

ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

ENTERTAINMENT

Oceanside Museum presents Tony DeLap retrospective

Aug. 15, 2013 | Updated Aug. 21, 2013 12:28 p.m.



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If you want to see some recent and historic creations by longtime Corona del Mar artist Tony DeLap, you'll have to make it down to Oceanside.

It isn't a bad drive if you're coming from most parts of Orange County. Oceanside is just south of Camp Pendleton, and the museum is conveniently located on Pier View Way, not far from the I-5.

Through Oct. 6, the Oceanside Museum of Art is presenting "Tony DeLap: Selections From 50 Years." It's a modestly sized retrospective featuring sculptures, paintings, hybrids, drawings and photos of site-specific sculptures in Orange and Los Angeles counties.

DeLap was a key figure in West Coast minimalism and op art of the 1960s and '70s. He was also a founding member of the studio art department at UC Irvine, and taught there from 1965 to 1991.

DeLap is pretty well known in Southern California art circles. He's been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions, and he enjoyed an extensive retrospective at the Orange County Museum of Art from October 2000 to January 2001. He was also included in "Best Kept Secret: UCI and the Development of Contemporary Art in Southern California, 1964-1971" at Laguna Art Museum from October 2011 to January 2012.

The Oceanside exhibit is smaller than the OCMA and Laguna shows. But it features a lot of work completed in the past five to 10 years, providing a rare opportunity to see what he's been up to lately. He has still been actively painting and creating new works, even though he's an octogenarian – he turns 86 this year.

This exhibition was curated by Danielle Susalla Deery, who is also director of marketing for the museum. That's a bit of an unusual combination; museums usually keep those departments separate, although the Oceanside museum's size and budget are probably the reasons for Deery wearing multiple hats. (She also used to be director of membership.)

DeLap may be best known for his hybrids, or combinations of painting and sculpture. It's the same general concept as Robert Rauschenberg's "combines," which he famously made in the 1950s and '60s. However, DeLap's hybrids are more minimalist and geometric. They're usually dominated by one color, as opposed to Rauschenberg's panoply of colors, shapes and objects. And they are meticulously precise in their shape and form – again, a direct contrast to Rauschenberg's chaos.

Some of DeLap's well-regarded and important hybrids are in this retrospective, including "Four Dots" (1962), "Ping Pong" (1962), "Modern Times III" (1966) and "Fawkes" (1968). A seminal DeLap installation, "Houdin's House" (1967), sits in the center-front of the exhibit. One can see the profound influence magic has had on the artist, as the piece depicts a lady lying supine and floating amid a field of black.

DeLap's floating lady is projected through glass and onto aluminum, so the image is reproduced and reflected a few times onto different surfaces, including on a white museum pillar in purple. It's a fascinating work and keen visual trick, representing the artist's love of illusion, sleights of hand and the unexpected.

"House of the Magician," a 1986 bronze with marble sculpture, is a black table resting at an angle, with three of its legs supported by two black quarter-pyramids. The piece is playful, well-constructed and yet another reverential reference to the world of magic.

DeLap's recent works are primarily paintings of acrylic on linen and/or aluminum. They're precise, intriguing and painstakingly executed. These include "Inscrutable" (2013), "Peek Diablo" (2013), "The Examiner" (2012), "All Crossed Up" (2012), "Tamariz" (2012), "Cross Roads" (2012), "Don't Get Cross" (2012), "Double Cross" (2011) and "Zanax" (2011).

Many of these paintings appear in series, where DeLap is exploring solid color bars crossing at different angles and locations. They're a bit of a departure from his work on view from the mid-2000s, which are limited to one or two colors (usually black and white) and are more monolithic, with some play on angles and shapes.

"Tony DeLap" includes other hybrids from 1967-2007, a trio of drawings from the 1960s, and photographs of his large-scale installations. Most of them can be found in Orange County: "Floating Lady" (1974, installed 1976) sits outside OCMA in Newport Beach; "The Levitation of Princess Asrah" (1982) is outside the Irvine Co. offices in Newport Beach; and "The Levitation of the Enchanted Princess" (1984) is on the campus of Chapman University in Orange. One of his best-known installations, "The Big Wave" (1983, installed 1989), spans Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica.

Despite being on the smaller side for a 50-year retrospective – it encompasses one gallery on the ground floor – the exhibit is an instructive and eye-catching survey, as well as an illuminating presentation of his work since 2000.

If you find yourself trekking down to the Oceanside Museum of Art, stick around and check out "Intersections: Charles Arnoldi" (through Aug. 25) and "Volcanos and Full Moons: Ernest Silva" (through Sept. 15). Arnoldi does impressive things with color, wooden sticks and chain saws, and has developed some intriguing series ("Ellipses," "Arcs," "Hawaii").

Silva has established his own visual narrative using reappearing characters, such as deer, silhouetted figures, boats and full moons. His paintings, drawings and sculptures represent a psychic and physical journey – apparently an ongoing vision quest for this artist.

Finally, at 1 p.m. Sept. 7, the museum will feature a conversation with DeLap, moderated by art critic Peter Frank. DeLap will sell and sign copies of his new monograph, which includes an essay by Barbara Rose and an interview with David Pagel. Admission is \$10 (free for Oceanside Museum of Art members).