

Two shows feature works of Carol Brown Goldberg

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The Vero Beach Museum of Art and Melbourne's Foosaner Museum are staging separate shows of works that were originally assembled as a single exhibition. And luckily for Vero art lovers, the Washington, DC-based artist will be speaking next Thursday at the Foosaner, located in the Eau Gallie arts district.

"Carol Brown Goldberg: Recent Works" was organized as one show by International Art & Artists (IA&A), a nonprofit that develops traveling fine art exhibitions.

Curated by Jack Rasmussen, director and curator of the American University Museum in Washington, the exhibition includes 16 paintings and 20 sculptures. The way that the VBMA and the Foosaner came to share the show was serendipitous, according to FIT Director of University Galleries, Carla Funk.

Funk was interested in the "Recent Works" show because the Foosaner owns an early painting by Brown Goldberg, who is Washington-based. When the president of IA&A, David Furchgott, visited Melbourne this summer, Funk did not know that the VBMA had already engaged the show. But Furchgott had some good news. According to Funk, the sculpture part of the exhibition was available because the Vero Beach Museum of Art had allotted space to exhibit the paintings only.

"It worked out wonderfully for us," Funk says.

The Foosaner made arrangements directly with IA&A for the exhibition of the sculptures, but Funk first checked with VBMA director Lucinda Gedeon to make sure that no conflict would arise from the two museums showing different aspects of Brown Goldberg's work.

Funk hopes to see Vero's audience at the Foosaner to experience the diversity of Brown Goldberg's oeuvre.

"We do share an audience with Vero – it's only 45 minutes away," Funk says.

Alongside Brown Goldberg's bronzes, created between 2001 and 2011, the Foosaner will exhibit its 1983 painting, "Bride takes a bow." It came into the permanent collection back in the '80s when Brown Goldberg received a purchase award for it in a competitive exhibition at what was then the Brevard Art Museum.

The 48-inch-square painting is a good example of Brown Goldberg's early figural work. It owes a debt both to Matisse for its colorful portrayal of people in decoratively patterned settings and Henri Rousseau for its tangle of tropical foliage, ferns and creeping vines that threaten to overwhelm the triumphant white gowned figure at its center.

Dating from 2008 to 2013, the non-objective paintings at the VBMA couldn't be more different and yet oddly the same as the work of 35 years before. While they do not include people, plants, family celebrations or comfortable bourgeois interiors, the newer paintings share the saturated color and all-over complex patterning evident in the Foosaner museum's 1983 work.

The paintings at the VBMA also have something that "Bride takes a bow" does not: size. The largest paintings in Vero Beach measure seven feet high by eight feet wide. They show a reliance on rigorous geometric, rather than organic, patterning and sparkly glass-encrusted surfaces.

In a 2012 video, *The Color of Time*, narrated by the artist, Brown Goldberg calls her recent paintings "maps that shimmer with countless particles of light." Describing her technique, she reveals that her paintings begin with a solid color – in recent years, black – over which she adheres a generous "sprinkling" of pulverized optical grade glass. After applying some free-form squirts of paint from a squeeze bottle, the artist uses a template and ruler to paint layer upon layer of geometric patterns.

Her final act is to apply dots to the composition, "letting paint drop off the brush" to form them. These proceed from each edge in orderly ranks toward the center of the work, lightening in value as they go, until they come to an abrupt stop to form a rectangular reserve at the center of the painting. The rectangular shape at the heart of each composition both discloses and frames the artist's Pollack-esque paint squirts and stenciled checker boards, circles and asterisks that seem to float above the surface of the canvas like an aura.

If the paintings' fireworks – size, sparks of prismatic light, mesmerizing patterns – do not satisfy your yearning for an aesthetic experience, the artist's written statement informs you that her paintings are universes unto themselves that bring "infinity into perspective;" and challenge "what cannot be measured. I do this to better understand notions of time, physics, aesthetics, philosophy, life, and death."

And if that is still not enough to impress, no less a person than art critic and historian Donald Kuspit wrote a catalog essay for a 2011 exhibition of Brown Goldberg's paintings that identifies her output as "musical abstractions, acknowledging, as Kandinsky did, that all art aspires to the condition of music, which is abstract and expressive at once, as (Walter) Pater said."

Brown Goldberg's sculptures at the Foosaner are another matter altogether. Relatively small for their heroic medium (none loom larger than 10 inches high) the bronze sculptures began as assemblages of odds and ends that include toys (her children's outgrown building blocks were the basis of her first assemblage), defunct technology such as dial telephones and roll film cameras, kitchen implements that include an espresso pot and measuring cups, and hardware store miscellanea such as electrical outlets, drawer pulls and plumbing pipe.

While the jumble of found objects used to create the assemblages might have resulted in a group of arcane abstract compositions, Brown Goldberg has also dipped into her store of found humor to make a motley assortment of whimsical personages inspired, according to the artist, by the people depicted in family photographs.

The assemblages, however, are not exhibition-ready objects; Brown Goldberg has the pieces cast in bronze and finished with a warm brown patina at a professional foundry. According to a 2011 interview of the artist for *The Studio Visit*, an online arts journal, only then does she think the sculptures are “precious enough” or “satisfying” as sculpture to suit her taste.

It is appropriate that the Foosaner show the sculptural aspect of Carol Brown Goldberg with her lighthearted early painting, “Bride takes a bow.” Although she crafted both that painting and the sculptures so as not to leave a jot or a tittle to chance, their fundamental playfulness manages to shine through.

The Vero Beach Museum of Art will feature the artist's large-scale paintings in its Schumann Gallery from Sept. 20, 2014, through Jan. 4, 2015. The Foosaner Art Museum of Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) in Melbourne will exhibit Carol Brown Goldberg: Recent Sculpture from Sept. 19, 2014, through Jan. 4, 2015.

A gallery talk by Brown Goldberg about her sculpture will be presented at the Foosaner on Thursday, Sept. 18 at 10:30 a.m. That talk is free and open to the public.