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Haight artists open their doors

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It was nearly a straight line, as the crow flies, from Page/Lyon (Sherri Cavan's sculpture, which has been featured in The Beat before) all the way to Fredrick/Stanyan (Arlene Diehl's fragmented nude sketches). Actually, it was more like an arc, perhaps even in the emotional sense... No, I'm not sure that's entirely accurate.

Regardless, along the way, The Beat encountered Sonia Melnikova's fantastic photographic wonder-scapes that varied from kaleidoscopic to the forlornly realistic. The mannikin resigned to ridicule, unable to remove the ill-fitting fedora, was our favorite snapshot there at Page/Masonic.

84.jpg

Next up, at Ashbury/Fredrick, was the garden studio sanctuary of Betty Katcher, whose lifelike sculpted heads peered out onto the small lawn from her workspace—and from a bargain shed!

photo-2.jpg

Phylis Johnson-Silk filled her Downey/Frederick garage with beaded delights—strung-together glass shapes of mutli-dimensional texture and color. Metallic grains of various substances collided in curved pieces like stardust(s) crushed together under unrelenting gravity, patterns hugging the walls of their celestial prisons to craft hollow and delicate pieces of the cosmos [to hang around your neck].

photo-4.jpg

Continuing west (to Clayton & Carl), we found Alanna Simone's emotionally savage work, self-portraits of bloody catharsis. The intensity of those works was offset nicely by whimsically selected random sentences paired with images that eagerly invited interpretation. Overall lovely use of space to convert a small room and a half into a creative asylum that welcomed art lovers.

photo-3.jpg

At Carl between Clayton & Cole, Sadie Jernigan Valeri demonstrated impressive versatility, and nearly sold The Beat a mixed-media collage of sorts (unsolicited). We were drawn to the yellowed pinup aesthetic with torn-out gaps through faces and figures filled in with harlequin queens... And, for \$120, the 8×10 piece would have been one of the more reasonable deals of the day. Alas, a red dot adorned the frame—another buyer beat us to it.

photo-5.jpg

Before Diehl's studio bookended our tour, we stumbled upon perhaps the most talented painter of the day—and he wasn't even in the program. Christopher Schramm's dark glimpses into a netherworld strike the casual viewer as abstract. At second glance, the subjects creep off the canvases, and forms take shape before your eyes. Tired splotches trudge across the painting until you recognize them as soldiers, bayonets pointing out across to... another viewer? Ah, you're in a theater, and you can make out the head of a man watching a war movie....

photo-7.jpg

At each location, we asked if the artist lived in or rented out their workspace. The answer was universally "NO." Considering the price of space these days, and the financial pressure (or cost of living offset) to lease out or sublet these garden apartments, the commitment demonstrated by these artists to their crafts was doubly inspiring. Thank you, Haighters, for opening your studios and nurturing our needy neurons with your aesthetic antidotes.

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