

'Obsessive Compulsive' in H.B. is a feast of artistic invention The exhibit, up through April 13, boasts an array of intriguing works by local artists

Imagine having the patience, to say nothing of steady hands, to dribble tiny droplets of acrylic paints into slender monochromatically variegated forms as slim as a nail and then affixing hundreds of them to boards or canvas shaped into elegantly minimalist forms. It's enough to make one's eyes cross, but for an artist like Charlotte Smith, the reward seems to lie in both the laborious process and its mesmerizing results.

"Blue Wave," 2008, a shaped canvas diptych connected by said "nails" and "Yellow Curve," 2008, exemplify her skills. To provide further interplay between light and shadow, she added larger drops of paint to the canvases' surface, giving them the appearance of a subtle relief sculpture.

Just as intriguing are woven sculptures by Sayon Syprasoeuth who originally lopped off his ponytail to donate to a cancer charity but wound up turning the hair into art instead. Over a few years, he knotted long individual hairs together, dipped them into glue and multi-hued glitter and then wove them into intricate net-like shapes that could inspire a spider on speed. "Catching Fireflies," 2007 is a basket-like form suspended from the ceiling by a narrow rope of hair that gains texture and heft through careful knotting and the aforementioned materials. The best of the series, "Kelly 1964," 2008, redefines the meaning of inventiveness and shows, once again, that artists are indeed different from the rest of us.

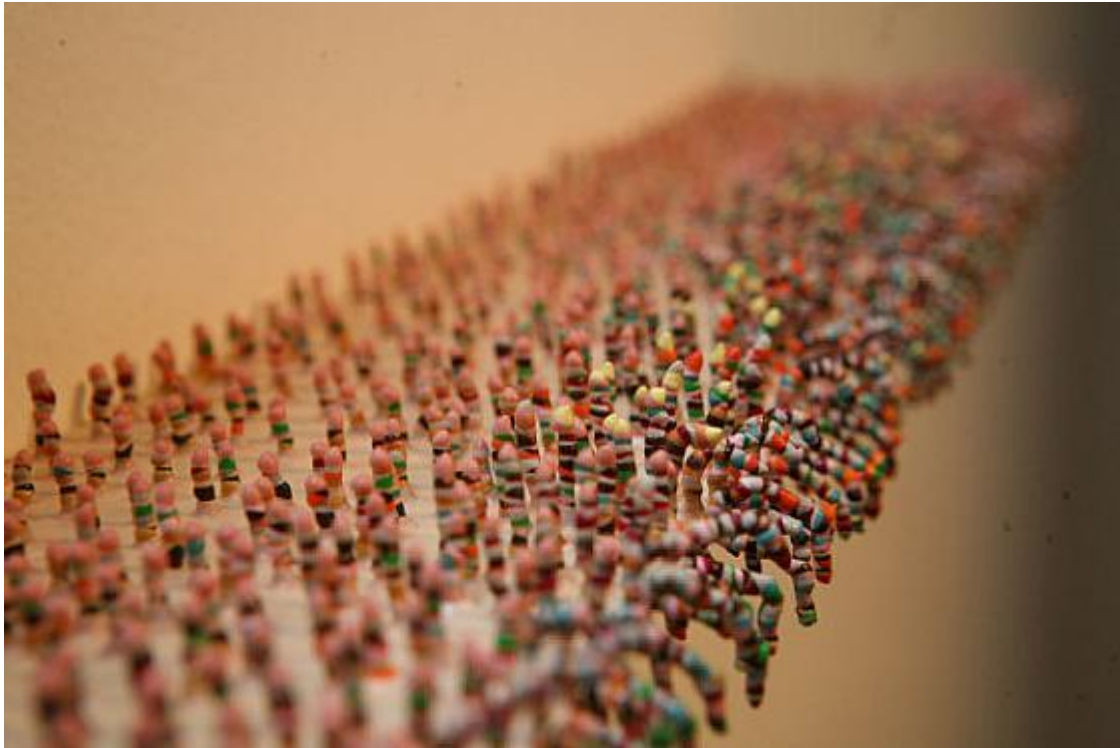
These pieces, along with a visually engaging video loop by Pascual Sisto and several works including a site-specific installation by Gina Han, comprise the current show at the Huntington Beach Art Center aptly titled by curator Darlene DeAngelo "Obsessive Compulsive." She says that one should take the title in a humorous rather than judgmental sense. Han's canvasses look delicious enough to eat. Picture brightly colored jellybean shapes slowly oozing singly or, at times, carefully double layered over a neutrally colored surface.

Smooth and shiny, they point to current Asian pop-sensibility, think Hello Kitty, candy-colored sports cars, sensuously shaped furniture and the like. Han's work plays



Charlotte Smith, Blue Wave, 2008,
acrylic on panel

to art historian Dave Hickey's suggestion that the boundaries between art and design are disappearing and how beauty has re-emerged in art—at last.

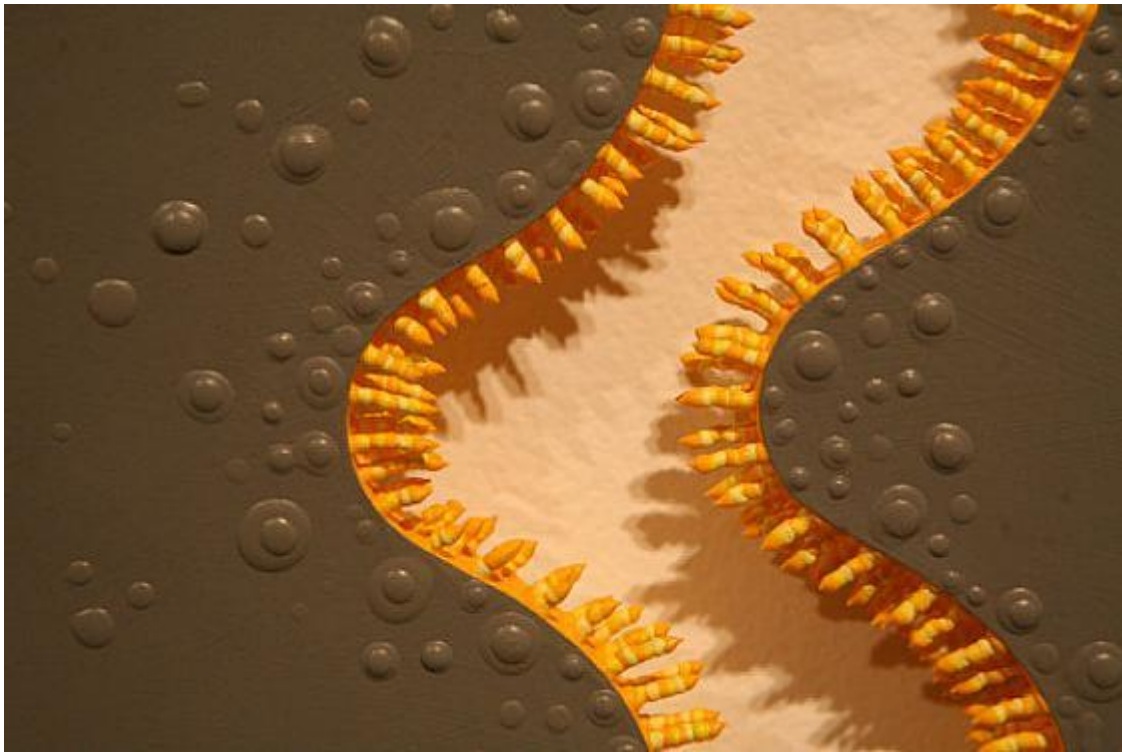


Charlotte Smith, *Leapin (Detail)*, 2008, acrylic on panel

An installation of 32 13-by-1-inch panels titled “Hana III,” 2008, should be seen as a single entity with which the artist allows herself to experiment with combining earth colors with pastels, adding a monochromatic panel and some other, by her standards, gloomy ones. This may sound ghastly, but actually the overall effect is rather striking. There is a sexy element in Han’s work since those shiny shapes (some “beans” have a skin-like texture) are tacitly and visually compelling and viewers will have to work hard to look but not touch.

This writer, with some notable exceptions, is no videophile. But, Sisto’s frames of what one might interpret as fireworks, explosions, implosions or really anything under the sun held y attention for the entire, albeit shot, run.

Lastly, visitors should not forget to check out the project room and enjoy Ingrid Lilligren’s display of small collages made form multi-colored eggshells on paper. The artist crushed the shells just enough to achieve the right amount of patterning, filled in the background with pastel crayon, but left the shells’ color natural. In their uncontrived simplicity, the works touched me in a similar way that children’s art projects do, as honest, uncontrived and just plain fun. Lilligren, De Angelo noted, donates proceeds from her work to food banks.



Charlotte Smith, *Yellow Curve*, 2008, acrylic on panel

De Angelo says that she picked the artists on the strength of their past work and just let them lose for this show. "I may plan carefully but there has to be that element of chance where I just trust the artists and my gut."

Evidently her approach worked well - again.

-Daniella Walsh