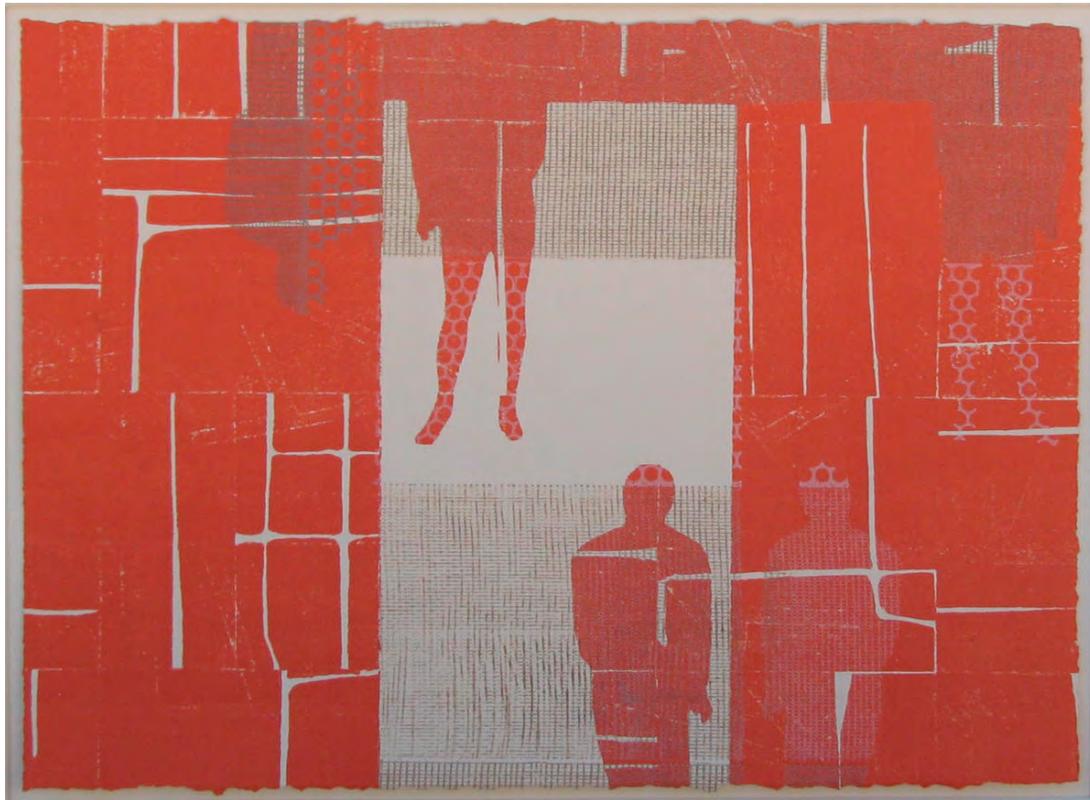


Mariposa print exhibit contrasts human figure, other elements

BY [WESLEY PULKKA / FOR THE JOURNAL](#)

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“Clear Out” by Helen Cozza balances several human silhouettes against a perfect rectangular doorway in the middle of an organically rendered earthen red grid that seems alive.

Printmaker Helen Cozza, bone sculptor Hugh O’Neill and mixed-media painter Francoise Barnes reveal three distinct views of modern life at the Mariposa Gallery. All three artists are highly skilled, but this review will focus on the work of featured artist Cozza and her solo print collection, “Taking It All In.”

Cozza chose the collagraphic print process for its textural flexibility and compatibility with other printmaking techniques. Collagraphy is a printing method involving the layering of elements onto a rigid substrate that acts as a printing plate. Texture can be added with stencils, bits of seeds, small sticks, leaves, screens and other layers of paper. The whole is inked and either printed by hand or run through a press.

This malleable process lends itself to Cozza's strategy of juxtaposing organic elements with crisply rendered geometric planes. She beautifully achieves her aims in "Clear Out," which balances several human silhouettes against a perfect rectangular doorway in the middle of an organically rendered earthen red grid so fluidly drawn it seems alive.

In "This Too Shall Pass" Cozza combines sections of human figures, rigid grids and hand-painted areas to produce a sophisticated overall composition that mirrors our current fragmented global society.

Although there are five silhouetted human figures in "This Too Shall Pass," none is depicted as complete. The layered structure of the design truncates the figures, cutting off the upper torso or the legs. It's as if the figures were weaving themselves in and out of sight within a highly structured and yet foggy dream world.

In her artist statement, Cozza mentions her feelings of isolation and her attempts to take everything in like a sponge. Cozza finds peace in the studio, where she is in control and can filter out the noise of modern living.



"Cut and Run" by Helen Cozza depicts a figure fleeing an undisclosed problematic situation.

Cozza's "Cut and Run" depicts a figure fleeing from an undisclosed problematic situation. It's obviously time to split the scene, which the artist amplifies by dividing the composition in half.

In a real sense, Cozza is a cultural satirist who is now working on a wall series that is not directly related to international border issues. Her walls represent the boundaries within ourselves that cut us off from others and keep us in self-imposed solitary confinement.

The elegance and inherent erudition of her designs elevate the viewing experience into a very positive realm. Cozza is asking questions, while her work is offering answers. The viewer is privileged to witness this dialogue between art and artist.

O'Neill gathers together chicken and wild animal bones, human hair, seed pods and other detritus to manifest constructions that bear a strong affinity to religious relics ranging in inspirational origin from Buddhism to Voodoo.

Though embodying a touch of the yikes factor, the selections at the gallery can be quite engaging. My favorite is "Pupating Mummies with Guardian Centaur," an ambitious assemblage replete with a wheeled undercarriage.

O'Neill is endowed with a fertile imagination and deserves a long visit.

Barnes' solo show of mixed-media paintings upstairs has been extended to coincide with Cozza's exhibit. Barnes is a born-again abstract expressionist who includes collage with energetic hand-painted passages. Her "Stellar Opera" is a tour de force brimming with cosmic and more down-to-earth imagery and living dynamism.

Two thumbs up.

If you go

WHAT: "Taking It All In," collagraphic prints by Helen Cozza; bone sculpture by Hugh O'Neill and "Her Paper Stories" by Françoise Barnes.

WHEN: Through March. 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays and noon-5 p.m. Sundays. Call 268-6828.

WHERE: Mariposa Gallery, 3500 Central SE, Nob Hill

HOW MUCH: Free