

Local

Museum puts 'Texas Twelve' in spotlight

By Lana Sweeten-Shults
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Frances Bagley's artwork has a kind of funky, pique-your-interest allure about it.

Her work includes dog forms draped in lithe fabrics that Saran Wrap them, with oodles of fabric in crimson reds and green-apple greens crinkled like waves around them. She adds bubbly insulation in her sculptures here and there, and found objects, too, like a horse from a child's merry-go-round. They are the kind of haphazard objects she arranges together in her work — a deliciously odd combination that draws you in.

Viewers will be drawn in when they see her sculptures and installations — four of them — at the Wichita Falls Museum of Art at Midwestern State University.

Bagley is just one of a dozen artists chosen by Cohn Drennan, the museum's director, and Danny Bills, curator, for "Texas Twelve: The Second Biennial Survey of Texas Art and Artists."

This survey of Texas art and artists is the only one of its kind in the state and is designed to show the divergent work being produced here.

Bagley, who works in Dallas, was busy Friday afternoon finalizing the set up of one of her sculptures.

One of the defining elements in Bagley's work at the Wichita Falls Museum of Art are the draped dog forms. Two artworks ("See All" and "Red Dog") include dog forms obscured under fabric. You don't see the dog, since it's covered up, but the form is so strong that you can still tell what it is.

Those draped-over dog forms don't symbolize anything in particular, Bagley said Friday.

"It's much more like a subconscious narrative that really doesn't have any words, so it's a different story for everybody ...

"The main reason (for draping the dogs) is I like the obscurity of the form ... It's more mysterious when information is obscured."

She said someone told her, " 'It looks like you're smothering everything.' But I don't think that's true."

Another work of hers in the show is of deer whose heads are covered by bubbly insulation foam.

"It just sort of interested me to think that these deer wear masks," said Bagley.

The artist includes a lot of animals in her work. One sculpture, called "The Kingdom," includes deer sculptures, a stuffed animal tiger and a merry-go-round horse.

Bagley, who owns two dogs of her own, said she grew up on a farm, and including animals in her work is a reflection of that.

Her work, she said, reflects humans' relationship with all things, in particular, animals.

Another work of hers in the show, called "Who Are You?" is a human form on a rug with a videoscreen where the form's head would be. Lips on the video screen repeat, "Who are you? What do you want?"

"That one is sort of about paranoia ... about how we're afraid of what we don't know."

Bagley's "See All" also includes a video element. The piece looks like a fabric shop with a video of eyes within it staring at you.

Viewers will also notice that Bagley uses a lot of found objects in her pieces. "They reflect a lot of layered information," she said of the found objects, plus they bring their own history with them when she uses them in her artwork.

"Texas Twelve" can be viewed through June 6 at the museum.

Exhibit surveys statewide art

For "Texas Twelve: The Second Biennial Survey of Texas Art and Artists," Wichita Falls Museum of Art Director Cohn Drennan and Curator Danny Bills spent two years looking for artists to represent the breadth of art being produced in the state.

"I found several in Austin when I went down to a curators' conference," said Bills.

Others they found at the **Dallas Art Fair** and a convention of the Texas Association of Museums. Anywhere they went, they kept their eye out for the right artists to invite to be part of the survey, the only biennial survey of Texas art and artists in the state.

"We go and look at art everywhere we go," said Drennan just before the opening of the exhibit Friday at the museum. "It's not just a vocation for us."

Artists exhibiting their work include Cande Aguilar of Brownsville; Frances Bagley, Paul Booker and Bradford Ellis of Dallas; Yoon Cho, Shawn Smith, Eric Zimmerman and Brian Johnson of Austin; John Hartley and Kathy Webster of Fort Worth; McKay Otto of Wimberly; and Christopher Olivier of Houston.

The exhibit is spectacularly varied, from encaustics (wax paintings) by Bradford Ellis to artwork made of computer chips by Christopher Olivier.

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