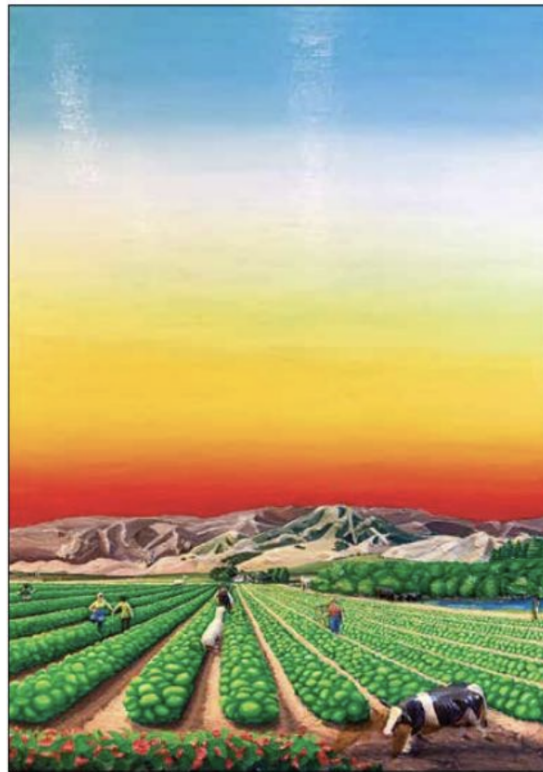
"*Unending* is a registration of the past broken by the present, allowing for deeper contemplation and immersion to take place," explained the UCSB MFA 2020 cohort class in their joint exhibition statement. "*Unending* showcases the collapse of time, tradition, and production, culminating in something more slowly realized and returned to."

Upon entering, gallery visitors first view Thomas Stoekinger's works, who



Molt by Megan Koth

playfully disrupts the concept of a "pastoral American dream." One work, named *Jolly Green Giantess takes John Doe out on the Deere*, shows a man sitting on a female Jolly Green Giant's lap, a motion



American Pastoral Past Times by Thomas Stoekinger

detector moving their shared tractor when viewers approach. His interactive pieces feature baseball bats and mannequin heads, asking viewers to confront familiarly American items in new ways.

Nearby is Kio Griffith's interactive room instrument *Silence Moves Faster*. Made of umbrellas, balls, wire, tinfoil, and wood, visitors use spoons, a paintbrush, or tuning forks to create different sounds.

"It is a survey into the acoustics and the distance between the object and the visitor," said Griffith. "That idea re-contextualized in the COVID time-space distortion, made me think of how matters are taken for granted in an expected push, click, switch, process, resolve arrangement."

Next, Marshall Sharpe's paintings offer glimpses into compelling scenes of vulnerability. From images of a naked man curled up on a forest floor to an overheard conversation, viewers feel almost as if they have intruded upon something, questioning the nature of viewing personal scenes in a formal setting.

David Wesley White's section is deeply political, utilizing video, paintings, and three-dimensional art to convey frustrations and concerns. Works include a jester hat made of a White House souvenir cap, a burned

gold iPhones. Beside this, a television shows a woman wearing a ceramic mask while a computerized voice narrates her actions, further suggesting commentary on femininity, fertility, and our society's view on both.

Finally, Megan Koth's oil paintings of women cleansing their faces and close-ups of skin force viewers to confront acts of "self-care." Simultaneously unsettling and compelling, they draw attention to a key point of our society's beauty expectations.

"To enact a ritual that makes one feel 'in control' over an ultimately fallible, imperfect body carries a certain catharsis that can be addictive," said Koth in her artist statement. "But the oppressive historical (and ever-present) cruelty of beauty standards and the struggle of women to approximate them can often turn these moments of adornment into self-defeating experiences of ritualized alienation."

MCASB is open 11am-5pm Thursdays through Sundays. www.mcasantabarbara.org

house titled *White Inferno, The Burning of Washington (1814)*, and a short film blending contemporary and medieval imagery.

"I use a research-based practice to examine personal and American history through a queer lens," said White in his artist statement. "I often fixate on forgotten or devastating events until I find visual clues hidden deep within them that feel particularly surreal or prophetic."

Serene Blumenthal's pieces take up the gallery's center floor, inviting visitors to walk around a tiny tent, a word-covered cloth, and a ceramic chastity belt made of rose



Abundification/Desertification by Serene Blumenthal



Installation photo



Castle Garden by David White