

TLMalka

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SBCC Art Student Turns Trash Into Treasure

Junkyard Items Become Delicate Sculpture

Artist Malka Belzberg has received two Best of Show awards and one Honorable Mention for her participation in student exhibitions at the Atkinson Gallery, all since the age of 60.

“She’s the Israeli grandma Moses,” said Joe Templar, a friend of Belzberg. “She has her free form style that nobody I know can beat.”

Belzberg was born in Israel in 1932 before the state was founded. She said she still hold onto her Palestine passport.

“A lot of her art comes from growing up in Palestine,” Templar said.

Belzberg now lives in a house in Goleta near the mountains. “It reminds me of my childhood,” she said. Here, she raises three horses, five goats, and 10 chickens. She also had five peacocks, but a coyote ate them.

In 1993, Belzberg attended an art class at City College and decided to become a full-time artist. She began with ceramics, when she could no longer help with her grandchildren, she said.

She has been on campus ever since and has her own workstation in the humanities building, where she makes unique sculptures from ordinary objects.

“I’m very influenced by contemporary artists and how they allow themselves to put things together,” Belzberg said.

One of her challenges has been to weld different pieces together. She collects junks from her backyard and from a recycling center, where she buys metal by the weight. She said that her inspiration comes from “the family, from life and anything that influences her.”

Keason Holehan, a student who helps her in the art studio, said, “Her home is like a museum of artwork.” He will be doing some additional painting on her new sculpture that depicts three goats.

Belzberg admitted that she doesn’t sell anything and that her artwork stays in the family. Instead she gives many of her sculptures to her children, who finance her education.

Belzberg has recently started casting in stainless steel, which is a bit different, according to Holehan. It gives the sculpture a very shiny polish, he said.

Fellow art student Hayden Osborn said Belzberg goes to a professional foundry in Oxnard, because they don’t have enough heat for melting steel at City College.

Osborn said that Belzberg is very helpful to other students. “That’s why everybody likes her.”

One of her awarded sculptures is called “Women in Prison.” It depicts a scene from Valley State Prison for Women in Chowchilla, Calif., according to Belzberg.

“It’s a good thing about the bad economy that they have to release a lot of prisoners,” she said. She actively corresponds with a German woman from the prison in Chowchilla.

Belzberg told that the woman was into drugs and went to prison because of that.

“She helped me with the horses,” Belzberg said referring to her bronze sculpture that depicts a horse head. It was awarded Best in Show at an exhibition at Atkinson Gallery in 2004.

During the 1950s, Belzberg served in the Israeli army. Because she wanted to help soldiers with psychological problems, and Israel didn’t have any psychology department, she decided to go to Los Angeles in 1955. After five or six years in the United States, she went back to Israel for further studies.

She returned to the U.S. in the 1970s. Her youngest daughter, Edet, who is a renowned documentary filmmaker, was born here.