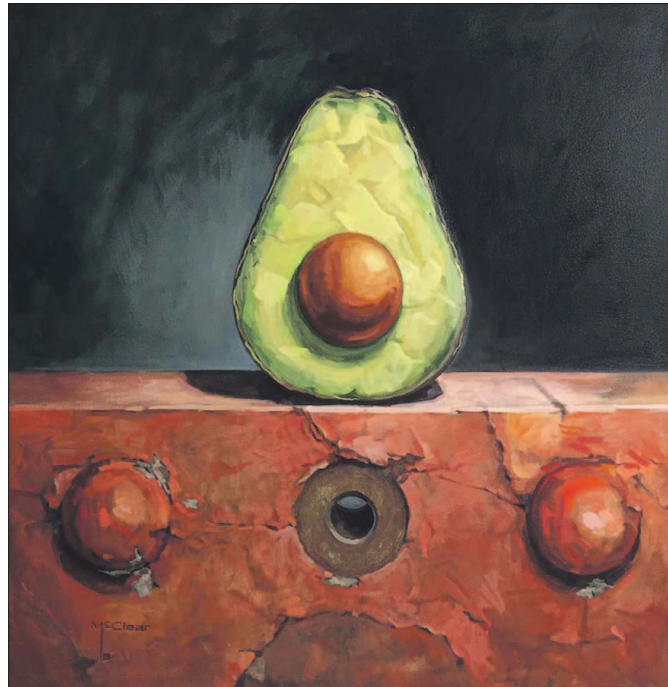


Purists might particularly enjoy the work of Brian McClear, whose 'Avocado & Rivets' depicts a split avocado, balancing, like Humpty Dumpty, on a rusty metal rafter.



CONTRIBUTED
 Brian McClear's oil painting, 'Avocado & Rivets,' will be among the works by contemporary artists featured in an exhibit titled 'Mixmaster' at the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury, through March 18.

Wait...you will WANT to drive to this 'Mixmaster'

BY TRACY O'SHAUGHNESSEY
 REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Waterbury's Mixmaster is a nightmare for everybody but artists.

For regional artists, the "Mixmaster," the Mattatuck Museum's juried show now in its third year, means a chance to strut their stuff for an audience receptive to contemporary art.

This year's show continues that tradition, with an emphasis on abstraction, conceptual art and even a little more sculpture than audiences might be accustomed to. The 40 artists the Waterbury museum has gathered run the gamut from traditional painting to mixed media and assemblage. What visitors get is a mixed bag of artists who play with formal composition even as they reinvent the rule book.

This Mixmaster show is heavy on gestural abstraction, with artists like Michele Tragakiss, Jean Scott, Julie Shapiro, Lesley Bodzy, Joan Jardine and Eric Chiang, enthusiastically wallowing in paint and finding in it their own calligraphic DNA.

Purists might particularly enjoy the work of Brian McClear, whose "Avocado & Rivets" depicts a split avocado, balancing, like Humpty Dumpty, on a rusty metal rafter. McClear juxtaposes the hard and the soft, the fraying and the fresh, the manufactured and the organic. He cleverly unifies these ostensibly disparate worlds by rhyming the pit of the fruit with the metallic orb of the rivet. In McClear's conception, both look alternately luscious and potent. The midnight blue background seems a piece of abstraction by itself. Artists like Aleksandar



CONTRIBUTED
 Nancy Moore's 'I Rise' is featured in 'Mixmaster,' a juried competition now on display at the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury.

Popovic play with the real world as mediated through the technological one. "Sinking Island V" is a tantalizing locale rooted in a cerulean sea, framed by the sort of bright red lines one might see on satellite imagery or a GPS.

In a more feminist conceit, Stefania Urist's "Window Dressing," a work of leaded glass, transforms the steel corset mannequin into a three-dimensional assertion of bodily freedom. The work consists of frames of leaded glass that together form what looks to be a constrictive corset. But the center explodes outward in animate rebellion, the cleavage bursting out of the frame with shards of spiky glass as remnants of its unshackling. It's a bold and deeply relevant piece in this #metoo era.

A number of artists, like Cynthia Cooper and Will Holub, demonstrate what is possible

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Mixmaster
WHERE: Mattatuck Museum, 144 West Main St., Waterbury
WHEN: Through March 18
HOW: visit mattmuseum.org or call 203-753-0381

with lines — horizontal, in Cooper's case, and playfully serpentine, in Holub's. Elanna Bernstein's "Sonoro," a gorgeous monotype of a series of bands — teal, pink, ochre, moss, cobalt and saffron — show the kind of kinetic possibilities available within lines — thick, narrow, curving, slender. It feels almost musical in its composition.

Finally, two splendid figural works — Susan Rollins' spare monotype of an albino parakeet "Serinus Canaria" — and Nancy Moore's "I Rise" — are delicious reminders of the continued power of figurative art. They are both playful, enigmatic and utterly captivating. Moore's work, a charming watercolor and gouache work of a woman in colorful attire, the toe of her boot on a bird's head, suggests a figure floating away from a confining past, animated by her dreams of flight and escape, which show up on the skirt of her dress, where a bird alights among the clouds, and the corner of her eye, on which yet another bird is painted. It's colorful, buoyant and rhapsodic, a captivating work of symbolist intensity nicely married to blistering color.

Contact Tracey O'Shaughnessey at tosh@ren-am.com.