

Putting byte in their creativity

By Shirle Gottlieb
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Thursday, August 12, 2004 - In the electronic 21st century, the computer has taken its rightful place in the art world by joining the ranks of painting, sculpture, et al., as an accepted art form. Some claim it has even replaced them. Others vehemently deny that, saying the computer is merely one more tool that artists can use to create their work.

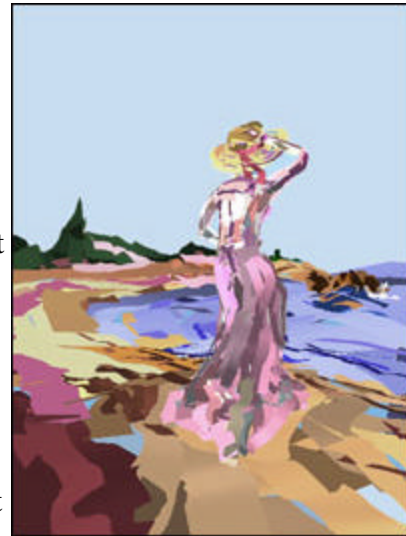
Considering that a handful of traditionalists still insist that photography is not art, per se, but craft; it's not surprising that stubborn die-hards believe the verdict is yet to come.

Whatever your opinion in this heated debate, a visit to the Viento y Agua Gallery is guaranteed to be a "wow" experience. On view through Sept. 4 is an exhibit of "Byte-Sized Digital Miniatures" by 24 computer graphics experts who understand this difficult new genre. And it's free.

Curated by Professor Jen Grey (aka Jen Zen) with the assistance of Sheriann Ki Sun Burnham, these "Byte-sized Digitals" vividly illustrate just how diverse and exciting, even mind-boggling, digital art can be. Unless you're familiar with the complicated process of digital software, you'll scratch your head and wonder, "How in the world did they do that?"

Viewers will have their own favorites, of course, depending on their personal aesthetics. I was mesmerized by almost every work I stopped to study. Elizabeth Kenneday's framed poetic landscapes of a "Crater" in winter, Anna Ursyn's abstract composition of rambling "Ideas and Designs" in line and form, Florian Claar's terrifying view of a surreal urban destruction site, and Dan Keefe's painterly impression of a "Guitarrista," are merely four diverse examples of what can be created on a computer.

Jack Duganne, a master printer who pioneered the digital printing process and originated the term "giclee" (fine art print), is represented by imagery of a glorious mountain landscape that you'd swear was an "en plein air" painting; and Sharon Eisenberg has created a stunning rhapsody in blue scene in her "Daytimewater" oceanscape. The illusionary perspective of Dave Curlander's free-form wave of fluid color was influenced by M.C. Escher.



In stark contrast, British artist Sue Gollifer's flat geometric forms suggest the imagery of Paul Klee; while Michael Wright's disturbing portrait of an expressionless man evokes the image of Frankenstein.

You'll be astonished by Grey's sci-fi "Centaur" trotting across a realistic desert, the painful sensuality of Ina Chavez's bright orange burning torch, and the cold crisp design of Burnham's "Tortuosity." As for glorious cumulus clouds, Candice Wolff Sanders captures their exquisite beauty in her scene of the Florida coastline.

Jen Zen did a fine job curating this exhibit. Supported in part by the Public Corporation for the Arts, The City of Long Beach, Los Angeles ACM SIGGRAPH-Art (and its subcommittee), the work in the gallery is created by computer art experts from major universities, high-tech corporations, the entertainment industry, the private sector, and artists from several foreign countries.

— *Shirle Gottlieb is a Long Beach freelance writer.*