

Out & About

Ventura County

Thursday: Family Jaunts
Friday: Pop Scene, Classic
Saturday: Shoptalk, Tidl
Sunday: Sights, Page Turn

sights



BRYAN CHAN / Los Angeles T

The Century multiplex in downtown Ventura seems to have taken some architectural inspiration from the city's long-shuttered Mayfair Theater, above

Fresh Facades

Buildings on Ventura's Main Street are steadily shifting the area's architectural status quo.

By JOSEF WOODARD
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

A fresh architectural face is slowly developing on downtown Ventura's Main Street. So far, the biggest change in civic scenery has been the Century multiplex's festooning of neo-moderne twists. In a way, the structure gives a cross-town wink and a nod to architect S. Charles Lee's Streamline Moderne Mayfair Theater on Santa Clara Street, like a deep-pocketed upstart paying respects to an elder.

Just up the street, the renovated Foster Library unveiled itself after Thanksgiving and still triggers double takes from passerby accustomed to the old facade. It may not be enough of a startling change to cause accidents, but shifts in the architectural status quo, especially in a conservative, slow-to-change town such as Ventura, will always be newsworthy.

The library's facade has changed very little, except for a new, candy-colored paint job. Interlocking planes of ice cream green and buttery yellow suggest snack time at the paint factory. The more eye-catching new addition is the glass entryway, once a utilitarian passageway now reformed by artist Sally Weber.

Titled "Matrix," Weber's fanciful, digitally-generated color design consumes the entrance, which has the effect

of sealing off the passage from public space to building space. But it also plays like a magical screen of color, through which one leaves the street and enters a world of knowledge, Internet access, napping or whatever else one associates with the library.

Here is a case of public art that is both unobtrusive and more expressive than first impression suggests. She has created a prismatic splash of color, set into elaborate, asymmetrical patterns of varied triangular shapes. The color application varies, too, between flat planes of color and textured, fabric-like surfaces. Allusions to literature and to tapestry traditions are subtly woven into the project. It's all fitted together with a discerning, precise eye, tinged with an Art Deco sensibility.

Kinder, Gentler Expressionism: In her artist's statement, painter Shoshona Brand acknowledges the influence of such noted abstract painters as Vasily Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock and Hans Hoffman. And it's not difficult to detect the imprint of each of those groundbreaking modern artists in her work, now showing in the Upstairs Gallery of Natalie's Fine Threads.

But while much of the history of abstract expressionists and their precursors triggers visions of moody introspection and angst-letting, Brand's work has a gentler touch. Her acrylic paintings are color-fueled

events, like good-natured little explosions of visual activity. There's no existential aftertaste.

Layers of visual materials and illusions of space circulate in her compositions. Sometimes the brushed gestures are laid atop a background of geometric patchwork, like blasts of kinetic energy over calm grid

In "Cover-Discover," the title hints at the painterly scheme, in which a mild tension hums between the action in the foreground and the background. Some of the tiny paintings seem to exert the greatest energy, a through compacted expression: small packages containing concentrated goods.

Also on view in the gallery are ceramic works by Jar Jacobs, part of the contingent of fine potters calling OJ home. Her section of the exhibition shimmers with iridescent glazes and, sonically, trickles with the sound of her fountains. In these, her ceramic handwork melt with fitting "found objects" from nature, such as stone and dead vegetation.

DETAILS

Shoshona Brand and Janet Jacobs, through Jan. 15 at Natalie's Fine Threads, Upstairs Gallery, 596 E. Main in Ventura. Gallery hours: 10:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Tue.-Sat., noon-4 p.m., Sun.; 643-8854.