

Lunatic grace: Janice Yudell, Sal Casa share art

By JEANNE PLATT
The Buzz

CHICO — How to describe visual artist Janice Yudell? As her Web site states: "One half Gallagher, One half Martha Stewart, One half Michael Moore."

That sounds just about right.

Yudell's mixed-media exhibition "Naked Corporate Power in a Nutshell" will show in the Humanities Center Gallery, in the Trinity hallway, until April 2, in conjunction with Sal Casa's "The Three Graces" in the main gallery (Trinity 100), which runs till March 26. A reception for Casa will be held from 5-7 p.m. Friday, to include music by Sharon DeMeyer and Robert Karch.

Yudell's ink drawings, three-dimensional paintings, and video pieces are lively, loony, chaotic, satirical, unapologetic and ardently political, much like the artist herself.

Many pieces in the show stem from her five years as a panelist on the now-defunct Los Angeles cable access show "Lunatic Fringe," an arts and politics variety hour.

"I wasn't really thinking I was making art exactly. Every month we'd get half an hour to talk with other artists and people. I just started bringing in something every time. I was terrified on the first couple shows, but after awhile it really started to get fun. It wasn't so preachy but I could really say how I felt. So I put together my little shuck. By the end I felt like I really integrated my art and political ideas," Yudell said.

She started with cheeky political craft projects such as "How to transform you war toys into Christmas ornaments" ("I told the audience to melt it all down and throw some glitter on it.") and ran from there.

"I come from an absurd family. My parents were both



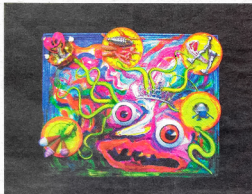
Photo courtesy of Sal Casa

Local artist Sal Casa's work is on display at Chico State University's Humanities Center Gallery through March 26.

Sal Casa and Janice Yudell's art work is on display at the Humanities Center Gallery in Trinity Hall at Chico State University. The gallery is open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

accountants but they were real energetic — my mom was a Girl Scout leader and we always did crafts. What do you do with all those orange juice cans and TV dinner trays? We'd always be using stuff up and making new objects," she said.

Yudell continues to be inspired by usually tossed-out items and thrift store ephemera, especially Barbie doll parts and



Photos courtesy of Janice Yudell

Janice Yudell's "Bees in my Bonnet," acrylic mixed media, is on display at the Humanities Center Gallery.

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rubber snakes.

"The snake in my work evolved because of the idea of a three-dimensional line. Snakes I don't see as evil as much as chaos. All of these symbols have a life of their own. I try to tell a story with them," she said.

For Chico art icon Salvatore Casa, "The Three Graces" marks a return to focusing on the figure after years of mostly abstract expressionistic-style painting.

"When you're painting all the time, usually you start making the same marks over and over again. To me you have to break those habits," he said.

Casa, who has been painting for more than 50 years and taught at Chico State University for 20, will show his latest drawings, watercolors, and "alla prima" (quick-study, all-in-one-shot) oil paintings dealing with the three graces, mythological female figures of joy, charm and beauty.

"As I work my main concern is the paint itself, even though it's attached to a figure. The more I work the more the object disappears and just the paint exists," he said.

Casa's work takes inspiration from Velasquez, de Kooning, and especially abstract



Photo courtesy of Janice Yudell

"Mutilation Nation," by Janice Yudell (ink, 8½ inches by 11 inches) is on display at Chico State's Humanities Center Gallery.

expressionist Joan Mitchell, with its lush, gestural mark-making and color rhythms.

"For me these are all personal reflections. When you start to paint you're confronted with a pure white space. As soon as you start putting marks in there, you're adding. I believe the art comes from subtraction," he said.

Continuing to push himself to make new discoveries is integral.

"If you're going to paint something and you know what it's going to look like, why do it? A painting should leave something to the imagination, even to the person that did it," he said.

"When I paint I want the medium I'm using to resist what I'm trying to do. The creative process is one of destruction. You have to destroy what you know and see if you can find something else."