

Beauty from and through chaos

For their installation 'Urban Jungle,' established artists work with students to create a messy yet lovely installation

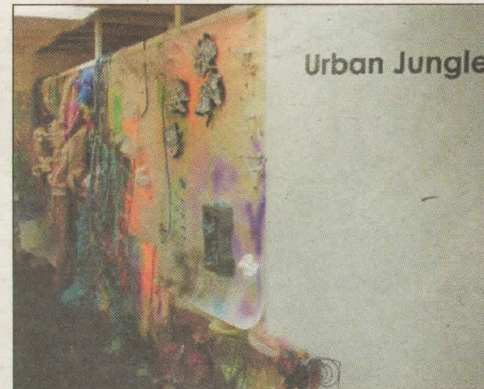
By Josef Woodard
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Neatniks might feel a twitch or shiver after climbing the steps and seeing what's currently up at the AFS Gallery, the workshop and showcase space above the main floor of Art From Scrap. The installation, a wrap-around, chaotic yet strangely beautiful assemblage wrapped around the gallery walls, produced by artists Jen Vanderpool and Elizabeth Folk, working with students from El Puente School.

It goes by the title "Urban Jungle," a reasonable enough indication of the multi-sensory thicket and overload involved. On another level, the title could allude to the abundance of waste produced by a post-urban

environment, as well as artful ways of reusing and recycling said waste. And that, of course, circles back to the core mission of Art From Scrap, recycling industrial cast-offs for art's sake.

Children have been making "art from scrap" for years, but an installation such as this reminds us of a grander application of the process. Contemporary artists in the professional swim of things have been transforming detritus, junk and funk into art for decades. Take, for example, Vanderpool, who recently turned Culver City's Bandini Art gallery into a junk-filled forest with her show "Hysterical Paradise." Folk is a multi-disciplinary UCSB MFA student, also with a penchant for transformation of humble materials.



Urban Jungle

"Urban Jungle 1," at immediate left, and "Urban Jungle 2," are on display at AFS Gallery.

JOSEF WOODARD PHOTOS

In this case, the collaborative and deliciously crazy installation includes such humble materials as Styrofoam, crumpled plastic, tarps, magnetic tape, wire, rusty bed springs and circuit boards, and painted backdrops that alternately scream with fluorescent colors, wax psychedelia or go all new-age cosmic.

But what might greet the visitor's eye as an unseemly mess, an anarchic flow of garbage flung against and affixed to the wall, becomes something else on more patient, closer scrutiny. Viewed close-up and read slowly from left to right, almost like a sequential scroll, the mess reveals its logic and poetry. Variations in density, color scheming and groupings of materials convey a series

of distinctly different sections and "movements" in the whole, from point A to point Z.

"Urban Jungle" is ultimately an interesting case study, in which established artists and their student artist charges have availed themselves of "scrap" art materials downstairs and gone artfully wild on the walls upstairs. The sum effect is something to see, and experience. ■

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ART REVIEW

'URBAN JUNGLE,' by JEN VANDERPOOL and ELIZABETH FOLK, with STUDENTS FROM EL PUENTE SCHOOL

When: through March 7

Where: AFS Gallery, 302 E. Cota St.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday

Information: 884-0459, www.artfromscrap.org