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Sculptures reflecting the beauty of nature

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"Forever Never," a sculpture in plastic resin, metal, wood, and fiberglass that is part of the "Field Guide: Markus Baenziger" exhibition at Haverford College.

Markus Baenziger exhibition at Haverford College.

By Victoria Donohoe, For The Inquirer

POSTED: September 09, 2011

Even with today's global narrative hammering home the point that we must take better care of the environment, you may be surprised - and fascinated - by one sculptor's creative response to that challenge.

Highlighted in the exhibition "Field Guide: Markus Baenziger" at Haverford College's Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery is the fresh perspective of a Swiss-born artist from Brooklyn new to Haverford's faculty. The intensity of focus and feeling in his work is strong, and the images become

key elements in the tale this show tells, often capturing a sad, resonant - and occasionally high-spirited - beauty.

It's said that Baenziger, who uses plastic resins, found objects, and cutting and carving techniques, puts the plastic back into nature, and also that he puts nature back into plastic. But that tells only part of the story. More important is his yen for beauty, whether unspoiled in nature or in bits of manufactured detritus he combines with natural objects. Awed by the confusions and chaos of despoiled environments, he invites viewers to ponder them anew in such pieces as *Drift*, which combines twisted copper wire, tin, and bits of conch shell, or *Me and I*, carefully crafted floral look-alikes of synthetic resin and copper filaments. Despite its deliberate artificiality, *Me and I* somehow conveys an upbeat note. Even the omery floating object *Flotsam* has power, shapes that go around and come around, indeterminate and faded yellow.

The show, curated by John Muse, offers another thread, one that enables us to spin a spacious unity around the works on display. That's the poignancy of these well-crafted, highly charged objects: We know the disruptive chaos that lurks, but are mercifully spared it here.

Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College. To Oct. 7. Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Wednesday, 11 a.m.-8 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, noon-6 p.m. Free. 610-896-1287.

Machine made

In case you're wondering if technology-dependent art has made any other advances toward exciting artistry, check out "Tinguely's Children: Sculptors of the Post-Industrial Machine Age" at Bucks County Community College. It features three artists billed as continuing the tradition of Swiss kinetic artist Jean Tinguely (1925-1991) in a show guest-curated by Susan Hagen. Although all three are well qualified to discern imaginative uses of technology, there might be different reasons philosophically why each makes work of this kind.

Arthur Ganson of Massachusetts is the show's most dedicated Tinguelyist, suggesting where his nihilist tilt comes from. The mechanical systems that activate Ganson's pieces are the work of a firm believer that art as we've known it is without meaning or value in the modern world. Some of these intricate post-art works are technologically clever.

Mark Zirpel of Seattle seems mainly to have sought and found a zestful style that artfully combines metal and his favorite medium, glass. His *Grind* is the show's chief entertainment, a heavy machine supporting a set of false teeth chomping away. Work by this former printmaker shows vigor, monumentality, and variety.

Christopher Vecchio of Philadelphia, a sculptor/electrical engineer, zeroes in on human-technology relationships. That's unusual: While a vast number of people today are delighted to let technology change their lives, they keep their emotions out of it. Vecchio reduces the alienation factor, most often concealing his complicated circuitry here in satin-smooth, hand-built wooden containers resembling early radios.

Bucks County Community College's Hicks Art Center Gallery, 275 Swamp Rd., Newtown. To Oct. 15. Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4

p.m. to Sept. 19; then Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday-Thursday 9 a.m.-8 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m.-noon. Free. 215-968-8425. Sept. 14, public reception 5-7 p.m.

Get real

Recent oil paintings by seven artists who range in age from mid-20s to mid-60s and lean toward representational subjects are at Artists' House. The show's standouts are Patrick Seufert, one of the youngest painters, and close second Henry Berkowitz, a cardiologist.

Each shows a deep receptivity to the urban landscape, yet manages not to end up with a reportorial look. Lack of ostentation helps - Seufert in his compelling, hyperrealistic views of factories, bridges, parking lots, and Tacony housing, Berkowitz in his close-ups of shapes, patterns, and shadows that have the muted quality of memory. Their presentations indicate that at the very least they have found a style, a promising direction and primary concern. Also exhibiting are Brian Burt, Lauren Gidwitz, Aaron Thompson, Alice Dustin, and Deborah Placko.

Artists' House Gallery, 57 N. Second St. To Oct. 2. Wednesday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m. Free. 215-923-8440. Public reception Sunday, 1-4 p.m.

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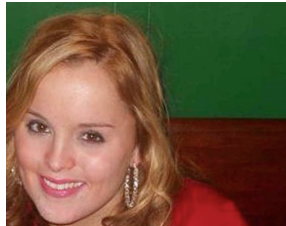
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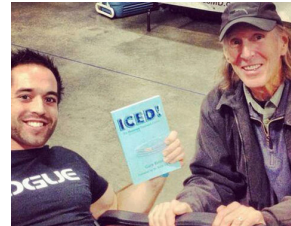
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