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SUZANNE AND RACHEL SIEGEL AT CHEZ SHAW GALLERY JUDITHE HERNANDEZ AT MOLAA

by Carol Colin

I'm recommending a trip to Long Beach to see two affecting, rewarding exhibits by northeast L.A. artists. "Home/Away - A Mother & Daughter Exhibition" features work by Suzanne Siegel and her daughter Rachel Siegel, on view at Chez Shaw Gallery through January 31. "Judithe Hernandez: A Dream is the Shadow of Something Real," on view through February 17, is the first solo show by a Chicana artist at the Museum of Latin American Art.

Chez Shaw is a gallery in a private home, and the atmosphere, color and scale reminded me of Monet's home at Giverny. It's a welcoming space for this familial show. Suzanne Siegel assembles intimate sculptures, often using found miniature chairs, to which she adds tiny figures, charms, knick-knacks, bits of old family photos, pieces of wire, spools of thread, beads, strips of paper with typed quotations - all sorts of small objects. These are like altars to fleeting thoughts and memories; the precious point is life's ephemerality.

In contrast to the small pieces, Suzanne has made three over-sized butterflies from women's vintage kitchen aprons. Two of them cling to a kitchen wall. One speaks of the Dreamers. One deals with "mothers and daughters who have been lost to each other in terrorist attacks and disasters." The third dominates the show from its position on the first wall one sees entering the gallery. It is at once irresistible and somewhat frightening. Called "Emerge", the piece is made of semi-sheer black fabric printed with pink flowers, stretched and supported in a triangle shape. More black fabric is twisted to form a head and antennae, or possibly the torso and upraised arms of a dancer, in which case the 'wings' become her skirt. As you come closer, you see that some of the flowers are actual rose petals and each one has been pinned to the fabric with an unburned kitchen match. In its beauty, this piece contains the means of its potential immolation. The artist told me she thinks of it as a response to the "me, too" movement. In the context of her history as a feminist artist, "Emerge" is a work of peak accomplishment. See similar pieces on her website: suzannesiegelart.com, but see the show in person.

Rachel Siegel grew up in N.E. L.A. and is now based in Portland, Oregon, where she teaches photography. Her work on view includes single and grouped photo installations - images of skies and clouds, earth from the air, observed couples in public spaces. Some photos are manipulated to include a familiar house shape. Rachel is away and back again, flying above our shared earth, communing with strangers, returning to her mother's home. Look at her website, racelsiegel.net, for an expanded context. Rachel and Suzanne share a feminist perspective, and they both collaborate with other artists. This exhibit includes a number of drawing/collages they sent back and forth to work on, with seamless results. Chez Shaw Gallery, 1836 Nipomo Avenue, Long Beach, Ca 90818. Call or text for an appointment: 562-708-3803.

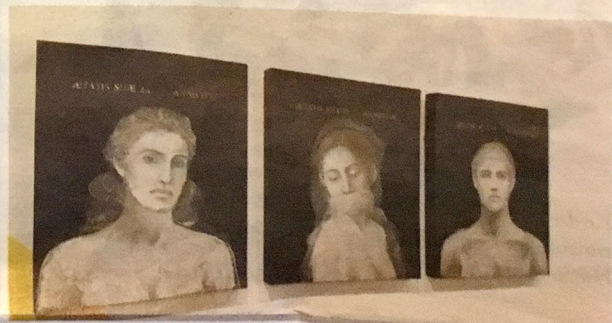
Judithe Hernández' must-see show is a short distance away at MOLAA. These very large-scale pastel paintings of women are stunning, iconic, elegiac, original and unforgettable. Hernandez has had an admirable career and has earned the attention currently being paid to her masterful work. While it is unfathomable that MOLAA, founded in 1996, hasn't featured a Chicana artist before this, the art of Judithe Hernandez is a perfect beginning. Museum of Latin American Art, 628 Alamos Avenue, Long Beach, Ca 90802; phone 562-437-1689. Call for information on a panel discussion of this show set for Feb. 9, 2019.



Suzanne Siegel, installation view, "Emerge", Chez Shaw Gallery



Suzanne Siegel and Rachel Siegel,



Judithe Hernandez, works from the Juárez Series