



Core samples

The North Valley as light, sculpture and sound in new 1078 exhibit

As the title of the current “immersive installation” at Chico’s 1078 Gallery—*The World Evades Us: Surveying Composite*

story and
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Review:
The World Evades Us: Surveying Composite Meanings of Place shows through Nov. 10. Panel discussion Nov. 2, 5–6 p.m.; nature walk: Nov. 3, 10 a.m.–noon.

1078 Gallery
1710 Park Ave.
433-1043
1078gallery.org

Valley,” according to their artists’ statement on the gallery’s website.

It was no easy task. The gallery is small (one mid-size main room plus two small alcoves) and the North Valley is, well, pretty big. It’s also dauntingly complex. Whether the artists have succeeded in representing it depends largely on how willing viewers are to immerse themselves in the installation and study the accompanying print documentation.

The artists did their homework for the exhibit, which was funded in part by a grant from the city of Chico. They consulted local land trusts, historians and geographers and “gathered information from various locations in the North Valley, including the Sutter Buttes, Bidwell Park, Oroville Dam and Paradise,” as well as the thousands of acres of farmland in the area. These are represented by floor-to-ceiling white cylindrical columns arranged in a grid suggestive of rows of nut trees. They are also meant to mimic “core samples” that serve as “composites of layered information.” Speakers inserted into the columns emit various levels of “pink noise” meant, the artists say, to suggest altitudes, from below sea level to 2,500 feet above (Paradise).

A weaving trail of wood mulch on the gallery floor suggests farmland, while a series of moving visual images is projected onto the columns. This projected imagery, the artists write in the printed statement, “stimulates both the linear striations of the core sample and the starbursting effect that a grid of nut trees produces as one drives past.”

This “symbolic imagery and sound,” the artists write, “allow the artists to draw on the myriad ideas and information gathered during their research and site visits.”

Chief among those ideas is the

notion of tension between “natural and human-made patterns of growth.” As cities grow and expand, the artists seem to ask, how can we protect the natural world? “We were struck,” they write, “by the contrast between humans’ attempt to create boundaries within nature and the ever present threat of natural disaster and displacement.” They’re talking about fires, of course.

As stated above, this is an ambitious exhibit—perhaps too ambitious. It asks a lot of the viewer. I myself didn’t know what to make of it at first but then read the literature (a single one-sheet and an online set of bios) and did a walk-through with the artists, all of which enabled me to appreciate the complexity of the installation.

Some of it worked for me; some didn’t. I’ve never experienced, for example, a “starbursting effect” while driving through orchards, and the supposed effect of the sound imagery eluded me, even after it had been explained.

Still, I admire the three artists for having the courage and determination to take on such a complex and demanding project. And I will admire anyone who, having read this review, decides to check out *The World Evades Us*. It’s a challenging show, perplexing at times but also fascinating for anyone willing to take it on. □

Artists (from left)
Shanna Sordahl, Tammy
LePham and Melanie
Treuhaft in their *Worlds
Evades Us* installation.

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