

A Century by the Sea

Written by Christa Martin

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MAH and Santa Cruz County Bank team up for an artistic Boardwalk bonanza



BIRTHDAY BASH Artist Sherry Karverâ's work illuminates the walls of MAH

Constructing a rollercoaster is a mind-boggling, dangerous, engineering feat. But to construct one made out of photographs? Still mind-boggling, but it's not nearly as death defying. That's what artist Sherry Karver has done in an airy room on the top floor of the Museum of Art & History in downtown Santa Cruz. Lining the room are hundreds of photos of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, and together they're arranged in the form of a roller coaster—pure creative genius.

Outside the anteroom is a larger room where a handful of Karver's large-scale, multihued photographs of Santa Cruz's 100-year-old amusement park hang on the walls. The visuals are beautiful and evoke sunny-day feelings one might experience if they were standing in line for a ride on the Carousel.

"I've been taking these photos for maybe six years, on and off," says Karver, who resides in Oakland and visits the Boardwalk a few times a year. "It started with a dream I had about flying, spreading your arms and sailing, hovering over the ground, and I thought, 'What would give that feeling?' Maybe some kind of amusement park ride. From there it took off. For an artist, a place like the Boardwalk is irresistible, the rides, lights, smells and sounds pulled me in."



Erika Perloff

Her photos are one-third of a larger Boardwalk exhibition. Also on display are pieces from Assistant Professor Elliot Anderson's UC Santa Cruz class, Intro to Computer Art. In that class, Anderson teaches archaeology of site and last fall he asked students in his class to use the Internet as a form of representation for a place. The place the class chose was the Boardwalk, which was on the cusp of celebrating its 100th anniversary. Pairing up with MAH staff, Anderson's students spent the semester, and then some, to create a variety of artistic projects that are now on display on the first floor of the MAH. Some of the work includes a series of black and white photos of the Boardwalk when it's empty and off-season; birds are the only visitors. There is Ian Alan Paul's photo series of the word "bikini," where a blonde woman is wearing three different bikinis, and in each picture the text definition of "bikini" is different. Polaroid pictures hang on the wall, detailing the sequence of a person participating in the arcade's Dance Revolution, and there's more, including an interactive projection where guests can see other works from students in the class.



Ian Alan Paul's depictions of the Boardwalk shows off a different side of the historic landmark.

On the floor between Anderson's class's work and Karver's photographs, is a large exhibit of Boardwalk artifacts: Old bathing suits—an original itsy bitsy teenie weenie yellow polka dot bikini is in the mix—the first Miss Santa Cruz's (Mary Black) gown and a picture of her from 1924, a Giant Dipper car, an old lemon juicer and an abundance of history. Ultimately, the entire exhibition is to honor the Boardwalk. "It's not one of those large amusement parks that moved in," says Theresa Myers from the Public Relations/Marketing department at the MAH. "This park has grown along with the community."



NICE DEPOSIT Marcos Weiss' "Afternoon by the Boardwalk" is on display at Santa Cruz County Bank as part of its Down by the Sea:1907-2007 exhibition.

Also tapping into the artistic realm this summer season is the Santa Cruz County Bank, which is honoring the Boardwalk with three shows—one in each of its venues: Santa Cruz, Watsonville and Scotts Valley. The show, "Down By the Sea," features the work of 28 local artists who are debuting 100 pieces of art, including paintings, ceramics, photography and much more. Coordinator for the show, Mary Anne Carson, explains that she put a challenge out to these 28 artists to create something, in a contemporary way, of their interpretation of the Boardwalk. The results have been staggering with artists submitting a cornucopia of creative ideas. Included in the cache of people involved are Surfer magazine photographer Bob Barber, painter Barbara Bailey Porter and painter Andrew Purchin. The bank will hold a reception at its Santa Cruz office from 5 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 26.

The Museum of Art & History is at the McPherson Center, 705 Front St., Santa Cruz, 429-1964. The Santa Cruz County Bank is at 325 Soquel Ave., Santa Cruz, 457-5000.