



Culture Watch

Sarah Spitz

Send comments to [editor@smdp.com](mailto:editor@smdp.com)

Meditation on art and motherhood

**WOMEN ARTISTS ARE FINALLY GETTING**

some due lately (better lately than never?), with surrealists at LACMA, L.A. artists Claire Falkenstein and Ruth Weisberg opening this Saturday at Jack Rutberg Gallery on La Brea (Weisberg will be present); and earth artist/cosmic conceptualist Lita Albuquerque's gallery talk and walk-through, Saturday at 10 a.m. at Bergamot Station's Craig Krull Gallery.

Weisberg and Albuquerque are part of a comprehensive group show, "Breaking in Two: A Provocative Vision of Motherhood," at Arena 1 Gallery (at Santa Monica Airport), a welcome addition to Pacific Standard Time. Forty years ago, women artists had to protest to gain attention for their work. They were muses and mothers but were told to keep the art part of their lives private.

Some of L.A.'s best women-mother-artists represent their struggle to straddle these multiple roles as a theme in their art. The late Santa Monica artist Miriam Wosk gives us a shorthand icon in "Supermom," a brightly colored gouache reminiscent of a vintage orange crate label. An idealized brunette beauty, whose wavy hair cascades over a heart-patterned blouse has a crown-like halo emanating from her head and vegetables in her hands.

Joyce Dallal's baby-shaped mesh cage, aptly titled "Receptacle," is filled with discarded plastic toys, baseballs, basketballs, the detritus of infancy and childhood. You think of the mother's body as a "receptacle" and the trash "receptacle" that will contain the mass of plastic trash that childhood generates. What kind of earth will these children inherit?

A continuum of matriarchy plays out in the Saar family: mother Betye, daughters Alison and Lezley and grand-daughter Sola Agutsson each has her own language.

Alison's black bronze breast sculpture emits a tree branch "sea of nectar" while mother Betye, raised in the Depression era, works with found materials in "Habits of the Heart." Lezley's mixed media "Fanny Mosebury was Forever Encountering Spirits" connects image bubbles with wavy lines across a face housed within a skull-shaped frame of bones. Sola's surrealist "Floating Soles" collage sports a foot dangling a high-heeled shoe hovering above a teacup, with a one-eyed wall clock joining other tiny cut out figurative images.

Curator/artist Bruria Finkel, an L.A. feminist art movement pioneer, helped found The Los Angeles Council of Women Artists in 1968 to protest gender discrimination at the L.A. County Museum of Art; she also co-founded the Santa Monica Arts Commission. Her long-standing connection to other mother artists results in a distinguished and important exhibition.

**CONTEMPLATING ART**

Longtime art writer/historian/ biographer Peter Clothier took up the practice of meditation decades ago. These days, his writing focuses on creativity and contemplation (Mind Work: [thebuddhadiaries.blogspot.com](http://thebuddhadiaries.blogspot.com)).

First offered 15 years ago, "One Hour/One Painting" is a guided meditation offering insightful immersion in one artwork for one hour. Clothier was at



**JOYCE DALLAL'S 'RECEPTACLE'**

Bergamot's Shoshana Wayne Gallery last week conducting a session. Only 20 people participated.

Try this exercise yourself: the artwork-Izhar Patkin's "The Dead Are Here" is on view until Feb. 18. There's a lot to contemplate here.

Patkin's giant artwork hangs in a four-walled room constructed within the gallery itself. Gauzy mesh curtains hung from high above fall in painted folds, giving the impression of a breezy window gazing at a pastoral scene. Nothing is in sharp focus — yet.

Clothier begins explaining that people often rush through exhibitions, focusing more on labels and moving to the next piece instead of the actual artwork. He wants us to stop, breathe, open our eyes, letting our minds absorb the work while allowing whatever feelings emerge to wash over us.

Clothier systematically suggests looking first at just one section of this nearly 360-degree piece, focusing with eyes open, then closed, on a single color, a single fold in the curtain, the material surface of the painting, a specific figure within it, the faces that come out of the shadows.

By the time the hour is up, the attention you've paid pays off in deeper appreciation. What first appears as a park-like vision reveals itself to be cemetery with rows of white gravestones vanishing into the distance, a blue reflecting pond, beautiful blossoming trees and statuary. Other figures emerge near the statues and phantom faces appear and disappear in the markings on tree trunks, in their limbs, between the folds.

Practicing this kind of focus while looking at art gives your mind a vacation while expanding it. And the artwork receives the time and attention it deserves. Learn more about these kinds of techniques applied to all aspects of your life at "An Introduction to Mindful Awareness" at Santa Monica Public Library tonight at 7 p.m. with Diana Winston of UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center.

**SARAH SPITZ** is a former freelance arts producer for National Public Radio and a producer for public radio station KCRW-Santa Monica. She reviews theatre for [LAOpeningNights.com](http://LAOpeningNights.com).

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