

VISUAL ARTS

CHARLES DESMARAIS *Art*

Trendy spaces in Mission arts scene

Two may be a start of something, but three is a trend.

On Friday, Nov. 10, the quirky, scrappy San Francisco art gallery Et al. opened a new space, Et al. etc., at 2831 Mission St. That's right next door to the larger, more established Ratio 3, and around the corner from Capital. Together, the three galleries amount to a great reason to invest an hour of your art-time budget at the corner of 24th and Mission.

All three appear at first to be dripping with hip attitude. None includes the word "gallery" — or "art," for that matter — in its official name (Capital would ideally be written with a strike through the word, but that's not The Chronicle style). The facade of Ratio 3, which has been at 2831A Mission for years and now sublets space to the two others, is painted out in black; if the security gate is unlocked, the place is open. Capital is on an alley at 26 Lilac St.; alternatively, you can get there through a back door from Ratio 3.

Et al. etc., which closed its Minnesota Street Project space this year, is in a former tattoo parlor — a huge sign still hangs above the door proclaiming, "Walk-ins Welcome." The original Et al. has continued to operate in a Chinatown basement at 620 Kearny St. — pass through Union Cleaners and down the stairs at the back.

The nicest people run them all, however, and a brief conversation with the attendant — probably the owner — is part of the pleasure of a visit.

The first show at Et al. etc. is a lively one that upholds the gallery's tradition of curveballs thrown right through the strike zone. "Jam Session" presents childlike drawings by 78-year-old Betty Bailey, along with a charmingly aimless film by Johanna Billing.

Bailey's drawings are a glimpse into the golden years as seen through the eyes of a counterculture original. She and her husband, Clayton, run what they call the Bailey Art Museum in Crockett, where, according to Atlas Obscura, "junkbots and mud babies are the masterpieces." Scenes from a casino ("Playing the Slots," 2005) and from "Medical Marijuana



Michael Macor / The Chronicle

Above: Aaron Harbour and Jackie Im own the Et al. etc. gallery. Below left: Betty Bailey's 2005 "Playing the Slots" is on view.



Et al. etc.

Manor" (2013) alternate with moments plucked from daytime TV or daily routine.

Billing's technically flawless "Pulheim Jam Session" (2015) is an unending video loop showing a world on the cusp of agriculture and industry, at the edge of the antique and the crisply contemporary. A pianist improvises an ethe-

real, halting melody. People in their cars are stalled on a country road, in a goodwill version of the final scene of Jean-Luc Godard's "Week-end," then happily move on. We are destined to lives in a perpetual cycle, the film seems to say. And that's OK.

At Ratio 3, long polished shelves hold small, intricately

jigsawed plywood sculptures by James Sterling Pitt. Their ingenuity is too mature for them to be children's toys, but their charm is that they could almost be mistaken for such.

Capital is currently showing plastic cutouts by Raque Ford that update flower-child, pictorial graphics with a

touch of goth humor. One 2017 work has its title engraved into it: "I sold my soul but I swear I'm a sensible person."

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Ratio 3

A 2017 piece by James Sterling Pitt is on display at Ratio 3.

Cataloging beauty of national parks

By Ryan Kost

The 59 national parks cover tens of millions of acres across the United States and its territories. California is home to eight of them — the most of any state (though Alaska's parks are larger overall). The diversity in their landscapes is striking and ever-changing. And still, even knowing that, it's often easy to forget that they exist at all.

That makes the work of photographer QT Luong all the more important. Over a span of two decades, Luong made some 300 visits to these parks. He'd go in the winter when they were snow-covered, in the summer when the high country was easy to move through, and in the spring and fall when the colors were particularly vibrant. He captured them, again and again, on large-format film, creating images that give the viewer a sense of place that is not easy to convey through a single photograph.

Thirty of his photographs are now on display in the lobby of the Hiram W. Johnson State Building in San Francisco. It's a truncated version of what would normally be a 59-image exhibition called "Treasured Lands," a show that puts one photograph on display for each

Treasured Lands: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday. Through Nov. 30. Hiram W. Johnson State Building, 455 Golden Gate Ave., S.F. www.treasuredlandsbook.com

park. That Luong usually has to narrow the show down to one photograph per park feels cruel enough; that he has had to cut it by half for this space is even crueler, and yet it's still very much worth a walk through the metal detectors at the entrance of the building.

One part of the display is dedicated entirely to California. Viewers can jump between the misty peaks of Yosemite National Park to the soft and creased Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes of Death Valley National Park by just walking a few feet. The images are so detailed you can make out the individual spines of the cholla cacti in the Joshua Tree National Park.

"There was so much diversity that I just wanted to try to see it all for myself, and then after that to try to communicate the sense of being there," Luong says. "I wanted to see all of it."

One of the most stunning aspects of the collection Luong has put together is how he magnifies this truth by juxtaposing certain images. In one makeshift diptych, Luong



QT Luong

An ethereal winter image captures a radiant sunset at Crater Lake National Park in Oregon.

places an image of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park next to an image of Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska. Side by side, the neon glow of lava peeks out from beneath black rock, and a lavender-blue sky gets filtered through the clearest glacial ice on the banks of the Muir Inlet. "I tried to group them so that you see, at the same time, the similarities and the contrasts in the parks," he explains.

Given the sheer volume of images that Luong has collect-

ed over the years, it would be impossible to convey the extent of his work in a single show, even if he'd been able to show all 59 images. To help with that, Luong has also placed a book on display (available for purchase online at www.treasuredlandsbook.com) that dives much deeper into each of the spaces, showing off their varying moods and individual depths — as well as his sincere respect for each of them.

Luong, it feels important to note, grew up in France, which

limited his access to these sorts of spaces to the "icy peaks of the Alps." When he arrived in the United States in the early '90s, he was moved by all the land had to offer. Part of his dedication to this project, he says, is to make sure others feel that, too — "to remind people of the beauty that we have in this country."

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