



FAST FORWARD 2009: Selections from The Berkus Family Collection at the Channing Peake Gallery

Exhibition Drawn from County's Contemporary Art Collection Shows Through June 19.

By Elizabeth Schwyzer

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When well-known Santa Barbara architect and art collector Barry Berkus gifted a body of nearly 70 contemporary works by area artists to the County Arts Commission (CAC) in 2006, he began a legacy whose scope reaches 30 years into the past, and indefinitely into the future. It's likely there is no other such collection in America. How the Berkus Collection will grow, and where it may lead, Santa Barbara has yet to discover.

Now on view at the County Administration Building's Channing Peake Gallery, ***FAST FORWARD 2009*** exhibits a number of pieces from the collection, hung alongside more recent work by the same 11 artists. Curator Heather Jenó conducted in-person and virtual studio visits in order to find new works that would give a sense of the artists' evolution over time, as well as of their enduring themes. The result is a show that hints at the many connections in time and space between the county's collection and the ever-expanding world of contemporary art.



Sky Bergman

Sky Bergman's "Pwa Saw Village, Bagan, Burma" (2006).

Denver-based artist Lawrence Argent, today best known for his large-scale public sculptures, has a single piece in the original collection: a three-dimensional oil and wax work whose stark geometry is complicated by shadowy sketches floating just beneath its surface. Jenó has placed this untitled work alongside four of Argent's more recent photographs: chromogenic prints depicting bulbous shapes, like bubbles rising from murky water.

One of the youngest artists included in the show, Dimitri Kozyrev is represented in the collection by a single untitled drawing depicting a graphic design-inspired landscape of signboards and forgotten roadside spaces. Jenó has hung it between two of the artist's more recent canvasses, "All Is Well #7" and "#8," in which the artist uses oil and acrylic paints to build up a fragmented urban environment of sharp angles and gunmetal grays.

Other artists represented include Cal Poly instructor Sky Bergman, whose recent trend toward

photojournalism is evident in her newer works from Cuba and Burma, and Ginny Brush, executive director of the CAC and also a fine artist in her own right. By bringing the Berkus Collection works into an immediately contemporary context, **FAST FORWARD** gives a picture of where our contemporary art community has come from, and where it's going.