

Pro Arts gallery in downtown Oakland, where each artist can include a small example of his or her work. The resulting collage is remarkably strong and immediately highlights the talent in the community. Perhaps the most creative contribution in art, science and technology was by Raines Cohen. He mounted a large postcard for the exhibition inside a locked box. Just before the opening reception, he unlocked the box and placed inside an iPad that was running a video presentation of his work and photographs. Watching it throughout the opening reception made it become clear that the postcard was a clever placeholder, and the purpose of the locked box was to use it for the video invitation that he ran during the opening. Needless to say, the video was intended to entice people to visit his space. (I assume that the postcard was returned to the locked box after the opening reception.)

The purpose of the Pro Arts gallery space is to help art enthusiasts devise their visitation plan. I must admit that although I mapped out a plan from the gallery pieces, once I got going, I found it hard to stay on track. I was lured into spaces by posters on the street and comments from artists I met as I visited with them in their studios. Other visitors I encountered along the way also changed my course. I am not sure if I recommend this approach because I am certain I missed studios of interest. Still, I was glad I took advantage of those who tried to draw an audience to their space because I found some gems along the way.

The first day of the four-day event I traveled around with a colleague. We picked as one of our first stops a building where several prominent Bay Area artists (Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff, William Theophilus Brown and Paul Wonner) had had their studios in the 1950s. Together with David Park, who had a studio in downtown Berkeley, Bischoff and Diebenkorn founded the Bay Area Figurative style. Moreover, it was in this space, in the mid-1950s, that Diebenkorn created his famous "Berkeley Series" of abstract landscapes. We found a particularly robust studio there, Marty McCutcheon's space. It was set up as if it was a gallery exhibition of his work with a large sculpture/installation around the walls that was uniformly whitewashed (although with bits of unpainted colors showing through). The all-white artwork was put together with found and discarded objects (a chair, a television,

old paint brushes, etc.) constructed in a flattened format resembling a synthetic cubist painting. While my companion saw shades of Diebenkorn in the asymmetrical geometry (suggesting some resonance with where the studio space was located), I thought more about Kurt Schwitters's *Merzhaus*. I was also reminded me of Louise Nevelson's unique assemblages made from cast-off wood and other materials that she, too, transformed into works of art. Like Nevelson's work, I think the monochromatic color added a mysterious quality that made the work alluring. The installation also incorporated a video projection that complemented the assemblage and truly elevated the presentation, because in the video McCutcheon showed his hands drawing. Within the work we saw him working on the work itself. Indeed, these clips, which were pieced together, were even more fascinating when I realized that I could see him create some of the whited-out pages of text that were a part of the assemblage. This juxtaposition brought to mind the work of William Kentridge, whose creative practice includes drawing a bit, shooting the drawing, and then drawing and shooting some more.

At first I was surprised that McCutcheon's space was set up to highlight his work more than his studio. As it turned out, many of the folks I visited did not highlight their working space. I found this a bit disappointing. For example, there were many locations where artists decided to group together to increase foot traffic. One of the largest was at a former bookstore. Here the large box was transformed into an art fair, with 43 artists displaying their work. The result was a mixed bag. In some ways the setup made the "studio" aspect of Open Studios seem quite remote. Yet I did find the work intriguing. Many artists there also integrated art, science and technology themes into their projects.

Marilyn Snow, for example, brought to mind that while digital art is still a relatively recent phenomenon, artists have used art, science and technology for a long time in various forms (e.g. printmaking and photography). Her work was quite representative of the way artists now mix and match, often using printmaking as a technique to create works that offer a commentary on scientific and mathematical ideas. Briefly, she works with "appropriated" images, finding ways to reassemble them and make them her own. She had several bubble chamber images on display. Her web page says these are from the Law-

EAST BAY OPEN STUDIOS PREVIEW EXHIBITION

Pro Arts Gallery, Oakland, California,
3 May–12 June 2011 and East Bay Open
Studios 2011, 4–5 and 11–12 June 2011.
Gallery web site: <www.proartsgallery.org/ebos/index.php>.

*Reviewed by Amy Ione, U.S.A. E-mail:
<ione@diatropes.com>.*

After reviewing the 7th Creativity and Cognition Conference [1], held in Berkeley in 2009, two thoughts kept reverberating in my mind. First, I thought about the many reviews I have written about art and events in the San Francisco Bay Area and wondered why I have never looked at the vibrant art produced here. I also thought quite a bit about Cathy Treadaway's paper, mentioned in that review, in which she outlined her approach to integrating newer technologies into her hand-crafted art. To put these thoughts to rest, I decided to review the annual East Bay Pro Arts Exhibition (EBOS) this year. This two-weekend event highlights the work of over 400 artists located in the San Francisco Bay Area, many of whom open their studios to the public. While perhaps not as well known as other locally based projects (such as Burning Man, which has achieved global recognition), EBOS does offer a noteworthy mix of innovative art, groundbreaking museum and gallery exhibitions, live concerts and great food.

The focal point of the show is the

**Amy Ione. "East Bay Open Studios Preview Exhibition (review)."
Leonardo 45, no. 2 (2012): 169-170.**

rence Berkeley Labs. She also showed her Art for Physicists portfolio and photocollages, which are quite unlike those of David Hockney. Whereas he keeps the multiple pieces in the presentation, Snow assembles the collage with tape and then rephotographs it so that the pieces become "whole" again.

Of the places I visited, I thought Benny Alba's studio/gallery was perhaps the best mix in terms of combining a number of artists with a "studio" feel. Benny greets visitors as they walk in, making one feel like a guest in her home. The studio itself, with 11 artists inside, seemed quite cohesive and had the kind of community feel that was missing at the bookstore site. The work of Vicky Mei Chen, a printmaker, stood out. She produces small, handmade artist books (in slipcases) exploring the relationship between urban landscape and the entities that occupy the space. Another artist of note here was Jennifer Downey, a painter whose work centers on nature and how humans interact with nature.

Although I found that traveling to so many studios has its ups and downs, the ups are more prevalent than the downs. There are also both rewards and challenges. Visiting one multiple-space environment, with a maze-like interior, was annoying because it was surprisingly difficult to find the artists that I wanted to see. Thinking about it later, this layout probably offered the artists who worked there more privacy. Cluttered locations showed more of "the artist" but, in some cases, this meant there was not enough room for visitors (because the space was so taken up by the art). It is harder to visit artists who work in spaces that are not shared with others. (Of those I visited, I particularly liked Barbara Maricle's; she displayed some mixed media prints that included old architectural blueprints and other materials.)

One of the enjoyable things about this type of event is that going here and there exposes things that are ordinarily invisible. Ironically, one building with an open studio introduced me to an exciting work that was just "sitting there" in the lobby. Called *The Tule Wave*, the piece is a large-scale kinetic sculpture by Berkeley-born Reuben Margolin. It consists of a small electric motor located overhead that rotates a pulley, which in turn imparts movement to 241 Dacron strings. The strings then pass through brass grommets in a tension grid and descend to support 1,140 sections of tule reed and more

than 3,000 brass beads [2]. Installed at the David Brower Center in Berkeley in 2010, it is in a location I walk by daily. Yet I had never been inside and had no idea that this extraordinary artwork was housed there. With so much attention given to museums, exhibitions and art-designated spaces, I wonder how many similar gems we miss as we live our lives. In this case, I find it hard to describe the dynamic and overall presence of this hanging work.

While I found the organization of the Pro Arts event extraordinary overall, there were a few things that were less successful in my view. The web site itself is a valuable tool in planning one's itinerary, so I can understand why many of the artists decided to display multiple images, but several of these links were broken. I also would have liked an option for saving my itinerary in the on-line gallery.

Still, all in all, East Bay Pro Arts Open Studios confirmed my sense that art, science and technology is quite evident across the board these days. This event, which mixes well-established masters with younger artists, highlighted many aspects of creativity and also allowed many artists to show what goes on inside their working space. It was particularly evident in the studios of the artists using what are often considered more traditional tools (from conversations and their libraries) that creative people have a knack for integrating the old and the new.

References

1. Amy Ione, review of "Everyday Creativity: Shared Languages and Collective Action," *Leonardo* 43, No. 3, 292-293 (2010); <www.leonardo.info/reviews/dec2009/everydaycreativity:ione.php>.
2. I urge readers to visit <www.reubenmargolin.com/waves/Tule/> for an image of the piece and more information about how it was made.