WILD LIFE on a Tame lsland

by Karen Braun Malpas

Alameda was long ago civilized by man but within the walls of the Frank Bette Center the spirit of the wilderness and

untamed wildlife are loosed.

Sue Matthews shows a masterful watercolor, "Sea Skyscrapers," of eternal rocks spilling into eternally rushing and crashing water. They were here before us and will survive our petty concerns.  Nancy Brandt's spare wet-on-wet, pale-on-pale watercolor conveys a wild stillness unbroken by sounds of human civilization, maybe only by the call of a wild loon. Taggart Gorman's golden photo, "Dawn Swim," shows a duck cutting a swath thru another silent, uninhabited waterway. Laura Anderson's encaustic paintings, "Suspended Impasse" and "The World Inside" suggest a world unseen by the naked eye teeming with multiplying, thriving microbes.

The characters in Denise Leite's paintings are untamed and untrammeled. They eschew tasteful decorum in the name of expression and jubilation of the If-It's-Too- Hot- in -The -Kitchen-Then,-Leave variety. The colors of her paints have the quality of faded newspaper images. The women pictured in Susan Hackett's "Sirens in the Woods" and "Desert Women" are less individuals than an archetype, the eternal feminine. They posture in nature like ageless mythological beings on a frieze.. Ron Millers woman wearing a paper bag over her head in "Crazy Life" has also tapped into her wild nature. Anonymous in the crowd, she is "free to be me."

A  visual smorgasbord of herons and fish, ducks and leopards, buffaloes, bears and cats is offered in photos and watercolors by David Bock, Fred and Margaret Fago, Jeff Cullen, Ron Miller and Robby Dickinson whose penguins wear their slightly soiled tuxedos to every occasion. Joyce Leighton shows an exquisite watercolor of a Towhee whose call, not surprisingly, sounds like his name.

The color blue shows up as a serenely gradated sky behind Joanne Clapp Fullagar's "Blue Geese".  A  swish of blue is all it takes in Sandi Adams "In the Deep" to set the aquatic stage for her school of silvery fish and sparkling reflections. The blue and white of delft china is evoked in the vigorous hand-painted animal tiles of Karen Braun Malpas.

In the back room, 4 friends with a range of skills and viewpoints show together.  Audrey Brown seems to have an affinity for young girls in their carefree suppleness whom she depicts in oil on paper, panel and canvas. Nancy Lovelady makes mosaics functional and not. Imagine a cow skull covered with chips of mirror.  Diane Una Dove's still lives seem autobiographical in the choice of objects depicted...a fancy bra, Quaker oats and a bottle of aspirin invite us to connect the dots and tell a story. Ros Harper is a member of the Wood Turners Guild. Because in nature, there are no 2 of something alike, her works are similarly unique, capitalizing of the grain, color and visual texture of the many woods with which she works. This show will hang until June 27.

The Opening Reception for Wild Life is Friday June 12, 7-9. This show hangs until August 1.The gallery is open Thurs, Fri., Sat. and Sun. 11-5.   Closed Mon., Tues., Wed.

Frank Bette Center for the Arts. 1601 Paru at Lincoln, Alameda, Ca. 94501. [www.frankbettecenter.org.](http://www.frankbettecenter.org./) 510)523-6957