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Explore natural 'Encounter' by Wesley Pulkka for the Journal

Installation art can be wonderful or really bad. The "Encounter" installation by Hee Sook Kim and Christopher Shultis at the UNM Art Museum is a solid if not perfect example of the excellent side of multimedia art.

Hee Sook Kim created collages of leaves, plant forms and other organic imagery under a translucent layer of resin. These works are hung in four vertical rows bracketed by poems written by Shultis in response to hikes he took in various mountain regions.

Hee Sook Kim also created a video of running water, rain, and other elements that Shultis encountered along the trail. The video runs continuously on the east wall of the gallery enhanced by recorded sounds both captured and created by Shultis.

Shultis is a professor of music at the University of New Mexico who designed this collaboration in conjunction with UNM's 36th Annual John Donald Robb Composer's Symposium that ran from March 25-28.

During the gallery talk Shultis discussed his impressions of solitude and silence as well as the random total sensory assaults that he encountered on his seasonal hikes in the hills.

The Installation requires visitors to sit or stand in silence while viewing the art works, reading the poems of watching the video. Shultis set the sound of his recordings at a level similar to that encountered during a quiet stroll on a mountain path.

His poetry reflects his inner conflict while trying to open himself to the wisdom of untrammeled forests, breathtaking vistas and bubbling mountain path.

His poetry reflects his inner conflict while trying to open himself to the wisdom of untrammeled forests, breathtaking vistas and bubbling mountain streams. The awkwardness of some passages reveals the difficulty of quelling the ego and daily concerns to tune in to our surroundings.

While relaxing into the walk Shultis noted his environment filled with waves of wind, bird songs, crickets, frogs, insects, running water and the utter silence of snow before the melt.

Shultis' descriptions of waves of energy are reminiscent of research into the nature of natural sound made by the late Harry Smith. A mentor to Bob Dylan through Smith's Folkways recordings and a friend of the late Alan Ginsberg, Smith spent his last years studying natural frequencies.

Along the south wall Hee Sook Kim and Shultis placed rows of large glass jars filled with seeds, herbs, twigs and other gatherings. These jars add a sense of apothecary science to the room.

Though one of the jobs of an artist is to create order out of chaos I'm a little put off by the impeccably neat and orderly presentation. It does not reflect the random experiences that inspired

these artists to express themselves.

During the question period following the talk one member of the audience said how much she enjoyed the reintegration of disciplines that the show represents. I heartily agree.

When futurism, cubism, orphism and most other art movements were in their heyday they were accompanied by music, architecture, theater and performances that reflected their respective aesthetic philosophies.

“Encounter” represents recognition of the interdisciplinary echoes possible for most art presentations.