



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTAMO GALLERY

"Four Dimensions," a group show of collage and assemblage artists at Artamo Gallery, showcases variations on media and the culling of scraps and ideas. Above is "Nucleus," part of the Nexus Series from artist Gurpran Rau.

# Pulling at the seams

By Josef Woodard  
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

In the creative world according to artists working in collage and assemblage — largely an artistic practice born of the 20th century and artists including Joseph Cornell, Kurt Schwitters, and Joseph Beuys — linear thinking is suspect. This breed of artists' secret power, when their art works, involves making irrational yet inspired

connections, and carefully exercising the art of scavenging.

Finding disparate objects or ideas and stitching them together into an artful whole is not necessarily an extension of the concept that the world's images and things are all somehow connected. It could suggest an opposite conclusion: the world is a much more random and chaotic place than we pretend, so why not celebrate the chaos?

Enter "Four Dimensions," a

group show of collage and assemblage work at Artamo Gallery, in which the dominant theme of synthesis and bringing-together of unrelated things conspires towards a dizzying end. It comes with the territory, especially in viewing the work of many of these artists — call them rebel hunters and gatherers — under one roof.

It can be said that this group of



Above is "Possession," by Seantel De'Monte Sanders, and at right is "Shadows Slanted," by Ann Baldwin.

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#### ◀ 4D / Page 5

artists generally manages to transcend the sins and easy decorative results sometimes encountered in the collage/assemblage scene. They come from different locales, and different artistic perspectives, and convey refreshingly different and personalized work.

Seantel De'Monte Sanders, a Brooks Institute graduate who now teaches at Santa Barbara City College, deals with the putty of ambiguity, but in heavy, elaborate constructions. An aura of altered or borrowed antiquity buzzes about this art, as in "Fog" and "Possession." Soft focus, vintage-looking photographs serve as foundations, but they are willfully obscured — something akin to Sally Mann's faux archival photographs — with weathered surfaces and milky glass joined to weighty frames. Something both enigmatic and muscular this way comes.

Perhaps the strongest work in the show is by Gurpran Rau, and India-born artist whose material list includes digital imagery, pigment, and encaustic on panel. Her aptly-named "Nexus Series," with multiple faces variously blurred and abstracted, riffs off of identity and the deconstruction of portraiture, with a touch of post-Warhol detachment.

More traditional collage practices appear in Ann Baldwin's work, which, in a piece like "Shadows (Slanted)," presents a deceptively straightforward-looking patchwork structure. Conjoined elements of painting, photography and text

## ART REVIEW

### FOUR DIMENSIONS

**When:** through April 8

**Where:** Artamo Gallery, 11 W. Anapamu St.

**Gallery hours:** 1 to 6 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday

**Information:** 568-1400

come together and evoke a sense of logic, but in fact, they are only shadows of rationality.

A similar aesthetic is at work in Jack N. Mohr, whose oblique checkerboard-like pieces appear like a tapestry of cross-stitched and interwoven fragments. Fleeing hints of recognizable forms and objects resonate against patches of red-washed areas, and our attempts to make rational sense of what we're looking at both encouraged and frustrated. It's the collagists' way.

Multi-media artist Mohr, who also runs the gallery, is a diverse artistic hunter-gatherer by nature, and he also shows pieces from distinctly different series. Relief sculptures in the back of the gallery intriguingly blend materials, including found wood pieces and scraps of fired clay. An elegance of design and a sense of restraint set them apart, demonstrating a discerning eye for composition also present in his small, airy, Constructivist-inspired collages.

It is possible to look at the exhibition as a kind of meta-assemblage itself, with its various parts and styles brought together into a multi-directional whole. ■