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art ltd.

WEST COAST ART + DESIGN



Mixing together use of paint, sculpture, mixed media installation, performance, occasional audio and video elements, and pretty much anything else she can put her hands on, Jennifer Vanderpool is more than merely interdisciplinary. In her own wacky way, she seems almost omnidisciplinary. Yet her work is also surprisingly concise and coherent, and exudes the joie de vivre of a teenage girl making an exuberant mess with her first Betty Crocker cooking set.

Her installation entitled *Bemused*, which opened the fall season at Bandini Art in Culver City last September, is a case in point. The sheets of brightly colored paint streaming down the walls aside, the work employed a staggering range of diverse materials, among them close to a thousand colorful bundt cakes of varying scale, from large to “teeny-weeny,” cast alternately in beeswax, white wax, resin, and hydrocal plaster. She also used foam balls dipped in ‘mold magic shredding’ and colored plaster mountains three to four feet high, of all different shapes, molded with what she dubs a “Dr. Seuss influence.” In addition, she also employed garden fencing, bubble-wrap flowers, foam towers made out of spiny Astro Turf and cut-up bathmats, as well as 700 pounds of artificial, non-toxic play sand shipped in from Texas. “It took eight

days to paint the walls, five days to install the landscape,” she recalls. “I have to be careful to use non-toxic materials ... People want to play with it, eat it, smell it, pick it up, move it around.”

Suggesting the day-after landscape of an especially effusive New Year’s Eve party, the piece is at once utterly spectacular and sweetly banal. “I work with very mundane objects, and I glorify very mundane objects,” she observes. Of the symbol of the bundt cake, Vanderpool notes: “It’s part of my personal history. My mother raised me to be a domestic goddess.” Born in Ohio, Vanderpool was raised in the south, and spent several years in Atlanta before moving west to L. A. Like many young would-be southern belles, she recalls, “When I was a little girl, I wanted to be Scarlett O’Hara.” But her works are not meant to be seen as autobiographical. “My personal narrative informs the process ... The work itself, when it’s installed, invites people to bring their own stories, to make up their own interpretation.”

Upon moving to California, Vanderpool studied art at UC Santa Barbara. From the beginning, she exhibited an interest in using desserts in her work, for both their symbolic and formal qualities. “One of the first things I did,” she recalls of her student days, using a basement exhibition space, “was frosting the walls, orange on one side, yellow on the other ... I was interested in the color, the texture, the smell ...” Today, she continues to press her practice of exploring issues of gender, process, and new genres, and teaches contemporary art and theory, both at UCSB, and at Otis. She also sometimes collaborates with a friend, Jane Callister, as a team they call Vandallister. “I’m interested in obsessed absurdity,” Vanderpool notes, “in taking a behavior to a point that it becomes destructive.”

Well regarded abroad (she has already had three shows in Sweden), Vanderpool seems almost obsessively busy, as well. The Monday after her Bandini opening last fall, she flew out to Tulsa to install a new outdoor piece. In the coming months, she has two shows, an exhibit at Urban Curatorial Project in Kansas City, called Yum Yum, which opens April 20, and an as-yet-untitled installation at Riverside Art Museum, slated to open in August. “I want it to look like a confectionary shop,” Vanderpool explains, “an explosive, overwhelming confectionary shop.”

Jennifer Vanderpool is represented by Bandini Art, Culver City, (310) 837-6230

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