

## Stars of tomorrow get to shine in juried exhibit

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The [Axis Gallery's](#) annual exhibition of artists from around the country is an antidote to this year's sprawling, uneven [State Fair](#) show.

Of necessity, it is a small exhibition tucked into the midtown gallery's circumscribed but clean-lined two-room space. By virtue of the judge's discernment, it is a remarkably cohesive show whose overall tone is cool, concise and carefully considered.

Dena Beard, a curatorial assistant at the [Berkeley Art Museum](#), selected 36 works by 24 artists from 786 entries for the sixth [National Juried Exhibition](#). Having worked with the Berkeley museum's Matrix Program of experimental site-specific works, she brought a practiced eye to the task of selecting an assemblage of smart, academically respectable works.

There are not many things here to make you scratch your head and wonder where they came from, which is, in some ways, too bad. But nearly everything in the show is master-level quality and the artists' bios attest that most came from highly respected graduate programs, and at least one teaches at the university level.

The first thing that grabs your eye is "[Circular Logic](#)," a large wall sculpture by [Peter Hiers](#) of [Pacific Grove](#). Made of tire rubber picked up from the highway, it resembles a large black rose, or alternatively a Zen circle. It has great bodily presence and intrigues the viewer with its contradiction between beauty and ugliness.

You are next drawn to puckish photograph by [Jacqueline Langelier](#) of [San Francisco](#). In it, an attractive young woman plays the role of a roast pig with an apple in its mouth on a banquet table. The untitled image is wonderfully funny, playing with historical references to 17th century Dutch still-life paintings and the sexual exploitation of women.

Also humorous, in a way reminiscent of Jeff Koons' ceramic sculptures of [Michael Jackson](#) and Cicciolina, though on a much smaller scale, is a work titled "A Boy's Dream" by [Bruce R. Cadman](#) of [Stockton](#). It's an eye-popping teapot with a female nude and a sleeping boy with an erection. It won one of the three juror's awards.

A subtheme of the exhibit is an emphasis in several works on the grid, a subject that was ubiquitous in the early '70s and makes a strong return here. [Jon Kuzmich](#) of San Francisco makes delicate grids of tiny dots of colored acrylic paint that form subtle plaids on Mylar, a plastic substance. Recessive and cool, his two pieces are lovely and grow on you as you recall them in tranquility.



[Martha Schlitt](#), also of San Francisco, pits a grid that looks like graph paper against the free-flowing patterns of a [wood grain](#) in another pair of cool and subtle works. Bolder is New York artist [Paul Antonio Szabo's](#) "Grid Series 4," in which he uses decorative geometric forms to construct a loose grid of Art Moderne-inspired images.

Strongest of all is "Grid Study" by [Tore Terrasi](#) of [Arlington, Texas](#), who weaves microfilm into a complex grid that makes you think of a huge skyscraper with tiny windows you can look into and see people and objects. It's a fascinating piece that bears extended viewing.

I also liked a pair of joined canvases titled "Network 1" by [Andrew W. Martin](#) of Lubbock, [Texas](#), which juxtaposes a painting of rural flatlands broken by a telephone tower with a head-and-shoulders painting of a man that is broken by horizontal bands as if the vertical hold on a television set was acting up. Here the grid is less evident but present nonetheless.

There are some strong drawings in the show, among them Illinois artist [Elena Peteva's](#) "IV," a rigorously rendered image of a woman's arm and hand making a come-hither gesture. Also finely done are a pair of meticulously drawn images of what looks like a long-legged bed with a tree growing through it and a crude shelter set in a blank field by [Jennifer Nelson](#) of [Grand Forks, N.D.](#) A great deal of intricate work also went into "Solarman," a surreal drawing of a boy with a solar panel in place of a face by Elizabeth Porter of Knoxville, Tenn.

Intricate, too, and cheekily humorous are Sacramentan Ianna Frisby's embroidered canvases with images from sewing pattern packages. "Simplicity Girls" harkens back to the 1950s, while "From the Brooke Shields Collection" has a more up-to-date take on advertising imagery.

The latter received a juror's award, as did Bay Area artist [Zach Moser's](#) noirish photo on aluminum of a man seen through a [car window](#) at night.

All in all, it's a show that gives you a look at works you might someday see in a museum's introductions exhibit.

## ART REVIEW

[Axis Gallery](#) sixth [National Juried Exhibition](#)

What: Dena Beard, a curatorial assistant at the [Berkeley Art Museum](#), reviewed 786 entries and selected 36 works by 24 artists for this exhibit.

Where: [Axis Gallery](#), 1517 19th St., in Sacramento

When: Noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and by appointment, through Sunday

Cost: Free

Information: (916) 443-9900, [www.axisgallery.org](http://www.axisgallery.org)

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